

THE CITY OF  
GREATER GEELONG

# ADVOCACY FRAMEWORK

A MULTI-FACETED APPROACH  
FOR A GROWING CITY

2024-2027





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**We Acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the Land, Waterways and Skies. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We Acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of our Greater Geelong community today.**

# MAYOR'S MESSAGE

**Driven by high population growth and a surging economy, Greater Geelong continues to transform.**

To ensure the region is a premier place to live, work and invest, this growth must be supported by upgrades to infrastructure and services.

As the grassroots level of government, the City of Greater Geelong is committed to listening to, and representing the needs of, our community.

This ethos informs our delivery of about 130 services, and how we assist others who can positively contribute to the region.

From the local level through to the international stage, the City will be proactive in identifying opportunities to advance our community's interests.

We will be strategic, ensuring our advocacy efforts align with our long-term plans and community demand.

And we will be flexible, recognising when the City needs to take the lead, and when we should play a supporting role.

Ultimately, we want to be a reliable and sought-after investment and project partner, working collaboratively with those who share our community's aspirations.

Whether it's securing new or improved infrastructure, social services, policies, or external funding streams, having a positive, proactive and collaborative approach is key to our success.

This Advocacy Framework outlines how we will strategically advance our region's interests and ensure its ongoing positive development.

**CR TRENT SULLIVAN**

Mayor



# CEO'S MESSAGE

**The City is committed to advocating on behalf of its current and future communities.**

In representing the views and needs of the community to decision and policy makers, Council aims to build strong, just, healthy and connected communities.

My vision for the organisation is to be known as the highest performing authority and the most desirable local government to work for in the country. Our Community Vision and Council Plan will guide us on how to achieve this

Council will be looking at new revenue streams, delivery outcomes and partnerships opportunities that:

- Support vibrant and diverse neighbourhoods and centres
- Enhance local employment activities
- Foster and promote vibrant arts, cultures and communities
- Contribute to the development and maintenance of the local and regional economy.
- Protect and enhance our natural environment and respond to the impacts of climate change
- Provide opportunities which support cultural, social and economic development for First Nations People.

It will take all levels of government, community and industry working together to ensure Geelong reaches its true economic powerhouse potential and be Australia's best regional city.

Our advocacy priorities will be achievable yet ambitious.

They will include measures critical to the short term and others will be longer term and city shaping.

**ALI WASTIE**

Chief Executive Officer



# INTRODUCTION

## GEELONG - FROM A TRADITIONAL MANUFACTURING TOWN TO VICTORIA'S SECOND-LARGEST CITY

Located approximately 75km from Melbourne's CBD the City of Greater Geelong is bound by Moorabool Shire to the north, Wyndham City and the Borough of Queenscliffe to the east, Bass Strait to the south, and Surf Coast Shire and Golden Plains Shire to the west.

The City is experiencing substantial change, growing in both population and economic activity. This change brings with it a range of complex issues that impact on our community including planning and construction, protecting heritage, creation of local jobs, sustainability, parking, traffic, sustainable transport, public housing, and affordable housing and community services.

Inhabited by First Nations people the Wadawurrung, Geelong was originally known as "Djilang" which means "land or place of the seagull". Given the name 'Geelong' in 1837, the city's wool industry played a critical role in its development in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Establishing many large warehouses and processing plants, as well as a thriving port for exports, made Geelong a significant regional centre.

The city's manufacturing industry flourished in the 20th century with the opening of several major factories, including facilities for the Ford Motor Company and the Alcoa aluminium plant. However, the sector declined in the late 20th century as some major manufacturers closed or reduced their Geelong operations.

A diversified economy and an emphasis on sustainability and environmental conservation have driven recent growth in Geelong. The city has become a centre for advanced manufacturing in industries such as aerospace, defence and biotechnology, and a hub of industry, innovation, and cultural activity.

The tourism industry is also significant, with surrounding areas such as the Great Ocean Road, the Bellarine Peninsula and the Geelong Waterfront attracting domestic and international visitors. The city is known for its natural beauty, strong focus on innovation and sustainability, and leading education institutions such as Deakin University and the Gordon Institute of TAFE.

The city's growing population has led to significant investments in infrastructure and public services, such as the construction of new housing developments and the expansion of public transport. Geelong's proximity to Melbourne makes it an attractive location for businesses and individuals looking for an alternative to the high cost of living and congestion in the capital. In October 2017, Geelong was designated as a UNESCO City of Design as a recognition of its continued creativity and innovation. With continued investment, Geelong is well positioned for continued growth in the years to come.



## KEY STATS

**25%**

The number of people working in Geelong grew 25%, from 107,000 in 2016 to 135,000 in 2021.

This is equivalent to a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 4.6% and is faster than population growth

**327.4K**

Greater Geelong's population reached 327,419 in 2021, a CAGR of 2.7%.

Its population in all age groups grew faster than the national and state averages.

**3.7%**

Geelong's estimated real Gross Regional Product (GRP) was 3.7% per annum on average between 2016 and 2021, faster than Victoria and Australia. GRP per capita in the city grew by 4.8% over the same period.

**27.3%**

In the City of Greater Geelong, 27.3% of households were made up of couples with children in 2021. Young couples and older adults are currently the two fastest growing population groups.

**8.5%**

Whilst Geelong currently has historically low unemployment levels it also has some of the most disadvantaged areas in the State with unemployment in these areas reaching as high as 8.5%.

**1.2%**

Geelong has the highest number of aboriginal people of any local government area (LGA) in Victoria representing 3,562 residents.



# CONTEXT

Advocacy is the action of influencing change in areas out of Council's direct control to bring about positive change that will ultimately improve or maintain the health and wellbeing of the community. For Council, advocacy might mean seeking external funding or in-kind contribution to a project, a new/changed policy or position, or another outcome that is important to the community.

Advocacy initiatives can be delivered in many ways and Council will identify the most appropriate forms of advocacy to achieve its desired outcomes.

## WHY DO WE ADVOCATE?

Many community needs and aspirations remain outside local governments' direct authority and are controlled or heavily influenced by other levels of government, and the private and community sectors. Advocacy, therefore, plays a critical role in enabling Council to achieve vital outcomes for the community.

The City primarily advocates to represent and address the needs, concerns, and interests of our community members. This includes initiatives for improved infrastructure, social services, policies, or funding allocations aimed at improving the overall wellbeing of our region.

The 2020 Victorian Local Government Act (The Act) identifies that Councils have a legitimate role to play in advocating for the needs of their communities and municipality.

The Act outlines the functions of a Council include –

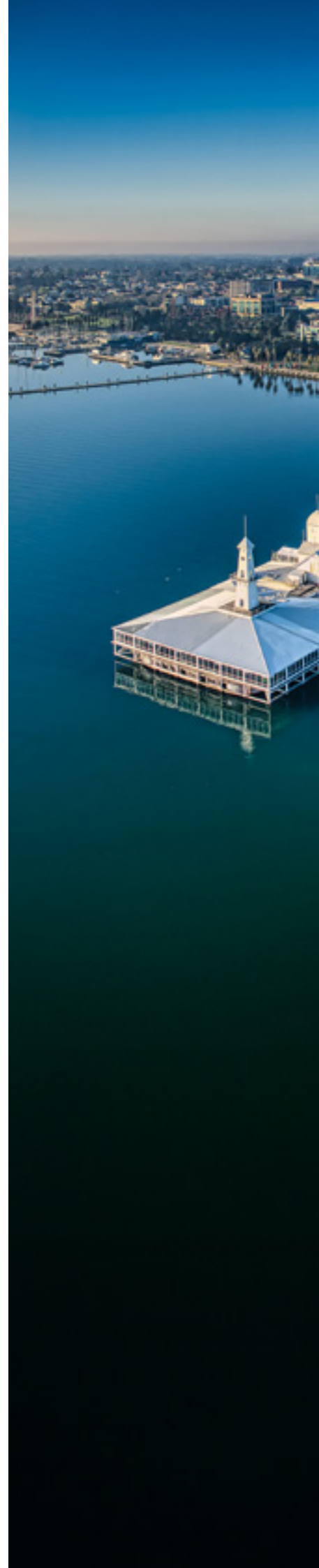
- Advocating and promoting proposals which are in the best interests of the local community;
- Raising revenue to enable it to perform its functions

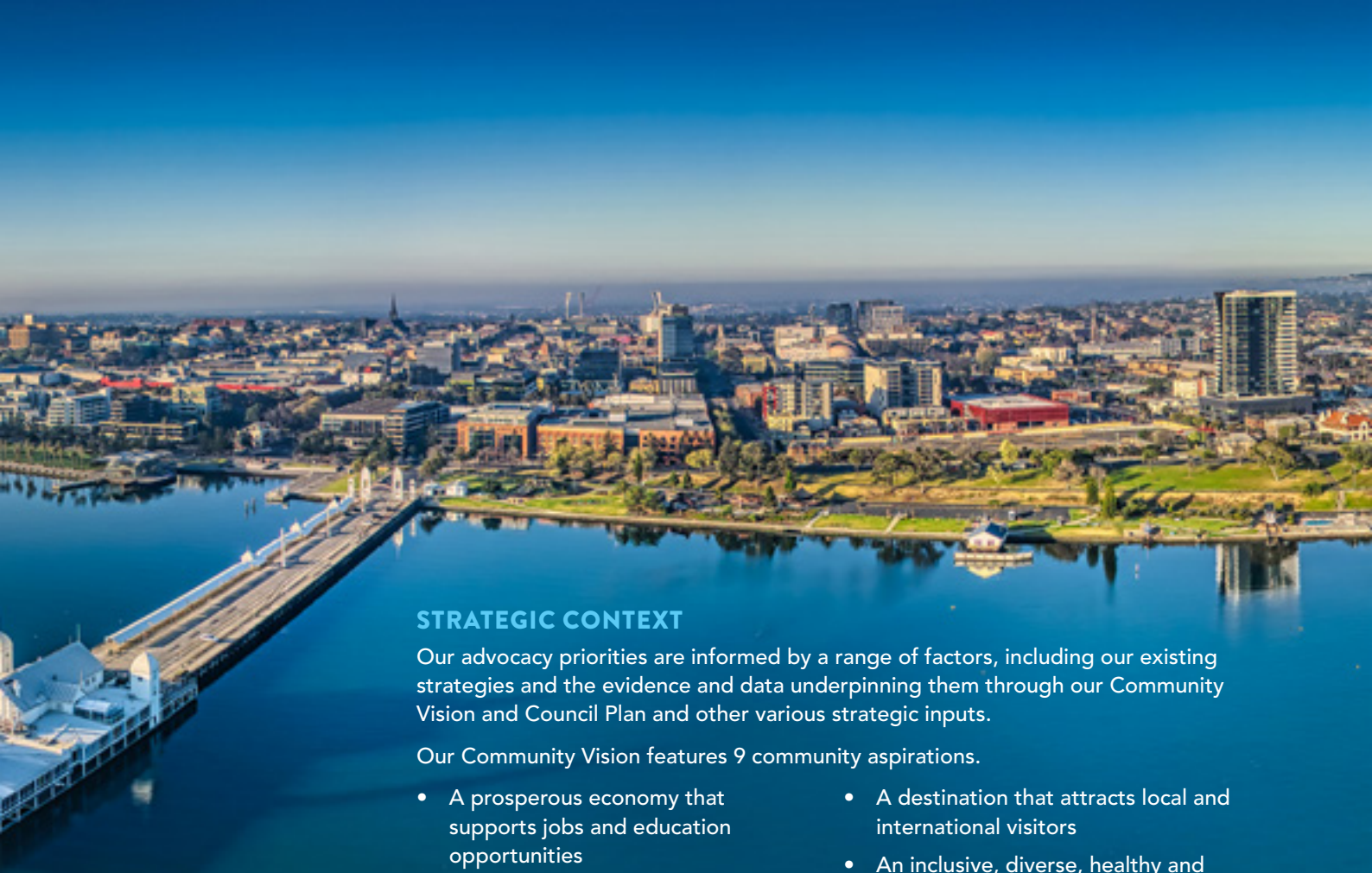
The Act states the role of a Council includes-

- Acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making
- Advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments.

## HOW DO WE ADVOCATE?

- Collect and identify local level data to identify service provision and infrastructure gaps
- Liaise with State & Federal Ministers, local MPs, government agencies and election campaigns
- Facilitate community engagement activities to better understand what is important to our local community
- Seek external funding opportunities to fast track delivery of community outcomes
- Development of advocacy campaigns and communications materials
- Identification of time-sensitive advocacy priorities
- Work with partner organisations, other levels of Govt, Corporates and industry representative groups on specific campaigns and regional priorities
- Pay membership to support advocacy led representative organisations
- Organise delegations to raise local level issues at a State or Federal level
- Coordinate local site tours
- Strengthen and continue to build productive stakeholder relations with all local stakeholders





## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our advocacy priorities are informed by a range of factors, including our existing strategies and the evidence and data underpinning them through our Community Vision and Council Plan and other various strategic inputs.

Our Community Vision features 9 community aspirations.

- A prosperous economy that supports jobs and education opportunities
- A leader in developing and adopting technology
- Creativity drives culture
- A fast, reliable and connected transport network
- People feel safe wherever they are
- A destination that attracts local and international visitors
- An inclusive, diverse, healthy and socially connected community
- Sustainable development that supports population growth and protects the natural environment
- Development and implementation of sustainable solutions

## ADVOCACY IN REVIEW

The G21 Geelong Region Alliance – known as ‘G21’ – has been the City’s instrument for regional advocacy to federal and state governments, no matter the politics or economic conditions of the day.

G21 was established 20 years ago to actively push the shared priorities within five LGAs – Colac Otway, Surf Coast, Golden Plains, Queenscliffe and Greater Geelong. Under the G21 banner, our region has successfully campaigned together for major projects that strengthen our entire community.

For example, the Geelong City Deal is now reshaping Central Geelong and the Great Ocean Road, the establishment of the NDIA and WorkSafe headquarters has helped diversify our local economy

and redevelopments of the Geelong Arts Centre, Northern Aquatic and Community Hub, Kardinia Park and Queenscliffe Ferry Terminal benefit our entire community.

Regional Advocacy still has an important role to play within our Framework and G21 is considered a benchmark for the sector. The City, as the largest local government within our region, can leverage these partnerships and relationships, whilst still having a leading voice where appropriate.

The City has an opportunity to grow its regional advocacy efforts with its western neighbours such as Wyndham, given synergies of growth and development in key corridors such as Avalon.

# ADVOCACY ECOSYSTEM IN GEELONG

The City has one of the most complex and multi-faceted eco-systems of any LGA in Victoria. In addition to the role that Council plays in advocacy, a number of other membership and industry representative groups share the same passion about ensuring that Geelong's residents have access to a high quality range of services, programs and infrastructure.

Whilst this incredibly diverse and broad based approach to advocacy is what sets this City apart it can also create some systemic challenges especially when there are competing advocacy priorities within this ecosystem.

It is time that the City took a more proactive, focused and dedicated role in advocacy both at a local, regional,

state, national and international level.

Our renewed advocacy approach will be strengthened by the development of a Partnership Framework. This Framework will promote the value of working with these entities for the positive benefit of our community.

The Framework recognises and respects the additional public value and advocacy strength created through the various forms of partnership with community.

As the second-largest city in Victoria, Geelong bears the responsibility to champion and seize opportunities for the region not only locally but on the world stage!





# ADVOCACY IN ACTION - APPROACH AND PRINCIPLES

## ADVOCACY APPROACH

To meet the needs of a growing City such as Geelong our Advocacy approach needs to:

1. Be multi-faceted, agile and responsive providing opportunities for the City to not only have a voice, but a voice with impact where it is most needed.
2. Work positively and collaboratively with all levels of Government as well as local community groups and representative bodies.
3. Recognise where leadership from the City can offer the most significant advantages and acknowledge instances where management from other organisations might provide greater benefits. In such cases, our role may shift towards supporting and collaborating with these entities.



## ADVOCACY PRINCIPLES

To do this effectively we will be guided and led by key principles including:

- We will represent our communities most pressing needs, areas of disadvantage, and minority groups whilst also embracing opportunities that will deliver the greatest benefit to a specific location, township or entire LGA
- We will be transparent and strategic with a strong set of priorities, aligned to our strategic goals that are well communicated both internally and externally
- We will strive for the City to be recognised as a known and trusted Council, and a partner that other agencies and government want to work with.
- We will have clarity of purpose through identifying clear community needs, which align to our Vision.
- We will be flexible and adapt to changing community and political needs
- We will use evidence to support our advocacy agenda and priorities
- We will work clever and creatively to develop and foster relationships and partnerships.
- We will regularly communicate the ongoing activities and outcomes of our advocacy efforts to our community and other stakeholders.
- We will celebrate our advocacy successes and acknowledge contributions where it is due.



# ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Advocacy priorities define our core platform, the key 'ask' that we will voice to government for the duration of councillors' terms. This approach helps us identify gaps, necessary actions, and areas requiring more extensive research and community engagement for effective advocacy on any issue.

These priorities change from year to year, shaped by community needs, the political climate and shifts in importance in the local and regional environment. Events like natural disasters, public health crises, leadership changes, cabinet shuffles and new ministerial appointments can influence these changes.

The City will introduce new advocacy priorities strategically, timed with Federal and State elections or during periods of significant funding opportunities, such as those arising from the cancellation of the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

This proactive approach ensures that the City of Greater Geelong remains inclusive, liveable, sustainable, vibrant, and well-governed in the long term.

## How do we determine strategic advocacy priorities?

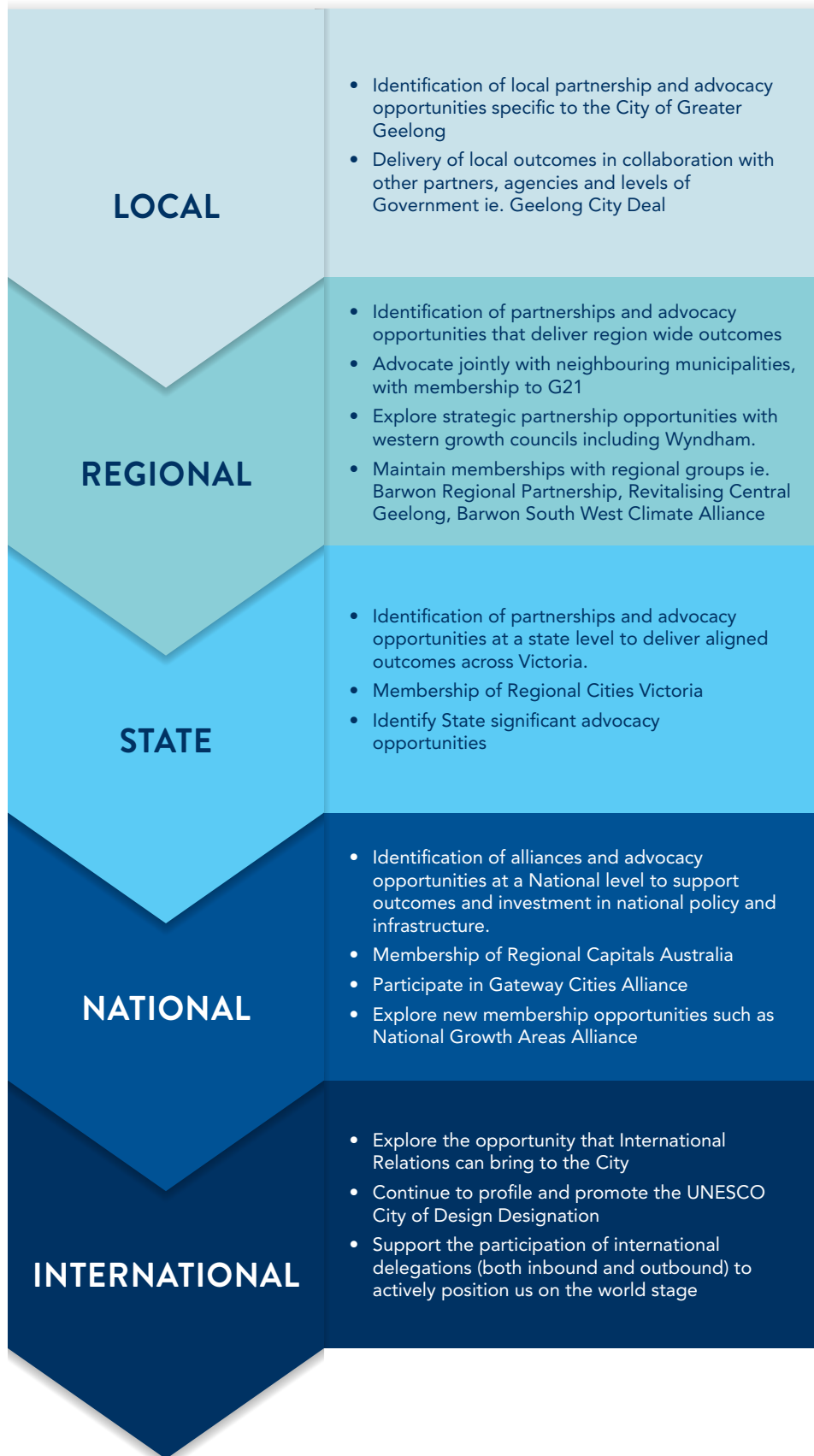
- Does it align to our Council Plan and our community aspiration's within the Community Vision?
- Contribute to addressing significant risks or challenges faced by the City or the community.
- Is there research to support the focus on the priority area?
- Alignment with political cycles and priorities of other levels of government.
- Likelihood of securing funding.





# FRAMEWORK APPROACH

The City employs a multi-faceted advocacy approach which enables it to have identified priorities and influence at the local, regional, state, national and international level that drive community outcomes.





# MEASURING PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNICATING OUTCOMES

Measuring the success of advocacy can be challenging in the short-term. Considering our actions collectively and through ongoing collaboration, our actions may result longer term outcomes including strengthened partnerships, improved policies, or legislative change.

It is important to measure, but gauging this success may take years to emerge. That is;

- did we achieve our goal?
- did we influence change?
- did we secure funding?
- did we deliver the project?

The success of our advocacy can be dependent upon unpredictable external events, plans may have to be adjusted often to account for circumstances beyond our control.

We will proactively plan and review our advocacy progress and consistently strive for improvement. Through our longer-term advocacy, we will consider emerging opportunities, threats, and identify promising approaches.

Importantly, we will set milestones and celebrate small wins. By being transparent and flexible, we can adjust our approach based on contextual changes, the actions of others, and our incremental successes.

We will regularly communicate the outcomes of our advocacy efforts to our community and other stakeholders.

We will review our Advocacy Framework within each Council term to ensure it is meeting the needs of the Council and the community it serves.





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