

Neighbourhood House and Community Centres Framework

Introduction

Greater Dandenong's seven Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres (NHCCs) perform a vital role in supporting community connection, capacity, and participation. These centres provide inclusive spaces where residents can access programs, services, and opportunities that strengthen community wellbeing. The seven NHCCs are:

- Springvale Learning and Activities Centre
- Dandenong Community and Learning Centre
- Keysborough Learning Centre
- Wellsprings for Women
- Springvale Neighbourhood House
- North Dandenong Neighbourhood House
- Noble Park Community Centre

In 2024, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria conducted a statewide review to understand local government partnerships with neighbourhood houses. A key recommendation of the review was for local councils to develop frameworks that guide their partnerships with NHCCs.

Responding to this recommendation, Council endorsed the development of a Council Neighbourhood House and Community Centre Framework on 13th May 2024.

Following a consultation process, the Community Funding Team has created a Framework that will strengthen the partnership between Council and NHCCs by defining the relationship and expectations between the organisations. The Framework will outline:

- I. The Council Position on Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres.
- II. The roles and responsibilities of Council and the NHCCs, both individually and in relation to one another.
- III. Partnership arrangements aligned with best practice principles.
- IV. Opportunities for NHCCs to promote their work through Council.
- V. A list of key contacts at Council.

Principles

Council and the NHCCs commit to being guided by the following principles during their partnership:

Principle	Intent
1. Accessibility	Council and the NHCCs will be accessible to one another, committing to regular and timely communication through both digital and in-person engagement.
2. Accountability	Council and the NHCCs will be accountable to one another in fulfilling their contract obligations and addressing issues in a constructive manner.

3. Transparency	Council and the NHCCs will operate transparently by proactively sharing relevant information, strategies, approaches, outcomes, and other non-protected data that supports informed collaboration and trust.
4. Honesty	Council and the NHCCs will engage with one another honestly, fostering open dialogue and clarity in all interaction.
5. Mutual Respect	Council and the NHCCs will respect each other's roles, expertise, governance responsibilities, and organisational independence, recognising the value each brings to the partnership.
6. Collaboration	Council and the NHCCs will work collaboratively to identify opportunities, address challenges, and support shared outcomes that strengthen community connection and wellbeing.

The Council Position on Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres

Council endorsed the following position on NHCCs on 13th May 2024.

Council values the unique contribution that Neighbourhood Houses provide to local communities through:

- **A place-based approach that focuses on the whole community.** Neighbourhood Houses focus on a geographic community and respond to the needs of that community. This differs from other community groups and organisations that often focus on particular target groups or specific issues.
- **A partnership approach between Council and Neighbourhood Houses** to directly deliver on Council strategies and plans.
- **Flexibility and responsiveness to meet current and emerging needs.** Neighbourhood Houses are established specifically with a broad objective to shape their activity to meet whatever the current and emerging needs and priorities are in their local community.
- **An ability and capacity to support and build the capacity of other small community groups and organisations.**
- **Funding leverage.** Evidence identifies that when local governments provide operational funding this enables Neighbourhood Houses to leverage and attract additional funding and therefore deliver more to the local community.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Council and the NHCCs

The following seeks to provide clarity around the core roles and responsibilities in the working relationship between Greater Dandenong Council and the 7 local NHCCs.

Shared Responsibility	NHCC Responsibility	Council Responsibility
Where agreed by both parties, to collaborate on matters that contribute to the achievement of shared aims.	To provide formal, early, and prompt notice to Council of any serious risk to their continued operation.	To provide access to Council staff advice and support on matters of shared interest and responsibility.
To proactively share non-sensitive information that may be of interest to either party e.g. on upcoming funding opportunities, emerging community needs etc.	To provide Council with local community intelligence, outcomes data, and case studies that demonstrate impact at a neighborhood level.	To invite NHCC participation in relevant Council networks and committees.
To fulfill the obligations of any signed agreements (e.g. funding contracts) between the two parties.	To maintain strong governance, financial accountability, and compliance in line with funding and service agreements.	To actively support collaboration between NHCCs, recognising the value of a strong and connected local network.
Where appropriate, to identify and achieve economies of scale for NHCCs via collective action.	To participate in collaborative initiatives that build sector capacity, share resources, and strengthen collective voices.	
To mutually promote the work and impact of Greater Dandenong Council and the NHCCs in communications.	To acknowledge Council support and partnership in communications and community-facing activities.	
To utilize NHCC's community connections to strengthen Council's approach to community engagement.	To provide accessible entry points for community members to engage, connect, and participate in civic life.	
To work to bolster the sustainability and climate resilience of our organisations and the communities served.	To plan for sustainable operations and adapt to changing community needs and external pressures.	

Partnership Arrangements

To streamline the partnership between Council and the NHCCs, the following working arrangements will be implemented:

A. Council Liaisons

The consultation identified a lack of clarity around which issues to direct to which Council teams.

- Each NHCC Manager will be assigned a liaison within the Community Development Funding Team to triage contact with Council.
- NHCC Managers may direct any requests for operational support, advice, or information to their liaison.
- Council liaisons will support timely responses, coordinated advice, and consistent engagement across Council.

B. Council and NHCC Meeting Schedule

The consultation identified a lack of NHCC access to key Council personnel.

- The Community Partnerships and Volunteers Team Leader will attend meetings with DFFH and participate in LG network meetings to better understand the strategic context that NHCCs operate in.
- An annual workshop with NHCC Managers will be organized by the Community Development Funding Team to:
 - i. Review and share KPIs and outcomes
 - ii. Share learnings and emerging community needs
 - iii. Set shared priorities and intent for the year ahead
- 2 x visits from the Community Development Funding Team per NHCC per year.
- 4 x Community Development Funding Team attendance at NHCC Network meetings per year. Attendance of representatives from other relevant Council teams (e.g. Comms, Maintenance, Libraries etc.) will be sought upon request.
- Community Development Funding Team to consider requests for attendance at ad hoc meetings / network meetings / AGMs etc. according to team capacity, recognising the importance of visibility and connection between Council and NHCC governance and leadership.

Promotion of NHCC Activities

The consultation highlighted the opportunity to collaborate more effectively on the mutual promotion of services, programs, and community impacts.

Council's monthly magazine, **Greater Dandenong Council News**, is delivered to every letterbox in Greater Dandenong 11 times a year. The magazine primarily shares Council services and

activities, but it includes one community page to help share stories and opportunities offered by organisations outside of Council. The single page means there is some competition for the limited space, but the Media and Communications team will work with NHCCs to ensure that their work is championed through the magazine where possible.

Council has strict deadlines for submissions and generally works two months in advance (see Appendix 1).

The magazine includes a 'What's On' calendar of events each month, which is populated using events listed on the Council **website**. Event listings can be submitted via the website: www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/promote-your-event. Submissions are subject to approval and can take up to 14 days to go live on the website.

Council also uses **Facebook** to promote its activities. There is a busy schedule of promotion for Council events and services, however posts from external organisations can be shared if the event or activity benefits the community and is not commercial in nature.

Council has two **Urban Screens**, at Harmony Square Dandenong, and at Springvale Community Hub. There is an opportunity to share community content via these screens, including professional quality videos and/or slides promoting events. Video content needs to be provided in a suitable format, and in some instances support may be available for creating slides that fit with Council's style guide.

There is also an **internal screen network** viewed by Council staff across most workplaces. This network shares similar content as the Urban Screens.

Requests for support from the Media and Communications Team may be directed via the assigned Council Liaison to the news@cgd.vic.gov.au email address.

While NHCCs and Council shall endeavour to mutually promote key services and impacts from both organisations, this cannot be guaranteed in every instance.

Council Letters of Support

Council will aim to provide Letters of Support to assist NHCCs when applying for external funding opportunities.

It should be noted that this process is **currently under review** and may need to be updated in the future.

Current Process

1. Request Submission

NHCCs must submit a formal request to Council for a Council Letter of Support.

2. Drafting the Letter

Council will use a **standardised Letter of Support template** to ensure consistency. Letters will generally outline Council's support for the NHCC sector and the organisation's role within the community, rather than endorsing specific funding outcomes.

3. Approval and Sign-off

Once drafted, the letter will be reviewed and approved in line with Council's internal delegation and governance requirements.

4. Timeframes

NHCCs must allow **three weeks** for end-to-end approval following Council's receipt of a complete request for a Letter of Support.

NHCCs are encouraged to plan accordingly and submit requests as early as possible.

Appendices

Updated Council news schedules and key contact lists can be provided by an NHCC's assigned Council Liaison on an annual basis upon request.

Appendix 1: 2026 Council News Schedule

2026 Council News Schedule		
Magazine	Submission deadline	Australia Post Distribution begins
February 2026	18 November 2025	27 January 2026
March 2026	16 December 2026	23 February 2026
April 2026	3 February 2026	23 March 2026
May 2026	3 March 2026	27 April 2026
June 2026	31 March 2026	25 May 2026
July 2026	5 May 2026	29 June 2026
August 2026	2 June 2026	27 July 2026
September 2026	30 June 2026	24 August 2026
October 2026	4 August 2026	28 September 2026
November 2026	8 September 2026	26 October 2026
Holiday Edition – December 2026/January 2027	6 October 2026	30 November 2026

Appendix 2: Key Contacts at Council

Key Council contacts are listed here for ease of access. Copying the Council Liaison into any correspondence will help to ensure that messages are directed to the most relevant Council teams.

- ❖ **Team:** Community Partnerships Team
- ❖ **Purpose:** To administer Council's grant funding programs and the NHCC funding contracts.
- ❖ **Contact:** 8571 1432 / commgrants@cgd.vic.gov.au
- ❖ **Webpage:** [Community Grants and Funding | Greater Dandenong Council](#)

- ❖ **Team:** Festivals and Events Team
- ❖ **Purpose:** To support the community to make their events safe and enjoyable.
- ❖ **Contact:** events@cgd.vic.gov.au

- ❖ **Webpage:** [Holding an Event in Greater Dandenong | Greater Dandenong Council](#)

- ❖ **Team:** Libraries Team
- ❖ **Purpose:** To offer a wide range of resources, programs, and services via two physical branches in Springvale and Dandenong,
- ❖ **Contact:** 1300 630 920 / cgdlibraries@cgd.vic.gov.au
- ❖ **Webpage:** [Greater Dandenong Libraries | Greater Dandenong Libraries](#)

- ❖ **Team:** Media and Communications Team
- ❖ **Purpose:** To carry out Council's public communications.
- ❖ **Contact:** media@cgd.vic.gov.au
- ❖ **Webpage:** [Ways to Connect with Council | Greater Dandenong Council](#)

- ❖ **Team:** Building Maintenance Team
- ❖ **Purpose:** The maintenance of Council-owned properties.
- ❖ **Contact:** 8571 5366 / buildingmaintenance@cgd.vic.gov.au
- ❖ **Webpage:** N/A

- ❖ **Team:** Community Safety Team
- ❖ **Purpose:** To implement evidence-based initiatives to reduce crime.
- ❖ **Contact:** CommunitySafety@cgd.vic.gov.au
- ❖ **Webpage:** [Community Safety | Greater Dandenong Council](#)

- ❖ **Team:** Emergency Management Team
- ❖ **Purpose:** The management of emergency situations (e.g. floods, storms).
- ❖ **Contact:** emergency.management@cgd.vic.gov.au
- ❖ **Webpage:** [Emergency Management | Greater Dandenong Council](#)