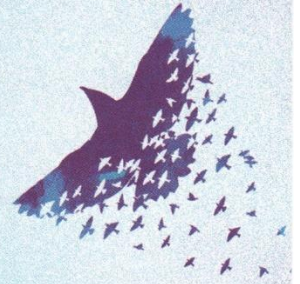




**The Interfaith Network of
City of Greater Dandenong**

~ Many Faiths, One People ~



Thursday, June 26th, 2024

**The Interfaith Network, (IFN) City of Greater Dandenong – Survey Response,
Our City, Our Future**

The Interfaith Network, City of Greater Dandenong welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the online survey towards the creation of a Council plan to support Council's vision for 2024; a vision that is a home for all and where you can enjoy and embrace life through celebration and equal opportunity.

The Interfaith Network acknowledges that Council alone cannot create and deliver on its vision, and stands ready to support, assist and continue to partner with the City of Greater Dandenong and the community to realize the plan's vision.

The IFN welcomes future opportunities to discuss our response and engage further in the consultation and developmental stages of the Council plan.

For further information, please contact the IFN Executive Officer, Ms Livia Carusi on 0429 510 333 or via exeuctive@interfaithnetwork.org.au

With regards

Livia Carusi
Interfaith Network of Greater Dandenong
Executive Officer

Interfaith Network, City of Greater Dandenong, Survey Response, Our City, Our Future, June 2024

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The Interfaith Network, (IFN), City of Greater Dandenong

Background

The Interfaith Network, City of Greater Dandenong was established in 1988 by local people serving their local community.

The founding members passionately believed that through shared dialogue, a shared vision and guiding values, including understanding, respect and the celebration of diversity, that social harmony is achieved within community.

In its 36 years, this vision, and commitment remains steadfast for the IFN and its members.

As communities across the State and Nation continue to navigate international and domestic pressures and challenges including environmental, economic, political and social, the Interfaith Network remains committed to its vision of '*Many Faiths, One People*', through:

- Active dialogue with Faith Leaders, elected officials, community and other key stakeholders on the issues affecting our community and how best we can collaborate to raise awareness and act as required, including the creation of resources for use and distribution amongst our Faith communities and providers of social programmes, including faith-based organisations delivering social programs.
- Offering of a calendar of events within and external to the Greater Dandenong community, including our phenomenally successful and engaging Schools and Public Tours of Places of Worship.
- Serving as a conduit of information exchange, resources and supports for our Faith Communities and the wider community, primarily through our website and our events.
- Partnering with a broad range of organisations outside the traditional IFN who align and share in our values and are committed to collaborating towards the improvement of outcomes for people within the City of Greater Dandenong.

Our City, Our Future

The Interfaith Network, City of Greater Dandenong, strongly advocates to Council for a future that ensures an intentional focus and delivers through tangible, impactful outcomes,

- Inclusivity
- Diversity and Place for **all** within the City of Greater Dandenong which is not determined by circumstances or postcode.

We want to hear what makes our city great and how we can help meet the ongoing needs of our community over the next four years.

What makes Greater Dandenong a great place to live, work and play?

1. City of Greater Dandenong's People
2. Community Diversity, supported by action
3. Community Inclusivity, supported by action
4. Visible, transformative and impactful leadership which includes Faith Leaders committed to collaboration and social cohesion within community.

What services and facilities are important to you?

What should Council focus on for the next four years?

The Interfaith Network identifies the following services and facilities as being important to ensuring a vibrant, inclusive and opportunity for all approach, in underpinning Council's focus over the next 4 years.

1. Recognition of the diversity of cultures and Faiths within the City of Greater Dandenong, and the continued support, funding and partnership approach with the Interfaith Network in promoting understanding, respect, active dialogue and opportunities to collaborate across the broad Faith Network.
2. Affordable housing including supporting the expansion and upgrade of social housing.
3. Cost effective and linked up public transport system.
4. Health and Wellness Programs for young people, First Nations people, and newly arrived people who first language is not English and who often experience disadvantage, exclusion from mainstream services including health and wellbeing programs.
5. Availability and access to social support programs including:
 - financial counselling,
 - emergency relief, including assistance with food, utility cost relief,
 - continued focused on family and domestic violence including improved integration and connection to behavioural change programs for perpetrators of violence.

6. Availability of access to cultural, arts, learning and recreational facilities at no cost, or subsidised costs specifically for households who due to financial circumstances are excluded from such opportunities.
7. Continued focused on programs in the areas of aged care, children, young people and families that have a focused on early intervention and prevention, whilst ensuring a response in times of difficulty.

What changes are needed to improve the health and wellbeing of our community?

The Interfaith Network strongly advocates for the inclusion of Faith and Spirituality as forming part of the 'holistic' view, approach implemented by Council towards the improvement of health and wellbeing outcomes of individuals and the broader community.

In adopting a 'holistic' approach that is inclusive of Faith and Spirituality, alongside, physical, mental, emotional health and wellbeing, we better understand the person, their community, and their needs. and subsequently improve our 'holistic' understanding of health and wellbeing and the collaborative responses, actions required to achieve improvements.

The Interfaith Network identifies the following changes in facilitating improvements to health and wellbeing of our community:

- Sound understanding of the needs of the community through active dialogue and consultation that is continuous.
- Articulation of the community health and wellbeing needs within Council's Plan including deliverables, inclusive of Faith and Spirituality
- In partnership with the community, including the Interfaith Network of Greater Dandenong, continued advocacy to Government for improved access and availability of funding to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our community as well as specific population cohorts, including First Nations people and newly arrived migrants.
- As much as possible, supporting and funding local communities to deliver specific, tailored, health and wellbeing programs and supports within their community.