FOREWORD

Feeling safe in the community where you live, work or play is important for everyone in the City of Greater Dandenong. Achieving a safer city requires a collaborative community approach.

Council will continue to develop partnerships with Victoria Police and other key agencies that build awareness and ownership of the priorities identified in this plan.

This Community Safety Plan, A Safer Greater Dandenong 2011-2014, enhances Council’s commitment to encourage the development of safer communities for all of its residents.

The Plan outlines Council’s key priorities in improving safety in Greater Dandenong. These include planning and designing Safer Public Places, collaboratively working towards Preventing Family Violence, creating a Safer Home for older people and families with young children and increasing road and public Transport Safety.

Council would also like to acknowledge the important leadership role the Community Safety Advisory Committee has played in the development of this plan.

I hope members of the community will join us in assisting to develop a healthy and safe city.

For the future, as well as the present, people want to live, and work in a city that is safe.

This plan acknowledges Council’s vision of ensuring Greater Dandenong is a safe place to visit and enjoy for a long time to come.

Cr Roz Blades
Greater Dandenong Mayor

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 4
2. COMMUNITY SAFETY IN GREATER DANDENONG 6
3. COUNCIL’S APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SAFETY 8
  3.1 Policy Context 8
  3.2 Council’s role in improving community safety 8
  3.3 The role of the Community Safety Advisory Committee 9
  3.4 The role of Neighbourhood Watch 9
PRIORITY AREAS OF COMMUNITY SAFETY 10
4. SAFER PUBLIC PLACES 10
  4.1 Urban Design and Social Inclusion 10
  4.2 Hotspots in Greater Dandenong 11
  4.3 Alcohol and Other Drugs 13
5. PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE 16
  5.1 Council’s response to family violence 17
  5.2 Elder abuse 17
6. SAFETY IN THE HOME 18
  6.1 Older persons 18
  6.2 Families and Young Children 19
7. TRANSPORT SAFETY 20
  7.1 Road Safety 22
  7.2 Public Transport 23
8. MANAGING THE STRATEGY 24
9. REFERENCES 26
INTRODUCTION

A safe community is where people want to live, work and interact with one another. It is where homes, workplaces, public transport, community spaces and neighbourhoods are welcoming and people trust one another, feel safe and are free from harm. Community safety is therefore more than policing and crime. It has a connection with many aspects of community life and well-being.

The purpose of this plan is:
• To clearly outline the role of the City of Greater Dandenong in relation to community safety;
• To ensure a consistent whole-of-organisation approach to community safety;
• To identify the priority areas and key strategies in community safety for the City of Greater Dandenong; and
• To provide a strategic context for the Community Safety Advisory Committee.

Priority areas of the Community Safety Plan – A Safer Greater Dandenong 2011-2014

Four priority areas have been identified as the focus for improving community safety in Greater Dandenong. These have been informed by recent community consultation, discussions with key stakeholders and research on crime and safety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITY AREAS</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safer Public Places</td>
<td>Planning for safer public places by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implementing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and safer urban design principles;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Working towards a socially inclusive community;</td>
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<td>• Responding to issues in crime hotspots; and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Responding to the inappropriate and harmful use of alcohol and other drugs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing Family Violence</td>
<td>Work towards preventing family violence by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Raising public awareness about family violence and available supports and services;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Advocating for improved responses to family violence.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Safety in the home</td>
<td>Increasing safety in the home for older people, families and children by:</td>
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<td>• Providing home maintenance/modifications, information provision and health/fitness programs; and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Utilising Council’s services and external partnerships to identify and address safety hazards for children and families.</td>
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<td>Transport Safety</td>
<td>Improving the capacity of the community to travel in a safe way by:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Implementing the Road Safety Strategy 2010 – 2014;</td>
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<td>• Advocating for enhanced road safety through peak bodies;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implementing initiatives that reduce speeding;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Improving knowledge and perceptions of public transport;</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Working with community groups to build confidence in public transport usage; and</td>
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<td>• Advocating for improved bus services.</td>
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COMMUNITY SAFETY IN GREATER DANDENONG

The reason crime occurs is complex and thought to be linked to high levels of social and economic disadvantage. Greater Dandenong is a relatively disadvantaged community, with the lowest incomes in Melbourne, unfavourable educational outcomes among young people and higher rates of unemployment and youth disengagement.

In some categories, crime in Greater Dandenong is higher than in other Victorian municipalities. Recent years have seen an increase in violent crime with rates for offences ‘against the person’ increasing 33% since 2005/06. Nearly half of the recorded growth in the overall rate of violent crime in Greater Dandenong in the past nine years has resulted from an increased level of reporting of family incidents.

Rates of family violence and child abuse are also relatively high in Greater Dandenong with the level of police attendance at family violence incidents the second highest in Melbourne and the rate of child abuse substantiations the highest in the southern region (Victoria Police, 2011).

Victoria Police crime data has shown that drug-related crime rates in Greater Dandenong have generally decreased. The rate of drug-related offences within the municipality fell by 68% from 1998/9 to 2009/10. However, the overall crime rate continues to be 42% higher than across metropolitan Melbourne.

2.1 Perceptions of safety

Poor perceptions of safety are an additional factor that affects the wellbeing of Greater Dandenong residents. The 2007 Community Indicators survey found that resident concern for personal safety in Greater Dandenong was the highest in Victoria. The City of Greater Dandenong’s Perception of Local Safety Survey conducted in 2007 found that:

- More than 80% of residents hold fears for their safety at night on trains, stations, and public car parks;
- Concerns for personal safety are up to three times more widespread among women and older people;
- Concerns among residents for their safety at night in Greater Dandenong are the highest in Victoria; and
- Levels of fear about safety at night in public places have risen substantially since 2004 – including a doubling in the proportion of people who feel very unsafe on trains.

Improving such public perceptions is a high priority for Council. Improving perceptions of safety largely depend on the effective partnerships between local communities, businesses, community groups, government agencies and the media. Additionally, appropriately designed and maintained built environments impact greatly on improving perceptions of safety in neighbourhoods.
COUNCIL’S APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SAFETY

3. Policy context

Community safety is a responsibility across the three tiers of government. The Commonwealth Government has responsibility for addressing high-level crime, setting policy directions for crime and justice; and funding research, health initiatives and community services to ensure community safety.

The Victorian Government funds major services such as Victoria Police, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Country Fire Authority, child protection, juvenile justice and drug and alcohol services.

Greater Dandenong’s commitment to community safety is reflected in many of Council’s strategic plans. The Greater Dandenong Imagine 2030 – Community Plan, identified Safe Streets and Places as a high community priority. Feeling and being safe in streets and public places and improving perceptions of safety were priorities for all groups and individuals.

The need for safer communities was also identified as a priority area in the Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013. This Plan is a key municipal strategy which sets out seven broad priorities and related actions that place ‘Community Wellbeing’ at the centre of planning for optimal quality of healthy community life in Greater Dandenong. The Action areas of ‘Travel and Transport’ and ‘Safer Streets and Places’ as a high community priority. Feeling and being safe in streets and public places and improving perceptions of safety were priorities for all groups and individuals.

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3.1 The role of the Community Safety Advisory Committee

The City of Greater Dandenong has established a Community Safety Advisory Committee to guide Council’s thinking regarding key aspects of safety across the municipality.

This strategic group includes senior members of Victoria Police, State Government, community agencies, transport providers, Neighbourhood Watch, Council’s Media and Communications Department and Council’s Youth Services.

The purpose of the Community Safety Advisory Committee is to:

- Create a safer Greater Dandenong (perception and reality);
- Provide leadership in the area of community safety;
- Positively reinforce the safety message;
- Provide high-quality and informed advice to Council to assist in planning for safer communities;
- Initiate and/or drive programs for community engagement; and
- Bring community leaders together to focus on integrated outcomes.

The Advisory committee meets bi-monthly and will oversee the development and progress of this Plan. It will report to Council annually on progress made, and on emerging issues and trends regarding community safety.

3.2 Council’s role in improving Community Safety

Council exercises a regulatory role in enforcing a number of State regulations as well as local laws where community safety is a key issue: amenity management, fire prevention, animal control, parking control and school crossing supervision. In addition, Council influences actual and perceived levels of safety through agency partnerships, advocacy, quality infrastructure and design, community education, sustained funding for targeted programs and the shared use of data, knowledge and information as common elements for success.

Agency partnerships are viewed by Council as particularly important. Council recognises that partnership based strategies are the key to expanding crime prevention from the domain of the police to the responsibility of the entire community. This approach to crime prevention is likely to have greater success than single agencies working alone. Isolated projects are often unable to deal effectively with the variety of factors that influence community safety. Therefore local government action requires support from a range of stakeholders including other levels of government, local agencies and members of the community.

Council will also continue to participate in regular forums and partnerships through the Regional Justice Forum. This forum provides an important opportunity for Council to jointly plan responses to regional community safety concerns such as alcohol and drug issues, transport corridor issues, road safety responses and the prevalence of family violence. Opportunities to align individual Council Safety Plans will be pursued through the Regional Justice Forum to seek greater resource sharing and more regional responses to shared issues.

The Principles under which Council seeks to improve community safety include:

- Promotion of community safety: The increase in perceptions of community safety and promotion of the positive features and attractions of Greater Dandenong is an area where local government can have a direct influence.

- Community development practices: Council actively works with partner agencies to cooperatively build trust with a number of communities to improve safety. There are opportunities for preventative programs and innovative approaches, working at a grass-roots level with local communities.

- Collaboration and advocacy: Successful approaches to fostering community safety require co-operation between Council and stakeholder agencies. They also require advocacy to other levels of government as well as community leadership on issues such as family violence.

3.3 Planning and design of the urban environment

Appropriate planning and design of urban environments can improve feelings of safety and community participation. Council seeks to create safer communities through the use of safer design principles such as the multi-disciplinary approach known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). This seeks to increase community use of public spaces, reduce opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour and create liveable communities.

3.4 The role of Neighbourhood Watch

Neighbourhood Watch operates as a partnership between Victoria Police and the community. As a community-based crime prevention program, Neighbourhood Watch aims to reduce the incidence of preventable crime and provide a safer community. The strategies used by Neighbourhood Watch include promoting community involvement in crime prevention activities, reporting suspicious behaviour, security and safety awareness and signposting. The City of Greater Dandenong recognises the role that Neighbourhood Watch plays in promoting greater community awareness of safety issues and as a member of the Community Safety Advisory Committee.
Public spaces can be both publicly and privately owned and include streets, parks, reserves, shopping centres and squares. The nature of local public places plays an important role in fostering a positive sense of community.

Public spaces offer people an opportunity to interact. Crime and/or anti-social behaviour can have serious impacts on how people view community spaces. If people feel unsafe due to an actual or perceived threat they are less likely to use public spaces or contribute to community activities.

Safe public spaces that encourage interaction between people also help to break down isolation and feelings of vulnerability or fear. Involvement in community life and getting ‘out and about’ helps people to feel included, more confident and happy and less isolated. This often reduces opportunities for crime and conflict, improves perceived and actual levels of safety and enhances health and wellbeing.

4.1 Urban design and social inclusion

The physical environment in which people live and socialise can have a significant impact on the quality of their activities and interaction. Well-designed and maintained urban environments are essential for improved safety in the community. The key to safer places is to improve the design and quality of the environment in order to minimise the opportunity for crime and promote accessible and liveable places that encourage community participation. This is the basis of ‘Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design’ (CPTED).

Key principles for CPTED include:
- Design and manage public space to ensure it is attractive and well used;
- Maximise visibility and opportunities for surveillance of the public environment;
- Ensure safe movement, good connections and access for all;
- Maximise activity in public spaces; and
- Clearly define private and public space responsibilities.

According to the Social Inclusion Board – a socially inclusive community is one where people feel included and are able to participate fully in society. An element in achieving this is the ability to connect with people in the community, through well-designed and maintained public spaces.

Public spaces can bring communities together, provide meeting places and foster social ties. These spaces provide a cultural identity for local areas and a ‘sense of place’ for the community. For example the use of community gardens to bring people together from a variety of backgrounds and create a sense of community (CARE, 2004 & Butterworth, 2000).

Social inclusion can be adversely affected by many factors including language/cultural barriers, income levels, education levels and fear of crime.

These factors require renewed community development and urban design approaches that encourage interaction between people. This can help reduce social isolation and feelings of vulnerability and fear, thereby improving community safety.

Strategy 4.1.1 – Provide a safer urban environment by incorporating ‘Best-Practice’ and safer design principles into all new and retrofitted developments in Greater Dandenong (as identified in the Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013 – Action 4.1.2).

Strategy 4.1.2 – Form partnerships with private and public sector agencies to ensure that design and development of public spaces complement each other, with the aim of increasing community safety.

Strategy 4.1.3 – Council to continue participation in the Regional Justice Forum as a mechanism to jointly plan to address regional community safety concerns.

Strategy 4.1.4 – Work with local and regional media to present positive community images of Greater Dandenong, including the promotion of cultural understanding and tolerance.

4.2 Hotspots in Greater Dandenong

A ‘hotspot’ is an area where an ongoing mix of anti-social or criminal behaviour occurs, which contributes to low levels of perceived or actual safety. Crime hotspots are typically areas that people avoid because they feel unsafe there. Places that are typically viewed as hot spots include public toilets, laneways, parks, some public transport hubs and car parks.

A number of hotspots in Greater Dandenong are centred around railway stations. These locations are transit points for thousands of people each day. They are also near or adjacent to popular places and provide the basis for ‘opportunistic’ crime.

Safety in public areas can be supported by measures such as additional police, passive surveillance of an area by passing motorists/pedestrians and security camera surveillance.

The City of Greater Dandenong has also sought to address hotspots through the use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems. Studies have found that CCTV systems can be effective tools for changing public behaviour. CCTV is most effective in detecting anti-social behaviour after it occurs and in improving the general perceptions of safety of an area.

Greater Dandenong consistently ranks as an area with poor perceptions of public safety. There are a number of locations within Greater Dandenong where there is potential to significantly improve perceptions of safety through the use of CCTV systems as part of a suite of community safety initiatives.

The preliminary results of Council’s trial of CCTV surveillance system in Mengies Avenue Dandenong North have been favourable. This has prompted requests by residents, traders, Victoria Police and community groups for more widespread use of CCTV in other safety hotspots in Greater Dandenong.
4. COMMUNITY SAFETY: SAFER PUBLIC PLACES (cont)

Strategy 4.2.1 – Develop a strategic plan for community safety hotspots and their user groups, as required, to improve the amenity, infrastructure of and community pride in these areas. Seek external funding where appropriate (as cited in the Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013, Action 4.1.3).

Strategy 4.2.2 – Victoria Police to meet with Council Executive and Councillors at least twice annually to provide up-to-date information about crime trends and responses. The purpose of these presentations is to provide context to the incidences of actual crime with a view to improving perceptions of safety.

Strategy 4.2.3 – In partnership with local youth service providers and the State Government, provide programs that encourage accessible spaces for young people, as well as promote community-wide understanding of young people’s use of public spaces.

Strategy 4.2.4 – Monitor the CCTV pilot project in Mengies Ave, Dandenong North for its effectiveness in promoting community safety. In partnership with Victoria Police implement a CCTV system in Foster St, Dandenong and Noble Park Activity Centre. Prepare a strategic directions plan for future CCTV involvement and seek external funding for CCTV projects.

Strategy 4.2.5 – Encourage a community development approach to build relationships with groups who utilise public spaces. Assess the impacts on the perceptions and actual levels of safety.

4.3 Alcohol and other Drugs

Although overt drug use and dealing has declined in recent years, the use of alcohol and illicit use of legal and illegal drugs is of major concern. Alcohol consumption rates are rising, particularly among younger people. Over the past decade, there has been an increase in binge drinking by people aged between 15-29 years.

The impact of inappropriate alcohol consumption on community safety includes anti-social behaviour in public places such as vandalism, street violence, family violence and road safety. Alcohol use contributes to a high rate of crime against persons and property, which in turn affects the low perceptions of safety. It is a key factor in 94% of late night calls to Police and 75% of assaults and street offences across metropolitan Melbourne (Doherty & Roche, 2007). Over the last decade, the number of alcohol-related ambulance attendances and emergency department presentations has more than doubled across Melbourne.

The availability of alcohol is also understood to have an impact on community safety. Research suggests that the greater the availability of alcohol, the higher the level of consumption and potential for alcohol-related problems (Hauke et al., 2002 cited in Ogilvie, 2011). One example is the positive relationship between high numbers of licensed liquor outlets and the numbers of assaults in local areas (Livingston, 2008).

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All tiers of government in Australia have adopted harm minimisation as the key policy to address alcohol and other drug issues in the community. This approach aims to reduce the supply, demand and harm caused by alcohol and other drugs. At the local level this has included alcohol control measures such as liquor licensing laws and regulations and campaigns to reduce public drinking and associated anti-social behaviour.

Council also address the impacts of alcohol consumption by making representation on bodies such as the National Local Government Drug and Alcohol Advisory Committee (NLGDAAC), Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Network (ADAN) and the South East Metro Council Group. National and state bodies such as NLGDAAC and the South East Metro Council Group provide an avenue through which Council can advocate on local issues. Locally the ADAN is of particular significance as it provides Council with strategic advice to reduce alcohol and other drug harms. Council is committed to working with ADAN to build a healthy and safe community.

Additionally, Council is developing an Alcohol Management Framework for central Dandenong that will guide a coordinated response to alcohol-related impacts. The framework will pay particular attention to the effect of alcohol consumption on public space. Council assets, people’s perceptions of safety and the City’s growth and economic viability.

Strategy 4.3.1 – Within a harm minimisation framework, work with local youth service agencies and community leaders to build workforce capacity in responding to and minimising the risk for young people with alcohol and drug use.

Strategy 4.3.2 – Continue participation in the NLGDAAC, ADAN, the South East Metro Council Group and other relevant state-based groups. Where appropriate take part in projects and activities that respond to local need.

Strategy 4.3.3 – Continue the ‘No Drinking Alcohol in Public Places’ campaign in partnership with Victoria Police.

Strategy 4.3.4 – Develop an Alcohol Management Framework for Central Dandenong.

Strategy 4.3.5 – Facilitate and participate in programs and activities for young people including continued development of new drug strategy initiatives (as cited in the Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013, Action 4.3.3).
PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Family violence includes any actions which threaten, harm, intimidate, control or victimise a person within a family, relationship or household. This violent, abusive or controlling behaviour may include physical or sexual assault, as well as verbal, emotional and other forms of abuse.

Family violence tends to be committed by people in positions of relative power within a relationship, against more vulnerable individuals, with the consequence that women, children, older adults and disabled people are most often at risk of such abuse. Males are generally the perpetrators of family violence, while women account for the majority of victims.

Family violence may cause death or injury; fear, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem; isolation, loneliness and lack of social support; or guilt and sense of failure in the marriage. Children are usually affected by family violence, either as witnesses or as victims of violence themselves.

The prevalence of such crimes in the community is substantial. The most recent Personal Safety Survey (2005) found that one in three women had been assaulted in their lifetime, and one in 30 in the previous year.

One of the primary challenges of preventing family violence is to increase the capacity of individuals and communities to respond to violence, to change attitudes towards violence, and to improve the status and rights of women. As a level of government which is closely attuned to the community, local government has an important part to play in these efforts.

5.1 Council response to family violence

Lack of information about available services is one reason why women remain in abusive and violent homes. This is made worse for women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds who are faced with a limited understanding of the services or legal options available to them.

Additionally, whilst there is a diverse range of services that respond to domestic violence, many local and regional services still lack sufficient resources to match existing demand. This results in long waiting lists and limited assistance. To improve community safety and better support for those experiencing family violence there is a need to inform the community about available services through a variety of sources and languages as well as advocate for improved responses to family violence.

Members of the community can also help to prevent family violence by speaking or acting against such abuse. Accordingly, a high priority is to inform the public about family violence, through Council publications and local media. Increasing public awareness by promoting respectful relationships and condemning the occurrence of family violence makes family violence a public concern rather than a hidden issue.

Strategy 5.1.1 - Respond to family violence through advocacy, facilitation of local initiatives, public education, professional development and strengthening of existing partnerships. (As cited in the Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013, Action 4.2.1)

Strategy 5.1.2 - Monitor trends in family violence including service delivery and government policy. Communicate relevant developments to staff, external partners and the wider community.

Strategy 5.1.3 - Inform Council staff about promoting respectful relationships, advising staff of available services, and exploring the possibility of extending support to staff who are experiencing violence or abuse within a relationship.

Strategy 5.1.4 - Support the efforts of the local Indigenous community who have also prioritised the need to raise awareness of family violence.

Strategy 5.1.5 - Provide family support services that communicate a ‘no tolerance’ approach to family violence, and that prioritises working with individuals who are at risk of or who are experiencing family violence.

Strategy 5.1.6 - Provide referral and support services for families affected by family violence, as well as programs to teach young people about respectful and non-violent relationships.

5.2 Elder abuse

Violence and abuse may occur within homes and in close family-like relationships between elders and carers. The Australian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse terms such violence ‘elder abuse’, defining it as “…an act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to the older person. Such abuse may be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, or neglect”. A range of Australian investigations have generated estimates of its prevalence among people aged 65 or more in the range of 3 to 5.4%.

Recent research indicates that, like much family violence, elder abuse is a largely hidden problem, with response to the issue often sparse and insufficient. The Victorian Government has sought to address this issue with improved service responses, development of a specialist legal service for older people and improvements in the detection and response to elder abuse by professionals involved in the care of older residents.

Strategy 5.2.1 - Conduct ongoing training for Council Community Care staff on the nature of elder abuse and the requirements to report any suspected cases of elder abuse.

Strategy 5.2.2 - Continue to work to develop a network of local Community Care service providers to increase awareness of elder abuse and to develop response strategies.

Strategy 5.2.3 - Continue to work to develop a network of local Community Care service providers to increase awareness of elder abuse and to develop response strategies.

Strategy 5.2.4 - Continue to work to develop a network of local Community Care service providers to increase awareness of elder abuse and to develop response strategies.
6. SAFETY IN THE HOME

The home is rightly considered a place of shelter, comfort and protection. However, for older persons and families with young children, the home can also be the source of a number of safety issues.

6.1 Older persons

Having a secure and safe home is important for all, but especially so for older persons who live on their own and may have limited mobility (Department of Health and Ageing, 2011). The population of residents aged 65 years or more in Greater Dandenong is expected to rise from its 2011 level of 20,000 persons to 26,400 persons by 2021 - an 18% increase.

Safety in the home concerns the extent to which older people feel at ease about living independently at home. A variety of circumstances contribute to the safety of older people in the home, including:

- **Home security** – for older people who live alone and face limited mobility, protection against burglaries or other such crimes are particularly important. Practical measures such as making sure outside areas are well lit and taking care not to hide keys in flowerpots or under mats can provide peace of mind;

- **Personal and medical alarms** – alarms are an easy and effective way of ensuring appropriate people are alerted when help is required. These are especially important in the case of a fall or any other accident where a person is left incapacitated;

- **Aids and equipment** – assist in walking, help with personal care (showering and going to the toilet) and enable social activity, and

- **Home design and modification** – disability or temporary periods of recovery from illness may require modifications to the home for ease of living such as non-slip surfaces, grab rails, adjustable trays and shelves, walkaways with ramps etc. Modifications to the home also reduce the likelihood of falls and resulting injury.

Falls are a leading cause of injury among older people, accounting for one-third of hospitalised injuries and about one-fifth of fatal injuries in Australia. It is estimated that the rate of one in three people aged 65 and over, living in their own home, will suffer a fall each year (DHS, 2007).

Injuries sustained from falls can be minimised and should a fall occur a loss of independence need not follow (Department of Health and Ageing, 2011). Falls can be prevented by keeping mobile, managing health problems and poor eyesight, wearing safe footwear, and conducting home maintenance to ensure that daily activities are undertaken in a safe manner.

**Strategy 6.1.1** – Assist in improving safety in the home for older people through the provision of Home and Community Care (HACC) programs such as the home maintenance and modification service as well as personal aids and equipment.

**Strategy 6.1.2** – Council staff to utilise the Home and Equipment Safety Checklist to improve safety around the home. Further, encourage clients to use the Self Assessment Check list and follow through on the recommendations of the check list.

**Strategy 6.1.3** – Provide information, via the Extreme Weather Packs, to HACC clients to better equip them for extreme weather situations.

**Strategy 6.1.4** – Provide a range of health programs that increase strength and fitness of clients with an emphasis on improving general fitness and falls prevention.

**Strategy 6.1.5** – Utilise the routine contact afforded by Council services such as planned activity groups and Meals on Wheels as a means of checking on the health and safety of HACC clients.

6.2 Families and young children

The home is the most common place for young children to be injured. Injury is the leading cause of death for children aged 1 to 14 years, and is the second most common reason for admission to hospital. The most common injuries for this age group are falls, road accidents, cuts, poisoning, scalds and burns.

The type of injuries children experience in the home reflects their age and stage of development with children under 5 at highest risk of unintentional injury. A contributing risk factor to childhood injury is the socio-economic status of the family (CGD, 2005). This is in part due to a lack of knowledge about injury prevention and fewer resources available to make the home safer.

The likelihood of childhood injury can be reduced through educational campaigns, environmental design, legislative strategies and improved medical responses. Targeting programs to those at greatest risk through educational material has been found to be effective in preventing childhood injuries.

**Strategy 6.2.1** – Conduct Environmental Checklists for all family support clients to identify hazards both inside and outside the home, raise awareness about child-safe practices and where appropriate provide resources to improve safety in the home.

**Strategy 6.2.2** – Facilitate awareness raising and community education for Safety in the Home with stakeholder agencies including the CFA, MFB, and Victoria Police.

**Strategy 6.2.3** – Utilise Council services such as playgroups, kindergartens, child care and family day care services to provide home safety information.
The capacity to travel safely at all times of the day is a key community need, as identified in consultation for Council’s Community Plan Imagine 2030.
7. TRANSPORT SAFETY

The capacity to travel safely at all times of the day is a key community need, as identified in consultation for Council’s Community Plan Imagine 2030. The goal of achieving friendly, safe and affordable travel options is a priority area of the Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013. Safety concerns related to the speed and volume of car traffic influence people’s decisions about whether to cycle or walk. In addition, fear of attack, particularly at night on the streets, trains and at unstaffed railway stations is a major safety concern for public transport users.

7.1 Road safety

The number of fatal accidents on Victorian roads has declined by 12% over the past five years, from 346 in 2005 to 305 by 2009. Despite this it is widely acknowledged that the impacts of road trauma can be devastating and long lasting not only for those who experience it but also for family, friends and the emergency workers who attend to them (DOT, 2008).

The City of Greater Dandenong suffers higher rates of road trauma than the Melbourne metropolitan average. In the six years to 2009, the rate of serious road accidents within Greater Dandenong rose to almost twice the metropolitan rate and the highest in metropolitan Melbourne (outside the CBD).

The central activity districts of Dandenong, Springvale and Noble Park are the most common locations for road crashes and particularly for pedestrian injuries. Council is working closely with other levels of government to improve the road toll through the development of local traffic plans; securing funding to improve the road network; increasing the understanding of road safety issues and implementing local programs (Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013).

Efforts to raise public awareness of local road rules help to address a gap in community knowledge. This requires a range of strategies to improve the understanding of local road rules and the safety of drivers and pedestrians in the municipality. The Greater Dandenong Road Safety Strategy (2010-2014) will assist Council to coordinate its efforts with other key agencies towards a safer road environment.

Strategy 7.1.1 – Endorse and implement the City of Greater Dandenong Road Safety Strategy (2010-2014).

Strategy 7.1.2 – Provide support to the Community Road Safety Reference Group which includes representatives from VicRoads, Victoria Police, local school communities and Council.

Strategy 7.1.3 – Actively take part in the Roadsafe South East Group to reduce road trauma in the Southern Metropolitan Area, develop and implement community education campaigns, foster partnerships between councils and other road safety bodies and encourage community involvement to reflect the cultural diversity of the region.

Strategy 7.1.4 – Based on community request and identified need, continue to address road safety near local schools.

Strategy 7.1.5 – Develop and conduct reviews of the Locality Plans in conjunction with traffic surveys to address problem areas where speeding is prevalent. Deploy the Speed Alert Mobile Trainer (SAMM) as required under the locality plans.

Strategy 7.1.6 – Use council publications to raise awareness regarding road rules and regulations to promote a safer environment for all road users.

Strategy 7.1.7 – Promote and encourage awareness of road safety among young people to develop safer young drivers.

7.2 Public Transport

Access to safe public transport is a key community safety issue for many residents. Research conducted by the Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) has indicated that isolated railway stations are one of the most feared locations for travellers. The perception of a threat of violence at train stations and on trains – particularly for young people, older people, women and some cultural groups – is an ongoing concern. The Dandenong Railway Station, for example, has a poor reputation for safety.

Increasing safety on public transport is essential to improve access and patronage of public transport. Research into safety on public transport in Australia indicates that while travel by public transport by day is generally regarded as safe, people feel much less safe at night. The introduction of incentives for wider use of train stations is an important part of any strategy to improve public transport safety.

It is also recognised that improving public transport needs to be approached with the whole journey in mind. Bus stops, railway platforms, associated car parks, and streets close to railway stations all influence the decision to take public transport. Such a broad perspective points to a more proactive role for the Council in its planning around key public transport nodes to collaborate and approach issues relating to safety.

Strategy 7.2.1 – Advocate to the Victorian Government and transport operators for increased service levels on bus routes. Increased frequency of bus services would reduce wait periods and increase patronage thereby reducing fears associated with isolated bus stops (as identified in the Community Wellbeing Plan 2010-2013, Action 11.2).

Strategy 7.2.2 – Develop and distribute Access Maps of Greater Dandenong precincts providing people with information on safe paths of travel to public transport as well as highlighting accessible paths to local landmarks such as public toilets, post offices, public telephones, Council buildings, ATMs, etc.

Strategy 7.2.3 – Work with young people to build confidence around public transport use while promoting public transport as both safe and accessible to the community.
The Community Safety Plan – A Safer Greater Dandenong 2011-2014 will be managed in partnership with Council and the Community Safety Advisory Committee.

Council’s Community Development Unit will have primary responsibility for the monitoring and review of the Plan. This will include monitoring the progress of the strategies, gathering and disseminating progress reports and identifying any change in context to community safety in the municipality.

The Community Safety Plan 2011-2014 will be delivered through strong and effective partnerships within Council, the Community Safety Advisory Committee, local service providers and community members.

The progress of the Community Safety Plan 2011-2014 will be reviewed and reported to Council annually.
REFERENCES


Hume City Council, Community Safety Strategy 2009-2013


Safe and Warm - Victorian Government. Melbourne

State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence (undated). Reforming the Family Violence System in Victoria, Victorian Government, Melbourne


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