

Community Facilities Access and Use Policy - April 2026

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Policy Superseded by this Policy:

- Multipurpose Use of Council Community and Civic Facilities Policy 2011
- Community Facilities Management Policy 2013

Responsible Department: Creative and Engaged City

Responsible Directorate: Community Strengthening

Policy Type: Discretionary

Next Review: April 2028

Document Compliance

Council acknowledges the legal responsibility to comply with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (<https://content.legislation.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/06-43aa014%20authorised.pdf>) and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. The *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values that include freedom, respect, equality and dignity.

Greater Dandenong City Council policies comply with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, the *Climate Change Act 2017*, the Child Safe Standards contained in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Amended), the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, and the Overarching Governance Principles specified in section 9(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Acknowledgment of Country

Greater Dandenong City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Bunurong People, and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We recognise and respect their continuing connections to climate, culture, Country and waters.

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1 POLICY OBJECTIVE (OR PURPOSE)

The City of Greater Dandenong is dedicated to creating community facilities that serve as inclusive and welcoming spaces for everyone. These hubs promote social inclusion and connectedness, providing places where established groups can thrive, and new connections can be forged. By offering multipurpose amenities and diverse programs, these facilities ensure that all community members feel valued and engaged, fostering a vibrant and cohesive community where everyone belongs.

Community Facilities are far more than just buildings and can be:

- provided for people to participate in the life of the community,
- available to the community to hold their own activities and celebrations,
- well programmed and activated places that offer spaces, activities and resources that are needed by, and of interest to, the local community.

This Policy defines Council's position in relation to the objectives and use of community facilities, which provides the basis for a consistent approach to their management and use.

2 BACKGROUND

This policy has been developed to provide a clear and consistent management framework for a range of community facilities that are managed by the City of Greater Dandenong Council.

The policy replaces the former Multipurpose Use of Council Community and Civic Facilities Policy and the Community Facilities Management Policy.

3 SCOPE

3.1 PRINCIPLES

This Policy applies to community members, groups and other organisations (such as commercial hirers, government and non-government education providers) seeking regular or casual use of Council's community facilities through community facility hire agreement, including but not limited to the following facilities:

Type of Facility	Description
Community Hubs / Civic Centre	These include Community Hubs owned and managed by Council including Dandenong Civic Centre, Springvale and Keysborough Community Hub and any future built community hubs.
Community Facility Spaces	Includes community halls, Seniors Centres and community centres.
Arts and Cultural spaces	These include Walker Street Gallery and Arts Centre, The Drum Theatre and Heritage Hill Museum and Historic Gardens.

Library Spaces	These are community rooms of varying capacity located within the library operated spaces and are used for library programs, events, studying and available for general public use to Library visitors when not booked.
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3.2 EXCLUSIONS

This policy does not include:

- The management of seasonally allocated sports grounds and pavilions located within the City of Greater Dandenong including Dandenong Police Paddocks. *Please see the Sports Grounds and Pavilion Allocation Policy 2023.*
- The management of leased sports and leisure facilities that hold lease, licence or management agreements. *Please see Leasing and Licensing of Community Facilities Policy 2014.*
- The management of leased or licensed community facilities or spaces such as kindergarten, childcare, community centres or neighbourhood houses. *Please see Leasing and Licensing of Community Facilities Policy 2014.*
- The management of Councils Leisure Centres and Indoor Stadiums under a management contract with South East Leisure.

4 DEFINITIONS

Unless otherwise specified within this policy, the following words and phrases are defined to mean the following:

Council	Greater Dandenong City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
Councillors	The individuals holding the office of a member of the Greater Dandenong City Council.
Council Officers	The Chief Executive Officer and staff of Council appointed by the Chief Executive Officer.
Council Advisory Committee	Advisory committees advise Council about strategic or policy issues. They also enhance communication between Council and the community. They complement other parts of community engagement.
Community Space	A space designated for hire for a range of user groups.
Council Plan	The Council Plan, incorporating the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, outlines the key priorities for Council over a four-year period including how Council will protect, improve, and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipality.
Individuals	Individual community members using facilities for private functions, celebrations and activities.

Non-insured Activities	Activities that are covered under Council’s corporate public liability insurance for facility hire. Such activities include commercial or sporting activities, festivals or events or activities involving attendance of greater than 1000 people.
Hire agreements	An agreement between Council and the Hirer for use of a facility on a casual or occasional basis for a fee, where a hire agreement will define the Conditions of Use, Fees and Bond Payable and responsibilities of the Hirer.
Lease Agreement	An agreement used for the exclusive occupancy (the tenant has sole use of the premises).
Licence Agreement	An agreement use for a non-exclusive occupancy (Council may grant the use of the premises to another party for joint occupancy).
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	An agreement between two or more parties that defines the working relationship, expectations, responsibilities and common purpose or intent of the partnership.
Seasonal Ground Allocation	The allocation of sports grounds, pavilions or reserves to Sporting Groups for a season or fixed period of time.
User/s or Hirer/s	This refers to an individual, group or organisation who hire a space or building from Council for their activities, services or programs.

5 POLICY

Community facilities are focal points for community interaction, places where the community can gather, build relationships and community identity, where people can meet and participate in activities, where residents can access community services and information and where the place strengthens the life of the community.

Council has invested significantly into the establishment, management, operations and activation of community facilities.

5.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Council aims to improve standards of access and inclusion at community facilities and deliver services that support equity and fairness across the city.

In prioritising access and use of community facilities, Council will have regard to the following principles:

Community Focus

- Participation
- Connections
- Strengthening

The aim of this principle is to support the community in participating in formal programs and activities or informal use, to increase or strengthen their connection to others in the community, improve health and wellbeing, explore diversity or cultural heritage, or celebrate special occasions.

Universally welcoming

- Equitable and Fair
- Accessible and Inclusive

The aim of this principle is to ensure that all community members whether individually or part of a group have the same opportunity to access and use a particular community space, while ensuring that spaces and programs are accessible and inclusive to all.

Optimise Use

- Diverse activities
- Affordable and cost-effective

The aim of this principle is to ensure that Council's community facilities are well utilised by a wide range of individuals and groups, celebrating and embracing the diversity of the Greater Dandenong community, by ensuring that fees and charges are affordable and transparent, while also providing options to reduce these if there is benefit to the community.

5.2 MULTIPURPOSE FACILITIES

To manage demand and provide for a range of activities, facilities will be available for shared use by a number of hirers and will not be used exclusively by any one group. Where a user cannot be granted access at their preferred community facility, and Council has similar facilities available, Council will support the user to find an alternative community facility deemed suitable for their needs.

Council will design and manage facilities, so they have the flexibility to accommodate a broad range of activities and users and can be operated through agreements on a multipurpose use basis.

If a community group seeks funding and/or land from Council, and Council contributes to the cost of building a special purpose facility, the community group will need to demonstrate a multipurpose use arrangement equivalent with Council's contribution.

5.3 EXCLUSIVE USE

To ensure Council can meet the purpose and guiding principles of community facilities, it aims to ensure that facilities are available and used by a wide variety of groups.

Requests for Exclusive Use

Council may be requested by community groups or users for exclusive use of a space, to support the group's activities and use. When receiving requests Council will consider:

Community facilities guidelines will be developed and made publicly available and provided to any groups requesting exclusive use. The guidelines will provide detailed information about:

- The application process.
- Support available for applicants.
- Eligibility and assessment criteria.
- The assessment criteria.
- Timelines.
- Feedback on application process and outcome.

Concluding Exclusive Use

If an existing group who has exclusive use, decides to forego an extension of a lease or licence arrangement with Council, the facility / space being used will be returned to Council's managed pool of community facilities and will become available for hire from the broader community.

Likewise, if a group is failing to meet the requirements under the Lease and Licensing Policy, this facility / space may return to the pool of managed community facilities as well.

5.4 PRIORITY OF ACCESS

Council has three key priorities of access. These are detailed below, and Table 1 identifies the relevant groups and the applicable fees and charges category.

In line with Council's Diversity, Access and Equity Policy, every effort shall be made to ensure equitable access to people of every age, gender, ability, financial means, culture and other attributes.

Priority One – Council services and use

Council provides a range of direct services to the community and will have primary and exclusive use of its community facilities where appropriate and receiving the highest priority for access and allocation.

If there is an increase in demand for Council's capacity to deliver services, Council may need to cancel existing hire agreements with community users. Council will attempt to offer different or alternative options for existing hirers and support them to access other facilities or spaces.

Some community facilities are primarily for Council related functions. When not being used for this purpose, these spaces are made available for the community to hire.

Priority Two – Community

This category is for not-for-profit community-based groups, organisations, and agencies that provide services to community members that live, work, or have a connection with Greater Dandenong.

These groups deliver or align programs that support community outcomes, including fostering community well-being, promoting social inclusion, enhancing access to essential services, and encouraging civic participation.

Hirers that fall within this category will have priority of access to spaces for community hire over those that fall within the standard rate, but after primary users.

Priority Three – Standard

This category is defined as commercial and private hirers who provide services or programs aimed at gaining a profit.

Hirers that fall within this category, who have an existing booking and hire agreement in place, won't be subject to lose this booking due to other requests.

Emergency Management

If Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan is enacted, Council has the right to access all Council owned facilities and to enter and remain in these buildings without prior notice and for the duration of the emergency.

5.5 FEES AND CHARGES

Council aims to establish fees, charges, and bonds which are affordable, transparent, and equitable. These considerations take into account the type, use, function, and purpose of the facility, the financial means of those seeking to hire facilities, including the lower incomes of residents who rely on government benefits. Additionally, Council acknowledges the lesser average incomes of women and other circumstances.

The fees and charges which may be imposed by Council include:

- Fees for Hire of the facility
- Security bonds (Council may retain the bond for breach of the 'conditions of hire' including any costs associated with cleaning, breaches of security, damage to Council property or loss of keys or security passes. The bond is refundable after the hire, less any charges for cleaning or damage).
- Insurance (Council requires hirers to keep in force, during the term of the agreement, a Public Liability Insurance Policy with a Limit of Indemnity of not less than \$20,000,000).
- Charges for hire of facility equipment (e.g. audio/visual equipment)
- Miscellaneous charges (e.g. venue/attendance staff)

Table 1
Definitions of Hirers

Hire rate category	Definition
Council services and use Exemptions for Council services, use and staff meetings.	<i>Council services and programs</i> Where Council staff provide a direct service to the community. <i>Council and staff meetings</i> Internal meetings to enable Councillors and Council officers to conduct Council business. <i>Council advisory, committee and reference meetings</i>

	<p>These meetings are providing a direct service and advisory function to Council.</p>
<p>Community rate:</p> <p>Not-for-profit community-based groups and organisations (with incorporation or charity status) that provide services to community members that live, work or have a connection with Greater Dandenong.</p> <p>Community Service organisations and agencies.</p>	<p><i>Community group</i> Any community-based group or organisation whose primary objective is to provide and engage in activities and accessible services that benefit the Greater Dandenong community.</p> <p><i>Member based organisations:</i> Any community-based group or organisation whose primary objective is to provide services and activities to the benefit of their membership.</p> <p><i>Community Service Organisations (CSO):</i> Not-for-profit organisations and agencies that deliver services/programs in response to specific community issues.</p> <p><i>Schools and education</i> Primary, Secondary and Tertiary educational institutions (except for private vocational or extra-curricular education).</p> <p><i>Health Care providers</i> Health Care providers providing services via Medicare rebates with no gap.</p> <p><i>Partnerships</i> Operating in partnership with Council or supported to cofacilitate programs, services, information sessions, events and activities for the Greater Dandenong community.</p> <p><i>Faith services and programs</i> Faith and religious groups and organisations providing community programs that are inclusive and accessible to all community members.</p>
<p>Standard rate:</p> <p>Commercial hirers conducting activities for the purposes of deriving a profit.</p> <p>Private hirers</p>	<p><i>Commercial</i> A business or organisation conducting activities or services for the purposes of deriving a profit.</p> <p><i>Organisations and groups without community/not-for-profit eligibility</i> including Dance Schools, private vocational and extra-curricular education organisations.</p> <p><i>Private</i></p>

	<p>Invitation only activities or celebrations that are not available to the general public or for community benefit.</p> <p><i>Private health care providers</i></p> <p>Private health care providers with a gap fee to clients.</p>
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5.6 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS (FEE WAIVERS AND SUBSIDIES)

Council seeks to encourage and maximise participation at community facilities.

In doing so, the following circumstances can be considered for special consideration:

- Financial hardship – individuals or users who can prove that they are unable to pay their hire fees or that payment of their hire fees would lead to financial hardship may be granted a discount or fee waiver. Where relevant and evident, consideration shall be given to the lesser financial resources of certain segments of the community, including those without paid employment, lower income working residents, women, people living with disability and others.
- New not-for-profit community groups who are not yet incorporated and that may not hold their own public liability insurance may apply to be covered by Council's corporate public liability insurance for a period of 6 months, up to a maximum of 10 bookings. To be eligible for this support, the group must register to work with Council staff to gain assistance to become incorporated. They may also apply to receive support from Council for facility hire if they meet the criteria below.

Criteria for receiving discounted / waived hire fees:

Hirers may apply for discounted / waived hire fees/ increased hours, by providing evidence that:

- They are a community hirer / community group / Community Service Organisation that:
 - Does not operate for profit or personal gain of an individual or group of people.
 - Have limited resources or capacity to generate income.
 - Are based locally within Greater Dandenong and / or have 50% or more proportion of their membership base living in Greater Dandenong.
- And that their intended hire / use:
 - Meets a broader community need and is of benefit to residents of Greater Dandenong.
 - Encourages local community participation.
 - Increases community access to activities and services, particularly access by First Nations, disadvantaged and socially isolated groups, including residents living with disability, those facing the challenges of recent settlement, women caring for children, people in receipt of low incomes, and others.
 - Supports access / reduces barriers to participation (i.e. does not have an entry fee or fee for participation).
- Offer opportunities to partner with Council to deliver key strategic outcomes, identified in relevant Council plans and strategies, in particular supporting women's only programs (may require submission to Community Grant program).

- Fundraising activities – for one-off fundraising activities.
- Commercial entities that demonstrate community demand, whose activity aligns with the Council Plan and who can provide evidence that they are not collecting sufficient customer fees to cover the commercial hire fees.
- Hirers may apply to have an increase on the maximum available hours of hire at the same venue/facility, if their current request is over the threshold limits in the restrictions for hire section.

5.7 RESTRICTIONS ON HIRE

The allocation of spaces for hire / use will be reasonable with respect to the range of users.

Council may limit the use of space (amount of time allocated) to some groups / organisations to ensure that facilities are not dominated by one type of user group, or program type, and to ensure spaces are able to meet the diverse needs of the Greater Dandenong community.

To achieve this, the following restrictions will apply:

- Not-for-profit community groups and community service organisations can make application for no more than 25 hours of room hire per month at any one facility.
- Commercial / private individuals and government organisations can make application for no more than 15 hours of room hire per month at any one facility.

Council reserves the right to review each application individually and adjust hiring limits to greater or lesser than these thresholds if there is expressed need.

These restrictions do not apply to Hirers and organisations under contract to provide specific services on Council's behalf.

Council reserves the right to prohibit alcohol consumption at any of its facilities.

5.8 REFUSAL TO HIRE

Council reserves the right to refuse hire where:

- The user group has not adhered to hiring terms and conditions in the past or has failed to adhere to relevant Council policies, procedures, or processes in making bookings.
- The group, individual, or entity has an unacquitted grant or debt to Council.
- The group or entity's program, event, or service may contain content that is obscene, improper, offensive, or does not align with Council's policies or values.
- The group or entity's core objectives, principles, or policies conflict with Council's own adopted plans, strategies, or positions.

6 RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility will rest with the Creative and Engaged City department for informing Council staff, residents and hirers about the content and meaning of the policy, including how it may impact any current hire agreements.

This may entail a range of marketing and promotions, including Council's website, emails, print and social media and updating of current hire information and agreements.

The department will also monitor levels of knowledge and understanding of Council staff, residents and hirers as required.

7 REPORTING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Reporting	The Creative and Engaged City will monitor reporting, breaches and issues against operating practices. As required, reports will be provided to Council.
Monitoring	The Creative and Engaged City will review the policy every six months to understand how it is impacting current and future hiring.
Review	The policy will be reviewed after two years and will consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The utilisation trends of community facilities, including hours of hire, increased community development and community capacity. • The impact the Policy has on the community, including the ease of accessing community facilities. <p>The cost to Council for the provision of special considerations and, in general, community facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking against other municipalities.
Stakeholder Engagement	The review process will involve stakeholders across all of Council, including any team with a related Council Policy or Procedure.

8 REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Legislation

[Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006](#)

[Gender Equality Act 2020](#)

[Climate Change Act 2017](#)

[Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Amended\)](#)

[Freedom of Information Act 1982](#)

[Local Government Act 2020.](#)

[Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014](#)

[Public Records Act 1973](#)

Related Council and Other Policies, Procedures, Strategies, Protocols, Guidelines

- Children's Plan 2021-26
- Climate Change Emergency Strategy and Action Plan 2020-30
- Code of Conduct - Councillors
- Code of Conduct - Contractors
- Code of Conduct – Staff

- Community Grants Guidelines 2023
- Council Plan (The Plan) 2021-25 which incorporates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Community Development Framework 2021
- Community Engagement Planning Framework 2022
- Diversity, Access, and Equity Policy, 2021
- Gambling Policy 2022
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-25
- Greater Dandenong Libraries Strategy 2022-26
- Greater Dandenong Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy 2022-26
- Indigenous Policy
- Leasing and Licensing of Community Facilities Policy 2014
- Positive Ageing Strategy 2017-25
- Privacy and Personal Information Policy
- Reconciliation Action Plan 2021-23
- Risk Management Policy
- Sporting Grounds and Pavilion Allocation Policy 2023
- Springvale Community Hub Strategic Plan 2022-26
- Sustainability Strategy 2016-30
- Youth and Family Strategy 2021-26.

Administrative Updates

It is recognised that from time to time, circumstances may change, leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to an existing policy or document referred to in this policy, and minor updates to legislation and the like which do not have a material impact. All changes or updates which materially alter this policy must be by resolution of Council.

Date	Update