

Community Grants Scheme:  
annual grants program policy and framework



February 2009

## **Community Grants Scheme: annual grants program policy and framework**

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## 1. Aims of the Darebin Community Grants Scheme – annual grants program

The aim of the Darebin Community Grants Scheme is ‘to partner with community organisations through the provision of grants that enhance the development of strong local communities’.

Community organisations are generally described in terms of:

- Being established for a social or community purpose,
- Not conducted for the profit or gain of individual members, and
- Self governing and independent of government.

Community organisations are the small, non profit organisations that are formed and owned by members of a community of place to pursue a shared interest such as a hobby, sport, preserving a cultural tradition, providing a neighbourhood, protecting the environment or public advocacy on an issue of concern.<sup>1</sup>

## Objectives of the Darebin Community Grants Scheme – annual grants program

1. **To strengthen local communities by valuing community identified need and supporting local responses**
  - by involvement of community in planning, management and the provision of services
  - by supporting opportunities to demonstrate social inclusion that builds sustainable communities
  - by encouraging and supporting the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse people, people with disabilities and those of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander descent
2. **To contribute to funding community organisations and projects that promote a range of opportunities**
  - Council acknowledges that community organisations can have significant resource pressures
  - as community organisations are often best placed within community to act for community benefit
  - by supporting emerging community organisations to become established within our community
3. **To engage community organisations to partner with Council to work on significant Council strategies**
  - by valuing the strength of networks within our community and encouraging partnerships between community organisations and with Council
  - by sharing broader resources of research and community information to inform local responses
  - community organisations add local innovation and multiply Council’s efforts on key strategies

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<sup>1</sup> Lyons 2001, Third Sector: the Contribution of Non profit and Cooperative Enterprises in Australia.

## 2. Policy principles guiding the Darebin Community Grants Scheme – annual grants program

### Darebin City Council's Commitment to the Community Grants Scheme

*"We are committed to accountable, democratic governance. In this term of Council, we will continue to focus on our strength in delivering relevant, quality services in a time of change. We will design our programs and services for the entire Darebin community and commit to sound strategic planning, prudent financial management and responsible environmental behaviour. We will place particular emphasis on making sure Darebin's most disadvantaged are not left behind". (Council Plan '4 Years 50 Commitments 2005 – 2009' Statement of Intent)<sup>2</sup>*

Council via its plan 4 Years 50 Commitments 2005 – 2009 articulates its strategic direction. Council outlines 5 key areas of focus: a caring city, a democratic city, a responsible city, a sustainable city, and a vibrant city. Specific commitments relating to each of these areas guide how Council will deliver its mandate to govern in the interests of the Darebin community.

Many of Council's Commitments articulated in the Council Plan 4 Years 50 Commitments 2005 – 2009 provide guidance for the delivery of our Community Grants Scheme. The following selected Council's Commitments are seen as particularly relevant: <sup>3</sup>

2. We will ensure targeted community services are delivered to address the specific needs of those in the Darebin community who experience barriers to accessing our universal services
17. We will actively encourage and foster strategic partnerships with community organisations, faith communities, other levels of government and the private sector with a view to strengthening the range of opportunities available to the Darebin community
45. We will support our local groups, clubs and organisations to strengthen Darebin's communities through arts, sports and other cultural and recreational pursuits
46. We will celebrate the contribution that Darebin's diversity brings to our neighbourhoods, and seek to nurture new and emerging communities as part of our city's diverse mix
47. We will recognise that vibrant communities are those where people feel connected to their neighbours and their neighbourhood, and we will undertake community building programs to forge and strengthen these links.

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<sup>2</sup> Council Plan '4 Years 50 Commitments 2005 – 2009' Note that this will be updated upon adoption of the new Council Plan [date].

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## Valuing local community organisations

“Community organisations are an essential part of Victorian society. They enable us to participate in social and economic life, share our passions and interests, develop skills, make connections, offer and receive mutual support, and gain access to important services. Community organisations are part of our everyday life. From the birth of a child to school years, adulthood and retirement, community organisations provide support and opportunities for fun and participation. They also enrich our lives. From gardening groups to football clubs, community choirs to youth groups, it is hard to imagine a society without them”. (Stronger Community Organisations Project Report of the Steering Committee October 2007)

Community organisations are broadly understood as organisations that operate for a community or social purpose, are selfgoverning, independent of government, and do not distribute profits. The strength of community organisations lies in their diversity – from local clubs and neighbourhood associations to social enterprises, major service providers and global advocacy organisations.<sup>4</sup>

Further, the capacity for community organisations to engage with people who are marginalised or disadvantaged, and support them in changing their life path is critical for ensuring that all members of society are equipped to participate in community life. Community organisations can therefore help lead social innovation – generating new ideas and approaches that meet the changing needs of society.

In short, the values of community organisations include:

- providing opportunities for social exchange and mutual support;
- giving people mechanisms to develop their interests and talents;
- providing people with a platform to voice their passions and concerns;
- offering services that meet vital needs and build the capacity for individuals to participate;
- creating frameworks for dialogue and partnership with large institutions in other sectors; and
- enhancing the quality of local life and the liveability of communities.

## Social inclusion

“Responding to social exclusion issues is fundamental to Council’s commitments to address disadvantage, improve community strengthening and tackle inequality” (DAREBinclusion: Darebin City Council’s Social Inclusion Framework 2008).

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<sup>4</sup> Stronger Community Organisations Project Report of the Steering Committee October 2007

Social inclusion is about a society that genuinely includes everyone. To be socially included everyone has opportunities to participate socially, physically and economically in their community and are free of discrimination and disadvantage.

“Every Australian should have an opportunity to be a full participant in the life of the nation”.  
Media release the Hon Julia Gillard MP 21 May 2008

Social inclusion and social exclusion are closely related. Key social exclusion issues include lack of access to housing, transport, food, education, employment, income, services, family support. Exclusion can occur at many levels for example in services, neighbourhoods, communities, systems with exclusion multiplying for those that experience multiple disadvantages. A core aspect of social inclusion is that everyone has a right to equal opportunity to be part of their community regardless of their age, ability, gender, background, language, where they live or what they look like.

All levels of government are increasingly adopting a social inclusion approach to addressing disadvantage by strengthening whole-of-government approach to strengthening well being, giving all a fair go, reducing inequity and valuing diversity.

## Community grants policy principles

The following table identifies the selected principles that guide our community grants scheme and shows how these principles have been directly translated into key elements of our program.

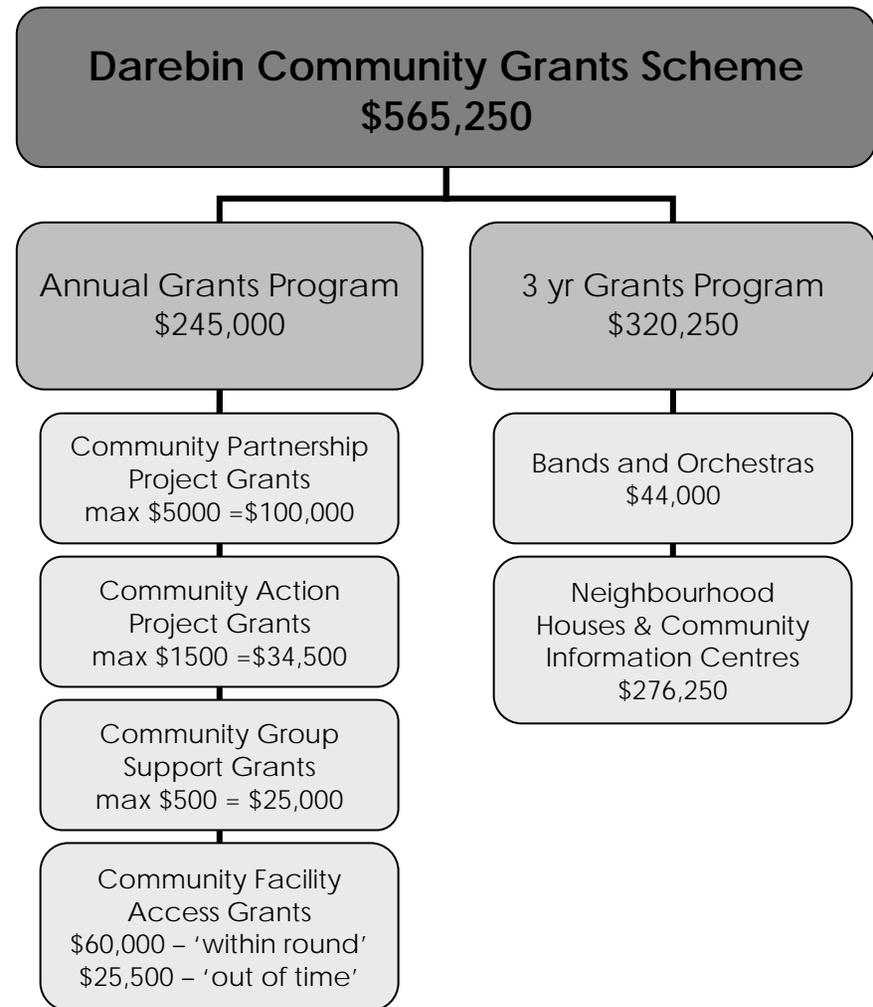
Community Grants Policy Principles	Translated into element of community grants program:
1. We value accountable, democratic community grants scheme governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community Grants Standing Committee to hear Council Officer assessments and make recommendation to Council</li> </ul>
2. We will partner with community organisations to work towards social inclusion  3. We will celebrate the contribution that Darebin’s diversity brings to our neighbourhoods, and seek to nurture new and emerging communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Grants criteria prioritise applications that work towards social inclusion</li> <li>▪ Applicants who have limited capacity to undertake initiatives from other funding sources will be prioritised</li> <li>▪ Applicants who don’t receive funding from Council via other funding streams will be prioritised</li> </ul>
4. We value community networks and partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Grants sought that include partnerships between community organisations and/or with Council</li> <li>▪ Project grants criteria to seek applicants with shared community goals of adopted Council strategies</li> </ul>
5. We will support our local groups to strengthen Darebin’s communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Our grant categories will be open to respond to community identified need and local actions</li> <li>▪ Grant model and criteria to fund both the core establishment and work of community groups as well as funding targeted projects</li> </ul>

#### 4. Darebin Community Grants Scheme Funding Model

The Darebin Community Grants Scheme model is divided into two distinct programs. An annual grants program and a 3 year grants program.

A significant percentage of grants are allocated to neighbourhood houses, community information centres and to bands and orchestras to augment recurrent funding for core services that address service gaps in the Darebin community. These programs are funded on a 3 year cyclic basis with specific agreements that detail targeting and service deliverables, along with clear evaluation processes and measurement of program outcomes.

The annual grants program is divided into a range of grants to support projects, operations of community organisations and to promote community access to facilities. Eligibility, criteria and priorities for funding have been designed to support Council's community grants objectives of supporting social inclusion and diversity, local responses to community identified needs and the value of local partnerships and networks.



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<sup>5</sup> Note that \$ are based on existing Council budget targets for 2009/2010 and will change according to Council budgetary processes in future years.

## 5. Governing the Community Grants Scheme – annual grants program

Council strives for good governance throughout all Council functions. The decision making process of the community grants scheme aims to achieve fair and accountable outcomes for applicants and Council.

**Darebin Community Grants Officer** (dedicated position to coordinate the Community Grants Scheme)

- Eligibility screening according to clearly articulated eligibility criteria

**Darebin Community Grants Assessment Team** (Council Officers who coordinate related Council strategies)

- Assessment of applications according to clearly articulated funding criteria and priorities
- Measurement of applications against selection criteria according to clearly articulated scoring system
- This team works to finalise the recommended grants to be awarded and makes presentation to Community Grants Standing Committee

**Darebin Community Grants Committee**

- It is proposed that the Community Grants Committee be appointed as a Standing (Advisory) Committee of the Council as this:
  - Will reflect its composition of Councillors only
  - Will provide an appropriate level of formality, accountability and transparency to Committee proceedings
  - Be consistent with the new legislative requirements for accountable decision making through formal committees or assemblies of Councillors
- A draft Committee Charter is attached – see appendix 1
- Standing Committee proceedings are minuted and a report on the Committee meetings and activities will be included in Council' annual report
- The Committee will have no delegated authority and will therefore make recommendations to Darebin City Council

**Darebin City Council**

- Will make formal decision to adopt the minutes of the Darebin Community Grants Committee
- Will make formal decision to adopt the recommendations of the Darebin Community Grants Committee

## 6. Community Grants Scheme Annual Grants Program - funding eligibility, criteria and priorities

Eligibility criteria for all grants	<p>EC1. Applicants must be a Not for Profit Community Organisation</p> <p>EC2. Applicants must be an Incorporated Organisation (or auspiced by) if applying for a grant of more than \$1500</p> <p>EC3. Applicants must comply with Public Liability Insurance regulations</p> <p>EC4. Applicant organisations must be located in Darebin or serve a majority Darebin resident membership</p> <p>EC5. Grants are one off agreements and are non recurrent</p>			
Funding criteria and priorities for all grants	<p>FC1. High quality initiatives that meet a demonstrated need within the Darebin community</p> <p>FC2. Application demonstrates shared goals of adopted Council strategies</p> <p>FC3. Application supports social inclusion and diversity</p> <p>FC4. Applicants who have limited capacity to undertake initiatives from other funding sources will be prioritised</p> <p>FC5. Applicants who don't receive funding from Council via other funding streams will be prioritised</p> <p>FC6. Applications will be considered for funding that include program costs such as fees for sessional staff, printing, advertising and translation costs, costs associated with venue hire, materials essential to program activities, equipment rental, local transport and emergency relief.</p> <p>FC7. Applications will not be considered for programs that are considered a primary or core service of state or federal government or large non-profit agency, capital equipment purchases, new building projects or fundraising activities.</p>			
Specific grant funding criteria and priorities	<p><b>Community Partnership Project Grants</b> –<i>joining together to strengthen local communities</i></p> <p>CP1. Applicant to nominate Council Officer to support partnerships and to facilitate shared community information</p> <p>CP2. Application to detail partnerships between community organisations actively involved in the project</p> <p>CP3. Council will fund community project but not core operations of community organisation</p>	<p><b>Community Action Project Grants</b> – <i>local responses to need</i></p> <p>CA1. Council will fund community projects but not core operations of community organisations</p>	<p><b>Community Group Support Grants</b> – <i>a range of community opportunities</i></p> <p>CP1. Council will fund operational costs to support group functions</p>	<p><b>Community Facility Access Grants</b> – <i>community access to facilities</i></p> <p>CF1. Council will subsidise access to Council owned and managed facilities</p> <p>CF2. Application to include temporary booking to ensure availability</p>

## **7. Community Grants Scheme Annual Grants Program - Information and promotion**

Council will encourage application to the Community Grants Scheme by providing clear information to community organisations that detail:

- General information about the Darebin Community Grants Scheme
- Darebin Community Grants Scheme – annual grants program model
- Darebin Community Grants Scheme – annual grants program eligibility, criteria and priorities
- Key Council adopted strategies
- Application forms with instruction on how to apply
- Additional information on Public Liability Insurance and Incorporation
- Assessment process and timelines
- Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

Information will be provided to community organisations in a number of ways. The Community Grants Officer will coordinate the provision of information that is printed, by speaking to community meetings and via Council partnerships and networks.

Council will also communicate clearly with community organisations who are unsuccessful applicants to the Darebin Community Grants Scheme. This communication will be structured to be beneficial for all by providing feedback based on each grant criteria. Information will relate to the general pool of applicants rather than respond to individual applicants to protect objectiveness of process. Information will also be shared as to alternative sources of funding for community organisations.

## **8. Resourcing the Community Grants Scheme Annual Grants Program**

### **Community Grants Officer**

The role of the Community Grants Officer is multifaceted and requires skills to both administer the Community Grants Scheme as well as demonstrating Council's commitment to community development. The Community Grants Officer is one of Council's key connections with many community organisations. Some of the roles required are summarised below:

- Coordination of information and promotion of the Community Grants Scheme
- Oversee the administration of the Community Grants Scheme
- Coordinate across Council Community Grants Assessment Team
- Prepare information for Councillors
- Ensure the Community Grants Scheme is delivered within approved Council budget
- Facilitate the annual review of the scheme

## **Assessment Team and project nominated Council Officers**

The work of Council Officers to encourage applications, receive, clarify information and record assessments against criteria of applications is critical to the successful delivery of the Community Grants Scheme. This work is also invaluable professional development essential for undertaking other roles within Council. Knowing our community organisations and the needs identified by community organisations is valuable information for other forms of Council planning and service delivery.

It is recommended that nomination for the Community Grants Assessment Team consider the following:

- Community knowledge that nominated officer brings to the Community Grants Scheme
- That Community Grants Assessment Team has a mix of knowledge and experience and fresh thinking and learning
- Assessment Team opportunities are shared across the organisation and amongst branch members
- Branch planning that considers the resource dedication and professional development value of participation in Community Grants Assessment Team

The Community Grants Scheme is one of Council's key partnerships with community organisations. To support this partnership it is recommended that Council officers be nominated for Community Partnership Project Grants. The intended nature of this partnership is to share information between Council and the successful community organisation.

## **Budget allocations**

Budget allocations for the annual grants program and the 3 year grants program are to be treated separately financially to protect from allocation shift and maintain the integrity of each stream of the Community Grants Scheme.

It is acknowledged that the Community Grants Scheme operates within adopted Council budgetary processes. As such, the management and administration of the scheme are responsible for ensuring that the program is delivered within the Council adopted budget. Changing the budget allocation of either program of the Community Grants Scheme must occur within adopted Council budgetary processes of long term financial planning and the new initiative bidding process.

## 9. Community Grants Scheme Annual Grants Program – review and evaluation

Ongoing review and evaluation of the Community Grants Scheme is essential for the program to remain relevant for Council and community organisations. The following review processes are recommended:

- Annual review and evaluation coordinated by Community Grants Officer at the completion of each funding round that considers feedback from community organisations, the Community Grants Assessment Team and the Community Grants Standing (Advisory) Committee
- Assessment by Community Grants Officer of applications to the Community Grants Scheme that seeks information as to the accessibility to the program by a range of community organisations for a range of community strengthening initiatives
- Review and Evaluation report to be made to the Community Grants Standing (Advisory) Committee.

## Appendix 1

### Darebin Community Grants Committee Charter

<b>Purpose:</b>	An Advisory Committee appointed pursuant to section 86 of the Local Government Act 1989, to assist Council with the allocation of grants under the Darebin Community Grants Scheme .
<b>Membership:</b>	Mayor and five Councillors  The Chairperson is to be appointed by the Council each Council year.
<b>Quorum:</b>	4 Councillors
<b>Meeting Frequency:</b>	As required but at least once each year.
<b>Scope of Activity:</b>	The scope of activity of the Committee is to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the assessment made by the Darebin Community Grants Assessment Team of applications received for grants under the various categories of the Darebin Community grants Scheme.</li><li>• Recommended to Council on the allocation of grants under the Darebin Community Grants Program.</li></ul>
<b>Reporting:</b>	The Committee reports as required to a subsequent meeting of the Council.  A report on the meetings and activities of the Darebin Community Grants Committee is to be prepared for inclusion in Council's Annual Report.
<b>Delegated Authority:</b>	Nil.