

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20



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OUR GREAT CITY



A TROBE
LIFE SANCTUARY



OUR GREAT CITY



Greater Dandenong is the **most culturally diverse locality in Australia** and has an estimated population of 168,000 people with a forecast of 205,000 people by 2028.

The most widely spoken languages are **Vietnamese, Khmer, Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese and Greek.**

Two thirds of residents in the city **speak languages other than English** at home and 18 per cent of residents have limited fluency in the use of spoken English.

Nearly two thirds of residents were **born overseas** and residents come from **157 different birthplaces.**

Quality infrastructure across the city includes **188km of bike and shared paths, 1,100km of footpaths and 152 playgrounds.**



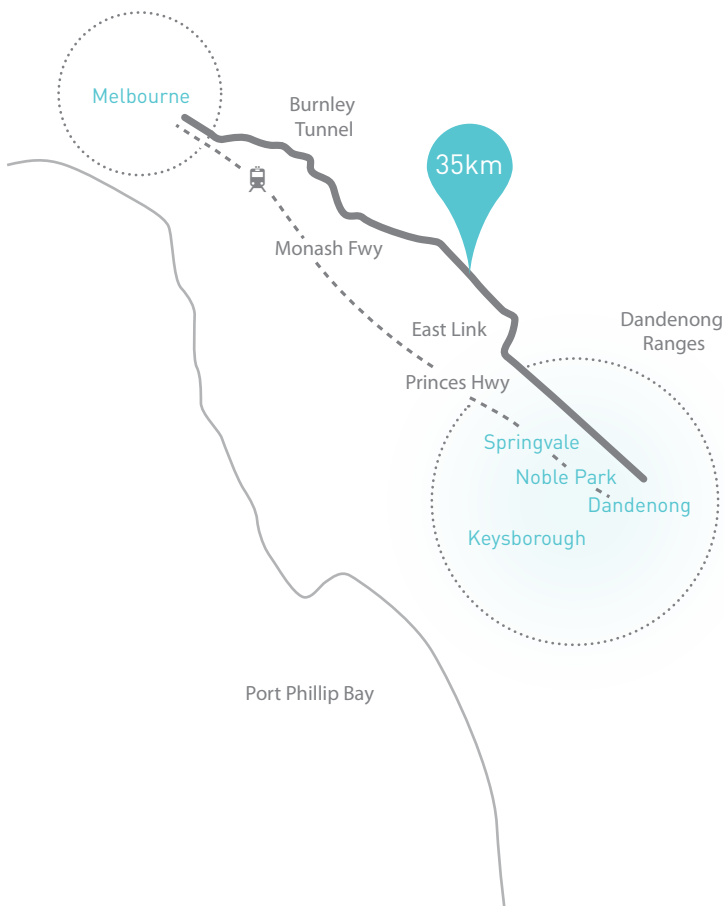
The **Afghan Bazaar** cultural precinct and **Melbourne's first Indian cultural precinct** bring many visitors to the city along with the **iconic Dandenong Market** which attracts over **five million visitors** a year.

It is home to **35** sports reserves, **197** parks totalling **523** hectares and **33** bushland areas

Key industries within the municipality include **health care and social assistance, retail trade, wholesale trade and transport, postal and warehousing.**

The **City of Greater Dandenong** is renowned as the **manufacturing hub of Victoria** with the industry accounting for **17 per cent of all jobs.**

Tourism is a key focus for Council and the area has **many attractions** including **cultural precincts, culturally diverse cuisine, and food and shopping tours.**



The City of Greater Dandenong encompasses an area of **129 square kilometres in Melbourne's south east**, approximately 35km from the Melbourne central business district.

Our Vision

Greater Dandenong is a safe and vibrant city of opportunity for all – to visit, work, live and play

Our Key Strategic Objectives

People

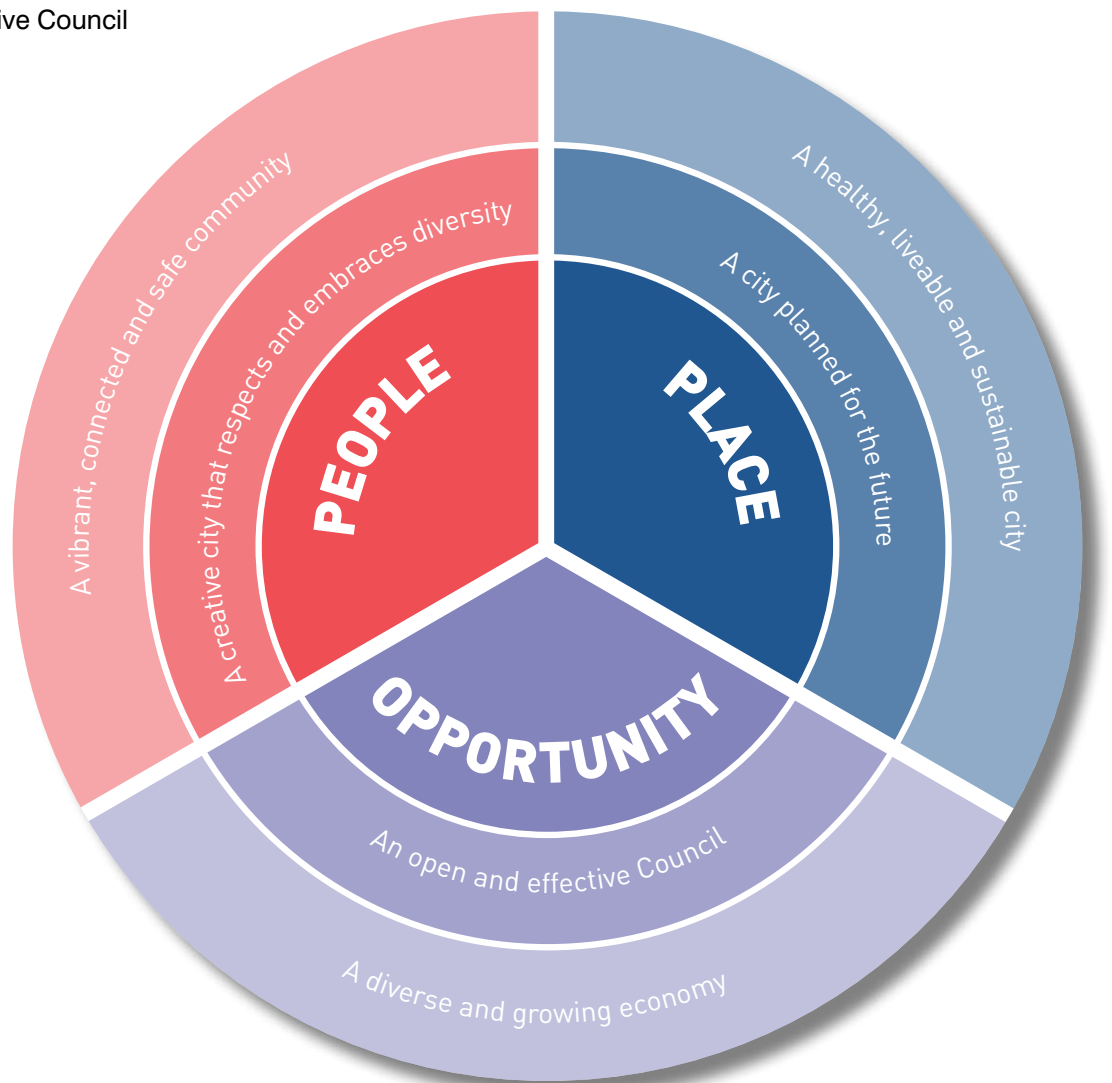
- A vibrant, connected and safe community
- A creative city that respects and embraces diversity

Place

- A healthy, liveable and sustainable city
- A city planned for the future

Opportunity

- A diverse and growing economy
- An open and effective Council





Message from the Mayor

The City of Greater Dandenong is a vibrant, diverse and welcoming community that has shown its resilience in the face of recent challenges.

Our emergency management response to the state-wide impact of bushfires in Gippsland at the start of 2020 showed that our community was adaptable and supportive.

While still assisting bushfire recovery efforts the global COVID-19 pandemic hit and Council swung into immediate action to protect the health and safety of our community.

Council offered a financial relief package including rate relief for some of our most vulnerable residents. Money and resources were also put towards a substantial material aid program that was co-ordinated from Springvale City Hall.

Throughout the pandemic Council continued to deliver essential services while exploring ways to help our community remain safe.

Advocacy is an important role of Council and over the past year we have worked with our community and other tiers of government to effect change.

Greater Dandenong is the most culturally diverse community in Australia and we have one of the highest populations of people seeking asylum. Over the past 12 months we continued to advocate for better support and financial services for people seeking asylum.

In November 2019 we held our annual Walk Against Family Violence and participated in the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.

In January 2020 we declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and also developed a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Other strategies developed over the past year include the Urban Forest Strategy and the revised Open Space Strategy. The Make Your Move Physical Activity Strategy also looked at how we can support our residents to be more active and healthy and remove barriers that prevent people from taking part in regular activity.

Council continued to invest in quality facilities and projects that add value and enjoyment to the lives of people who live and work in our city and our many visitors.

The Springvale Community Hub was completed, and while the opening was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the precinct is set to become the new heart of Springvale. The project has unfolded over the past few years and began with the refurbishment of the Springvale City Hall. The area is now a world-class space providing a variety of learning, leisure and cultural opportunities.

We continued to implement park master plans across several locations, including at Dandenong Park, where the final stages of the works include the creation of a 'tan' style running track and refurbishment of the historic Rotary Wheel.

Renowned as a City of Celebration, Greater Dandenong hosted 57 community events, with more than 20 unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Key events held in 2019, including Snow Fest, Little Day Out, Carols in Harmony Square, New Year's Eve and the Australia Day Festival, attracted a combined total of more than 80,000 people.

Council once again achieved a record performance rating on the Community Satisfaction Survey, outscoring other metropolitan local governments on six of seven key measures. Results regarding residents feelings of safety increased by six points from 2019.

Across the local government sector the new *Local Government Act* to be implemented has been described as 'the most ambitious reform in the sector in 30 years'. It includes new overarching governance principles for community engagement, public transparency, strategic planning, good practice guidelines, service performance and financial management. These changes affect the way Council works, reports and engages with our community, but we always put the people first and will continue to do that.

As Mayor of this city I am proud to present the 2019–20 Annual Report. We have achieved a lot over the past year, often under trying and unusual circumstances, and the above is just a highlight of the work we have carried out. I encourage you to look through this document to learn more.

I would like to thank my fellow Councillors and Council staff for their commitment to making the City of Greater Dandenong such a great place to visit, work, live and play.



Cr Jim Memeti
Greater Dandenong Mayor



Chief Executive Officer's Report

2019–20 has been a very successful yet challenging year for both Greater Dandenong City Council and its community. We have continued our focus on providing key community services, undertaking advocacy and completing major construction projects which provide state of the art facilities. In the second half of the year the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have undeniably changed the way we operate as a Council and how we continue to support both our residents and businesses. The pandemic has required a greater degree of flexibility and adaptability in our service delivery and we have embraced many online and virtual offerings to ensure we remain connected to our community.

Among other initiatives, Council acted quickly to provide relief to its residents via a \$4 million package to assist the most vulnerable members of our community via rate rebates and waivers. Council also committed over \$300,000 towards a material aid program which has since helped to feed thousands of local people in need. I was particularly proud of the way these were enacted so quickly and the community was able to receive tangible benefits in such difficult times.

In spite of these challenges and the ever-changing landscape I am pleased to share with you some of the many achievements of Council over the last 12 months which have benefited our city:

- completion of the new Springvale Community Hub – a fantastic new facility designed as a community centred place of connection. Unfortunately we were unable to open the building as planned due to the pandemic, but I am confident once the community get to see and experience this incredible venue they will be suitably impressed;
- Dandenong Park improvements including the construction of a 'Tan' style running track, an upgraded rotary wheel, and general park and landscape improvements;
- six major events were held with over 80,000 attendees – including Snowfest, Cinema in the Square and Little Day Out;
- a new multi-sport park was completed in Walker Street – reflecting our ongoing partnership with the State Government and Development Victoria;

- strong advocacy campaigns including Council's declaration of a climate emergency, participation in the 16 days of activism campaign against family violence, and support for the Raise the Rate campaign;
- the Community Satisfaction Survey outcomes placed Council at the top end of Victorian Councils for another year;
- sustainability projects, as part of the Urban Tree Strategy, saw 3,338 trees planted;
- a new IT Strategy and digital framework was developed to meet the needs of a growing online community;
- 77 community arts programs were delivered including 22 online; and
- a site for the new Keysborough South Community Hub was selected in consultation with community members.

Asset renewal and upgrades continue to be a focus each year and in addition to the major projects completed this year many others are underway or planned including a new Dandenong Aquatic and Wellbeing Centre to replace Oasis and upgrades to the Noble Park Aquatic Centre. The Aquatic Strategy was endorsed by Council and the feasibility study for NPAC Stage 1 and business case for the development to replace Oasis have been completed. These facilities will enhance community health and wellbeing; maximise equity and access; and facilitate social connection.

I encourage you to read the performance section and service summaries of this report which highlight more of the operational and key project achievements which confirm our commitment to making the City of Greater Dandenong a city of opportunity.

Sound Financial Management

Council's operating result was a surplus of \$16.48 million. It is important to note that these surpluses are 'accounting surpluses' which include a range of non-cash items such as depreciation on Council assets, assets written off, assets gifted to Council by developers (eg. roads, footpaths and open space) and exclude cash costs such as capital expenditure.

Through sound and prudent leadership by Council and management by staff, Council remains in a healthy financial position although it must again be stated, that this will be tested into the future by COVID-19 and the compounding effect of rate capping.

Despite these obvious challenges, Council remains focused on its purpose and objective – to provide quality services and assets to the people and businesses of this city. As stated in previous years, Council will not allow its hard earned and sound financial position to be unreasonably impacted by external challenges.

Capital Improvements

\$58.03 million was spent on capital improvements during the year, \$29.19 million was on asset renewals with a further \$6.15 million on upgrades to existing infrastructure assets.

It is pleasing to report that the funding of basic infrastructure – roads, footpaths and drains – in 2019–20, was maintained at \$12.44 million. This investment continues to underpin the importance of Council’s maintenance and protection of existing assets.

The new *Local Government Act* received royal assent in March and Council has commenced the necessary work required for its implementation. The new Act is designed to improve local government democracy, accountability and service delivery and how Council’s engage effectively with their communities. The principles based Act will be implemented in four stages with the final stage planned for July 2021. We look forward to improving the way we deliver services under the Act and are committed to ensuring greater transparency and accountability.

I commend the Council on its leadership and achievements in 2019-20 and thank the many wonderful staff who remain committed to local government service within Greater Dandenong City Council.



John Bennie PSM
Chief Executive Officer

