

Anti-Poverty Strategy

2022-25



Acknowledgement

The City of Greater Dandenong respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Australians and the Traditional Owners of the land and continues to acknowledge and respect their continuing connection to culture and Country. Council acknowledges the contribution of the voice of lived experience of poverty, community, sector and business who shared their knowledge, experience and aspirations to inform this strategy.

The City of Greater Dandenong is a Child Safe Organisation, working to protect children from harm through upholding the Child Safe Standards in every interaction with children and young people.

The Gender Equality Act 2020 requires local government to take positive action towards promoting gender equality in their policies, programs and services. A Gender Impact Assessment has been completed in line with the development of this strategy to ensure that accompanying actions are inclusive and promote equity.

In January 2020, Council declared a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency' and committed to emergency action on climate change. Sustainability is a core principle of this strategy, with emphasis placed upon embedding our commitment across work practices; and in advancing community participation in climate action regardless of economic status.



Foreword

Greater Dandenong City Council is committed to supporting all people within the community and understands that people experiencing poverty are often unable to participate in community life. People in poverty often must make difficult choices between paying the electricity bill or buying groceries. Poverty is a whole of community issue. By developing the Anti-Poverty Strategy 2022-25 Greater Dandenong Council aims for the city to be a place where people experiencing poverty have the power and resources to share in life's possibilities and potential.

The *City of Greater Dandenong Anti-Poverty Strategy 2022–2025* has been developed in response to, and with, community. Greater Dandenong City Council established a consortium made up of agencies working with people in poverty to guide the consultation process and connect Council with people experiencing poverty. The consortium, non-government organisations, volunteers and over 120 people with lived experience of poverty contributed to the development of the Strategy. Feedback will guide Council to realise its vision for the city to be a home to all, a city of equal opportunity.

Greater Dandenong City Council acknowledges and pays respects to the Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation, as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters in and around Greater Dandenong. We value and recognise local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, heritage, and connection to land as a proud part of a shared identity for Greater Dandenong.

Greater Dandenong City Council pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging and recognises their importance in maintaining knowledge, traditions, and culture in our community. Social inclusion and community participation are important to Council as we are enriched by the social, cultural, and economic contributions of residents and visitors to Greater Dandenong.

Greater Dandenong is Australia's most culturally diverse community and is known for inspiring social connections and encouraging people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests to come together. The Strategy seeks to remove barriers that limit access for those living in poverty. We look to enhance opportunities for respectful engagement, with the voice of lived experience of poverty informing the ongoing commitment to create innovative ways to alleviate poverty.

The Strategy is designed to be held by Council whilst offering opportunity and guidance for external stakeholders to contribute to delivering components of the strategy. It will take a collective effort from those who believe challenging poverty is their business and those who think it is not their role in the system and/or society. I invite everyone to partner with us on this journey.

**Greater Dandenong City Council
Mayor, Cr Jim Memeti**

The background is a solid teal color. On the left side, there are two large, white, overlapping arcs that curve upwards and then downwards, resembling stylized arches or a partial circle. The top arc is larger and positioned higher than the bottom arc, with their curves overlapping in the center.

About our Strategy

The purpose of our Strategy and its intent

The City of Greater Dandenong Anti-Poverty Strategy 2022-25 sets the direction guiding councils effort to alleviate poverty within the community. We know this work will take 10-15 years of effort and focus to achieve change at a population level. This Strategy is focused on the first 3 years of this journey. In this first 3 years there is a focus on:

- Lifting the voice of those with lived experience.
- Building a shared understanding of poverty.
- Strengthening the way we collaborate and work together to understand and challenge poverty.
- Engaging government and other decision makers - some who see tackling poverty as their work, and others who don't.
- Strengthening local/place-based community connection.

This Strategy, while informed by the past and the 'now', is about the future. Council understand that we are already holding work through the Anti-Poverty Consortium and that this Strategy will shift both how and what this work looks like.

Poverty will only decrease if we can make it everyone's business. It will take a collective effort from those who believe challenging poverty is their business and those who think it is not their role in the system and/or society.

Defining poverty

Establishing a definition for people experiencing poverty is not easy. International poverty lines are set as a proportion of median income, and define a level of income, below which people are regarded as living in poverty. It is widely accepted in Australia economically to use 50 per cent of median income.

Socio-economic disadvantage goes beyond economics, describing people within our community that cannot participate in activities many of us take for granted. Poverty can take place during any time within a lifespan; therefore the strategy needs to consider the diversity in the area. We know that some people are disproportionately affected by poverty in our communities - women, migrants, refugees, people seeking asylum, young people, the LGBTQI+ community and seniors.

Our community

Greater Dandenong is the most culturally diverse community in Australia, with 64 per cent of its residents born overseas, residents from 157 different birthplaces and languages other than English spoken by over two-thirds (70 per cent) of its residents – the highest level in the State.

Average individual incomes are 74per cent of the metropolitan average and the second lowest in Melbourne.

In the 2016 Census 31 per cent of local families with children had no parent in paid employment – the highest level in metropolitan Melbourne and substantially more than the State level of 19 per cent.

The 2020 Victorian Health Survey recorded that 13 per cent of residents of Greater Dandenong had run out of money to buy food at some time during the previous year – the second highest level of food insecurity in the state.

Unemployment rates in Greater Dandenong stood at 8.6 per cent in June 2021 – unemployment was highest in Dandenong at 12 per cent, lowest in Keysborough, at 5 per cent.

Community Vision and Council Plan

This strategy aligns with our Council Plan and Community Vision and allows the opportunity for people experiencing poverty to contribute to the objectives of the Council plan.

Council's plan has a focus for the next four years on achieving the following objectives:

1. A socially connected, safe and healthy city
2. A city that respects and celebrates diversity, our history and the arts
3. A city of accessible, vibrant centres and neighbourhoods
4. A green city committed to a sustainable future
5. A city that supports entrepreneurship, quality education and employment outcomes
6. A Council that demonstrates leadership and a commitment to investing in the community

Population Level Outcome

People currently living in poverty in the City of Greater Dandenong and surrounds have the power and resources to share in life's possibilities and potential.

Who will benefit from the Strategy

Council knows that some people are disproportionately affected by poverty in our communities - women, migrants, refugees, people seeking asylum, young people, the LGBTQI+ community and seniors. The Anti-Poverty Consortium will focus on cohorts within the Strategy based on evidence against the following:

- *Who is least empowered?*
- *Whose potential is most undermined by poverty in our community?*
- *What does the Anti-Poverty Consortium have the most control and influence over?*

If we work together to influence and create the conditions for people to move out of poverty, we all benefit. Council believes that we are all a part of the solution.



**How we will know we
are making an impact**

We will undertake our work as learners, trying something, reflecting on our work together, and changing what we do as we learn what works. We will also stop doing what does not work.

We will measure the impact of what we do, not only the numbers of people we reach.

Roles in delivering the Strategy

- The Council's role is to hold the Strategy as central to addressing poverty. This will require dedicated resourcing.
- Council will also resource and lead aspects of the work that align with the Council Plan, Council's Budget and other strategies within Council that align with the Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- The role of the Anti-Poverty Consortium is to lead the implementation of the Strategy.



Our work towards our desired outcome

Domains of Work and Strategic Priorities			
Shifting people's experience of poverty through a holistic, collaborative approach.	Services are 'serving' people experiencing poverty to achieve their goals.	Influence all levels of government to align policy and resources to prevent and address the impacts of poverty.	Strengthen and embed the voice of lived experience in addressing poverty to maximise impact of the work
<p>PRIORITY 1: Work across the system to minimise social isolation and the impacts.</p> <p>PRIORITY 2: Challenge stigma associated with poverty.</p> <p>PRIORITY 3: Influence those who work in systems impacted by poverty.</p>	<p>PRIORITY 4: Increase service accessibility.</p> <p>PRIORITY 5: Work within the rhythm of the community.</p> <p>PRIORITY 6: Utilise the voice of lived experience in service design.</p>	<p>PRIORITY 7: Increase connections with, between and across governments.</p> <p>PRIORITY 8: Increase alignment of policy and practice.</p> <p>PRIORITY 9: Improve how data is used for decision making, progress and impact.</p> <p>PRIORITY 10: Maximise influence in policy and funding effecting locally led and locally relevant strategies to address poverty.</p>	<p>PRIORITY 11: Lift hope for the future for people living in poverty.</p> <p>PRIORITY 12: Place the voice of those experiencing poverty at the centre of decisions that impact them.</p>

DOMAIN

1

Shifting people's experience of poverty through a holistic, collaborative approach.

What is being called for

- ✔ Efforts are aligned to understand poverty, its causes, the experiences of those living with poverty and how we tackle this together
- ✔ Poverty is decoupled from shame
- ✔ The causes of poverty are being addressed through collaboration
- ✔ Women, migrants, seniors and young people to access employment and education opportunities to get out of poverty

Strategic Priorities and Motivation (What we will work on and why)	Strategic Actions (How we will achieve our priorities)
<p>PRIORITY 1: Work across the system to minimise social isolation and the impacts.</p> <p><i>Community connection and participation is critical in addressing poverty.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Identify and address factors that are contributing to social isolation for people experiencing poverty in CGD ✔ Develop community connection and participation opportunities for people experiencing poverty in ways that build equity and reduce stigma
<p>PRIORITY 2: Challenge stigma associated with poverty.</p> <p><i>Poverty is a structural issue that requires us to remove the label from the people and focus on systems that perpetuate poverty.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Build a shared understanding of 'poverty' and its causes ✔ Build capacity across the system to work with the voice of lived experience rather than those speaking on behalf of such people ✔ Develop messaging and communication strategies to re-frame poverty in CGD and surrounds ✔ Build a shared language around poverty, causes, impacts that reduces stigma
<p>PRIORITY 3: Influence those who work in systems impacted by poverty.</p> <p><i>When people move out of poverty, everyone benefits. This is not for specialist services to tackle but for everyone.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Develop an understanding of the 'ecosystem' of poverty ✔ Connect anti-poverty work with other local collaborative efforts in housing, education and employment ✔ Connect anti-poverty work with local collaborative work in mental health and other forms of disability because mental health issues are both a consequence of poverty and a cause of poverty ✔ Engage people who do not see their role as addressing or responding to poverty but work in and contribute to related areas such as job or wealth creation

DOMAIN

2

Services are 'serving' people experiencing poverty to achieve their goals.

What is being called for

- ✓ People are part of shaping solutions that impact them
- ✓ Services are deeply connected with people experiencing poverty in their own communities

- ✓ Service access is equitable, seamless and local
- ✓ Services meet the needs of people experiencing poverty in ways that work for them

Strategic Priorities and Motivation (What we will work on and why)	Strategic Actions (How we will achieve our priorities)
<p>PRIORITY 4: Increase service accessibility.</p> <p><i>Being able to access local services that are connected to people experiencing poverty in their own communities builds equity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Understand and challenge exclusion from programs due to eligibility criteria ✓ Establish 'smaller' gateways in local communities (suburbs) to facilitate access and communication with the service system actors ✓ Advocate for accessible services in line with what people experiencing poverty are calling for
<p>PRIORITY 5: Work within the rhythm of the community.</p> <p><i>Service providers understanding the community by connecting with people living in poverty in their own communities is vital to achieve success.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide and maximise networking and communication structures and processes across the service system based on 'place' (LGA, suburb) not issue (e.g. housing, education, health) ✓ Identify key place based, grassroots agencies that can act as connectors and communicators between community and services ✓ Utilise how people connect and get their information within their local area to communicate to work with and for community
<p>PRIORITY 6: Utilise the voice of lived experience in service design.</p> <p><i>Bringing the wisdom and expertise of people with lived experience in the design, delivery and evaluation of services improves service outcomes and impact.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify safe places for the voice of lived experience to inform the work on an ongoing basis ✓ Identify organisations who are holding the voice of lived experience in the design and delivery of their work. Share how to do this with others in the service system ✓ Promote co-design of service solutions with people living in poverty

DOMAIN

3

Influence all levels of government to align policy and resources to prevent and address the impacts of poverty.

What is being called for

- ✔ Policies align to positively impact the lives of people experiencing poverty
- ✔ Policy and funding decisions are based on deep understanding of community context
- ✔ Resources are allocated and aligned to prevent poverty
- ✔ Policies work for everyone in addressing and preventing poverty
- ✔ Policies reflect and build equity (e.g. gender equity, financial equity)

Strategic Priorities and Motivation (What we will work on and why)	Strategic Actions (How we will achieve our priorities)
<p>PRIORITY 7: Increase connections with, between and across governments. <i>Connections improve collaboration between and within levels of government.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Maximise existing and future communication mechanisms across local and other jurisdictions to influence relevant policy and resource allocation ✔ Include cross jurisdictional (local, state and federal governments) representatives in networking opportunities ✔ Include cross jurisdictional (local, state and federal governments) representatives in designing and tackling solutions to poverty within the CGD ✔ Work collaboratively between the Anti-Poverty Consortium and the Community Revitalisation Partnership and other key partnerships impacting on poverty
<p>PRIORITY 8: Increase alignment of policy and practice. <i>Aligning work to address poverty with work on other influencing factors will improve collaboration and effectiveness.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Establish an 'anti-poverty' impact indicator that would apply across various policies ✔ Align policy and strategies across CGD Council and consortium organisations that impact on poverty ✔ Align the Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Economic development and employment work with all strategies across the CGD Council

DOMAIN

3

Influence all levels of government to align policy and resources to prevent and address the impacts of poverty.

Strategic Priorities and Motivation (What we will work on and why)	Strategic Actions (How we will achieve our priorities)
<p>PRIORITY 9: Improve how data is used with for decision making, progress and impact.</p> <p><i>Improving how data is used to make decisions and the role everyone plays in this improves quality and impact while building equity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Develop information sharing processes to inform change within State and Federal government portfolios ☑ Develop two-way communication and learning cycles using data, with community as well as funders and policy makers ☑ Influence for sharing of data with services, community and collaborators to learn and shape solutions to address poverty with governments ☑ Establish connections to share information, learning and relationships to work across issue and community boundaries
<p>PRIORITY 10: Maximise influence in policy and funding effecting locally led and locally relevant strategies to address poverty.</p> <p><i>Policy and funding strengthens our work when it aligns with the objectives of our strategy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Bring the voice of the community directly to government decision makers across government bureaucracy ☑ Learn what problems/issues are facing government and offer local solutions when these is-sues are impacting on poverty ☑ Maximise and seek specific and locally relevant funding to catalyse local solutions ☑ Influence funders to evaluate impact, not just throughputs ☑ Maximise opportunities for greater alignment between government levels on policy and in-vestment to lift the voice of those living in poverty and to provide scaffolding of poverty

DOMAIN

4

Strengthen and embed the voice of lived experience in addressing poverty to maximise impact of the work.

What is being called for

- ✓ People living in poverty feel hopeful for a better future
- ✓ People feel heard and empowered
- ✓ People have a voice in policy design and resource allocation
- ✓ People have a sense of hope and confidence they can achieve their goals

Strategic Priorities and Motivation (What we will work on and why)	Strategic Actions (How we will achieve our priorities)
<p>PRIORITY 11: Lift hope for the future for people living in poverty.</p> <p><i>People without hope do not believe their voice is important enough to be heard.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Build a sense of belonging in the community for those living in poverty ✓ Use the voice of those who have or are moving out of poverty to convey hope to others ✓ Celebrate success stories through videos - people need to see it
<p>PRIORITY 12: Place the voice of those experiencing poverty at the centre of decisions that impact them.</p> <p><i>Change happens when we bring peoples thinking to build understanding, not just solutions.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide resources to local community enabling critical thinking and choice in making decisions about their economic and social participation ✓ Utilise community spaces to engage local community in places where they live ✓ Develop 'voice inclusion' strategies for and with specific groups of people (Women/ children/LGBTQI+ and young people need approaches specific to their needs) ✓ Use community voice to advocate within the political and broader systems ✓ Make community a part of the process - bring all stakeholders and decision makers to conversations locally (not just advocacy) ✓ Ensure opportunities and mechanisms for connection are culturally and linguistically appropriate and embrace the diversity of our community

