

COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

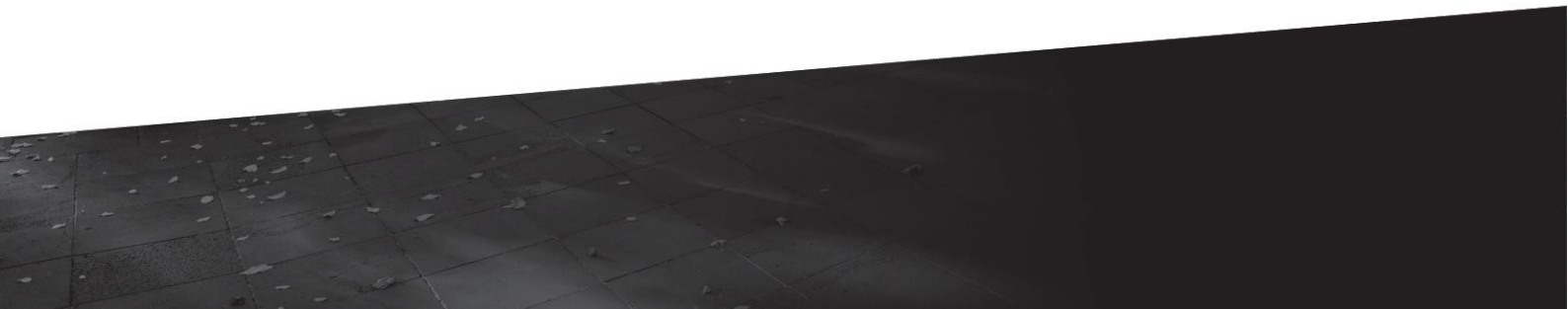
6:00 pm on Monday September 25, 2023

Livestreaming at https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings#live-stream
Broadcast live on Phoenix FM 106.7 ***

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https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings#register-attend-meeting
or call the box office on 5434 6100 no later than 5pm on the day of the meeting.

Photo ID is a requirement of entry to the Public Gallery.

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COMMUNITY VISION 2021–2031

Greater Bendigo celebrates our diverse community.
We are welcoming, sustainable and prosperous.
Walking hand-in-hand with the Traditional custodians of this land.
Building on our rich heritage for a bright and happy future.

The community vision is underpinned by five values –
Transparency, sustainability, inclusion, innovation and equity.

COUNCIL PLAN (MIR WIMBUL) – OUTCOMES

The Council Plan (Mir wimbul) is based on seven outcomes, which are the main focus of the Council Plan.

Each outcome has a set of goals, objectives and actions that will help to achieve the community vision, and indicators to measure achievement against each goal:

1. Lead and govern for all
2. Healthy, liveable spaces and places
3. Strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
4. Aboriginal reconciliation
5. A climate-resilient built and natural environment
6. A vibrant, creative community
7. A safe, welcoming and fair community

STAFF VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

The City of Greater Bendigo's values and behaviours describe how Councillors and staff will work together to be the best we can for our community.



They are aligned to our strategic documents, such as the Council Plan, which ensure they are meaningful for Council and the organisation.

A shared commitment to living our values and behaviours will help us to build the type of culture we need to be able to work together and support each other to deliver the best possible outcomes for the community.

This Council Meeting is conducted in accordance with the

- Local Government Act 2020
- Governance Rules

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

2. TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE STATEMENT

3. OPENING STATEMENT

4. MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

5. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

6. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

7. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

RECOMMENDED MOTION

That Standing Orders be suspended to allow the conduct of the Community Recognition Section and Public Question Time.

8. COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

9. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Council allows up to 30 minutes for question time on any matter except for planning items that are on the agenda tonight or anything that is defamatory, otherwise inappropriate or outside the scope of Council.

If your question is about routine or operational Council requests, you should instead make a request through our Customer Request system.

Pre-registering questions is mandatory for all remaining Council meetings in 2023. This allows residents to have their questions answered on the night and provides more opportunity to give a detailed response.

We are trialling this change in order to keep Council meetings open, accessible and safe for the community, in light of the significant disruption that other Victorian Councils are experiencing including some having to temporarily close meetings.

Public Question time is only one of many ways the community is able to communicate with Council, other options include:

- Customer Request system
- Let's Talk Greater Bendigo
- Feedback and complaints process
- Petitions and joint letters
- Invitations to the Mayor (and other Councillors)
- Presentations to Councillors
- Councillor Ward Engagements events, generally held monthly
- Councillor attendance at many and varied events across the Municipality and over the year
- Councillor committee membership
- Various methods of contacting the City and individual Councillors

Public Question Time is not a requirement of Council under the Local Government Act. This Council has provides for Public Question Time in the Governance Rules adopted by the Council to ensure greater public transparency and accountability. The Council asks that the opportunity to ask a question of the Council in this forum is treated respectfully and within these rules.

10. RESUMPTION OF STANDING ORDERS

RECOMMENDED MOTION

That Standing Orders be resumed.

11. WARD REPORTS

11.1. Eppalock Ward - Cr Penna

11.2. Lockwood Ward - Deputy Mayor Cr Alden

11.3. Whipstick Ward - Cr Fagg

12. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic) (**the Act**) provides that a relevant person must disclose a conflict of interest in respect of a matter and exclude themselves from the decision making process in relation to that matter including any discussion or vote on the matter at any Council meeting or delegated committee meeting and any action in relation to that matter.

The procedure for declaring a conflict of interest at a Council Meeting is set out at rule 18.2.4 of the Governance Rules.

Section 126 of the Act sets out that a relevant person (Councillor, member of a delegated Committee or member of Council staff) has a conflict of interest if the relevant person has a **general conflict of interest** or a **material conflict of interest**.

A relevant person has a **general conflict of interest** in a matter if an impartial, fair minded person would consider that the person's private interests could result in that person acting in a manner that is contrary to their public duty.

A relevant person has a **material conflict of interest** in a matter if an *affected person* would gain a benefit or suffer a loss depending on the outcome of the matter.

13. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

13.1. Confirmation of Previous Minutes

RECOMMENDED MOTION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on August 28, 2023, as circulated, be taken as read and confirmed.

Previous minute location:
https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/about-us/council/council-meetings#past-meetings

14. PETITIONS AND JOINT LETTERS

14.1. Petition: Change to end Temporary Outdoor Dining Arrangements

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to respond to a petition from residents regarding the Temporary Outdoor Dining Arrangements.

Summary

The following petition has been received from residents and ratepayers as outlined below:
"We the undersigned residents and ratepayers of Greater Bendigo City Council formally request Council to Not to return to Outdoor dining trading to pre-covid trading conditions, and close expanded outdoor dining area."

Signatures - 17

Recommended Motion

That Council:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the petition and thank submitters for their contribution to the petition.

2. Advise the lead petitioners that:

   Since September 2020, with the support of a State Government grant, the City has actively assisted food and beverage operators to expand their outdoor dining options by fast-tracking the assessment and issue of temporary Local Law permits. In most cases this resulted in expanded outdoor dining on footpaths (often in front of neighbouring businesses), in car parking spaces (in View, Hargreaves, King, Water and Olinda Streets), and in one instance on a partial road closure (in Bull Street).

   The State Government is ending these temporary measures as follows:
   · Temporary Liquor Licence extensions expired on 30 June 2023.
   · Temporary Planning Permits are due to expire on 12 October 2023.

   All impacted businesses were reminded of the expiration dates in April 2023 and can apply for a planning permit to continue their outdoor dining on footpaths through the normal application process, which remains the same as it was prior to the COVID measures being introduced. Council does not have any legal ability to provide ‘blanket’ approval for businesses to continue with the arrangements that were introduced by the State Government during the pandemic.

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

1. Petition - Outdoor Dining [**14.1.1** - 4 pages]

Background to Petition (media release from the Great City of Bendigo Council 30th May)

Temporary expanded outdoor dining measures will come to an end in the coming months, in line with changes to Victorian Government legislation.

Businesses have been advised that as of **Friday June 30** they will need to extend their Temporary Liquor Licence to continue to serve alcohol in an expanded outdoor dining area and as of Thursday **October 12** all expanded outdoor dining will end".

But as we have learnt to **live with COVID**, expanded outdoor dining has **become less necessary** and the legislation that supported it is winding up in October, all business that have taken up the use of car parks will return to pre-COVID outdoor trading conditions".

Why I am opposed to the closure of expanded outdoor dining area

I understand the impact on business, parking, and amenity. However there appears to be a lack of understanding of the impact of this decision on individuals, their families and friends who would choose to dine outdoor, including people like me. In May 2023 was diagnosed with a rare blood disorder called Evan Syndrome.

This condition weakens my immune system and exposure to any infection including Covid 19, and poses significant risk to my wellbeing.

Therefore, indoor dinning in not an option, foot path dinning is often too crowded, I would however choose to dine in a designated outdoor space, it is safe and social distancing is possible.

We the undersigned residents and ratepayers of Greater Bendigo City Council formally request Council to **Not to** return Outdoor dining trading to pre-covid trading conditions, and close expanded outdoor dining area.

Name	MARTYN RYAN	Signature	
Name	Claire Allan	Signature	
Name	KATE GIFFORD	Signature	
Name	Shereen Jose	Signature	
Name	JACLYN LONG	Signature	
Name	Christine Cummins	Signature	
Name	Diane Treszl	Signature	
Name	Eve Curtis	Signature	
Name	Faige Hayman	Signature	
Name	JUSTIN MOIR	Signature	
Name	Bridget Nuttsy	Signature	
Name	KARYN BATH	Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	

lodged:

- In person at 15 Hopetoun Street, Bendigo or 125 High Street, Heathcote

  And

- Emailed to councillor.support@bendigo.vic.gov.au

- Paul Kenneth Hurnall
- 145 Paton's Rd Axe Creek
- Outdoor dining trading to ***NOT*** return to pre-covid trading conditions
- "We the undersigned residents and ratepayers of Greater Bendigo City Council formally request Council to **Not** to return Outdoor dining trading to pre-covid trading conditions, and close expanded outdoor dining area.

Name	Paul Hurnall	Signature	
Name	LLOYD KENNEDY	Signature	
Name	FRANCES BRENNAN	Signature	
Name	VIKI Hurnall	Signature	V. Hurnall.
Name	Daniel Eltringham	Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	
Name		Signature	

15. LEAD AND GOVERN FOR ALL

15.1. Contracts Awarded Under Delegation

Author:	Corinne Fisher, Procurement Officer
Responsible Director:	Jessica Howard, Director Corporate Performance

Purpose

To inform Council of contracts signed under Delegation.

Recommended Motion

That Council note the contracts awarded under delegation during the previous reporting period.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 1 - Lead and govern for all

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 1 - Accountable, financially responsible, equitable, transparent decision making

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

1. Contracts Awarded Under Delegation Council Report August 2023 [**15.1.1** - 1 page]

Capital Contracts

Contract No	Project	Successful Contractor	Delegated Officer	Date Signed	Price (ex GST)	Practical Completion	Budget
CT000676	Bendigo Airport - New Water and Sewer Mains	DPJ Civil Pty Ltd	Craig Niemann	29-Aug-23	$1,078,449.67	Practical Completion 13 Dec 23	$11,995,000 Bendigo Airport Redevelopment Budget $1,600,000.00 Cost estimate for this portion of works

Service Contracts

Contract No	Project	Successful Contractor	Delegated Officer	Date Signed	Price (ex GST)	Contract Term & Options	Budget
CT000636	Provision of TechOne System Support	Ladd & Associates Pty Ltd & Galaxy 42 Pty Ltd TA Atturra Business Applications	Jessica Howard	24 May 2023 Last panel supplier withdrew from tender in Aug 23, therefore not reported earlier.	Schedule of Rates	4 Years No Extension Options	Schedule of Rates - Operational Budget across various units
CT000655	Provision of Processing of Timber and Garden Material	Van Schaik's Bio Gro Pty Ltd	Chris Mitchell Acting Director Presentation & Assets	4-Jul-23	Schedule of Rates	24 Months with the option of 1 + 1 years	$270,000.00
CT000656	Supply and Delivery of General Office Stationery and Corporate Printed Stationery	Bolton and McCredden Unit Trust trading as Boltons Office National	Jessica Howard	23-Aug-23	Schedule of Rates	3 Years with the option of 2 x 1 years	$277,682.00
CT000662	Provision of Quarterly Environmental Monitoring at the Eaglehawk Landfill	Glaeba (03) Pty Ltd T/A Environmental Earth Sciences VIC	Brian Westley	22-Jun-23	Schedule of Rates	24 Months with the option of 2 by 12 months	$824,000.00
CT000668	Provision of Glass Acceptance and Processing	Allstone Quarries Pty Ltd	Brian Westley	14-Aug-23	Schedule of Rates	36 Months with the option of 2 x 12 months	$300,000.00
CT000670	Provision of Consultancy Services for Fosterville Gold Mine EES	Tonkin & Taylor Pty Ltd	Andrew Cooney Acting CEO	6-Jul-23	Schedule of Rates	Contract Final Completion 31.12.2023	$300,000.00
CT000672	Provision of Trade & Liquid Waste Cleaning Services	Total Drain Cleaning Services Pty Ltd	Andrew Cooney Acting CEO	1-Aug-23	Schedule of Rates	3 Years with the option of 2 Years	$70,000.00
CT000673	Provision of Monitoring Services for Fire Alarm Signalling Systems	Romteck Grid Pty Ltd	Brian Westley	31-Aug-23	Schedule of Rates	3 Years with the option of 2 x 2 years	$30,000.00
CT000677	Provisions of Veterinary Services	Bendigo Animal Hospital Pty Ltd	Stacy Williams	9-Aug-23	Schedule of Rates	2 Years with the option of 1 x 2 years	$200,000.00
CT000682	Provision of Strategic Fundraising Services for the Bendigo Art Gallery Redevelopment	DGB Global Pty Ltd	Craig Niemann	22-Aug-23	Schedule of Rates	20 Months + option to extend 1 year	$100,000.00 Council $440,000.00 Board $540,000.00 Total Budget

Contracts Awarded at Council

Contract No	Project	Successful Contractor	Delegated Officer	Date Signed	Price (ex GST)	Practical Completion / Contract Term & Options	Budget
CT000654	Provision of Management of Aquatic & Leisure Facilities	Belgravia Health & Leisure Group Pty Ltd	Andrew Cooney Acting CEO	17-Jul-23	$3,033,904.00	4 years and 11 months	$5,999,189.45 Estimated budget at time of tendering
CT000663	Provision of Various Concrete Work Service	Theods Pty Ltd TA Redilesa Nursery J.J Maher Earthcrete J&K Civil Maintenance Pty Ltd Rainbow Concret Solutions Pty Ltd	Andrew Cooney Acting CEO	26-Jul-23	Schedule of Rates	5 Years	$3,000,000.00

15.2. Reappointment of Stephen Brown as ARC Independent member

Author:	Rosemary Broad, Risk & Assurance Officer
Responsible Director:	Jessica Howard, Director Corporate Performance

Purpose

To recommend the reappointment of Stephen Brown as an independent member of the Audit and Risk Committee for a second term from 1 October 2023 to 1 October 2026.

Recommended Motion

That Council appoint Stephen Brown to the position of independent member for another three-year term from 1 October 2023 to 1 October 2026.

Executive Summary

Stephen Brown has completed an initial term as an independent member on the Audit and Risk Committee from 1 October 2020 to 1 October 2023. Mr Brown would like to be considered for a second term of an additional three years.

A report went to the Audit and Risk Committee recommending the endorsement of Stephen Brown's reappointment which was tabled at the Committee meeting on 14 September 2023.

A copy of that report is **attached**.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 1 - Lead and govern for all

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 1 - Accountable, financially responsible, equitable, transparent decision making

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

1. Reappointment of Stephen Brown - 14.9.23 ARC report [**15.2.1** - 2 pages]

4.2. Reappointment of Stephen Brown for second term

Meeting Date:	September 14, 2023
Presenter:	Ryan Millard
Duration:	15

Purpose

To recommend the reappointment of Stephen Brown as an independent member of the Audit and Risk Committee (the Committee) for a second term from 1 October 2023 to 1 October 2026.

Request of Audit and Risk Committee

That the Committee recommend Stephen Brown to the position of independent member for another three-year term from 1 October 2023 to 1 October 2026.

Executive Summary

Stephen Brown has completed an initial term as an independent member on the Committee from 1 October 2020 to 1 October 2023. Mr Brown would like to be considered for a second term of three years.

Report

As outlined in the Audit and Risk Committee Charter, the Committee comprises seven members, which include three Councillors and four independent external members who are appointed by Council.

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Committee members must:
- Include members who are Councillors of the Council
- Consist of a majority of members who are not Councillors of the Council and who collectively have expertise in financial management, risk and public sector management
- Not be a member of Council staff

Section 3.1.1 of the Charter provides that independent members may be reappointed for one additional term subject to satisfactory performance, that is, a maximum of six years. Mr Brown will conclude his first three-year term on the 1 October 2023.

Mr Brown is a Chartered Accountant specialising in the Banking and Finance field. He has held senior executive positions in the financial services industry and is heavily involved in community and not for profit groups. He is a current director and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is eager to further utilise his passion for helping individuals and entities achieve their goals. He has experience across financial

management, managing risk and significant dealings with Government departments. Mr Brown has also had experience as a member on other Boards and Committees.

Communications/Engagement

As required under section 3.1.1 of the Charter, the Chair, in conjunction with management, conducted a formal review of Mr Brown's performance. Following that review, the Chair recommended that the Committee appoint Mr Brown as an independent member for another three-year term from 1 October 2023 to 1 October 2026.

15.3. Recommendation of new Independent Member for Audit and Risk Committee

Author:	Rosemary Broad, Risk & Assurance Officer
Responsible Director:	Jessica Howard, Director Corporate Performance

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval to the appointment of Daniel Butal as an independent member of the Audit and Risk Committee (**ARC**).

Recommended Motion

That Council resolves to appoint Daniel Butal to the Audit and Risk Committee as an independent member for an initial term of three years, concluding on the 30 September 2026.

Executive Summary

Tony Ridley, an independent member of the ARC, resigned in July 2023, leaving a vacancy. As set out in the ARC's Charter, the vacant position was recently advertised externally.

Following a thorough recruitment process, which included a formal interview, Daniel Butal has been recommended by the interview panel as the preferred candidate to fill the vacant position.

Report

As outlined in the ARC Charter, the Committee comprises of seven members, which include three Councillors and four independent external members who are appointed by Council. In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* (Vic), the committee members must:

- include members who are Councillors of the Council
- consist of a majority of members who are not Councillors of the Council and who collectively have:
    - expertise in financial management and risk;
    - experience in public sector management; and
- not be a member of Council staff.

Three current independent members on the ARC are Stephen Brown, Jovana Obradovic-Tantra and Robert Stephenson. The fourth member, Tony Ridley, resigned in July 2023, leaving a vacancy.

As set out in the ARC Charter, the vacant position was advertised externally. The City received applications from six candidates. A panel consisting of the Mayor, CEO and Chair of the of the ARC reviewed the applications and interviewed three shortlisted candidates. Following interviews, the panel recommends the appointment of Daniel Butal to the vacant independent member position on the ARC.

The recommendation of the panel was tabled at the September 14 ARC meeting for consideration and endorsement.

Daniel is the Acting Manager ICT at Campaspe Shire Council. He currently oversees finance, risk and public sector administration. In Daniel's career he has been responsible for overseeing multi-million-dollar budgets, organisational risk, and public sector management. Daniel has a Bachelor of Information Technology, Post Graduate Diploma in Business and Administration Management and Health Service Management. He is a current Board Director of Echuca Regional Health, and current independent Audit and Risk Committee member for Goulburn Valley Health and Greater Shepparton City Council.

Communications/Engagement

This position was advertised externally in the Bendigo Advertiser and on the City of Greater Bendigo website. Following the advertising, a competitive recruitment process took place.

Financial Sustainability

The independent members of the Audit and Risk Committee are remunerated $875+GST per meeting for attendance. This position is budgeted each year on an ongoing basis, with 4-5 meetings held each year.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 1 - Lead and govern for all

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 1 - Accountable, financially responsible, equitable, transparent decision making

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments
Nil

15.4. Annual Financial and Performance Statements

Author:	Nathan Morsillo, Manager Financial Strategy
Responsible Director:	Jessica Howard, Director Corporate Performance

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the draft Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement for 30 June 2023, noting their draft pre-audit status at the time of writing this report.

Recommended Motion

1. That Council:
    a. approve in principle the draft Financial Statements and the draft Performance Statement as presented; and
    b. authorise the Mayor, Cr Metcalf and Cr O'Rourke or Cr Sloan (or their delegates), as the Audit and Risk Committee representatives, to certify the Financial Statements and the Performance Statement in their final form on behalf of the Council of City of Greater Bendigo.
2. The Principal Accounting Officer (Manager Financial Strategy) be authorised to make any non-material changes to the Financial Statements and the Performance Statement that may arise as a result of the audit.
3. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee be notified of any material changes proposed to be made to any of the Statements so that it may be decided whether the Audit and Risk Committee needs to meet further to consider such proposed changes prior to two Councillors signing off the Statements.
4. A copy of the Statements in their final form be forwarded to the members of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Executive Summary

The City of Greater Bendigo has prepared draft Annual Financial Statements and the Performance Statement for the financial year ending 30 June 2023.

This item seeks a resolution authorising two Councillors to certify the statements. The statements are in the process of being reviewed by the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO), and as such are considered to be in draft form.

Background

Section 98 of the Local Government Act 2020 requires the following:

(1) A Council must prepare an annual report in respect of each financial year.

(2) An annual report must contain the following:

(a) a report of operations of the Council;

(b) an audited performance statement;

(c) audited financial statements;

(d) a copy of the auditor's report on the performance statement;

(e) a copy of the auditor's report on the financial statements under Part 3 of the Audit Act 1994;

(f) any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

The annual report must be presented to a council meeting (open to the public) by 31 October 2023. Council can submit the final version of the Financial Statements to its auditor once it has passed a resolution giving its approval in principle to the Financial Statements and Performance Statement.

Report

Annual financials

The City of Greater Bendigo has prepared draft Annual Financial Statements and the Performance Statement for the financial year ending 30 June 2023.

Headline results in the financial statements

The financial statements, including comprehensive income, balance sheet, cash flows, equity and capital works summarise the financial position as at 30 June 2023. The following section highlights items of note in the Financial Statements.

The year end result is a $31.2M operating surplus. The budgeted operating surplus was $31.5M, resulting in a variance of $300k to budget. The overall result represents less than 1% variance to budget. Both total expenditure and total revenue exceeded budget by around 10%.

This result is reported in line with applicable Accounting Standards.

Key financials:

- Total income of $259.3M (Budget $236.3M) for the financial year
- Total operating expenses, including non-cash items of $228.2M (Budget $204.8M)

- The City expended $57.5M in Capital Works during 2022/2023 ($55M in 2021/2022)
- Capital Works project funding carried forward to 2023/2024 totalled $22.2M ($11.9M in 2020/2021).

Cash or term deposit balances at 30 June 2023 are $95.5M, an increase of $1.66M from the prior year. A large percentage of the 30 June cash balance has some form of restriction or intended allocation for future needs (refer Note 5.1). These include:

- Trust funds and deposits $3.7M
- Grant funding received in advance $9.5M
- Reserves $40.1M
- Council cash contribution held to fund carried forward capital works $18.5M.

An important ratio reported by Councils is the Working Capital Ratio, sometimes referred to as the Liquidity ratio, which demonstrates the level of current assets to current liabilities. The City's Working Capital Ratio is 2.26:1 (2021/2022 was 1.96:1). This result is considered low risk in the Local Government sector. There is significant further analysis of the City's finances available in the 10-year financial plan, available on the City's website. A summary of other key financial sustainability indicators is included below.

Key financial sustainability indicators

Indicator	2021/22 Result	2022/23 Result	Risk indicator
Net result (%)	14.33%	12.03%	LOW
Adjusted underlying result (%)	2.66%	-3.27%	HIGH
Liquidity (ratio)	1.96	2.26	LOW
Internal financing (%)	135%	167%	LOW
Indebtedness (%)	20%	39.38%	LOW
Capital replacement (ratio)	1.31	1.32	MEDIUM
Renewal gap (ratio)	0.84	0.77	MEDIUM

The only indicator with a high risk rating is the City's adjusted underlying result. The calculation method for this indicator includes significant (non-cash) depreciation charges on the City's assets, and is calculated by subtracting any non-cash contributions and removing any one-off or non-recurrent transactions. The result highlights the challenges the City is facing in a revenue-constrained environment where costs and service demands are outstripping recurrent available funds.

Council assets have a written down value of $1.89B across property, infrastructure plant and equipment. Land, buildings, roads, footpaths, drainage, bridges and artworks were all revalued during the 2022/2023 financial year. An overall increase in value of $144M (8%)

was a result of this revaluation process, bringing the total replacement value of Council assets to $2.7B.

Performance Statement

The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) requires councils to report against prescribed indicators and measures as part of their Annual Report.

Data and information has been collected and finalised to fulfil the requirements of the LGPRF. This information is used in both the Report of Operations and the Performance Statement in the Annual Report. Only the data and information that goes into the Performance Statement is required to be audited. There are a larger set of indicators which will be reported through the LGPRF framework and published on the VAGO and Victorian Government websites.

Communications/Engagement

The draft Annual Financial Statements and the Performance Statement has been presented to the Executive Management Team. The Audit and Risk Committee reviewed and endorsed the draft Statements on 14 September 2023. The financial statements have been reviewed by RSD Audit, who are contracted by the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) to undertake the external audit.]

Financial Sustainability

The cost of the annual audit of the Council's Financial Statements is $53,850 with the Performance Statements costs approximately $5,300. There is also an additional charge of $1,700 for the audit of the Roads to Recovery funding program and $1,800 for each phase of the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program which is also completed by VAGO under the same engagement.

Budget Allocation in the Current Financial Year:	Yes
Current Tender Price:	$62,650
Projected costs for future financial years:	CPI Plus

Risk Assessment

Financial sustainability remains a key City strategic risk, currently assessed as Medium.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 1 - Lead and govern for all

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 1 - Accountable, financially responsible, equitable, transparent decision making

Other Reference(s)

City of Greater Bendigo Financial Plan 2021-2031
City of Greater Bendigo Budget 2022/2023

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

1. DRAFT COGB Financial Statements 2023 [**15.4.1** - 57 pages]
2. DRAFT - COGB Performance Statement 30.06.23 [**15.4.2** - 10 pages]

Greater Bendigo City Council
ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Greater Bendigo City Council
Financial Report
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Certification of the Financial Statements

In my opinion, the accompanying financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020,* the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020,* the Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.

Nathan Morsillo, FCPA
Principal Accounting Officer / Chief Financial Officer
Dated : *26/09/2023*
Bendigo

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly the financial transactions of the Greater Bendigo City Council for the year ended 30 June 2023 and the financial position of the Council as at that date.

At the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances that would render any particulars in the financial statements to be misleading or inaccurate.

We have been authorised by the Council and by the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* to certify the financial statements in their final form.

Andrea Metcalf
Councillor
Dated : *26/09/2023*
Bendigo

Margaret O'Rourke
Councillor
Dated : *26/09/2023*
Bendigo

Craig Niemann
Chief Executive Officer
Dated : *26/09/2023*
Bendigo

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Comprehensive Income Statement
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
Income / Revenue			
Rates and charges	3.1	139,172	133,126
Statutory fees and fines	3.2	5,848	5,340
User fees	3.3	29,068	29,685
Grants - operating	3.4	39,136	41,320
Grants - capital	3.4	16,883	18,504
Contributions - monetary	3.5	6,769	3,497
Contributions - non monetary	3.5	17,007	9,676
Share of net profits (or loss) of associates	6.2	14	180
Other income	3.7	5,456	4,102
Total income / revenue		**259,353**	**245,430**
Expenses			
Employee costs	4.1	81,548	76,063
Materials and services	4.2	85,803	80,256
Depreciation	4.3	43,500	41,900
Amortisation - intangible assets	4.4	1,513	931
Amortisation - right of use assets	4.5	3,030	2,658
Bad and doubtful debts - allowance for impairment losses		385	624
Borrowing costs		977	1,365
Finance costs - leases	4.6	358	258
Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant & equipment	3.6	9,712	5,677
Other expenses	4.7	1,332	519
Total expenses		**228,158**	**210,251**
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		**31,195**	**35,179**
Other comprehensive income			
Items that will not be reclassified to surplus or deficit in future periods			
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	6.1	144,012	22,013
Total other comprehensive income		**144,012**	**22,013**
Total comprehensive result		**175,207**	**57,192**

The above comprehensive income statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Balance Sheet
As at 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	5.1	23,532	47,910
Trade and other receivables	5.1	10,608	10,742
Other financial assets	5.1	67,038	43,000
Inventories		169	214
Prepayments		1,576	1,215
Accrued Income		1,521	2,533
Total current assets		**104,444**	**105,614**
Non-current assets			
Trade and other receivables	5.1	71	18
Other financial assets	5.1	5,000	3,000
Investments in associates, joint arrangements and subsidiaries	6.2	3,749	3,735
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	6.1	1,893,968	1,730,095
Right-of-use assets	5.8	44,574	4,599
Forestry plantation		105	105
Intangible assets	5.2	1,744	2,513
Total non-current assets		**1,949,211**	**1,744,065**
Total assets		**2,053,655**	**1,849,679**
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	5.3	9,482	14,694
Trust funds and deposits	5.3	3,686	3,630
Unearned income/revenue	5.3	10,967	13,235
Provisions	5.5	14,908	15,375
Interest-bearing liabilities	5.4	4,996	4,793
Lease liabilities	5.8	2,146	2,247
Total current liabilities		**46,185**	**53,974**
Non-current liabilities			
Provisions	5.5	13,004	11,369
Interest-bearing liabilities	5.4	15,172	20,168
Lease liabilities	5.8	42,534	2,615
Total non-current liabilities		**70,710**	**34,152**
Total liabilities		**116,895**	**88,126**
Net assets		**1,936,760**	**1,761,553**
Equity			
Accumulated surplus		833,944	804,021
Reserves	9.1	1,102,816	957,532
Total Equity		**1,936,760**	**1,761,553**

The above balance sheet should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Changes in Equity
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

2023	Note	Total $'000	Accumulated Surplus $'000	Revaluation Reserve $'000	Other Reserves $'000
Balance at beginning of the financial year		1,761,553	804,021	918,715	38,817
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		31,195	31,195	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)	6.1	144,012	-	144,012	-
Transfers to other reserves	9.1	-	(24,937)	-	24,937
Transfers from other reserves	9.1	-	23,665	-	(23,665)
Balance at end of the financial year		**1,936,760**	**833,944**	**1,062,727**	**40,089**

2022	Note	Total $'000	Accumulated Surplus $'000	Revaluation Reserve $'000	Other Reserves $'000
Balance at beginning of the financial year		1,704,361	774,557	896,702	33,102
Surplus/(deficit) for the year		35,179	35,179	-	-
Net asset revaluation increment/(decrement)		22,013	-	22,013	-
Transfers to other reserves	9.1	-	(21,260)	-	21,260
Transfers from other reserves	9.1	-	15,545	-	(15,545)
Balance at end of the financial year		**1,761,553**	**804,021**	**918,715**	**38,817**

The above statement of changes in equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Cash Flows
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 Inflows/ (Outflows) $'000	2022 Inflows/ (Outflows) $'000
Cash flows from operating activities			
Rates and charges		139,144	133,505
Statutory fees and fines		5,767	5,422
User fees		29,056	29,960
Grants - operating		36,868	40,082
Grants - capital		16,883	18,504
Contributions - monetary		6,767	3,497
Interest received		2,890	462
Trust funds and deposits taken		(406)	357
Other receipts		3,578	125
Net GST refund/payment		278	(717)
Employee costs		(81,703)	(76,222)
Materials and services		(93,683)	(80,874)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities		**65,439**	**74,101**
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment		(55,189)	(55,046)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	3.6	1,473	998
Purchase or payments for other financial assets		(26,038)	(46,000)
Net increase/(decrease) in intangible assets		(744)	(1,338)
Net cash provided by/(used in) investing activities		**(80,498)**	**(101,386)**
Cash flows from financing activities			
Finance costs		(978)	(1,365)
Repayment of borrowings		(4,793)	(15,599)
Repayment of lease liabilities		(3,189)	(2,658)
Interest paid - lease liabilities		(359)	(258)
Net cash provided by/(used in) financing activities		**(9,319)**	**(19,880)**
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		(24,378)	(47,165)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		47,910	95,075
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	5.1	**23,532**	**47,910**
The following notes also provide details on the City's cash position			
Financing arrangements	5.6		

The above statement of cash flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Capital Works
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
Property			
Land		151	3,875
Buildings		15,423	17,065
Total property		**15,574**	**20,940**
Plant and equipment			
Plant, machinery and equipment		5,216	4,327
Fixtures, fittings and furniture		6,115	4
Fountains, statues and monuments		32	37
Total plant and equipment		**11,363**	**4,368**
Infrastructure			
Land improvements		4,508	4,061
Bridges		862	1,363
Sealed roads		12,455	11,825
Unsealed roads		3,690	3,367
Pathways		3,984	3,018
Drainage		1,545	3,099
Public furniture and fittings		3,558	3,005
Total infrastructure		**30,602**	**29,738**
Total capital works expenditure	6.1	**57,539**	**55,046**
Represented by:			
New asset expenditure		23,982	19,873
Asset renewal expenditure		33,510	34,704
Asset upgrade expenditure		47	469
Total capital works expenditure		**57,539**	**55,046**

The above statement of capital works should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 1: Overview

Introduction

The Greater Bendigo City Council was established by an Order of the Governor in Council on 10th September 1993 and is a body corporate.
The Council's main office is located at 189 - 229 Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo, Victoria.

Statement of compliance

These financial statements are a general purpose financial report that consists of a Comprehensive Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Cash Flows, Statement of Capital Works and Notes accompanying these financial statements. The general purpose financial report complies with the Australian Accounting Standards (AAS), other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board, the *Local Government Act 2020* , and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* .

The Council is a not-for-profit entity and therefore applies the additional AUS paragraph 16.3 of AASB 101 and need not comply with the paragraph 16 requirement to make an explicit and unreserved statement of compliance with IFRSs.

Significant accounting policies

(a) Basis of accounting

Accounting policies are selected and applied in a manner which ensures that the resulting financial information satisfies the concepts of relevance and reliability, thereby ensuring that the substance of the underlying transactions or other events is reported. Accounting policies applied are disclosed in sections where the related balance or financial statement matter is disclosed.

The accrual basis of accounting has been used in the preparation of these financial statements, except for the cash flow information, whereby assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses are recognised in the reporting period to which they relate, regardless of when cash is received or paid.

The financial statements are based on the historical cost convention unless a different measurement basis is specifically disclosed in the notes to the financial statements.

The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The financial statements are in Australian dollars. The amounts presented in the financial statements have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars unless otherwise specified. Minor discrepancies in tables between totals and the sum of components are due to rounding.

Judgements, estimates and assumptions are required to be made about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated judgements are based on professional judgement derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised and also in future periods that are affected by the revision. Judgements and assumptions made by management in the application of AAS's that have significant effects on the financial statements and estimates relate to:
- the fair value of land, buildings, infrastructure, plant and equipment (refer to Note 6.1)
- the determination of depreciation for buildings, infrastructure, plant and equipment (refer to Note 6.1)
- the determination of employee provisions (refer to Note 5.5)
- the determination of landfill provisions (refer to Note 5.5)
- the determination of whether performance obligations are sufficiently specific so as to determine whether an arrangement is within the scope of AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers or AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities (refer to Note 3)
- the determination, in accordance with AASB 16 Leases, of the lease term, the estimation of the discount rate when not implicit in the lease and whether an arrangement is in substance short-term or low value (refer to Note 5.8)
- whether or not AASB 1059 Service Concession Arrangements: Grantors is applicable
- other areas requiring judgements

Unless otherwise stated, all accounting policies are consistent with those applied in the prior year. Where appropriate, comparative figures have been amended to accord with current presentation, and disclosure has been made of any material changes to comparatives.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Income and expenses are recognised net of the amount of associated GST. Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is included with other receivables or payables in the Balance Sheet.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 2: Analysis of our results

2.1 Performance against budget

The performance against budget notes compare the City's financial plan, expressed through its annual budget, with actual performance. *The Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* requires explanation of any material variances. The City has adopted a materiality threshold with explanations provided if the operational expense variance is greater than 10% and is greater than $2,500,000 (capital expenditure greater than 10% and $1,000,000). Explanations have not been provided for variations below the materiality threshold unless the variance is considered to be material because of its nature.

These notes are prepared to meet the requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*.

2.1.1 Income / Revenue and expenditure

	Budget 2023 $'000	Actual 2023 $'000	Variance $'000	Variance %	Ref
Income / Revenue					
Rates and charges	139,298	139,172	(126)	0%	
Statutory fees and fines	5,101	5,848	747	15%	
User fees	25,589	29,068	3,479	14%	**1**
Grants - operating	29,315	39,136	9,821	34%	**2**
Grants - capital	19,923	16,883	(3,040)	-15%	**3**
Contributions - monetary	2,707	6,769	4,062	150%	**4**
Contributions - non monetary	12,000	17,007	5,007	42%	**5**
Share of net profits/(losses) of associates	95	14	(81)	-85%	
Other income	2,357	5,456	3,099	131%	**6**
Total income / revenue	**236,385**	**259,353**	**22,968**	**10%**	
Expenses					
Employee costs	77,771	81,548	(3,777)	-5%	
Materials and services	74,403	85,803	(11,400)	-15%	**7**
Depreciation	42,726	43,500	(774)	-2%	
Amortisation - intangible assets	930	1,513	(583)	-63%	
Amortisation - right of use assets	2,800	3,030	(230)	-8%	
Bad and doubtful debts - allowance for impairment losses	261	385	(124)	-48%	
Borrowing costs	999	977	22	2%	
Finance costs - leases	350	358	(8)	-2%	
Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant & equipment	4,020	9,712	(5,692)	-142%	**8**
Other expenses	600	1,332	(732)	-122%	
Total expenses	**204,860**	**228,158**	**(23,298)**	**-11%**	
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	**31,525**	**31,195**	**(330)**	**-1%**	

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

2.1.1 Income / Revenue and expenditure (cont.)
(i) Explanation of material variations

1 **User fees:**
User fees revenue was higher than budget due predominantly to conservative estimates and uncertainties post Covid-19 conditions. This included $0.5M for parking fees, $1.3M for the Bendigo Art Gallery and an additional $2M Hirer income from Box Office Sales made by Bendigo Venues and Events (noting that this is offset by $2M in materials and services for Hirer box office payments).

2 **Grants - operating:**
The City received 100% of the 2023/2024 financial assistance grant in advance totaling $21m however only 75% early payment of $15m was included in the adopted budget. This advance payment is not known until late each financial year. Unbudgeted operating grant revenue of $1M was also received to help deliver the Healthy Loddon Campaspe program, improving health outcomes in the Loddon Campaspe region – the heart of Victoria. And $1.1M in unbudgeted grants to cover flood damage costs were brought to account.

3 **Grants - capital:**
$3.1M of grants which were budgeted for the Bendigo Tramways Workshop expansion project were re-classified as cash contributions as they were received via VicTrack rather than a government department. (See also note 3.4)

4 **Contributions - monetary:**
$3.1M of grants which were budgeted for the Bendigo Tramways Workshop expansion project were re-classified as cash contributions as they were received via VicTrack rather than a government department.(See also note 3.5)

5 **Contributions - non monetary:**
The City's contributions - non-monetary budget is set based on an assessment of recent years actual contributions received, the majority of which is infrastructure received through the sub division process. It is difficult to get an estimate of when subdivision infrastructure will be handed over to the City at the time the budget is set. The actual recognised was greater than the estimate by $5M, representing non-monetary income to the City.

6 **Other income:**
Term deposit rates increased during the financial year as the cash rate rose. This earned the city an additional $2.6M of unbudgeted interest income.

7 **Materials and services:**
$5.3M of major works that were budgeted through the Capital Works Statement were reclassified as 'operating' after being assessed through the capitalisation process. Bendigo Venues and Events expensed an additional $2M Hirer box office payments made (noting that this is offset by $2M in user Hirer income from Box Office Sales). The steady increase in the price of fuel since the 2021/2022 financial year had not been factored into the budget, the city has seen a 65% increase in fuel prices over a 2 year period. The City also incurred $2.2M in operating costs from flood damage, and experienced cost increases more broadly due to general inflation increases.

8 **Net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant & equipment:**
The City's net loss on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant & equipment budget is based on an assessment of recent year actuals. This is generally for assets that are being renewed and the loss is the residual value of these asset. In addition to this $3.2M of works in progress was written off due to the expenditure being assessed as not capital due to it not being in line with Councils capitalisation policy or the expenditure not relating to a Council owned asset.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

2.1.2 Capital works

	Budget 2023 $'000	Actual 2023 $'000	Variance $'000	Variance %	Ref
Property					
Land	3,000	151	(2,849)	-95%	**1**
Buildings	19,550	15,423	(4,127)	-21%	**2**
Total property	**22,550**	**15,574**	**(6,976)**	**-31%**	
Plant and equipment					
Plant, machinery and equipment	3,860	5,216	1,356	35%	**3**
Fixtures, fittings and furniture	8,398	6,115	(2,283)	-27%	**4**
Fountains, statues and monuments	55	32	(23)	-42%	
Total plant and equipment	**12,313**	**11,363**	**(950)**	**-8%**	
Infrastructure					
Land improvements	7,618	4,508	(3,110)	-41%	**5**
Bridges	660	862	202	31%	
Sealed roads	11,789	12,455	666	6%	
Unsealed roads	3,300	3,690	390	12%	
Footpaths and cycleways	3,785	3,984	199	5%	
Drainage	3,072	1,545	(1,527)	-50%	**6**
Public furniture and fittings	4,444	3,558	(886)	-20%	
Total infrastructure	**34,668**	**30,602**	**(4,066)**	**-12%**	
Total capital works expenditure	**69,531**	**57,539**	**(11,992)**	**-17%**	
Represented by:					
New asset expenditure	33,351	23,982	(9,369)	-28%	**7**
Asset renewal expenditure	35,830	33,510	(2,320)	-6%	
Asset upgrade expenditure	350	47	(303)	-87%	
Total capital works expenditure	**69,531**	**57,539**	**(11,992)**	**-17%**	

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

2.1.2 Capital works (cont.)
(i) Explanation of material variations

1 **Land:**
Council budgeted $2.5M to progress the Bendigo Regional employment precinct for future industrial land. This did not proceed in the 22/23 financial year with the budget allocation being deferred into future years. $500k was also budgeted for purchasing land in the Huntly Growth area which will be progressed in future years.

2 **Buildings:**
The Bendigo tramways workshop expansion had an annual budget of $6m of which $3.1m was delivered during the financial year. The remainder of the budget will be carried over into the 23/24 financial year for completion of the project. The Strathfieldsaye Community hub also had a delay in delivery with only $141k delivered of an overall allocation of $950k. The Brennan Park facilities upgrade project for $900k was also put on hold during the financial year as the City works towards completing the overall aquatic strategy.

3 **Plant Machinery & Equipment:**
Due to the extended lead time to acquire new plant, remaining budget from the previous year was carried over to the 22/23 financial year to fund delayed plant.

4 **Office Equipment and Fittings:**
An amount for $1M was included in the annual budget to improve the cities information technology systems and processes, however only a small portion of this program was delivered with City's resources being re-directed to the move to the new City offices at Galkangu (Govhub). This remaining budget allocation will be carried forward for delivery in future years. Fit-out costs of Galkangu were $500k lower than the allocated budget.

5 **Land Improvements:**
The City budgeted $1.5M of capital expenditure for the joint use facility being constructed at Catherine Macauley College. This was Councils contribution during the year, however this asset ownership will remain with the College, so this expenditure is not considered capital for financial reporting purposes. The Ewing Park precinct also had an overall budget of $1.8M of which $977k was delivered during the 22/23 financial year with the remainder to be carried forward for completion in the 23/24 financial year. The budgeted Mandurang cricket nets ($320k) were also not constructed during the financial year and delivery will commence in 23/24.

6 **Drainage:**
The Kennington reservoir dam wall project had a budget of $1.6M however the delivery of this project has been deferred to the 23/24 financial year.

7 **New Asset Expenditure:**
A number of new capital projects were delayed during the financial year with delivery continuing in the 23/24 financial year. These projects include the Bendigo tramways workshop expansion, Bendigo airport civil works and the municipal baths. $1.5m of new capital expenditure for works at the joint use facility at Catherine Macauley college has been expensed (see item 5 above)

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

2.2.1 Analysis of Council results by program
Council delivers its functions and activities through the following programs.

Corporate Performance
The Corporate Performance directorate leads, enables and strengthens the organisation to ensure it has the resources and capability to deliver on the Community Plan. The directorate does this through developing our people and culture, systems and processes, good governance practices and financial stewardship to ensure the delivery of high quality services and programs. The directorate leads innovation, change, transformation and project management, to ensure we are ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future in partnership with our community.

Healthy Communities and Environments
The Healthy Communities and Environment directorate plans and delivers a broad and diverse range of community services and programs aimed at supporting people to live their lives fully and be active, safe, engaged and healthy. The focus of the directorate is on developing policy, plans and programs in partnership with the community, delivering services, and supporting the delivery of community infrastructure projects.

Presentation and Assets
The Presentation and Assets directorate provides and maintains high quality assets and services that help make Greater Bendigo a great place to live, while planning and delivering new assets and services to support Bendigo's ongoing growth. Demonstrating and committing to environmentally responsible thinking and practices and encouraging this throughout the organisation and community is an important focus for the directorate. Business units include Engineering, Resource Recovery and Education, Works, Parks and Open Space and Property Services.

Strategy and Growth
The Strategy and Growth directorate incorporates responsibility for Bendigo Art Gallery, Economic Development, Bendigo Venues and Events, Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning, and Tourism and Major Events. The overarching role of the directorate is to contribute to the economic, cultural and social prosperity of our region by identifying and supporting investment opportunities, employment generation and the integrated planning for the sustainable growth of our City and region.

Further details on the services provided by each directorate can be found within the City's annual Budget, published on the City's website.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

2.2.2 Summary of income / revenue, expenses, assets and capital expenses by program

2023	Income / Revenue	Expenses	Surplus/ (Deficit)	Grants included in income / revenue	Total assets
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Corporate Performance *	169,370	27,364	142,006	26,255	148,743
Healthy Communities and Environments	30,628	42,204	(11,576)	14,269	241,522
Presentation and Assets	35,862	127,828	(91,966)	9,502	1,592,208
Strategy and Growth	23,493	30,762	(7,269)	5,993	71,182
	259,353	**228,158**	**31,195**	**56,019**	**2,053,655**

2022	Income / Revenue	Expenses	Surplus/ (Deficit)	Grants included in income / revenue	Total assets
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Corporate Performance *	162,182	26,333	135,849	27,713	133,970
Healthy Communities and Environments	29,811	38,967	(9,156)	14,950	217,533
Presentation and Assets	35,544	115,985	(80,441)	13,648	1,434,064
Strategy and Growth	17,893	28,966	(11,073)	3,513	64,112
	245,430	**210,251**	**35,179**	**59,824**	**1,849,679**

* Includes the Office of the CEO and the Directorate for Commonwealth games for the purpose of this reporting (see note 8.5 for events occurring after balance date)

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 3: Funding for the delivery of our services

	2023	2022
3.1 Rates and charges	**$'000**	**$'000**

The City declares rates on the Capital Improved Value (CIV) of all rateable property within the municipal district. The CIV is the value of the land and all its improvements. Valuations are undertaken annually by the Valuer General of Victoria.

The valuation base used to calculate general rates for 2022/23 was $36,210,207,000 (2021/22 $25,923,717,000).

General rates	112,220	107,911
Supplementary rates and rate adjustments	934	1,622
Garbage charge	15,314	13,782
Recyclable charge	5,879	5,263
Organics charge	4,347	4,166
Interest on rates and charges	478	382
Total rates and charges	**139,172**	**133,126**

The date of the latest general revaluation of land for rating purposes within the municipal district was 1 January 2022, and the valuation will be first applied in the rating year commencing 1 July 2022.

Annual rates and charges are recognised as revenues when the City issues annual rates notices. Supplementary rates are recognised when a valuation and reassessment is completed and a supplementary rates notice issued.

3.2 Statutory fees and fines

Building and planning	2,526	2,400
Parking	525	352
Regulatory service	261	312
Fines	1,702	1,333
Other fees and charges	834	943
Total statutory fees and fines	**5,848**	**5,340**

Statutory fees and fines (including parking fees and fines) are recognised as revenue when the service has been provided, the payment is received, or when the penalty has been applied, whichever first occurs.

3.3 User fees

Leisure centre and recreation	356	698
Child care/children's programs	4,340	4,084
Parking	3,797	3,022
Saleyard yarding	962	1,038
Regulatory service	1,207	1,210
Ticket income *	6,332	6,639
Sales income	1,294	1,896
Waste management services	6,735	7,673
Other fees and charges	4,045	3,425
Total user fees	**29,068**	**29,685**

User fees by timing of revenue recognition		
User fees recognised over time	6,332	6,639
User fees recognised at a point in time	22,736	23,046
Total user fees	**29,068**	**29,685**

User fees are recognised as revenue at a point in time, or over time, when (or as) the performance obligation is satisfied. Recognition is based on the underlying contractual terms. * Ticket income consists of ticket sales through Ulumbarra Theatre, Capital Theatre, Bendigo Art Gallery and the Visitor Information Centre.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

3.4 Funding from other levels of government	**2023 $'000**	**2022 $'000**
Grants were received in respect of the following :		
Summary of grants		
Commonwealth funded grants	40,881	37,016
State funded grants	15,138	22,808
Total grants received	**56,019**	**59,824**
(a) Operating Grants		
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Financial Assistance Grants - Unallocated	20,738	19,773
Financial Assistance Grants - Local Roads	5,426	4,900
Aged services	4,541	4,483
Health services - immunisation	11	10
Recurrent - State Government		
Aged services	24	55
Arts and culture	308	311
Environment	56	70
Family and children	301	140
Health services - immunisation	128	80
Maternal and child health	2,050	2,008
Rural access initiative	790	733
School crossing supervisors	355	284
Youth	88	84
Total recurrent operating grants	**34,816**	**32,931**
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Arts and culture	-	100
Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements	599	-
Recreation / healthy communities	-	5
Non-recurrent - State Government		
Airport	-	50
Arts and culture	227	694
Business support	363	1,174
Community and strategy planning	125	502
Community employment connectors	128	-
Community safety	267	95
Disaster Recovery	564	-
Cultural diversity	204	416
Emergency management	33	100
Environment	78	66
Family and children	96	126
Galkangu	-	3,000
Recreation / healthy communities	1,027	1,523
Tourism / events projects	94	237
Other	515	301
Total non-recurrent operating grants	**4,320**	**8,389**
Total operating grants	**39,136**	**41,320**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

3.4 Funding from other levels of government (cont.)	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
(b) Capital Grants		
Recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Roads to recovery	2,246	2,246
Total recurrent capital grants	**2,246**	**2,246**
Non-recurrent - Commonwealth Government		
Airport	2,001	279
Local roads and community infrastructure	5,320	3,829
Parks and open spaces	-	644
Recreation / healthy communities	-	747
Non-recurrent - State Government		
Airport	2,823	407
Arts and culture	14	-
Art gallery redevelopment	-	560
Family and children	105	-
Footpaths	83	60
Golden Dragon Museum and precinct	110	794
Heritage	-	100
Libraries infrastructure	35	-
Local roads and streets	1,497	1,805
Parks and open spaces	613	3,269
Recreation / healthy communities	1,701	3,287
Showgrounds upgrade	-	280
Waste	335	197
Total non-recurrent capital grants	**14,637**	**16,258**
Total capital grants	**16,883**	**18,504**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

3.4 Funding from other levels of government (cont.)

(c) Recognition of grant income

Before recognising funding from government grants as revenue the City assesses whether there is a contract that is enforceable and has sufficiently specific performance obligations in accordance with *AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers* . When both these conditions are satisfied, the City:

- identifies each performance obligation relating to revenue under the contract/agreement
- determines the transaction price
- recognises a contract liability for its obligations under the agreement
- recognises revenue as it satisfies its performance obligations, at the time or over time when services are rendered.

Where the contract is not enforceable and/or does not have sufficiently specific performance obligations, the City applies *AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities* .

Grant revenue with sufficiently specific performance obligations is recognised over time as the performance obligations specified in the underlying agreement are met. Where performance obligations are not sufficiently specific, grants are recognised on the earlier of receipt or when an unconditional right to receipt has been established. Grants relating to capital projects are generally recognised progressively as the capital project is completed. The following table provides a summary of the accounting framework under which grants are recognised.

	2023	2022
Income recognised under AASB 1058 *Income of Not-for-Profit Entities*	**$'000**	**$'000**
General purpose	26,164	24,673
Specific purpose grants to acquire non-financial assets	16,778	18,060
Other specific purpose grants	480	3,517
Revenue recognised under AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers*		
Specific purpose grants	12,597	13,574
	56,019	**59,824**

(d) Unspent grants received on condition that they be spent in a specific manner		
Operating		
Balance at start of year	3,040	9,257
Received during the financial year and remained unspent at balance date	3,099	3,040
Received in prior years and spent during the financial year	(3,040)	(9,257)
Balance at year end	**3,099**	**3,040**
Capital		
Balance at start of year	6,344	272
Received during the financial year and remained unspent at balance date	3,580	6,344
Received in prior years and spent during the financial year	(5,430)	(272)
Balance at year end	**4,494**	**6,344**

Unspent grants are determined and disclosed on a cash basis.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

3.5 Contributions	**2023 $'000**	**2022 $'000**
Monetary	6,769	3,497
Non-monetary - developer contributed assets	17,007	9,676
Total contributions	**23,776**	**13,173**
Contributions of non monetary assets were received in relation to the following asset classes.		
Artworks	467	342
Buildings	696	-
Land	1,970	1,926
Sealed roads	5,935	3,686
Unsealed roads	-	85
Pathways	2,766	1,183
Drainage	5,173	1,882
Other	-	572
Total non-monetary contributions	**17,007**	**9,676**

Monetary and non monetary contributions are recognised as revenue at their fair value when the City obtains control over the contributed asset.

3.6 Net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

Proceeds of sale	1,473	998
Written down value of assets disposed	(11,185)	(6,675)
Total net gain/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	**(9,712)**	**(5,677)**

The profit or loss on sale of an asset is determined when control of the asset has passed to the buyer.

3.7 Other income

Rental income	1,757	1,620
Revenue from volunteer services	418	332
Interest on investment	2,890	439
Landfill rehabilitation	-	1,404
Other	391	307
Total other income	**5,456**	**4,102**

Under AASB 1058, government sectors are required to recognise Volunteer Services as income at fair value if it can be measured reliably and the services would have been purchased if they were not provided by volunteers. This revenue matches the cost of volunteer services expenditure Note 4.7 other expenses.

Interest is recognised as it is earned.
Landfill rehabilitation income represents the movement in the rehabilitation estimate for closed sites due to the change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the effect of any change in the discount rate.

Other income is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable and is recognised when the City gains control over the right to receive the income.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 4: The cost of delivering services

4.1 (a) Employee costs	**2023 $'000**	**2022 $'000**
Wages and salaries	71,054	66,703
WorkCover	1,294	1,236
Superannuation	7,044	6,531
Fringe benefits tax	205	198
Agency staff	1,951	1,395
Total employee costs	**81,548**	**76,063**

(b) Superannuation

The City made contributions to the following funds:

Defined benefit fund		
Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	293	331
Employer contributions - other funds	-	-
	293	**331**
Employer contributions payable at reporting date.	-	-
Accumulation funds		
Employer contributions to Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (Vision Super)	3,465	3,594
Employer contributions - Australian Super	555	447
Employer contributions - Hostplus Super	318	290
Employer contributions - VicSuper	255	266
Employer contributions - other funds	2,158	1,603
	6,751	**6,200**
Employer contributions payable at reporting date.	58	286

Contributions made exclude amounts accrued at balance date. Refer to Note 9.3 for further information relating to the City's superannuation obligations.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

4.2 Materials and services	**2023 $'000**	**2022 $'000**
Contract payments (by Service Unit)*		
Resource Recovery & Education	12,205	14,129
Parks & Open Space	3,616	3,451
Library Services	3,298	3,237
Bendigo Venues and Events	5,316	2,394
Active and Healthy Communities	1,962	2,275
Capital/Major Projects	1,958	1,832
Engineering	942	1,482
Works	2,310	1,224
Art Gallery	593	988
Tourism and Major Events	754	984
Economic Development	491	879
Property Services	1,209	613
Safe & Healthy Environments	628	493
Strategic Planning	1,305	488
Community Wellbeing	453	468
Other	1,607	1,325
Administration expense	7,744	7,154
Utility expenses	5,675	5,293
Materials, concrete products and hardware	7,595	6,917
Maintenance and consumables	11,105	11,588
Plant and equipment operating expenses	8,257	6,018
Contributions and donations	4,693	5,181
Insurance	2,087	1,843
Total materials and services	**85,803**	**80,256**

* The City has disclosed larger categories of Contract payments by Service Unit.
Expenses are recognised as they are incurred and reported in the financial year to which they relate.

4.3 Depreciation	**2023 $'000**	**2022 $'000**
Property	9,747	9,664
Plant and equipment	3,045	3,157
Infrastructure	30,708	29,079
Total depreciation	**43,500**	**41,900**

Refer to Note 5.2, 5.8 and 6.1 for a more detailed breakdown of depreciation and amortisation charges and accounting policy.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

4.4 Amortisation - Intangible assets	**2023 $'000**	**2022 $'000**
Landfill airspace	1,513	931
Total Amortisation - Intangible assets	**1,513**	**931**
4.5 Amortisation - Right of use assets		
Property	1,766	1,480
Plant and equipment	1,229	1,143
Other	35	35
Total Amortisation - Right of use assets	**3,030**	**2,658**
4.6 Finance Costs - Leases		
Interest - Lease Liabilities	358	258
Total finance costs	**358**	**258**
4.7 Other expenses		
Auditors' remuneration - VAGO - audit of the financial statement and performance statement.	66	62
Auditors' remuneration - Internal Audit and grant acquittals	62	57
Cost of service for volunteer services	418	332
Landfill rehabilitation *	786	68
Total other expenses	**1,332**	**519**

** Landfill rehabilitation expenditure represents the change in the estimate for future rehabilitation works required at closed landfill sites. This includes any change as a result of updated rates used in the net present value calculation of the landfill provision. Refer to Note 5.5 for more detail on the provision for landfill rehabilitation.*

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 5: Our financial position

	2023	2022
5.1 Financial assets	**$'000**	**$'000**
(a) Cash and cash equivalents		
Cash on hand	21	25
Cash at bank	19,511	33,848
Term deposits	4,000	14,037
Total cash and cash equivalents	**23,532**	**47,910**

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand, deposits at call, and other highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, net of outstanding bank overdrafts.

(b) Other financial assets		
Current		
Term deposits - current	67,038	43,000
Non-current		
Term deposits - non-current	5,000	3,000
Total other financial assets	**72,038**	**46,000**
Total financial assets	**95,570**	**93,910**

Other financial assets are valued at fair value, at balance date. Term deposits are measured at original cost. Any unrealised gains and losses on holdings at balance date are recognised as either a revenue or expense.

Other financial assets include term deposits and those with original maturity dates of three to 12 months are classified as current, whilst term deposits with maturity dates greater than 12 months are classified as non-current.

The City's cash and cash equivalents are subject to external restrictions that limit amounts available for discretionary use. These include:

- Trust funds and deposits (Note 5.3)	3,686	3,630
- Grants received in advance (Note 5.3)	9,548	9,384
Total restricted funds	**13,234**	**13,014**
Total unrestricted cash and cash equivalents	**10,298**	**34,896**
Total unrestricted cash and cash equivalents, and financial assets (term deposits)	**82,336**	**80,896**

Intended Allocations

Although not externally restricted the following amounts have been allocated for specific future purposes by the City:

- Other reserves - internal allocation determined by Council	40,089	38,817
- Cash allocated for carried forward capital projects	18,503	11,916
Total funds subject to intended allocations	**58,592**	**50,733**

Refer to Note 9.1 (b) Other Reserves for further detail relating to the City's intended allocations being held in reserves.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
5.1 Financial assets (cont.)	**$'000**	**$'000**
(c) Trade and other receivables		
Current		
Statutory receivables		
Rates debtors	2,532	2,043
Infringement debtors	4,834	4,378
Provision for doubtful debts - infringements	(2,075)	(1,700)
Net GST receivable	1,398	1,676
Non statutory receivables		
Other debtors	311	432
General debtors - grants	1,512	1,367
General debtors - other	2,134	2,591
Provision for doubtful debts - other debtors	(38)	(45)
Total current trade and other receivables	**10,608**	**10,742**
Non-current		
Non statutory receivables		
Other debtors	71	18
Total non-current trade and other receivables	**71**	**18**
Total trade and other receivables	**10,679**	**10,760**

Short term receivables are carried at invoice amount. A provision for doubtful debts is recognised when there is objective evidence that an impairment has occurred. Long term receivables are carried at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method.

(d) Ageing of Receivables

The ageing of the City's trade and other receivables (excluding statutory receivables) that are not impaired was:

Current (not yet due)	1,738	2,540
Past due by up to 30 days	334	751
Past due between 31 and 180 days	1,755	507
Past due between 181 and 365 days	53	268
Past due by more than 1 year	148	297
Total trade and other receivables	**4,028**	**4,363**

(e) Ageing of individually impaired Receivables

At balance date, other debtors representing financial assets with a nominal value of $2,113,028 (2022: $1,744,855) were impaired. The amount of the provision raised against these debtors was $2,113,028 (2022: $1,744,855). They individually have been impaired as a result of their doubtful collection. Many of the long outstanding past due amounts have been lodged with City's debt collectors or are on payment arrangements.

The ageing of receivables that have been individually determined as impaired at reporting date was:

Past due between 181 and 365 days	-	11
Past due by more than 1 year	2,113	1,734
Total trade & other receivables	**2,113**	**1,745**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
5.2 Non-financial assets	**$'000**	**$'000**
(a) Intangible assets		
Landfill air space	1,500	2,269
Water rights	244	244
Total intangible assets	**1,744**	**2,513**

	Landfill	Water Rights	Total
	$'000	**$'000**	**$'000**
Gross carrying amount			
Balance at 1 July 2022	6,428	244	6,672
Other additions	744	-	744
Balance at 30 June 2023	7,172	244	7,416
Accumulated amortisation and impairment			
Balance at 1 July 2022	(4,159)	-	(4,159)
Amortisation expense	(1,513)	-	(1,513)
Balance at 30 June 2023	(5,672)	-	(5,672)
Net book value at 30 June 2022	2,269	244	2,513
Net book value at 30 June 2023	**1,500**	**244**	**1,744**

Intangible assets with finite lives are amortised as an expense on a systematic basis over the asset's useful life. Amortisation is generally calculated on a straight line basis, at a rate that allocates the asset value, less any estimated residual value over its estimated useful life. Estimates of the remaining useful lives and amortisation method are reviewed at least annually, and adjustments made where appropriate.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

5.3 Payables, trust funds and deposits and unearned income/revenue	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
(a) Trade and other payables		
Current		
Non-statutory payables		
Trade payables	2,657	7,808
Accrued expenses	780	153
Sundry creditors	6,045	6,733
Total current trade and other payables	**9,482**	**14,694**
(b) Trust funds and deposits		
Current		
Refundable security holding deposits	2,537	3,052
Fire services levy (held for the state revenue office)	870	408
Other refundable deposits	279	170
Total current trust funds and deposits	**3,686**	**3,630**
(c) Unearned income/revenue		
Current		
Grants received in advance - operating	3,099	3,040
Grants received in advance - capital	6,449	6,344
Pre sold ticket income	1,419	3,851
Total current unearned income/revenue	**10,967**	**13,235**

Unearned income/revenue represents contract liabilities and reflect consideration received in advance from customers in respect of delivering a service or constructing an asset that will benefit the City's residents. Unearned income/revenue are derecognised and recorded as revenue when promised goods and services are transferred to the customer. Refer to Note 3.

Amounts received as deposits and retention amounts controlled by the City are recognised as trust funds until they are returned, transferred in accordance with the purpose of the receipt, or forfeited. Trust funds that are forfeited, resulting in the City gaining control of the funds, are to be recognised as revenue at the time of forfeit.

Purpose and nature of items

Fire Service Levy - the City is the collection agent for fire services levy on behalf of the State Government. Payments receipted by the City before the end of financial year are held in trust until the payment is made to the State Revenue Office on due dates.

Refundable security holding deposits - deposits are taken by the City as a form of surety in a number of circumstances, including in relation to building works, tender deposits, contract deposits and the use of civic facilities.
Pre sold ticket income - sales for upcoming performances, predominantly at the Capital and Ulumburra theatres, are held as a deposit and only recognised as income once the performance has occurred.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

5.4 Interest-bearing liabilities	**2023 $'000**	**2022 $'000**
Current		
Borrowings - secured	4,996	4,793
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	-	-
Total current interest-bearing liabilities	**4,996**	**4,793**
Non-current		
Borrowings - secured	15,172	20,168
Treasury Corporation of Victoria borrowings - secured	-	-
Total non-current interest-bearing liabilities	**15,172**	**20,168**
Total	**20,168**	**24,961**

Borrowings are secured against a charge over the City's rate revenue

(a) The maturity profile for the City's borrowings is:		
Not later than one year	4,996	4,793
Later than one year and not later than five years	14,235	17,738
Later than five years	937	2,430
	20,168	**24,961**

Borrowings are initially measured at fair value, being the cost of the interest bearing liabilities, net of transaction costs. The measurement basis subsequent to initial recognition depends on whether the City has categorised its interest-bearing liabilities as either financial liabilities designated at fair value through the profit and loss, or financial liabilities at amortised cost. Any difference between the initial recognised amount and the redemption value is recognised in net result over the period of the borrowing using the effective interest method.
The classification depends on the nature and purpose of the interest bearing liabilities. The City determines the classification of its interest bearing liabilities at initial recognition.

5.5 Provisions

2023	**Employee $ '000**	**Landfill restoration $ '000**	**Total $ '000**
Balance at beginning of the financial year	16,791	9,953	26,744
Additional provisions	5,515	-	5,515
Amounts used	(5,733)	(203)	(5,936)
Change in provision estimate	-	919	919
Change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the effect of any change in the discount rate	59	611	670
Balance at the end of the financial year	**16,632**	**11,280**	**27,912**
Provisions - current	14,733	175	14,908
Provisions - non-current	1,899	11,105	13,004
2022			
Balance at beginning of the financial year	16,951	13,460	30,411
Additional provisions	6,972	-	6,972
Amounts used	(6,549)	(3,509)	(10,058)
Change in provision estimate	-	1,178	1,178
Change in the discounted amount arising because of time and the	(583)	(1,176)	(1,759)
Balance at the end of the financial year	**16,791**	**9,953**	**26,744**
Provisions - current	15,093	282	15,375
Provisions - non-current	1,698	9,671	11,369

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

5.5 Provisions (cont.)	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
(a) Employee provisions		
Current provisions expected to be wholly settled within 12 months		
Annual leave	4,345	4,360
Long service leave	1,590	1,649
Sick leave	13	13
	5,948	**6,022**
Current provisions expected to be wholly settled after 12 months		
Annual leave	1,118	1,216
Long service leave	7,540	7,725
Sick leave	127	130
	8,785	**9,071**
Total current employee provisions	**14,733**	**15,093**
Non-current		
Long service leave	1,899	1,698
Annual leave	-	-
Total non-current employee provisions	**1,899**	**1,698**
Aggregate carrying amount of employee provisions:		
Current	14,733	15,093
Non-current	1,899	1,698
Total aggregate carrying amount of employee	**16,632**	**16,791**

The calculation of employee costs and benefits includes all relevant on-costs and are calculated as follows at reporting date.

Annual leave

A liability for annual leave is recognised in the provision for employee benefits as a current liability because the City does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability. Liabilities for annual leave are measured at:
- nominal value if the City expects to wholly settle the liability within 12 months
- present value if the City does not expect to wholly settle within 12 months.

Liabilities that are not expected to be wholly settled within 12 months of the reporting date are recognised in the provision for employee benefits as current liabilities, measured at the present value of the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled using the remuneration rate expected to apply at the time of settlement.

Long service leave, Sick Leave (contracted employees)

Liability for long service leave (LSL) is recognised in the provision for employee benefits. Unconditional LSL is disclosed as a current liability as the City does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement. Unconditional LSL is measured at nominal value if expected to be settled within 12 months or at present value if not expected to be settled within 12 months. Conditional LSL that has been accrued, where an employee is yet to reach a qualifying term of employment, is disclosed as a non-current liability and measured at present value.

Effective 6 May 1996, the Sick Leave Gratuity Scheme (former City of Bendigo) arrangements and payments ceased to operate. However a number of staff who are entitled to this scheme remain employed by the City. It shall be adjusted annually within one (1) month of the publication of the Consumer Price Index.

Effective 1 April 1998, the Accumulated Sick Leave Scheme arrangements and payments cease to operate. However a number of staff who are entitled to this scheme remain employed by Greater Bendigo City Council. This balance is adjusted based on the individuals applicable pay rate.

	2023	2022
Key assumptions:		
- discount rate	4.06%	3.69%
- index rate	4.35%	3.85%

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
5.5 Provisions (cont.)	**$'000**	**$'000**
(b) Landfill restoration		
Current	175	282
Non-current	11,105	9,671
	11,280	**9,953**

The City is obligated to restore the active Eaglehawk landfill site once it reaches capacity. The forecast life of the Eaglehawk site is based on current estimates of remaining capacity and the forecast rate of infill. The city is also required to undertake aftercare works and monitoring at the Wolstencroft and White Hills closed sites. The provision for landfill restoration and aftercare has been calculated based on the present value of the expected cost of works to be undertaken. The expected cost of works has been estimated based on current understanding of work required to reinstate the sites to a suitable standard. Accordingly, the estimation of the provision required is dependent on the accuracy of the forecast timing of the work, work required and related costs.
Council reviews the landfill restoration provision on an annual basis, including the key assumptions listed below.

Key assumptions:		
- discount rate	3.36%	3.38%
- index rate (short term rehabilitation costs)	6.00%	3.08%
- index rate (long term after care costs)	3.36%	3.08%

5.6 Financing arrangements

The City has the following funding arrangements in place as at 30 June 2023.

Bank overdraft	3,500	3,500
Credit card facilities	400	400
Interest-bearing liabilities	20,168	24,961
Total facilities	**24,068**	**28,861**
Used facilities	20,269	25,073
Unused facilities	3,799	3,788
Total facilities	**24,068**	**28,861**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

5.7 Commitments

The City has entered into the following commitments. Commitments are not recognised in the Balance Sheet. Commitments are disclosed at their nominal value and presented inclusive of the GST payable.

(a) Commitments for expenditure

2023	Not later than 1 year	Later than 1 year and not later than 2 years	Later than 2 years and not later than 5 years	Later than 5 years	Total
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Operating					
Aquatic and leisure facilities	1,540	1,551	2,175	-	5,266
Building essential services	653	534	340	-	1,527
Car parking	289	-	-	-	289
Cleaning contracts	790	520	520	-	1,830
Communications	219	96	-	-	315
Community events	337	167	208	-	712
Contract management	659	83	56	-	798
Exhibitions	429	-	-	-	429
Galkangu - shared services	903	930	2,962	19,422	24,217
Insurance	14	-	-	-	14
Internal audit	53	-	-	-	53
IT / telecommunications	1,265	1,236	220	-	2,721
Organics collection	734	-	-	-	734
Processing organic waste	367	-	-	-	367
Recyclable garbage collection	1,584	1,584	660	-	3,828
Processing recyclable garbage	880	-	-	-	880
Sanitary services	3	-	-	-	3
Theatre costs	130	-	-	-	130
Transportation of waste from Eaglehawk Landfill	330	-	-	-	330
Veterinary services	242	259	-	-	501
Waste disposal	6,723	8,314	9,213	40,656	64,906
Total	**18,144**	**15,274**	**16,354**	**60,078**	**109,850**
Capital					
Car parking	85	-	-	-	85
Construction works	14,691	-	-	-	14,691
Plant	3,924	584	-	-	4,508
Total	**18,700**	**584**	**-**	**-**	**19,284**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

5.7 Commitments (cont.)

2022	Not later than 1 year	Later than 1 year and not later than 2 years	Later than 2 years and not later than 5 years	Later than 5 years	Total
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
Operating					
Aquatic and leisure facilities	2,359	497	1,420	-	4,276
Building essential services	590	294	713	238	1,835
Car parking	226	29	-	-	255
Cleaning contracts	1,063	171	-	-	1,234
Communications	104	19	19	-	142
Community events	290	278	428	45	1,041
Contract management	301	141	75	-	517
Exhibitions	376	-	-	-	376
Galkangu - shared services*	30	903	2,875	20,438	24,246
Insurance	15	15	15	-	45
Internal audit	53	-	-	-	53
IT / telecommunications	45	26	26	-	97
Organics collection	1,320	1,353	4,264	-	6,937
Processing organic waste	2,151	2,203	4,573	-	8,927
Recyclable garbage collection	1,540	1,579	4,972	-	8,091
Processing recyclable garbage	1,584	1,624	3,368	-	6,576
Sanitary services	88	37	112	39	276
Strategic planning	124	-	-	-	124
Theatre costs	213	17	-	-	230
Transportation of waste from Eaglehawk Landfill	776	-	-	-	776
Waste disposal	3,036	3,036	-	-	6,072
Website development	75	-	-	-	75
Total	**16,359**	**12,222**	**22,860**	**20,760**	**72,201**
Capital					
Car parking	179	-	-	-	179
Construction works	6,553	-	-	-	6,553
Galkangu - fit out costs	5,000	-	-	-	5,000
Garbage bins	330	-	-	-	330
Plant	3,278	-	-	-	3,278
Rehabilitation works	529	-	-	-	529
Total	**15,869**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**15,869**

**The comparative commitment figures have been updated to reflect the commitment to future outgoings as part of the shared services agreement at Galkangu. Prior year figures originally included the rental portion which is now represented as a lease liability at note 5.8*

(b) Operating lease receivables

Operating lease receivables

The City has entered into commercial property leases on its investment property, consisting of surplus freehold office complexes. These properties held under operating leases have remaining non-cancellable lease terms of between 1 and 10 years. All leases include a CPI based revision of the rental charge annually.

Future undiscounted minimum rentals receivable under non-cancellable operating leases are as follows:

	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
Not later than one year	1,159	1,253
Later than one year and not later than five years	1,052	1,789
Later than five years	365	418
	2,576	**3,460**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

5.8 Leases

At inception of a contract, the City assesses whether a contract is, or contains, a lease. A contract is, or contains, a lease if the contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset for a period of time in exchange for consideration. To identify whether a contract conveys the right to control the use of an identified asset, it is necessary to assess whether:
- The contract involves the use of an identified asset;
- The City has the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the asset throughout the period of use; and
- The City has the right to direct the use of the asset.

This policy is applied to contracts entered into, or changed, on or after 1 July 2019.

As a lessee, the City recognises a right-of-use asset and a lease liability at the lease commencement date. The right-of-use asset is initially measured at cost which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability adjusted for:
- any lease payments made at or before the commencement date less any lease incentives received; plus
- any initial direct costs incurred; and
- an estimate of costs to dismantle and remove the underlying asset or to restore the underlying asset or the site on which it is located.

The right-of-use asset is subsequently depreciated using the straight-line method from the commencement date to the earlier of the end of the useful life of the right-of-use asset or the end of the lease term. The estimated useful lives of right-of-use assets are determined on the same basis as those of property, plant and equipment. In addition, the right-of-use asset is periodically reduced by impairment losses, if any, and adjusted for certain measurements of the lease liability.

The lease liability is initially measured at the present value of the lease payments that are not paid at the commencement date, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease or, if that rate cannot be readily determined, an appropriate incremental borrowing rate. Generally, the City uses an appropriate incremental borrowing rate as the discount rate.

Lease payments included in the measurement of the lease liability comprise the following:
- Fixed payments
- Variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate, initially measured using the index or rate as at the commencement date;
- Amounts expected to be payable under a residual value guarantee; and
- The exercise price under a purchase option that the City is reasonably certain to exercise, lease payments in an optional renewal period if the City is reasonably certain to exercise an extension option, and penalties for early termination of a lease unless the City is reasonably certain not to terminate early.

When the lease liability is remeasured in this way, a corresponding adjustment is made to the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset, or is recorded in profit or loss if the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset has been reduced to zero.

5.8 Leases (cont.)

Right-of-Use Assets	**Property**	**Plant & Equipment**	**Other, etc.**	**Total**
	$'000	**$'000**	**$'000**	**$'000**
Balance at 1 July 2022	1,309	3,226	64	4,599
Additions*	42,092	972	-	43,064
Disposals	-	(33)	-	(33)
Amortisation charge	(1,825)	(1,196)	(35)	(3,056)
Balance at 30 June 2023	**41,576**	**2,969**	**29**	**44,574**

Lease Liabilities	**2023**	**2022**
Maturity analysis - contractual undiscounted cash flows	**$'000**	**$'000**
Less than one year	4,263	2,402
One to five years	13,208	2,734
More than five years	53,595	53
Total undiscounted lease liabilities as at 30 June:	**71,066**	**5,189**
Lease liabilities included in the Balance Sheet at 30 June:		
Current	2,146	2,247
Non-current	42,534	2,615
Total lease liabilities	**44,680**	**4,862**

*The City has entered into an initial 20-year lease agreement with the Department of Treasury and Finance. The Leasing accounting standard capitalises these future payments (over 20 years) into a Right-of-use asset as an addition and future liability.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 6: Assets we manage

6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

Summary of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment

	Carrying amount 30 June 2022 $'000	Additions $'000	Contributions $'000	Revaluation $'000	Depreciation $'000	Disposals & Write Offs $'000	Transfers $'000	Carrying amount 30 June 2023 $'000
Property	631,308	151	2,666	78,242	(9,747)	(2,451)	13,882	**714,051**
Plant and equipment	89,002	5,559	467	2,401	(3,045)	(995)	16	**93,405**
Infrastructure	958,308	-	13,874	63,369	(30,708)	(4,531)	30,305	**1,030,617**
Work in progress	51,477	51,829	-	-	-	(3,208)	(44,203)	**55,895**
	1,730,095	**57,539**	**17,007**	**144,012**	**(43,500)**	**(11,185)**	**-**	**1,893,968**

Summary of Work in Progress	Opening WIP $'000	Additions $'000	Write-off $'000	Transfers $'000	Closing WIP $'000
Property	23,233	15,846	(1,937)	(13,882)	**23,260**
Plant and equipment	47	22	(17)	(16)	**36**
Infrastructure	28,197	35,961	(1,254)	(30,305)	**32,599**
Total	**51,477**	**51,829**	**(3,208)**	**(44,203)**	**55,895**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment (cont.)
(a) Property

	Land - specialised	Land - non specialised	Land under roads	Total Land	Heritage buildings	Buildings - specialised	Buildings - non specialised	Total Buildings	Total Property
	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000	$'000
At fair value 1 July 2022	276,945	7,142	12,523	**296,610**	172,309	318,653	9,421	**500,383**	**796,993**
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2022	-	-	-	**-**	(58,941)	(106,596)	(148)	**(165,685)**	**(165,685)**
	276,945	7,142	12,523	**296,610**	113,368	212,057	9,273	**334,698**	**631,308**
Movements in fair value									
Additions	151	-	-	**151**	-	-	-	**-**	**151**
Contributions	962	-	1,008	**1,970**	284	1,233	-	**1,517**	**3,487**
Revaluation	19,777	397	676	**20,850**	63,133	8,209	(321)	**71,021**	**91,871**
Disposal	-	-	-	**-**	-	(1,273)	(2,000)	**(3,273)**	**(3,273)**
Write-off	-	-	-	**-**	-	-	-	**-**	**-**
Transfers	-	-	-	**-**	-	13,882	-	**13,882**	**13,882**
	20,890	397	1,684	**22,971**	63,417	22,051	(2,321)	**83,147**	**106,118**
Movements in accumulated depreciation									
Depreciation and amortisation	-	-	-	**-**	(2,962)	(6,638)	(147)	**(9,747)**	**(9,747)**
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	-	-	-	**-**	-	763	59	**822**	**822**
Accumulated depreciation of write offs	-	-	-	**-**	-	-	-	**-**	**-**
Accumulated depreciation of contributions	-	-	-	**-**	(238)	(583)	-	**(821)**	**(821)**
Revaluation	-	-	-	**-**	(17,019)	3,279	111	**(13,629)**	**(13,629)**
	-	-	-	-	(20,219)	(3,179)	23	**(23,375)**	**(23,375)**
At fair value 30 June 2023	297,835	7,539	14,207	**319,581**	235,726	340,704	7,100	**583,530**	**903,111**
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2023	-	-	-	**-**	(79,160)	(109,775)	(125)	**(189,060)**	**(189,060)**
Carrying amount	**297,835**	**7,539**	**14,207**	**319,581**	**156,566**	**230,929**	**6,975**	**394,470**	**714,051**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment (cont.)
(b) Plant and Equipment

	Plant and equipment $'000	Office equipment, furniture and fittings $'000	Artworks $'000	Fountains, staues and monuments $'000	Total plant and equipment $'000
At fair value 1 July 2022	33,725	10,061	59,795	13,984	**117,565**
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2022	(15,923)	(8,449)	-	(4,191)	**(28,563)**
	17,802	1,612	59,795	9,793	**89,002**
Movements in fair value					
Additions	5,479	80	-	-	**5,559**
Contributions	-	-	467	-	**467**
Revaluation	-	-	2,401	-	**2,401**
Disposal	(3,636)	-	-	-	**(3,636)**
Write-off	-	-	-	-	**-**
Transfers	-	-	-	16	**16**
	1,843	80	2,868	16	**4,807**
Movements in accumulated depreciation					
Depreciation and amortisation	(2,603)	(298)	-	(144)	**(3,045)**
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	2,641	-	-	-	**2,641**
Accumulated depreciation of contributions	-	-	-	-	**-**
Revaluation	-	-	-	-	**-**
	38	(298)	-	(144)	**(404)**
At fair value 30 June 2023	35,568	10,141	62,663	14,000	**122,372**
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2023	(15,885)	(8,747)	-	(4,335)	**(28,967)**
Carrying amount	**19,683**	**1,394**	**62,663**	**9,665**	**93,405**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment (cont.)
(c) Infrastructure

	Sealed roads $'000	Unsealed roads $'000	Bridges $'000	Pathways $'000	Drainage $'000	Land improvements $'000	Public furniture and fittings $'000	Landfill $'000	Total Infrastructure $'000
At fair value 1 July 2022	709,338	58,914	77,072	152,738	404,570	92,468	50,142	4,807	**1,550,049**
Accumulated depreciation at 1 July 2022	(289,143)	(18,619)	(30,382)	(55,839)	(125,759)	(42,929)	(24,863)	(4,207)	**(591,741)**
	420,195	40,295	46,690	96,899	278,811	49,539	25,279	600	**958,308**
Movements in fair value									
Additions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Contributions	5,939	-	-	2,794	5,332	-	-	-	**14,065**
Revaluation	36,921	1,963	3,155	3,412	26,550	-	-	-	**72,001**
Disposal	(6,892)	(2,940)	(64)	(461)	(625)	(514)	(1,240)	-	**(12,736)**
Write-off	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	**-**
Transfers	12,702	3,209	64	3,993	3,709	5,401	1,227	-	**30,305**
	48,670	2,232	3,155	9,738	34,966	4,887	(13)	-	**103,635**
Movements in accumulated depreciation									
Depreciation and amortisation	(13,536)	(2,476)	(771)	(3,719)	(3,911)	(3,540)	(2,355)	(400)	**(30,708)**
Accumulated depreciation of disposals	4,679	1,507	58	266	371	232	1,092	-	**8,205**
Accumulated depreciation of contributions	(4)	-	-	(28)	(159)	-	-	-	**(191)**
Revaluation	(730)	2,567	(825)	2,827	(12,471)	-	-	-	**(8,632)**
	(9,591)	1,598	(1,538)	(654)	(16,170)	(3,308)	(1,263)	(400)	**(31,326)**
At fair value 30 June 2023	758,008	61,146	80,227	162,476	439,536	97,355	50,129	4,807	**1,653,684**
Accumulated depreciation at 30 June 2023	(298,734)	(17,021)	(31,920)	(56,493)	(141,929)	(46,237)	(26,126)	(4,607)	**(623,067)**
Carrying amount	**459,274**	**44,125**	**48,307**	**105,983**	**297,607**	**51,118**	**24,003**	**200**	1,030,617

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment (cont.)

Acquisition

The purchase method of accounting is used for all acquisitions of assets, being the fair value of assets provided as consideration at the date of acquisition plus any incidental costs attributable to the acquisition. Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset (or paid to transfer a liability) in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

Where assets are constructed by the City, cost includes all materials used in construction, direct labour, borrowing costs incurred during construction, and an appropriate share of directly attributable variable and fixed overheads.

In accordance with City's policy, the threshold limits have applied when recognising assets within an applicable asset class and unless otherwise stated are consistent with the prior year.

	Depreciation Period	Threshold Limit
Asset recognition thresholds and depreciation periods		$'000
Land and Buildings		
land	n/a	-
buildings	20-150 years	10-20
Plant and Equipment		
plant and equipment	2-25 years	2
office equipment, furniture and fittings	2-25 years	2
artwork	n/a	-
fountains, statues and monuments	80-100 years	5
Infrastructure		
sealed roads	15-100 years	10
unsealed roads	15-100 years	10
pathways	25-50 years	5
bridges	100 years	10
drainage	100-200 years	5-20
public furniture and fittings	15-40 years	2-5
land improvements	20-80 years	5
landfill	6-10 years	-
Intangible assets		
landfill airspace	6-10 years	-

Land under roads

The City recognises land under roads it controls at fair value.

Depreciation and amortisation

Buildings, land improvements, plant and equipment, infrastructure, and other assets having limited useful lives are systematically depreciated over their useful lives to the City in a manner which reflects consumption of the service potential embodied in those assets. Estimates of remaining useful lives and residual values are made on a regular basis with major asset classes reassessed annually. Depreciation rates and methods are reviewed annually.

Where assets have separate identifiable components that are subject to regular replacement, these components are assigned distinct useful lives and residual values and a separate depreciation rate is determined for each component. Road earthworks are not depreciated on the basis that they are assessed as not having a limited useful life.

Straight line depreciation is charged based on the residual useful life as determined each year.

Depreciation periods used are listed above and are consistent with the prior year unless otherwise stated.

Repairs and maintenance

Where the repair relates to the replacement of a component of an asset and the cost exceeds the capitalisation threshold the cost is capitalised and depreciated. The carrying value of the replaced asset is expensed.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment (cont.)

Valuation of land and buildings

Valuation of land and buildings were undertaken by a qualified independent valuer William Wright, Opteon Property Group Pty Ltd Member No: 80899 at 30 June 2023. The valuation of land and buildings is at fair value, being market value based on highest and best use permitted by relevant land planning provisions. Where land use is restricted through existing planning provisions the valuation is reduced to reflect this limitation. This adjustment is an unobservable input in the valuation. The adjustment has no impact on the comprehensive income statement.

Specialised land is valued at fair value using site values adjusted for englobo (undeveloped and/or unserviced) characteristics, access rights and private interests of other parties and entitlements of infrastructure assets and services. This adjustment is an unobservable input in the valuation. The adjustment has no impact on the comprehensive income statement.

Any significant movements in the unobservable inputs for land and land under roads will have a significant impact on the fair value of these assets.

The date and type of the current valuation is detailed in the following table.

Details of the City's land and buildings and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 30 June 2023 are as follows:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of Valuation	Type of Valuation
Land	-	7,539	-	Jun-23	full
Specialised land	-	-	297,835	Jun-23	full
Land under roads	-	-	14,207	Jun-23	full
Buildings	-	6,975	-	Jun-23	full
Buildings - specialised	-	-	230,929	Jun-23	full
Buildings - heritage	-	-	156,566	Jun-23	full
Total	**-**	**14,514**	**699,537**		

Valuation of infrastructure

Valuation of Infrastructure assets and specialised buildings has been determined in accordance with contemporary asset management standards and are independently verified. The valuation process is managed by Mr. Ian McLauchlan, Manager Engineering (Certified Practicing Engineer) and Mr. Paul Nicholson, Coordinator GIS and Asset Information utilising internal professional engineering and technical resources. The valuation process for sealed roads, unsealed roads, pathways, bridges and drainage is performed annually with a third of each asset class inspected and valued. The valuation of land improvements and public furniture and fittings asset classes are completed on a three year cycle.

The date and type of the current valuation is detailed in the following table.

The valuation is at fair value based on current replacement cost less accumulated depreciation as at the date of valuation.

Details of the City's infrastructure and information about the fair value hierarchy as at 30 June 2023 are as follows:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Date of Valuation	Type of Valuation
Sealed roads	-	-	459,274	Jun-23	full
Unsealed roads	-	-	44,125	Jun-23	full
Pathways	-	-	105,983	Jun-23	full
Bridges	-	-	48,307	Jun-23	full
Drainage	-	-	297,607	Jun-23	full
Public furniture and fittings	-	-	24,003	Jun-22	full
Land improvements	-	-	24,003	Jun-22	full
Landfill	-	-	200	N/A	
Total	**-**	**-**	**1,003,502**		

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

6.1 Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment (cont.)
Description of significant unobservable inputs into level 3 valuations

Specialised land and land under roads is valued using a market based direct comparison technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the extent and impact of restriction of use and the market cost of land per square metre. The extent and impact of restrictions on use varies and results in a reduction to surrounding land values between 10% and 95%. The market value of land varies significantly depending on the location of the land and the current market conditions. Currently land values range between $1 and $1,557 per square metre.

Specialised buildings are valued using a current replacement cost technique. Significant unobservable inputs include the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives of buildings. Current replacement costs are calculated on a square metre basis and ranges from $305 to $10,620 per square metre. The remaining useful lives of buildings are determined on the basis of the current condition of buildings and vary from 1 years to 100 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of buildings are sensitive to changes in expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of buildings.

Infrastructure assets are valued based on the current replacement cost. Significant unobservable inputs include the current replacement cost and remaining useful lives of infrastructure. The remaining useful lives of infrastructure assets are determined on the basis of the current condition of the asset and vary from 1 year to 200 years. Replacement cost is sensitive to changes in market conditions, with any increase or decrease in cost flowing through to the valuation. Useful lives of infrastructure are sensitive to changes in use, expectations or requirements that could either shorten or extend the useful lives of infrastructure assets.

	2023	2022
Reconciliation of specialised land	**$'000**	**$'000**
Land under roads	14,207	12,523
Land	297,835	276,945
Total specialised land	**312,042**	**289,468**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

6.2 Investments in associates	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
(a) Investments in associates		
North Central Goldfields Regional Library Corporation (NCGRLC)	3,749	3,735

North Central Goldfields Regional Library Corporation (NCGRLC)
Background
The City is a member of the North Central Goldfields Regional Library Corporation. The City has a 60.98% share of the net assets (61.01% 2022). At 30 June 2023 the City's equity in the Corporation was $3,749,351 (30 June 2022 $3,734,702).

Fair value of the City's investment in NCGRLC	**3,749**	**3,735**
The City's share of accumulated surplus/(deficit)		
The City's share of accumulated surplus(deficit) at start of year	3,047	2,875
Reported surplus(deficit) for year	17	183
Transfers (to) from reserves	(22)	(1)
Distributions for the year	(1)	(10)
The City's share of accumulated surplus(deficit) at end of year	**3,041**	**3,047**
The City's share of reserves		
The City's share of reserves at start of year	686	678
Share of equity adjustment	-	(2)
Transfers (to) from reserves	22	10
The City's share of reserves at end of year	**708**	**686**
Movement in carrying value of specific investment		
Carrying value of investment at start of year	3,735	3,555
Share of surplus(deficit) for year	17	183
Share of equity adjustment	(3)	(3)
Carrying value of investment at end of year	**3,749**	**3,735**
The City's share of expenditure commitments		
Operating commitments	148	356
Capital commitments	-	-
The City's share of expenditure commitments	**148**	**356**

Associates are all entities over which the City has significant influence but not control or joint control. Investments in associates are accounted for using the equity method of accounting, after initially being recognised at cost.

Community Asset Committee
All entities controlled by the City that have material revenues, expenses, assets or liabilities, such as community asset committees, have been included in this financial report. Any transactions between these entities and the City have been eliminated in full.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 7: People and relationships

7.1 Council and key management remuneration

(a) Related Parties

Parent entity

Greater Bendigo City Council is the parent entity.

Subsidiaries and Associates

Interests in subsidiaries and associates are detailed in Note 6.2.

(b) Key Management Personnel

Key management personnel (KMP) are those people with the authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of Greater Bendigo City Council. The Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Directors are deemed KMP.

Details of KMP at any time during the year are:

Councillors
Andrea Metcalf - Mayor
Jennifer Alden - Councillor (01/07/2022 to 07/11/2022) and Deputy Mayor (08/11/2022 to 30/06/2023)
Matthew Evans - Deputy Mayor (01/07/2022 to 07/11/2022) and Councillor (08/11/2022 to 30/06/2023)
Margaret O'Rourke
Rod Fyffe OAM
Gregory Penna
Vaughan Williams
Julie Sloan
David Fagg

Executive
Craig Niemann - Chief Executive Officer
Andrew Cooney - Director Commonwealth Games
Jessica Clarke-Hong - Director Corporate Performance (01/07/2022 to 05/03/2023)
Jessica Howard - Director Corporate Performance (06/03/2023 to 30/06/2023)
Stacy Williams - Director Healthy Communities and Environments
Brian Westley - Director Presentation and Assets
Steve Hamilton - Director Strategy and Growth

	2023 No.	2022 No.
Total Number of Councillors	9	9
Total of Chief Executive Officer and other Key Management Personnel	7	5
Total Number of Key Management Personnel	**16**	**14**

(c) Remuneration of Key Management Personnel

Remuneration comprises employee benefits including all forms of consideration paid, payable or provided by the City, or on behalf of the City, in exchange for services rendered. Remuneration of Key Management Personnel and Other senior staff is disclosed in the following categories.

Short-term employee benefits include amounts such as wages, salaries, annual leave or sick leave that are usually paid or payable on a regular basis, as well as non-monetary benefits such as allowances and free or subsidised goods or services.
Other long-term employee benefits include long service leave, other long service benefits or deferred compensation.
Post-employment benefits include pensions, and other retirement benefits paid or payable on a discrete basis when employment has ceased.
Termination benefits include termination of employment payments, such as severance packages.

The below remuneration values are calculated on an accrual basis. Annual leave and long service leave utilised during the year will impact the values reported. These values will not always represent the annualised current value of the employment contract with the City.

	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
Total remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	2,074	1,658
Other long-term employee benefits	69	48
Post-employment benefits	201	157
Total	**2,344**	**1,863**

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

7.1 Council and key management remuneration (cont.)

The numbers of key management personnel whose total remuneration from the City and any related entities, fall within the following bands:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
$30,000 - $39,999	2	6
$40,000 - $49,999	5	1
$50,000 - $59,999	1	-
$60,000 - $69,999	-	1
$80,000 - $89,999	1	1
$120,000 - $129,999	1	-
$230,000 - $239,999	-	1
$240,000 - $249,999	1	-
$250,000 - $259,999	1	-
$270,000 - $279,999	1	2
$280,000 - $289,999	1	1
$290,000 - $299,999	1	-
$370,000 - $379,999	-	1
$440,000 - $449,999	1	-
	16	**14**

(d) Remuneration of other senior staff

Other senior staff are officers of the City, other than Key Management Personnel, whose total remuneration exceeds $160,000 and who report directly to a member of the KMP. *

	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
Total remuneration of other senior staff was as follows:		
Short-term employee benefits	3,228	2,774
Other long-term employee benefits	107	85
Post-employment benefits	335	273
Termination benefits	-	-
Total	**3,670**	**3,132**

The number of other senior staff are shown below in their relevant income bands:

	2023	2022
Income Range:	**No.**	**No.**
$160,000 - $169,999	8	8
$170,000 - $179,999	8	11
$180,000 - $189,999	4	1
$190,000 - $199,999	1	-
$200,000 - $209,999	-	1
	21	**21**

	$'000	**$'000**
Total remuneration for the reporting year for other senior staff included above, amounted to:	3,670	3,132

* Due to a definitional change the comparative figures in this note may not align with the previous year's annual report, which included disclosure of senior officers as defined in the *Local Government Act 1989* .

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

7.2 Related party disclosure	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
(a) Transactions with related parties		
During the period the City entered into the following transactions with related parties.		
Income		
Financial services provided to NCGRLC	79	79
Rent and outgoings received from NCGRLC for the Bendigo Library headquarters	48	37
	127	**116**
Expenses		
Contribution to NCGRLC	3,298	3,237
Reimbursement for running the Bendigo Regional Archive Centre (BRAC), paid to NCGRLC	92	91
Grants paid to NCGRLC	93	70
Contributions for various initiatives, paid to NCGRLC	-	16
	3,483	**3,414**

The North Central Goldfields Regional Library Corporation operate library services from a number of Council owned buildings free of charge. The buildings that the City do not charge any rent for are located at Heathcote, Eaglehawk and Kangaroo Flat.

(b) Outstanding balances with related parties

There were no material balances outstanding at the end of the reporting period in relation to transactions with related parties.

(c) Loans to/from related parties

There are no loans in existence at balance date which have been made, guaranteed or secured by the City to a related party.

(d) Commitments to/from related parties

The aggregate amount of commitments in existence at balance date that have been made, guaranteed or secured by the City to a related party are as follows:

The City had an agreement with the North Central Goldfields Regional Library Corporation to provide accounting and financial services to 30 June 2023 for which a fee is paid. The agreement had an option to extend for a year, this extension has been executed. The agreement will expire at 30 June 2024 with an additional option to extend for a year. The City also has a 10 year lease agreement for buildings with the Corporation which commenced on 1 July 2015, for which rental is charged.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 8: Managing uncertainties

8.1 Contingent assets and liabilities

Contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet, but are disclosed and if quantifiable, are measured at nominal value. Contingent assets and liabilities are presented inclusive of GST receivable or payable, respectively.

(a) Contingent assets

Construction of infrastructure assets by developers in the course of creating new subdivisions results in the infrastructure assets being vested in the City when the City issues a statement of compliance. These assets are bought to account as revenue and capitalised.

At reporting date, developers had commenced construction of assets that will eventually be transferred to the City contingent upon the City issuing a statement of compliance.

Contingent assets are possible assets that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the City.

(b) Contingent liabilities

Contingent liabilities are:
- possible obligations that arise from past events, whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the City; or
- present obligations that arise from past events but are not recognised because:
- it is not probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation; or
- the amount of the obligation cannot be measured with sufficient reliability.

Superannuation

The City has obligations under a defined benefit superannuation scheme that may result in the need to make additional contributions to the scheme, matters relating to this potential obligation are outlined below. As a result of the volatility in financial markets the likelihood of making such contributions in future periods exists.

Landfill

The City has confirmed the presence of ten past and one current landfill sites that may require some form of rehabilitation or remediation works. White Hills, Wolstencroft and part of the Eaglehawk Landfill sites have had rehabilitation works completed over the past 3 years with a rehabilitation plan currently being developed for the remainder of the Eaglehawk site once it reaches capacity. This has allowed the City to include an accurate provision within the financial statements at the 30 June 2023. The remainder of the former landfill sites that have been identified are considered a low risk and the level of rehabilitation works required, if any, is unknown.

Liability Mutual Insurance

The City is a participant of the MAV Liability Mutual Insurance (LMI) Scheme. The LMI scheme provides public liability and professional indemnity insurance cover. The LMI scheme states that each participant will remain liable to make further contributions to the scheme in respect of any insurance year in which it was a participant to the extent of its participant's share of any shortfall in the provision set aside in respect of that insurance year, and such liability will continue whether or not the participant remains a participant in future insurance years.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

8.1 Contingent assets and liabilities (cont.)

(c) Guarantees for loans to other entities

The amount disclosed for financial guarantee in this note is the nominal amount of the underlying loan that is guaranteed by the City, not the fair value of the financial guarantee. The City maintains representation on Bendigo Stadium Ltd board and finance committee as part of arrangements related to the loan guarantee provided. In August of 2020 Councillors agreed to support additional guarantee arrangements for refinancing of a loan at Bendigo Stadium Ltd up to the value of $13M.

Financial guarantee contracts are not recognised as a liability in the balance sheet unless the lender has exercised their right to call on the guarantee or City has other reasons to believe that it is probable that the right will be exercised.

Name of Organisation	Current Loan Guarantee Exposure	Financial Institution	Date Approved by Council	Guarantee Expires
Bendigo Stadium Ltd	$11,965,941	Bendigo Bank	4/05/2016	1/05/2027

8.2 Change in accounting standards

Certain new Australian Accounting Standards and interpretations have been published that are not mandatory for the 30 June 2023 reporting period. The City assesses the impact of these new standards. As at 30 June 2023 there were no new accounting standards or interpretations issued by the AASB which are applicable for the year ending 30 June 2024 that are expected to impact the City.

8.3 Financial instruments

(a) Objectives and policies

The City's principal financial instruments comprise cash assets, term deposits, receivables (excluding statutory receivables), payables (excluding statutory payables) and bank borrowings. Details of the significant accounting policies and methods adopted, including the criteria for recognition, the basis of measurement and the basis on which income and expenses are recognised, in respect of each class of financial asset, financial liability and equity instrument is disclosed in the notes of the financial statements. Risk management is carried out by senior management under policies approved by the City. These policies include identification and analysis of the risk exposure to the City and appropriate procedures, controls and risk minimisation. Details are reviewed by the City's Audit & Risk Committee.

(b) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of the City financial instruments will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. The City's exposure to market risk is primarily through interest rate risk with only insignificant exposure to other price risks and no exposure to foreign currency risk.

Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk refers to the risk that the value of a financial instrument or cash flows associated with the instrument will fluctuate due to changes in market interest rates. The City's interest rate liability risk arises primarily from long term loans and borrowings at fixed rates which exposes the City to fair value interest rate risk. Cash flow interest rate risk is the risk that the future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rates. The City has minimal exposure to cash flow interest rate risk through its cash and deposits that are at floating rates.

Investment of surplus funds is made with approved financial institutions under the *Local Government Act 2020* . Council manages interest rate risk by adopting an investment policy that ensures:

- diversification of investment product;
- monitoring of return on investment; and
- benchmarking of returns and comparison with budget.

There has been no significant change in the City's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing interest rate risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

Interest rate movements have not been sufficiently significant during the year to have an impact on the City's year end result.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

8.3 Financial instruments (cont.)
(c) Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk that a contracting entity will not complete its obligations under a financial instrument and cause the City to make a financial loss. The City have exposure to credit risk on some financial assets included in the balance sheet. Particularly significant areas of credit risk exist in relation to outstanding fees and fines as well as loans and receivables from sporting clubs and associations. To help manage this risk:

- The City have a policy for establishing credit limits for the entities council deal with;
- The City may require collateral where appropriate; and
- The City only invest surplus funds with financial institutions which have a recognised credit rating specified in the City's investment policy.

Receivables consist of a large number of customers, spread across the ratepayer, business and government sectors. Credit risk associated with the City's financial assets is minimal because the main debtor is secured by a charge over the rateable property.

There are no material financial assets which are individually determined to be impaired.

The City may also be subject to credit risk for transactions which are not included in the balance sheet, such as when the City provides a guarantee for another party. Details of our contingent liabilities are disclosed in Note 8.1(b).

The maximum exposure to credit risk at the reporting date to recognised financial assets is the carrying amount, net of any provisions for impairment of those assets, as disclosed in the balance sheet and notes to the financial statements. The City does not hold any collateral.

(d) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk includes the risk that, as a result of the City's operational liquidity requirements it will not have sufficient funds to settle a transaction when required or will be forced to sell a financial asset at below value or may be unable to settle or recover a financial asset.

To help reduce these risks the City:
- have a liquidity policy which targets a minimum and average level of cash and cash equivalents to be maintained;
- have readily accessible standby facilities and other funding arrangements in place;
- have a liquidity portfolio structure that requires surplus funds to be invested within various bands of liquid instruments;
- monitor budget to actual performance on a regular basis; and
- set limits on borrowings relating to the percentage of loans to rate revenue and percentage of loan principal repayments to rate revenue.

The City's maximum exposure to liquidity risk is the carrying amounts of financial liabilities as disclosed on the face of the balance sheet and the amounts related to financial guarantees disclosed in Note 8.1(c), and is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk.

There has been no significant change in the City's exposure, or its objectives, policies and processes for managing liquidity risk or the methods used to measure this risk from the previous reporting period.

With the exception of borrowings, all financial liabilities are expected to be settled within normal terms of trade. Details of the maturity profile for borrowings are disclosed at Note 5.4.

Unless otherwise stated, the carrying amounts of financial instruments reflect their fair value.

(e) Sensitivity disclosure analysis

Taking into account past performance, future expectations, economic forecasts, and management's knowledge and experience of the financial markets, the City believes the following movements are 'reasonably possible' over the next 12 months:
- A parallel shift of +1% and -1% in market interest rates (AUD) from average year end interest rates on term deposits of 5.5%.

These movements will not have a material impact on the valuation of the City's financial assets and liabilities, nor will they have a material impact on the results of the City's operations.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

8.4 Fair value measurement

Fair value hierarchy

The City's financial assets and liabilities are not valued in accordance with the fair value hierarchy , the City's financial assets and liabilities are measured at amortised cost.

The City measures certain assets and liabilities at fair value where required or permitted by Australian Accounting Standards. AASB 13 Fair value measurement, aims to improve consistency and reduce complexity by providing a definition of fair value and a single source of fair value measurement and disclosure requirements for use across Australian Accounting Standards.

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within a fair value hierarchy, described as follows, based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole:

Level 1 — Quoted (unadjusted) market prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities

Level 2 — Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is directly or indirectly observable; and

Level 3 — Valuation techniques for which the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement is unobservable.

For the purpose of fair value disclosures, the City has determined classes of assets and liabilities on the basis of the nature, characteristics and risks of the asset or liability and the level of the fair value hierarchy as explained above.

In addition, the City determines whether transfers have occurred between levels in the hierarchy by re-assessing categorisation (based on the lowest level input that is significant to the fair value measurement as a whole) at the end of each reporting period.

Revaluation

Subsequent to the initial recognition of assets, non-current physical assets, other than plant and equipment, are measured at their fair value, being the price that would be received to sell an asset (or paid to transfer a liability) in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date. (For plant and equipment carrying amount is considered to approximate fair value given short useful lives). At balance date, the City reviewed the carrying value of the individual classes of assets measured at fair value to ensure that each asset materially approximated its fair value. Where the carrying value materially differed from the fair value at balance date, the class of asset was revalued.

Fair value valuations are determined in accordance with a valuation hierarchy. Changes to the valuation hierarchy will only occur if an external change in the restrictions or limitations of use of an asset result in changes to the permissible or practical highest and best use of the asset. In addition, the City undertakes a formal revaluation of land, buildings, and infrastructure assets on a regular basis ranging from 1 to 5 years. The valuation is performed either by experienced council officers or independent experts. The following table sets out the frequency of revaluations by asset class.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

8.4 Fair value measurement (cont.)

Asset class	Revaluation frequency
Land and Buildings	
Land	2 years
Specialised land	2 years
Land under roads	1 year
Buildings	2 years
Buildings - specialsed	2 years
Buildings - heritage	2 years
Plant and Equipment	
Plant and equipment	N/A
Office equipment, furniture and fittings	N/A
Artworks	3 years
Fountains, statues and monuments	5 years
Infrastructure	
Sealed roads	1 year
Unsealed roads	1 year
Bridges	1 year
Pathways	1 year
Drainage	1 year
Land improvements	3 years
Public furniture and fittings	3 years
Intangible Assets	
Landfill	N/A

Where the assets are revalued, the revaluation increments are credited directly to the asset revaluation reserve except to the extent that an increment reverses a prior year decrement for that class of asset that had been recognised as an expense in which case the increment is recognised as revenue up to the amount of the expense. Revaluation decrements are recognised as an expense except where prior increments are included in the asset revaluation reserve for that class of asset in which case the decrement is taken to the reserve to the extent of the remaining increments. Within the same class of assets, revaluation increments and decrements within the year are offset.

Impairment of assets
At each reporting date, the City reviews the carrying value of its assets to determine whether there is any indication that these assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use, is compared to the assets carrying value. Any excess of the assets carrying value over its recoverable amount is expensed to the comprehensive income statement, unless the asset is carried at the revalued amount in which case, the impairment loss is recognised directly against the revaluation surplus in respect of the same class of asset to the extent that the impairment loss does not exceed the amount in the revaluation surplus for that same class of asset.

8.5 Events occurring after balance date
In July 2023 the State Government announced that the Commonwealth Games would no longer be hosted in regional Victoria in 2026. There are no material impacts on the City's financial statements from this change of policy.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Note 9: Other matters

9.1 Reserves (a) Asset revaluation reserves	Balance at beginning of reporting period $'000	Increment (decrement) $'000	Balance at end of reporting period $'000
2023			
Property			
Land	208,844	20,850	229,694
Buildings	154,797	57,392	212,189
Plant and equipment	1,541	-	1,541
Library resources	820	-	820
Artwork	48,582	2,401	50,983
	414,584	**80,643**	**495,227**
Infrastructure			
Roads, bridges and pathways	382,671	49,290	431,961
Drainage	76,535	14,079	90,614
Public furniture and fittings, statues and monuments	13,490	-	13,490
Land improvements	31,435	-	31,435
	504,131	**63,369**	**567,500**
Total asset revaluation reserves	**918,715**	**144,012**	**1,062,727**
2022			
Property			
Land	208,844	-	208,844
Buildings	154,797	-	154,797
Plant and equipment	1,541	-	1,541
Library resources	820	-	820
Artwork	48,582	-	48,582
	414,584	**-**	**414,584**
Infrastructure			
Roads, bridges and pathways	384,221	(1,550)	382,671
Drainage	70,309	6,226	76,535
Public furniture and fittings, statues and monuments	9,399	4,091	13,490
Land improvements	18,189	13,246	31,435
	482,118	**22,013**	**504,131**
Total asset revaluation reserves	**896,702**	**22,013**	**918,715**

The asset revaluation reserve is used to record the increased (net) value of the City's assets over time.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

9.1 Reserves (cont.)

	Balance at beginning of reporting period $'000	Transfer from accumulated surplus $'000	Transfer to accumulated surplus $'000	Balance at end of reporting period $'000
(b) Other reserves				
2023				
Open Space	5,853	759	(331)	6,281
Development Contributions	4,452	390	(143)	4,699
Tree Amenity	110	45	-	155
Native Vegetation	119	17	-	136
Waste Management	2,466	2,134	(835)	3,765
Land and Buildings	5,651	-	(5,188)	463
Car Parking	832	-	-	832
Defined Benefits	2,000	-	-	2,000
Unexpended Grants and Donations	17,334	21,592	(17,168)	21,758
Total Other reserves	**38,817**	**24,937**	**(23,665)**	**40,089**
2022				
Open Space	5,216	815	(178)	5,853
Development Contributions	4,285	448	(281)	4,452
Tree Amenity	48	62	-	110
Native Vegetation	95	24	-	119
Waste Management	5,761	2,507	(5,802)	2,466
Land and Buildings	5,657	-	(6)	5,651
Car Parking	511	342	(21)	832
Defined Benefits	2,000	-	-	2,000
Unexpended Grants and Donations	9,529	17,062	(9,257)	17,334
Total Other reserves	**33,102**	**21,260**	**(15,545)**	**38,817**

Open Space
Statutory developer contribution funds to be used for future recreation facility additions or improvements.

Development Contributions
Statutory developer contribution funds for future drainage, road, fencing and tree planting.

Tree Amenity
This reserve was established to set aside revenue received from the replacement of trees, whilst taking into account the removal of trees.

Native Vegetation
This reserve was established to recognise the cost savings by utilising Council owned native vegetation offsets to deliver council projects. These cost savings are held in a reserve to contribute to future expenditure associated with maintaining and establishing future native vegetation offset credits.

Waste Management
This reserve was established to make some provision for a replacement waste treatment facility when the Eaglehawk Landfill is exhausted and to contribute to rehabilitation requirements for closed landfill sites.

Land and Buildings
The purpose of this reserve is to provide funds for future strategic purchases of land and building assets within the municipality.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

9.1 Reserves (cont.)

Car Parking

This reserve was established to make provision for future car parking solutions in the city centre.

Defined Benefits

This reserve is used to assist with the funding of any call that may be made on the City as a result of shortfall in the Local Authorities Superannuation Fund Defined Benefits Plan.

Unexpended Grants and Donations

This reserve is used to set aside grant and donation monies in relation to specific projects received in one financial year that will not be expended until a later financial year. Funds in this account are predominantly not discretionary.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

9.2 Reconciliation of cash flows from operating activities to surplus/(deficit)	**2023 $'000**	**2022 $'000**
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	31,195	35,179
Depreciation / amortisation	48,043	45,489
Profit/(loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	9,712	5,677
Contributions - Non-monetary assets	(17,007)	(9,676)
Share of net (profits) / losses of associates accounted for using the equity method	(14)	(180)
Borrowing and finance costs	1,335	1,623
Change in assets and liabilities:		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables	81	681
(Increase)/decrease in other assets	651	(1,901)
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	(7,562)	1,838
(Decrease)/increase in unearned income /revenue	(2,268)	(1,239)
(Decrease)/increase in trust funds and deposits	56	346
(Increase)/decrease in inventories	45	(69)
(Decrease)/increase in provisions	1,172	(3,667)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	**65,439**	**74,101**

9.3 Superannuation

The City makes the majority of its employer superannuation contributions in respect of its employees to the Local Authorities Superannuation Fund (the Fund). This Fund has two categories of membership, accumulation and defined benefit, each of which is funded differently. Obligations for contributions to the Fund are recognised as an expense in the Comprehensive Income Statement when they are made or due.

Accumulation

The Fund's accumulation category, Vision MySuper/Vision Super Saver, receives both employer and employee contributions on a progressive basis. Employer contributions are normally based on a fixed percentage of employee earnings (for the year ended 30 June 2023, this was 10.5% as required under Superannuation Guarantee (SG) legislation (2022: 10.0%)).

Defined Benefit

The City does not use defined benefit accounting for its defined benefit obligations under the Fund's Defined Benefit category. This is because the Fund's Defined Benefit category is a pooled multi-employer sponsored plan.

There is no proportional split of the defined benefit liabilities, assets or costs between the participating employers as the defined benefit obligation is a floating obligation between the participating employers and the only time that the aggregate obligation is allocated to specific employers is when a call is made. As a result, the level of participation of The City in the Fund cannot be measured as a percentage compared with other participating employers. Therefore, the Fund Actuary is unable to allocate benefit liabilities, assets and costs between employers for the purposes of AASB 119.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

9.3 Superannuation (cont.)
Funding arrangements

The City makes employer contributions to the Defined Benefit category of the Fund at rates determined by the Trustee on the advice of the Fund Actuary.

A triennial actuarial investigation is currently underway for the Defined Benefit category which is expected to be completed by 31 December 2023. The City was notified of the 30 June 2023 VBI during August 2023
(2022: August 2022). The financial assumptions used to calculate the 30 June 2023 VBI were:

Net investment returns	5.70% pa
Salary information	3.50% pa
Price inflation (CPI)	2.80% pa

As at 30 June 2022, an interim actuarial investigation was held as the Fund provides lifetime pensions in the Defined Benefit category. The vested benefit index (VBI) of the Defined Benefit category of which the City is a contributing employer was 102.2%. The financial assumptions used to calculate the VBI were:

Net investment returns 5.5% pa
Salary information 2.5% pa to 30 June 2023, and 3.5% pa thereafter
Price inflation (CPI) 3.0% pa

The City was notified of the 30 June 2022 VBI during August 2022 (2021: August 2021).

Vision Super has advised that the estimated VBI at June 2023 was 104.1%.

The VBI is used as the primary funding indicator. Because the VBI was above 100%, the 30 June 2022 actuarial investigation determined the Defined Benefit category was in a satisfactory financial position and that no change was necessary to the Defined Benefit category's funding arrangements from prior years.

Employer contributions
(a) Regular contributions
On the basis of the results of the 2022 interim actuarial investigation conducted by the Fund Actuary, the City makes employer contributions to the Fund's Defined Benefit category at rates determined by the Fund's Trustee. For the year ended 30 June 2023, this rate was 10.5% of members' salaries (10.0% in 2021/22). This rate is expected to increase in line with any increases in the SG contribution rate and was reviewed as part of the 30 June 2022 interim valuation.

In addition, the City reimburses the Fund to cover the excess of the benefits paid as a consequence of retrenchment above the funded resignation or retirement benefit.

(b) Funding calls
If the Defined Benefit category is in an unsatisfactory financial position at an actuarial investigation or the Defined Benefit category's VBI is below its shortfall limit at any time other than the date of the actuarial investigation, the Defined Benefit category has a shortfall for the purposes of SPS 160 and the Fund is required to put a plan in place so that the shortfall is fully funded within three years of the shortfall occurring. The Fund monitors its VBI on a quarterly basis and the Fund has set its shortfall limit at 97%.

In the event that the Fund Actuary determines that there is a shortfall based on the above requirement, the Fund's participating employers (including the City) are required to make an employer contribution to cover the shortfall.

Using the agreed methodology, the shortfall amount is apportioned between the participating employers based on the pre-1 July 1993 and post-30 June 1993 service liabilities of the Fund's Defined Benefit category, together with the employer's payroll at 30 June 1993 and at the date the shortfall has been calculated.

Due to the nature of the contractual obligations between the participating employers and the Fund, and that the Fund includes lifetime pensioners and their reversionary beneficiaries, it is unlikely that the Fund will be wound up.

If there is a surplus in the Fund, the surplus cannot be returned to the participating employers.

In the event that a participating employer is wound-up, the defined benefit obligations of that employer will be transferred to that employer's successor.

Notes to the Financial Report
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

9.3 Superannuation (cont.)

The 2022 interim actuarial investigation surplus amounts

An actuarial investigation is conducted annually for the Defined Benefit category of which the City is a contributing employer. Generally, a full actuarial investigation is conducted every three years and interim actuarial investigations are conducted for each intervening year. An interim investigation was conducted as at 30 June 2022 and the last full investigation was conducted as at 30 June 2020.

The Fund's actuarial investigation identified the following for the Defined Benefit category of which the City is a contributing employer:

	2022 (Interim) $m	2021 (Interim) $m
- A VBI Surplus	44.6	214.7
- A total service liability surplus	105.8	270.3
- A discounted accrued benefits surplus	111.9	285.2

The VBI surplus means that the market value of the fund's assets supporting the defined benefit obligations exceed the vested benefits that the defined benefit members would have been entitled to if they had all exited on 30 June 2022.

The total service liability surplus means that the current value of the assets in the Fund's Defined Benefit category plus expected future contributions exceeds the value of expected future benefits and expenses as at 30 June 2022.

The discounted accrued benefits surplus means that the current value of the assets in the Fund's Defined Benefit category exceeds the value of benefits payable in the future but accrued in respect of service to 30 June 2022.

The 2023 triennial actuarial investigation

A triennial actuarial investigation is being conducted for the Fund's position as at 30 June 2023. It is anticipated that this actuarial investigation will be completed by 31 December 2023. The financial assumptions for the purposes of this investigation are:

	2023 Triennial investigation	2020 Triennial investigation
Net Investment return	5.70% pa	5.60% pa
Salary Inflation	3.50% pa	2.50% pa for the first two years and 2.75% pa thereafter
Price Inflation	2.80% pa	2.00% pa

Superannuation contributions

Contributions by the City (excluding any unfunded liability payments) to the above superannuation plans for the financial year ended 30 June 2023 are detailed below:

Scheme	Type of Scheme	Rate	2023 $'000	2022 $'000
Vision super	Defined benefits	10.5% (2022:10.0%)	293	331
Vision super	Accumulation	10.5% (2022:10.0%)	3,465	3,594

There were no contributions outstanding and no loans issued from or to the above schemes at 30 June 2023. The expected contributions to be paid to the defined benefit category of vision super for the year ending 30 June 2024 is $418,163.

Note 10: Change in accounting policy

There have been no material changes to accounting policies in the 2022-23 year impacting on the financial statements.

Greater Bendigo City Council
PERFORMANCE STATEMENT

For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Description of Municipality

The City of Greater Bendigo is located in the geographic centre of Victoria about 90 minute drive north of Melbourne. Greater Bendigo has an estimated population of 122,551 at 30 June 2023 and covers approximately 3,000 square kilometres of the central Victorian landscape, including smaller towns and villages such as Heathcote, Axedale, Huntly, Marong, Elmore, Goornong, Neilborough, Sebastian, Woodvale, Raywood, Mia Mia and Redesdale.

The resident population of Greater Bendigo at 30 June 2023 was estimated at 122,551, which represents an annual growth rate of 1.1% or 1,330 people since 30 June 2022.

The service age structure of Greater Bendigo shows different populations at their different life stages. Looking at age structure this way can better inform the level of demand on specific age based services as well as specific housing needs. At the 2021 Census the age structure shows that overall 18.7% of the population was aged between 0 and 15 and 19.9% of residents were over the age of 65.

Additional demographic information is contained earlier in the annual report.

Sustainable Capacity Indicators					
Indicator/measure	**Results 2020**	**Results 2021**	**Results 2022**	**Results 2023**	**Material Variations**
Population					
Expenses per head of municipal population [Total expenses / Municipal population]	$1,638	$1,588	$1,732	$1,862	
Infrastructure per head of municipal population [Value of infrastructure / Municipal population]	$11,525	$11,970	$11,810	$12,847	
Population density per length of road [Municipal population / Kilometres of local roads]	37.65	38.19	38.61	38.83	
Own-source revenue					
Own-source revenue per head of municipal population *[Own-source revenue / Municipal population]*	$1,302	$1,184	$1,421	$1,465	The City's user fees (a key own source revenue) were lower in 2020/2021 due to the pandemic. User fees have returned to pre-pandemic levels.
Recurrent grants					
Recurrent grants per head of municipal population *[Recurrent grants / Municipal population]*	$232	$226	$290	$302	
Disadvantage					
Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage [Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage by decile]	4	4	4	4	
Workforce turnover					
Percentage of staff turnover [Number of permanent staff resignations and terminations / Average number of permanent staff for the financial year x100]	8.5%	10.9%	14.3%	23.9%	The City exited Home Support Services in 2022/2023 resulting in an increase in staff turnover for related resignations and redundancies.

Definitions

"adjusted underlying revenue" means total income other than:
(a) non-recurrent grants used to fund capital expenditure; and
(b) non-monetary asset contributions; and
(c) contributions to fund capital expenditure from sources other than those referred to above

“infrastructure” means non-current property, plant and equipment excluding land

"local road" means a sealed or unsealed road for which the council is the responsible road authority under the Road Management Act 2004

"own-source revenue" means adjusted underlying revenue other than revenue that is not under the control of council (including government grants)

"relative socio-economic disadvantage", in relation to a municipality, means the relative socio-economic disadvantage, expressed as a decile for the relevant financial year, of the area in which the municipality is located according to the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Service Performance Indicators					
Service/*indicator*/*measure*	**Results 2020**	**Results 2021**	**Results 2022**	**Results 2023**	**Material Variations**
Aquatic Facilities ***Utilisation*** *Utilisation of aquatic facilities* [Number of visits to aquatic facilities / Municipal population]	4.26	2.92	4.16	5.17	The increase in utilisation of aquatic facilities is attributed to this being the first summer that all pools were open since the end of COVID-19 lockdowns.
Animal Management ***Health and safety*** *Animal management prosecutions* [Number of successful animal management prosecutions / Number of animal management prosecutions]	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Food Safety ***Health and safety*** *Critical and major non-compliance outcome notifications* [Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises followed up / Number of critical non-compliance outcome notifications and major non-compliance notifications about a food premises] x100	85.19%	71.23%	63.44%	98.10%	New internal work priorities meant follow up of non-compliance outcomes in this period received a more intensive focus.
Governance ***Satisfaction*** *Satisfaction with council decisions* [Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed in making decisions in the interest of the community]	53	54	53	54	
Libraries ***Participation*** *Active library borrowers in municipality* [Number of active library borrowers in the last three years / The sum of the population for the last three years] x100	12.47%	10.34%	8.81%	8.35%	

Service Performance Indicators (cont.)					
Service/*indicator*/*measure*	Results 2020	Results 2021	Results 2022	Results 2023	Material Variations
Maternal and Child Health (MCH) ***Participation*** *Participation in the MCH service* [Number of children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of children enrolled in the MCH service] x100	78.02%	77.34%	75.93%	76.51%	
Participation *Participation in the MCH service by Aboriginal children* [Number of Aboriginal children who attend the MCH service at least once (in the year) / Number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the MCH service] x100	82.97%	72.20%	69.88%	71.29%	
Roads ***Satisfaction*** *Satisfaction with sealed local roads* [Community satisfaction rating out of 100 with how council has performed on the condition of sealed local roads]	60	61	54	53	
Statutory Planning ***Decision making*** *Council planning decisions upheld at VCAT* [Number of VCAT decisions that did not set aside council's decision in relation to a planning application / Number of VCAT decisions in relation to planning	75.00%	87.50%	73.33%	61.11%	The number of planning decision upheld at VCAT remains consistent with previous years but due to the low numbers, the percentage fluctuates each year.
Waste Collection ***Waste diversion*** *Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill* [Weight of recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins / Weight of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins] x100	50.80%	50.19%	52.25%	52.96%	

Definitions
"active library member" means a member of a library who has borrowed from the library
"annual report" means an annual report prepared by a council under section 98 of the Act
“class 1 food premises” means food premises, within the meaning of the Food Act 1984, that have been declared as class 1 food premises under section 19C of that Act
“class 2 food premises” means food premises, within the meaning of the Food Act 1984 , that have been declared as class 2 food premises under section 19C of that Act
"critical non-compliance outcome notification" means a notification received by council under section 19N(3) or (4) of the Food Act 1984 , or advice given to council by an authorized officer under that Act, of a deficiency that poses an immediate serious threat to public health
"local road" means a sealed or unsealed road for which the council is the responsible road authority under the Road Management Act 2004
"major non-compliance outcome notification" means a notification received by a council under section 19N(3) or (4) of the Food Act 1984, or advice given to council by an authorized officer under that Act, of a deficiency that does not pose an immediate serious threat to public health but may do so if no remedial action is taken
"MCH" means the Maternal and Child Health Service provided by a council to support the health and development of children within the municipality from birth until school age
"population" means the resident population estimated by council

Financial Performance Indicators

Dimension/*indicator*/*measure*	Results 2020	Results 2021	Results 2022	Results 2023	Forecasts 2024	Forecasts 2025	Forecasts 2026	Forecasts 2027	Material Variations
Efficiency									
Expenditure level									
Expenses per property assessment [Total expenses / Number of property assessments]	$3,279	$3,230	$3,413	$3,679	$3,503	$3,550	$3,615	$3,652	
Revenue level									
Average rate per property assessment [General rates and municipal charges / Number of property assessments]	$1,710	$1,794	$1,778	$1,831	$1,926	$2,024	$2,102	$2,160	
Liquidity									
Working capital									
Current assets compared to current liabilities *[Current assets / Current liabilities] x100*	185.97%	160.09%	195.68%	226.13%	123.00%	121.82%	119.32%	129.88%	Working Capital in 2022/2023 is higher due to increased cash holdings, due to capital project delivery delays and additional Federal Assistance Grants. Working Capital is projected to reduce in outer years as cash holdings reduce.
Unrestricted cash**									
Unrestricted cash compared to current liabilities [Unrestricted cash / Current liabilities] x100	73.67%	68.98%	62.08%	-41.54%**	26.82%	33.52%	28.87%	37.06%	** The prescribed calculation method excludes term deposits with an original maturity of greater than 90 days (Financial Assets) of $67M. With term deposits included in the definition of unrestricted cash, the result for 2022-23 is 104%. This amended result is a better representation of available funds than the negative ratio in the 2023 column. The forecast has been prepared on the assumption that all term deposits are unrestricted in the future.
Obligations									
Loans and borrowings									
Loans and borrowings compared to rates [Interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue] x100	34.27%	32.10%	18.75%	14.49%	16.66%	17.54%	17.05%	16.17%	The City held a loan portfolio of $20.1M as at 30 June 2023. The City's 2022/2023 Budget was prepared with an upper borrowing limit of $5.1M, which was not utilised. Borrowings have been reduced as the City continues to repay principal loan liabilities. Projections assume borrowings will be utilised in future years.
Loans and borrowings repayments compared to [Interest and principal repayments on interest bearing loans and borrowings / Rate revenue] x100	4.89%	4.74%	12.74%	4.15%	3.44%	3.80%	3.78%	2.81%	Total principal repayments in 2021/2022 were $15.59M, largely due to the repayment of an $11M interest only loan. Borrowings are planned in future years to support the City's capital program.
Indebtedness									
Non-current liabilities compared to own source revenue [Non-current liabilities / Own source revenue] x100	36.95%	28.86%	19.81%	39.38%	40.76%	38.68%	36.67%	34.28%	Australian Accounting Standards require long term operational leases to be recognised as non-current liabilities. From 2022/2023 lease liabilities include the Galkangu office lease, which impact on this measure.

**** Unrestricted Cash** - The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework considers term deposits with an original maturing age of greater the 90 days to be considered restricted. Due to this it has resulted in a negative result for the 202/2023 financial year. The Greater Bendigo City Council consider term deposits with an original maturing date of greater than 90 days to be unrestricted for cash management purposes and is treated this way in the long term financial plan.

Financial Performance Indicators (cont.)

Dimension/*indicator*/*measure*	Results 2020	Results 2021	Results 2022	Results 2023	Forecasts 2024	2025	2026	2027	Material Variations
Asset renewal and upgrade *Asset renewal and upgrade compared to depreciation* [Asset renewal and asset upgrade expense / Asset depreciation] x100	99.74%	67.88%	83.95%	77.03%	78.34%	81.98%	82.02%	81.25%	The City's Asset Plan provides a strategic summary about managing the City's $2.75B in fixed infrastructure. As evidenced by this measure, the gap continues to grow between available and required funding to support all these assets and their related services.
Operating position ***Adjusted underlying result*** *Adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)* [Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit)/ Adjusted underlying revenue] x100	-5.17%	-6.84%	2.66%	-3.27%	-3.88%	-0.70%	0.37%	2.22%	The prior 2021/2022 year is higher than prior, current and projected years due to upfront grant payments. Across the 10 years modelled by the City's Financial Plan, underlying surplus is targeted to shift back towards 0%.
Stability ***Rates concentration*** *Rates compared to adjusted underlying revenue* [Rate revenue / Adjusted underlying revenue] x100	66.18%	70.84%	61.63%	62.99%	70.15%	70.65%	71.66%	72.10%	Rates represent a significant portion of our total underlying revenue. In the prior 2021/2022 year additional grant payments for covid recovery and increased user fees contributed to the lower reliance on rates revenue.
Rates effort *Rates compared to property values* [Rate revenue / Capital improved value of rateable properties in the municipality] x100	0.53%	0.53%	0.50%	0.38%	0.39%	0.41%	0.43%	0.44%	Residential valuations saw a large uplift in 2022/2023 by the Valuer General resulting in a decrease in rates compared to property values. Valuations projected to stabilise in future years.

Definitions

"adjusted underlying revenue" means total income other than:
(a) non-recurrent grants used to fund capital expenditure; and
(b) non-monetary asset contributions; and
(c) contributions to fund capital expenditure from sources other than those referred to above
"adjusted underlying surplus (or deficit)" means adjusted underlying revenue less total expenditure
"asset renewal expenditure" means expenditure on an existing asset or on replacing an existing asset that returns the service capability of the asset to its original capability
"current assets" has the same meaning as in the AAS
"current liabilities" has the same meaning as in the AAS
"non-current assets" means all assets other than current assets
"non-current liabilities" means all liabilities other than current liabilities
"non-recurrent grant" means a grant obtained on the condition that it be expended in a specified manner and is not expected to be received again during the period covered by a council's Strategic Resource Plan
"own-source revenue" means adjusted underlying revenue other than revenue that is not under the control of council (including government grants
"rate revenue" means revenue from general rates, municipal charges, service rates and service charges
"recurrent grant "means a grant other than a non-recurrent grant
"residential rates" means revenue from general rates, municipal charges, service rates and service charges levied on residential properties
"restricted cash" means cash and cash equivalents, within the meaning of the AAS, that are not available for use other than for a purpose for which it is restricted, and includes cash to be used to fund capital works expenditure from the previous financial year
"unrestricted cash" means all cash and cash equivalents other than restricted cash.

Other Information

1. Basis of Preparation

Council is required to prepare and include a performance statement within its annual report. The performance statement includes the results of the prescribed sustainable capacity, service performance and financial performance indicators and measures together with a description of the municipal district and an explanation of material variations in the results. This statement has been prepared to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 and Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.

Where applicable the results in the performance statement have been prepared on accounting bases consistent with those reported in the Financial Statements. The other results are based on information drawn from council information systems or from third parties (e.g. Australian Bureau of Statistics).

The performance statement presents the actual results for the current year and for the prescribed financial performance indicators and measures, the results forecast by the council's strategic resource plan. The Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020 requires explanation of any material variations in the results contained in the performance statement. Council has adopted materiality thresholds relevant to each indicator and measure and explanations have not been provided for variations below the materiality thresholds unless the variance is considered to be material because of its nature.

The forecast figures included in the performance statement are projections adopted by council in the 2023/2024 budget on 22 May 2023. The projections include estimates based on key assumptions about the future that were relevant at the time of adoption and aimed at achieving sustainability over the long term. Detailed information on the actual financial results is contained in the General Purpose Financial Statements.

Certification of the Performance Statements

In my opinion, the accompanying performance statement has been prepared in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 and the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.

Nathan Morsillo, FCPA
Principal Accounting Officer / Chief Financial Officer
Dated : 26/09/2023
Bendigo

In our opinion, the accompanying performance statement of the (council name) for the year ended 30 June 2023 presents fairly the results of council's performance in accordance with the Local Government Act 2020 and the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.

The performance statement contains the relevant performance indicators, measures and results in relation to service performance, financial performance and sustainable capacity.

As at the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances that would render any particulars in the performance statement to be misleading or inaccurate.

We have been authorised by the Council and by the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020* to certify this performance statement in its final form.

Andrea Metcalf
Councillor
Dated : 26/09/2023
Bendigo

Margaret O'Rourke
Councillor
Dated : 26/09/2023
Bendigo

Craig Niemann
Chief Executive Officer
Dated : 26/09/2023
Bendigo

Audit opinion Performance Statement

16. HEALTHY, LIVEABLE SPACES AND PLACES

16.1. 384 Tannery Lane, Lot 2 Tannery Lane and 56 and 80 Schilling Lane, Strathfieldsaye 3551 - Boundary Realignment, Variation of Easement and Removal of Covenant PS824333C

Author:	Beth Lavery, Senior Statutory Planner
Responsible Director:	Andrew Cooney, Acting Director Strategy and Growth

Summary/Purpose

Application No:	DS/401/2022
Applicant:	P A Carr
Land:	384 Tannery Lane, Lot 2 Tannery Lane, and 56 & 80 Schilling Lane, STRATHFIELDSAYE 3551
Zoning:	Rural Living Zone
Overlays:	Bushfire Management Overlay; and Land Subject to Inundation Overlay
No. of objections:	Seven, with one that has been withdrawn.
Consultation meeting:	Consultation was undertaken via the circulation of a written response to objectors from the applicant, and a written response to each objector from the assessing officer. One objection was withdrawn following the circulation of this information.
Key considerations:	• Is the proposed boundary realignment appropriate in terms of the planning controls which apply to the land? • Is the variation to the easement acceptable? • Is the removal of the covenant acceptable, giving regard to the intention of the restriction?
Conclusion:	The proposed boundary realignment, variation to easement and removal of the covenant represent an appropriate planning outcome for the site and approval of the application is recommended.

Recommended Motion

Pursuant to section 61 of the Planning and Environment Act (1987), Council issue a Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit for the proposed *boundary realignment, variation of the easement and removal of Covenant PS824333C* at 384 Tannery Lane, Lot 2 Tannery Lane, and 56 & 80 Schilling Lane, STRATHFIELDSAYE 3551, subject to the conditions at the end of this report.

Report

Subject Site and Surrounds

This application relates to four separate, but contiguous, properties which are indicated below at Figure 1. The properties are zoned Rural Living Zone and are located on the south west periphery of the Strathfieldsaye township. The land is undulating, particularly along Schilling Lane, levelling out towards Tannery Lane.

The parcels adjoining Tannery Lane to the north are generally cleared of vegetation with only scattered patches remaining, with the lots adjoining Schilling Lane and land to the south and west of the site being more heavily vegetated.



Figure 1. Subject land delineated with red dotted line, objector's properties marked with a star, and existing dwellings circled in yellow.

Each of the allotments can be described as follows:

384 Tannery Lane

Formally known as Lot 1 PS824333C, this land is rectangular in shape and has an area of 2.493 hectares. The land contains an existing dwelling and associated outbuildings in the south west corner, along with scattered vegetation and planted vines nearby to the property frontage. A water supply easement runs along the southern portion of the land.



Figure 2. Photo of 384 Tannery Lane.

Lot 2 Tannery Lane

Lot 2 PS824333C has an area of 8.573 hectares and adjoins the abovementioned property along its north eastern boundary. Irregular in shape, the site contains a dam and a small amount scattered vegetation and is used in association with 384 Tannery Lane as the properties are within the same ownership. A water supply easement dissects the site. This parcel does not contain an existing dwelling.



Figure 3. Photo of Lot 2 Tannery Lane

56 Schilling Lane

With an area of 4.909 hectares, this property is generally rectangular in shape, and contains an existing dwelling and associated outbuildings in the south eastern corner of the lot, along with two dams and scattered vegetation. This parcel is formally known as Lot 2 LP215252P.



Figure 4. Photo of 56 Schilling Lane.

80 Schilling Lane

This property (Lot 1 PS 51677G) is a ‘L’ shape, with a total area of 5.145 hectares. An existing dwelling and associated outbuildings are located in the southernmost part of the land, with a dam (shared with the property at 68 Schilling Lane) located centrally, along with scattered vegetation and a planted grove located in the northern part of the land.



Figure 5. Photo of 80 Schilling Lane

Restrictions on Title

The land is subject to the following restrictions on Title:

- Covenant PS824333C, which is registered on the Title of Lot 2 PS824333C.

The description of this restriction is as follows:

CREATION OF RESTRICTION:

UPON REGISTRATION OF THIS PLAN THE FOLLOWING RESTRICTIONS ARE CREATED:

LAND TO BENEFIT:	LOT 1 ON THIS PLAN OF SUBDIVISION.
LAND TO BE BURDENED:	LOT 2 ON THIS PLAN OF SUBDIVISION.
DESCRIPTION OF RESTRICTION:	1. NO DWELLING (EXCLUDING OUTBUILDINGS) IS TO BE LOCATED OUTSIDE THE BUILDING ENVELOPE AS SHOWN ON THE ENDORSED PLANS UNDER PLANNING PERMIT DS/480/2018 UNLESS OTHERWISE AGREED IN WRITING BY THE RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY. 2. NO DWELLING CAN BE CONSTRUCTED ON LOT 2 WITHOUT ACCESS PROVIDED FROM TANNERY LANE VIA AN ALL WEATHER DRIVEWAY WITH A MINIMUM WIDTH OF 3.5 METRES WITH 500mm CLEARANCE, 4 METRE VERTICAL CLEARANCE TO TREES AND A TABLE DRAIN ON THE HIGH SIDE WITH A TURNAROUND AREA AT THE PROPOSED DWELLING.

; and

- Section 173 Agreement AR950435T, which is registered on the Title of Lots 1 and 2 PS824333C.

This Agreement states that:

> *The owner covenants and agrees that the owner of any lot created by the Plan will not further subdivide the land.*

Both of these restrictions were included on the Title as a requirement of planning permit DS/480/2018 which allowed re-subdivision of land at 384 Tannery Lane and Lot 7 Tannery Lane (with Lot 7 Tannery Lane now known as Lot 2 Tannery Lane following the registration of that newer plan of subdivision).

Further interrogation of the proposed removal of Covenant PS824333C is included later within this report.

The City has provided ‘in principle’ support for the removal of this Section 173 Agreement, in order to allow for the proposed boundary realignment proposed as part of this application to proceed.

If a permit was to issue for this proposed boundary realignment, a condition would be included requiring a new Section 173 Agreement to be registered on Title to also state no further subdivision of the land would be allowed. The reason for this would be to acknowledge that any averaging entitlement remains exhausted.

- Section 173 Agreement AD832143P, which is registered on the Title of 80 Schilling Lane.

This Agreement includes a number of requirements relating to wastewater management on the site.

The City has provided 'in principle' support for the removal of this Agreement, given that its contents are redundant (being that the land is now developed with a dwelling and has an established wastewater system), and that specific requirements referred to in the Agreement are now obsolete in terms of current wastewater disposal requirements and regulations.

Proposal

The application proposes:
a) A boundary realignment
b) Removal of a covenant
c) Variation to an easement

Each of these elements are discussed further below.

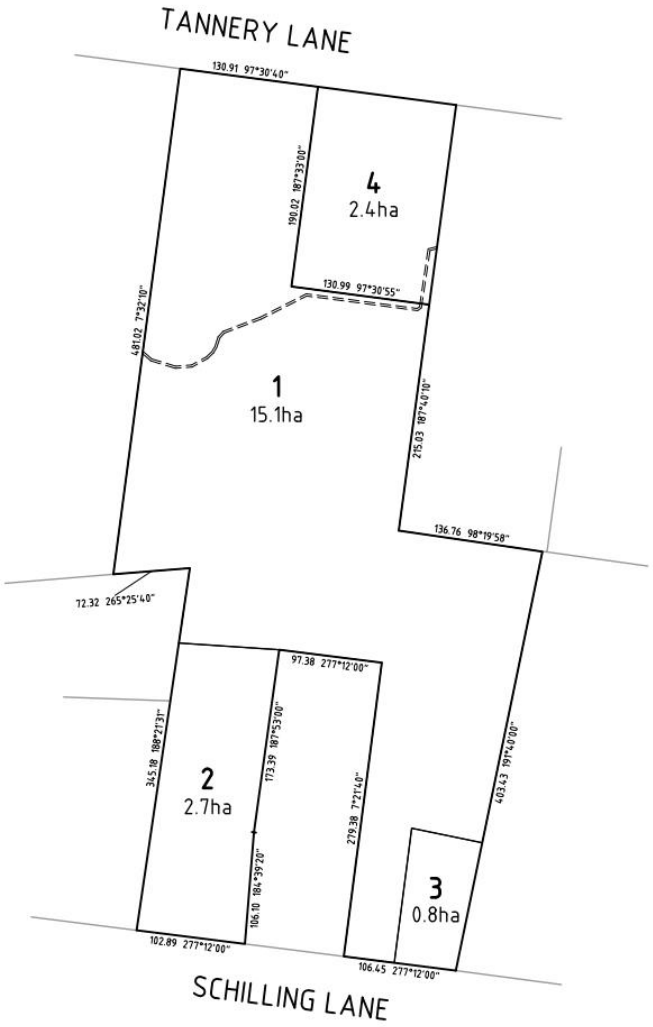


Figure 6. Proposed plan of subdivision.

a) Boundary Realignment

It is proposed to realign the boundaries between Lot 2 Tannery Lane, 56 Schilling Lane and 80 Schilling Lane.

The realignment would see a reduction of the areas of 56 and 80 Schilling Lane from 4.909 hectares and 5.145 hectares to 0.8 hectares and 2.7 hectares respectively. The area of Lot 2 Tannery Lane would be increased from 8.573 hectares to 15.1 hectares. The same number of lots would exist, albeit in a new configuration.

The realignment essentially reduces the lot areas of 56 and 80 Schilling Lane to take in the immediate curtilage around the existing dwellings on these lots (more so for 56 Schilling Lane given the larger reduction and smaller proposed lot size), with the balance being consolidated with the vacant parcel at Lot 2 Tannery Lane.

The boundary realignment does not propose any development of the vacant parcel at Lot 2 Tannery Lane. Parts of that land are affected by the Bushfire Management Overlay and

Land Subject to Inundation Overlay. A future Planning Permit for development of this lot may be required if:

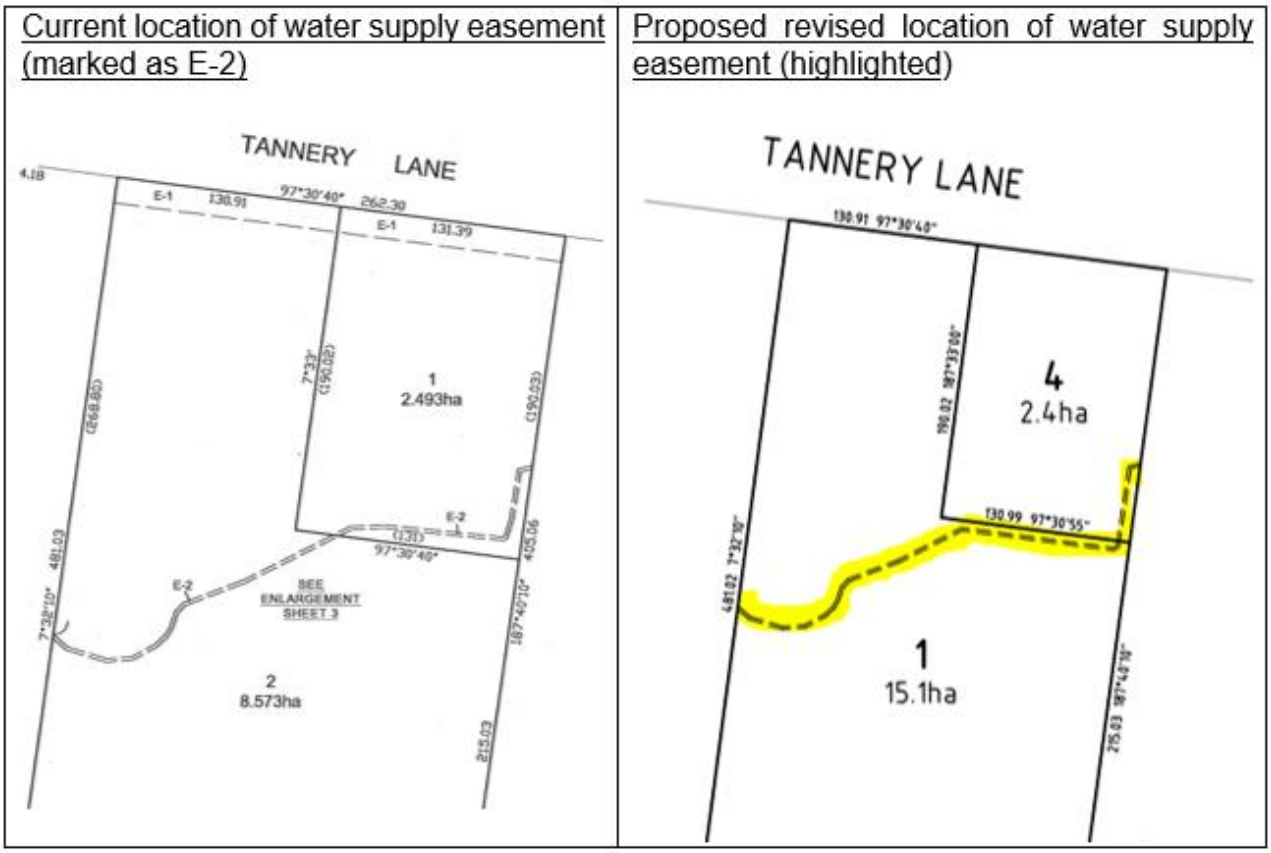
- A dwelling was to be located within either of these Overlays; or
- If a dwelling did not meet the siting requirements set out in the Rural Living Zone.

b) Removal of Covenant

It is also proposed to remove Covenant PS824333C, which is registered on the Title of Lot 2 PS824333C. As outlined earlier within this report, this covenant restricts future development on this lot to a specified building envelope and provides for access requirements to this building envelope.

c) Variation to Easement

It is proposed to slightly reposition the location of the water supply easement affecting 384 Tannery Lane and Lot 2 Tannery Lane. Currently the water supply easement runs close by to the southern boundary within Lot 1 PS824333C. It is proposed that the water supply easement be repositioned to the south of this boundary instead, within Lot 2 PS824333C (shown as lots 1 and 4 in the proposed revised location shown below). The remainder of the water supply easement would remain unaffected.



Planning Controls - Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme

The following clauses are relevant in the consideration of this proposal:

Municipal Planning Strategy

02.03-2 – Environment and landscape values
02.03-3 – Environmental risks and amenity
02.03-4 – Natural resource management

Planning Policy Framework

11.01-1S – Settlement
11.01-1L – Settlement – Greater Bendigo
11.03-6L-03 - Strathfieldsaye
13.02-1S – Bushfire planning
13.03-1S – Floodplain management
13.03-1L – Floodplain management – Greater Bendigo

Other Provisions

35.03 – Rural Living Zone
44.04 – Land Subject to Inundation Overlay
44.06 – Bushfire Management Overlay
52.02 – Easements, Restrictions and Reserves
65.02 – Approval of an application to subdivide land

Why is a Planning Permit required?

The reasons why a permit is required are outlined in the table below:

Planning Scheme Clause:	Reason why a permit is required:
Clause 35.03-3 Rural Living Zone	Permit required to subdivide land.
Clause 44.04-2 Land Subject to Inundation Overlay	Permit required to subdivide land.
Clause 44.06-2 Bushfire Management Overlay	Permit required to subdivide land.
Clause 52.02 Easements, restrictions, and reserves	Permit required to vary an easement and remove a restriction.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025

Outcome 2 – Healthy, liveable spaces and places

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 7 – Sustainable population growth is planned for

Consultation/Communication

Referrals

The following authorities and internal departments have been consulted on the proposal:

Referral	Comment
Country Fire Authority	Does not object to the granting of a permit and has not requested any conditions be included on the planning permit.
Coliban Water	Does not object to the granting of the permit; subject to the inclusion of the following permit conditions: 1. All Coliban Water assets located within the subdivision, are to be protected by Registered Easements to be created in favour of Coliban Region Water Corporation. I refer to the existing 300mm and 900mm Trunk water mains which traverse this development site. Connections to either of these Trunk water mains will not be granted by Coliban Water. 2. Coliban Water requires the creation of Registered Easements to protect all of the existing private Delvers or a proposed realignment of the private Delvers which are located within the subdivision. These easements must be created in favour of the titles having rights over the Delvers and not Coliban Water. 3. Agreement is required to be reached with Coliban Water regarding the existing rural water supply licenses and volumes, due to the significant changes in numbers of and the sizes of the lots within this development site.
Downer	Does not object to the granting of a permit and has not requested any conditions be included on the planning permit.

Referral	Comment
North Central Catchment Management Authority	Does not object to the granting of the permit; subject to the inclusion of the following permit conditions: 1. Prior to certification, a suitable restriction is to be placed on title for Lots 1 and 2, which specifies that there can be no buildings or works within 30 metres of the top bank of the waterway that runs through this property.
Powercor	Does not object to the granting of the permit; subject to the inclusion of the following permit conditions: 1. This letter shall be supplied to the applicant in its entirety. 2. The plan of subdivision submitted for certification under the Subdivision Act 1988 shall be referred to the Distributor in accordance with Section 8 of that Act. 3. The applicant shall provide an electricity supply to all lots in the subdivision in accordance with the Distributor's requirements and standards. **Notes**: Extension, augmentation or rearrangement of the Distributor's electrical assets may be required to make such supplies available, with the cost of such works generally borne by the applicant. 4. The applicant shall ensure that existing and proposed buildings and electrical installations on the subject land are compliant with the Victorian Service and Installation Rules (VSIR). **Notes**: Where electrical works are required to achieve VSIR compliance, a registered electrical contractor must be engaged to undertake such works.
Drainage Engineer	No comments or conditions.
Environmental Health	Does not object to the granting of the permit; subject to the inclusion of the following permit conditions: 1. Before a statement of compliance is issued, the Onsite Wastewater Management System servicing the dwelling on Lot 3, must be changed through a Permit to Install/Alter an Onsite Wastewater management System and approved for use by the City's Environmental Health team.

Public Notification

The application was advertised by way of notice on the sites and letters to adjoining owners and occupiers. Seven (7) objections were received, with the grounds of objection being summarised as:

- Concerns relating to the intentions behind the boundary realignment and future plans for the site.

- Concerns regarding the removal of the Covenant and that this will allow for the land to be subdivided into smaller lots.
- Concerns that the variation to the water supply easement will remove water access to other properties and have other impacts on water supply.
- Possibility of a large housing project or subdivision being built in the area, and the impacts this would have on the area in terms of additional traffic, noise, impacts to vegetation.
- Adverse impacts to the amenity of the area.
- Adverse impacts to the environment, including native vegetation on the land, and to flora and fauna.
- Concerns regarding the waiving of application requirements relating to the Bushfire Management Overlay, and that this may result in increased bushfire risk to the site and beyond.
- No detail provided as to how the land will be developed in future.
- Schilling Lane is a single lane narrow road which would not have capacity for increased vehicular access.
- Noncompliance with minimum lot sizes set out in the Rural Living Zone.
- Inappropriate current and future use of the land.

Consultation occurred via direct written communication with objectors with the permit applicant response circulated to them.

A detailed written response was provided to each objector in response to their objection from the assessing officer upon receipt of their objection. The reason for this was each objection asserted a prohibition for the boundary realignment, which was incorrect in fact and law. Officers corresponded to provide information that this was not the case.

One (1) objection was withdrawn because of this process, with six (6) objections remaining.

These objections are discussed further below within the planning assessment.

Planning Assessment

<u>What are the planning controls applicable to the land, and is the proposed boundary realignment an appropriate outcome in terms of these planning controls?</u>

Each of the properties forming part of this application are zoned Rural Living Zone. There are parts of each allotment which are within the Bushfire Management Overlay, as well as some parts within the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay. A Vegetation Protection Overlay also applies to the lots adjoining Schilling Lane.

- *Rural Living Zone*

The Schedule to the Rural Living Zone sets out a minimum lot size of 4 hectares for the land, being located on the Strathfieldsaye fringe.

The Rural Living Zone allows for lots smaller than this minimum to be created if the subdivision is the re-subdivision of existing lots and the number of lots is not increased (Source: clause 35.03-3). Subdivisions of this type are often referred to as relying on 'averaging' provisions.

The averaging provisions is being relied upon to allow for the proposed realignment between the properties, whereby the boundary is being repositioned between the lots, and does not create any *additional* lots. The boundary realignment would result in the following lot sizes:
- Lot 1 (currently Lot 2 Tannery Lane) = 15.1 hectares
- Lot 2 (80 Schilling Lane) = 2.7 hectares
- Lot 3 (56 Schilling Lane) = 0.8 hectares
- Lot 4 (384 Tannery Lane) = 2.4 hectares

The proposed lot size for Lot 1 will be *greater* than the minimum lot size set out in the Rural Living Zone schedule (which is 4 hectares in this part of the municipality. In theory Lot 1 would be capable of further subdivision into additional lots based on the 4-hectare minimum lot size. As the boundary realignment is reliant on a planning provision where the number is **not** increasing, a restriction (in the form of a new Section 173 Agreement) will be required to prevent further subdivision of this parcel of land.

The proposed boundary realignment will only realign the common boundaries between four titles. No development is proposed and no development opportunity (where it does not already exist) will result. Taking the above factors into account, the proposal is consistent with the purpose and objectives of the Rural Living Zone.

- *Overlays*

Each of the properties are partially affected by the Bushfire Management Overlay, as indicated by the red shading in Figure 7 below. 80 Schilling Lane and a small portion of Lot 2 Tannery Lane are also partially affected by the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay, indicated in the lighter shading in Figure 7.

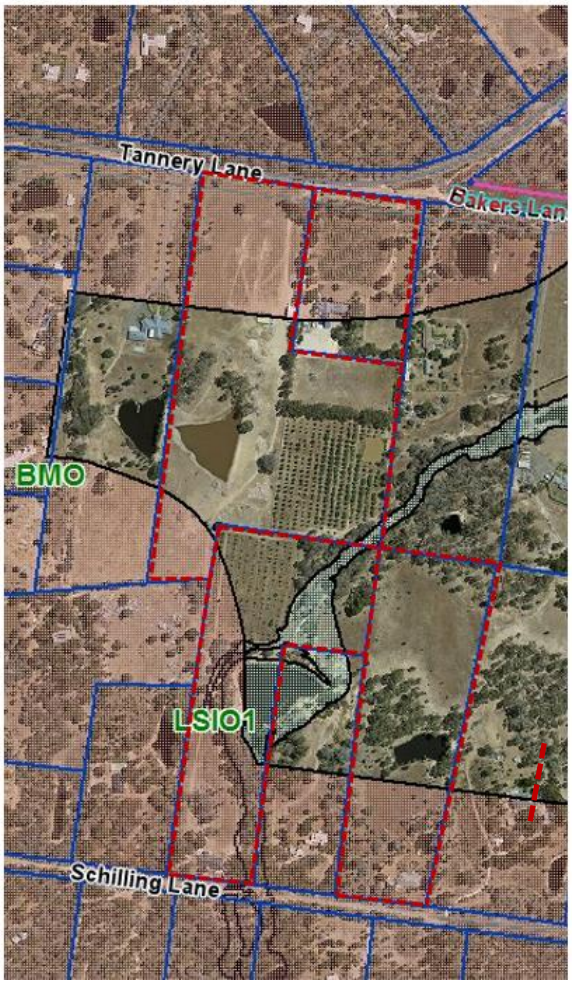


Figure 7. Aerial photo showing areas affected by Bushfire Management Overlay (red shading) and Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (lighter shading), with subject parcels delineated with red dotted line.

- *Bushfire Management Overlay*

The proposed boundary realignment does not have significant implications in terms of both of these planning controls, particularly given that three of the lots already contain existing dwellings. Risk to life or property would not increase in the assessment of officers, which is the policy test under clause 13.02-1S *Bushfire Planning.*

As risk was not being increased, the application requirements for the Bushfire Management Overlay were waived in this instance. Discretion for the City to waive the Bushfire Management Overlay in certain circumstances is provided for in the Overlay at clause 44.06-3.
The Country Fire Authority requested a bushfire assessment be prepared for 56 Schilling Lane only. The reason for this was that the significant reduction in lot size raised a question in the view of the Country Fire Authority whether a future extension to this dwelling (if proposed) would be able to achieve required bushfire protection measures. Following the provision of evidence that this could be achieved, the Country Fire Authority provided consent to the proposed boundary realignment and did not require any permit conditions.

Any new development on Lot 2 Tannery Lane will either address bushfire protection through:

- A future planning process (if sited within the Bushfire Management Overlay, though there is ample opportunity to build outside of the Overlay); or
- As part of the building permit process as is the process where land is within a bushfire prone area.

The proposal to realign the boundaries does not represent any significant or unacceptable risk in terms of bushfire, and any new development on the site will address bushfire risk at a later date.

- *Land Subject to Inundation Overlay*

A relatively small portion of the land is affected by the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay. The proposed boundary realignment will have little impact on these parts of the land, other than essentially only changing the ownership of the parts of land that is affected by this Overlay. As with the Bushfire Management Overlay, if future development is to be sited within this Overlay, planning permission would be required and the appropriateness of such development on the waterway assessed at that time.

- *Vegetation Protection Overlay*

The land is also partly affected by the Vegetation Protection Overlay. No planning permit under this Overlay is required for subdivision and no vegetation removal is proposed or required as part of this application. As such, no assessment against this Overlay is required.

Can the land be further subdivided as envisaged by the objections to the application?

Many of the objections raise concern that the proposed boundary realignment will facilitate further, more intensive development of the land in the future.

As noted above, the land is zoned Rural Living Zone, which has a minimum lot size of 4 hectares for subdivision in this part of Strathfieldsaye. The Rural Living Zone does not allow for small lot *urban style* subdivision of the land.

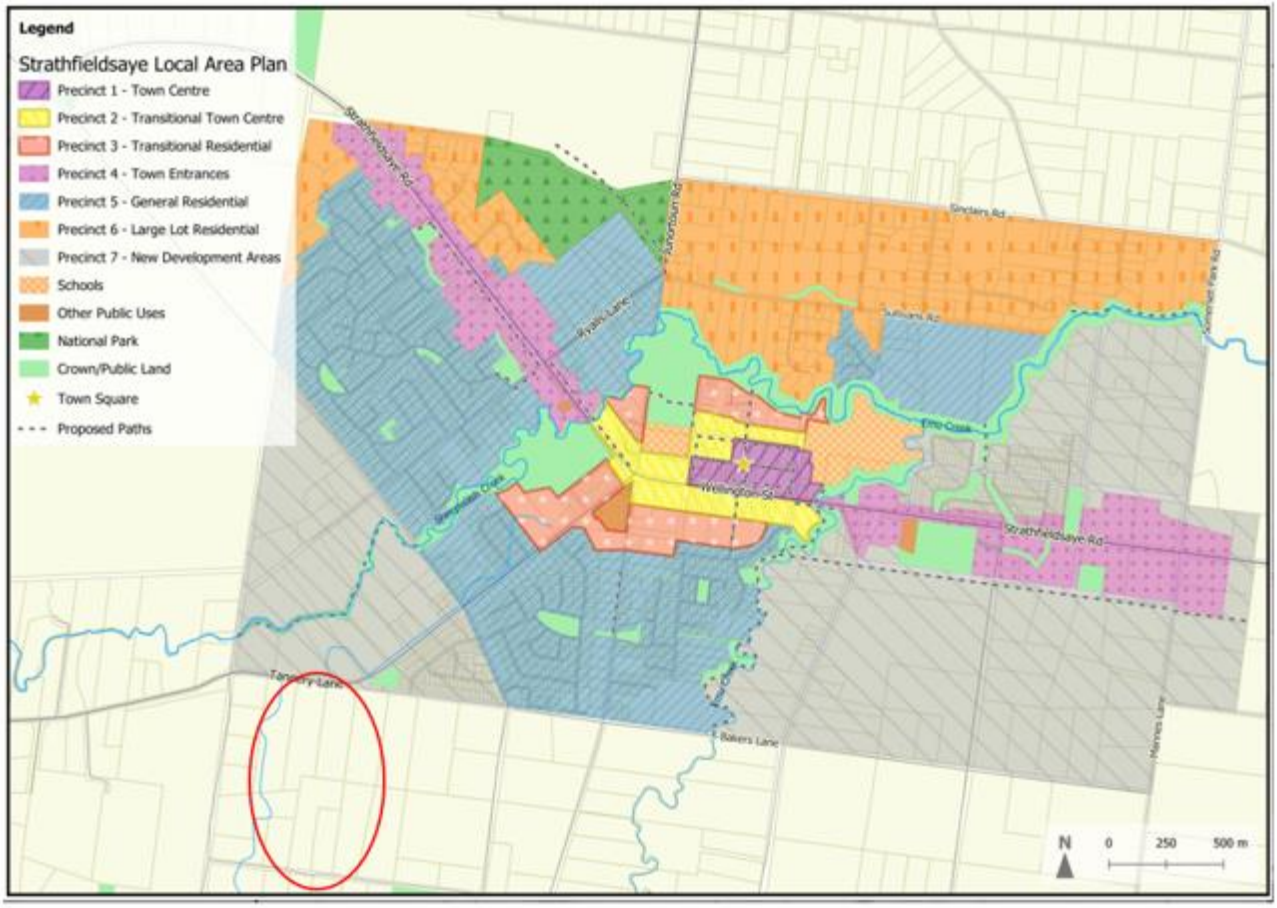


Figure 8. Strathfieldsaye Local Area Plan, with location of subject land circled.

The land is in close proximity to the Strathfieldsaye township; however, the subject land remains *outside* of the township growth boundary. As shown in the Strathfieldsaye Local Area Plan at Figure 8 above, growth areas (shaded grey) are indicated north of both Tannery Lane and Bakers Lane and do not take in the subject land.

Objectors fear the land will be developed in a manner not preferred by them. This fear is unfounded as two significant steps would have to occur before *urban style* subdivision could occur:

1. Further strategic work would need to be undertaken to identify future growth areas for the Strathfieldsaye township and would need to identify this land as having development potential; and/or
2. The land would need to be rezoned from Rural Living Zone, which does not allow for intensive subdivision, to the General Residential Zone. Any request to do so would require strategic justification (outlined above).

If change was recommended, for example through the *Managed Growth Strategy* (currently under development) *any* change to Planning Scheme requires extensive consultation with the community. Changes to the Planning Scheme are open and transparent processes where this objector cohort, the community at large and relevant agencies would be party to the process as to whether change should occur or not.

The current application for a boundary realignment must be assessed on its merits and against the planning controls as they now stand. The proposal does not seek to create additional lots and would only result in a realignment of boundaries between existing parcels of land. This realignment is considered an acceptable planning outcome for the land in terms of the Rural Living Zone, as outlined earlier within this report.

Is the variation to the easement acceptable?

A minor repositioning of part of the water supply easement on Lot 2 and 384 Tannery Lane is proposed as part of the application. This repositioning, which affects only a small part of the easement, will see the location moved to be more wholly within Lot 2 Tannery Lane, and will otherwise remain in its current location.

The water supply easement benefits both Lot 1 (384) and Lot 2 Tannery Lane which are referred to above, as well as Lot 5 LP110744 2 Bakers Lane) and Lot 1 PS317652N (50 Bakers Lane).

There are no other proposed changes to the easement.

It is considered the variation to the water supply easement is not likely to cause adverse impact on the following basis:

- The variation will occur only within the application site;
- Only a relatively small portion of the easement is proposed to be repositioned;
- The easement will continue to be in use and will not be removed from the land; and
- There will be no changes to how the easement operates beyond the site.

The variation is therefore considered appropriate.

Is the removal of the covenant acceptable, giving regard to the intention of the restriction?

It is proposed to remove Covenant Covenant PS824333C, which is registered on the Title of Lot 2 PS824333C.

This Covenant restricts the location of a dwelling on this lot, through requiring that development only be located within a building envelope and also sets out the access requirements to the building envelope.

The Covenant was required as part of a previous subdivision application, with the intention to ensure that development was located to be outside of the Bushfire Management Overlay which applies to part of the land, as well as to ensure that any future dwelling had appropriate access.

The proposed boundary realignment will increase the size of Lot 2 and in doing so will provide ample alternative siting opportunities for a future dwelling beyond the location

previously anticipated. The requirement for a dwelling to be only located within the designated envelope is considered unnecessary as there are a number of alternative locations on the site, clear of these Overlays, where a future dwelling may be positioned.

The current title restriction for access is superfluous as these requirements can be achieved via other measures. Most notably clause 35.03-2 of the Zone imposes a mandatory requirement for dwellings that:

> *Access to the dwelling must be provided via an all-weather road with dimensions adequate to accommodate emergency vehicles.*

If a dwelling was constructed and occupied without the requirement being met; a planning enforcement path through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to force compliance can be pursued.

It has been noted that a future dwelling on Lot 2 *may* require a Planning Permit if it was proposed within the Bushfire Management Overlay or Land Subject to Inundation Overlay, or proximate to a waterway, boundary, or existing neighbouring dwelling. If the above siting consideration resulted in the need for a permit; it would be assessed on its merits at that time.

In considering whether a Covenant should be removed, the Planning Scheme and Planning and Environment Act set out that the responsible authority must consider the interests of affected people. Section 60(2) of the Act applies to restrictive covenants created on or after 25 June 1991 and states that a planning permit cannot be granted to remove or vary a registered restrictive covenant unless the responsible authority is satisfied that any benefiting landowner will be unlikely to suffer material detriment, including financial loss or loss of amenity.

In this instance, given that the restriction only applies to Lot 1 (384 Tannery Lane) and Lot 2 Tannery Lane, with both properties being in the same ownership, there is unlikely to be any resulting material detriment, impacts to amenity or financial loss resulting from the Covenant's removal, thereby satisfying the 'tests' of the Act.

On this basis, and for the reasons outlined above, the removal of the Covenant is considered acceptable.

Remaining Objector Concerns

The balance of objector concerns not already addressed relate to:

- Impacts to amenity; and
- Impacts on the environment and native vegetation.

The application does not seek to change the current use of the land. On this basis the proposal will not result in any impacts on the existing amenity of the area.

Likewise, no physical changes are proposed beyond the repositioning of the water supply easement, which can occur without impact to native vegetation, the proposal will not result in any environmental impacts.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, the proposed boundary realignment, variation to easement and removal of the covenant represent an appropriate planning outcome for the site and approval of the application is recommended.

Options

Council, acting as the responsible authority for deciding this application under the Planning Scheme, may resolve to grant a permit, grant a permit with conditions, or refuse to grant a permit.

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Proposed Notice of Decision Conditions

NO LAYOUT ALTERATION

1. The subdivision permitted by this permit as shown on the endorsed plan(s) and/or described in the endorsed documents must not be altered or modified (for any reason) except with the prior written consent of the responsible authority.

REFERRAL OF PLAN

2. The plan of subdivision submitted for certification under the Subdivision Act 1988 must be referred to the relevant authority in accordance with section 8 of that Act.

REMOVAL OF COVENANT

3. This permit provides for the removal of Covenant PS824333C.

ENDING OF SECTION 173 AGREEMENT

4. Prior to certification of the Plan of Subdivision, Section 173 Agreement AR950435T must be formally ended.

REQUIREMENT FOR A NEW SECTION 173 AGREEMENT – NO FURTHER SUBDIVISION

5. Prior to the issue of a Statement of Compliance, the applicant/owner must enter into an agreement under section 173 of the Planning & Environment Act 1987.
   (a) Such agreement must covenant that the land must not be further subdivided.

The agreement must be prepared by the City's Solicitors and the landowner must pay the reasonable costs of the preparation, execution, and registration of the Section 173 Agreement

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

6. Prior to the issue of a Statement of Compliance is issued, the Onsite Wastewater Management System servicing the dwelling on Lot 3, must be changed through a Permit to Install/Alter an Onsite Wastewater management System and approved for use by the City's Environmental Health Unit.

NORTH CENTRAL CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

7. Prior to certification a suitable restriction is to be placed on title for Lots 1 and 2, which specifies that there can be no buildings or works within 30 metres of the top bank of the waterway that runs through this property.

COLIBAN WATER

8. All Coliban Water assets located within the subdivision, are to be protected by Registered Easements to be created in favour of Coliban Region Water Corporation. I refer to the existing 300mm and 900mm Trunk water mains which traverse this development site. Connections to either of these Trunk water mains will not be granted by Coliban Water.
9. Coliban Water requires the creation of Registered Easements to protect all the existing private Delvers or a proposed realignment of the private Delvers which are located within the subdivision. These easements must be created in favour of the titles having rights over the Delvers and not Coliban Water.
10. Agreement is required to be reached with Coliban Water regarding the existing rural water supply licenses and volumes, due to the significant changes in numbers of and the sizes of the lots within this development site.

POWERCOR

11. This letter shall be supplied to the applicant in its entirety.
12. The plan of subdivision submitted for certification under the Subdivision Act 1988 shall be referred to the Distributor in accordance with Section 8 of that Act.
13. The applicant shall provide an electricity supply to all lots in the subdivision in accordance with the Distributor's requirements and standards.

    Notes: Extension, augmentation or rearrangement of the Distributor's electrical assets may be required to make such supplies available, with the cost of such works generally borne by the applicant.
14. The applicant shall ensure that existing and proposed buildings and electrical installations on the subject land are compliant with the Victorian Service and Installation Rules (VSIR).

    Notes: Where electrical works are required to achieve VSIR compliance, a registered electrical contractor must be engaged to undertake such works.

EXPIRY OF THE PERMIT

15. The permit will expire if:
    (a) The plan of subdivision is not certified within two years from the date of this permit; or
    (b) The subdivision is not completed within five years from the date of certification of the plan of subdivision.

    The responsible authority may extend the time for certification of the plan if a request is made in writing before the permit expires or within six months afterwards.

USEFUL INFORMATION: (the following information does not form part of this permit)

North Central Catchment Management Authority Note:
Flood levels for the 1% AEP (100-year ARI) flood event have been determined for this area under provisions of the Water Act 1989. The applicable 1% AEP flood level for the location described above grades from 233.4 metres AHD down to 223.0 metres AHD, which was obtained from Bendigo Urban Flood Study (2013).

Environmental Health Notes:
(a) The final location and design of the changed Onsite Wastewater Management System servicing the dwelling on Lot 3 will be specified and assessed by Council (Environmental Health).
(b) Before a building permit is issued for a dwelling at the newly created vacant Lot 1, a Permit to Install an Onsite Wastewater Management System is required to be issued by Council (Environmental Health).
(c) The future use of the area of land at the southern end of Lot 1 (currently a Land Application Area for the dwelling at Lot 3 – rock, pipes, saturated soil) should be carefully considered.

Attachments

Nil

16.2. 2 Apsley Street, Strathfieldsaye - Six Lot Subdivision

Author:	Penny Loader, Statutory Planning
Responsible Director:	Andrew Cooney, Director Strategy and Growth

Summary/Purpose

Application No:	DS/1029/2021
Applicant:	Total Property Developments
Land:	2 Apsley Street, STRATHFIELDSAYE 3551
Zoning:	General Residential Zone
Overlays:	Design and Development Overlay – Schedule 28
No. of objections:	2
Consultation meeting:	A consultation meeting was held on 7 June 2023, attended by the Planning Officer, 1 Councillor, the applicant and a number of local residents/objectors.
Key considerations:	• What does the strategic planning policy seek to achieve for this part of Strathfieldsaye? • Whether the Planning Scheme supports a residential subdivision in this location. • Whether the proposal is in accordance with the requirements of the Design and Development Overlay Schedule 28 and the Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework. • Objector concerns.
Conclusion:	The subject site is suitable for infill development and the broad planning policy framework supports a residential subdivision in this location. However, it must be acknowledged that the Planning Scheme provides specific direction for what such a subdivision should look like in this location as it sets a clear vision for Strathfieldsaye. This vision is not achieved by the proposed subdivision. The proposal fails to respond to the desired density for the precinct and is a poor subdivision layout. The policy clearly states that medium density development, with a maximum lot size of 300 square metres is desired for this site. The proposed lot layout does not minimise vehicle access points – instead, requiring each proposed lot to construct a separate vehicle crossover. This is contrary to policy seeking to create a pedestrian friendly environment with active street frontages. The proposed subdivision layout also proposes to create lots that would not be capable of being developed in accordance with the design objectives of active frontages,

	minimal street setbacks and avoiding multiple vehicle access points. The proposed subdivision is an underdevelopment of the site and is inconsistent with the objectives and standards of policy specific to Strathfieldsaye.

Recommended Motion

Pursuant to section 61 of the Planning and Environment Act (1987), Council issues a Notice of Decision to Refuse to Grant a Permit for *a 6 lot subdivision* at 2 Apsley Street STRATHFIELDSAYE, on the following grounds:

1. The proposed subdivision does not provide for medium density residential development as sought by Clause 11.03-6L-03, Schedule 28 to the Design and Development Overlay and the Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework by creating lots greater than 300 square metres in size.

2. The proposed subdivision fails to minimise vehicle access points as sought by Clause 11.03-6L-03, Schedule 28 to the Design and Development Overlay and the Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework.

3. The proposed subdivision seeks to create lots which would be incapable of meeting built form objectives relating to vehicle access, interface with the street and building setbacks sought by Schedule 28 to the Design and Development Overlay and the Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework.

Background Information

The application was initially lodged in early December 2021 for a 6-lot subdivision. Preliminary concerns were raised with the applicant regarding the subdivision not being in accordance with the relevant planning policy framework and it was advised that the proposed layout was unlikely to be supported at officer level.

The application was subsequently amended on 25 January 2023 to a 14-lot subdivision and development of 14 dwellings in response to the City's concerns. The application was advertised and received 16 objections. A consultation meeting was held on 7 June 2023 to discuss the concerns raised.

The application was again amended on 15 June 2023 to revert back to the original 6 lot subdivision, as described above. This is the application that Council is required to decide on.

It is noted that Planning Scheme Amendment C256 was gazetted on 9 June 2022 which replaced the Municipal Strategic Statement and Local Planning Policy Framework with the

new format Municipal Planning Strategy and local policies into the Planning Policy Framework. Whilst the applicant did not provide an updated policy response, the original content remains relevant despite the changes to the policy format.

Report

Subject Site and Surrounds

The subject site is located on the north-eastern corner of Apsley Street and Uxbridge Street and is rectangular in shape with an area of 3,955 square metres. The site has a southern frontage to Apsley Street of 45.29 metres and a western frontage to Uxbridge Street of 74 metres.



Figure 1: Aerial photo of subject site

The site contains a single storey weatherboard dwelling, sited at an angle to the boundaries. Vehicle access to the site is provided via an unsealed crossover to Apsley Street. The site has been cleared of vegetation, except for one tree located to the rear of the dwelling. A 2 metre wide drainage easement runs along the eastern boundary of the site. The site has a minimal fall to the north-east.



Figure 2: Photo of existing dwelling from Uxbridge Street (taken 6 January 2022)

The site is adjoined to the south by Apsley Street, to the west by Uxbridge Street (both two-way, sealed roads) and to the north and east by adjoining residential properties.

The applicant provides the following character description as it relates to the existing pattern of development in this neighbourhood:

> *"The land surrounding the site has historically been developed into low density residential allotments typically greater than 3,000 square metres in area. Many of these properties have since been further subdivided into lots of between 600 and 1,000 square metres in area, with a handful of higher density lots of approximately 300 to 400 square metres. The pattern of subdivision surrounding the site seems to be shifting from large residential lots to higher density lots as Strathfieldsaye continues to develop."*

Minimal change has occurred in the area immediately surrounding the subject site since the current strategic framework was introduced in 2020. A 17-lot subdivision at 16 Apsley Street with lot sizes around 400 square metres is the only recent approval. All other development in the immediate vicinity was either constructed or approved before the current Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework became part of the planning assessment framework.

The site is located to the immediate north of Strathfieldsaye's commercial area with excellent access to facilities including Strathfieldsaye Primary School (directly west), Strathfieldsaye Recreation Reserve (to the north-west), a medical centre (directly south) and the supermarket (300 metres to the south-east).

The site is part of the Transitional Town Centre Precinct, as defined in the *Strathfieldsaye Town Centre Urban Design Framework, February 2017*, which is defined as:

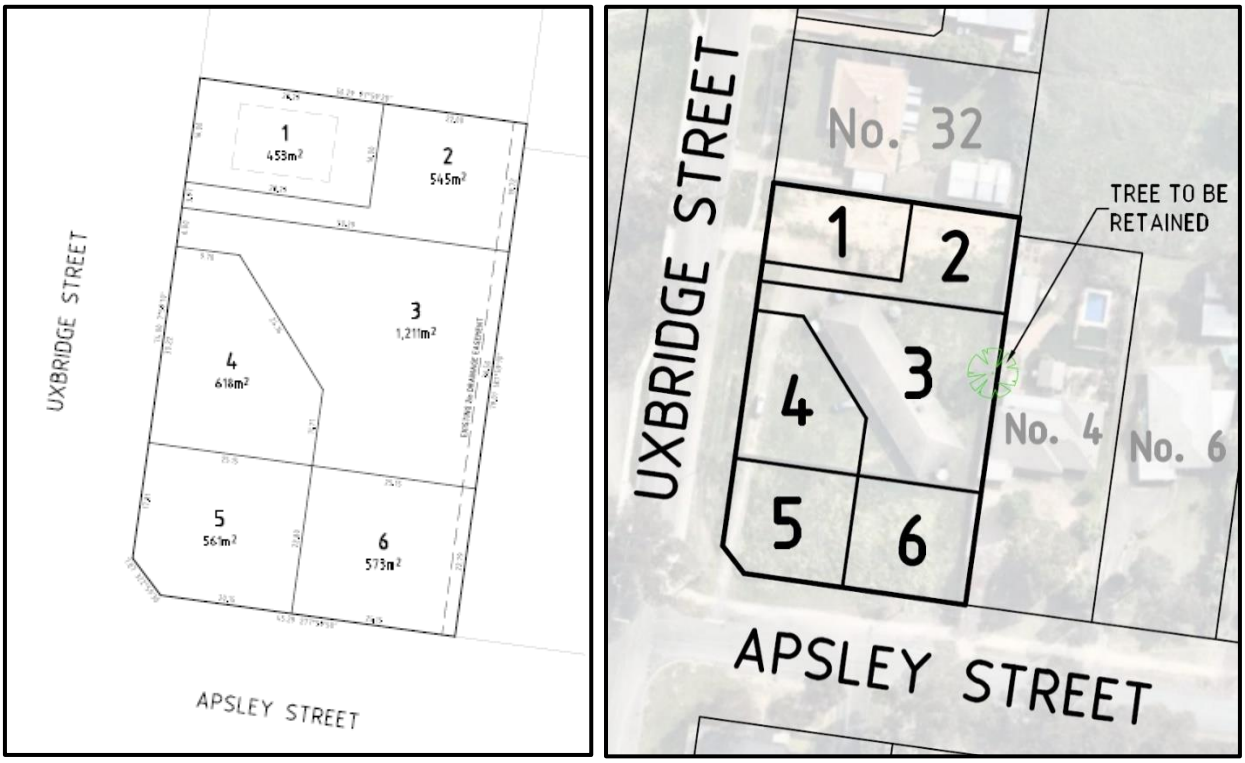
> *"… a transitional area between the Town Centre Precinct and the Transitional Residential Precinct [which] encourages medium density residential and mixed-use activities that are framed by large trees and native vegetation."*

Restrictive Covenants

The site is not subject to any restrictive covenants that would affect the proposal.

Proposal

The application proposes to subdivide the subject site into 6 lots in the following configuration:



Figures 3 and 4: Proposed plan of subdivision and plan of subdivision over aerial photo

Lot	Size	Contains
1	453 square metre rectangular lot with a 16 metre frontage to Uxbridge Street.	Vacant.
2	545 square metre battleaxe style with a 3.97 metre frontage to Uxbridge Street.	Vacant.
3	1,211 square metre irregular shape with a 6 metre frontage to Uxbridge Street.	Retaining existing dwelling.
4	618 square metre irregular shape with a 30.22 metre frontage to Uxbridge Street.	Vacant.
5	561 square metres with 17.81 metres frontage to Uxbridge Street, 20.15 metre frontage to Apsley Street and a 7.07 metres splay at the corner.	Vacant.
6	573 square metres with a 25.15 metre frontage to Apsley Street.	Vacant.

Planning Controls - Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme

Why is a permit needed?

The following table lists all the relevant planning permit triggers that apply to this application.

Clause	Why a Planning Permit is Required
Clause 32.08 General Residential Zone	Clause 32.08-3 subdivision of land
Clause 43.02-3 Design and Development Overlay	Clause 43.02-3 subdivision of land

The following clauses are relevant in the consideration of this proposal:

Municipal Planning Strategy

- Clause 02.02 Vision
- Clause 02.03-1 Settlement
- Clause 02.03-5 Built Environment and Heritage
- Clause 02.03-6 Housing
- Clause 02.04 Strategic framework plans

Planning Policy Framework

- Clause 11 Settlement
- Clause 11.01-1S Settlement
- Clause 11.01-1R Settlement – Loddon Mallee South
- Clause 11.01-1L-01 Settlement – Greater Bendigo
- Clause 11.01-1L-02 10 Minute Neighbourhoods – Greater Bendigo
- Clause 11.02-1S Supply of Urban Land
- Clause 11.01-2S Structure planning
- Clause 11.02-2L Structure planning – Greater Bendigo
- Clause 11.03-1S Activity centres
- Clause 11.03-1L Activity centres – Greater Bendigo
- Clause 11.03-6L-03 Strathfieldsaye
- Clause 12.01 Biodiversity
- Clause 13.02-1S Bushfire Planning
- Clause 15 Built environment and heritage
- Clause 15.01-1S Urban Design
- Clause 15.01-3S Subdivision Design
- Clause 15.01-5S Neighbourhood Character

- Clause 15.03-2S Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
- Clause 16 Housing
- Clause 16.01-1S Housing supply

Other Provisions

- Clause 32.08 General Residential Zone
- Clause 43.02 Design and Development Overlay
- Clause 53.01 Public Open Space
- Clause 56 Residential Subdivision
- Clause 65 Decision Guidelines
- Clause 71.02-3 Integrated Decision-Making

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 2 – Healthy, liveable spaces and places

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 7 – Sustainable population growth is planned for

Other References

- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
- Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework (City of Greater Bendigo 2017)

Consultation/Communication

Referrals

The following authorities and internal departments have been consulted on the proposal:

Referral	Comment
Powercor	No objection subject to conditions requiring electricity to be supplied to all lots, compliant with regulations.
Coliban	No objection subject to conditions requiring water and sewer to be supplied to all lots, which includes a water main extension.
Downer	No response received.

Referral	Comment
Engineering (Traffic)	No objection subject to conditions requiring access to be constructed in accordance with the Infrastructure Design Manual and the driveways to lots 2 and 3 to be sealed.
Engineering (Drainage and Development Infrastructure)	No objection subject to conditions requiring a detailed drainage plan, a footpath, kerb and channelling along the Apsley Street frontage and protection for future on-site drainage infrastructure.
Strategic Planning	Objected, on the following basis: • Subdivision layout does not align with design objectives for the precinct as described in the Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework. • Lack of direction for future development on the site. • Proposed lot sizes are considerably larger than the 300 square metres maximum identified in the policy. • Proposed layout unlikely to result in development of the desired scale. • Layout likely to lead to dominance of car parking/garages. • Layout precludes lots 2 and 3 to interface with the street and provide passive surveillance, contrary to policy. • The lot layout is likely to lead to development that cannot meet design objectives, particularly around active frontages and street setbacks.

Public Notification

The original application for a 14-lot subdivision and construction of 14 dwellings was advertised by way of notices on the site and letters to adjoining and nearby owners and occupiers.

As a result of advertising, 16 objections were received, of which 14 were withdrawn following the amendment of the application to the current proposal for a six-lot subdivision.

A consultation meeting was held on 7 June 2023 at the Strathfieldsaye Football Netball Club rooms. The meeting was attended by almost all the objectors, the permit applicant, the landowner of the subject site and Councillor Penna. The objectors' concerns were discussed at length and while there was no resolution reached at the meeting, the discussion provided valuable context for the issues raised in objections and afforded City officers the opportunity to clarify the planning process.

The applicant subsequently chose to amend the application to a 6-lot subdivision, which resulted in the majority of objections being withdrawn.

Two of the objections to the original application remain, with the grounds of objection being:

- Character (in particular, density and setbacks);
- Traffic congestion and parking;
- Property valuation;
- Visual bulk;
- Overlooking;
- Noise impacts.

The issues relating to visual bulk, overlooking and noise impacts are no longer relevant as the application no longer proposes development. While it cannot be guaranteed that these issues would not arise again as a result of future development proposals, they are beyond the scope of a subdivision to control. In addition, property valuation is not a relevant planning consideration. Character, traffic and parking are relevant to the revised application and these matters are discussed throughout the assessment below.

Planning Assessment

What does the strategic planning policy seek to achieve for this part of Strathfieldsaye?

Extensive structure planning has been undertaken for Strathfieldsaye, with the *Strathfieldsaye Township Plan* (TP) adopted by Council in December 2010 and the *Strathfieldsaye Town Centre Urban Design Framework* (UDF) adopted by Council in February 2017. Strathfieldsaye is somewhat unique with regards to the extent of strategic planning policy work that has been undertaken and implemented into the Planning Scheme in recent years.

Strathfieldsaye has anticipated and planned for significant growth over several decades. The Strathfieldsaye Township Plan 2012 replaced the previous Township Structure Plan developed in the early 1990s. The Township Plan anticipated growth in Strathfieldsaye to reach 8,000 people by 2021. The estimated population as of 2022 was just over 7,000. The plan was adopted by Council in 2009 and identified two large new development areas in the east and west, as well as identifying the subject site for medium density residential development.

The UDF is the product of significant community engagement and consultation and was developed to guide future development alongside the growth of Strathfieldsaye. The Framework establishes the form and layout of the town centre, landscaping, public space and how the town centre will progressively develop to retain the features that the community highly values.

These documents inform local policy for Strathfieldsaye, which encourages medium density residential development in this precinct. The UDF both informs and is referred to in the local planning policy specific to this site (Clause 11.03-6L-03 Strathfieldsaye and Schedule 28 to Clause 43.02 Strathfieldsaye Transitional Town Centre (DDO28).

In December 2020, the vision and directions of the UDF were introduced into the Planning Scheme via Planning Scheme Amendment C232 which created Schedule 28 to the Design and Development Overlay that applies to the Strathfieldsaye Transitional Town Centre. The DDO28 is the planning control which gives voice to the objectives and strategies of the UDF.

This work defines 7 precincts in and around Strathfieldsaye's core, with the subject site falling within Precinct 2 – Transitional Town Centre (shown in Figure 5 below). The desired character for Precinct 2 is "*a transition area between the high activity area of Precinct 1 and the residential area of Precinct 3, that is framed by large native trees and native vegetation."*

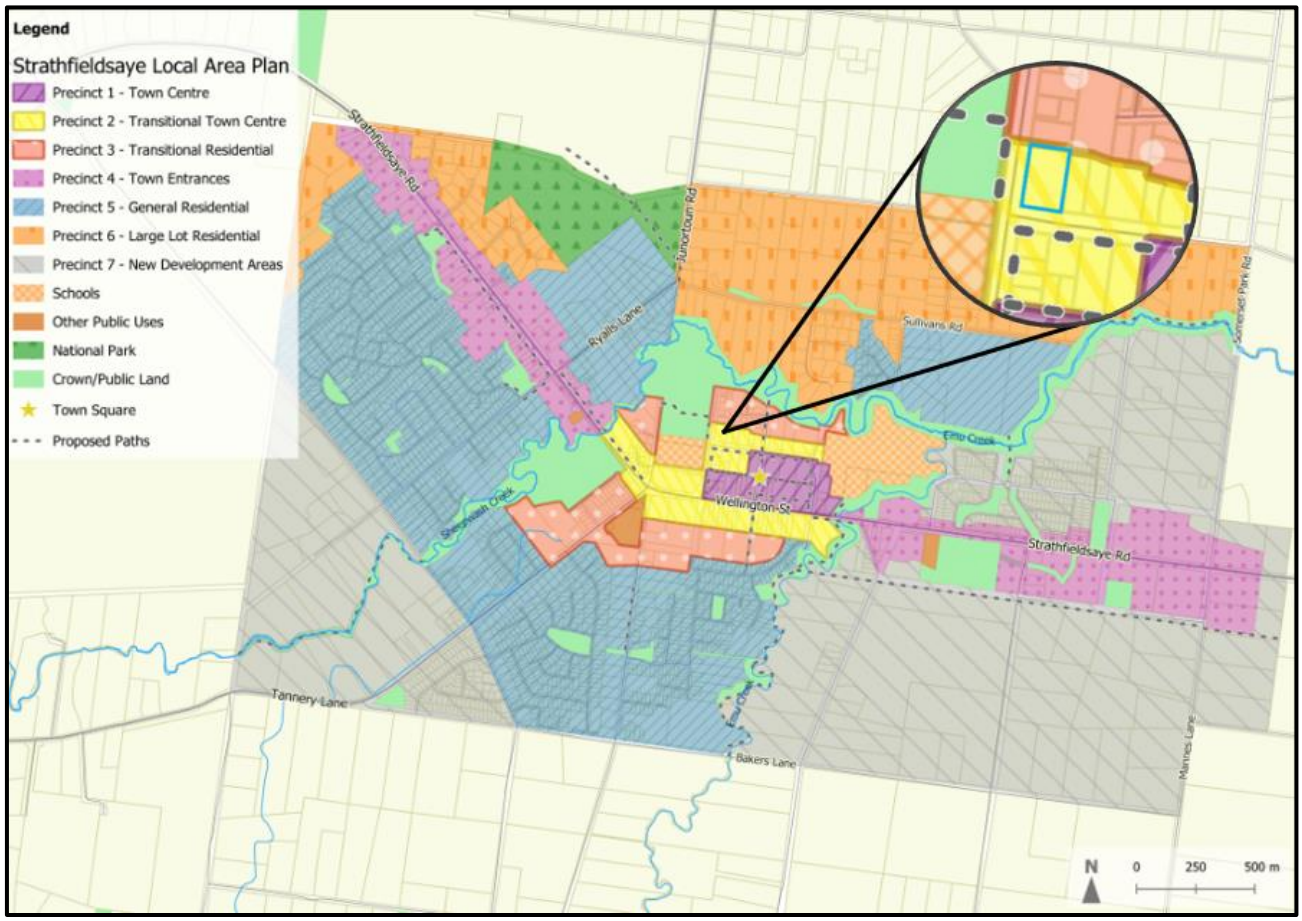


Figure 5: Strathfieldsaye Local Area Plan from Clause 11.03-6L-03

The relevant development strategy from the local policy for this precinct is to "*encourage medium density residential in Precinct 2 in areas adjoining Precinct 3".* Medium density in this instance is defined as having a maximum lot size of 300 square metres (UDF). Schedule 28 to the Design and Development Overlay DDO28 reinforces the importance of medium density outcomes with the decision guideline: *whether the development provides* ***medium density residential*** *or office/residential development* (emphasis added). The failure of the proposal to achieve the desired lot density is discussed in greater detail below.

Whether the Planning Scheme supports a residential subdivision in this location.

- *State and Regional Policy*

Planning policy, through Clauses 11.01-1S, 15.01-3S and 16.01-1S, seeks to encourage safe, accessible, and pleasant urban development. The site is suitable for infill residential development, being fully serviced, located close to amenities and services and inside the Urban Growth Boundary – all consistent with high level State and regional planning policies (such as Clauses 11.01-1S, 11.02-1S and 11.03-1S) which seek to direct residential development to such sites.

State policy offers a variety of strategies to achieve the objective of facilitating *well-located, integrated, and diverse housing that meets community needs*. Strategies to achieve this include increasing the proportion of housing in established urban areas, increasing residential densities to help consolidate urban areas and providing a mix of housing types though a variety of lot sizes, including higher housing densities in and around activity centres. Increasing the existing yield of one lot to six accords with these strategies. Though the proposal does not include development of the proposed lots, future development of these lots for more diverse housing options (such as community care accommodation, a rooming house or social housing) is not precluded by the proposed layout.

Character is one of the most important considerations in the assessment of an application for residential development. This is evidenced by reference to character at every level of planning policy described above and it is also noted that this was a common theme raised by objectors. Planning policy references to character frequently relate to how a place is at the present time (existing character), but policy also directs us to consider preferred neighbourhood character. Clause 15.01-5S Neighbourhood Character specifically states that planning should *support development that respects the existing neighbourhood character or* ***contributes to a preferred neighbourhood character*** (emphasis added) and to *ensure the preferred neighbourhood character is consistent with medium and higher density houses outcomes in areas identified for increased housing.*

- *Local Policy*

The City's strategic planning policy directions seek to facilitate both 10-minute neighbourhoods and a wide diversity of housing typologies to suit all household types, needs and incomes. This proposal responds to these strategies by offering the opportunity for residential development on land free from environmental constraints, in an appropriate location and on smaller lots which are typically more affordable. Proposed lot sizes range from 453 square metres to 1,211 square metres (the average being 662 square metres) which would offer a reasonable level of diversity if not for the maximum lot sizes identified in the UDF.

The site is located within the Urban Growth Boundary and Clause 11.03-6L-03 identifies the site as being suitable for medium density development.

- *General Residential Zone*

The General Residential Zone's purposes include encouraging development that respects neighbourhood character and encouraging a diversity of housing types and housing growth, particularly in locations offering good access to services and transport.

Nearby services include doctors, shops, public open space, and schools, and while Strathfieldsaye is physically disconnected from Bendigo, there is a public bus service. The decision guidelines of the zone as they relate to subdivision are limited to the pattern of subdivision and the objectives of Clause 56 (which is discussed below).

The lot sizes of the proposed subdivision are generally consistent with the existing lot sizes in the surrounding neighbourhood and the proposed development is generally in accordance with the broader policy directions for residential development.

However, it must be acknowledged that significant strategic work has been done to describe the desired future character of this area, primarily through the Design and Development Overlay Schedule 28 (DDO28) and the Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework (UDF). The DDO28 and UDF provide specific guidance on what a subdivision should look like in this location. This is discussed in greater detail below.

The pattern of the proposed subdivision would obligate all future developments to construct separate vehicle access points which is not a desirable outcome, though the layout does provide each lot with adequate dimensions to allow spacing between any future developments, consistent with character objectives. The development is generally in accordance with the relevant objectives of Clause 56 which includes lot area, solar orientation, and servicing – character being the only exception. This is discussed further in the section below.

Whether the proposal is in accordance with the requirements of the Design and Development Overlay Schedule 28 and the Strathfieldsaye Urban Design Framework.

A Design and Development Overlay is applied to land for the purpose of identifying areas which are affected by specific requirements relating to the design and built form of new development. In this case, the overlay is designed to achieve the objectives of the Urban Design Framework and specifically for this site, medium density development.

Whilst the proposed subdivision does not meet the character objectives of the overlay, other issues relating to bushfire and vegetation have been adequately responded to.

It is a requirement for subdivision in the overlay that each lot must be capable of accommodating a development with a bushfire exposure level of not more than 12.5 kilowatts/square metre (BAL12.5). The subject site is surrounded exclusively by low-threat landscape features, specifically: cultivated gardens and maintained lawns, road reserves and managed public reserves. The proposal meets the requirement for bushfire exposure levels.

The overlay also seeks to preserve and enhance established native trees, through subdivision design. There is a large, mature eucalypt located on the eastern boundary of the subject site which is not subject to any existing or proposed protections. The applicant has not proposed any measures for the protection of the tree. In this instance, this is appropriate given the location of the tree on a common boundary does not afford adequate space within the subject site to protect the Tree Protection Zone.

The DDO28 and the UDF seek to achieve medium density residential infill on the site. The DDO28 is the planning control which gives voice to the objectives and strategies of the UDF.

The design objectives of the DDO28 are:

- *To support development that creates a transition area between the high activity Town Centre Precinct and the General Residential Precinct, characterised by medium density residential and mixed-use office/residential development framed by native vegetation.*
- *To support development with active frontages that contribute to the amenity, public safety and pedestrian use of adjoining public space.*
- *To create car parking facilities that are safe, convenient and well designed and support efficient utilisation of infrastructure and sustainable transport options.*
- *To provide protection from bushfire by requiring adequate defendable space.*

The definition of medium density, defined by the UDF is a maximum lot size of 300 square metres. The proposed subdivision fails to achieve medium density lots as sought by this policy. Concerns in relation to the proposed lot sizes was also raised by City's Strategic Planning Unit. This desired character of *medium density residential in Precinct 2 in areas adjoining Precinct 3* is clearly communicated in the local policy, the overlay and the background document. There are no site constraints which prevent the proposal from complying with a maximum lot size of 300 square metres. For this reason, it is considered that the proposed subdivision is an underdevelopment of the land.

The policy seeks to minimise the dominance of car parking and garages. Specifically, the DDO28 *seeks to avoid multiple vehicle access points along streets to minimise conflict with pedestrians*. The objections received referred to issues with traffic safety and congestion, a theme also addressed in the UDF, as a result of community consultation. The proposed lot layout would obligate each lot to construct its own, separate vehicle access, resulting in reduced on-street parking and greater likelihood of pedestrian conflict.

Referral advice from the City's Strategic Planning Unit echoes these concerns with vehicle access, highlighting that the lot layout is highly likely to lead to the street interfaces being dominated by vehicle access and storage. The proposed layout is contrary to the policy objectives for access and fails to achieve *active frontages that contribute to the amenity, public safety and pedestrian use of adjoining public space*.

While this application only seeks to subdivide the land, not develop it, the subdivision will dictate the development outcomes for each lot. The proposed lot layout not only fails to achieve the desired character and access objectives, future development of the proposed lots would also be unable to comply with the policy. Proposed lots 2 and 3 have no opportunity to interface with the street due to being a 'battleaxe' configuration and would be unable to comply with the minimum required setback of 0-2m specified in the DDO28. The sizing and dimensions of proposed Lots 1, 4, 5 and 6 provide little opportunity to site garages and carports to the rear. The advice from the Strategic Planning Unit also provided commentary on the ability of future development (on lots 2 and 3 in particular) to comply with built form policy contained in the DDO28 and the UDF.

It would be poor planning practice to approve a subdivision which obligates future development contrary to the desired built form outcomes described in policy. Particularly when that policy is a result of extensive, location and community-specific consultation over many years and adopted by multiple councils.

Conclusion

The subject site is suitable for infill development and the broad planning policy framework supports a residential subdivision in this location. However, it must be acknowledged that the Planning Scheme provides specific direction for what such a subdivision should look like in this location as it sets a clear vision for Strathfieldsaye. This vision is not achieved by the proposed subdivision.

The concerns with this proposal discussed above relate to this proposal's lack of regard for the desired density for the precinct and poor subdivision layout. The policy clearly states that medium density development, with a maximum lot size of 300 square metres is desired for this site. The subdivision does not accord with this lot size requirement.

The proposed lot layout does not minimise vehicle access points – instead, requiring each proposed lot to construct a separate vehicle crossover. This is contrary to policy seeking to create a pedestrian friendly environment with active street frontages.

The proposed subdivision layout also proposes to create lots that would not be capable of being developed in accordance with the design objectives of active frontages, minimal street setbacks and avoiding multiple vehicle access points.

The proposed subdivision is an underdevelopment of the site and is inconsistent with the objectives and standards of policy specific to Strathfieldsaye.

Options

Council, acting as the responsible authority for administering the Planning Scheme, may resolve to grant a permit, grant a permit with conditions, or refuse to grant a permit.

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

Nil

16.3. 87 High Street, Bendigo - Use of Land for a Function Centre (Live Music Entertainment Venue); Use of the Land for the Sale and Consumption of Liquor; Display of Business Identification Signage; Waiver of Car Parking and Waiver of Bicycle Facilities

Author:	Michael St Clair, Statutory Planner
Responsible Director:	Andrew Cooney, Acting Director Strategy and Growth

Summary/Purpose

Application No:	DU/525/2022
Applicant:	Sonic Entertainment Pty Ltd
Land:	87 High Street, BENDIGO 3550
Zoning:	Commercial 1 Zone
Overlays:	Design and Development Overlay – Schedule 5 Heritage Overlay – Schedule 155 Land Subject to Inundation Overlay – Schedule 2 Parking Overlay – Schedule 1
No. of objections:	6
Consultation meeting:	A consultation meeting was held on 2 March 2023, attended by the Planning Officer, 2 Councillors, applicant, and 6 local residents/objectors.
Key considerations:	• Whether the proposed land uses in this location are supported by planning policy. • Whether the proposal will result in unreasonable amenity impacts with regards to noise and patron management. • Whether the proposed carparking reduction is acceptable. • Whether the proposed signage is acceptable for a heritage listed building. • Objector concerns.
Conclusion:	The application proposes the adaptive reuse of a long-term vacant, heritage building that sits in a prominent location within the Bendigo City Centre. The proposed hours of operation and venue and patron management measures provide a reasonable level of assurance that the proposal will not result in adverse amenity impacts. There is adequate carparking provision within the walkable catchment of the site to support the proposed uses whilst not having an unreasonable impact on existing uses within the surrounding area. It is recommended that Council determine to grant a permit as the proposal presents an acceptable planning outcome with regards to the purposes of the Commercial 1 Zone, Heritage Overlay, Parking Overlay and broader planning policy framework.

Recommended Motion

Pursuant to section 61 of the *Planning and Environment Act (1987)*, Council issue a Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit for the 'u*se of the land for a function centre (live music entertainment venue); use of the land for the sale and consumption of liquor; display of business identification signage; waiver of car parking and waiver of bicycle facilities*' at 87 High Street BENDIGO 3550, subject to the conditions at the end of this report.

Background Information

Application Background

The planning permit application was received by the City on 5 August 2022.

Preliminary concerns were raised with the applicant regarding the level of detail contained within the original Acoustic Assessment submitted with the application following review by the City's Environmental Health team.

An amended Acoustic Assessment was provided, which was subsequently reviewed by the City's Environmental Health team. In response to concerns raised, the City engaged an independent specialist Acoustic Engineer to peer review the application material and Acoustic Assessment. Advice provided through this review indicated that the proposal was able to satisfy the relevant acoustic legislative requirements, subject to the inclusion of appropriate conditions (contained within the recommended conditions below).

As a result of advertising, 6 objections were received (discussed further below). A consultation meeting was held in March 2023, attended by the majority of objectors and the applicant. No objections were withdrawn as a result of the consultation process. Following the consultation meeting, the applicant made a number of changes to the proposal in an attempt to address the concerns raised. This included a significant variation to the proposed hours of operation and the submission of a draft Venue Management Plan. No objections were withdrawn following the objectors being advised of these changes.

Report

Subject Site and Surrounds

The subject site is an irregular shaped allotment located on the south-eastern corner of the intersection of High and Short Streets, Bendigo. The site is approximately 480 square metres in size and is fully developed with a prominent three-storey, red brick building. The site is individually heritage listed under the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme (HO155) and is identified as the former YMCA building. The site has had a number of uses throughout the years but has sat vacant for the majority of the last two decades.



Figure 1: Aerial image of subject site



Figure 2: Streetscape image of site (March 2023)

The site is located in a mixed commercial area, with no residential interfaces. Land use and development within the immediate surrounding area is characterised by a mix of commercial (retail premises, food and drink premises) and other (hair salon, restricted recreation facility, place of worship etc.) land uses and developments.

The Telstra exchange building is located to the south, which was constructed in the 1950s and presents as the dominant building of the area. Finny's Warehouse is located to the east fronting High Street, presenting as a single store commercial building with on street carparking out the front. Finny's is accessed via a shared carriageway along the rear of the subject site from Short Street. To the north of the site, commercial uses are located along the northern side of High Street. This section of commercial premises contains a hairdresser and a number of restaurants. On the western side of Short Street is Oz Design furniture, an office building and the Bendigo Church of Christ. The majority of uses (with the exception of Telstra) within this area are reliant on on-street car parking to service customer needs.

The site is strategically located within the Bendigo City Centre.

Proposal

The application proposed the 'u*se of the land for a function centre (live music entertainment venue); use of the land for the sale and consumption of liquor; display of business identification signage; waiver of car parking; and waiver of bicycle facilities*'. The individual components are further discussed below.

- *Use of the land for a Function Centre (live music entertainment venue)*

The application proposes to use the site as a Function Centre in relation to a live music entertainment venue as follows:

- Live music acts would perform for an audience of up to 550 patrons.
- The proposed hours of operation are Friday and Saturday 7:00pm until 1:00am the following morning (including Good Friday, restricted to 11pm finish).

No development works requiring a planning permit are proposed.

- *Use of the land for the sale and consumption of liquor (Liquor licence)*

The application proposes to operate a general late night liquor licence, the hours for which accord with the hours of operation detailed above. The liquor licence area (red line area) has been detailed as all internal areas of the building, with the exception of an office space on the second floor.

- *Display of business identification signage*

One business identification sign is proposed, which would be positioned to replace the existing signage located on the façade of the building. Figure 3 below shows the proposed location.



Figure 3: Proposed signage location

Specific details (dimensions and design) of the proposed signage have not been provided, with the applicant requesting that these requirements form a condition on a permit.

- *Waiver of car parking*

A full waiver of car parking is sought for the operation of the site. As an existing heritage listed building, built to all boundaries of the site, there is no ability to provide any car parking on-site. Previous uses of the site have also not been able to provide on-site car parking.

The Planning Scheme specifies a car parking requirement of 0.3 spaces per patron. The proposal seeks a waiver of all 165 car spaces required for the proposed 550 patrons. A Car Parking Demand Assessment has been provided as part of the application material.

- *Waiver of bicycle parking*

The planning scheme specifies a requirement for two bicycle parking spaces. The proposal seeks to waive both bicycle spaces.

Planning Controls - Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme

Why is a permit needed?

The following table lists all the relevant planning permit triggers that apply to this application.

Clause	Permit Trigger
Clause 34.01-4 Commercial 1 Zone	• Use the land for a Function Centre (live music entertainment venue)
Clause 43.01-1 Heritage Overlay	• Construct or display a sign
Clause 52.06-3 Car parking	• Waive or reduce the required number of car parking spaces
Clause 52.27 Licenced premises	• Use the land for the sale or consumption of liquor
Clause 52.34-2 Bicycle facilities	• Waive the standard bicycle facility requirements

It is noted that the proposal does not require planning approval under the:
- Design and Development Overlay – Schedule 5 or
- Land Subject to Inundation Overlay – Schedule 2.

The following clauses are relevant in the consideration of this proposal:

Municipal Planning Strategy

02.02	Vision
02.03	Strategic directions
02.03-1	Settlement
02.03-3	Environmental risks and amenity
02.03-5	Built environment and heritage
02.03-7	Economic development

Planning Policy Framework

11.01-1L-02	10 minute neighbourhoods – Greater Bendigo
11.03-1L	Activity centres – Greater Bendigo
11.03-6L-01	Bendigo City Centre
13.05-1S	Noise Management

13.07-1L	Licenced premises – Greater Bendigo
13.07-3S	Live music
15.01-1L-03	Signs
15.03-1S	Heritage conservation
15.03-1L	Post contact heritage conservation – Greater Bendigo
17	Economic Development
17.01-1S	Diversified economy
17.01-1R	Diversified economy – Loddon Mallee South
17.02-1S	Business
17.02-1L	Business – Greater Bendigo
17.04-1L	Tourism – Greater Bendigo
18.02-4L-03	Car parking – Greater Bendigo
19.02-4L	Social and cultural infrastructure – Greater Bendigo

Other Provisions

34.01	Commercial 1 Zone
43.01	Heritage Overlay – Schedule 155
43.02	Design and Development Overlay – Schedule 5
45.09	Parking Overlay – Schedule 1
52.06	Car Parking
52.27	Licenced Premises
52.34	Bicycle facilities
53.06	Live music entertainment venues
65	Decision guidelines
65.01	Approval of an application or plan
71.02-3	Integrated decision making

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025

Outcome 2 – Healthy, liveable spaces and places

Secondary Council Plan Reference

Goal 7 – Sustainable population growth is planned for

Consultation/Communication

Referrals

The following authorities and internal departments have been consulted on the proposal:

Referral	Comment
Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (VGCCC)	No objection and did not offer any comment or submission. Referral to VGCCC was not required under the provisions of the Planning Scheme as this would only occur for a bar, hotel or nightclub that sought to operate after 1:00am. Neither the use sought, nor the hours of operation proposed trigger the need for this referral to occur.
Heritage Advisor	No objection subject to a condition requiring sign details to be submitted prior to any works commencing to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
Traffic Engineer	No objection and did not request any conditions.
Parking	No objection and did not request any conditions. It was noted that no change to parking controls within the surrounding area will be undertaken.
Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions relating to the acoustic impacts of the proposal and requiring the endorsement of a Venue Management Plan. It is noted that the first referral response recommended, due to the specialised nature of the proposal, that a third-party peer review of the proposal be undertaken to include specialist assessments of the impacts. Renzo Tonin & Associates were engaged to undertake this assessment. This peer review confirmed that the submitted assessments were sound and that all required considerations had been incorporated into the assessment undertaken. A range of refined conditions were provided to ensure the appropriate operation of the venue occurred should a permit issue. These conditions have all been incorporated below.

Public Notification

The application was advertised by way of notice on the site and letters to adjoining and nearby owners and occupiers.

As a result of advertising, 6 objections were received, with the grounds of objection being:

- How the proposed use has been defined;

- Noise impacts;
- Patron management;
- Car parking;
- Hours;
- Access to rear lane;
- Anti-social behaviour; and
- City cleaning of public domain.

A consultation meeting was held on 2 March 2023 to discuss the concerns raised.

Following the consultation meeting, the applicant provided additional information and reduced the proposed hours of operation in response to the concerns raised. No objections have been withdrawn following the submission of this additional information.

The issues raised by objectors are discussed in the planning assessment section below.

Planning Assessment

The planning assessment for an application of this nature requires consideration of a broad range of matters. The key matters for consideration are:

- Whether the proposed land uses in this location are supported by planning policy.
- Whether the proposal will result in unreasonable amenity impacts with regards to noise and patron management.
- Whether the proposed carparking reduction is acceptable.
- Whether the proposed signage is acceptable for a heritage listed building.
- Objector concerns.

Whether the proposed land uses in this location are supported by planning policy.

One of the key objectives of the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme is to provide for a strong and innovative economy, where all sectors are critical to economic prosperity. Policy seeks to achieve this by facilitating growth in a range of employment sectors, including tourism (entertainment) based on the emerging and existing strengths of Greater Bendigo. This is achieved through the aggregation of commercial uses, such as is proposed here, to provide a net community benefit in relation to their viability, accessibility and efficient use of infrastructure.

The site is located within the Commercial 1 Zone which contains the following purposes:

- *To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *To create vibrant mixed use commercial centres for retail, office, business, entertainment and community uses.*
- *To provide for residential uses at densities complementary to the role and scale of the commercial centre*

The first two dot points are relevant to the consideration of this application. As outlined above, the proposal is seeking to use a heritage building that has sat vacant for a significant period of time for an entertainment use. The Commercial 1 Zone is the appropriate zone for land uses of this nature and the adaptive re-use of the building would arguably create a sense of vitality and support broader economic development principles.

The following discussions outline how the proposal accords with the Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework.

It is noted from the outset that concerns were raised by objectors in relation to whether the proposal was in fact a 'Night club' as opposed to a function centre (live music entertainment venue). Concerns related to a perception that the applicant was trying to disguise the actual proposed use of the site.

The Planning Scheme sets out a series of land use terms and their associated definitions. In addition to this, the Planning Scheme also allows for undefined land uses to be considered which are referred to as 'innominate' uses. Officer assessment is that the proposed land use is correctly defined as a 'Function Centre'. Specifically, the application is seeking to establish a 'Live music entertainment venue' operation within the site (which is not a defined land use term). Clause 53.06: Live music entertainment venues provides general requirements and performance standards for how a live music venue must be assessed in relation to acoustic impacts to nearby noise sensitive residential uses. The assessment of the application against these provisions is detailed below.

For clarity a 'Function Centre' is defined as follows:

> *'Land used, by arrangement, to cater for conferences, private functions, and in which food and drink may be served. It may include entertainment and dancing'*

The application material details that all music events will be ticketed events, promoted by the listed applicant 'Sonic Entertainment Pty Ltd'. This means that patrons must pre-purchase tickets prior to entering the facility. This structure of operation requires that all live music acts must be pre-arranged, with tickets than offered for sale. By requiring pre-purchase tickets to be sold for each event, the proposed use therefore meets the definition of private functions.

This is in contrast to a 'Night club', which is defined as follows:

> *'A building used to provide entertainment and dancing. It may include the provision of food and drink for consumption on premises. It does not include the sale of packaged liquor, or gaming'*

Whilst the two definitions share some similarities, there are some key differences which must be acknowledged. These are namely around the requirement of a function centre for attendance to be 'by arrangement' for 'private functions'. A night club is a use that enables

attendees to enter without the need for a pre-purchased ticket, whilst also not being restricted to the hosting of particular music artists for specific events. This general style venue, due to its wider freedom of operation, must be controlled in a different way (via additional conditions) than would be expected for a function centre.

To ensure that the site operates in accordance with the 'Function Centre' land use definition, it is proposed that a condition be included on any permit that will require all patrons to the venue to hold a pre-purchase ticket prior to entry.

The other land use component that needs to be considered is the use of the land for the sale and consumption of liquor. The City's local Licenced premises policy at Clause 13.07-1L applies to applications for a new liquor licence within or outside the Bendigo Entertainment Precinct. In reference to the map contained within this clause, the subject site is located outside the defined entertainment precinct. The objective of this clause is:

- *To provide a safe and vibrant environment for social interaction at live music, food and entertainment venues and protect the amenity of surrounding areas.*

In applying this clause, the key strategies sought to be achieved are as follows:

- *Support licenced premises to locate in the Bendigo Entertainment Precinct shown on the Bendigo Entertainment Precinct map to this clause.*
- *Avoid clustering of licensed premises outside the entertainment precinct.*
- *Protect the amenity of surrounding areas by:*
  - *Managing the location, patron capacity and hours of operation of licensed premises.*
  - *Locating licenced premises to minimise detriment to residential properties.*

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal is located outside the defined Entertainment Precinct centred around Bull Street, the proposal does achieve the last two strategies detailed above. The subject site is the only venue of its type in the area, meaning that it is not creating a cluster of licenced premises. It is also worth noting that the defined entertainment precinct does not extend along View Street with its cluster of licenced venues, the Capital Theatre or the nearby Ulumbarra Theatre. Further, by only being open for ticketed events on an irregular basis, the site will not become an anchor entertainment venue within the area. The hours of operation proposed are consistent with the hours detailed within this clause for licenced premises located outside the entertainment precinct. Further discussion regarding proposed hours of operation is contained below. Figure 4 below is extracted from the clause.

Day	Hours of operation
Sunday	10am to 11pm
Good Friday	12 noon to 11pm
Anzac Day (not being Sunday)	12 noon to 1am the following morning
On any other day	10am to 1am the following morning

Figure 4: Licenced premises policy recommended hours for premises outside entertainment precinct

The clause also requires that the following be considered as relevant:

- *Whether the licenced premises are a signatory to the Bendigo Liquor Accord (Victorian Commission for Gaming and Liquor Regulation, September 2019).*
- *Avoiding the location of new licensed premises, or extending hours of existing licenced premises, in a residential zone or within 100 metres of a residential zone.*

The site is not a signatory to the Bendigo Liquor accord, with the submitted draft Venue Management Plan prepared in accordance with the principles detailed within the accord. The site is located approximately 70 metres to the south of residential zoned land at 54 Short Street. The potential noise impacts on this residential property are considered in greater detail below.

Clause 17.04-1L: Tourism – Greater Bendigo seeks to 'Support tourism development that enables the reuse and adaption of heritage places'. The subject site is a heritage site within Greater Bendigo that has been vacant or underutilised for an extended period of time. Its adaptive reuse aids in achieving the identified heritage conservation strategies of Clause 15.03-1S by '*Support[ing] adaptive reuse of heritage buildings where their use has become redundant'*. Further, a portion of the heritage value placed on this building stems from a previous use of the site as a nightclub in the 1970s through to the 1990s. Whilst not identified as part of the Statement of Significance for the site, there is a large portion of the community that connect live music entertainment with the subject site.

Officer assessment is that the proposed use of the subject site is supported by broader planning policy relating to economic development, commercial premises, and heritage conservation, and is appropriate in its context. This is specific to the days and hours of operation proposed, that would ultimately form permit conditions.

<u>Whether the proposal will result in unreasonable amenity impacts with regards to noise and patron management.</u>

Potential amenity impacts are a key consideration of an application of this nature and concerns relating to potential noise impacts were raised by objectors. Planning policy through Clauses 13.05, 13.07 and 65.01 require consideration to be given to noise management, land use compatibility and amenity. An Acoustic Report prepared by a suitably qualified consultant (Enfield Acoustics), was provided as part of the application material and as outlined above has been reviewed by the City's Environmental Health team as well as an independent consultant (Renzo Tonin and Associates).

The consideration of noise impacts of the proposal is primarily drawn from Clause 53.06: Live Music Entertainment Venues. This clause builds on State policy at Clause 13.05-1S: Noise management which seeks to assist in the management of noise effects on sensitive land uses. The purpose of Clause 53.06 is as follows:

- *To recognise that live music is an important part of the State's culture and economy.*
- *To encourage the retention of existing and the development of new live music entertainment venues.*
- *To protect live music entertainment venues from the encroachment of noise sensitive residential uses.*
- *To ensure that noise sensitive residential uses are satisfactorily protected from unreasonable levels of live music and entertainment noise.*
- *To ensure that the primary responsibility for noise attenuation rests with the agent of change.*

(emphasis added)

In relation to how an application for a live music entertainment venue must be assessed, the clause includes a list of specific requirements that must be met by the proposal. These require:

- *A live music entertainment venue must be designed, constructed and managed to minimise noise emissions from the premises and provide acoustic attenuation measures that would protect a noise sensitive residential use within 50 metres of the venue.*
- *A noise sensitive residential use must be designed and constructed to include acoustic attenuation measures that will reduce noise levels from any:*
  - *Indoor live music entertainment venue to below the noise limits specified in the Environment Protection Regulations under the Environment Protection Act 2017 and the incorporated Noise Protocol (Publication 1826, Environment Protection Authority, November 2020)*
  - *Outdoor live music entertainment venue to below 45dB(A), assessed as an Leq over 15 minutes.*
- *For the purpose of assessing whether the above noise standards are met, the noise measurement point may be located inside a habitable room of a noise sensitive residential use with windows and doors closed (consistent with EPA Publication 1826).*
- *A permit may be granted to reduce or waive these requirements if the responsible authority is satisfied that an alternative measure meets the purpose of this clause.*

(Emphasis added)

If these requirements are met, then it is reasonable to conclude that an application satisfies the relevant noise requirements contained within the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme. As emphasised above, the specific requirement that must be met is dot point 1, which relates to noise sensitive residential uses within 50 metres of the venue. There are no residential uses within 50 metres of the site as shown by Figure 5 below, with the closest residential use at 33 Short Street at a distance of 63.5 metres.



Figure 5: 50 metre buffer around the boundaries of the subject site. Note both 33 and 54 Short Street are located outside this area.

Concerns were raised by objectors that the late night noise impacts of the proposal would significantly impact on the quiet enjoyment of residential uses in the broader area surrounding the site. These concerns are primarily related to residential properties to the north of the site along Short and Mackenzie Streets. Concerns raised also relate to the two residential uses at 31 and 33 Short Street to the south. It is noted that all of these properties are located beyond the 50 metre radius that is specified within Clause 53.06 requiring consideration (shown above). Regardless, consideration has been given to potential noise impacts in a broader sense as directed by the relevant policy framework.

The original advertised application proposed to operate 7 days a week (through to 1am Sunday to Thursday and 3am Friday and Saturday). During the consultation meeting the applicant advised that whilst they did not intend to operate 7 days a week, they were seeking the flexibility to work around the tour schedules of the acts that they are trying to

attract to Bendigo. They acknowledged that the vast majority of acts would likely also be seeking a Friday or Saturday night timeslot. It was also acknowledged that finish times would likely be by 1am, with the 3am finish time sought to accommodate the rare occasions when an act might wish to play through to a later time.

The applicant acknowledged that these hours of operation were excessive in the proposed location and as such formally amended the application post advertising to reduce the proposed hours to 7pm to 1am Friday and Saturdays only in order to reduce any potential impacts from noise (and other amenity impacts). These hours are reasonable for a land use of this nature within a commercial setting.

The Acoustic assessment provided as part of the application material states that modelled noise impacts to the surrounding area are compliant with the requirements of the *Environment Protection Regulations 2021* and EPA Publication 1826. It notes that all residential land uses are well setback from the site, with only the dwelling at 33 Short Street close enough to the site to experience even minor noise impacts. It is noted that the assessment identified the need for conditions to be imposed on any permit requiring the rear access door to the building (providing access directly to Short Street) to remain closed when live entertainment is in progress, with the exception of short timeframes to allow access/egress for staff. This condition, in addition to the other conditions recommended through the peer review discussed below, are included in the recommended conditions at the end of this report.

Due to the specialised nature of acoustic assessments and at the advice of the City's Environmental Health team, the City engaged a suitably qualified consultant to peer review the Acoustic Report to ensure that compliance with the relevant noise regulations could be achieved. Renzo Tonin undertook the review and concluded that the assessment undertaken by Enfield Acoustics was robust. They also provided a range of potential permit conditions for the City to consider as a result of their extensive experience with appeals to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal on acoustic grounds. Specifically, these conditions would require that additional empirical acoustic assessments be undertaken prior to any use commencing to ensure that the site will meet its noise obligations. Conditions will also provide additional assessment requirements should valid noise complaints be received, including the ability for the City to impose noise restriction requirements should a breach be substantiated.

Other potential amenity impacts relate to the movement of patrons to and from the venue, anti-social behaviour and the like. The following concerns were raised by objectors:

- An increase in alcohol being consumed within the site, with associated anti-social behaviour impacts spilling into the public domain at the conclusion of events.
- An increase in damage, leaving of excrement, littering and vandalisation from patrons to the venue at the conclusion of an event.

- An increase in drug taking activities in the surrounding area associated with events within the premises, especially within the alleyway to the rear of the venue which is a shared access to the adjoining Finny's Warehouse.
- An increase in violence associated with drug affected patrons in the area surrounding the site, including against adjacent landowners and operators within their own premises.
- Impacts from noisy, drunk patrons following the conclusion of events as they move about the surrounding area. Either going to town or returning to their own homes.

In relation to the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme, these concerns – whilst valid concerns from adjoining landowners – largely sit outside the controls contained within the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme. These matters largely fall under the control of Victoria Police or the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission.

Nonetheless, these issues were discussed extensively during the consultation meeting held with the applicant and objectors. No resolution was found that was acceptable to either party on this issue. However, the applicant advised that they have extensive experience in this area of the proposed business and readily advised that it is also in their best interests to ensure anti-social behaviour does not result as an outcome of their events. Following the consultation meeting, the applicant provided a draft Venue Management Plan to all parties, detailing how they intended to operate, train staff, manage alcohol, provide security and manage the operations of the facility to minimise any impacts to the surrounding area.

In order to ensure that there is a management plan in place to address potential issues that may arise, a condition is proposed to be included on the permit requiring a Venue Management Plan to be provided and endorsed to form part of the permit. A component of this condition will require specific measures associated with the management of patrons within and in the immediate surrounds of the site. These requirements will aid in providing a level of management of patrons appropriate with the planning considerations relating to this application. This plan will be endorsed under this permit, with an ongoing requirement for compliance with this plan throughout the operation of the site. As this Venue Management Plan is specific to the use proposed by the applicant, a condition has been included limiting the operation of any permit issued under this application to Sonic Entertainment Pty Ltd, with provision made for the transfer of this permit to another operator only at the express written consent of the responsible authority. This condition has been included to ensure that, should the applicant cease to operate from the site, that any new operator must be approved by the responsible authority before the use considered under this application can continue.

This considered to be a fair and reasonable way to address the objector concerns and the issues that fall within the scope of planning considerations.

It must be recognised that the Commercial 1 Zone is the most appropriate zone for this proposed use. The purpose of the Commercial 1 Zone is to provide for a vibrant town centre that meets the diverse needs of a community, especially one like Greater Bendigo. For this use to best serve the needs of the community it must be located within this zone. The principles behind zoning are to cluster like uses together to provide the services that these uses require. These services include policing (should it be required). As the site is located within the central area of Bendigo, Police coverage is higher than would be expected in other zonings for a Friday and Saturday night (within the proposed hours of operation). This increased coverage (when compared to other zones) will provide a level of policing that will help in discouraging anti-social behavour.

Another aspect that must be considered in this discussion is the fact that anti-social behaviour is more likely to occur in areas of lower activity. The proposed use of this site will increase activity within this pocket of Bendigo, providing an added layer of discouragement for the conduct of anti-social behaviour. This may actually result in a reduction of incidents within this pocket of the city centre than what is currently being experienced.

It is officer assessment that, subject to the imposition of the conditions discussed above and included below, the proposal is in accordance with the specific noise requirements outlined in Clause 53.06 as well as broader noise management policy and will not result in any unreasonable amenity impacts. Further, proposed conditions will be able to appropriately manage anti-social behavior to the extent required by the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme.

Whether the proposed carparking reduction is acceptable.

The application seeks a waiver of all 165 car parking spaces required under the Planning Scheme, on the basis that no car parking can be provided on site. The requirement for 165 car spaces has been calculated based on 0.3 spaces provided for each patron (Based on a Place of Assembly, which a Function Centre is nested under).

Under the requirements of this Clause, a planning permit is required to reduce (including reduce to zero) the number of car parking spaces required.

Further, the application seeks to waive the two bicycle spaces required by Clause 52.34.

Schedule 1 to the Parking Overlay applies to the site which relates to the Bendigo City Centre. Given that both Place of Assembly and Function Centre are not listed within the altered car parking rate table to the Overlay, the statutory car parking rates detailed above apply. The schedule provides additional application requirements and the ability for the City to request a financial contribution in lieu of the provision of the required number of car spaces. Both are discussed in detail below.

The purpose of Clause 52.06: Car parking is as follows:

- *To ensure that car parking is provided in accordance with the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *To ensure the provision of an appropriate number of car parking spaces having regard to the demand likely to be generated, the activities on the land and the nature of the locality.*
- *To support sustainable transport alternatives to the motor car.*
- *To promote the efficient use of car parking spaces through the consolidation of car parking facilities.*
- *To ensure that car parking does not adversely affect the amenity of the locality.*
- *To ensure that the design and location of car parking is of a high standard, creates a safe environment for users and enables easy and efficient use.*

(emphasis added)

Additionally, the Schedule to the Parking Overlay has the following additional objectives to be achieved:

- *To provide car parking in the Bendigo City Centre that promotes a vibrant and efficient use of urban space, encourages sustainable transport options and reflects the conditions, opportunities and needs of the area.*
- *To provide future parking through a combination of on-site and off-site parking, with preference for the provision of off-site public parking facilities in strategic locations.*
- *To provide for the collection of financial contributions to contribute to the construction of public car parking facilities.*
- *To implement sustainable transport initiatives which reduce demand for parking within the precinct.*

(emphasis added)

To provide further parameters for the consideration of car parking reduction applications, the City has a local policy at Clause 18.02-4L-03: Car parking – Greater Bendigo. The key considerations under this policy are as follows:

- *Reducing (including reduce to zero) car parking requirements on sites where:*
  - *The 10 minute neighbourhood principles set out in Clause 02.03-1 are met.*
  - *There are off-site car parking alternatives.*
  - *Bicycle parking and end of trip facilities are provided above the rates specified in Clause 52.34.*
  - *The site is highly accessible, safe and functional.*
  - *Pedestrian or cycling infrastructure is provided.*
  - *Car parking demand will be managed through a transport management plan.*
  - *The proposal enables the reuse of a heritage building.*

(emphasis added)

The site is fully developed with a building that has existed since 1908, which holds individual heritage significance. Given the siting of the existing building, there is no ability to provide any car parking on site.

The site has been used for a number of uses throughout its history. It was initially constructed for the YMCA movement, with subsequent uses over the years including a night club and office building. A number of temporary retail style uses have occurred within the building over the last decade. Throughout this history, the site has relied upon on street car parking for occupants of the building. Due to the historic operation of the site and its heritage listing, it is not feasible to provide on-site car parking (especially to the quantum required for this application). It must be recognised that any application, no matter the land use, will require a full waiver of car parking for the site. As such, the assessment of suitability relates to the extent of reduction and its associated impacts.

Under the decision guidelines of the Parking Overlay, the heritage listing of the site and its recent history of being underutilised must be considered. The proposal is seeking to activate this heritage site in a way that will provide for the ongoing maintenance and protection of this heritage asset for the city, which is supported. However, it is noted that this relies upon the proposed waiver of car parking requirements being considered favourably.

A Car Parking Demand Assessment was provided as part of the application material in accordance with Planning Scheme requirements. The Assessment considered the proposal and analysed the availability of car spaces in the surrounding area and made the following conclusions:

- Demand will only occur from 7pm onwards aligning with the proposed hours of operation of the site.
- As the site is located within the Commercial 1 Zone in an area with a high portion of retail and office uses, the utilisation of car parking spaces is low.
- The assessment found that '*no fewer than 273 vacant spaces were observed during the car parking surveys, which is more than enough to accommodate the anticipated peak parking demands of up to 165 spaces'*. This assessment considered an area of on-street and publicly accessible off-street parking options within a 300m walking distance of the site. Figure 6 below shows the area considered by the study.

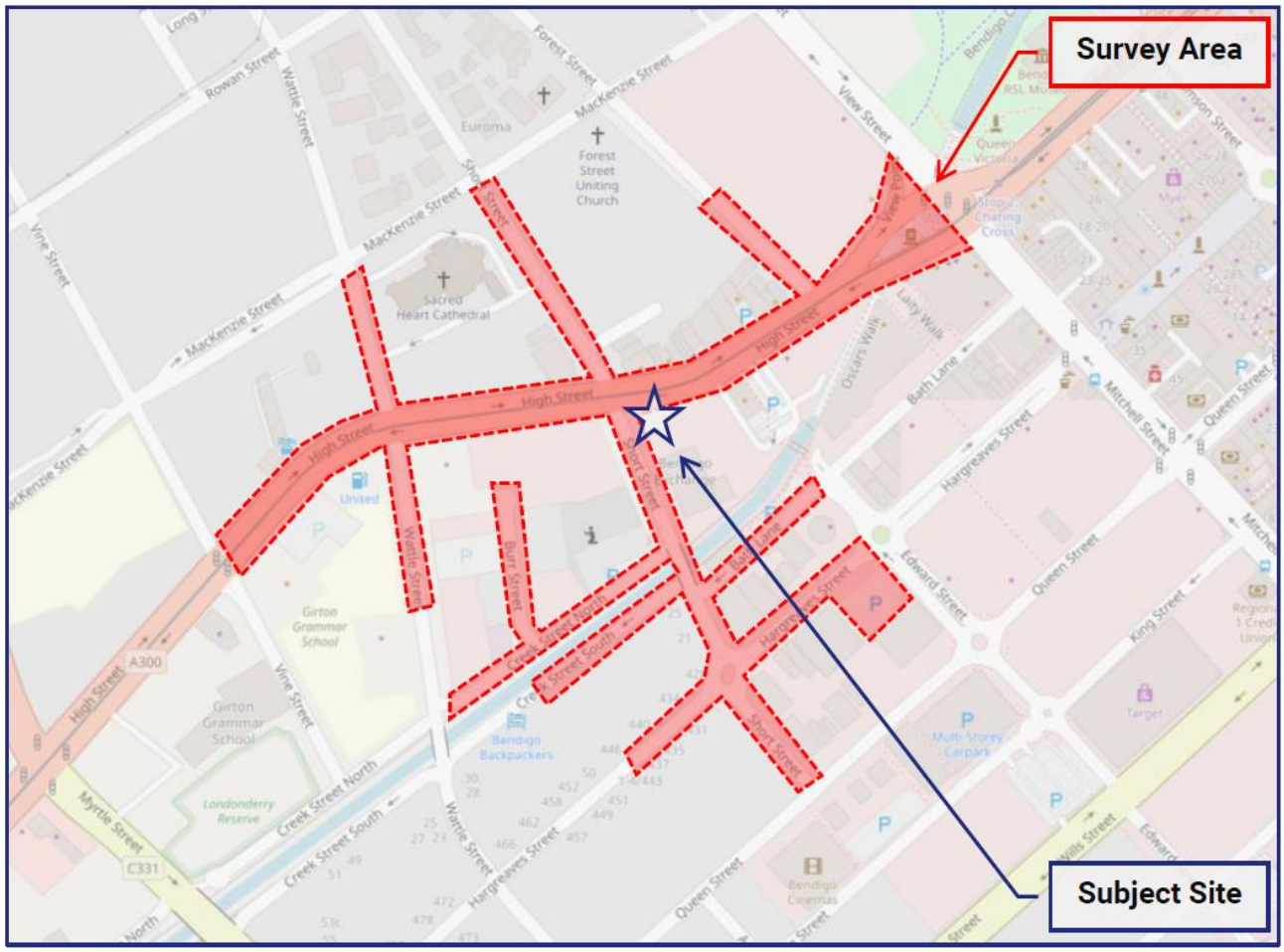


Figure 6: Car parking survey area (Source: Traffix Group, July 2022)

Within the surveyed area, 427 publicly available car parking spaces were identified, with a peak occupancy of 36% observed (154 spaces occupied, 273 spaces vacant) at 7:00pm. This level of vacancy clearly shows that the surrounding area has more than enough capacity to accommodate any additional demand on car parking spaces that may result from the proposed use.

The *Bendigo City Centre Parking Futures Actions Plan* was adopted by Council on 6 May 2020 (noting that this plan is yet to be gazetted into the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme). This site is located within the area covered by this plan. This plan identifies three key parking reform actions, being:

- Charge the right prices for on-street parking. The right prices are the lowest prices that will leave one or two open spaces on each block, so there will be no parking shortages. Price is used to balance the demand with supply for on-street parking.
- Remove off-street parking requirements. Developers and businesses are best positioned to decide how many parking spaces are required for their buildings to be leasable and meet the needs of their customers.
- Spend parking revenue to improve public services on the metered streets. If people can see their meter money at work, demand-based prices for on-street parking can become more acceptable and politically popular.

Of key consideration is the decision by Council to remove on-site parking requirements for applications within this plans area. When the outcomes of this plan are gazetted into the Planning Scheme, this permit trigger will no longer exist. Further, the plan calls for the cessation of the cash-in-lieu financial contribution that is available under the Schedule for the Parking Overlay. Following Council's adoption of the plan, the requirement for payment of this contribution has not been included within the conditions below.

When considering the proposed waiver of bicycle spaces, it is noted that the existing heritage building does not allow for the provision of bicycle storage within the site. To satisfy this requirement of the Planning Scheme, storage facilities would need to be provided within the public domain fronting the site. Due to the heritage listing of the building, this is deemed to not be an appropriate outcome for the site, especially noting the type of function centre proposed within this application.

Officer assessment is that the car parking and bicycle facility waiver sought in respect of this application is appropriate, noting the reuse of a heritage listed building located within the area covered by the adopted *Bendigo City Centre Parking Futures Actions Plan.*

Whether the proposed signage is acceptable for a heritage listed building.

The proposal seeks to install new signage in the same location as existing signage on the corner façade facing the High and Short Street intersection (as shown in the proposal section above). Whilst specific details of the sign are yet to be provided, sufficient detail has been provided in order to assess the proposal. The details are as follows:

- Single sign to replace the existing motif on the building
- Utilise muted colours
- Modest in size (less than 8 square metres)
- No illumination has been proposed.

The scope of consideration with regards to signage relates to the Heritage Overlay only, noting that no planning permit is required for the proposed signage under the requirements of the Commercial 1 Zone or Clause 52.05 Signage.

The *City of Greater Bendigo Heritage Design Guidelines (September 2020)*' contain the following objectives with regards to signage:

- *To encourage advertising that complements the character of the heritage place by considering placement, style and scale.*
- *To encourage the rationalisation of advertising to reduce the cumulative amenity impacts in the public realm.*
- *To maintain and enhance the appearance of streetscapes and heritage areas by encouraging well designed and located signage and advertising.*

(emphasis added)

These objectives have been developed in direct reference to strategies detailed within Clause 15.03-1L: Post contact heritage conservation – Greater Bendigo.

The application was referred to the City's Heritage Advisor in respect of the proposed signage, who supported the proposal subject to a requirement for detailed signage plans to be provided before any woks occur. This condition has been worded to require the signage to be placed in the same location as the existing sign, be of muted colours, not be illuminated and be less than 8 square metres in size.

Officer assessment is that subject to the proposed Condition 1 requirement, the proposed signage is appropriate for the subject site.

Objector Concerns

Two objector concerns have not been addressed in the discussion above. Each of these matters is discussed here.

- *Access to rear lane*

The adjoining landowner and operator expressed concern about how the operation of the subject site may limit access to the rear lane. This rear lane provides access to the rear of the adjoining premises which is utilised throughout the week to receive deliveries for the retail business. Figure 7 below shows an extract of the title plan, showing this alleyway.

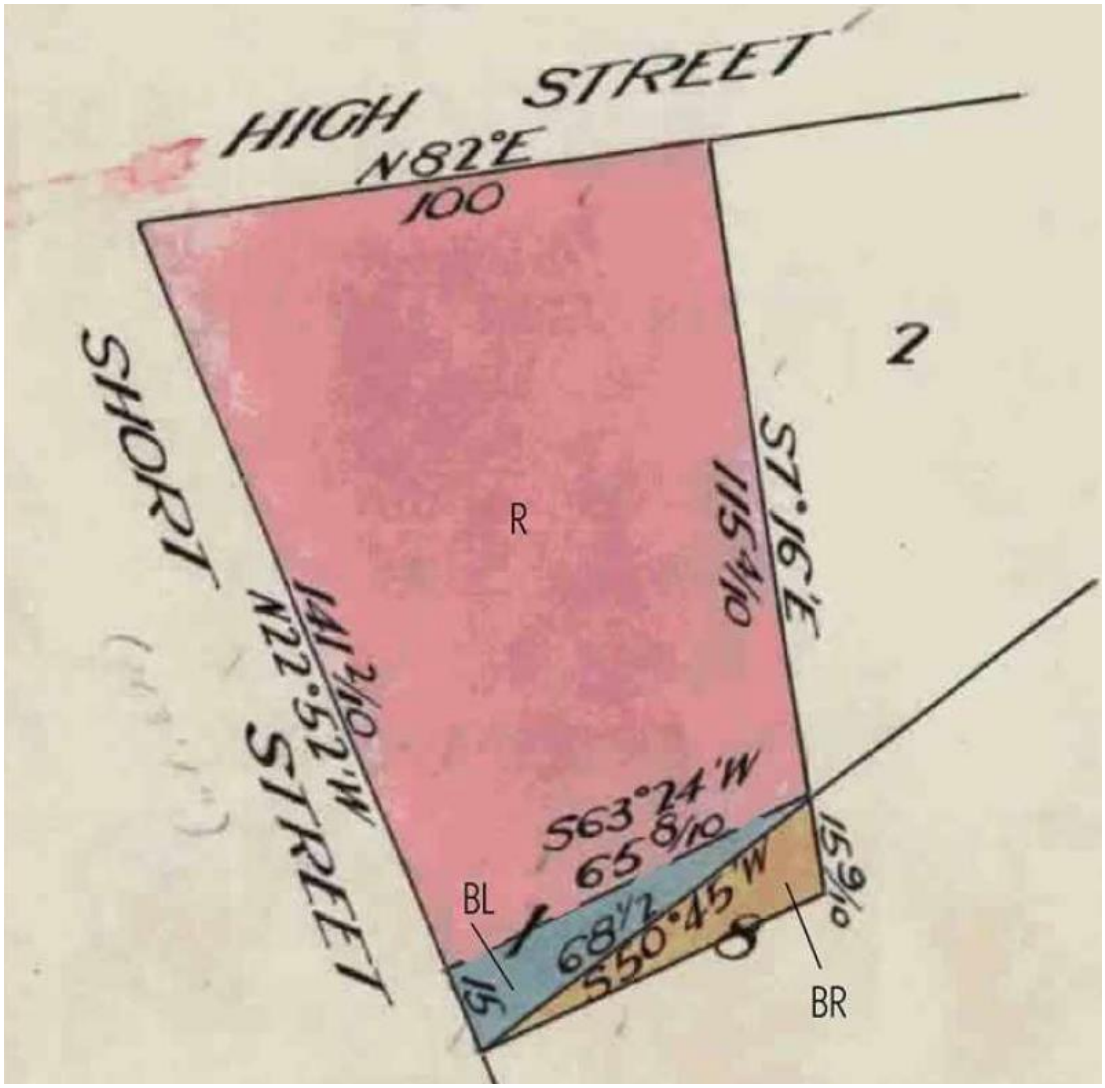


Figure 7: Extract of title plan

The red section of the site shown above is fully developed with the former YMCA building. The blue section of the plan corresponds to the portion of the rear alleyway under the ownership of the subject site. The brown section relates to the portion of the alleyway that forms part of the land parcel containing Finny's Warehouse to the east. This alleyway is solely in the ownership of these two parcels of land (i.e., not under the ownership of Council).

The blue and brown portions shown are both affected by a carriageway easement. This easement provides a right of way to the other land parcel (meaning that Finnys has a right to utilise the blue portion on the former YMCA building title, and vice-versa). Under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, a responsible authority must ensure that a proposal does not breach a restriction (such as an easement) listed on title. However, the planning system does not control how these restrictions operate. In this case, the proposed use of the land will not impact the ability of either landowner to access either portion of the alleyway. Should a dispute arise as to how the alleyway is being utilised by either party, this issue should be pursued through the relevant legal processes and would not involve the City.

As the submitted documentation shows no proposed change to the alleyway area – with the alleyway remaining open for use in accordance with the carriageway easement – there is no further consideration that can be given to this concern.

- *City cleaning of public domain*

Concerns were raised that the proposal may result in anti-social behaviour occurring within the vicinity of the site which would result in excrement, litter or graffiti being left in the public domain. Objectors asked whether this would be the owners' or the City's responsibility to clean. This concern sits outside the considerations of the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme. Objectors have been advised through the consultation process, that standard City processes for the rectification of these issues would apply if a permit was to issue in relation to this application.

Conclusion

Officer assessment is that the application should be supported, subject to conditions, on the following basis:

- The use of the site, subject to the recommended conditions below, is appropriate for the site and will not adversely impact on surrounding uses within the vicinity of the land.
- Noise impacts have been appropriately modelled, with an independent peer review confirming this assessment. A range of recommended conditions have been included below which will provide further certainty that acoustic impacts will be minimised prior to the use commencing, whilst also providing adequate avenues for additional testing should valid objections be received once the proposed use commences.
- There is adequate carparking provision within the walkable catchment of the site to support the proposed use whilst not having an unreasonable impact on existing uses within the surrounding area. No cash-in-lieu contribution has been required in accordance with the adopted *Bendigo City Centre Parking Futures Actions Plan.*
- The proposed management of the venue, subject to the preparation and endorsement of a Venue Management Plan, will ensure that the site is managed to a level appropriate to the considerations available under the controls of the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme.
- That all submitter concerns have been appropriately considered as available under the controls of the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme.
- The proposal is compliant with the Municipal Planning Statement, Planning Policy Framework, Commercial 1 Zone, Heritage Overlay, relevant Particular Provisions and General Provisions of the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme.

Approval of the proposal will aid in the creation of a vibrant central Bendigo in accordance with the purpose of the Commercial 1 Zone, consistent with relevant local planning policy. Amenity impacts to adjoining properties have been appropriately managed.

Options

Council, acting as the responsible authority for administering the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme, may resolve to refuse to grant a permit; grant a permit; or grant a permit with conditions.

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Proposed Notice of Decision Conditions

1. PLAN REQUIRED
   Before the use and/or development start(s), plans to the satisfaction of the responsible authority must be submitted to and approved by the responsible authority. When approved, the plans will be endorsed and will then form part of the permit. The plans must be drawn to scale with dimensions and two copies must be provided. The plans must show:
   (a) Signage details, showing:
      i. Located in the same location as the existing signage on site at the corner of High and Short Streets.
      ii. Less than 8 square metres in size.
      iii. Utilising muted colours.
      iv. No internal or external illumination.

2. NO LAYOUT ALTERATION
   The use and/or development permitted by this permit as shown on the endorsed plan*(s)* and/or described in the endorsed documents must not be altered or modified (for any reason) except with the prior written consent of the responsible authority.

3. SPECIFIED OPERATOR ONLY
   This permit allows the use of the land only by Sonic Entertainment Pty Ltd. Except with the written consent of the responsible authority, if Sonic Entertainment Pty Ltd ceases to use the land, this permit will expire.

4. HOURS OF OPERATION
   Except with the prior written consent of the responsible authority, the use permitted by this permit must operate only between the following times:
   - Friday and Saturday – 7pm to 1am the following morning, except as below
   - Good Friday – 7pm to 11pm
   - ANZAC Day (when a Friday or Saturday) – 7pm to 1am the following morning

5. PATRON NUMBERS

The use permitted by this permit is limited to a maximum of 550 pre-purchased ticketed patrons at any given event.

6. TICKETED EVENTS

The use permitted by this permit must comply with the requirement for all events to be accessed only through the pre-purchase of tickets.

7. VENUE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prior to the use commencing, a Venue Management Plan must be submitted to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority. Once approved, the Venue Management Plan will be endorsed and will form part of this permit.

The Venue Management Plan shall include (but not be limited to) the following:

(a) Detailed technical and management measures to manage music noise levels to not exceed time and noise limits set out by the current legislation, to all surrounding sensitive uses.
(b) Incorporation of safe design principles as detailed in the '*Design Guidelines for Licensed Venues (Victorian Commission of Gambling and Liquor Regulation 2017)*'.
(c) Details of training provided for bar staff in the responsible serving of alcohol.
(d) Measures to be taken by management and staff to ensure patrons do not cause nuisance or annoyance beyond the land.
(e) Installation of appropriate signage throughout the venue and in common areas instructing patrons on expected behaviour, including to minimise noise levels in outdoor areas, and whilst accessing or leaving the premises.
(f) Adequate seating and places to put down drinks, to limit intoxication and associated off site noise impacts.
(g) The maintenance of a register for any complaints.
(h) Provide a telephone number to contact the premises, provided on the internet and a notice put on the door and linked to the complaints register.
(i) Deliveries and waste collections to be conducted in accordance with *EPA Publication 1254 'Noise Control Guidelines'* and shall not occur after 10pm, and before 7am weekdays or 9am all other days.
(j) Emptying bottles into bins and glass crushing shall not occur after 10pm, and before 7am weekdays or 9am all other days. Noise enclosures are required for any bottle crushers that are to be used.
(k) Measures to encourage incidental smokers not to congregate in Short Street or cause off site noise impacts.
(l) Procedures to be undertaken by staff in the event of complaints by a member of the public, the Victoria Police, an 'authorised officer' of The City of Greater Bendigo or the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation.
(m) The management and dispersal of patrons, including patrons loitering around the venue after the venue has closed.
(n) The management of large group bookings.

(o) The management of smokers and on and off-site smoking areas (particularly where liquor may not be allowed to be sold and consumed within the smoking area after a particular time).
(p) The management of external queues.
(q) How the movement and exit of patrons is to be managed, particularly where there is a requirement to close different sections of the venue at different times.
(r) Details of the provision of music including the frequency and hours of entertainment provided by live bands and DJs.
(s) Any other measures to be undertaken to ensure no unreasonable amenity impacts from the licensed premises.

8. NOISE ASSESSMENT

Prior to commencement of the use, noise measurements and assessment shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified acoustic consultant, to assess the maximum allowable internal and external music noise levels against criteria derived in accordance with the current legislation. Following the measurements, an acoustic report containing the result of the testing demonstrating compliance with the maximum allowable internal and external music noise levels as required by the Noise Protocol must be submitted to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

Such a report is at the full expense of the operator/permit holder.

9. NOISE ESCAPE

To any areas where music shall be played above background music levels, an airlock shall be constructed, and its doors kept closed except for access and egress, such that music noise is contained even when patrons are accessing/egressing.

10. ASSESSMENT REQUIRED UPON RECEIPT OF VAILD COMPLAINT

Should the responsible authority determine that the operation resulting from the subject venue is likely to be generating noise beyond the allowable limits following the receipt of a valid compliant, noise measurements and assessment shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified acoustic consultant at the full expense of the operator/permit holder.

This assessment must be completed within 2 months following the request, unless an alternative timeframe is agreed to in writing by the responsible authority.

This assessment must assess noise impacts from the subject venue to all identified surrounding sensitive receivers, against criteria derived in accordance with the legislation current at the time of the assessment, including any guidelines and best practices. Following the measurements, an acoustic report containing the result of the testing demonstrating compliance with the maximum allowable internal and external music noise levels as required by the Noise Protocol must be submitted to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

If this is unable to be demonstrated, the requirements of Condition 11 must be

enacted.

11. MANAGEMENT OF VALID NOISE COMPLIANTS

Should the responsible authority determine that the use is exceeding operating noise limits, the responsible authority may require the operator of the subject venue to install and maintain a limiter at their own expense, and provide a limiter calibration report provided by a suitably qualified acoustic consultant every 12 months; where all music shall be played through a music noise limiter that:

(a) Controls the octave band music levels.
(b) Is setup for all amplified music on site to be controlled by the limiter.
(c) Is capable of recording and storing logged music noise levels, in 15 minute intervals for a period of at least 30 days. The logged levels are to be provided to the Responsible Authority on request.
(d) Is located in a tamperproof box or have a software lock, not accessible to personnel other than the venue's acoustic consultant.
(e) Is commissioned by a suitably qualified acoustic consultant to ensure compliance with the noise limits for all time periods. In addition to meeting the nominated octave band levels within the venue, compliance measurements are to be undertaken at sensitive receiver locations.
(f) The music noise limiter shall be recalibrated as necessary to maintain compliance when any changes are made to the audio equipment or to the layout, which have the potential to affect the compliance status of the venue; or at least every 12 months.

12. LIQUOR LICENCE DOCUMENT

The applicant must provide (for the City's records) an original copy of any new liquor licence within 1 month of issued by Liquor Licensing Victoria.

13. AMENITY OF THE LOCALITY

The use permitted by this permit must not, in the opinion of the responsible authority, adversely affect the amenity of the locality by reason of the processes carried on; the transportation of materials, goods or commodities to or from the subject land; the appearance of any buildings, works or materials; the emission of noise, artificial light, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke vapour, steam, waste water, waste products, grit, or oil; the presence of vermin, or otherwise.

14. EXPOSED STORAGE

Goods, equipment or machinery must not be stored or left exposed outside a building so as to be visible from any public road or thoroughfare.

15. WASTE COLLECTION AREA

An area on the subject land must be set aside for the purpose of a waste disposal/collection bin. Such area must have minimum dimensions of 2.4 metres wide by 1.8 metres deep and where located outside a building, it must be screen fenced so

as not to be visible from any public road or thoroughfare. The waste bin area must be provided prior to the commencement of the use permitted by this permit, maintained and used to the satisfaction of the responsible authority and must not be used for any other purpose.

16. LOADING AND UNLOADING
The loading and unloading of goods from vehicles must only be carried out on the land or from designated on-street loading bays.

17. SIGNAGE
Any signs to be fixed to a heritage listed building must be attached in such a way to ensure that no damage occurs to the fabric of the building and must be approved by the responsible authority.

18. REMOVAL OF EXISTING SIGNAGE
Prior to the erection of the sign*(s)* permitted by this permit, all disused signage structures located on the High Street frontage must be removed.

19. MAINTENANCE OF SIGN
The sign permitted by this permit must be maintained in good condition to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.

20. NO EXTERNAL LIGHT ILLUMINATION
The sign permitted by this permit must not be floodlit or illuminated by external lights except with the prior written consent of the responsible authority.

21. EXPIRY OF USE
This permit will expire if the use permitted by this permit is not commenced within 2 years from the date hereof or is discontinued for a period of 2 years. The time within which the use must commence may, on written request made before or within 6 months after the expiry of this permit, be extended by the responsible authority.

Notes:
Noise levels associated with the use must at all times comply with the Environment Protection Regulations under the Environment Protection Act 2017 and the incorporated Noise Protocol (Publication 1826, Noise Limit and Assessment Protocol for the Control of Noise from Commercial, Industrial and Trade Premises and Entertainment Venues).

Attachments

Nil

16.4. 60 Race Street, Flora Hill, 3550 - 9 Lot Subdivision, Construction of 9 Dwellings, Native Vegetation Removal and Removal of an Easement

Author:	Peter O'Brien, Coordinator Planning
Responsible Director:	Andrew Cooney, Acting Director Strategy and Growth

Summary/Purpose

Application No:	DSD/317/2022
Applicant:	H J Nicholas and M V Nicholas
Land:	60 Race Street, FLORA HILL 3550
Zoning:	General Residential Zone
Overlays:	Bushfire Management Overlay Schedule 1
No. of objections:	10
Consultation meeting:	Consultation was undertaken via the circulation of a written response to objectors from the applicant, with an opportunity for right of reply. No objections were withdrawn following the circulation of this information.
Key considerations:	• Whether the proposal is consistent with Planning Scheme policy regarding housing and infill residential development • Whether the proposal is an appropriate response to its site context, neighbourhood character and garden character. • Whether the proposed vegetation removal in the road reserve has been appropriately justified. • Whether the proposal complies with ResCode provisions, including through limiting amenity impacts upon adjoining sites. • Whether other objector concerns have been appropriately addressed, including parking and traffic. • Whether bushfire risk has been appropriately managed.
Conclusion:	The siting of the buildings and the extensive earthworks proposed will result in the removal of all but one tree on the lot as well as ten trees beyond the property boundary. This would result in a highly disturbed site with extensive fill, retaining walls and insufficient scope for the establishment of replacement landscaping. The buildings' impact will not be appropriately moderated through landscaping and the result would be an inappropriate landscape and neighbourhood character response. It is recommended that the application for a permit be refused on the grounds outlined below.

Recommended Motion

Pursuant to section 61 of the Planning and Environment Act (1987), Council issue a Notice of Decision to Refuse to Grant a Permit for the proposed *9 lot subdivision, construction of 9 dwellings, native vegetation removal, and removal of an easement* at 60 Race Street, FLORA HILL 3550 for the following reasons:

1. The extent of vegetation removal and excavation, along with the lack of scope for appropriate replacement landscaping, leads to a development outcome that does not respond appropriately to the neighbourhood character, contrary to:
   a. Clause 15.01-5S – Neighbourhood Character
   b. Clause 15.01-5L-01 – Neighbourhood Character – Greater Bendigo
   c. Clause 15.01-5L-05 – Neighbourhood Character – Flora Hill neighbourhood Character
   d. Clause 55.02-12 – Neighbourhood Character
   e. Clause 55.03-8 – Landscaping
2. The proposal does not meet the following objectives of Clause 55:
   a. Clause 55.02-12 – Neighbourhood Character
   b. Clause 55.03-8 – Landscaping
   c. Clause 55.04-6 – Overlooking
   d. Clause 55.06-1 – Design Detail
3. The proposed vegetation removal within the road reserve has not been appropriately avoided or minimised and is contrary to the provisions of:
   a. Clause 12.01-1S – Protection of Biodiversity
   b. Clause 12.01-2S – Native Vegetation Management.
   c. Clause 52.17 – Native Vegetation.

Background Information

Planning Permit Application DSD/40/2022 was lodged with the City on 25 May 2022.

The applicant was required to provide additional information with regards to native vegetation removal and various plan details. Concerns were raised at the same time about aspects of the proposal's compliance with clause 55 (ResCode), including about energy efficiency, landscaping and open space.

Notice of the application was given in February to March 2023 and ten objections were received.

The application was amended in June 2023 to include removal of native vegetation (relating to the vegetation within the road reserve).

The applicant provided a response to objections but did not wish to attend a consultation meeting.

Report

Subject Site and Surrounds

The subject -land is an irregularly shaped allotment on the western side of Race Street in Flora Hill. The land is 2,583 square metres – notably larger than the prevailing lot sizes in the area – and currently contains a double storey house.

The size of the site means it has substantial open space and garden, which includes a mix of native and exotic vegetation. The central portion of the land, where the house and driveway currently sit, is levelled and sits below street level; the land then rises towards the rear (west side). There is also a notable slope rising from the north to south, along the length of the frontage. These level changes mean that there are currently stairs down to the existing house from street level, located near the centre of the frontage.

The main driveway gains access from near the northern end of the property, accessing a double garage integrated into the house. A second gravel crossover is near the southern end of the driveway and accesses an unsealed driveway along the southern side of the property.



Figure 1: Site plan showing site and surrounds, with locations of objectors' properties shown (three objectors are located outside area shown).--



Figure 2: Aerial photograph showing the subject site (July 2023 NearMap image).

The land abuts other houses to its north, west and south.

To the north is a single house at 54 Race Street, although approval exists to construct two more houses on this land (for a total of three) and subdivide the land.

Along the irregular western boundary, the site abuts the rear of four properties: three houses at the bottom of the court bowl of Davies Court (2 and 3 Davies Court, with the latter touching at one small corner), and another that is part of a multi-dwelling complex at 7-9 Wirth Street (9F Wirth Street). The proposal also has a small abuttal to the common property of the 7-9 Wirth Street property.

To the south the site abuts a single house at 62 Race Street; this is a deeper lot than the subject site, meaning that the abuttal is with that property's front yard.
To the east, across Race Street, are more houses, with four directly opposite the subject site. The land rises on this side of the street, so these properties sit at an elevated position compared to the subject land.

The surrounding area is notable for the large lots of the original subdivision, which has allowed for extensive vegetation to be retained on lots. This has led to a strong "bush-suburban" feel evident along Race Street, despite some infill unit development and subdivision occurring in the surrounding area. This includes the three-lot development proposed to the north of this site and a two-storey townhouse development further north at 50 Race Street. This character is also enhanced by the vegetation on the Latrobe University campus to the south.

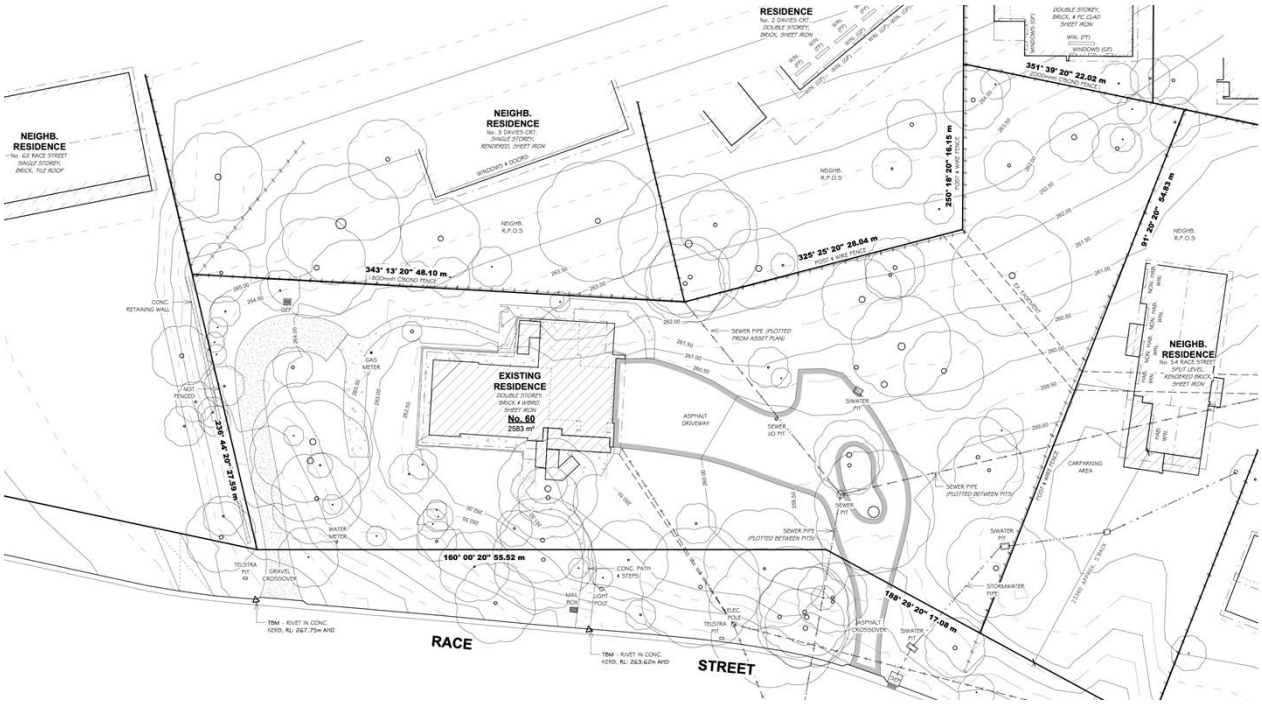


Figure 1: Existing conditions plan (rotated 90 degrees from Error! Reference source not found. and Error! Reference source not found.).

Proposal

The applicant proposes the construction of 9 dwellings on the land, along with the subdivision of the land, removal of an easement and removal of native vegetation.

Dwellings would all be two storey and arranged in three groups: a block of six facing Race Street, a pair in the northwest corner of the land and a single townhouse near the northern boundary.

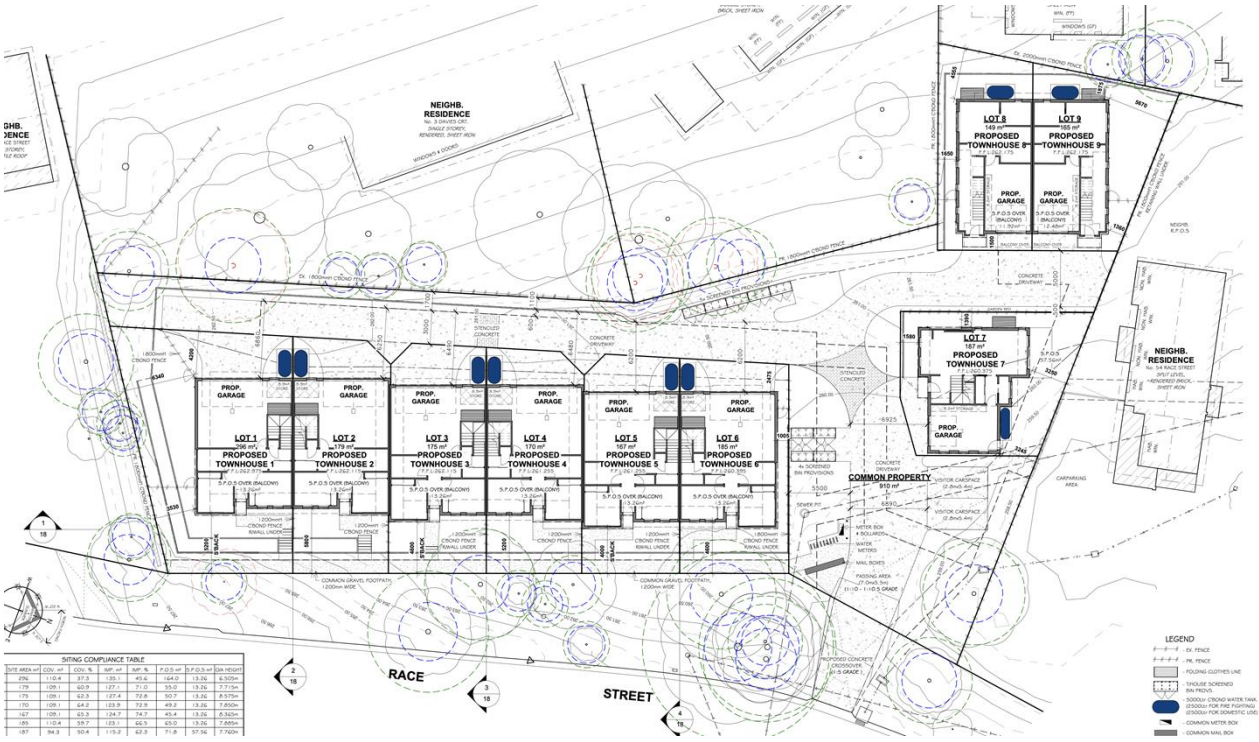


Figure 2: proposed site plan.

Access would be via a new widened crossover approximately in the location of the current driveway. A new concrete driveway would provide access to the townhouses, splitting to access the pair in the rear corner of the land and to run along the rear (west) side of the townhouses facing Race Street.

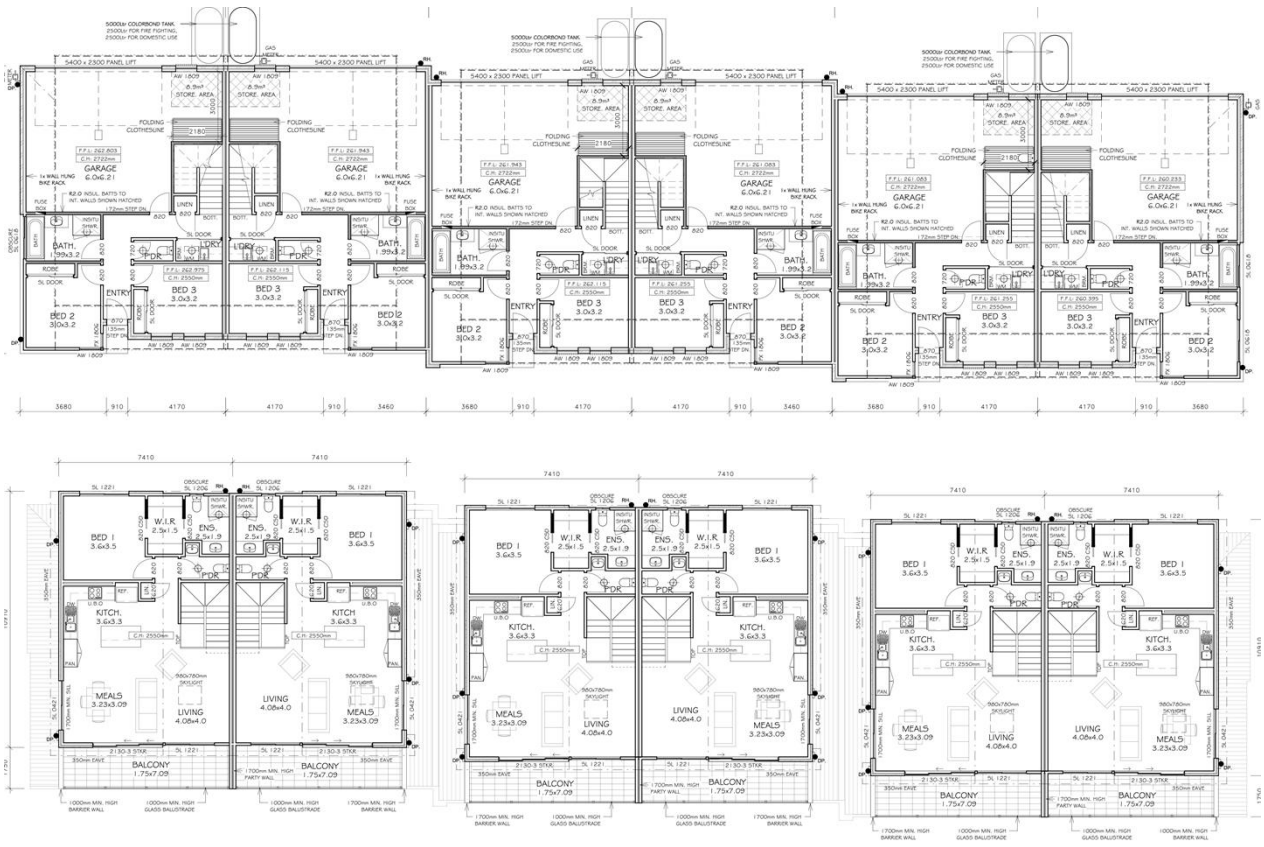


Figure 3: Ground (top) and second storey floorplans of townhouses facing Race Street.

The block of six townhouses would have rear-facing double garages. As shown in Figure 3, these townhouses are proposed to have two bedrooms at ground level facing the street, with bathrooms and laundries also at ground level. At the upper storey level of each of these dwellings there would be another bedroom with a walk-in robe and ensuite and living rooms with a balcony facing the street.

The floorplans for the other three townhouses are shown at Figure 4. The stand-alone townhouse, Townhouse 7, is proposed to have a single garage and living areas on the ground floor, with two bedrooms above. This townhouse would have a large balcony constructed on the roof of its garage, which is forward of the dwelling. Townhouses 8 and 9 would be a mirror-imaged pair, each with a single garage, entry hall, bedroom, walk-in robe / ensuite at ground level and living rooms and another bedroom with ensuite and walk-in robe at the second storey level.

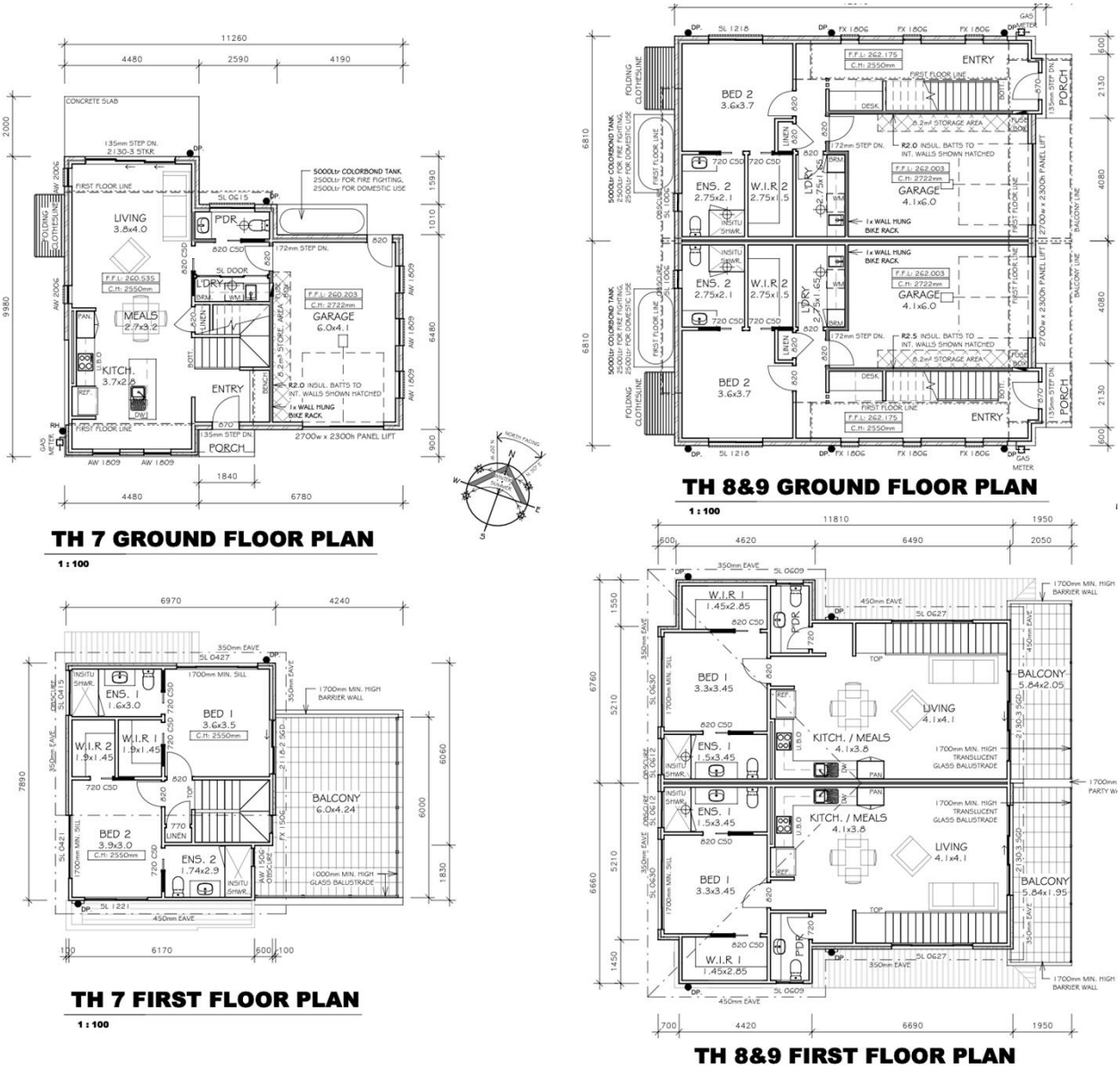


Figure 4: Floorplans for townhouses 7, 8 and 9.

The block of 6 would all be three-bedroom dwellings with double garages, while the remaining three townhouses would have two bedrooms with a single car space. Two visitor car parking spaces are proposed forward of Townhouse 7. Bin storage, mailboxes and meters are also located along the central driveway near this point.

The townhouses would be of a contemporary design with (predominantly) asymmetrical gable-ended pitched roofs. The elevations would feature a mix of materials, with most faces of the buildings including a mix of brick, rendered cladding and painted cladding with a horizontal weatherboard effect.

While the dwellings are proposed to rise along the land, they would also include a mix of fill and retaining walls to level the land around each dwelling. The block of 6 townhouses is surrounded by a retaining wall at its southern end, as shown in the site section at Figure 5 and the 3D drawing at Figure 6.

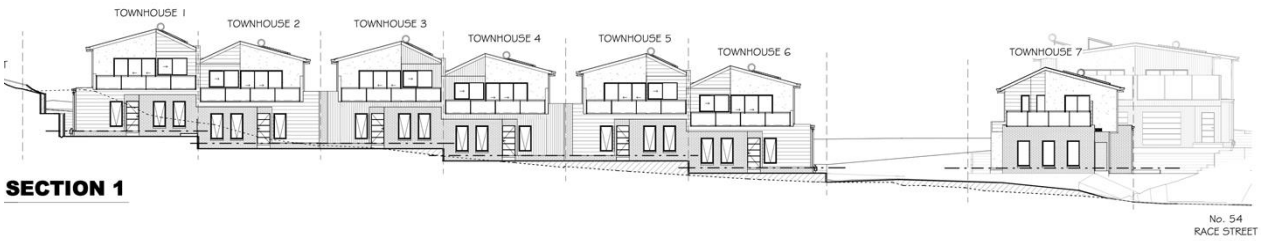


Figure 5: Site section



Figure 6: 3D streetscape drawing

The combination of new buildings and the site excavation and fill would require removal of all but one of the trees from within the site, as shown in Figure 7. It is also proposed to remove 5 trees from the road reserve and a further 5 from adjoining properties, due to the impact of the site excavation and construction upon the tree roots.

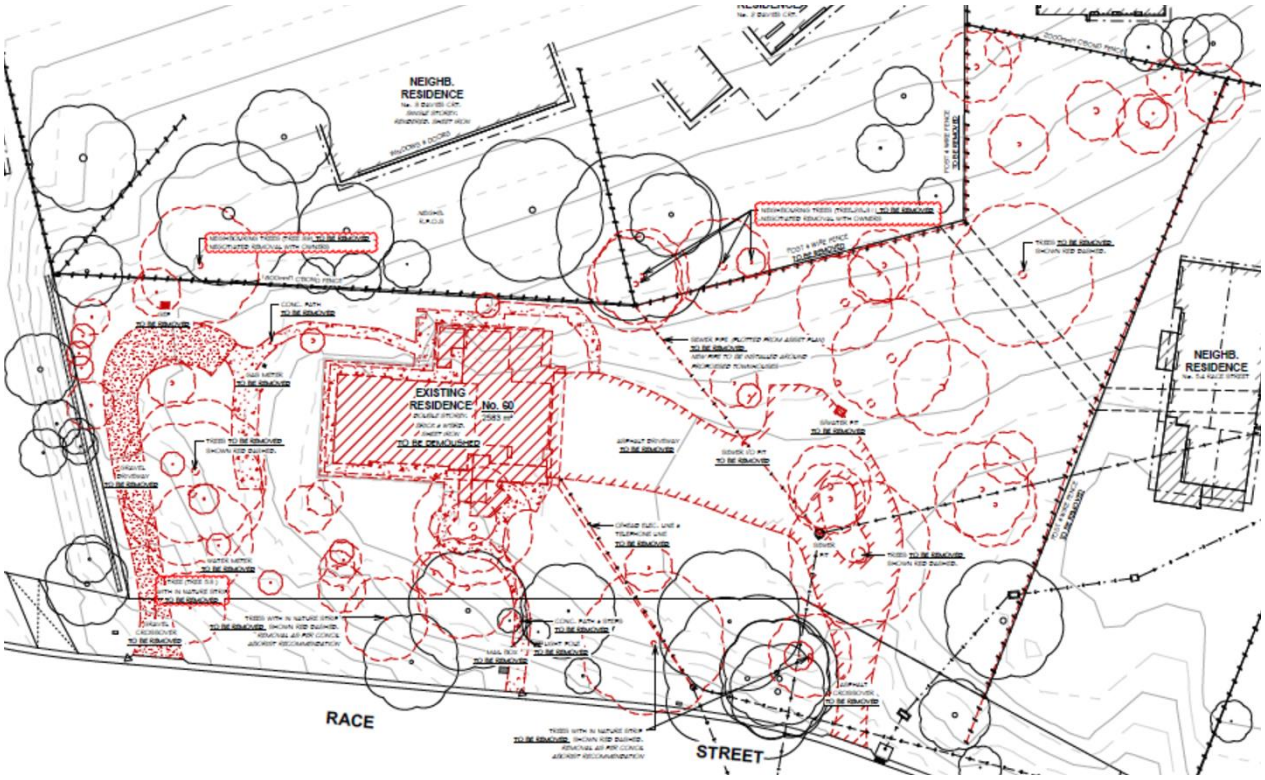


Figure 7: Proposed tree removal.

The subdivision would follow the pattern of the development, with lots ranging from 149 square metres (for lot 8) to 296 square metres (for lot 1), as shown in Figure 8. A total of 910 square metres of common property would be provided for the driveway and other communal space. The existing easement would be removed and new easements provided for services within the land.

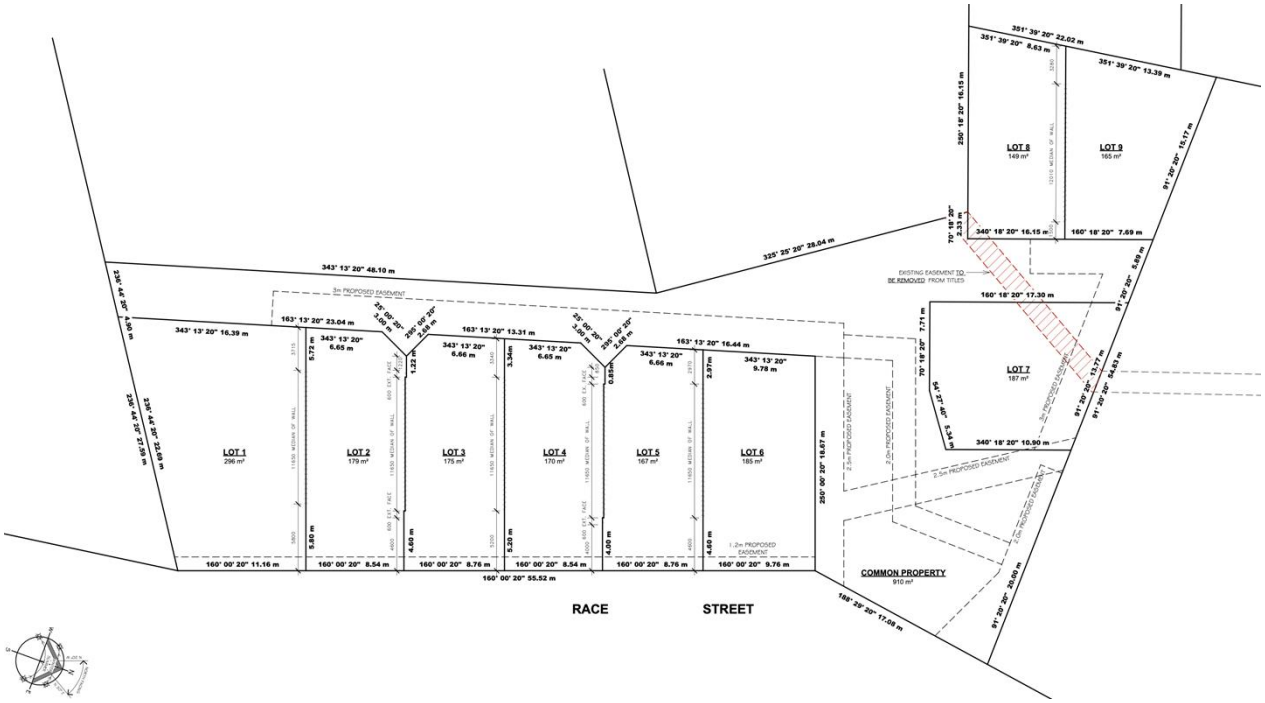


Figure 8: Subdivision plan.

Planning Controls - Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme

Why is a permit needed?

The reasons why a permit is required are outlined in the table below:

Planning Scheme Clause	Reason why a permit is required:
Clause 32.08-3 *General Residential Zone*	A planning permit is required to subdivide the land.
Clause 32.08-6 *General Residential Zone*	A planning permit is required to construct two or more dwellings on a lot.
Clause 44.06-2 *Bushfire Management Overlay*	A planning permit is required to subdivide the land, and to construct a building or carry out works associated with accommodation.
Clause 52.02 *Easements, Restrictions and Reserves*	A permit is required to remove an easement.
Clause 52.17-1 *Native Vegetation*	Permit required to remove native vegetation (applies to the vegetation in the **road reserve** only).

The following clauses are relevant in the consideration of this proposal:

Municipal Planning Strategy

- Clause 02.03-1 Settlement
- Clause 02.03-2 Environmental risks and amenity
- Clause 02.03-5 Built environment and heritage
- Clause 02.03-6 Housing

Planning Policy Framework

- Clause 11.01-1S Settlement
- Clause 11.01-1R Settlement – Loddon Mallee South
- Clause 11.01-L-01 Settlement – Greater Bendigo
- Clause 11.02-1S Supply of urban land
- Clause 12.01 – Biodiversity
- Clause 13.02-1S Bushfire planning
- Clause 13.04-1S Contaminated and potentially contaminated land
- Clause 15.01-1S Urban design
- Clause 15.01-1L-01 Landscaping – Greater Bendigo

- Clause 15.01-2S Building design
- Clause 15.01-2L Environmentally sustainable development - Greater Bendigo
- Clause 15.01-3S Subdivision design
- Clause 15.01-4S Healthy neighbourhoods
- Clause 15.01-5S Neighbourhood character
- Clause 15.01-5L-01 Neighbourhood Character – Greater Bendigo
- Clause 15.01-5L-05 Flora Hill Neighbourhood Character
- Clause 16.01-1S Housing supply
- Clause 16.01-2S Housing affordability

Other Provisions

- Clause 32.08 General Residential Zone
- Clause 52.06 Car parking
- Clause 53.01 Public Open Space Contribution and Subdivision
- Clause 53.02 Bushfire Planning
- Clause 55 Two or more Dwellings on a lot and Residential Buildings
- Clause 56 Residential Subdivision

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025

Outcome 2 – Healthy, liveable spaces and places

Secondary Council Plan Reference

Goal 7 – Sustainable population growth is planned for.

Consultation/Communication

Referrals

The following authorities and internal departments have been consulted on the proposal:

Referral	Comment
CFA	No objection subject to conditions
Downer	No objection subject to conditions
Coliban Water	No objection subject to conditions

Referral	Comment
Powercor	No objection subject to conditions
CFA	No objection subject to conditions
ESD	No objection subject to conditions
Traffic	No objection subject to conditions
Drainage	No objection subject to conditions

Public Notification

The application was advertised by way of notice on the site and letters to adjoining and nearby owners and occupiers.

As a result of advertising, ten objections were received, with the grounds of objection summarised as:

- Loss of vegetation and replacement with hard surface;
- Neighbourhood character impacts;
- Visual bulk;
- Inappropriate setbacks;
- Insufficient car parking;
- Biodiversity impacts;
- Traffic impacts;
- Noise impacts;
- Poor pedestrian access;
- Difficulties with rubbish bin collection;
- Shared driveway excessively close to neighbouring dwellings;
- Overlooking (both into and out of development);
- Existing fencing will need replacement.

Planning Assessment

Is the proposal consistent with Planning Scheme policy regarding housing and infill residential development?

A range of policies supports infill development in established areas such as Bendigo. The objective of **Clause 11.02-1S Supply of urban land** is to ensure a sufficient supply of land is available for residential, commercial, retail, industrial, recreational, institutional, and other community uses. **Clause 11.01-1R Settlement – Loddon Mallee South** identifies that Bendigo is the major regional city for the Loddon Mallee South region. Strategies at Clause **11.01-1L-01 (Settlement – Greater Bendigo)** include directing growth to areas within the Bendigo Urban Growth Boundary.

Clause 02.03-1 Settlement of the Municipal Planning Strategy identifies that the population of the municipality is projected to increase by over 2,000 people per year over the next 20 years. An additional 1,000 new dwellings per year will be required to accommodate this growth. This aligns with State policy at Clause 16.01-1S Housing supply, which seeks to facilitate well-located, integrated and diverse housing that meets community needs. The objective of **Clause 11.01-1L-02 10 Minute neighbourhoods – Greater Bendigo** is to develop a network of attractive neighbourhoods that allow most people to access local facilities and services within 10-minute walking or cycling from their home.

An increase in density in a location such as this is consistent with these policies, subject to an appropriate design and character outcome. The site is midway between the Flora Hill local centre and the Strathdale Large Activity Centre, as identified in the urban activity centre hierarchy framework plan at clause 02.04. While the site is not especially well located with regards to retail facilities and other community services, being approximately 700m from the nearest commercially zoned land, it is within the Bendigo Urban Growth Boundary and has good access to parks, schools and the university. There is intensification already evident on adjacent and nearby sites.

Is the proposal an appropriate response to its site context, neighbourhood character and garden character?

The policy regarding housing intensification exists alongside policy regarding neighbourhood character at **clause 15.01-5s – Neighbourhood character**, **clause 15.01-5L-01 – Neighbourhood character – Greater Bendigo**, and **clause 15.01-5L – Flora Hill Neighbourhood Character**. These polices become progressively more specific, with clause 15.01-5L identifying the following strategies for this precinct (Flora Hill 4):

"Maintain the existing neighbourhood character of this precinct that is drawn from:

- *A spacious streetscape with consistent front and side setbacks and roof shapes.*
- *Dwellings of timber, non-masonry, render or painted bricks.*
- *An open streetscape with low or transparent front fences and mature trees in gardens."*

This description accurately reflects the character along this part of Race Street, notably with its reference to the spacious and open streetscape and the importance of mature trees and gardens.

Neighbourhood character is also central to assessment throughout clause 55 (ResCode), but particularly in response to **clause 55.02-1 – Neighbourhood Character** and **cl 55.03-8 – Landscaping**.

Many aspects of the built form are, in isolation from the issue of the landscaping response, considered to represent an appropriate response. The site coverage is low in absolute

terms. The use of attached units in a block of six is a departure from the original built form character of the area, but similar forms are seen nearby, including on Race Street at number 50.

The proposal does differ from those examples by presenting its long face to the street, unlike 50 Race Street which has a single unit facing the street and the other units lined up beside it. This does mean that the proposed block of six townhouses is more disruptive to the streetscape rhythm than other examples. However, it is recognised that this is an unusually shallow site and it is considered that such a form could be acceptable if it were situated in a manner that appropriately responded to the character of the precinct, particularly through siting the buildings within a landscape context reflective of the bush suburban feel of the street.

The proposal involves extensive site excavation. Individual townhouses do not step down the land; instead, each sits on a flat surface created through site excavation or fill. This design approach results in a heavily modified ground surface, especially apparent at the southern end of the site where parts of townhouse 1 are sunk more than 3 metres below natural ground level, as shown in Figure 9.

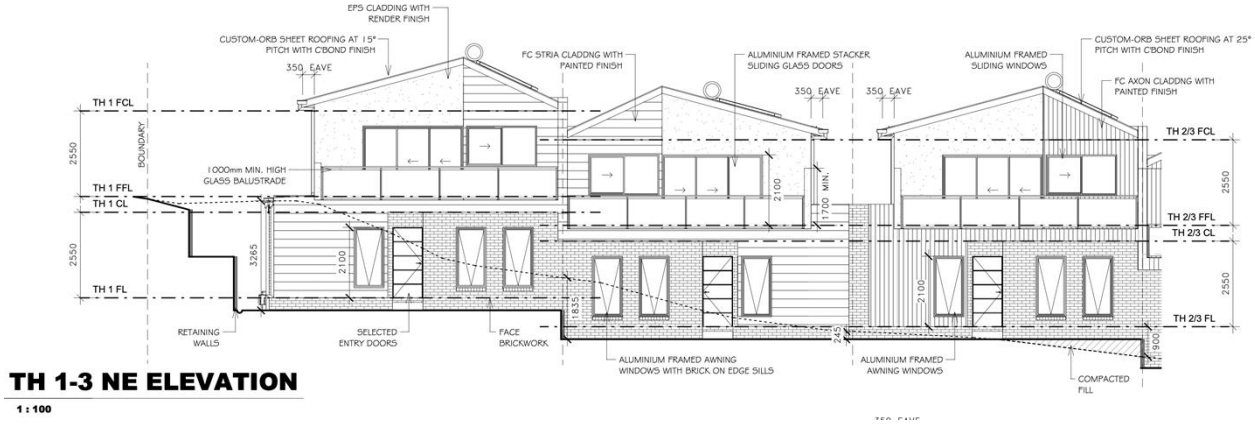


Figure 9: Elevation showing extent of site excavation at southern end of the block of six townhouses.

This extent of site excavation contributes to the need to remove all but one tree on the land and a further 10 off the site, despite the relatively low site coverage. The extent of site disturbance (with retaining walls and compacted fill) also limits the potential for future landscaping to compensate for the trees lost.

This extent of tree removal is considered an exceptionally poor landscape response.

The applicants have argued that this is justified as no permit is required for the tree removal on private land under cl 52.17 – Native Vegetation, because no overlay requires a permit for vegetation removal and because the site is in a Bushfire Management Overlay.

It is a misconception to consider that the lack of a permit requirement under clause 52.17 warrants extensive tree removal. Clause 52.17 does not apply to land of less than 0.4

hectares, meaning it typically applies on rural land or on large development sites. It is therefore quite normal for clause 52.17 not to apply to an infill housing application. It should also be noted that this clause relates purely to biodiversity impacts; it is not the relevant Scheme provision for assessment of landscaping character outcomes for residential development.

Similarly, it is not correct to argue that the lack of a specific overlay with a permit requirement for vegetation removal means that tree removal is irrelevant to the current assessment. Tree removal and landscaping outcomes are routinely assessed in the absence of such permit requirements through the application of ResCode Clause 55.03-8 – Landscaping, which has the following objectives:

> *"To encourage development that respects the landscape character of the neighbourhood.*
> *To encourage development that maintains and enhances habitat for plants and animals in locations of habitat importance.*
> *To provide appropriate landscaping.*
> *To encourage the retention of mature vegetation on the site."*

It is noted that these objectives specifically relate to retention of mature vegetation and maintenance of mature vegetation and habitat. Furthermore, the related Standard includes the following guidance:

> *"Development should provide for the retention or planting of trees, where these are part of the character of the neighbourhood.*
> *Development should provide for the replacement of any significant trees that have been removed in the 12 months prior to the application being made."*

These emphasise the need to retain trees where possible, including through replacement of trees if these are removed without a permit (reflecting that these provisions have effect in situations such as this where no permit is required for tree removal). In this case, the policy already quoted from clause 15.01-5L-05 does identify the mature vegetation as part of the character of the neighbourhood.

The proposed removal of all but one tree from the site is not considered to accord with the above objective or the Neighbourhood Character at cl 55.02-1. While some tree removal can be expected as part of the development of the site, the opportunity has not been taken to preserve higher quality trees or avoid development in particular locations – such as the south end of the site, or north of the existing driveway – where there are currently clusters of trees.

It is also considered that the need to remove trees on adjoining properties and the road reserve is consistent with an unusual extent of vegetation removal and failure to moderate development and excavation appropriately on the subject land. While it is acknowledged that the neighbours accept removal of these trees – their consent to the removal has been provided – as a general principle the impact of development on vegetation should be

contained within the site. (The removal of the road reserve vegetation also raises separate concerns with regards to clause 52.17 – Native Vegetation, discussed below).

It is not considered that the presence of the Bushire Management Overlay on the land justifies this outcome. The development needs a permit for both the new buildings and subdivision, including under the provisions of the Bushfire Management Overlay. Such an application needs to be considered in an integrated manner, including policies relating to neighbourhood character, landscape character and biodiversity. The application also must meet every objective of ResCode, including the Landscaping Objective discussed above.

This means that when assessing an application for development, the implications for landscaping of intensifying the development need to be considered. If constructing nine dwellings creates a need for near-total tree removal for bushfire protection, those impacts upon vegetation are a factor weighing against approval of the intensified development.

Where development is proposed to be made more intense, the Bushfire Management Overlay is therefore properly understood as a constraint upon development potential, rather than a justification for an otherwise inappropriate landscape outcome. To understand it as justifying wholesale vegetation removal would create a perverse situation in which greater development yields could occur in at-risk locations, because these sites could provide less landscaping.

The excavation, vegetation loss and lack of landscaping – especially forward of the attached 6-townhouse block – would mean that these buildings would not be appropriately softened and placed within a spacious and open streetscape setting with mature planting in accordance with the existing character along Race Street. This leads to an inappropriate character outcome.

Has the proposed vegetation removal in the road reserve been appropriately justified?

In addition to the landscape concerns discussed above, the vegetation removal in the road reserve is not considered to accord with cl 52.17 – Native Vegetation. This applies the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2017). Under the Guidelines applicants should first seek to avoid the removal of native vegetation, then minimise impacts from native vegetation that cannot be avoided and then provide a biodiversity offset for any vegetation removal that cannot be avoided or minimised.

The applicant has proposed an offset for the vegetation removal that is proposed in the road reserve. However, it is not considered that such an approach adequately follows the three-step approach required by the Guidelines. As noted in the preceding discussion, it is unusual for applications to involve such an extent of excavation that they require vegetation removal outside of the site. Such an approach cannot be said to have adequately avoided or minimised vegetation removal in accordance with the guidelines.

Does the proposal comply with ResCode provisions, including through limiting amenity impacts upon adjoining sites?

A key consideration is whether the proposal achieves a residential subdivision and development outcome that appropriately responds to the site and its context and whether the proposal would result in unreasonable amenity impacts for surrounding properties and future residents. The zone activates ResCode (in this case **Clause 55 – Two or More Dwellings on a Lot and Residential Buildings** – and **Clause 56 – Residential Subdivision**) as the key assessment criteria for such proposals. In this case, because the subdivision largely follows the development, it is Clause 55 that is considered most relevant.

Clause 55 includes neighbourhood character considerations, and the two most notable clauses in this regard have been discussed in the preceding section.

The large site means that the proposal generally limits offsite impacts appropriately and meets most of the quantitative Standards of Clause 55. An assessment of the key objectives and standards of clause 55 where further discussion is required, or those which are relevant to the objectors' concerns, is provided below.

- *Clause 55.03-1 – Street Setback (Standard B6)*

The objective is to *ensure that the setbacks of buildings from a street respect the existing or preferred neighbourhood character and make efficient use of the site.* The Standard setback is for the building to be set back the average of the two adjacent front setbacks.

The shallowness of the proposed site and the unusually large setback of the house to the south means that a fully compliant setback cannot be provided across much of the site. It is considered that the unusual shape of this lot (being wide and – at the southern end – shallow) justifies some flexibility with regards to front setbacks. It is also noted that siting is varied along the street and that there are examples of both established and newer buildings with relatively small setbacks, such as those at 50 Race Street (to the north) and 55 Race Street (across the road).

The townhouses in the proposed block of 6 would be set back between 4m and 5.2m from the street. It is considered that such a setback could be acceptable if appropriately landscaped. As already discussed, the street setback is heavily affected by excavation which detrimentally affects the ability to situate these buildings in a landscaped setting. However, if that issue was addressed it is considered that this siting could be acceptable.

- *Clause 55.03-7 – Building Height (Standard B7)*

The objective is *to ensure that the height of buildings respects the existing or preferred neighbourhood character.* Objections raised the height and bulk of buildings.

As mentioned in the discussion of character, there are examples of similar two-storey buildings in the area and the proposal is comfortably within the maximum height allowed under Standard B7 and the zone (being 11m). At points where the townhouses are proposed to sit on fill, they approach 8.6m above natural ground level, but most of the buildings are less than 8m.

As noted in the discussion about character, the concerns with the townhouses are considered to arise from their siting and landscaping rather than their scale.

- *Clause 55.04-6 – Overlooking (Standard B22)*

The objective is to “limit views into existing secluded private open space and habitable room windows.” Overlooking was raised as a concern by objectors.

The block of 6 townhouses would include upper storey windows facing west; those for townhouses 1 to 5 are proposed less than 9m from the boundary and therefore create the potential for overlooking that does not comply with Standard B22.

The applicant’s planning report argues that due to the rise in the land to the west, this overlooking is to be successfully screened by the 1.8m high Colorbond boundary fencing proposed for the western boundary. However, this is not supported by the provided sections (Figure 10) which show that these second storey windows would be high enough to look over such a fence. The proposal is therefore not considered to meet the Objective with regards to overlooking, although this could be remedied by conditions requiring screening if a permit were to be issued.

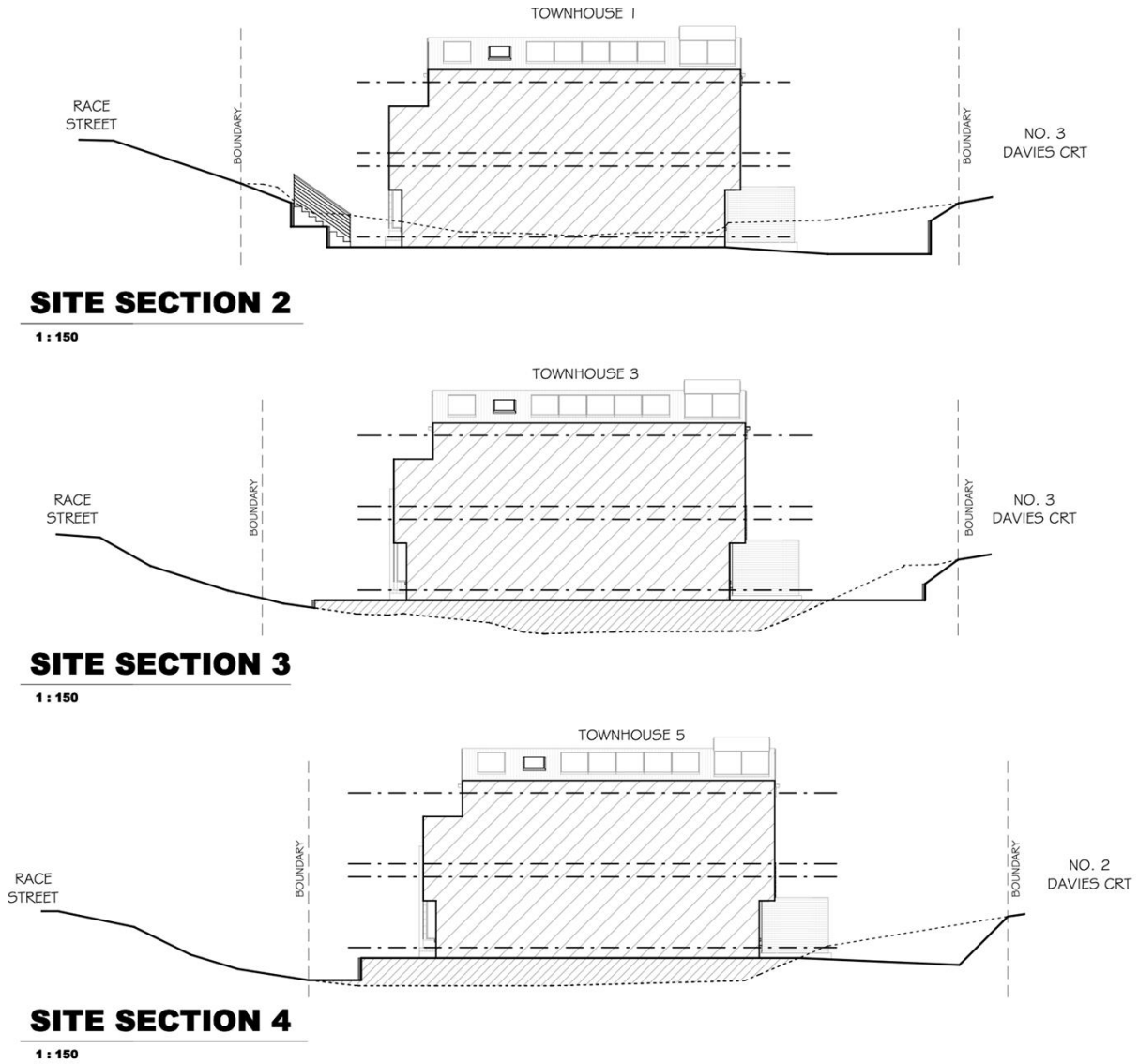


Figure 10: Site sections through townhouses 1, 3 and 5

Objectors also raised concerns about overlooking the backyards of the townhouses at the south of the site from adjoining properties. There are no backyards in this location, but the overlooking from the west-facing bedroom windows could occur in reverse (from adjacent gardens into those windows). While not strictly addressed under Clause 55, in practice, screening to prevent overlooking *from* those windows will also limit overlooking *into* those windows.

- *Clause 55.06-1 – Design Detail (Standard B31)*

The Objective is to *encourage design detail that respects the existing or preferred neighbourhood character.*

The proposed contemporary style of the townhouses is generally acceptable. However, the proposed designs include a mix of materials that creates a somewhat random mix of finishes, typically with three different wall cladding treatments on each face of each

townhouse. It is considered that articulation is better provided through variation in the building massing and a more considered treatment of different materials.

Have other objector concerns been appropriately addressed, including parking and traffic?

Several objectors raised concerns about the quantity of parking spaces. Parking spaces – including visitor car parking – have been provided that comply with clause 52.06 – Car Parking, which is acceptable.

Objectors were also concerned about traffic impacts but the total volume of traffic is relatively small and well within the capacity of the local road network. No traffic or safety concerns within the road network were raised by the City's traffic engineers. The safety of the driveway was queried by objectors and City's traffic engineer indicated that appropriate gradients needed to be shown at the approach to the crossover. These have now been shown on the plans.

Objectors were concerned about the noise of cars along the shared driveway along the property boundary. Such noise impacts are within the normal expectations of a residential area and are not considered to be inappropriate.

Concerns were expressed by objectors about how waste collection would be managed. It is proposed to have a shared bin storage area near the driveway. These could be collected via normal City collection.

Has bushfire risk been appropriately managed?

While the proposed, extensive vegetation removal is not considered an appropriate site response for reasons outlined earlier in this report it does, combined with construction to appropriate Bushfire Attack Levels, manage bushfire risk in accordance with the terms of the Bushfire Management Overlay. The proposal has been referred to the CFA, who did not object subject to appropriate conditions endorsing the submitted Bushfire Management Plan.

Conclusion

The siting of the buildings and the extensive earthworks proposed would result in the removal of all but one tree on the lot as well as ten trees beyond the property boundary. This would result in a highly disturbed site with extensive fill, retaining walls and insufficient scope for the establishment of replacement landscaping.

The buildings' impact would not be appropriately moderated through landscaping and the result would be an inappropriate landscape and neighbourhood character response.

It is recommended that the application for a permit be refused on the grounds previously outlined.

Options

Council, acting as the responsible authority for administering the Planning Scheme, may resolve to grant a permit, grant a permit with conditions, or refuse to grant a permit.

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

Nil

17. STRONG, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Nil

18. ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION

Nil

19. A CLIMATE-RESILIENT BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

19.1. Biodiversity Strategy

Author:	Mark Hall, Senior Biodiversity Officer
Responsible Director:	Stacy Williams, Director Healthy Communities and Environments

Purpose

To update Council of the process completed to develop the Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2033 (the Strategy) and seek adoption of the Strategy

Recommended Motion

That Council adopts the Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2033 as per the attachment to this Report.

Executive Summary

The Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2033 (the Strategy) seeks to set a vision for biodiversity conservation across the City, engaging and supporting actions by Council, land managers and the community to protect, enhance and connect natural values, and advocate on behalf of the environment.

The initial draft Strategy was produced with input from over 500 individuals who participated in a range of forums, stakeholder workshops, individual meetings, via Let's Talk (where there were 296 contributions) and written submissions (11 in total). Following drafting of the document, further community consultation was sought. In total, over 1100 people attended this second phase of events and actively engaged in dialogue and feedback. We received a further 32 survey responses on Let's Talk and 10 written submissions, all of which reflected positively on the draft and the process to complete it.

Overall, the community feedback was positive, indicating support for the Strategy.

The Strategy comprises 62 actions for protecting, enhancing and connecting biodiversity values, engaging the community and advocating on behalf of the natural environment. Of these:

- 22 actions are considered very high priority, 26 are considered high and 14 considered medium priority.
- 41 actions can be undertaken using existing resources, 4 have been budgeted for in the 2023/24 budget, 13 require additional resources (through future Council budget and external sources), and 4 are TBC.

- 11 actions have commenced, 20 will commence within 2 years, 10 will commence within 5 years and 21 are ongoing.

Background

The Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2033 was initiated as an action of Outcome 5 of the City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025. It also builds on, reviews and revises goals set out in the Biodiversity and Regeneration section of the *Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026*.

Previous Council decision dates: Council were briefed on the draft Strategy on 15 May prior to the second phase of community consultation.

Report

Process to complete the Strategy

The process to produce the Strategy involved:

- Review of existing national, state and local legislation, plans and strategies.
- Attendance at community group meetings.
- Community forums on biodiversity conservation across Greater Bendigo.
- Let's Talk survey (x2) and online mapping exercise.
- Focus groups and workshops with a range of stakeholders.
- Written submission and response process.
- A Biodiversity Strategy Emerging Directions Forum.
- Discussions with staff from across the organisation.

Strategy format

The Strategy has been divided into two parts:

- Part 1 – Background Report
- Part 2 – Strategic Directions and Action Plan

The current state of biodiversity across Greater Bendigo

Bendigo is often referred to as a 'City in a Forest' as it is surrounded by approximately 40,000 hectares of regional, state, and national parks and bushland reserves across the municipality. These areas continue to provide important habitat for flora and fauna and critical ecological functions such as fresh air, clean water, nutrient cycling, and climate regulation.

The municipality is home to more than 200 species of birds, 44 species of mammals, 40 species of reptiles, 12 species of frogs and countless invertebrates, bacteria, and microbes.

However, many habitats are greatly reduced in area and quality. Nearly all of the City's remnant native vegetation is significantly modified and the City's biodiversity values continue to be impacted by fire, pest plants and animals, land development, water pollution and climate change.

Greater Bendigo is currently home to 105 threatened flora species, 65 threatened birds, seven threatened mammals, four threatened fish, seven threatened reptiles, two threatened amphibians and two threatened invertebrates. Two ecological communities are also listed as threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

Globally, we are currently experiencing Earth's sixth mass extinction event and a climate emergency, both driven almost exclusively by human activities, and we are seeing major international and national reports saying we are not doing enough to stem the tide.

We are faced with a tremendous challenge over the next decade, but with that comes exciting opportunities to become better stewards of our unique natural landscapes, to stop species extinctions and to engage and inform the community of Greater Bendigo to ensure a safe and resilient future for all.

Priorities for action

The draft Strategy includes 62 actions which seek to address the challenges identified above. Many of these actions can be delivered with existing resources and will be incorporated into existing staff work plans.

The top 12 key priorities are:

Action Plan #	Description	Pillar	Resources
5.1	Establish a permanent Biodiversity Engagement Officer position to meet growing community needs.	Engage	Funded for 2 years in 2023/24 Council budget
1.2	Investigate options for establishing an Environmental Planner position.	Protect	TBC
1.1	Review the planning scheme provisions relating to biodiversity in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme (GBPS).	Protect	$$$$
3.1	Develop and implement a detailed 'Habitat Connectivity Plan' to create biolinks across Greater Bendigo.	Connect	Existing
2.1	Conduct a review of Council's natural reserve management functions, considering implementation of this strategy and future environmental management	Enhance	Existing

	plans.		
1.8	Ensure protection of mature native trees through the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme or a Local Law which may include use of a Significant Tree Register.	Protect	$$$$
2.2	Develop and implement Environmental Management Plans / Action Plans for City managed natural reserves.	Enhance	TBC
3.3	Develop a local carbon offset program with stakeholders, ensuring sites align with priority areas for habitat enhancement and connectivity.	Connect	Funded for 1 year in 2023/24 Council budget
1.18	Establish a biodiversity monitoring program that is representative, robust and strategic.	Protect	Funding included in 2023/24 Council budget
2.13	Increase participation of Bendigo landholders in the Healthy Landscapes project in partnership with Djaara.	Enhance	$$$$ from 2024/25
2.7	Support Djaara and Taungurung to increase connection to country and promote cultural practices that also benefit biodiversity.	Enhance	$$
5.3	Establish a community engagement program to increase community access to nature and to raise awareness about Greater Bendigo's natural values and how to protect and enhance them.	Engage	Existing (ongoing delivery dependant on ongoing Biodiversity Engagement Officer role)

Legend: $ = <$5000*, $$* = $5,000-$25,000*, $$$*= $25,000-$50,000*, $$$$* = $50,000-$100,000

Priority/Importance

High – Protecting and enhancing biodiversity delivers co-benefits which help achieve a number of Council's environmental and health and wellbeing goals.

Timelines

The Strategy sets out a program of prioritised actions for the next 10 years.

Communications/Engagement

Consultation on the draft Strategy

The draft Strategy was released for public feedback on 22 May for 6 weeks until 30 June (and extended by one week to allow late submissions). The timing coincided with the release of the draft Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Roadmap. As such, a coordinated approach to the consultation program for both projects was pursued.

This consultation program included:

- Release of the draft Strategy on Let's Talk (735 views).
- Official launch of the draft at the Climate Summit on 26 May, including opportunities for community feedback throughout the day.
- Community drop-in sessions at the City's libraries, community and neighbourhood centres and public spaces.
- Briefings with key stakeholders.
- Promotion of the consultation opportunity through traditional and social media.
- Receipt of feedback through an online survey accessed through Let's Talk (32 responses).
- Receipt of written submissions (x10)

Overall, approximately 1,100 people actively engaged in the community consultation.

Key messages from community consultation

Key messages received during the consultation period include:

- General support for the Strategy's vision and actions
- Support for the wide-reaching engagement with the community and stakeholders
- Suggestions for stronger recommendations on housing development, mining, urban biodiversity, roadside weeds, common species, wildlife road deaths and enforcement.
- Suggestion for greater recognition of Traditional Owner rights and biocultural values
- Suggestion to further highlight the work of other groups and organisations

Key changes to the draft Strategy

As a result of the community feedback, the following changes have been made to the Strategy:

- Updates to better reflect Traditional Owner rights, values and address concerns of cultural sensitivity, including addition of biocultural values.
- Addition of further context for mining impacts, urban biodiversity values, offsetting and the work of other groups.
- Addition and amendment to actions on roadside management
- New actions added about partnerships with Wildlife Victoria and other local government organisations on injured wildlife (particularly road collision)
- Addition of a table outlining the indicators that will be measured and reported on as a part of the Annual Environment Report.

Reflection on the community consultation

The feedback received during face-to-face meetings and drop-in sessions was positive and constructive.

Feedback received via Council's online Let's Talk platform was more limited. Despite receiving a high number of views, this did not translate to high numbers of people providing feedback via the online survey.

Monitoring and reporting

The Strategy includes a biodiversity monitoring framework which will be delivered in collaboration with the community through citizen science activities.

The Strategy also includes a suite of indicators which will be reported on in Council's Annual Environment Report.

Current implementation priorities

Current implementation priorities from the Strategy include:

1. Establishing the **Biodiversity Monitoring Program** and commencing implementation.
2. Developing the **Habitat Connectivity Plan** in collaboration with stakeholders.
3. Establishing a **biodiversity engagement program,** including support for Landcare and Friends groups.
4. Developing templates and frameworks for natural reserve **environmental management plans** and commencing plans for Kennington Reservoir, Crosby and Huntly Forests**.**
5. Delivering the **Rural Regeneration Grants Program** (sustainable land management grants)

Financial Sustainability

The Strategy assumes that most actions will be initiated and / or led by Council. Many of these actions can be delivered with existing resources within the Climate Change and Environment, Parks and Open Space and Strategic Planning units. Further resources will also be sought through Council's annual budget process and through state and federal grants as needed.

The key actions requiring additional funding are outlined in the above table.

Priorities for consideration in the 2024/25 Council budget are likely to be:

1. **Agribusiness Officer** – continuation of the position.

2. **Healthy Landscapes** – continuation of Council's financial contribution to this collaborative regenerative agriculture program.
3. **Carbon offsets** – continuation of Council's contribution to the North Central Catchment Management Authority's Community Carbon local carbon offset program.

Risk Assessment

The Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy addresses the risk biodiversity decline presents to the natural environment and the community of Greater Bendigo. There is a risk that existing and future budgets aren't able to meet true needs for biodiversity conservation, however many of these actions can be achieved (at least to some extent) using existing resources and through external funding streams. Our prioritisation process will dictate resource allocation.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025

Outcome 5: A climate resilient and healthy landscape: "A regional community that enjoys a restored and thriving natural environment".

Relevant actions include:

- *Develop and implement a Biodiversity Policy.*
- *Develop and implement a management and monitoring plan for ecological restoration projects on Council-managed land.*
- *Increase involvement of Traditional Owners in the management of public spaces.*
- *Engage the wider community in actions to support our goal.*

Outcome 5 - A climate resilient and healthy landscape

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026

The *Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026* provides an overarching vision for biodiversity and regeneration across Greater Bendigo. Five broad goals were set out in the strategy:

- *Council projects regenerate landscapes and ecosystems.*

- *Native habitat and areas of important biodiversity are protected for future generations.*
- *Connected and flourishing urban and rural landscapes and ecosystems.*
- *Strong community connection to, awareness of, and care for our ecosystems and biodiversity.*
- *Respectful and effective partnerships with Traditional Owners to regenerate ecosystems.*

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

1. Biodiversity Strategy cover I D 0099 [**19.1.1** - 1 page]
2. Biodiversity Strategy [**19.1.2** - 94 pages]
3. GBBSConsultationReportPhase2 [**19.1.3** - 9 pages]

DRAFT BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR GREATER BENDIGO



CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO



DRAFT GREATER BENDIGO BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2023-2033

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The City of Greater Bendigo lies within both Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We acknowledge and extend our appreciation for the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples, the Traditional Owners of this land. We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples. We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

We acknowledge that caring for Country in partnership with Traditional Owners is our privilege and our responsibility. This strategy supports Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians' rights to practice their culture and enjoy the social, spiritual and economic benefits that flow from healthy ecosystems.

Glossary

Biocultural values: significant cultural connections of indigenous people to Country: knowledge, stories, songs, trade routes, traditions and relationships with ancestors, animals and places.

Biodiversity: the variety of all life on earth (animals, plants, fungi, microbes), their interactions and the natural patterns they form. This includes the variety (or diversity) of species, the variety within species (genetic diversity) and the variety of ecosystems.

Biolink/habitat corridor: geographical area that provides suitable conditions for animal and plant movement and dispersal through the landscape and is of sufficient area for species to live out their lifecycle.

Ecosystem: a unique community of living and non-living organisms interacting as a system.

Ecosystem services: the benefits provided to humans through the transformation of natural resources (including land, water, vegetation and atmosphere) into essential goods and services, such as clean air, water and food.

Flora: plants.

Fauna: animals.

Habitat patch: an area sufficient in size and with the right structure and composition of native vegetation to provide food, shelter and opportunities for breeding for a species so they may live out their lifecycle and provide future generations.

Habitat connectivity: the connections available in the landscape for flora and fauna to access resources and to retain natural patterns of movement and dispersal, including intergenerational dispersal.

Natural environment: all living and non-living things occurring naturally on Earth, including animals, plants, water, air, sunlight, and features like mountains, forests, and rivers.

Stepping stones: smaller areas of vegetation or habitat, such as large paddock trees or rocky outcrops, that provide species with (sometimes temporary) habitat or act as a connection to larger patches.

Acronyms

BARC	Bendigo Animal Relief Centre
BDEC	Bendigo and District Environment Council
BSUD	Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design
CALP Act	Catchment and Land Protection Act
CASBE	Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
COM	Committee of Management
CVACF	Central Victoria Australian Conservation Foundation Group
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DELWP	(former) Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (now DEECA)
DJAARA	Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
DJANDAK	Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
ESD	Environmentally Sustainable Development
ESO	Environmental Significance Overlay
EVC	Ecological Vegetation Class
FFG Act	Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act
GBPS	Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme
LUAA	Land Use Activity Agreement
MPS	Municipal Planning Strategy
PE Act	Planning and Environment Act 1987
PV	Parks Victoria
RCS	Regional Catchment Strategy
RSA	Recognition and Settlement Agreement
SLO	Significant Landscape Overlay
TfN	Trust for Nature
VBA	Victorian Biodiversity Atlas
VPO	Vegetation Protection Overlay
WRES	Wildlife Rescue and Emergency Service
WRIN	Wildlife Rescue & Information Network
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

**City of Greater Bendigo is referred to as the City*



Image by John Walter.

Executive summary

Greater Bendigo has a wealth of natural environments that provide important habitat for flora and fauna and critical ecological functions such as fresh air, clean water and climate regulation. However, habitat destruction, pest plants and animals, land development, water pollution and climate change all threaten our natural environment. Greater Bendigo is currently home to 105 threatened plants and 87 threatened animal species. We are faced with a tremendous challenge over the next decade to protect, enhance and connect our natural landscapes, stop species extinctions and processes that threaten species survival and engage and inform the community to ensure a safe and resilient future for all.

The Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2033 seeks to set a vision for biodiversity conservation across the region, engaging and supporting actions by the City of Greater Bendigo (the City), land managers and the community to protect, enhance and connect natural values, and advocate on behalf of the environment. It was initiated as an action of Outcome 5 of the City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul 2021-2025*. It also builds on, reviews and revises goals set out in the Biodiversity and Regeneration section of the *Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026*.

The Strategy was produced with input from stakeholders and the community through two phases of consultation. Phase one (input into the draft Strategy) received over 500 individual responses given at forums, stakeholder workshops, focus groups, community group meetings, via our online platform Let's Talk (where there were 296 contributions) and through written submissions (11 in total). Phase two (feedback on the draft Strategy) saw over 1100 people attending community events and drop-in sessions and actively engage in dialogue and feedback. There were a further 32 survey responses and 10 written submissions. DJAARA and Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation were provided extensive opportunity for input and engaged at several points in the drafting and consultation process. Discussions were also had with staff from across the organisation. A review of existing national, state and local legislation, plans and strategies was undertaken, along with data collection and collation, mapping and modelling of biodiversity values across Greater Bendigo.

This Strategy and 10-year Action Plan address the highest priority short-term actions to achieve a shared vision over the next decade and build strong foundations for biodiversity protection and enhancement into the future. We are on a long-term journey. It will take decades to redress biodiversity loss, but this is a big milestone in the City's leadership and commitment towards a renewed natural environment.

The 5 strategic pillars underpinning the Strategy are:

- **PROTECT** the existing natural values of Greater Bendigo
- **ENHANCE** native vegetation communities, habitats and species diversity
- **CONNECT** habitats and species through strategic linkages
- **ADVOCATE** on behalf of the community and environment
- **ENGAGE** the community in environmental stewardship

The Strategy includes 61 actions which seek to address the challenges faced. The top 12 key priorities for the City to implement are:

1. Establish a permanent Biodiversity Engagement Officer position to meet growing community needs.
2. Investigate options for establishing an Environmental Planner position.
3. Review the planning scheme provisions relating to biodiversity in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme (GBPS).
4. Develop and implement a detailed 'Habitat Connectivity Plan' to create biolinks across Greater Bendigo.
5. Ensure protection of mature native trees through the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme or a Local Law which may include use of a Significant Tree Register.
6. Establish a biodiversity monitoring program that is representative, robust and strategic.
7. Develop and implement Environmental Management Plans for City managed natural reserves.
8. Continue and expand the Healthy Landscapes regenerative agriculture program.
9. Conduct a service review of the City's natural reserve management functions, considering implementation of this strategy and future environmental management plans.
10. Develop a local carbon offset program with stakeholders, ensuring sites align with priority areas for habitat enhancement and connectivity.
11. Support Djaara and Taungurung to increase connection to country and promote cultural practices that also benefit biodiversity.
12. Establish a community engagement program to increase community access to nature and to raise awareness about Greater Bendigo's natural values and how to protect and enhance them.

Purpose

The Biodiversity Strategy establishes a shared vision for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and biocultural values across Greater Bendigo, including urban and rural environments. The strategy includes identifying policy and planning initiatives and priorities for Traditional Owner empowerment, community engagement and on ground action. It provides a framework for collaboration on region-wide questions and develops a clear set of management actions to help seek and allocate resources to implement a monitoring framework that is robust, deliberate and strategic.

Scope

This Strategy considers the biodiversity and biocultural values of the extensive natural, urban and rural environments across Greater Bendigo, the threats to these values, and actions the City can take to protect and enhance them, both directly and by working with others, including:

- Programs to encourage and facilitate conservation outcomes on private land
- Desktop review of existing biodiversity data for Greater Bendigo
- Recommendations for biolinks to aid landscape connectivity for flora and fauna
- The City's partnership opportunities with Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples
- The City's collaboration with land managers and community groups
- Establishment of a biodiversity monitoring plan to be implemented by the City in collaboration with land managers and the community
- Recommendations for biodiversity engagement activities and support for community groups
- Recommendations for the review of the City's natural environment plans, policies and strategies
- Recommendations for the review of existing environmental planning policies and provisions

Vision

Protected, enduring and connected natural landscapes, waterways and townships across Greater Bendigo, shared with healthy, abundant and diverse native plants and animals, creating a common home that is actively cared for by an engaged and informed community.



Images by John Walter.

Objectives

The objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy are to:

1. Establish a shared vision and strong partnerships for the conservation of biodiversity and biocultural values across Greater Bendigo between the City, land managers, external agencies, environment groups, private landholders and the community.
2. Establish a suite of prioritised and strategic land management and community engagement actions that promote diverse, thriving ecosystems and address the challenges of climate change.
3. Establish a biodiversity monitoring program to track the impact of the City's and the community's activities on the natural environment.
4. Embed biodiversity conservation at the core of the City's planning, policy, and business practices.

The Strategy's actions will aim to:

- Increase the diversity, connectivity and resilience of the natural environment and avoid further loss of species and communities
- Support urban and rural landowners, environment groups and the community to protect and enhance biodiversity
- Partner with land managers, including the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples, to implement and monitor biodiversity and biocultural outcomes
- Connect people to nature, creating a common home for all
- Provide direction for conservation efforts in anticipation of further climate change
- Mitigate threatening processes in a strategic way

The Biodiversity Strategy will inform the review and / or development of the following City strategies:

- *Strategic Directions Urban Roadside Vegetation Management 2011-2015*
- *Strategic Directions Rural Roadside Conservation 2011-2015*
- Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Plan
- Implementation Plan for Reimagining Bendigo Creek (to be developed)
- *Invasive Plants and Animals Policy and Procedure*
- Planned Burn Policy (to be developed)
- Stormwater Management Strategy (to be developed)
- Environmental Management Plans for Citymanaged nature and forestry reserves (to be developed)
- Review of environmental planning policies and overlays (to be undertaken)

PART 1: BACKGROUND REPORT

Background

Why is biodiversity important?

The term "biodiversity" describes the enormous variety of genes, species and ecosystems on Earth, including all the plants (trees, shrubs, forbs, mosses), animals (birds, mammals, invertebrates, frogs, and reptiles), fungi, and micro-organisms like bacteria. These form an intricate web, working together to maintain balance and support life.

Biodiversity is always changing, with the gradual addition and removal of species and genetic lineages over time. As such, all species alive today have evolved unique traits that make them distinct from other species. Countless species exist in a single ecosystem, such as a forest, grassland or river – plants, beetles, fish, snakes, birds, and butterflies, to name a few. Ecosystems are also home to thousands of species of bacteria and other tiny organisms that are vital to life on Earth.

We rely on healthy ecosystems for clean air and water, productive soils, natural pest control, pollination, flood mitigation, waste decomposition, detoxification and carbon sequestration. Biodiverse ecosystems also provide us with food, production materials (such as timber, pastures and fertilizers), genetic resources and pharmaceuticals. 'Ecosystem services' provide immeasurable value and replacing them would be impossible.

The Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung people also stress the importance of conserving and protecting their significant cultural connections to Country: knowledge, stories, songs, trade routes, traditions and relationships with ancestors, animals and places, collectively referred to as "biocultural diversity"[1]. They know that having people on Country means better stewardship of the land and creatures. We have a responsibility to support and partner with Traditional Owners to ensure their ongoing relationship with Country. Actions that support both biodiversity and biocultural protection and enhancement will likely achieve far greater benefits for the natural environment and fulfil cultural obligations to keep Country healthy, and by doing so, also heal people.

The danger of inaction

We are currently experiencing Earth's sixth mass extinction event[2] and a climate emergency[3], both driven almost exclusively by human activities. A recent report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) found an average 69 per cent decline in global populations of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians since 1970[4].

"Three-quarters of the land-based environment and roughly 66 per cent of the ocean environment have been significantly altered. More than a third of the world's land surface and nearly 75 per cent of freshwater resources are now devoted to crop or livestock production. Climate change worsens the impact of other stressors on nature and our well-being. Humans have overfished the oceans, cleared forests, polluted our water sources, and created a climate crisis. These actions are impacting biodiversity around the world, from the most remote locales to our own backyards[5]".

This and the national State of the Environment report[6] are sobering reading. If we do not act now with conviction, strategy and adequate resourcing we will witness more species threatened with extinction and the continued collapse of ecosystems that support life as we know it.

We are deeply connected to nature. bushland, farmland, grasslands, urban parks and open spaces are places for people to observe nature, commune and relax in. Time spent in biodiversity-rich environments increases health benefits, such as stronger immunity and stress reduction. Around $80-$200M per annum is generated through active park visitation that reduces health costs for visitors[7]. It is therefore essential that Greater Bendigo maintains and enhances its network of parks, open spaces and nature reserves that connect people to their local places and improve quality of life. For instance, volunteering in Victoria's parks provides social benefits valued at $6M per annum.

[1] Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy
[2] Strong evidence shows Sixth Mass Extinction of global biodiversity in progress -- ScienceDaily
[3] The Climate Emergency (unep.org)
[4] HOME | WWF (panda.org)
[5] What is biodiversity? | Pages | WWF (worldwildlife.org)
[6] Australia state of the environment 2021 (dcceew.gov.au)
[7] Parks Victoria DELWP 2015, Valuing Victoria's Parks: Accounting for ecosystems & valuing their benefitsVictoria



Image by Ian McBurney.

Greater Bendigo currently has far higher rates of obesity and chronic diseases than the state average and are[8]. More time spent in biodiverse environments could greatly reduce this cost.

Canopy trees in urban and rural environments also produce shade that reduces people's exposure to harmful UV rays by up to 75 per cent, limiting the incidence of heat related illness . Vulnerable sectors of the community, such as the young, frail, elderly and those with a pre-existing illness[9] will benefit most from urban shading[10]. On an individual level, the simple act of increasing tree cover by 10 per cent over a small building or house can significantly reduce power bills[11].

We are faced with a tremendous challenge over the next decade. Children raised in and around the abundant biodiversity values of Greater Bendigo and provided opportunities for nature-based play will grow to be a generation of healthy, happy people that respect the natural world and become its greatest advocates. Ensuring a safe, healthy, and liveable environment for them is our responsibility and privilege. How we choose to act, how bold we are in our actions and how adaptable we can be in the way we live on this planet will determine which biodiversity values we leave for future generations of life on Earth.

Regional and historical context

Pre-European colonisation

For millennia, the natural environment of Greater Bendigo existed in a state of balance, with natural cycles of life, death, growth, disturbance, hydrology and evolution shaping a range of ecosystems and an amazing diversity of species. When the first human inhabitants, the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples, arrived in the region thousands of years ago, they developed a deep connection with Country and were the first farmers, gardeners and custodians, caring for Country as Country cared for them. They lived with species not found anywhere else on Earth: The kangaroo, emu, platypus and wedge-tailed eagle, and hunted as they needed, knowing when and how much to take and when to leave it. They were the first land managers, using skills, knowledge and activities over thousands of generations in a system of relationships between humans, animals, plants, ancestors, song lines and other cultural connections to Country. The Box, Gum and Ironbark trees characteristic of Greater Bendigo not only provided abundant food and resources for animals, but the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung people also enjoyed the shade, shelter and resources they provided. The incredibly hard wood was turned into spears and clubs and the bark was used for shields, canoes and homes. Reeds and grasses were weaved together to make products such as baskets. Nectar from Eucalypts and native shrubs such as Banksia, Callistemon and Melaleuca provided sweet drinks, while the large, nutrient rich tubers of Murnong (Yam Daisy) growing in the flat grassy plains bordering creeks provided mass produced food that was planted and harvested using digging sticks.

"Australia forms as a tapestry of interwoven cultural landscapes that are the product of the skills, knowledge and activities of Aboriginal land managers over thousands of generations. Cultural landscapes are reflections of how Aboriginal people engage with the world. The concept of a cultural landscape is a bridging tool, in this case one that aims to bridge the ontological differences between Indigenous and 'western' world views, between Natural Resource Management (NRM) and caring for Country. This is required to take steps towards preventing the ongoing ontological violence that is perpetuated by the dominance of 'western' approaches to managing Country. It enables a dialogue between Traditional Owners and government land managers within a framework that does not exclude one or the other world view. Traditional Owners actively managing Country must be able to strengthen their identity, individual and collective."

- Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy

[8] Healthy Loddon Campaspe

[9] Parsons et al 1998, The shady side of solar protection, Queensland Cancer Fund Laboratories

[10] Norton et al, 2013, Planning for a cooler future: Green infrastructure to reduce urban heat, VCCCAR

[11] Parsons et al 1998, The shady side of solar protection, Queensland Cancer Fund Laboratories



At the time of European colonisation, the mix of dry forest and woodlands consisted of open stands of large trees with a diverse understory of grasses, forbs and shrubs. There were at least 1705 recorded species of plant and 811 species of animal (including birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish, and invertebrates)[12] and 23 distinct vegetation communities, or Ecological Vegetation Classes[13] (EVCs, listed in Appendix 1.3).

Since colonisation

The new inhabitants immediately began altering the landscape, removing trees, hunting animals and mining the land for its resources. Many of the tree species, including Red Stringy Bark, Red Box and Yellow Box were removed to promote more desirable timber species such as Red Ironbark, Grey Box and Yellow Gum. Pastoralists arrived in the 1830s and 1840s, turning forest into arable land, and the discovery of gold in the early 1850s generated a devastating period of development, broadscale clearing and urbanisation. Mining waste and removed topsoil produced sludge that left the waterways brown and turned the land into 'upside down Country'. Bendigo and surrounding towns soon became permanent settlements designed with wide malls, large lots and reserves for parks and gardens where people could meet and recreate[14]. A mix of native and exotic street trees were planted for shade and beautification[15]. Several areas were reserved as public parks and gardens in the 1860s including Rosalind Park, the Botanic Gardens in White Hills and Lake Weeroona. By the late 1920s, state forests in the Bendigo district covered more than 100,000 acres. Municipal open spaces gradually became more naturalised and bushland reserves were established.

Today, the Greater Bendigo covers an area of 3,048km^2, and includes Bendigo – Victoria's third largest city with a population of over 116,000 people – and the townships of Axedale, Elmore, Goornong, Heathcote, Marong, Raywood and Redesdale[16] (Fig. 1). In 2013, The Dja Dja Wurrung group of clans were recognised by the State of Victoria as the Traditional Owners of the land to the West of the Campaspe that the City occupies, and the land beyond the limits of Greater Bendigo in the North, West and South. The Taungurung Group were recognised by the State of Victoria in 2018 as the Traditional Owners of the land in the east of Greater Bendigo, Heathcote and beyond (Fig. 1).

[12] Victorian Biodiversity Atlas records for Greater Bendigo - Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (environment.vic.gov.au)

[13] Pre-1750 Ecological Vegetation Classes layer, NatureKit Victoria (biodiversity.vic.gov.au)

[14] Thematic Environmental History, final report, June 2013, Lovell Chen, Adopted by the City - July 31, 2013

[15] Inventing Traditions in Goldfields Society: Public Rituals and Town-building in Sandhurst, 1867-1885, 198, 200

[16] About Greater Bendigo, https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/About/About-Greater-Bendigo

The urban area is a 'City in a Forest', surrounded by 40,000 hectares of regional, state, and national parks and natural reserves. The largest of these is the Greater Bendigo National Park, which was created from several state and regional parks in 2002 and covers an area of 17,000 hectares[17]. The Greater Bendigo National Park is one of six Dja Dja Wurrung Parks handed over as part of the settlement package in the Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria, jointly managed by DJAARA, the Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation, and Parks Victoria. These areas continue to provide important habitats for flora and fauna and critical ecological functions like fresh air, clean water, nutrient cycling and climate regulation.

The forests and bushland of Greater Bendigo are currently home to more than 200 species of birds, 44 species of mammals, 40 species of reptiles, 12 species of frogs and countless invertebrates, bacteria, and microbes[18]. However, today the 23 original (1750s) EVCs are greatly reduced in area and quality, with Box-Ironbark forests now only covering ~17 per cent of their original area across the state (Figs 8 and 9). Nearly all that remains of the native vegetation is significantly modified, including changed understory plants and multi-stemmed, more densely spaced trees. Biodiversity loss is an ongoing issue due to land clearing, mismanagement, fire, pest plants and animals, land development, river regulation, water pollution and climate change. Many 19th Century goldfields sites are yet to be remediated and soil and water quality remain poor.

Greater Bendigo is home to 105 threatened flora species, 65 threatened birds, seven threatened

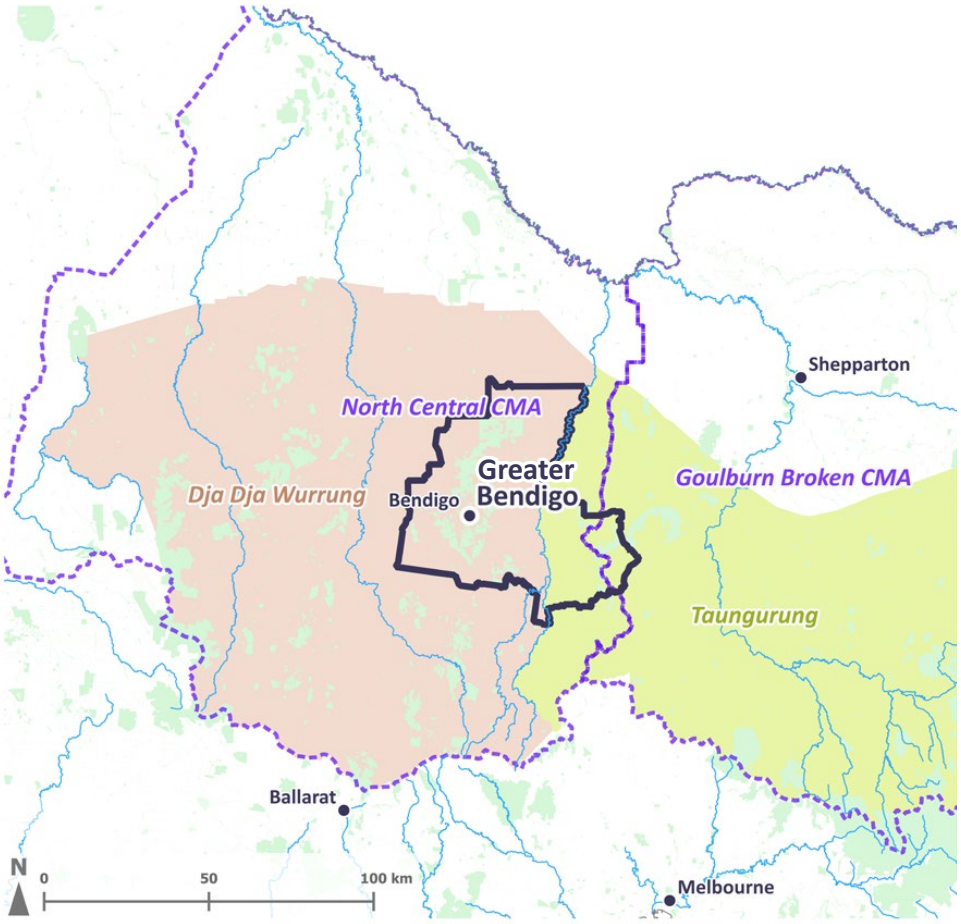


Fig. 1: Regional context
Regional context for the City of Greater Bendigo, which includes significant tracts of Crown reserves and lies on the lands of two Registered Aboriginal Parties and within two Catchment and Land Protection Regions).

[17] National Parks Information - Explore Bendigo (bendigoregion.com.au)

[18] Greater Bendigo snapshot | City of Greater Bendigo

mammals, four threatened fish, seven threatened reptiles, two threatened amphibians and two threatened invertebrates (Appendix 1.1). Two ecological communities are also listed as threatened under the FFG Act: The Victorian temperate-woodland bird community and the Creekline Grassy Woodland (Goldfields) Community[19].

Collective efforts by the City, Landcare and Friends groups, land managers and organisations to redress decline include the restoration of Crownland reserve habitat (Case Study 1), increasing the genetic diversity of a species (Case Study 2), monitoring populations of Tuans (Brush-tailed Phascogale) and other arboreal mammals (Case Study 3), restoring habitat on degraded land (Case Study 4) and the reintroduction of native fish species into streams and lakes across Greater Bendigo (Case Study 6). Countless members of the community also support wildlife in their gardens or on larger properties through actions that support soil health, vegetation (particularly native species), retain large trees or provide other habitat values. However, it is difficult to fully assess the current health of local biodiversity due to limited resources for invasive species control, on-ground management and strategic data collection, monitoring and evaluation of actions.

Another critical component to the success of effective biodiversity conservation across Greater Bendigo is an informed and engaged community that can act as stewards for the land. The City, land management agencies and community groups currently offer a range of engagement activities and resources for the community, such as those on our pollinating insects (Case Study 5), a vital group for ecosystem health and renewal, and through emerging engagement techniques like 'eventing' (Case Study 7). A more sustained and dedicated effort is needed to engage the population in the critical issues surrounding biodiversity and spurring them into action and advocacy to ensure a vibrant natural environment and a healthy community long into the future.

Image by William Terry.



[19] Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act Threatened List (environment.vic.gov.au)



CASE STUDY 1: SPRING PLAINS WATERSHED REPAIR

Cameron O'Mara, Biolinks Alliance

Spring Plains Nature Conservation Reserve is located just south of Heathcote. It is the site of a restoration project currently being undertaken by Biolinks Alliance, a partnership and capacity building organisation supporting, coordinating, and amplifying large-scale community-driven conservation on public and private land in Central Victoria.

We chose Peters Gully as our treatment site and Whites gully as a control or comparison site. We have been gathering ecological data at both sites for the last four years. While Spring Plains has been protected under state legislation for its conservation values, it suffers from some common issues across box ironbark forests and woodlands. Historical land use practices - the harvesting of timber, grazing, gold mining and water manipulation -have left the site ecologically dysfunctional. The regrowth trees are dense and small, lack hollows and critical food sources, compete heavily for resources and limit ground cover diversity. The soil is hard and non-porous causing water to sheet off at high velocities leading to "leaky landscapes" and intensifying erosion.

To address these issues, Biolinks Alliance has drawn on evidence-based approaches applied in similar situations. We will be incorporating the use of ecological thinning, wherein 50 per cent of the basal area (DBHOB) of the entire 138Ha site will be felled and strategically placed along the contours. Placing the logs in this way helps to impede the sheeting effect, allows the build-up of organic matter, and replenishes soil health. Contour ripping will also be used to rip the soil sub-surface, allowing water to infiltrate deeper which helps to rehydrate the landscape. These rip lines will also be sown with seed collected from local native grasses. Gully pond creation will take place along the waterline in the form of a series of trickling ponds that will be ringed with native semi-aquatic plants. This will help to stabilise the soil, hold water in the landscape for longer and provide resources to native animals.

We have created a range of interesting opportunities for involvement in the project, appealing to many interests and capacities of the community. Currently people can help collect data on kangaroo populations, small arboreal mammals, invertebrates, and reptiles. We have also incorporated online tools so people can contribute from afar by helping us identify animals on our camera traps or wildlife images that are uploaded to a dedicated iNaturalist page. We have also posted promotional materials at key locations such as the local Heathcote library and information centre. We are exploring a partnership with the library to create a joint field day for school-aged kids to do some nest box monitoring. In 2019 we held a 'Walkshop' for Heathcote locals to visit and learn about the site. So far, we have engaged dozens of volunteers through the project at various levels. We have collected critical data which will be used to demonstrate the efficacy of the project to governments and other organisations. We have also very recently been granted final approval of works after two years of discussions with the relevant governing bodies that seek to protect these sites.

Our project makes up only 0.019 per cent of the Goldfields bioregion. Biolinks Alliance plans to mobilise communities, governments, and organisations to help mitigate the impacts of climate change on these ecosystems and the already threatened species that call them home. Using advanced modelling techniques, we can stitch back together the fragmented landscapes and boost the overall resilience of ecological communities.



Image by James Peake.

Policy and legislative context

There are a range of international, national, state, regional and local policy, strategy and planning documents, including those supporting Traditional Owner rights and responsibilities, that the City is obliged to meet the requirements of or will use as guiding documents in the development and implementation of this strategy. These include (but are not limited to) the following list.

International

Convention on Biological Diversity

Australia is a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The "Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework" (GBF)[20], adopted in 2022 by all parties includes four goals and 23 targets to be achieved by 2030. The broad goals are to:

- Increase the area of natural ecosystems by maintaining, enhancing and restoring their integrity, connectivity and resilience
- Halt species extinction and increase the abundance of native species to healthy and resilient levels
- Maintain genetic diversity within species to safeguard their adaptive potential
- Value, maintain and enhance sustainable use and management of ecosystem functions and services

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)[21]

This UN Declaration, of which Australia is a signatory, outlines the rights of Indigenous peoples around the world and describes self-determination as the right of Indigenous peoples to 'freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development'.

Article 26 of the UNDRIP states Indigenous peoples' right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess.

Article 32 of the UNDRIP outlines Indigenous peoples' right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

National

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999

This central piece of Commonwealth environmental legislation provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places defined in the Act as matters of national environmental significance.

Greater Bendigo has 27 flora and 17 fauna species currently listed under the EPBC Act (listed in Appendix 1.4)

Other national policy and legislation

- Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030
- Water Act 2007
- Nature Positive Plan: better for the environment, better for business (2022)
- The Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-32

State

Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act 1988

The FFG Act is the key piece of Victorian legislation for the conservation of threatened species and communities and for the management of potentially threatening processes (e.g., loss of hollow-bearing trees, hyper-aggressive species competing with native fauna) to ensure that more species do not become threatened in the future. The FFG Act also requires Action Statements to be prepared to guide the protection of threatened species or communities, and to address threatening processes[22].

[20] COP15: Final text of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework I Convention on Biological Diversity

[21] United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

[22] Victoria's Framework for Conserving Threatened Species (environment.vic.gov.au)

The FFG Act requires the City to consider potential biodiversity impacts in planning applications (i.e., to determine whether the area planned for development could affect habitat for listed species). Greater Bendigo currently has 159 species listed under the FFG Act as occurring or likely to occur (Appendix 1.1).

Amendments that came into effect on June 1, 2020 [23] that are relevant to this strategy include:

- consideration of the rights and interests of Traditional Owners and the impacts of climate change
- consideration of biodiversity across government to ensure decisions and policies are made with proper consideration of the potential impacts on biodiversity (public authority duty)[24]
- a consistent national approach to assessing and listing threatened species using the Common Assessment Method (CAM)
- an enforcement framework with stronger penalties

Protecting Victoria's Environment - Biodiversity 2037

Protecting Victoria's Environment - Biodiversity 2037 is the Victorian Government's long-term plan to halt biodiversity decline and achieve overall biodiversity improvement over the next 20 years through specific priorities and targets. Progress reports are prepared each year along with a 5-yearly evaluation - Biodiversity Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Framework – to track progress towards meeting the goals of Biodiversity 2037[25].

Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act)

The CaLP Act governs the management of invasive plants and animals in Victoria, specifying noxious weeds and pest animals that have the potential to become a serious threat to the environment, agriculture or community health. The Act applies to all public and private land in Victoria[26] and:

- regulates the management of noxious weeds and pest animals
- prohibits the movement and sale of noxious weeds
- regulates the importation, keeping, selling and releasing of declared pest animals

The Act requires landowners to take all reasonable steps to:

- eradicate regionally prohibited weeds
- prevent the growth and spread of regionally controlled weeds
- prevent the spread of established pest animals on their land

The City has an obligation to manage declared noxious weeds and established pest animals on The City owned and managed land, waterways and roadsides.

Wildlife Act 1975

The Wildlife Act sets rules around:

- the protection and conservation of wildlife in Victoria
- the sustainable management and use of wildlife in Victoria

All wildlife in Victoria is protected under the Wildlife Act. It is illegal to disturb or destroy wildlife without an Authority to Control Wildlife (ATCW) . Breaches of this Act are prosecuted by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. A review of the Wildlife Act was recently undertaken to ensure it reflects contemporary values and expectations and continues to operate consistently with other wildlife legislation.

Other State policy and legislation:

- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Local Government Act 2020
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Victoria Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy
- Victorian Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy
- The Victorian Traditional Owners Cultural Fire Strategy
- Managing Country Together Framework (Parks Victoria)
- Natural Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022-2026
- State of the Environment Biodiversity Update 2021 Report
- Environment Protection Act 2017
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

[23] Victoria's Framework for Conserving Threatened Species (environment.vic.gov.au)

[24] Title (environment.vic.gov.au)

[25] Biodiversity 2037 (environment.vic.gov.au)

[26] Invasive species laws and the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 | Legislation, policy and permits | Protecting Victoria

[27] Wildlife management and control authorisations | Victorian Government (www.vic.gov.au)

Regional

North Central Regional Catchment Strategy 2021-2027

The 2021-27 North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) is the overarching strategy for collective land, water and biodiversity management within the north central region. It provides a roadmap for agencies, Traditional Owners and the community to care for catchments to protect and improve their health for future generations. It builds on achievements and considers future challenges and opportunities[28].

The strategy sets out four biodiversity priority areas in Greater Bendigo: Kamarooka, Wellsford, Eppalock and Mid Loddon and two biodiversity priority directions that specify local government as a key collaborator to:

- Improve the retention and restoration of native vegetation and habitat on private land through community education and community-based programs that support stewardship and permanent protection, leveraging government and market-based incentives.
- Collaborate to increase awareness of legal requirements for cultural heritage management, and the protection of threatened species and communities, and improve compliance.

Other Regional Policy and Legislation:

- Recognition and Settlement Agreement Dja Dja Wurrung
- Recognition and Settlement Agreement Taungurung
- Natural Resource Agreement Dja Dja Wurrung
- Natural Resource Agreement Taungurung
- Land Use Activity Agreement
- Joint Management Plan Strategy Dja Dja Wurrung
- Taungurung Buk Dadbagi - Taungurung Country Plan
- Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan 2014-2034
- Galk-galk Dhelkunya Forest Gardening Strategy 2022 -2034
- Trust for Nature Statewide Conservation Plan 2021-2030
- Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan

Local

Greater Bendigo Council Plan 2021-2025 (Mir wimbul)

Relevant to the development of a biodiversity strategy, the Mir wimbul includes the following goal for Outcome 5: A climate resilient and healthy landscape: *"A regional community that enjoys a restored and thriving natural environment"*. Relevant actions include:

- Implement relevant priorities from the Greater Bendigo Public Space Plan
- Implement Greening Greater Bendigo.
- Develop and implement a Biodiversity Policy
- Develop and implement a management and monitoring plan for ecological restoration projects on City managed land
- Increase involvement of Traditional Owners in the management of public spaces
- Engage the wider community in actions to support our goal

Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026

The Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026 provides an overarching vision for biodiversity and regeneration across Greater Bendigo and sets out five broad goals:

- The City projects regenerate landscapes and ecosystems
- Native habitat and areas of important biodiversity are protected for future generations
- Connected and flourishing urban and rural landscapes and ecosystems
- Strong community connection to, awareness of, and care for our ecosystems and biodiversity
- Respectful and effective partnerships with Traditional Owners to regenerate ecosystems

The biodiversity strategy will review and / or progress the City actions listed in the Climate Change and Environment Strategy.

Other local policy and legislation

- Greening Greater Bendigo 2020-2070
- Greater Bendigo Public Space Plan (2019)
- Invasive Plants and Animals Policy
- Nature Strip Policy 2022
- Nature Strip Guidelines 2022
- Strategic Directions Rural Roadside Conservation 2011-2015
- Strategic Directions Urban Roadside Vegetation Management 2011-2015
- Barpangu "Build Together" - Reconciliation Plan 2021–2025
- Urban Tree Management Policy
- Municipal Fire Management Plan
- Reimagining Bendigo Creek (2020)
- Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Control Plan
- Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025
- Baseline Ecological Assessment of the Crosbie Plantation – (2021)
- Landscape Design Guidelines for Subdivisions (2022)
- Waterway guidelines (in development)
- Managed Growth Strategy (in development)

[28] North Central Regional Catchment Strategy | North Central Catchment Management Authority (nccma.vic.gov.au)

Biodiversity and the planning scheme

The Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme

The Planning and Environment Act 1987 is the principal piece of state planning legislation and establishes a "framework for planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria". One of the objectives of planning in Victoria is to "provide for the protection of natural and man-made resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity."[29]

The Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme (GBPS) contains State and local planning policies, zones, overlays and provisions that control land use and development in the municipality, following Victorian Planning Provisions (Fig. 2).

The Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS)[30] sets out the overarching strategic policy directions for environment and landscape values of Greater Bendigo to:

- Enhance the sense of the Bendigo urban area being 'A City in Forest' that is created by extensive forest areas and roadside vegetation
- Develop biolinks and habitat corridors to connect areas of environmental significance
- Protect and restore biodiversity and create new natural habitats
- Improve the health of streams and watercourses and land adjacent to develop their role as important community assets
- Protect gullies as an important part of the waterway network in providing habitat for flora and fauna
- Protect significant landscapes such as Big Hill, Mount Camel Range and Coliban and Campaspe Rivers

Victorian Planning Provisions
Ordinances - state and local content

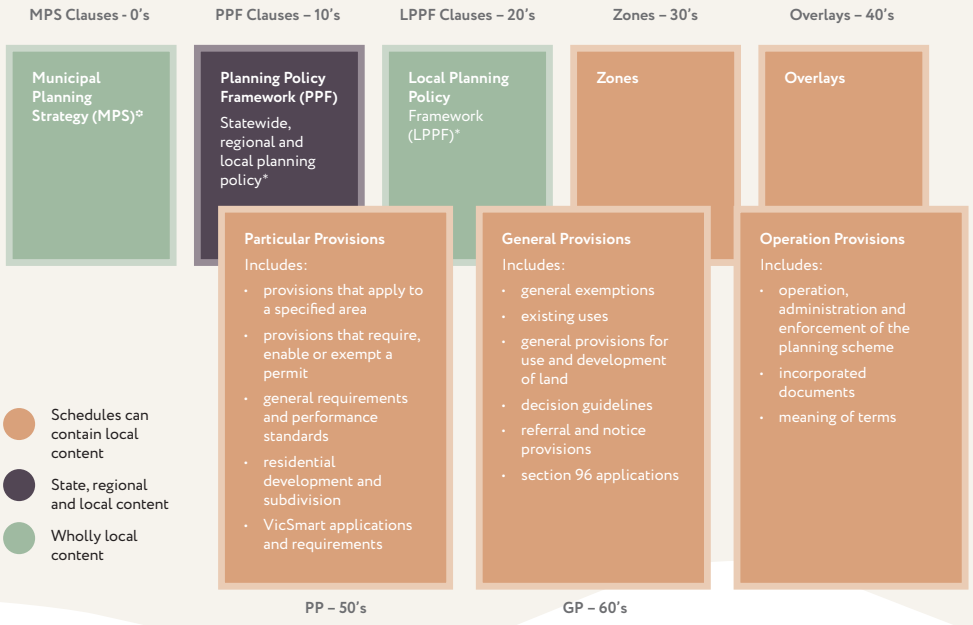


Fig. 2: Victorian Planning Provisions
Adapted from https://www.planning.vic.gov.au

[29] Planning for biodiversity (environment.vic.gov.au)

[30] Municipal Planning Strategy - Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme - Ordinance

There are numerous clauses within the Planning Policy Framework (PPF) that relate to environmental significance, including Cl11 Settlement; Cl 12 Environmental and Landscape Values (esp. Cl12.01-1S Protection of biodiversity and Cl12.02-2S Native vegetation management); Cl 13 Environmental Risks; Cl 14 Natural Resource Management; Cl 16 Housing (rural residential); Cl18 Transport. There are also Local Planning Policies interspersed (e.g., Cl 12.01-1L Biodiversity).

Zones set out what use and development can occur at a site. They can be used to facilitate the protection and conservation of biodiversity or to direct development away from areas of high value biodiversity. Zones where high biodiversity values may need to be considered include Farming (FZ), Public Conservation and Resource (PCRZ), Public Park and Recreation (PPRZ), Rural Conservation (RCZ) and Rural Living (RLZ) zones (Fig. 3).

There are three overlays which are primarily used to trigger permits where biodiversity values may be impacted (Fig. 4). These are:

1) Clause 42.01 – Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO), which aims to identify areas where development may be affected by environmental constraints and ensure it is compatible with environmental values. This could include protection of watercourses, groundwater recharge areas and remnant vegetation.

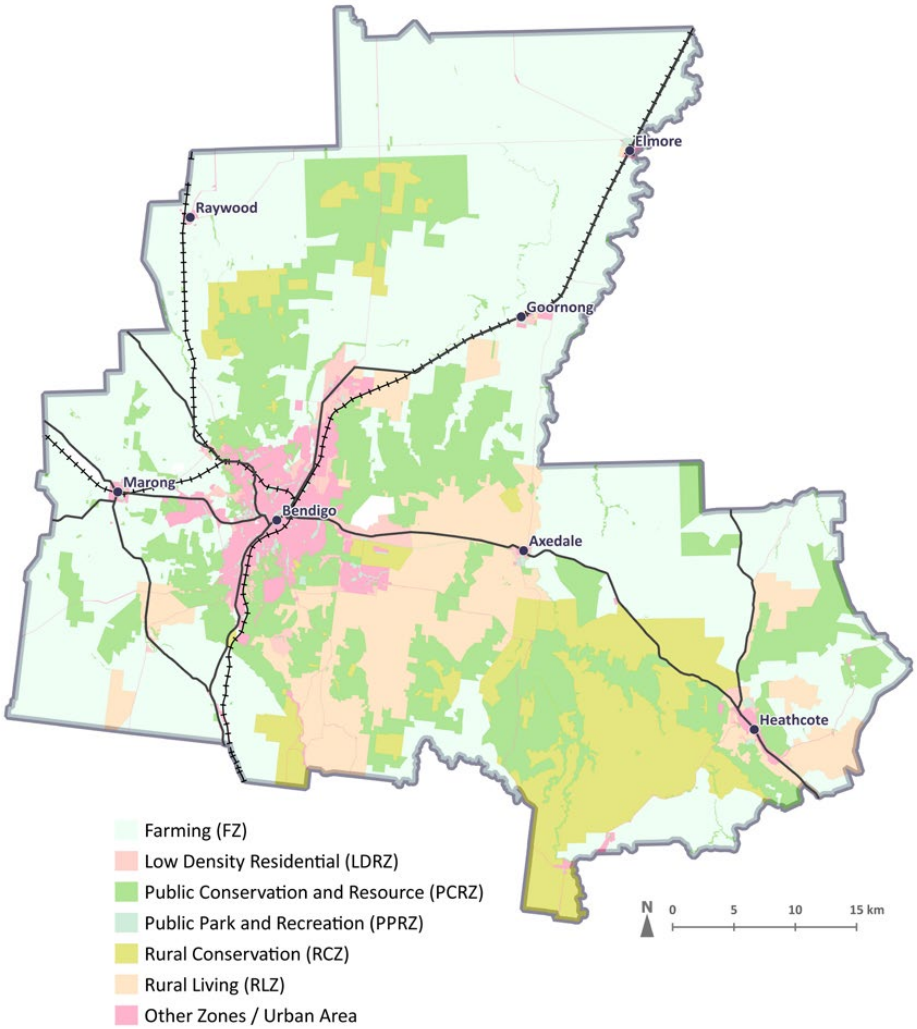


Fig. 3: Current Planning Zones
Primary planning Zones for Greater Bendigo where biodiversity values may be considered. Source: The City's database.

2) Clause 42.02 – Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO), which aims to recognise, protect, preserve and encourage regeneration of areas of significant vegetation for their special significance, natural beauty, interest and importance, maintain and enhance habitat corridors and ensure that development minimises vegetation loss.

   The GBPS has three schedules to the VPO:

   - VPO1 – Wildlife Corridor Protection
   - VPO2 – Significant Vegetation
   - VPO3 – Roadside Remnant Vegetation

3) Clause 42.03 – Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO), which aims to identify, conserve and enhance the character of significant landscapes, including bush garden and semi-bush residential areas and those the Campaspe River.

There are some particular, general or operational provisions that also relate to biodiversity. Most notably, Clause 52.17 deals with the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation to ensure there is no net loss of biodiversity.

The City is the responsible authority and regulator for native vegetation removal under the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme.

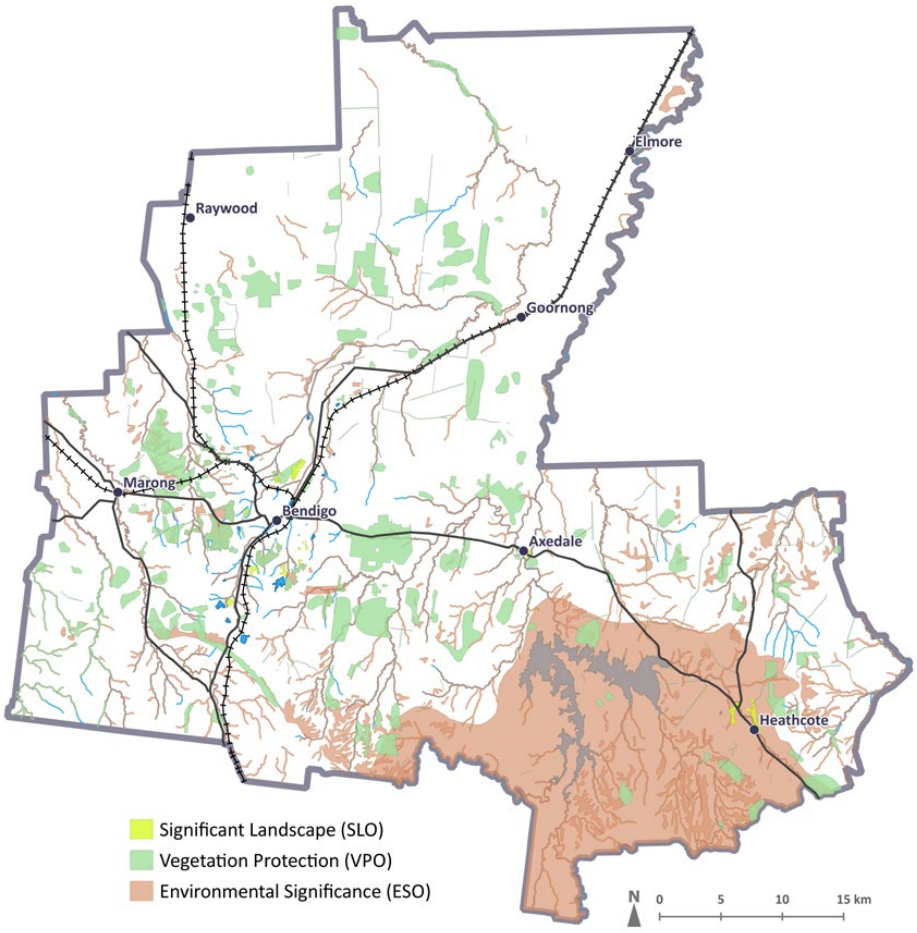


Fig. 4: Current Planning Overlays
Current Planning Overlays relevant to biodiversity conservation for Greater Bendigo. Source: The City's database.

Current challenges for biodiversity within the planning scheme

Many of the existing environmental overlays in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme (GBPS) are outdated, as they were translated from the pre-amalgamation schemes dating back to the 1990's. Community values have changed, planning scheme regulations and tools have evolved, more detailed information and mapping are available and there is increasing awareness of the impacts of climate change. The GBPS also refers to outdated documents and several schedules no longer comply with the requirements of the Ministerial Direction on the Form and Content of Planning Schemes[2]. Another key issue is the lack of protection for large trees and other native vegetation where the property size is less than 0.4 ha (Clause 52.17). There is currently no permit trigger that would require assessment of large trees and other potentially significant native vegetation on lots less than 0.4 ha prior to removal.

Other issues include a lack of specified high biodiversity values across the landscape, inadequate land management plans submitted with planning permit applications in farming zone (FZ) and rural conservation zone (RCZ) land that propose effective actions that support biodiversity, and vague wording of provisions within the GBPS.

A review of environmental controls in the GBPS will be conducted to ensure that they are up to date, align with State and Local Planning policy and better reflect community and stakeholder expectations of biodiversity protection, maintenance, health and recovery.

Theme
Land use planning

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.1 - 1.5, 1.7, 1.8, 1.14 – 1.16, 1.19, 2.19, 4.2.

Key stakeholders

The City shares responsibility for the protection and enhancement of the environment with other State Government departments, agencies, water authorities, Traditional Owner groups, community environment groups, educational institutions and property owners. Cooperation and partnership across Greater Bendigo and beyond is essential to achieve the goals of this strategy, make the most of limited resources and to collectively enhance and protect our amazing biodiversity values. A list of stakeholders can be seen in Appendix 1.5

Current City action

City's role

Local government has several roles to play in the conservation of biodiversity and protection of threatened species. It can be:

- **Direct** – implementing on-ground action on City managed land (such as natural reserves, roadsides, and waterways)
- **Regulatory** – developing and implementing planning policy and local laws, including enforcement of infringements, including for native vegetation removal
- **Partnering** – facilitating environmental projects and supporting community groups and private landholders
- **Advocacy** – encouraging collaboration and coordination with other stakeholders and public land managers
- **Engagement** – providing nature-based activities, community education, training, and resources
- **Monitoring** – identifying biodiversity values, monitoring species and reporting changes over time



Image by Ian McBurney.

Local government regularly considers biodiversity in its day-to-day operations including:

- Assessing planning applications for developments that may have environmental impacts
- Managing public bushland and waterways (both City owned land and Crown Land for which the City is Committee of Management)
- Supporting other agencies, community groups and landholders
- Ensuring City operations do not damage the environment
- Providing information and advice on matters concerning the natural environment
- Acting on biosecurity issues

The City's impact on biodiversity

The City also delivers on infrastructure and other projects that sometimes impact the natural environment. For example, the City had 14 projects that resulted in native vegetation removal for the 2021/22 financial year, totalling 5.337 hectares removed, including 31 large trees. All projects were approved and obtained the required native vegetation offsets[31], which were all located within the Greater Bendigo local government area. As a standard when offsets are calculated, a multiplier of 1.5 is factored in to help remediate the loss when native vegetation is removed. Vegetation offsets (as well as carbon offsets) are one tool used for revegetation activities by the City to help remediate the impacts of vegetation loss and climate change, noting that there are considerable limitations with these particular approaches[32,33] . The greatest way to prevent biodiversity and climate collapse is by reducing vegetation loss and emissions. Greater focus is therefore placed on the protection and enhancement of City managed land through policy, targeted revegetation and monitoring and by supporting the community in biodiversity-related programs to better achieve biodiversity and climate outcomes.

Recent City achievements

The City has a range of existing programs to aid biodiversity conservation, including Greening Greater Bendigo, Reimagining Bendigo Creek, and the management of over 1000 hectares of nature reserves that contribute to regenerating landscapes and ecosystems.

City staff also manage a 1.2 ha area dedicated to seed production of *Banksia marginata*, a species which has declined considerably across the region. The team has collected seed from a large area across the state to ensure there is good genetic diversity to help the species adapt to a changing climate (Case Study 2).

During 2021/22, the City also established around 5 hectares (~50,000 plants) of natural vegetation on City managed land along with the equivalent of 10,000 aquatic plants. As part of Greening Greater Bendigo, an additional ~2700 trees were planted across urban areas in 2021/22. Over five years (2018-2022), tree loss or failure in this project was ~900 (~180 per year), so success has been good. In addition to tree and shrub restoration, the City sowed 9.9 hectares of native grass during 2021/22.

The 2022 National Tree Day event at Gold Leaf Reserve in Huntly jointly funded and run by the City, Northern Bendigo Landcare Group, Bendigo Northern District Community Enterprise and Planet Ark Environmental Foundation was attended by approximately 200 community members who planted 6,400 native seedlings.

Actions identified where the City can further aid biodiversity conservation in line with its legislative responsibilities and operations are outlined in following sections of this strategy.



Yilingga Marna

Yillingga Marna is a 12-month partnership agreement between the City and DJAARA which supports the implementation of the Local Area Agreement under DJAARA's Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria. Yilingga Marna commits the City to specified processes and outcomes that support healing of Dja Dja Wurrung Country and which achieve positive outcomes for Dja Dja Wurrung people. The agreement will be reviewed annually.

[31] Offsets for the removal of native vegetation (environment.vic.gov.au)

[32] Offsetting Native Vegetation Loss on Private Land | Victorian Auditor-General's Office

[33] Insider blows whistle on Australia's greenhouse gas reduction schemes - ABC News



CASE STUDY 2: CREATING CLIMATE-READY SPECIES - THE SILVER BANKSIA

Mark Toohey, Parks and Open Spaces Team

The Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*) was once a common sight across the Greater Bendigo region, providing a "nectar highway" for animals like the Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater on their winter and spring migrations through the region. In fact, it was so common that an 1853 geological survey of the area between Malmsbury and Bendigo by Alfred Selwyn provides several handwritten references to "honeysuckle" as it was then known.

But now there are very few Silver Banksia left, leaving fragmented populations with poor genetic diversity across Greater Bendigo. The lack of genetic diversity, combined with increasing climate change could spell the end of this species north of the Great Dividing Range.

To help combat this, City staff, Deakin University in Warrnambool and several community groups came together in 2019 to create a 1.7 ha seed production area (SPA) at the Crosby Regenerative Forestry site, raising ~350 Silver Banksia plants. Plantings contain 12 different provenances (locations) of the species, ranging from Kangaroo island in South Australia east to Dimboola, Hamilton, and Benalla.

This will increase the genetic diversity of the species and improve climate readiness of future reintroductions of Silver Banksia across the region. Fortunately, three provenances are now in the second year of flowering and we hope the rest will flower in time and cross pollinate, allowing for seed harvesting and reintroduction back into the Bendigo area.

Current community action

Environment and conservation groups

Numerous environmental groups serve across Greater Bendigo. These include the Central Victorian Australian Conservation Foundation Group (CVACF), Biolinks Alliance, Bendigo District Environment Council (BDEC), Trust for Nature (TfN), Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, Farmers for Climate Action, Bendigo Climate Alliance, Bendigo Family Nature Club and Wildlife Rescue and Information Network (WRIN). The City works closely with at least 20 groups and/or networks (Fig. 5, see Appendix 1.5 for a list of stakeholders involved in biodiversity conservation across Greater Bendigo).

Landcare and Friends groups

Greater Bendigo residents have a strong connection to nature, with a wealth of community support through Landcare, various friends' groups, and active school programs. These groups participate in activities such as revegetation works on both public and private land (including often on their own properties), nest box installation, wildlife monitoring and control of threats such as weeds and pest animals like the Common Myna.

For instance, Axe Creek Landcare is restoring remnant understorey habitat and establishing biodiversity corridors to connect areas of public land including Pilchers Bridge Nature Conservation Reserve and roadside vegetation as part of their groups' activity. They have recorded several significant fauna species in their region, including Lace Monitor, Square-tailed Kite, Brush-tailed Phascogale (Tuan) and Swift Parrot.

The Longlea and District Landcare (LDL), Friends of Strathfieldsaye Streams and Land (FOSSALs), Northern Bendigo Landcare, Friends of Ironbark Gully Landcare and Mandurang Landcare (among others) have all engaged private landholders in eradicating weeds and revegetating along important creeks and rivers. Among the work of the Northern Bendigo Landcare group is a native fire-resistant display garden at the Huntly CFA that includes plant names and interpretive signage.

Meanwhile, the Friends of Crusoe Reservoir and No 7 Park have conducted monitoring programs, including nest box surveys for several years (Case Study 3), and the Friends of Riley Street Natural Reserve Landcare group have been restoring a degraded site close to Bendigo creek and the O-Keefe Rail Trail (Case Study 4).

Theme
Working with the community

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.10 - 1.13, 1.17, 2.2, 2.3, 2.11 - 2.15, 3.2, 4.4 - 4.5, 5.1 - 5.6, 5.8 - 5.13.





Image by William Terry

CASE STUDY 3: 'HOLLOWS FOR HABITAT' PROJECT 2018-22

Friends of Crusoe Reservoir and Number 7 Park Landcare group

A community driven conservation project which is showing some impressive results.

In 2017, Friends of Crusoe Reservoir and Number 7 Park Landcare group (FoCRN7P) received City funding to conduct a fauna survey within Crusoe Reservoir and Number 7 Park (Crusoe), a 220-hectare City managed nature conservation reserve, bordering the Greater Bendigo National Park. This community-focussed project enabled members of several local environment groups to assist an ecologist conduct both day and night-time surveys. The recommendation from this study was to install nest boxes to enhance habitat for two listed threatened species – Brush-tailed Phascogale (Tuan) and Powerful Owl. The nest boxes would provide much needed habitat for Tuan and other arboreal species such as Krefft's Glider and Ring-tailed Possum, while also providing a sustainable food source for Powerful Owl.

In 2018, the FoCRN7P was successful in obtaining a DELWP (Department Environment, Land, Water and Planning) 'On Ground Community Action' grant. The grant enabled the 'Hollows for Habitat' project to commence. The aim of the project was to construct 140 additional nest boxes within Crusoe and surrounding bushland. Construction of the boxes involved collaboration with local schools, Men's Shed groups, and retirement villages. Wildlife monitoring cameras were also purchased with grant money.

The FoCRN7P members and City staff initially visited schools to conduct wildlife presentations and once nest box construction was completed, the schools visited the park for further onsite educational activities and to assist in installation of the boxes. It was a great project, and a lot was learnt a lot from the experience.

Since 2019, the FoCRN7P members have assisted in monitoring 200 nest boxes and the results to date are very encouraging. In the first year, inspections found 53 Krefft's Glider, three Tuan and one possum inhabiting the boxes. In early 2022 results showed 160 Krefft's Glider, 20 Tuan and 11 possums. 2023 saw a small drop in Krefft's Glider numbers, but for good reason.

In 2022-3, in the Big Hill bushland area, a pair of Powerful Owl successfully bred two owlets in a 'deployed' hollow log. The deployed hollow was constructed and installed by City staff and has been monitored with the assistance of community birding specialists.

The breeding of Powerful Owl in a non-natural hollow is an exceptionally rare occurrence and had it not been for the sustainable food source made available to the owls, breeding may never have happened. Wildlife camera footage has captured the adult owls bringing food to the nest hollow up to three times a night. Survey results show the extra nest boxes are providing essential habitat in the area and enabling an abundant population of arboreal mammals to exist.

The adjoining Greater Bendigo National Park is also lacking in natural hollows and a future objective is to seek funding to collaborate with Parks Victoria to improve habitat, by installing several hundred more nest boxes throughout the National Park. We hope this will provide homes for many more native species.

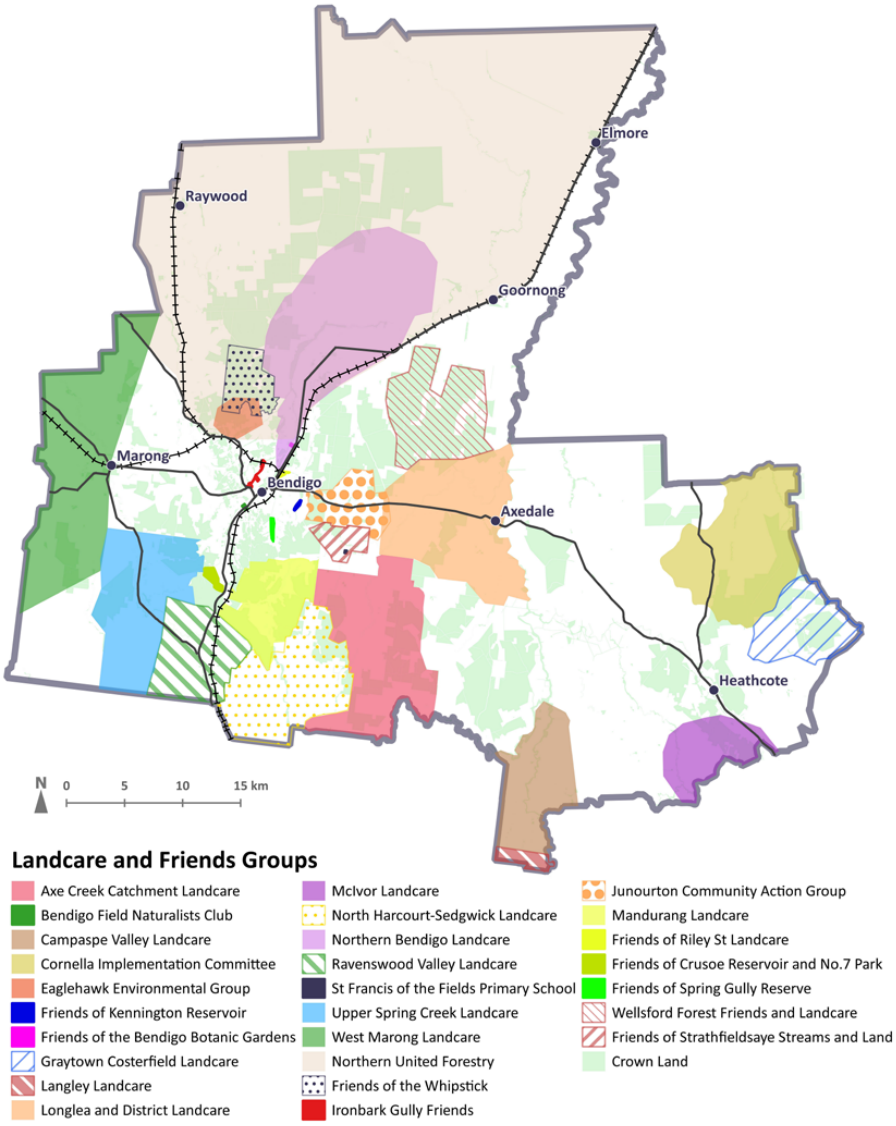


Fig. 5: Community Conservation
Community environment groups past and present working across Greater Bendigo. Source: The City's database.



CASE STUDY 4: FRIENDS OF RILEY STREET NATURAL RESERVE LANDCARE GROUP

"When people came to Bendigo in search of gold, they found a line of flat-topped mesas which were soon famous as "The 7 White Hills of Bendigo". All seven were completely destroyed over the next 170 years, not by goldmining but by excavation to extract valuable gravels and sands. The holes were then used as garbage tips for many years. The hill in this reserve was the First White Hill, but it has all gone except for a few remnants. (John Lindner, one of our members).

We are a passionate group of volunteers who came together to protect our common home we call Earth. We are acutely aware of the dangers that we are all facing from the impacts of climate change and believe that trying to restore our bushland and create wildlife corridors is one step we can take to protect biodiversity.

Our story began when Ian, now president of our group, was walking through the area and saw there had been a lot of trees planted in Riley Street after the devastating fires of 2019. Ian was (and still is) a member of the Australian Conservation Foundation (Bendigo) who were launching a project called "Nature for Neighbourhoods". The concept was to encourage people to form local community groups to carry out projects of revegetation in their neighbourhoods and Ian and Jenny (our treasurer), who was also an CVACF member, raised Riley Street as a possibility. Ian researched the area and discovered that it was land (approximately 16 hectares) owned and managed by the City. Ami Greenfield, a park ranger with the City was invited to speak at an CVACF meeting about this site and Vyonne, now Secretary, happened to be there and saw the potential in this project. A committee was formed and grew. We now have 11 active members on the committee, 26 paid members and approximately 50 supporters. The committee decided to become a Landcare Group and now works closely with Mid-Loddon Sub Catchment Landcare. We also have a Memorandum of Understanding with the ACF.

The success of this project lies in continually networking with other community groups and the City to reach a common goal. The group is fortunate to have a diverse mix of people involved in many other community groups who bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and contacts. Education is a key goal. We work with the community and children to encourage them to protect our biodiversity and to develop a love for our natural environment.

Through the dedication of the City rangers and the Friends of Riley Street, the land is repairing. Many of the native plantings are now growing and a lot of natural recruitment is happening. For example, *Cassinia arcuata*, a pioneer plant, is emerging and will eventually be replaced with other natives over time. Many of the plants that the group have planted are spreading seed, so we are hopeful that eventually this reserve will be a thriving bushland for our wildlife to enjoy.

The group has successfully applied for grants, including one from the City to purchase 26 nest boxes which we have installed throughout the reserve. Another grant was obtained to purchase a monitoring camera to check the nest boxes. The camera is now being used with other "Friends of" groups to monitor fauna in nest boxes across Greater Bendigo. The good news is that the boxes are being used regularly and the birdlife in the reserve is increasing. Some of our members have specific roles to play, such as "bird monitoring", "orchid and flora monitoring", "frog monitoring" and "wildlife monitoring". Each member provides a report at our monthly meeting.

Our future goal is to create bushland corridors across Greater Bendigo to the outlying regions for our wildlife to survive and thrive. We also hope to engage City residents to develop their nature strips that could be used as part of these corridors.

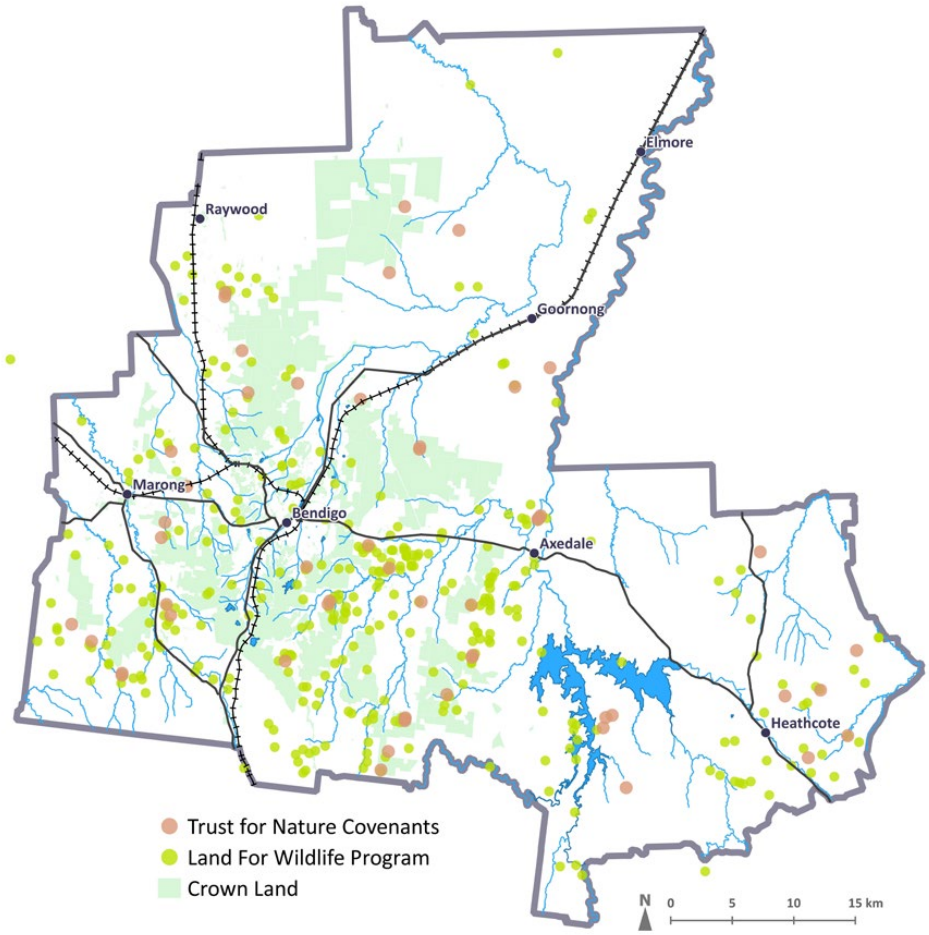


Fig. 6 – Private Land Conservation
Private land conservation across Greater Bendigo. Source: The City's database. Data supplied by DEECA and Trust for Nature.

Trust for Nature

The City currently has 52 properties (totalling 938.6 hectares) with a Trust for Nature conservation covenant on them (Fig. 6), protecting the biodiversity values of those properties in perpetuity. The City offers a rate rebate to landowners with conservation covenants through its Bushcare Incentive Program[34]. The Eastern Box-Ironbark region is one of 18 'focal landscapes' within Trust for Nature's State-wide Conservation Plan 2021-203.

Land for Wildlife

There are also 369 properties across Greater Bendigo that have registered with Land for Wildlife (Fig. 6), a voluntary wildlife conservation program developed and managed by the Victorian Government. These sites are often on private land, such as bush blocks and farmland, but can also be on public land such as schools. They protect important plants and animals and help connect biodiversity across Greater Bendigo.

The City will continue to actively promote voluntary conservation measures on private land and support the priorities of agencies undertaking this work.

Theme
Private land conservation

Biodiversity Action Plan #
2.12 – 2.14, 3.1 - 3.3, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.5.

[34] Environmental grants and rebates | City of Greater Bendigo


Image by Mark Hall.

Biodiversity values in Greater Bendigo

Vegetation and soils

Geology and soils

Healthy soils are fundamental to healthy, biodiverse ecosystems, and are typically characterised by good soil structure, a deep topsoil layer, many soil organisms and a good ground cover of plants[35]. Soils contain an amazing diversity of microbes, bacteria and invertebrates that create healthy, thriving systems.

Greater Bendigo is made up of a range of geographic landforms and soil types that shape ecosystems, vegetation communities and water retention across the landscape (Fig. 7).

There are six land systems (groups of soil components that have in common major features of climate, geology, bed rock, topography, and landscape) that occur across Greater Bendigo. The land systems to the north of Bendigo and Heathcote have a similar climate and their geological units include basalt, granite, and sedimentary calcareous bedrock. To the south, there are slates, sandstones, alluvium, granodiorite, and basalt. Soils are largely podosols (yellow to brownish yellow coloured upper subsoil horizons that are usually mottled due to variable and restrictive drainage conditions) in the south, and solodic in the north of the municipality, tending to be very dense soils with low permeability (e.g., clay)[36], including the red brown earths found in the wine growing areas around Heathcote.

Greater Bendigo has lost much of its topsoil in areas of intense historical mining activity, while other lands have been contaminated by mining waste and pollutants. This can make planning and implementation of habitat restoration challenging.

Vegetation communities

With a variety of environments created by different altitudes, aspects, hydrology and soils across Greater Bendigo, diverse plant communities have formed that each have a unique structure and support their own associated animals, fungi, and microorganisms. The Victorian Government has classified the different plant communities into Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) based on vegetation structure and floristics, geology, aspect, slope, elevation, rainfall, fire frequency and ecological response to disturbance[37].

Greater Bendigo has 23 different EVCs represented across two bioregions (Victorian Riverina and Goldfields) that cover a range of broad vegetation types including woodlands, grasslands, forests, shrublands and wetlands (outlined in more detail below).

[35]North Central Catchment Management AuthoSoil Health Guide: North Central Victoria (3rd Ed.)

[36]Soils of the Bendigo district (agriculture.vic.gov.au)

[37] Bioregions and EVC benchmarks (environment.vic.gov.au)

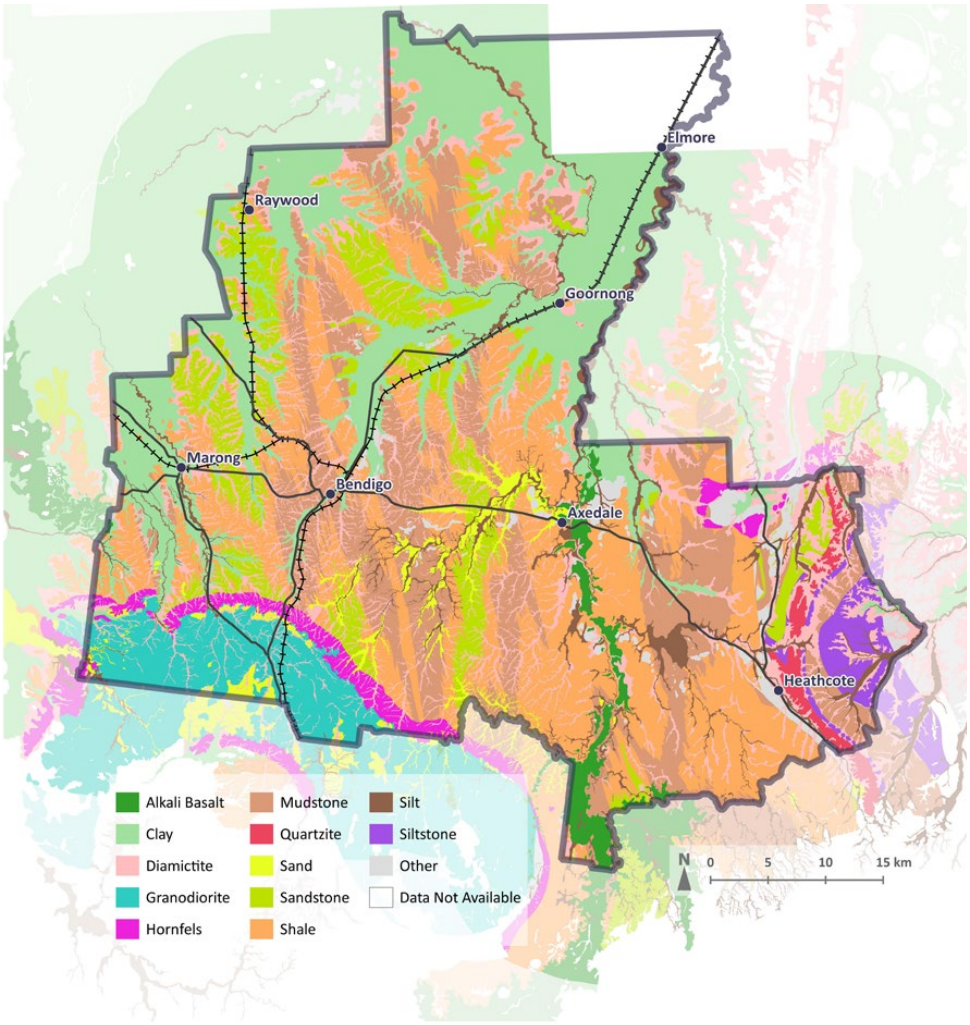


Fig. 7 – Soil Types
*Soil types across Greater Bendigo. Source: Data Vic - SG_GEOLOGICAL_UNIT_50K_*

The most extensive remnant vegetation persists where forests were set aside for timber harvesting or natural values or where soil is too poor for agriculture.

Prior to European colonisation, Greater Bendigo was dominated by Box-Ironbark Forest, Grassy Woodland, Plains Woodland, and Grassy Dry Forest EVCs (Fig. 8), but extensive clearing has left most EVCs greatly reduced across the municipality (Fig. 9). Heaviest hit was the Creekline Grassy Woodland (Goldfields) Community, which is FFG listed, while Plains Woodland, Grassy Woodland and Floodplain Riparian Woodland are among those most heavily modified, largely being converted to agricultural land. Due to this dramatic reduction in native grassy woodland communities, there has been a subsequent reduction in flora and fauna associated with these systems, many of which are now threatened in Victoria. A list of all EVCs found in Greater Bendigo and their conservation status is provided in Appendix 1.3.

Dry Forests

Encompasses the open, dry forests of the foothills. Taller Eucalypt dominated with understory of wattles, peas and grasses.

EVCs: Box Ironbark Forest, Heathy Dry Forest, Grassy Dry Forest, Valley Heathy Forest, Valley Grassy Forest.

Woodlands

Open Eucalypt areas on lower lying hills and alluvial areas with a rich understory of grasses, pea and herbs. Woodlands generally occur on fertile soils and have a grassy understory.

EVCs: Grassy Woodland, Hillcrest Herb-rich Woodland. Alluvial Terraces Herb-rich, Woodland/ Creekline Grassy Woodland Mosaic, Metamorphic Slopes Shrubby Woodland, Heathy Woodland, Plains Woodland, Granitic Hills Woodland, Alluvial Terraces Herb-rich Woodland

Grasslands

Grasslands with a species rich understory of shrubs, grasses and herbs and sparse Manna Gum and Swamp Gum. Most former grasslands have been cleared or degraded and are highly endangered.

EVCs: Plains Grassland, Plains Grassy Woodland, Grassy Woodland, Plains Woodland/Plains Grassland/Gilgai Wetland Mosaic

Riparian Grassy Woodlands

Found along smaller streams on the plains and lower slopes of foothills. Open woodlands with an overstorey usually dominated on the plains by River Red Gum. Manna Gum may be found on the lower slopes of the foothills.

EVCs: Lignum Swamp, Stream Bank Shrubland and Creekline Grassy Woodland, Sedge-rich Woodland, Floodplain Riparian Woodland.

Wetlands

Natural wetlands are not common, either because they have been drained/cleared or the terrain is too hilly.

EVCs: Wetland Formation

State listed ecological communities

As well as EVCs, the Victorian Government has several listed threatened ecological communities. Those that once occurred or are likely to occur in Greater Bendigo include Grey Box – Buloke Grassy Woodland Community, Creekline Grassy Woodland (Goldfields) Community, Northern Plains Grassland Community and Lowland Riverine Fish Community of the Southern Murray-Darling Basin. While this last community mainly occurs in the lowland river reaches, some species do occur in slope and upland Campaspe River reaches and there is concerted effort to reintroduce several species into waterways of Greater Bendigo.

Federally listed ecological communities

The Austraian Government has also declared four broad threatened ecological communities under the EPBC Act that may occur within Greater Bendigo: Grey Box (Eucalyptus microcarpa) Grassy Woodlands and Derived Native Grasslands of South-eastern Australia; White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland; Buloke Woodlands of the Riverina and Murray-Darling Depression Bioregions, and: Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains[38] (Appendix 1.4).

[38] Threatened ecological communities in Victoria - DCCEEW

Theme
Protecting and enhancing native vegetation

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.1- 1.4, 1.6-1.10, 1.14- 1.16, 1.19, 2.2 - 2.14, 2.16 - 2.18, 3.1 - 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 5.3 - 5.5.



Image by Mark Hall

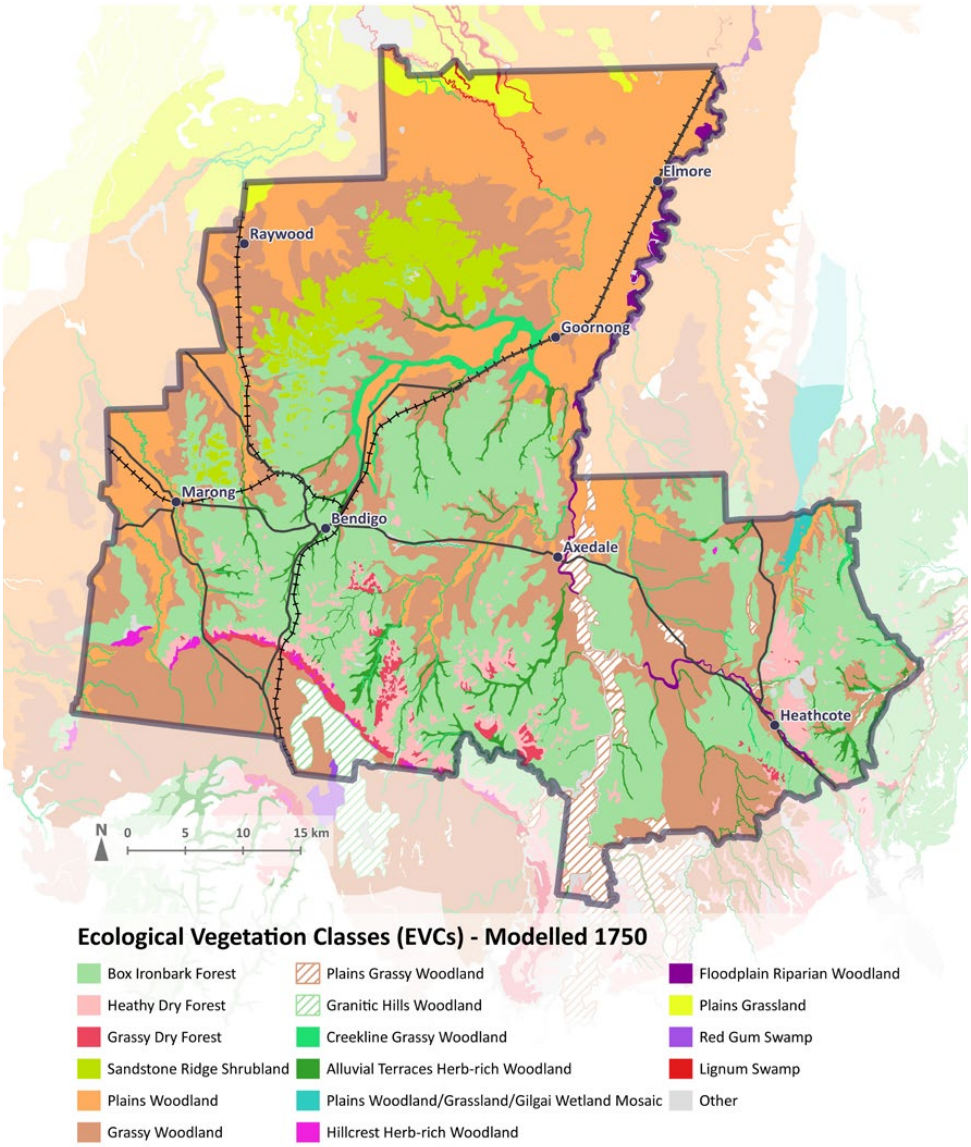


Fig. 8 – Pre-Colonial Vegetation
1750s EVCs: natural vegetation communities prior to European colonisation. Source: Data Vic - Modelled 1750 Ecological Vegetation Classes

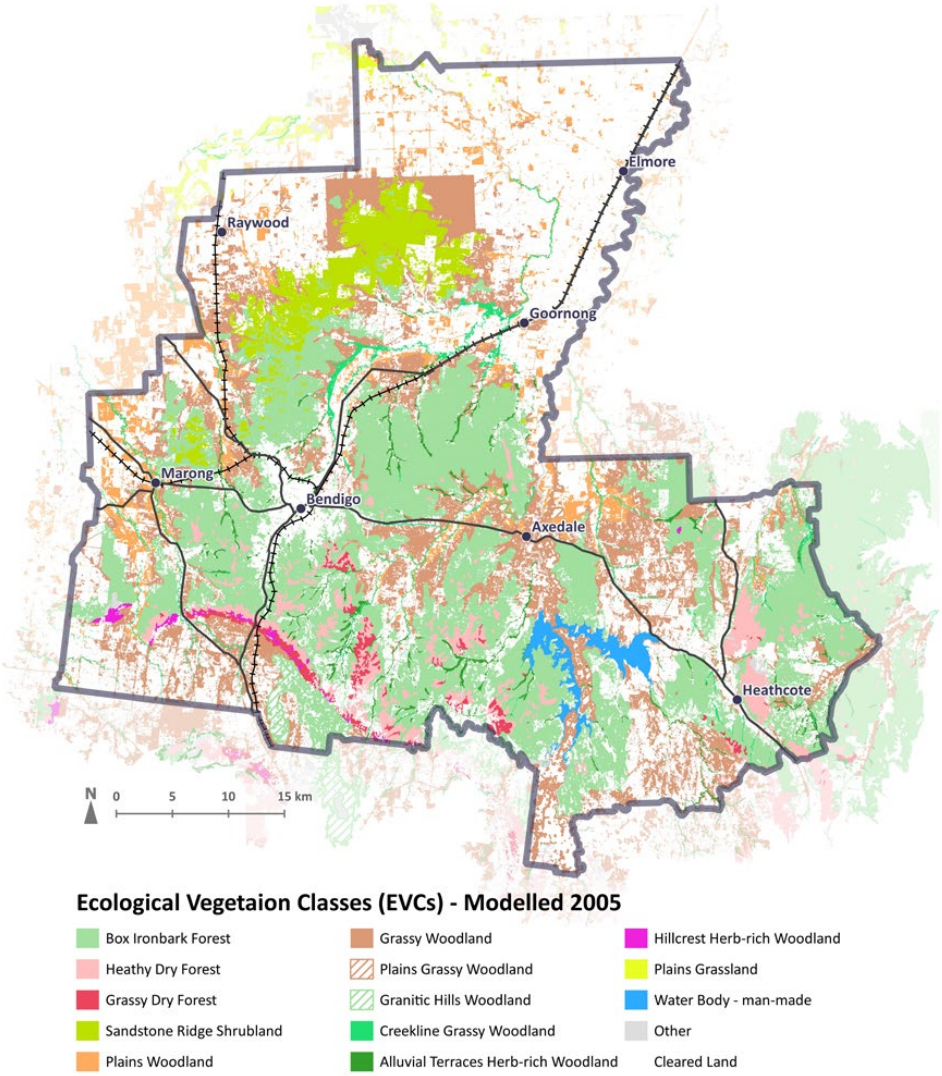


Fig. 9 – Current Vegetation
Extent of EVCs in 2005. Source: Data Vic - Native Vegetation Modelled 2005 EVC

Threatened plants and animals

Greater Bendigo currently has 92 plant and 67 animal species, and two ecological communities listed under the FFG Act (Fig. 10; full list and conservation status in Appendix 1.1).

The Australian Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) also lists 20 plant and 15 animal species as being threatened nationally that have been recorded in Greater Bendigo (Appendix 1.4).

Greater Bendigo is also home to many species that may be considered common, including Kangaroo, Grey Box, New Holland Honeyeater or Common Froglet. Many others are poorly known, such as our countless invertebrate species, fungi and soil microbes. These are all critical to biodiversity and ecosystem function, so we cannot neglect these and focus solely on threatened species, or they may too become threatened with extinction over time. Research shows that while focussing on threatened species, or any single species, can generate improve natural values, it may be less effective than a multi-species or habitat approach[39, 40, 41] in increasing overall biodiversity.

Local extinctions

Numerous native plants and animals appear to have disappeared from Greater Bendigo, with 20 plants species and 14 animals not being recorded in the region since 1990[42]. These include the Plains Wanderer (last recorded in 1981), Maroon Leek-orchid (last recorded in 1990) and Spot-tailed Quoll (last recorded in 1972). There were also records of Rufous Bettong from 1760, but this species has been declared locally extinct.

With increasing pressures, urgent action needs to be taken to ensure the remaining native plants and animals of Greater Bendigo do not also face extinction.

Threatened animals

Threatened fauna include iconic and significant species such as Brush-tailed Phascogale (Tuan), Growling Grass Frog, Spiny Rice Flower, Pink-tailed Worm Lizard, Golden Sun Moth Macquarie Perch, Grey-headed Flying-fox, Platypus, Common Dunnart, Lace Monitor and Powerful Owl.

Arboreal hollow dependent species

Hollow-bearing trees and logs are critical habitat for many arboreal (tree-dwelling) species and support some of our threatened species. The Brush-tailed Phascogale *(Phascogale tapoatafa)* is a small carnivorous marsupial that occurs in and Box-Ironbark forests and grassy and shrubby woodland.

The combination of species-ecological factors (i.e., large home range, low density and synchronous annual male die-off), habitat loss and fragmentation and predation by foxes and cats has resulted in their decline and listing on the FFG Act. Other threatened arboreal species include Lace Monitor, Powerful Owl.

Woodland birds

Woodland birds are typically associated with woodlands and forests of temperate southern Australia. The continuing decline of species within this group is of significant concern, principally due to the loss, fragmentation and degradation of habitat. The critically endangered Swift Parrot migrates from its breeding grounds in Tasmania to feed on the rich nectars of Greater Bendigo's Box-ironbark forests each winter. This is a critical resource for this species, which is teetering on the edge of extinction. While we cannot directly affect the threats occurring to this species in its breeding grounds (logging and predation by the introduced Krefft's Glider), protecting, enhancing and connecting the forests of Greater Bendigo will benefit this and many other species.

Other threatened woodland species include Bush Stone-curlew, Diamond Firetail, Grey-crowned Babbler, Hooded Robin.

Aquatic species

Aquatic species are under threat from altered waterways and flow regimes, pollution, habitat loss, disease, predation and climate change. The Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon is one of several small-bodied fish that has become threatened in the waterways of Greater Bendigo due to introduced Redfin Perch and Eastern Gambusia and the loss of permanent floodplain wetlands. Other threatened aquatic species include Platypus, Macquarie Perch, Blue-billed Duck, Broad-shelled Turtle, Brown (Bibron's) Toadlet.

[39] High focus on threatened species and habitats may undermine biodiversity conservation: Evidence from the northern Baltic Sea - Diversity and Distributions

[40] Species-based versus habitat-based evaluation for conservation status assessment of habitat types in the East Aegean islands (Greece) - ScienceDirect

[41] Single species conservation as an umbrella for management of landscape threats | PLOS ONE

[42] Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (environment.vic.gov.au) - records for Greater Bendigo

Grassland species

Grasslands are one of the most extensively altered habitats in Victoria, now only occupying 1-2 per cent of their former range. As a result, many grassland species are also threatened with extinction through habitat loss, overgrazing, rock removal, use of non-native pastures, predation and fire. The threatened Pink-tailed Worm Lizard inhabits grassland dominated by Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) with sparse rock cover and is known to occur within Greater Bendigo. Other threatened grassland species include Plains-wanderer, Striped Legless-lizard.

Pollinators

Many species of invertebrates, mammals, birds and lizards pollinate the flowering plants of Greater Bendigo, including the threatened Grey-headed Flying-fox. There has been great concern over recent years about the apparent decline of many insect species, including those we rely on for pollination. While many insect species are not yet listed as threatened under federal or state legislation, two species are: Eltham Copper Butterfly (*Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida*) and Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*).

Golden Sun Moth habitat is characterised by the presence of native grasses, especially Wallaby grasses (*Rytidosperma spp.*) Many suitable grassland habitats for this species have been lost or modified by stock management and Golden Sun Moth is particularly threatened by the influx of invasive pasture grasses into these systems.

Other pollinating insects (Case Study 5) requiring monitoring are native solitary bees, of which one species, the Green Carpenter Bee (*Xylocopa aerata*), no longer occurs in Victoria and its populations are under threat in South Australia (particularly on Kangaroo Island) and in New South Wales.

Threatened plants

Many plant species are threatened due to land conversion (i.e., for agriculture or human development) which disturb and fragment populations, leaving them vulnerable to further loss through drought, fire, herbivory and loss of ecosystem function (e.g., pollinators).

The Erect Pepper-cress *(Lepidium pseudopapillosum)* grows in grassy woodlands of Grey Box *(Eucalyptus microcarpa)* or Buloke *(Allocasuarina luehmannii)* on heavy grey loam or clay soils and has been recorded in Kamarooka Forest. Its small population size and restricted, fragmented distribution make it very susceptible to loss regionally.

Other threatened plant species include Whirrakee Wattle, Goldfields Grevillea, Pale Flax-lily, Small-flower Wallaby-grass, Whipstick Crowea.

Survey gaps

It is apparent from mapping of threatened species records from the VBA that most occur within Crown land parcels, with few records from other public and private land. This likely reflects survey effort and data management than being a true reflection of where threatened species are located across Greater Bendigo. Certainly, greater effort is required to identify, record and map species occurrence on City managed and private land, which will be a priority as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation plan. Another priority is to verify potential local extinctions of species to ensure any remaining populations are recorded and protections put in place to conserve them.

Monitoring

We will establish or continue a monitoring program for a range of threatened species and communities across Greater Bendigo, as well as other species or groups of concern, to act as flagship species and indicators of broader ecosystem health (some outlined below). The monitoring program will focus on identifying populations of these species, surveying them, assessing and mitigating risks, and reporting on trends in their populations and conservation status against actions taken. See Monitoring and Evaluation section for more details.

Theme
Threatened plants and animals

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.7, 1.8, 1.10, 1.17, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9,3.1, 4.1 - 4.3, 5.3, 5.4, 5.10 - 5.13.



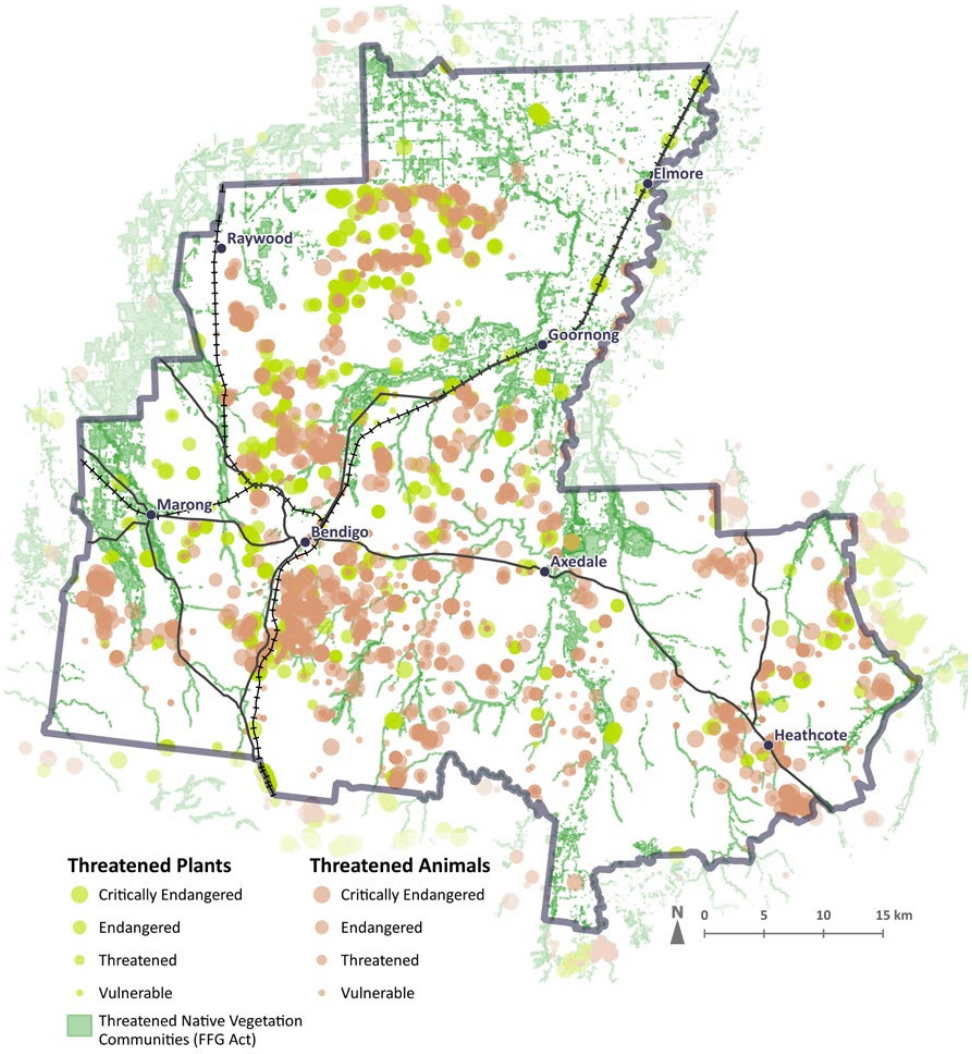


Fig. 10 – Threatened Species and Communities
Threatened flora, fauna and communities listed under the FFG Act. Source Data Vic – VBAFLORA25, VBAFAUNA25 and NV2005FFGCOMM

CASE STUDY 5: LOOKING FOR THE LITTLE THINGS

Mark Hall, Climate Change and Environment Team

Insects come in a stunning array of colours, shapes and sizes, they live in every habitat imaginable and provide ecosystem services that we could not survive without. But despite being an amazingly abundant and diverse group of animals, they are often overlooked in biodiversity surveys and in our estimation of biodiverse habitats. So, we need to look harder for them and start to appreciate the little things living alongside us.

And what better group to explore than our insect pollinators. These little beauties are responsible for helping many of our native plants and food crops reproduce and can be found from grasslands and woodlands to backyards and school veggie gardens. And with stories from around the world warning of global pollinator declines, there has never been a more important time to monitor populations and ensure their survival.

Staff at the City have been raising the profile of the little things we live with through community walks and information sessions, supporting groups with small grants for school education programs and community activities, and helping to create and publish *Your Guide to the Insects of Central Victoria*, a free booklet for the community to identify and understand the lives of the insects of our region.

We launched the guide at the Bendigo Library in October 2022 as part of our Spring in the Bendigo Bush program, followed by a pollinator walk along the Goldfield's track at Soloman's Gully, where we saw many bees, butterflies, beetles flies and wasps feeding on the abundant flowering and supporting this important urban ecosystem.

Our hope is that residents across Greater Bendigo will help us to better understand our insect communities through recording observations as part of the Australian Pollinator Count, assisting in strategic monitoring of local populations and engaging in habitat restoration programs that seek to bring back some of the important ground cover plants and shrubs that support our pollinator communities.



Image by William Terry.



Image by John Walter.

Landform, water and transport networks

Landform

The City has a range of landforms, from the sloping ranges of the Greater Bendigo and Heathcote-Graytown National Parks to the low-lying plains of agricultural lands around Goornong and Elmore (Fig. 11). These provide for a range of habitat types and ecosystems and the varied recreation, such as bird watching, mountain biking, bushwalking and orienteering, enjoyed by the community.

Water

Greater Bendigo has a wealth of waterbodies and lies within the catchments of the Loddon and Campaspe Rivers (Fig. 11). The Upper Coliban, Coliban and Malmsbury Reservoirs, as well as Lake Eppalock provide domestic water supply to residents, industry, agriculture and manufacturing, and enable the City to maintain local parks, sporting fields and public gardens. Smaller creeks like Bendigo Creek and McIvor Creek form important urban waterways for nature and recreation. The Reimagining Bendigo Creek Plan sets out the vision for the creek's enhancement which will be implemented by the City in conjunction with the Djaara and other stakeholders.

The waterways and floodplains of Greater Bendigo and the vegetation within and around them provide valuable habitat and movement pathways for both terrestrial and aquatic life across the landscape. There are regular surveys of macro invertebrates and water quality undertaken by the North Central CMA and volunteers to determine the health of waterways. Surveys of Bendigo Creek show varying, but generally poor health along urban and rural stretches[43].

There are currently 20 active WaterWatch volunteers regularly monitoring 30 sites on waterways within Greater Bendigo. Djandak monitor a further three sites along Bendigo Creek. In addition, there are 14 primary and secondary schools participating in the River Detectives program within Greater Bendigo, eight of which are affiliated with the 'Reimagining Bendigo Creek' project.

Annually, the City is constructing and/or maintaining 10 - 12 waterbodies in preparation for fish release. The preparation includes either digging a new basin or desilting an old basin, then planting aquatic vegetation and installing woody debris. Plants need two years to flourish and create enough habitat for fish to hide and breed in. To date, at least 300 Southern Pygmy Perch, 300 Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon and 100 Olive Perchlet have been re-introduced to City managed basins (Case Study 6).

With ongoing pollution of soil and water from industry and housing, climate forecasts and a growing population, we need to ensure there is sufficient safe, clean water to maintain the ecological functioning of waterways across the region.

Predicted extreme downpours will lead to an increase in the incidence of flooding events, particularly in urbanised areas. The City must ensure that existing infrastructure can withstand future flooding and that these events and mitigation measures do not impact biodiversity values.

Theme
Waterways

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.12, 2.3, 2.6, 2.12, 2.13, 2.16, 2.19, 3.1, 4.4.



Image by Felicity Johnson

[43] North Central Waterwatch. River Health Snapshot Report Bendigo Creek Catchment Project

Roadsides

The City manages most roadsides in the municipality for their natural values, including performing weed control and fire prevention works (Figs 11 and 12).

Roadsides provide some of the oldest and most significant vegetation across Greater Bendigo, often containing old Grey Box, Yellow Box and Red Gum trees. However, management of roadsides for perceived risk (e.g., fire, visibility) often leaves them lacking sufficient understorey species which are vital for animal habitat and movement. Mowing equipment can also spread environmental weeds that displace native species. This is inevitably complex, requiring a considered and balanced approach to decision making. However, with careful consideration and planning, practices like woody weed control and slashing can help meet goals for both fuel reduction and biodiversity protection.

The City is also responsible for road improvement projects (e.g., road widening, grading) that may impact native vegetation on roadsides and seeks to do so responsibly to avoid negative impacts. Further training on the importance of native vegetation and how to identify it would assist this work.

The City has several plans relating to roadside management: *Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Control Plan*, *Strategic Directions Rural Roadside Conservation 2011-2015*, and *Strategic Directions Urban Roadside Vegetation Management 2011-2015*, however these may need review.

In 2009, roadside conservation values were mapped across Greater Bendigo (Fig. 12). This continues to inform where priority action is undertaken on roadsides across the municipality to best protect and enhance significant roadside vegetation and habitat for species.

VicRoads manages major roads which can also have conservation values.

Theme
Roadside management

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.15, 1.16, 2.10, 2.18, 3.1, 3.2, 5.7.

VicTrack and V/Line

Several rail corridors support both intact and fragmented native vegetation, including along the rail line that stretches from Big Hill to Elmore (Fig. 11). These sites often support grassland species and wildflowers, including important habitat for threatened species like the Eltham Copper Butterfly, but are under threat from woody weeds and the potential for frequent management that would reduce diversity.



Image by Ian McBurney.

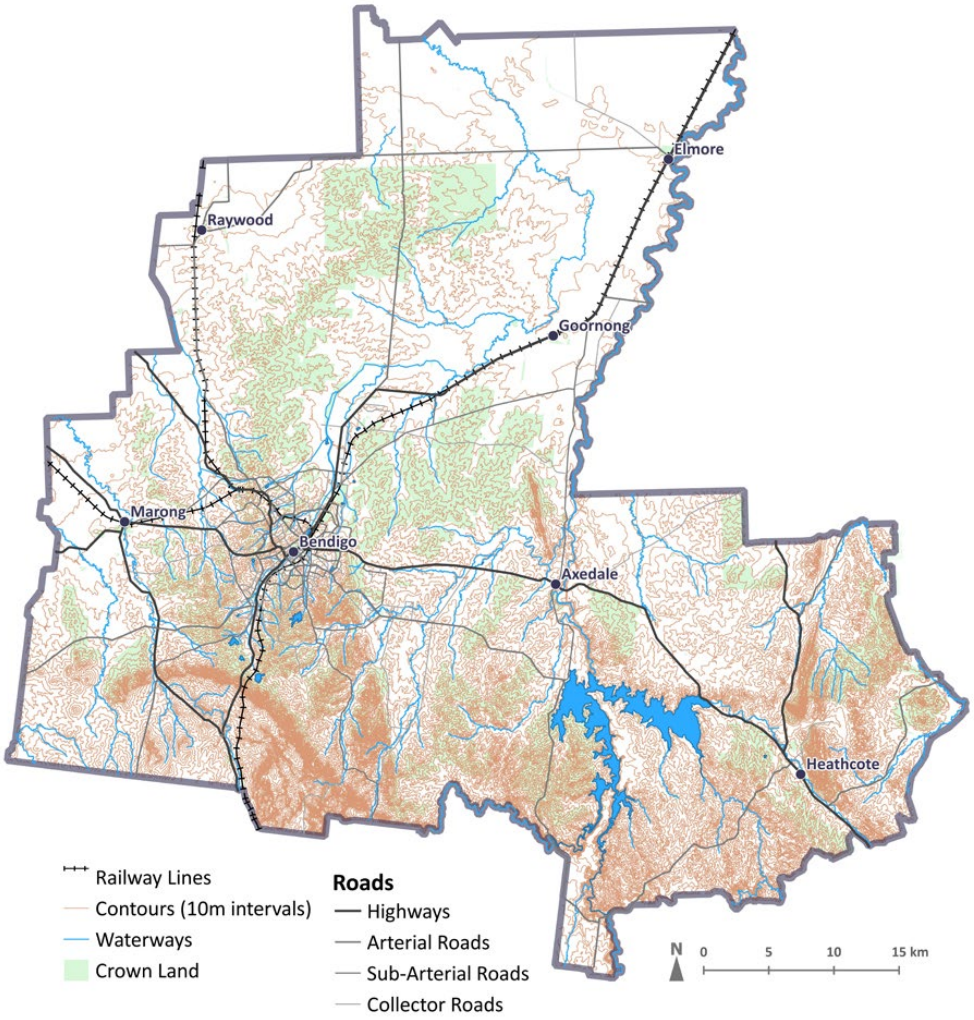


Fig. 11 – Topology and Transport
Contours, waterways, and major transport routes across Greater Bendigo. Source: The City's database.

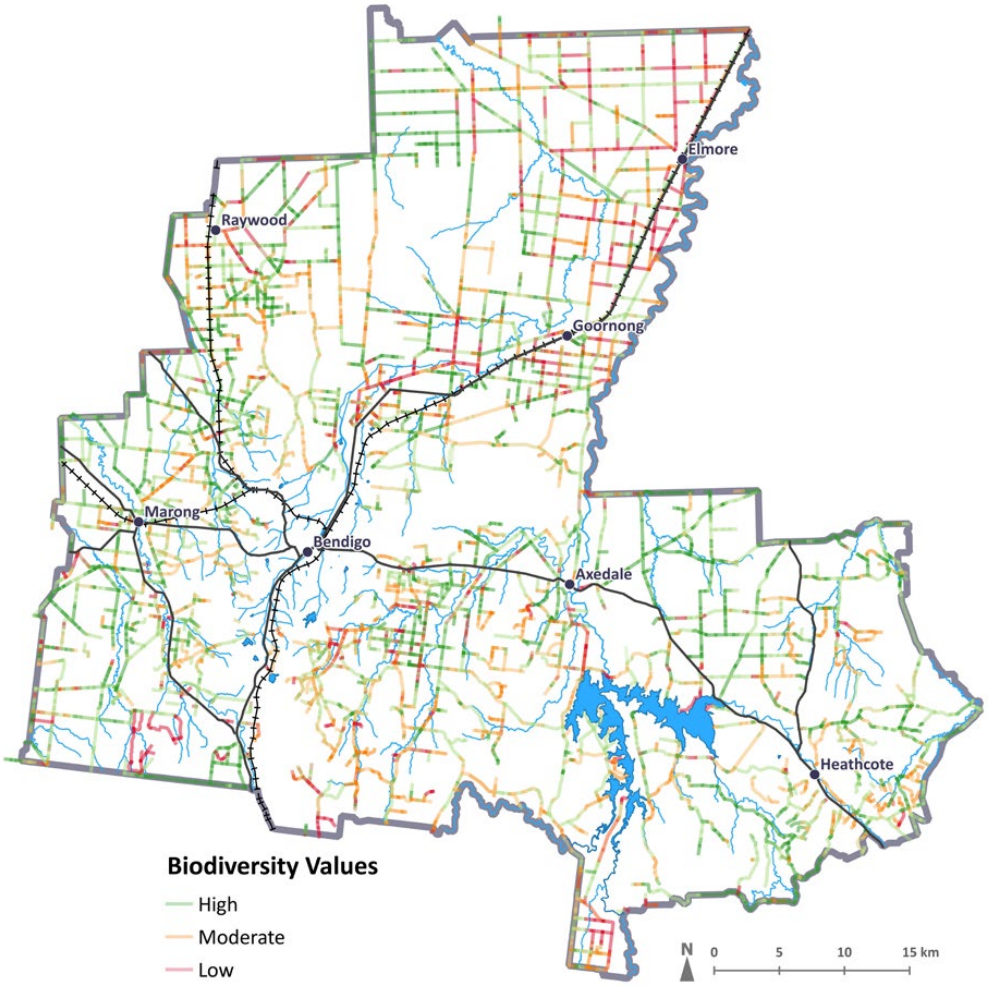


Fig. 12 – Roadside Conservation
Ranking of biodiversity values based on a 2009 survey of all roadsides across Greater Bendigo. Source: The City's database.



Image by Doug Gimesy.

CASE STUDY 6: BRINGING BACK 'THE MAGNIFICENT SIX'

Peter Rose, North Central Catchment Management Authority

The 'magnificent six' are a group of threatened floodplain specialist fish on the brink of extinction in the southern Murray-Darling basin. Species include Southern Pygmy Perch (SPP), Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon (SPSG), and Flat-headed Galaxias which would have been historically present in waterways and wetlands in the Greater Bendigo Region. Key threats to the species include loss of floodplain habitat (permanent and semi-permanent wetlands), altered flow regimes, habitat destruction (particularly aquatic plants), introduced pest fish such as European Carp, Mosquitofish, and Redfin Perch, and climate change. Floodplain wetlands drying out through the Millennium drought substantially impacted remaining populations of these species.

In 2018, North Central CMA partnered with the City, Australia New Guinea Fishes Association and Native Fish Australia (NFA) to collect threatened Southern Pygmy Perch broodstock to start a captive breeding program with Middle Creek Farm in Gippsland. Motivated by the City's aspiration to recover threatened fish in Bendigo Creek, partners engaged with private landholders, Landcare/Friends groups, developers, and businesses to enhance farm dams and urban wetlands through revegetation and addition of habitat to act as surrogate sites (permanent, predator free 'natural hatcheries' with high quality habitat for the fish to thrive). The project was a success with large recruiting populations of SPP established in the first year and the beginning of an enduring partnership. Southern Pygmy Perch populations have now also established in natural waterways downstream of the 'surrogate sites' including Sheepwash Creek in Strathfieldsaye.

Next on the group's radar was the Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon, which until 2019 was thought to be extinct in Victoria. The group worked alongside government agencies, researchers, and private hatcheries to collect broodstock for a breeding program, while the City worked with landholders and Landcare groups to create surrogate sites around Bendigo by enhancing riparian and in-stream habitat in urban wetlands, as well as rehabilitating local waterways to re-wild the fish. There are now at least three populations of breeding SPSG in the Bendigo area, and community and school education opportunities have been created through native fish displays and events by Melbourne Sealife Aquarium, Goldfields Library Corporation, NFA and the North Central CMA's River Detectives program. More recently, Olive Perchlet (another species thought to be extinct in Victoria) has been reintroduced into a wetland in Harcourt dog park in Strathdale.

The project now involves 10 groups and 20+ landholders and businesses working towards a common goal. Connecting with community groups, landholders, businesses, developers, and researchers has led to genuine partnerships. There are now groups who are leading their own waterway restoration efforts to contribute to the recovery of threatened small-bodied fish in and around Bendigo. Project outcomes extend beyond recovery of threatened fish, to education and the creation of natural urban spaces for improved health and wellbeing and waterway stewardship.

Future aspirations of the group are to improve waterway and wetland health in the region and establish further populations of these overlooked species, and to reintroduce the EPBC Critically Endangered Flat-headed Galaxias into waterways across Greater Bendigo.

Public land

There is an extensive network of National, State and Regional Parks and reserves within Greater Bendigo that provide important ecological functions and habitat for plant and animals. Most native vegetation is located on Crown land (~69,512 ha) and is managed by the Victorian Government (DEECA and Parks Victoria) and Traditional Owner groups, with the City contributing several smaller parcels for biodiversity conservation and human health and recreation (~1100 ha; Fig. 14). The City's natural reserves contribute roughly 1.6 per cent of all bushlands in Greater Bendigo, which may seem inconsequential, but research shows that many small patches of native vegetation (or habitat) can have high biodiversity value and aid species survival. The City also acts as the Committee of Management (COM) for several parcels of Crown Land, including the O'Keefe Rail trail and several waterways.

Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung

Dja Dja Wurrung Country covers a large area of Greater Bendigo extending west from the Campaspe River, and out to the northern, western, and southern boundaries of the municipality. Taungurung Country covers the area to the east of the Campaspe River extending past Heathcote.

Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples have a long and deep connection to Country, a profound understanding of biodiversity conservation and a desire to work in partnership to enhance biodiversity and biocultural values.

More recently, they were recognised and given rights to land and to continue cultural practices and care for Country as legitimate land managers. The Recognition and Settlement Agreements and Natural Resource Agreements outline their rights. The Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan expresses Cultural Heritage objectives seeking to:

- Strengthen our understanding of what significant sites and artefacts exist on Dja Dja Wurrung Country
- Secure the right and means to effectively protect and manage cultural landscapes and sites.

All of the waterways in Greater Bendigo and some of the remaining forested lands are recognised as sites with important cultural heritage values that the City needs to be aware of when implementing the actions of this Strategy (Fig. 13).

The City works in close partnership with Traditional Owner Groups to jointly manage lands and assist in their desire to build self-determination. This strategy outlines specific actions that further strengthen those partnerships over the next ten years, while recognising that the intent of all actions of the strategy is to align as much as practicable with Traditional Owner rights, responsibilities, customs and needs.

Theme
Traditional Owner values, priorities and partnerships

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.13, 1.17, 1.18, 2.2, 2.3, 2.6 - 2.9, 2.11 - 2.13, 2.17, 2.18, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 5.2.



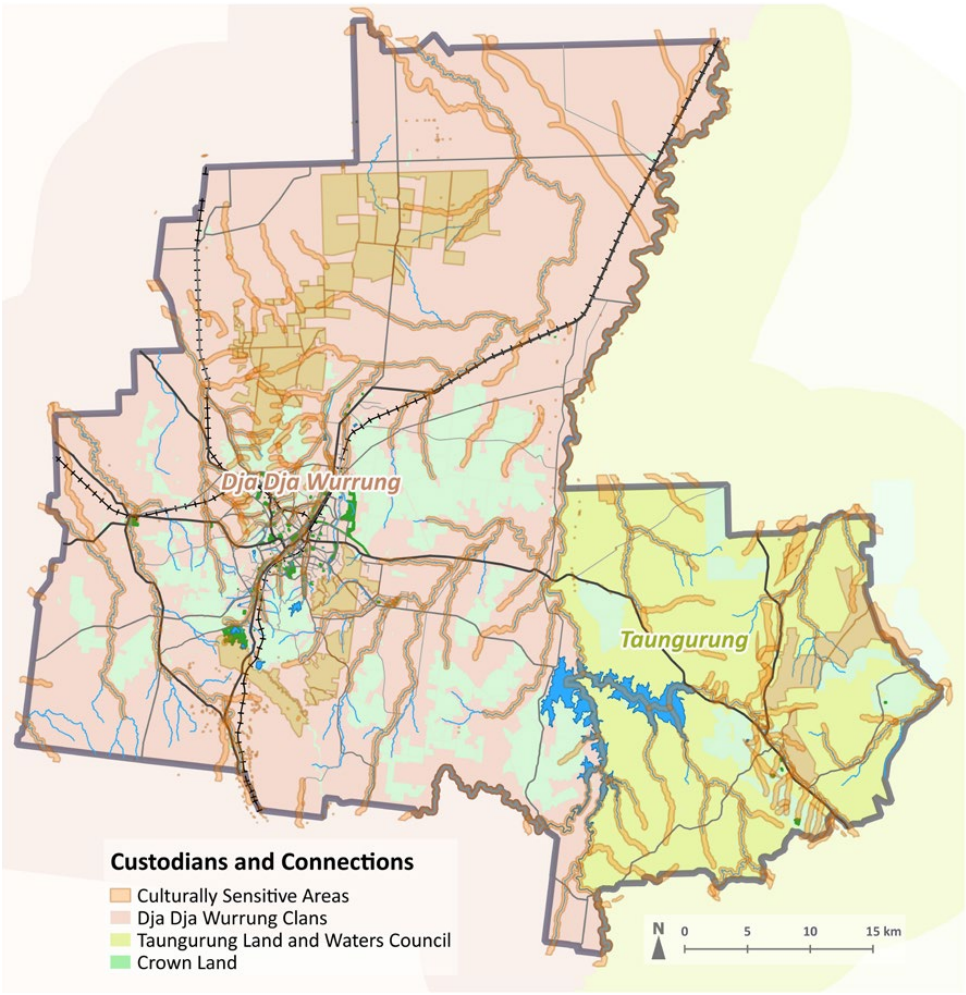


Fig. 13– Traditional Owner Connection to Country
Registered Aboriginal Parties and areas with Cultural heritage values across Greater Bendigo. Source Data Vic - SENSITIVITYPUBLIC

State parks and forests

Greater Bendigo National Park

This 17,020-hectare national park was created from the former Whipstick State Park, Kamarooka State Park, One Tree Hill Regional Park, Mandurang State Forest, and the Sandhurst State Forest in 2002. The park spans areas of Box-ironbark forest, Grassy Woodlands and Mallee. It supports a diversity of native wildflowers and animals and is home to Swift Parrots and other woodland birds. Much of the park is within Birdlife International's Important Bird Area for the Box-Ironbark Region. Greater Bendigo National Park is one of six Aboriginal Title parks in Central West Victoria, jointly managed by the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and Parks Victoria.

Wellsford State Forest

This site is home of some of the region's largest old ironbark trees, known to locals as "The Big Trees", two of which have been listed on the National Trust's Significant Trees Register. These provide important habitat for Lace Monitors, Tuans and woodland birds. The site is also one of the best places to see wildflowers in spring. Bendigo and District Environment Council and action group Wellsford Watch have been fighting to have this area declared a National Park over the last 25 years. Previous applications have had the City's support.

Heathcote-Graytown National Park

The Heathcote-Graytown National Park (12,833 ha) is located to the north-east of Heathcote. The site became a national park in 2002 to protect Victoria's diminishing Box-ironbark forests, crucial in retaining Victoria's biodiversity. This park also forms part of the Rushworth Box-Ironbark Region Important Bird Area.

Other

Other important public land within Greater Bendigo includes Shelbourne Nature Conservation Reserve, Pilchers Bridge Nature Conservation Reserve, Crosbie Nature Conservation Reserve Mount Sugarloaf Nature Conservation Reserve and Spring Plains Nature Conservation Reserve.

City managed natural reserves

The City's natural reserves play a key role in protecting biodiversity and providing habitat for wildlife along with passive human recreational activities, managing a number or urban parks, regenerative forestry and native vegetation offset sites.

While some have an Environmental Management Plan in place to provide direction for protecting and enhancing the conservation values of the reserves and managing threats, most need review and others are lacking these. This will be addressed in the implementation of this strategy.

Sites managed by the Parks and Open Spaces Unit include Kennington Reservoir, Crusoe Reservoir and No. 7 Park, Victoria Hill Diggings, Bendigo Creek (south of Howard St), and the O'Keefe Rail Trail. Other City reserves on more degraded land (often with a mining history) are being managed and enhanced for their biodiversity value. For instance, Riley Street Reserve is an old quarry site being rehabilitated by the City and a local Friends Group (Case Study 4).

Theme
Public land management

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.6, 1.9, 1.10, 1.12, 1.13, 1.15, 2.1 - 2.8, 2.10, 2.11, 2.16 - 2.19, 3.1 - 3.4, 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.7, 5.10 – 5.13.



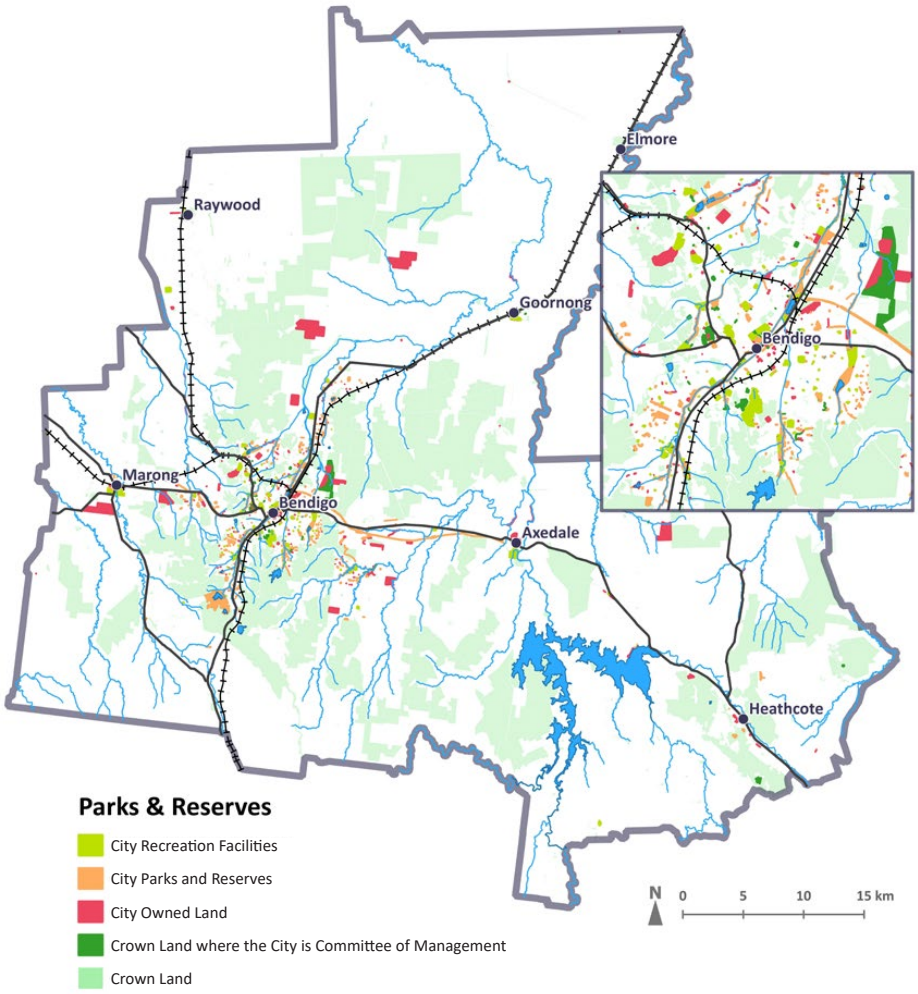


Fig. 13 – Public Land
Land tenure across Greater Bendigo. Source: The City's database.



CASE STUDY 7: AXE CREEK 'EVENTING' SERIES - LOVE YOUR LAND

Kristie Smith, Nature Network Facilitator

While volunteering in Australia was declining due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Axe Creek Landcare experienced a boom in 2022. The group engaged with 200 new people, typically from younger and more diverse backgrounds, who all expressed their love for nature. The audience growth came through 'eventing' - an event series named *Love Your Land*, where Axe Creek Landcare engaged "non-traditional" audiences with different ways of environmental volunteering - from sharing photos of nature on social media, sightings in an app, or building native bee hotels with kids, to enhance appreciation of the environment.

The series targeted females aged 28-50 interested in gardening/hobby-farming, art, nature, health and wellbeing. Time and extra-curricular commitments are barriers to participation for this audience, so events were structured to overcome these. First, the group acknowledged that volunteers are attracted to flexible, event-based and short-term opportunities, that virtual volunteering could attract new audiences and that motivation to contribute comes through a personal connection to the environment. So, they offered an achievable and enjoyable short-term commitment to participants and created a buzz in the community.

Activities like planting trees and education activities had featured highly in feedback as something non-traditional audiences would personally participate in. From this, Axe Creek Landcare developed an event program, including:

- Indigenous Cooking and Conversation with Peta Hudson (online)
- Nature Journaling
- Environmental Photography with Alison Pouliot
- Fungi Foray with Alison Pouliot
- Nature Photography and birdwatching with Chris Tzaros
- Watercolour in the Forest with Terry Jarvis
- Leaf Litter Art with Myf
- Build a Native Bee Hotel (online)

Axe Creek Landcare ensured these events reflected the audience's interests and that barriers to participation were removed, by hand-delivering pre-cut bee hotel kits and posting native ingredients to online cooking participants. All events were free and did not require participants to prepare anything. Events were relaxing and easy, where people could participate on weekends and feel like they were still taking a break from their busy lives. Understanding that this particular target audience was most accessible through Facebook, Axe Creek put effort into social media sharing and online advertising. This allowed the group to be very targeted with their budget and to easily link in with advertising partners to extend their reach.

The indigenous cooking demonstration, native bee hotel construction and photography with Alison Pouliot was picked-up online by the National Sustainability Festival. Attendees joined from across the country and internationally. People from Melbourne followed the Love Your Land program and some even travelled to Bendigo to participate in events. By the end of the program Axe Creek Landcare event releases were being watched by hundreds of younger people, were booked out almost too quickly and there was pressure to pre-release tickets to members. One of the most valuable things to come out of these events was nine months of continuous feedback to ensure future events could be tailored to changing community needs.

Threats

Undoubtedly, humans have shaped Earth to meet their ever-expanding needs. But with increasing pressure on landscapes and the consumption of more resources, ecosystem balance has been disrupted and biodiversity loss continues at an alarming rate.

In Greater Bendigo, we have a range of threats to biodiversity that need urgent and sustained resources if we are to adequately address them and protect our unique biodiversity values. While common human land-uses and activities do not always impact biodiversity conservation (e.g., small-scale agriculture, fishing, house construction, fire), the scale at which these occur and the interaction between them often results in multiplying threats to biodiversity.

This means that every small action we take, thinking there are little to no impacts can collectively have huge impacts over time. And if too many negative actions occur too often, then it can lead to species extinction and ecosystem collapse, and we could lose the plants and animals we share this land with. The major current and historical threats to biodiversity across Greater Bendigo are outlined below and in the list of FFG Act Threatening Processes (Appendix 1.2).

Climate change

Greater Bendigo had a stable climate and thriving ecosystems for thousands of years with regular seasons for plant growth and food production and natural cycles supporting abundant biodiversity. It is now characterised by hot, dry summers and cooler, wetter winters with some frosts and a long-term average annual rainfall of 510 mm.

Climate projections for the region by the end of this century indicate increased temperatures, more frequent and extreme heatwaves, less rainfall, and more intense storm events[44]. Hotter, drier conditions will result in a greater number of heat-related illnesses and deaths of animals and humans, more challenging conditions for plant establishment and survival and increased bushfire risk.

Climate change is also causing compositional change in communities (e.g., loss or re-ordering of species and interactions), particularly in ecosystems already under stress. While mean annual rainfall will decline, incidents of storm events and flooding are predicted to increase. Simply put, the climate is changing faster than wildlife and ecosystems can adapt. Many species will suffer in a warmer and drier Bendigo, while the impacts of some weeds, pests and diseases may increase.

We need to act now to reduce human impacts to climate whilst also protecting and restoring our ecosystems. We need urgent interventions, well above our current rate, to halt and reverse species declines exacerbated by climate change, as well as long-term monitoring to detect changes in the biodiversity of our region if we are to prevent further local species extinctions. We must identify biodiversity adaptation priorities, including refuges to protect, areas to build climate resilience and a strategic approach to climate-wise connectivity[45].

Under the Local Government Act 2020, it is a requirement that all local governments embed mitigation and planning for climate risks across their services, strategies, policies, and processes. The City must continue to lead on climate action and invest in making our environment and communities more resilient to climate change. While there are only a few specific actions that explicitly mention climate change and its impacts, all actions listed in this strategy implicitly help the City tackle this issue through protection, enhancement and connectivity of healthy, natural environments, and community engagement that promotes awareness and action to combat the pressures of the changing climate. Those actions where climate mitigation measures may be more tangible are listed below.

Theme
Climate change

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.1 - 1.6, 1.9, 1.10, 1.12, 1.15, 1.16, 1.18, 2.2, 2.3, 2.6 - 2.14, 2.16 - 2.19, 3.1 - 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.3, 5.5, 5.7, 5.8.



Image by Mark Hall.

[44] Clarke JM, et al., 2019. Loddon Campaspe Climate Projections 2019, Melbourne Australia: CSIRO

[45] Climate Change | North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (rcs.vic.gov.au)

Mining

Greater Bendigo has a long mining history. It has brought prosperity, but at an environmental and biocultural cost. Mining wastes have long contaminated our land and waters, removed huge tracts of vegetation, and turned soils upside down.

"The landscapes of the goldfields had changed very quickly. Just a few years earlier the Bendigo valley was carpeted with green grass and dotted with beautiful gum trees, while its wattle-shaded creek banks sloped down to waterholes full of sweet, clear water…but sludge bought an end to all that[46]".

There are gold mines still in operation across Greater Bendigo today near important waterways like the Campaspe River. While regulations are in place to minimise the impacts to the natural environment, mining activities continue to threaten and degrade native bushland and waterways. Effects can be cumulative or immediate and long-lasting. For instance, if tailings dams that hold mining wastes were to fail, the pollution to lands and waterways of Greater Bendigo would be devastating and remain in the system for years. The Bendigo and District Environment Group (BDEC) has been actively campaigning for changes to mining activities to abate the threat to biodiversity for over twenty years and continues to advocate to the City and other levels of government on mining matters.

Managing rehabilitation of sites post-mining is time consuming and costly, with mining companies sometimes failing in their obligations. For instance, Earth Resources Regulation is using rehabilitation bonds totaling $5.9M to rehabilitate former mine sites - Kangaroo Flat, New Moon, Eaglehawk mining and Woodvale Evaporation Ponds sites, following cessation of a mining license[47]. There is also an Environmental Effects Statement being considered for an application to extend current mining operations[48].

Gold panning, fossicking, or prospecting, typically involving metal detectors, hand tools, pans or sluices is allowed within the Greater Bendigo National Park with an appropriate permit. However, this activity can disrupt biodiversity values if not done responsibly – by avoiding vegetation removal, replacing soils and leaf litter, and keeping to marked tracks.

Urban development

Greater Bendigo continues to grow, with an expected population expansion of ~33,900 people by 2036, from over 121,000 people in 2021 to 155,175 in 2036, a growth rate of 1.7 per cent per annum[49]. This brings with it a need for greater housing and community infrastructure. While all developments must meet relevant regulations, the challenge for biodiversity is that any individual development may not cause a 'significant impact on a local population or community', and therefore is allowed to proceed. However, significant losses to biodiversity occur through cumulative impacts from developments; incremental habitat fragmentation through direct vegetation removal, timber collection, domestic gardens, bushfire regulations and fuel management on roadsides and adjoining bushland. Weed encroachment from urbanised landscapes, road collision with animals and predation of native animals by cats can cause long-term damage and are much harder to regulate and control. Thus, both the immediate threats to biodiversity from development and the ongoing threats to biodiversity in the landscape require careful consideration and stronger protections. A move toward greater infill development within the current urban growth boundary would provide the greatest protection to biodiversity values, while individual landholders could continue to support urban biodiversity by providing healthy garden environments with a diversity of flowering plants and native grasses, in keeping with the natural environment of Greater Bendigo.



[46] Sludge: Disaster on Victoria's Goldfields. By Susan Lawrence and Peter Davies

[47] Kangaroo Flat, New Moon, Eaglehawk mining and Woodvale Evaporation Ponds - Earth Resources

[48] Fosterville Gold Mine - Earth Resources

[49] Regional City of Bendigo - Regional Development Victoria (rdv.vic.gov.au)

Theme
Removal and modification of native vegetation

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.1 - 1.8, 1.14 - 1.16, 1.19, 2.5 - 2.8, 2.10 - 2.13, 2.16 - 2.18, 3.1 - 3.4, 4.1 - 4.5, 5.2 – 5.4.

Agricultural expansion

Agricultural practices in Greater Bendigo vary from large-scale grazing and cropping to smaller lifestyle properties and urban market gardens. Managing farms for both productivity and biodiversity values is important, as inappropriate land management practices can result in weed and pest animal invasion, over grazing by stock on native vegetation, severe gully erosion and nutrient input into waterways.

With topsoil lacking across the region, poor pasture management (e.g., relying solely on annual grasses that are shallow rooted) can impact biodiversity values and agricultural productivity. Fortunately, many landholders in Greater Bendigo are motivated to improve the management of their land through participation in programs like the Healthy Landscapes project[50], run collaboratively with Macedon Ranges Shire Council and others. The North Central CMA and Agriculture Victoria run other agricultural programs across Greater Bendigo, including Regenerative Agriculture and Digging Deeper into Soils.

Pollution

Pollution from development, industry, mining, and agriculture continues to impact the land and waterways of Greater Bendigo. Most notably, the legacy of arsenic from mining activities contaminates land and rivers, impacts the local groundwater, endangers the health of wildlife and humans, and jeopardises restoration activities.

Contaminated groundwater is rising within parts of Bendigo and interventions of groundwater extraction and treatment are costly.

Firewood collection

Inappropriate and illegal firewood collection can lead to biodiversity loss through removal of vital food and habitat for insects and native animals. With an increasing population and continued reliance on fuel heating, firewood collection continues in state forests and along roadsides, often illegally.

Djaara have rights to firewood collection and do so to appropriately manage sites through cultural thinning to heal forests and return them to a pre-colonial state where they were more open and diverse. Resources resulting from this practice, including firewood as well as alternative sources, such as plantation timber could be promoted as sustainable products to protect and even increase biodiversity.

Pest animals

Pest animals threaten the biodiversity values of an area. They can be species introduced into Victoria or native species that have become overabundant, aggressive, or invasive. Key threats to biodiversity posed by pest animals are predation, habitat destruction and competition for resources.

Predation of native animals occurs by species such as foxes and cats (feral and domestic). Foxes are very efficient predators of native animals, and an agricultural pest, taking young lambs and calves and spreading weeds. Domestic and feral cats are a particularly dangerous predator to birds and smaller marsupials such as Krefft's Gliders and Tuans and are instinctive hunters, killing animals regardless of hunger. Combined, these two predators are responsible for killing more than 2.6 billion mammals, birds, and reptiles across Australia every year[51]. Pet cats can stray widely, day and night, so the Cityl is introducing a strict cat curfew that requires cats to be contained within a property 24 hours a day and not allowed to roam[52]. Dingoes are efficient hunters of these pest species and can help regulate numbers, however they have been removed from the landscape over time due to their own perceived status as a threat to livestock.

The City actively removes fox dens and harbour as part of a control program in City reserves but does not bait. The City also works with other government agencies and private landholders to manage this threat across Greater Bendigo.

Grazing by feral animals, including goats, pigs, deer, hares and rabbits and some abundant native species such as kangaroos and wallabies, limits the regeneration of native vegetation and puts pressure on agricultural systems. More than two rabbits per hectare can virtually eliminate the regeneration potential of plant species, so grazing pressure is a major impediment to restoring depleted ground cover plants across Greater Bendigo.

[50] Healthy Landscapes - Macedon Ranges Shire Council (mrsc.vic.gov.au)

[51] Foxes and cats are knocking out Australia's wildlife with a devastating one-two punch - ABC News

[52] Cat curfew in Bendigo more strict, councillors unanimous on limiting cats to properties 24/7 - ABC News



Competition for resources by abundant or aggressive species can also impact populations of native wildlife and alter plant community structure. Feral swarms of honeybees entering bushland can take over tree hollows, displacing birds and mammals reliant on this scarce resource. Honeybees may also outcompete other pollinators for nectar and pollen due to their numbers and longer foraging period, particularly where resources are scarce[53]. The Common (or Indian) Myna is an aggressive introduced bird often found in urban and open rural landscapes, while the native Noisy Miner is an aggressive bird that excludes other small birds from its large territory, displacing and fragmenting bird populations. As such, it has been declared a key threatening process under the FFG Act (Appendix 1.2) and should be considered in biodiversity monitoring and conservation. There is an active Common Myna control group in Greater Bendigo, run by volunteers.

Rats and mice are common in both urban and rural areas and can lead to species decline due to their massive numbers and voracious appetites. They are often controlled through chemical baiting, however the inappropriate use of these can affect native species that may feed on them, such as owls, falcons and kookaburras. Birdlife Australia is actively campaigning against the use of some of these baits to ensure the safety of native bird species (and other native animals that feed on dead or injured rodents)[54].

Weeds

Invasive plants threaten the biodiversity of Greater Bendigo by changing and destroying habitat; by outcompeting and smothering indigenous vegetation, providing harbor to vermin, choking waterways, and offering few resources for native animals.

Many Weeds of National Significance[55] are found across Greater Bendigo. These and other environmental weeds are plant species that are a priority to control due to their invasiveness and environmental, social, and economic impacts and include Chilean Needle Grass, Blackberry, Gorse, Broom, Bridal Creeper and Boneseed.

The City has several policies and procedures to combat the threat of weeds, including the Invasive Plants and Animals Policy and Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Plan. Future updates to these should consider new and emerging weeds that could threaten biodiversity values.

[53] European honeybees outcompete native pollinators, concerning experts and traditional owners - ABC News

[54] BirdLife Australia - Act for Birds: Rat Poison. https://www.actforbirds.org/ratpoison

[55] Weed profiles - Weeds Australia

Legislative responsibilities for managing invasive species

Both public and private landholders have a responsibility under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act) to control pest plants and animals. Working collaboratively with other land management agencies and supporting volunteers is vital to controlling these threats to our region's biodiversity.

While weeds listed under the CaLP Act must be controlled, other environmental weeds can impact biodiversity by competing for resources with native plants. These are often 'garden escapees', which are spread by clothing, dumped garden waste, vehicles, stock, wind and water. For example, species like Gazania are spreading rapidly, mainly along roadsides, across Greater Bendigo. These environmental weeds should also be given adequate resourcing to address in a strategic manner, but currently do not. We all have a responsibility to select appropriate garden plants that benefit biodiversity and provide aesthetic and cultural value.

Theme
Pest plants and animals

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.9, 1.11, 1.13, 2.2 - 2.4, 2.13, 2.15, 4.3, 4.5, 5.3, 5.7, 5.10, 5.13.

Wildlife and human interactions

While many interactions with native wildlife can be positive experiences that connect us with the natural world and increase our appreciation and respect for the plants and animals living with us, some interactions are less positive for us and for the species encountered. The City will continue to act to increase connection with nature while limiting the impacts of negative wildlife/human interactions where possible.

Roadkill

Increasing urbanisation brings people into contact with nature in ways that do not benefit either. Providing permanent water sources and infrastructure around developments, such as roadsides, lead to more vehicle collisions with animals such as birds, wombats, snakes, and lizards. This can lead to a reduction in animal populations, with some species disappearing from parts of the landscape they were once abundant in. Collision with kangaroos is a major threat to human safety, as kangaroo numbers have increased through human land-use change (more water sources and abundant grass to forage on) and they often cross roads to find new resources.

Animal collision data suggests Greater Bendigo, particularly the Heathcote area, has one of the highest animal collision rates in Australia[56]. There is currently a lack of accurate data on animal collisions in Australia, with only one database available for recording roadkill in Tasmania[57]. Wildlife Victoria are currently working with the City and other councils on programs to reduce the impacts of vehicle collision on wildlife.

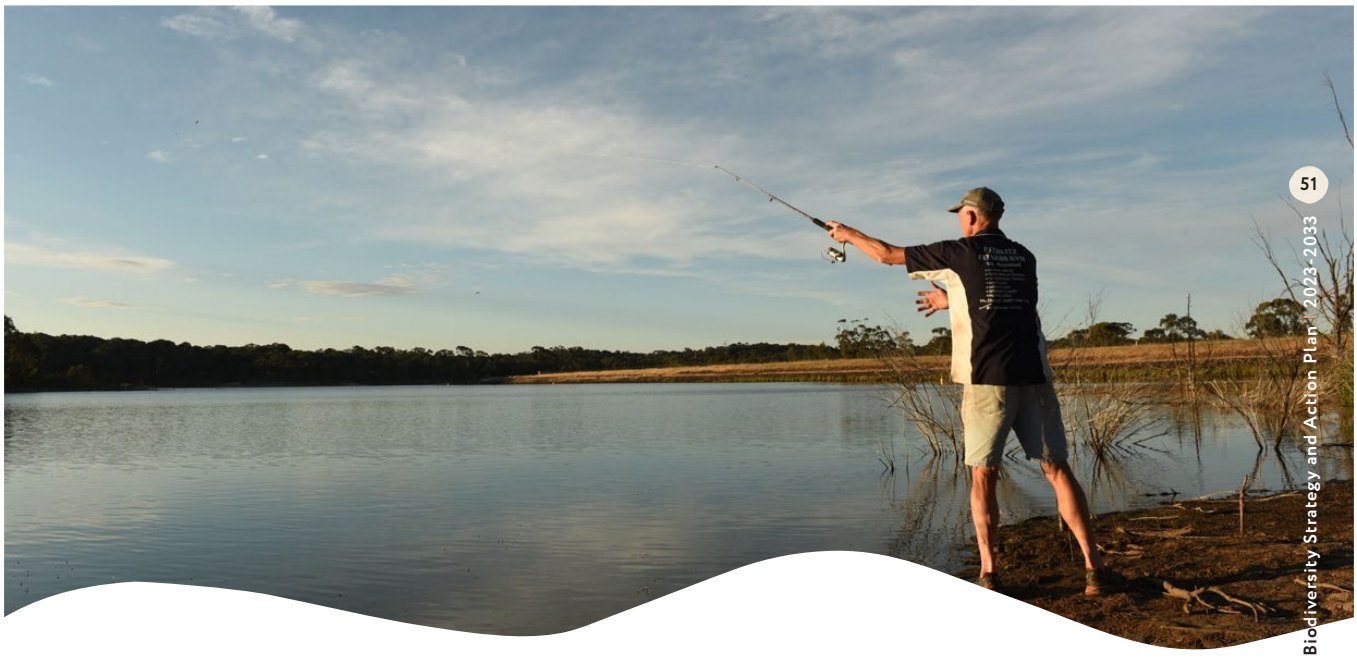


Image by John Walter.

[56] AAMI Data - Animal Collision Hotspots

[57] Animals | The Australian Roadkill Reporting Project—Applying Integrated Professional Research and Citizen Science to Monitor and Mitigate Roadkill in Australia (mdpi.com)

[58] Wildlife Victoria concerned about non-compliance as duck hunting season opens | Bendigo Advertiser



Hunting and fishing

Hunting and fishing are popular activities in Greater Bendigo. Hunting generally focusses on wildfowl as well as pest species like foxes, while several lakes and waterways are stocked with both native and introduced angling fish species. While these activities can impact biodiversity and further threaten species if not conducted under strict adherence to regulations[58], there is potential to engage this community in nature stewardship, and local groups associated with these activities are generally supportive of, and actively engaged in, conservation activities. Djaara and Taungurung also have rights to hunt and use it to care for Country. Supporting this right could improve biodiversity and biocultural values of landscapes.

Theme
Wildlife and human interactions

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.12, 1.15, 1.16 – 1.18, 2.2, 2.3, 2.7, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 5.1 – 5.6, 5.10, 5.13.

Fire regimes

Greater Bendigo is a high-risk area for fire, particularly at the urban forest interface of Bendigo, in woodlands, broad acre cropping and grazing landscapes. Very high fuel levels occur across parts of the region and the average fire season lasts 126 days (about four months) . Bushfire risk is set to increase with the warmer, drier climate predicted under climate change, impacting already threatened native species. There is also increasing demand to reduce the risk of fire through habitat clearing on private land and fuel-reduction burns on public land.

However, fire is also an important part of the evolutionary history of the natural environment, with some plants and ecosystems requiring specific fire regimes. The Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples have used fire as a tool to manage landscapes for thousands of years and continue to conduct cultural burns. Fuel reduction burns are carried out by land managers to reduce bushfire risk to communities but can burn too hot to achieve real ecological benefits. The impacts of large-scale burns can include interruption to species' life cycles, fewer hollow-bearing trees, changes in floral composition, death of native animals (including threatened species), loss of food resources for wildlife and harm to biocultural values.

The City currently engages in vegetation management where appropriate on City managed land and along roadsides but does not currently conduct planned burns. Private landholders often "tidy up" understorey plants, leaf litter and logs to reduce risk, however this impacts biodiversity through a reduction in soil nutrients, food and habitat for native species and often simplifies ecosystems and encourages weed invasion. The challenge is to balance the need to protect life and property and to provide an appropriate fire regime or other appropriate management action for different ecosystems to promote biodiversity and functioning ecosystem processes. Better community education could mitigate much of the unnecessary impacts.

Theme
Fire

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.1 - 1.5, 1.9, 1.15, 1.16, 1.19, 2.2, 2.7, 2.18, 5.2, 5.7.



PART 2: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

Setting priorities

Greater Bendigo is a unique regional landscape, with its major centres surrounded by high value native forests and many towns with areas where human dwellings interact with forest, grasslands or waterways. We are also fortunate to have a community that is passionate about conserving the natural environment and many City managed reserves that protect important plant and animal communities. While large natural areas provide key habitat and require increased protection and on-going management, it is the places in-between that will provide opportunities for the City and the community to protect, enhance and connect habitats across the landscape.

Combined, the remaining areas of native vegetation along waterways, transport routes and scattered trees on private land, can provide habitat and movement pathways, including as stepping stones, and allow species to respond to environmental change. It is important to protect, enhance, and continue to connect vegetation along these corridors and within the urban and rural environment, particularly where they can close gaps between significant larger patches of vegetation.

Mapping and modelling

Victorian Government Strategic Biodiversity Values mapping

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Adaptation (DEECA - formerly DELWP) have modelled 'Strategic Biodiversity Values' across Victoria, where they will focus energies to protect and restore biodiversity values (Fig. 15 shows values within the City). The darker green areas show higher value. These values occur most often in Crown reserves (e.g., National Parks) and along some waterways. This and other statewide maps provide some valuable insights into where high biodiversity values occur on public land and where effort to maximise biodiversity values could occur based on a set of data and predictors, but on its own is perhaps less informative for where the City should prioritise local strategic actions across its land tenure and on private land.

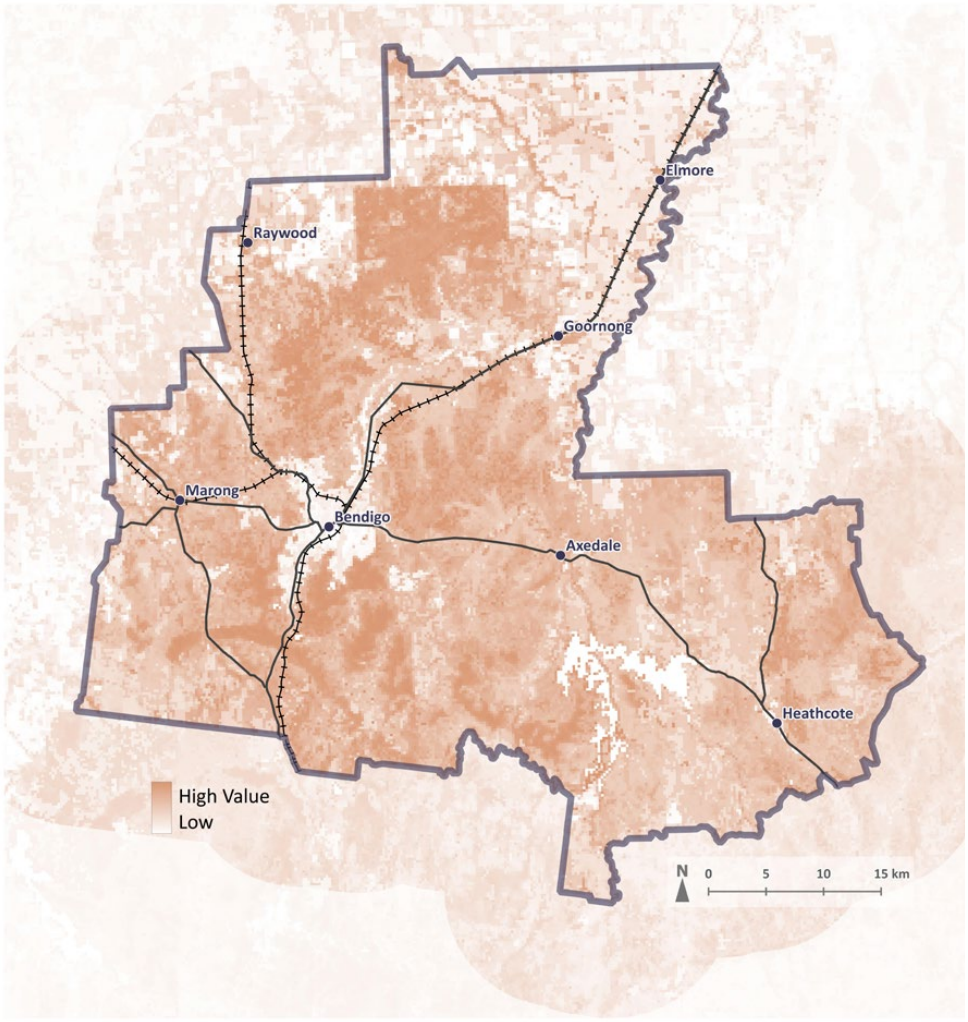


Fig. 15 – State Government Strategic Biodiversity Values
DEECA strategic biodiversity values. Source: Data Vic - NATUREPRINT_4_0

Biodiversity hot spot map

Building on the Strategic Biodiversity Values concept above, we established a 'Biodiversity Hot Spot' map specifically for Greater Bendigo, incorporating available map layers that contained a range of ecological and community values we felt would most appropriately help us establish where time and resources are prioritised for biodiversity protection and enhancement (Fig. 16). Colours represent areas that scored highly in modelling based on the data available (most cumulative points across modelled themes - set out in Table 1).

These sites will need to be further investigated on the ground to verify their high strategic value for biodiversity conservation and, along with further modelling of both spatial and functional connectivity, will be incorporated into a habitat connectivity study.

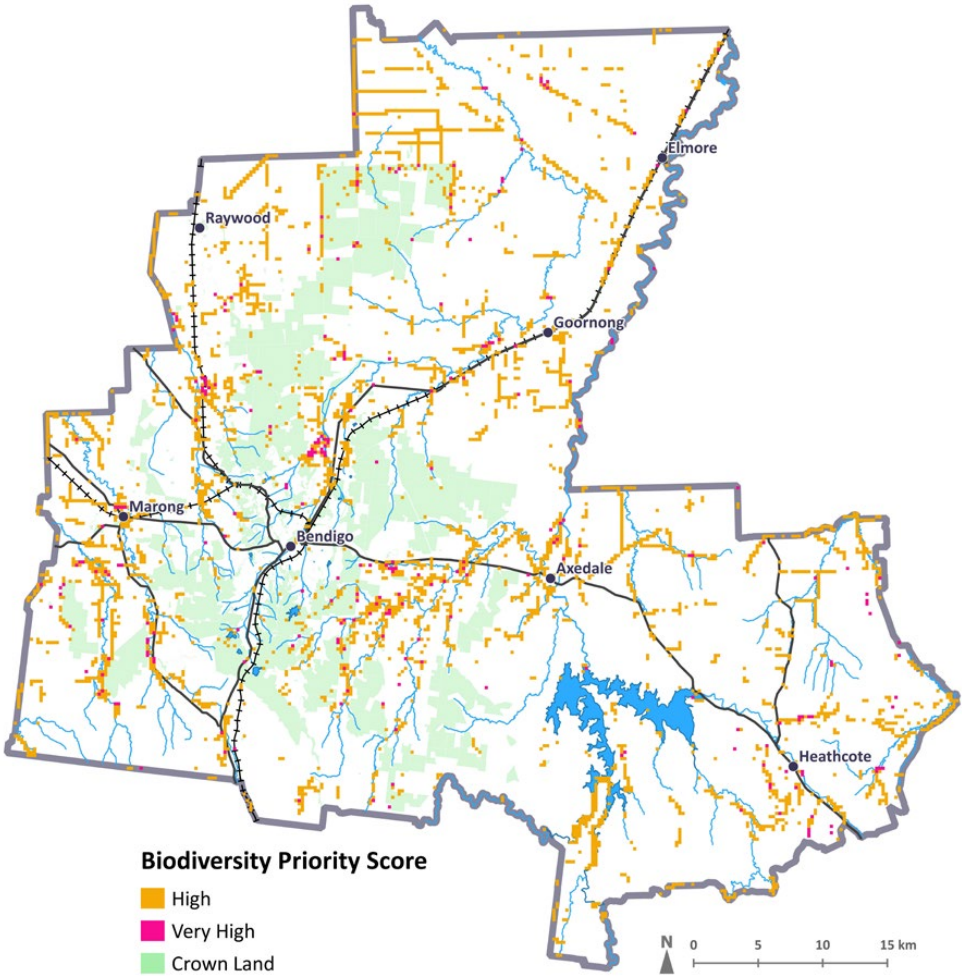


Fig. 16 – Priority Areas
Modelled biodiversity hot spot areas

Table 1: Biodiversity Hot Spot Map modelling framework

Theme	Justification	Value	Points given
City owned or managed land	Feasibility for action, biodiversity value and connectivity potential. Data source: The City's spatial database	City Owned Land (e.g., parks, recreation)	1
		Crown Land where the City is COM	1
Current Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) status (under FFG Act)	Habitat importance. **We only included the highest threat categories to improve specificity of target areas.* Data source: 1750s EVCs and 2005 EVC layers, DEECA	Endangered	3
		Vulnerable	2
Threatened species (flora and fauna listed under the FFG Act)	Threatened flora and fauna require greater protection to ensure they do not become extinct. They often reflect important sites and values, and their conservation can improve connectivity across the landscape. **The presence of species reflects survey effort as well as habitat value.* Data source: Victorian Biodiversity Atlas records	Critically Endangered	3
		Endangered	3
		Threatened	2
		Vulnerable	2
Roadside conservation status	Roadsides which ranked highly for conservation status support significant biodiversity values, require protection and enhancement, and can improve connectivity across a landscape. Data source: The City's spatial database	Rank of 4	2
		Rank of 3	1
DEECA bushbank biorank	This is a strategic program of the Victorian Government to help allocate resources for biodiversity conservation. This sets strategic target areas for project funding and aids the feasibility of meeting state priorities. Data source: DEECA's Bushbank layer (BUSHBANKBIORANK - from NatureKit)	Rank of 4 or 5	2
		Rank of 3	1
Private land conservation	These provide important habitat protection and help connect sites across private land. Prioritising actions around these sites will consolidate and extend biodiversity values. Data source: The City's spatial database, using records from Bushcare Incentive program and DEECA supplied LfW data.	Conservation covenant on land (through Bushcare Incentive rate rebate for TfN properties)	1
		Land for Wildlife registered property	1
Cultural Heritage Sensitivity	Preservation of Traditional Owner connection to Country, important biodiversity values and connectivity. Data source: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity layer, DEECA.	Areas of recognised cultural heritage	1

Biolinks

The Biodiversity Hot Spots map has helped inform the identification of potential biolink areas that would connect high value sites and build on existing community and agency efforts across Greater Bendigo.

In March 2023, we conducted a workshop with 35 participants representing 19 agencies and community environmental groups from across Greater Bendigo, including DJAARA, DEECA, Parks Victoria, North Central CMA, Coliban Water, Trust for Nature, Biolinks Alliance, Central Victoria ACF, Bendigo Climate Alliance, Nature Network and several Landcare, Friends and other special interest groups. Collectively, we identified several areas where biolinks have been proposed, works have begun, or where high values are known to exist, to try to connect habitat both within and across local government boundaries to support biodiversity and species movement and dispersal. From this discussion and the Biodiversity Hotspots map, we have indicated the types of potential biolinks that could occur across Greater Bendigo to connect significant sites of biodiversity value or where values could be enhanced (Fig.17). This exercise was an important first step to set some initial direction, however a comprehensive connectivity plan needs to be developed in conjunction with these partners (Action 3.1) before prioritising and implementing a strategic biolinks program across Greater Bendigo. Such a plan would identify key priority areas to enhance spatial and functional connectivity, resistance areas for movement, where current community effort occurs and will aid future community planning to ensure high value biodiversity and cultural sites and those connecting them (which can be enhanced to provide even greater value) are considered and impacts to them minimised.

Implementation

Creating linkages to meet the goals of the potential biolinks / habitat connectivity plan can be achieved through continuing to work on City managed land, including roadsides, and on private land by working with landholders, Landcare and other stakeholders.

Along with City resources and grant programs, there are several funding streams that could help deliver habitat connectivity, including the Victorian Government's Bushbank program or the North Central CMA's local carbon offsets pilot program that would provide additional benefits to landholders. Community-led programs and those of other conservation organisations will also be important in achieving municipality-wide connectivity. Local Landcare groups and networks will play a role here, as outlined in the Nature Network's recent Blueprint for Action, found here: Landcare (nccma.vic.gov.au).

Public acquisition of land is a more expensive approach and is only necessary if a) the site has very high biodiversity values which may otherwise be lost if retained in private ownership, b) if aiming to create a contiguous public open space corridor which provides additional recreation opportunities, and / or c) if aiming to create a contiguous waterway reserve where public ownership enables coordinated and strategic mitigation of threats such as weed spread and urban flooding.

Theme
Habitat connectivity

Biodiversity Action Plan #
1.1, 1.4 - 1.6, 1.8, 1.12, 1.15, 1.16, 2.6 – 2.8, 2.10 - 2.14, 2.18, 3.1 - 3.4, 4.1, 4.4 - 4.5, 5.5.



Image by Michael Keogh

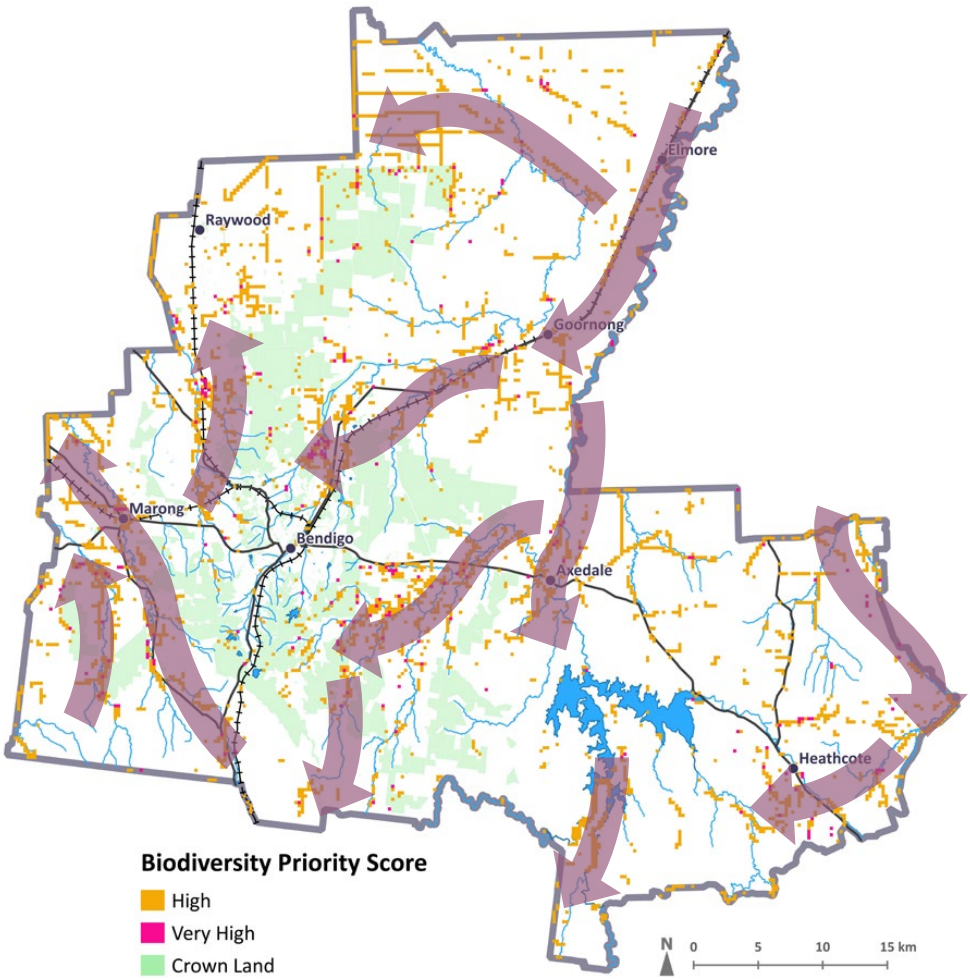


Fig. 17– Biolinks
Indicative biolinks across Greater Bendigo connecting high biodiversity value areas, with the potential for linkages to extend beyond the local government boundary. Lines are for illustrative purposes and should be used as a guide.



Image by Daryl Fleay.

Biodiversity Action Plan – 2023-2033

This 10-year action plan addresses the highest priority short-term actions to achieve the strategy's vision over the next decade and build strong foundations for biodiversity protection and enhancement into the future.

The 5 strategic pillars underpinning this strategy are:

1. **PROTECT** the existing natural values of Greater Bendigo
2. **ENHANCE** native vegetation communities, habitats and species diversity
3. **CONNECT** habitats and species through strategic linkages
4. **ADVOCATE** on behalf of the community and environment
5. **ENGAGE** the community in environmental stewardship

Actions are grouped under these five pillars. Following extensive community, agency and staff engagement, all actions have been assigned a priority level, time limit to commencement and estimated resource requirements (Table 2).

The lead City department(s) have also been specified to ensure progress of the action.

The overarching goal is also to ensure the strategy meets Traditional Owner, federal, state, and local obligations, and fits with best practice global targets, as set out in previous sections.

A monitoring and evaluation framework will track progress and assess the impact of the actions (see Monitoring and Evaluation section).

Table 2: Codes used in Action Tables

Priority	City resources required (estimate)	Commencement timeframe	Lead Department
Very High High Medium	Existing = undertaken with existing staff and / or operational resources. FTE – Full time equivalent TBC – To be confirmed based on current budget $ = <$5000 $$ = $5,000-$25,000 $$$ = $25,000-$50,000 $$$$ = $50,000-$100,000 $$$$$ = >$100,000	Commenced <2 yrs <5 yrs Ongoing	CC&E = Climate Change and Environment P&OS = Parks and Open Spaces S&HE = Safe and Healthy Environments StcP = Strategic Planning StyP = Statutory Planning ENG = Engineering

Priority actions

Extensive community engagement, stakeholder workshops and City departmental meetings identified twenty-two key actions for this strategy (of 61 total actions) that are the highest priority for resourcing (of both time and money) and without which, many subsequent actions will not be possible, or will be made more difficult to achieve. Twelve of these are outlined in Table 3, with more detailed actions set out in below sections under each of the five pillars.


Image by Mark Hall

Table 3: Twelve of the highest priority actions to meet the objectives of this strategy.

Action Plan #	Description	Pillar	Resources
5.1	Establish a permanent Biodiversity Engagement Officer position to meet growing community needs.	Engage	FTE
1.2	Investigate options for establishing an Environmental Planner position.	Protect	FTE
1.1	Review the planning scheme provisions relating to biodiversity in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme (GBPS)	Protect	$$$$
3.1	Develop and implement a detailed 'Habitat Connectivity Plan' to create biolinks across Greater Bendigo.	Connect	Existing
2.1	Conduct a service review of the City's natural reserve management functions, considering implementation of this strategy and future environmental management plans.	Enhance	Existing
1.8	Ensure protection of mature native trees through the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme or a Local Law which may include use of a Significant Tree Register.	Protect	$$$$
2.2	Develop and implement Environmental Management Plans / Action Plans for City managed natural reserves.	Enhance	TBC
3.3	Develop a local carbon offset program with stakeholders, ensuring sites align with priority areas for habitat enhancement and connectivity.	Connect	Existing + 2023/24 Council budget
1.18	Establish a biodiversity monitoring program that is representative, robust and strategic.	Protect	Existing + 2023/24 Council budget
2.13	Increase participation of Bendigo landholders in the Healthy Landscapes project in partnership with Djaara.	Enhance	$$$$ from 2024/25
2.7	Support Djaara and Taungurung to increase connection to country and promote cultural practices that also benefit biodiversity.	Enhance	$$
5.3	Establish a community engagement program to increase community access to nature and to raise awareness about Greater Bendigo's natural values and how to protect and enhance them.	Engage	Existing (subject to employment of a Biodiversity Engagement Officer)

1. PROTECT

Goal: Ensure there is adequate protection of Greater Bendigo's unique natural environment into the future

Measures of success:

- No net tree loss of native vegetation on City managed land or through City activities across Greater Bendigo
- Better protection of remnant native vegetation and biodiversity values, especially large old trees and grasslands
- No new species added or elevation of status in the FFG and EPBC Acts Threatened Species Lists
- Reduced impacts to wildlife from domestic and wild pest animals
- Increase in protected land area, through covenants and reclassification of crown land

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
1.1	Review the planning scheme provisions relating to biodiversity in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme (GBPS). This should include a review of the effectiveness of current planning policies and overlays and implementation of necessary changes, considering (amongst other things): · Potential policy gaps · Protecting urban vegetation · The preliminary 'Potential Biolink Areas' mapping (Fig. 17) and proposed habitat connectivity plan (Action 3.1) · The degree to which the Urban Forest Interface Policy achieves its goals.	Very High	$$$$	Commenced	StcP
1.2	Investigate all available options for establishing an Environmental Planner position responsible for providing internal and external education, advice and assessments of planning applications and projects which have environmental impacts, including compliance for native vegetation removal.	Very High	TBC – could review or repurpose existing FTE	<2 yrs	CC&E
1.3	Ensure land management plans are submitted with planning permit applications in the farming zone (FZ) and rural conservation zone (RCZ) that propose effective actions that support biodiversity values and limit impacts to them.	High	Existing	Ongoing	StyP
1.4	In City's Managed Growth Strategy, direct new development toward areas that avoid unacceptable biodiversity outcomes.	Very High	Existing	Commenced	StcP
1.5	Explore development of Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design (BSUD) principles for Greater Bendigo.	High	$$	<5 yrs	CC&E, StcP, ENG

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
1.6	Review the City's implementation of planning provisions related to native vegetation removal, including compliance processes and the City's in-house native vegetation offsets program.	Medium	Existing	Commenced	P&OS, CC&E, StcP
1.7	Continue to provide input into Environmental Effects Statements as appropriate to minimise and manage biodiversity impacts from mining and other activities.	High	Existing	Ongoing	StyP, StcP, CC&E, P&OS
1.8	Ensure large native trees are properly protected through the GBPS or local laws, potentially through the implementation and promotion of a Significant Tree Register. Investigate integration of data collected in the Large Old Tree Project across Greater Bendigo.	High	$$$$ annually to implement and enforce	<2 yrs	P&OS
1.9	Conduct regular condition / health assessments of native vegetation in City managed land and along waterways, potentially incorporating citizen scientists, and report the outcomes in City's Annual Environment Report.	High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E, P&OS
1.10	Support the establishment of a threatened plant collection at Bendigo Botanic Gardens.	High	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E, P&OS
1.11	Increase awareness of the City's domestic cat policy (i.e., 24 hr curfew) and ensure adequate enforcement to protect native wildlife.	High	Existing	Ongoing	S&HE
1.12	Develop an agreed service level for water levels in City managed waterbodies (e.g., Crusoe Reservoir) to best protect native species and processes while balancing the community's desire for passive recreation.	Medium	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E, P&OS
1.13	When developing Environment Management Plans for City managed reserves, work with Traditional Owners, agencies, and the community to support and strengthen strategic and coordinated pest plant and animal control programs across land tenures in the vicinity.	High	$	<5 yrs	P&OS, CC&E
1.14	Review approval processes for biodiversity enhancement projects that trigger permit applications under the GBPS and explore opportunities to streamline and simplify it.	High	Existing	<5 yrs	CC&E, StyP
1.15	Ensure precinct planning undertaken as part of Greening Greater Bendigo adequately promotes the retention and connection of native vegetation to support urban biodiversity.	High	Existing	Commenced	P&OS, CC&E

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
1.16	Continue to collaborate with other local government areas including the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) to incorporate native vegetation and biodiversity outcomes into new developments and subdivisions via planning scheme mechanisms including: · Elevating Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) targets Planning Scheme Amendment and · Advancing the Sustainable Subdivisions Framework documentation for Planning Scheme Amendment consideration	High	Existing	Commenced	CC&E, StcP
1.17	Collaborate with groups and agencies to determine the completeness and adequacy of existing biodiversity data, extend existing programs across Greater Bendigo (e.g., nestboxes, bird surveys, waterbugs, large 'hero' trees project), and identify additional monitoring and evaluation needs.	Very High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E, P&OS
1.18	Establish a monitoring program that is representative, robust, and strategic in the species and communities it monitors closely to measure against actions taken to protect and enhance biodiversity and biocultural values.	Very High	2023/24 Council budget	<2 yrs	CC&E, P&OS
1.19	Review current enforcement procedures for infringements related to biodiversity and identify potential pathways to increase compliance (e.g., vegetation removal, firewood collection, rubbish dumping and pollution).	High	Existing	<2 yrs	StyP, P&OS
1.20	Reduce the number of displaced, injured and killed wildlife through human activities (e.g., vehicle strikes) through: · Partnering with Wildlife Victoria, wildlife rescue and care agencies, other councils and transport authorities on education and mitigation programs · Assisting in reviewing the Greater Bendigo Road Safety Action Plan (as necessary) to incorporate wildlife strikes	Medium	Existing	Commenced	CC&E

2. ENHANCE

Goal: Improve the quality of native vegetation and enhance habitat and structures that support species and ecosystem diversity.

Measures of success

- Increase in habitat quality at the City's managed natural reserves to achieve a conservation value of 'high' or 'very high'
- Increase in species abundance and diversity, particularly of priority species and communities and culturally significant plants and animals
- Increased self-determination of Djaara and Taungurung, including increased indigenous cultural landscape management practices incorporated across public and private land
- Increase in the number of significant roadside vegetation sites

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
2.1	Conduct a service review of the City's natural reserve management functions taking into account implementation of this strategy and future environmental management plans.	Very High	Existing	<2 yrs	P&OS, CC&E
2.2	Work with Traditional Owners, agencies, groups and the community to develop and implement Environmental Management Plans / Action Plans for City managed nature reserves, including an assessment of conservation values and threats and a set of actions to enhance their natural, recreation and cultural values, including water quality and flood and erosion control. Align these with Traditional Owner rights, obligations, and priorities. Prioritise plans for: · Kennington Reservoir · Crusoe Reservoir · Crosbie Regenerative Forest · Huntly Regenerative Forest · Victoria Hill	Very High	TBC	Ongoing	P&OS, CC&E
2.3	Work with Traditional Owners, agencies, groups (particularly Landcare) and the community to develop and implement waterway restoration plans that promote biodiversity and cultural values and supports the rights and obligations of first nations peoples (e.g., restoring chain-of-ponds). Prioritise a review the Implementation Plan for Reimagining Bendigo Creek to help inform the sequencing and scheduling of conservation works.	High	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E, P&OS

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
2.4	Continue to conduct strategic pest plant and animal management works within City managed reserves in accordance with the requirements of the CALP Act, the City's Invasive Plants and Animals Policy and Procedure and any site-specific management plans.	High	Existing	<2 yrs	P&OS, CC&E
2.5	Complete an audit of all City owned and managed nature reserves, ensuring each has been adequately classified according to their primary purpose.	Very High	TBC	Ongoing	CC&E, P&OS
2.6	Maximise opportunities to restore diverse groundcover and shrub vegetation on council owned and managed land and waterways and through council programs (e.g., Greening Greater Bendigo), including increasing populations of threatened plant species or communities and Traditional Owner priority species.	Very High	Existing	<2 years	P&OS, CC&E
2.7	Support Djaara and Taungurung to increase connection to country and cultural practices (e.g., food and fibre plants, cultural burns), working towards sole management of public land where appropriate and partnering in stewardship across multiple land tenures where biodiversity values can also be enhanced through joint action.	Very High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E, P&OS
2.8	Increase populations of all species, with particular attention on threatened species and communities, on City managed land, through targeted habitat restoration, enhancement and monitoring of populations, in line with Traditional Owner, federal, state, and regional priorities.	Very High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E, P&OS
2.9	Work with other local government areas, agencies, Traditional Owner Groups and commercial native nurseries to prepare a feasibility study for establishment of an additional native nursery and indigenous seed collection and propagation program, targeting locally rare species to increase genetic diversity, bolster resistance and resilience to climate change and meet growing demand for indigenous plants.	Very High	$$$	<2 yrs	CC&E, P&OS
2.10	Increase and improve significant roadside vegetation across Greater Bendigo through strategic management. Review: • *Strategic Directions Urban Roadside Vegetation Management 2011-2015* • *Strategic Directions Rural Roadside Conservation 2011-2015* • *Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Plan*	Very High	Existing	<5 years	CC&E, P&OS

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
2.11	Create a series of "Tiny Forests" on City managed land at key locations in urban areas and townships across Greater Bendigo that align with Djaara's Forest Gardening priorities to restore important native and cultural habitat and engage the community in their conservation value.	High	$$ for initial pilot/s.	<5 yrs	CC&E, P&OS
2.12	Support habitat restoration on private land by: · Promoting local carbon offset projects, including the program being developed by the North Central CMA · Connecting landholders with funding streams such as the Victorian Government's Bushbank Program and others as appropriate · Connecting landholders with Landcare and other groups · The City's Sustainable Land Management Grants program* · Applying for funding to implement the Habitat Connectivity Plan (Action 3.1). · Collaborating with Djaara to integrate actions from Galk-galk Dhelkunya Forest Gardening Strategy 2022 -2034 **included in the 2023/24 Council budget*	Very High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E
2.13	Increase participation of Bendigo landholders in the Healthy Landscapes project and seek to extend the program to the cropping and horticulture industries. Aim to include Djaara as a partner and to expand the program to other local government areas.	Very High	$$$$ from 2024/25, including for continuation of the Agribusiness Officer position.	Commenced	CC&E
2.14	Increase the number of properties with conservation covenants, particularly in potential biolink areas, by actively promoting the City's applicable Bushcare Incentive rate rebate.	Medium	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E
2.15	Explore options to support the current community run Common Myna control program.	High	Existing	<5 yrs	CC&E
2.16	Track the effectiveness of programs such as the Spring Plains Watershed Repair project and, if highly effective, support similar programs to restore ecological function at appropriate strategic sites.	High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
2.17	Review the management plans for Crosbie and Huntly Regenerative Forestry programs with the aim of maximising biodiversity outcomes while achieving financial co-benefits from forestry products. Investigate opportunities to collaborate with Djaara to integrate Forest Gardening principles into the management of these sites.	Medium	CC&E	<2 yrs	CC&E
2.18	Develop a planned burn policy with Traditional Owner Groups to enhance the natural and cultural values of City managed nature reserves and roadsides where appropriate and investigate the need for additional resources to deliver an ecological and cultural burn program.	Medium	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E, P&OS
2.19	Finalise preparation of a Storm Water Management Strategy that, amongst other things, aims to enhance the quality of water entering Greater Bendigo's creeks and rivers through sediment and pollution control.	Medium	$$$	Commenced	CC&E



Image by Mark Hall.

3. CONNECT

Goal: Connect vegetation communities, habitats and species through strategic linkages

Measures of success

- Improved habitat connectivity across Greater Bendigo to aid species movement
- All native vegetation surrounding Bendigo is connected
- More connected urban greenspaces, including enhancement of nature strips through indigenous plantings

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
3.1	Develop and implement a detailed 'Habitat Connectivity Plan' based on the Potential Biolink Areas Plan (Fig. 17) included in this strategy. The plan will be developed in partnership with Traditional Owners and land management agencies and incorporate current conservation efforts, interrogate modelled biodiversity and cultural values (Fig. 16), build adaptive capacity to climate change, and engage local landholders to help create a series of biolinks to aid species diversity and movement on land and in waterways across Greater Bendigo.	Very High	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E
3.2	Develop a program that supports re-naturalisation of nature strips, particularly in urban areas and townships, to increase mostly ground cover and shrubby native plant species diversity, improve habitat for wildlife and neighborhood character (e.g., pollinator corridors project). Encourage the community to apply for a community grant or partner with a corporate sponsor that would support its implementation.	Very High	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E
3.3	Work with North Central Catchment Management Authority and other stakeholders on a local carbon offset program, ensuring offset sites align with priority areas for habitat enhancement and connectivity.	High	Pilot program funding included in 2023/24 Council budget.	Commenced	CC&E, P&OS
3.4	Explore opportunities to utilise regenerative forestry on council managed land to improve habitat and cultural connectivity across the landscape and provide opportunities for more sustainable firewood practices – i.e., in addition to Crosby and Huntly Regenerative Forestry programs. Integrate Djaara's Forest Gardening principles where possible and appropriate.	Medium	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E, P&OS

4. ADVOCATE

Goal: Advocate for and support the Greater Bendigo community on matters of environmental stewardship.

Measures of success

- The City, in collaboration with other organisations as appropriate, raises awareness amongst other levels of government of policy, legislation and funding changes needed to enhance biodiversity in Greater Bendigo and the wider region.

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
4.1	Advocate for 1) the return of land to Djaara and Taungurung for sole management; and 2) for the extension of protected land, through the state purchase and registration of significant bushland areas not currently protected (e.g., application for National Park classification for the Wellsford Forest).	High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E
4.2	Advocate for stronger biodiversity controls in state and federal legislation as appropriate.	High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E
4.3	Advocate for Victorian and Australian listing of threatened species, pest plants and animals and threatening processes as needed. Support delisting of species that have recovered and are no longer threatened as appropriate.	High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E
4.4	Advocate for a review of funding to catchment management authorities (CMAs) to allow them to actively protect and restore riparian habitats.	High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E
4.5	Advocate for Victorian and Australian government funding programs that are long term, support scaling of existing successful program and approaches and, where possible, are aligned to state, regional and local priorities and, therefore, are non-competitive.	High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E

5. ENGAGE

Goal: Engage the community in environmental stewardship and increase biodiversity awareness

Measures of success

- Increased awareness of, and connection with, the unique natural environment of Greater Bendigo and threats to its survival
- Strong collaborative partnerships with other agencies and groups to conduct region-wide projects, better resource community environment programs, coordinate data collection and management and incorporate all values and needs
- Increased participation in community, school, and environment group (inc. conservation, Landcare and Friends groups) events and citizen science activities

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
5.1	Establish a permanent Biodiversity Engagement Officer position to meet growing community needs for support, citizen science activities and education (e.g., assistance to community environment groups and supporting the establishment of new groups and programs).	Very High	Included in 2023/24 Council budget	Commenced	CC&E
5.2	Work collaboratively with Djaara and Taungurung, environmental groups and agencies, businesses, farmers, and individuals to increase and share environmental storytelling and bring Traditional Owner voices back to the landscape (e.g., historical accounts, on-country yarns, art installations, greater media coverage of environmental stewardship).	Very High	$$	<5 yrs	CC&E
5.3	Establish a program to increase community access to nature and to raise awareness about Greater Bendigo's natural values and how to protect and enhance them (e.g., school program, nature activities, planting, clean-up days, dead tree detectives, weed busters, stormwater education).	Very High	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E
5.4	Continue to develop guides on the natural values of Greater Bendigo and how best to support them on private land (e.g., weeds guide, species guides).	Medium	TBC	<5 yrs	CC&E, P&OS
5.5	Consider establishing community environment programs that fall under the "Gardens for Wildlife" banner (e.g., pollinator plantings on nature strips and in schools, tiny forests, backyard biodiversity, wilderhoods).	Medium	$$	<5 yrs	CC&E

#	Actions	Priority	Resources	Start	Lead
5.6	Assist in the development, promotion and distribution of a bushwalking guide to Bendigo (tracks and trails) with other groups and agencies (e.g., CVACF, Spring Plains Steering Committee), including the Bendigo Bushland Trail, outlined for reinstatement in the Greater Bendigo Public Space Plan.	Medium	Existing	Commenced	CC&E, P&OS
5.7	Increase environmental awareness of City staff, including training on significant natural values of Greater Bendigo. Provide specific training for on-ground staff on natural values protection when conducting work.	High	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E
5.8	Investigate implementing the Nature Stewards program run by the Victorian National Parks Association to help build capacity amongst interested individuals and environmental groups across Greater Bendigo.	Medium	Existing	<5 yrs	CC&E
5.9	Celebrate and recognise the contribution community groups make to the environment and biodiversity conservation.	Medium	Existing	Commenced	CC&E
5.10	Utilise citizen science programs to train the community to help deliver the Biodiversity Monitoring Program included in this Strategy.	Very High	Included in 2023/24 Council budget.	<2 yrs	CC&E
5.11	Provide education and support to the community for online data recording and management tools (e.g., Fulcrum, iNaturalist, Victorian Biodiversity Atlas).	Very High	Existing	<2 yrs	CC&E
5.12	Increase inter-agency and community group data sharing across Greater Bendigo (e.g., use of shared platforms such as iNaturalist and the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas) and ensure data is effectively managed to allow for appropriate analysis of trends.	High	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E
5.13	Establish an annual BioBlitz across Greater Bendigo, engaging relevant land management agencies, groups, Landcare, and the public.	Medium	Existing	Ongoing	CC&E

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring program

A Biodiversity Monitoring Program has been designed to assess how the City is tracking against each of the five pillars of the strategy. This will form the basis for how we detect changes in species and communities and measure impacts of actions taken to protect, enhance and connect biodiversity values, and engage the community in environmental stewardship. A summary of the proposed approach is presented in Table 4.

Note that this monitoring program is the minimum, base level of study required to understand the biodiversity values of Greater Bendigo and does not preclude other surveys and monitoring activities which will also increase our knowledge and understanding.



Image by William Terry.

Table 4: Summary of the proposed monitoring program

Pillar	Protect	Enhance	Connect	Advocate	Engage
Monitoring question	What changes to biodiversity are occurring across Greater Bendigo?	What improvements to biodiversity are occurring on City owned and managed land, including roadsides, across Greater Bendigo?	Has the extent and connectivity of native vegetation changed across Greater Bendigo?	What advocacy has the City undertaken aimed at achieving structural changes at the state and federal level?	Are the City, the community and environmental groups more engaged in environmental education and stewardship?
What is being monitored	Presence and abundance of indicator species or communities to monitor ecosystem health.	Habitat structure and health assessments of City managed land.	Native vegetation cover across Greater Bendigo, including within potential biolink areas.	Development of submissions and proactive advocacy statements to state and national governments as appropriate.	Health and activity of Landcare and Friend groups. Number of participants at environment events. Number of partnership programs and activities with Djaara and Taungurung. Engagement in citizen science activities.

Pillar	Protect	Enhance	Connect	Advocate	Engage
Data sources	Victorian Biodiversity Atlas iNaturalist Atlas of Living Australia Ebird.org/Birdlife databases On-ground surveys and observations (recorded in the above three databases)	Habitat health assessments database (to be developed for Greater Bendigo)	Relevant DEECA GIS layers (including lidar) City managed database of landholder and agency involvement in biolinks projects across Greater Bendigo – e.g., grants allocated etc.	Number of submissions and advocacy statements.	North Central CMA Landcare Health Check. City managed database of event participants. City managed data of number and type of Traditional Owner collaborations. Species records uploaded to iNaturalist and the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.
Measures of Success	Reduction in removal of native vegetation from the City's operations Better protection of remnant native vegetation and biodiversity values, especially large old trees and grasslands. No new species or elevation of status in the FFG and EPBC Acts Threatened Species Lists. Reduced impacts to wildlife from domestic and wild pest animals. Increase in protected land area, through covenants and reclassification of crown land.	Increase in habitat quality at City managed natural reserves to achieve a conservation value of 'high' or 'very high'. Increase in species abundance and diversity, particularly of priority species and communities and culturally significant plants and animals. Moving toward self-determination of Traditional Owners groups, including increased first nation management practices incorporated across public and private land. Increase in the number of significant roadside vegetation sites.	Improved habitat connectivity across Greater Bendigo to aid species movement. All native vegetation surrounding Bendigo is connected. More connected urban greenspaces, including enhancement of nature strips through indigenous plantings.	The City, in collaboration with other organisations as appropriate, raises awareness amongst other levels of government of policy, legislation and funding changes needed to enhance biodiversity in Greater Bendigo and the wider region.	Increased awareness of, and connection with, the unique natural environment of Greater Bendigo and threats to its survival. Strong collaborative partnerships with other agencies and groups to conduct region-wide projects, better resource community environment programs and incorporate all values and needs. Increased participation in community, school, Landcare and Friends groups, events and citizen science activities. Data gathering, collation and management is shared between agencies and the community to better understand biodiversity needs and trends

Designing the monitoring program

A detailed monitoring program will be prepared which sets out:

- Verification of possible local extinctions (e.g., species not recorded since 1990) through targeted surveys.
- A suite of terrestrial monitoring sites across a range of priority ecological vegetation communities to be used to monitor both common and threatened species (e.g.,):
  - Annual woodland bird surveys (visual and auditory)
  - Annual arboreal mammal spotlight surveys
  - Installation of nest boxes and annual nestbox surveys
  - Annual pollinator surveys
- A suite of aquatic monitoring sites to be used for (e.g.,):
  - Annual Platypus and small-bodied native fish surveys (visual and possible eDNA)
  - Waterwatch and River Detectives programs (where possible)
- A suite of sites that qualify as Creekline Grassy Woodland (FFG listed) and Grey Box Grassy Woodland (EPBC listed) for:
  - Annual threatened flora surveys

Indicator species

Proposed indicator species and communities comprise (but are not limited to):

Systematic annual surveys

- Brush-tailed Phascogale (Tuan) Woodland birds, including the Swift Parrot
- Colletid bees
- Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon
- Spiny Rice Flower
- Erect Pepper-cress

Opportunistic and site-specific surveys

- Potential locally extinct species
- Pink-tailed Worm Lizard
- Growling Grass Frog
- Striped Legless Lizard
- Eltham Copper Butterfly
- Grey-headed Flying-fox
- Silver Banksia

These species or communities were selected using the following broad criteria:

- The presence and abundance of the species/community is an indicator of broader ecosystem health
- The species/community is known to occur within Greater Bendigo
- The species/community is listed as threatened within Victoria or is regionally significant
- The species/community possesses one or more traits that would appeal to the local community and stimulate conservation awareness and action.
- The species can be readily surveyed by the City and/or the local community
- The species may already be surveyed by local Landcare and Friends groups or be part of targeted management by land-managers

Key actions related to monitoring. (see Biodiversity Action Plan section)

1.8, 1.10, 1.11, 1.15, 1.17, 1.20, 1.21, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.7, 2.8 – 2.14, 2.16, 2.17, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 5.1 - 5.3, 5.5, 5.6, 5.8 – 5.14.



Image by William Terry.

Evaluation and reporting

Ensure regular evaluation of, and reporting on, actions to determine and communicate their effectiveness in achieving the strategy's goals.

The City is committed to accountability and reporting on program outcomes. Adaptive management is especially important for biodiversity conservation to ensure actions are tailored to meet any new information gathered. For instance, new populations of a threatened species may be discovered at a site, raising the priority level of that site. Therefore, as we learn more about the biodiversity values across Greater Bendigo the monitoring program will need to change to incorporate this population and some on ground works may occur at the site to ensure the species survival. Those on ground works would be evaluated to determine if they achieved the desired outcome of a healthy self-sustaining population of the threatened species. This cyclical and interrelated process of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is a simple framework to help us understand what is being achieved and guide our decision making to improve projects and programs. This MEL framework will be used to assess the short-term and long-term outcomes and impact of each action in meeting the goals of this strategy.

Monitoring: is the ongoing collection of data about progress/performance toward goals (inc. the collection of species-specific data).

Evaluation: is setting out questions and using data and evidence to answer them. Based on this data, informed judgements can be made about the success of a project or program and where improvements can be made.

Learning: is reflecting on, sharing and using findings from monitoring and evaluation.

As part of the MEL process, we will also conduct:

- Annual reporting on strategic actions (set out in Table 5)
- Detailed 5-yr reporting to show trends and impact and determine future measures of success.



Image by William Terry.

Table 5: Annual Environment Report reporting framework.

Measure of success	Indicator	2026 Target or trend	2033 Target	Reporting timeframes
PROTECT: Ensure there is adequate protection of Greater Bendigo's unique natural environment into the future				
Reduction in removal of native vegetation from the City's operations	General Habitat Units of native vegetation removed due to City operations*.	150% net increase in biodiversity value based on the General Habitat Score of the offset compared to the vegetation removed.	150% net increase in biodiversity value based on the General Habitat Score of the offset compared to the vegetation removed.	Annually From 22/23
	Total General Habitat Score of native vegetation offsets secured on City managed land to compensate for removals*			Annually From 22/23
	Ha of native vegetation removed from City operations*	Declining	Declining	Annually From 22/23
	# medium and large trees removed from City operations* **Includes permitted and exempted removal under the planning scheme*	Declining	Declining	Annually From 22/23
Increase in habitat quality at City managed natural reserves to achieve a conservation value of high or very high.	Ha weed control on City managed land.	N/A	N/A	Annually From 22/23
	% of City managed Natural Reserves subject to weed control	Declining	Declining	Annually From 22/23
	Ha revegetation on City managed land.	N/A	N/A	Annually From 22/23
	Ha of enhancement plantings on City managed land.	N/A	N/A	Annually From 22/23
	Habitat quality / condition scores for selected City managed natural reserves	Baseline assessments complete	Increase in habitat quality scores of all assessed reserves to "high" or "very high"	Every 3 years From 23/24

Measure of success	Indicator	2026 Target or trend	2033 Target	Reporting timeframes
Better protection of remnant native vegetation and biodiversity values, especially large old trees and grasslands.	Application of environmental overlays where needed	Completion of the review of environmental planning overlays	Implementation of the environmental overlays planning review – i.e., completion of the planning scheme amendment	Annually From 22/23
Reduced impacts to wildlife from domestic and wild pest animals	# cats brought into BARC	Declining	Declining	Annually From 22/23
	# cats and foxes sighted in City reserves.	Declining	Declining	Annually From 23/24
Increase in protected land area through covenants and reclassification of crown land	# properties accessing the rate reduction for Trust for Nature covenants.	Increasing	Increasing	Annually From 22/23
No new species or elevation of status in FFG and EPBC Acts Threatened Species Lists	Number and status of endangered species in Greater Bendigo listed under the FFG or EPBC Acts	No increase in number or status of listed species	No increase in number or status of listed species	Annually From 22/23
ENHANCE: Improve the quality of native vegetation and enhance habitat and structures that support species and ecosystem diversity				
Increase in species abundance and diversity, particularly of priority species and communities and culturally significant plants and animals	Presence and abundance of indicator species, including fish	Increase from baseline condition assessment at each City managed natural reserve	Increase from 2026 records	Annually From 23/24
Increase in the number of significant roadside vegetation sites	Number of "significant roadsides"	Increase from last survey in 2009	Increase in number since 2026	Every 3 years From 24/25
Increased self-determination of Djaara and Taungurung, including increased indigenous cultural landscape management practices incorporated across public and private land	# reserves managed by Traditional Owners	Two additional reserves (from 2021 baseline)	Four additional reserves (from 2021 baseline)	Annually From 22/23

Measure of success	Indicator	2026 Target or trend	2033 Target	Reporting timeframes
CONNECT: Connected vegetation communities, habitats and species through strategic linkages				
Improved habitat connectivity across Greater Bendigo to aid species movement.	Number of disconnected patches of native vegetation over 20ha in area.	Declining	All patches are connected.	Every 3 years From 23/24
All native vegetation surrounding Bendigo is connected	As above	As above	As above	N/A
More connected urban greenspaces, including enhancement of nature strips through indigenous plantings.	% tree cover in urban areas	23% increase from 2019 baseline	28% increase from 2019 baseline	Every 5 years From 23/24
	% tree cover across Greater Bendigo	Increasing	35% increase from 2016 baseline year	When DEECA GIS layers are updated From 23/24
	Fish populations in Bendigo Creek??		Greater number and abundance of species.	Every 3 years From 23/24
ENGAGE: Engage the community in environmental stewardship and increase biodiversity awareness				
Increased awareness of and connection with the unique natural environment of Greater Bendigo and threats to its survival	# attendees at environment events (City run events only until additional data is available) # new participants	Increasing	Increasing	Annually From 22/23
Strong collaborative partnerships with other agencies and groups to conduct region-wide projects, better resource community environment programs, coordinate data collection and management and incorporate all value and needs	# collaborative projects underway.	N/A - Relevant collaborations underway	N/A - Relevant collaborations underway	Annually From 22/23

Measure of success	Indicator	2026 Target or trend	2033 Target	Reporting timeframes
Increased participation in community, school, Landcare and Friends groups, events and citizen science activities.	# people who are members of Landcare or Friends groups # Number of school programs/events on biodiversity	Increasing	Increasing	Annually From 22/23
ADVOCATE: Advocate for and support the Greater Bendigo community on matters of environmental stewardship				
The City in collaboration with other organisations as appropriate raises awareness amongst other levels of government of policy, legislation and funding changes needed to enhance biodiversity in Greater Bendigo and the wider region.	# advocacy submissions, letters, and other initiatives			Annually From 22/23



Image by Bird Brains.

Appendices

1.1 LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES (FFG ACT)

PLANTS

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Annual Buttons	*Leptorhynchos orientalis*	EN
Arching Flax-lily	*Dianella sp. aff. longifolia (Benambra)*	CR
Ausfeld's Wattle	*Acacia ausfeldii*	EN
Austral Crane's-bill	*Geranium solanderi var. solanderi*	EN
Australian Broomrape	*Orobanche cernua var. australiana*	EN
Bear's-ear	*Cymbonotus lawsonianus*	EN
Bent-leaf Wattle	*Acacia flexifolia*	EN
Blue Burr-daisy	*Calotis cuneifolia*	EN
Blue Mallee	*Eucalyptus polybractea*	EN
Blunt-leaf Pomaderris	*Pomaderris helianthemifolia subsp. minor*	EN
Branching Groundsel	*Senecio cunninghamii var. cunninghamii*	EN
Bristly Greenhood	*Pterostylis setifera*	EN
Broom Bitter-pea	*Daviesia genistifolia*	EN
Buloke	*Allocasuarina luehmannii*	CR
Button Immortelle	*Leptorhynchos waitzia*	EN
Cane Spear-grass	*Austrostipa breviglumis*	EN
Castlemaine Spider-orchid	*Caladenia clavescens*	CR
Clover Glycine	*Glycine latrobeana*	VU
Coccid Emu-bush	*Eremophila gibbifolia*	VU
Common Sour-bush	*Choretrum glomeratum var. glomeratum*	EN
Cottony Cassinia	*Cassinia ozothamnoides*	EN
Crimson Sun-orchid	*Thelymitra X macmillanii*	VU
Cut-leaf Burr-daisy	*Calotis anthemoides*	CR
Dainty Phebalium	*Phebalium festivum*	EN
Dargile Bush-pea	*Pultenaea dargilensis*	CR
Diosma Rice-flower	*Pimelea flava subsp. dichotoma*	EN
Dookie Daisy	*Brachyscome gracilis subsp. gracilis*	EN
Dwarf Cassinia	*Cassinia diminuta*	EN
Dwarf Swainson-pea	*Swainsona phacoides*	EN
Emerald-lip Greenhood	*Pterostylis smaragdyna*	EN
Erect Peppercress	*Lepidium pseudopapillosum*	CR
Flat-leaf Bush-pea	*Pultenaea platyphylla*	EN
Floodplain Fireweed	*Senecio campylocarpus*	EN
Fuzzy New Holland Daisy	*Vittadinia cuneata var. morrisii*	EN
Giant Honey-myrtle	*Melaleuca armillaris subsp. armillaris*	EN
Globe-hood Sun-orchid	*Thelymitra X chasmogama*	EN
Golden Sour-bush	*Choretrum glomeratum var. chrysanthum*	EN
Goldfield Boronia	*Boronia anemonifolia subsp. aurifodina*	EN
Goldfields Grevillea	*Grevillea dryophylla*	EN
Grey Grass-tree	*Xanthorrhoea glauca subsp. angustifolia*	CR

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Hairy Tails	*Ptilotus erubescens*	CR
Half-bearded Spear-grass	*Austrostipa hemipogon*	VU
Inland Pomaderris	*Pomaderris paniculosa subsp. paniculosa*	EN
Jericho Wire-grass	*Aristida jerichoensis var. subspinulifera*	CR
Kamarooka Mallee	*Eucalyptus froggattii*	CR
Lanky Buttons	*Leptorhynchos elongatus*	EN
Large Rustyhood	*Pterostylis maxima*	CR
Late-flower Flax-lily	*Dianella tarda*	CR
Long Eryngium	*Eryngium paludosum*	EN
Maroon Leek-orchid	*Prasophyllum frenchii*	EN
Melbourne Yellow-gum	*Eucalyptus leucoxylon subsp. connata*	EN
Midlands Spider-orchid	*Caladenia sp. aff. concolor (Midlands)*	EN
Oval-leaf Pseudanthus	*Pseudanthus ovalifolius*	VU
Pale Flax-lily	*Dianella sp. aff. longifolia (Riverina)*	CR
Plump Swamp Wallaby-grass	*Amphibromus pithogastrus*	CR
Purple Diuris	*Diuris punctata*	EN
Purple Eyebright	*Euphrasia collina subsp. muelleri*	EN
Rayless Daisy-bush	*Olearia tubuliflora*	EN
Red Swainson-pea	*Swainsona plagiotropis*	EN
Rising Star Guinea-flower	*Hibbertia humifusa subsp. humifusa*	EN
Sand Rush	*Juncus psammophilus*	EN
Sarcozona	*Sarcozona praecox*	EN
Sikh's Whiskers	*Pterostylis boormanii*	EN
Silver Snow-daisy	*Celmisia tomentella*	VU
Slender Club-sedge	*Isolepis congrua*	EN
Slender Mint-bush	*Prostanthera saxicola var. bracteolata*	EN
Slender Water-ribbons	*Cycnogeton dubium*	EN
Small Milkwort	*Comesperma polygaloides*	CR
Small Scurf-pea	*Cullen parvum*	EN
Small-flower Mat-rush	*Lomandra micrantha subsp. tuberculata*	VU
Small-flower Wallaby-grass	*Rytidosperma monticola*	EN
Small-leaf Goodenia	*Goodenia benthamiana*	EN
Small-leaf Wax-flower	*Philotheca difformis subsp. difformis*	EN
Smooth Minuria	*Minuria integerrima*	VU
Snowy Mint-bush	*Prostanthera nivea var. nivea*	VU
Southern Swainson-pea	*Swainsona behriana*	EN
Spiny Rice-flower	*Pimelea spinescens subsp. spinescens*	CR
Spotted Gum	*Corymbia maculata*	VU
Sutton Grange Greenhood	*Pterostylis agrestis*	CR
Swamp Diuris	*Diuris palustris*	EN
Tan Leek-orchid	*Prasophyllum erythrocommum*	CR
Tough Scurf-pea	*Cullen tenax*	EN
Umbrella Wattle	*Acacia oswaldii*	CR
Velvet Daisy-bush	*Olearia pannosa subsp. cardiophylla*	EN
Waterbush	*Myoporum montanum*	EN
Western Golden-tip	*Goodia medicaginea*	EN

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Whipstick Crowea	*Crowea exalata subsp. revoluta*	CR
Whipstick Westringia	*Westringia crassifolia*	EN
Whirrakee Wattle	*Acacia williamsonii*	VU
Winged Water-starwort	*Callitriche umbonata*	EN
Woodland Leek-orchid	*Prasophyllum sp. aff. Validum*	EN
Yellow-tongue Daisy	*Brachyscome chrysoglossa*	EN

MAMMALS

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Brush-tailed Phascogale	*Phascogale tapoatafa*	VU
Common Dunnart	*Sminthopsis murina murina*	VU
Grey-headed Flying-fox	*Pteropus poliocephalus*	VU
Platypus	*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*	VU
Spot-tailed Quoll	*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus*	EN

BIRDS

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Australasian Bittern	*Botaurus poiciloptilus*	CR
Australian Bustard	*Ardeotis australis*	CR
Australian Painted Snipe	*Rostratula benghalensis australis*	CR
Australasian Shoveler	*Anas rhynchotis*	VU
Barking Owl	*Ninox connivens*	CR
Black Falcon	*Falco subniger*	CR
Blue-billed Duck	*Oxyura australis*	VU
Brolga	*Grus rubicunda*	EN
Bush Stone-curlew	*Burhinus grallarius*	CR
Caspian Tern	*Hydroprogne caspia*	VU
Chestnut-rumped Heathwren	*Hylacola pyrrhopygia*	VU
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	VU
Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	EN
Crested Bellbird	*Oreoica gutturalis*	EN
Curlew Sandpiper	*Calidris ferruginea*	CR
Diamond Dove	*Geopelia cuneata*	VU
Diamond Firetail	*Stagonopleura guttata*	VU
Eastern Curlew	*Numenius madagascariensis*	CR
Eastern Great Egret	*Ardea modesta*	VU
Freckled Duck	*Stictonetta naevosa*	EN
Grey-crowned Babbler	*Pomatostomus temporalis*	VU
Grey Falcon	*Falco hypoleucos*	VU
Grey Goshawk	*Accipiter novaehollandiae novaehollandiae*	EN
Ground Cuckoo-shrike	*Coracina maxima*	EN
Hardhead	*Aythya australis*	VU
Hooded Robin	*Melanodryas cucullata*	VU
Inland Dotterel	*Charadrius australis*	VU
Lewin's Rail	*Rallus pectoralis*	VU

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Little Eagle	*Hieraaetus morphnoides*	VU
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	EN
Magpie Goose	*Anseranas semipalmata*	VU
Malleefowl	*Leipoa ocellata*	VU
Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*	EN
Masked Owl	*Tyto novaehollandiae novaehollandiae*	CR
Musk Duck	*Biziura lobata*	VU
Painted Honeyeater	*Grantiella picta*	VU
Plains-wanderer	*Pedionomus torquatus*	CR
Plumed Egret	*Ardea intermedia plumifera*	CR
Powerful Owl	*Ninox strenua*	VU
Purple-gaped Honeyeater	*Lichenostomus cratitius*	VU
Regent Honeyeater	*Xanthomyza phrygia*	CR
Speckled Warbler	*Chthonicola sagittata*	EN
Square-tailed Kite	*Lophoictinia isura*	VU
Swift Parrot	*Lathamus discolor*	CR
Turquoise Parrot	*Neophema pulchella*	VU
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	*Haliaeetus leucogaster*	EN
White-throated Needletail	*Hirundapus caudacutus*	VU
Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	EN

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Bearded Dragon	*Pogona barbata*	VU
Broad-shelled Turtle	*Chelodina expansa*	EN
Brown Toadlet	*Pseudophryne bibronii*	EN
Growling Grass Frog	*Litoria raniformis*	VU
Murray River Turtle	*Emydura macquarii*	CR
Pink-tailed Worm-Lizard	*Aprasia parapulchella*	EN
Striped Legless Lizard	*Delma impar*	EN
Lace Monitor	*Varanus varius*	EN

INVERTEBRATES

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Eltham Copper Butterfly	*Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida*	CR
Golden Sun Moth	*Synemon plana*	VU

FISHES

Common name	Scientific name	Status
Freshwater Catfish	*Tandanus tandanus*	EN
Murray Cod	*Maccullochella peelii*	EN
Macquarie Perch	*Macquaria australasica*	EN
Southern Purple-spotted Gudgeon	*Mogurnda adspersa*	CR

THREATENED COMMUNITIES OF FLORA AND FAUNA

Victorian temperate-woodland bird community
Creekline Grassy Woodland (Goldfields) Community
Lowland Riverine Fish Community of the Southern Murray-Darling Basin
Northern Plains Grassland Community
Grey Box – Buloke Grassy Woodland Community

1.2 POTENTIALLY THREATENING PROCESS IN GREATER BENDIGO

The FFG Act defines a potentially threatening process as 'a process which may have the capability to threaten the survival, abundance or evolutionary development of any taxon or community of flora or fauna[60]'

Listed below are threatening processes for Biodiversity in Greater Bendigo along with a measure of the likelihood of the threat.

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 - Potentially Threatening Processes List (as of July 2022)	**Likelihood in Greater Bendigo**
Alteration to the natural flow regimes of rivers and streams	High
Alteration to the natural temperature regimes of rivers and streams	High
Collection of native orchids	Moderate
Degradation and loss of habitats caused by feral Horses *(Equus caballus)*	Low
Degradation of native riparian vegetation along Victorian rivers and streams	High
Habitat fragmentation as a threatening process for fauna in Victoria	High
High frequency fire resulting in disruption of life cycle processes in plants and animals and loss of vegetation structure and composition	Moderate
Human activity which results in artificially elevated or epidemic levels of Myrtle Wilt within Nothofagus-dominated Cool Temperate Rainforest	Low
Inappropriate fire regimes causing disruption to sustainable ecosystem processes and resultant loss of biodiversity	Moderate
Incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during longline fishing operations	Low
Increase in sediment input into Victorian rivers and streams due to human activities	High
Infection of amphibians with Chytrid Fungus, resulting in chytridiomycosis	Moderate
Input of organotins to Victorian marine and estuarine waters	Low
Input of petroleum and related products into Victorian marine and estuarine environments	Low
Input of toxic substances into Victorian rivers and streams	High
Introduction and spread of Spartina to Victorian estuarine environments	Low
Introduction of live fish into waters outside their natural range within a Victorian river catchment after 1770	High
Invasion of native vegetation by Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus* L. agg	Moderate
Invasion of native vegetation by 'environmental weeds'	High
Invasion of native vegetation communities by Tall Wheat-grass *Lophopyrum ponticum*	Low

[60] FFG-Threatening Processes List-July-2022 (environment.vic.gov.au)

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 - Potentially Threatening Processes List (as of July 2022)	Likelihood in Greater Bendigo
Loss of biodiversity as a result of the spread of Coast Wattle (*Acacia longifolia subsp. sophorae*) and Sallow Wattle (*Acacia longifolia subsp. longifolia*) into areas outside its natural range	Low
Loss of biodiversity in native ant populations and potential ecosystem integrity following invasion by Argentine Ants (*Linepithema humile*)	Low
Loss of coarse woody debris from Victorian native forests and woodlands	High
Loss of hollow-bearing trees from Victorian native forests	High
Loss of terrestrial climatic habitat caused by anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases	High
Predation of native wildlife by the cat, Felis catus	High
Predation of native wildlife by the introduced Red Fox Vulpes vulpes	High
Prevention of passage of aquatic biota as a result of the presence of instream structures	High
Reduction in biodiversity of native vegetation by Sambar (*Rusa[1] unicolor*)	Moderate
Reduction in biodiversity resulting from Noisy Miner (*Manorina melanocephala*) populations in Victoria	High
Reduction in biomass and biodiversity of native vegetation through grazing by the Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*	High
Removal of wood debris from Victorian streams	High
Soil and vegetation disturbance resulting from marble mining	Low
Soil degradation and reduction of biodiversity through browsing and competition by feral goats (*Capra hircus*)	Moderate
Soil erosion and vegetation damage and disturbance in the alpine regions of Victoria caused by cattle grazing	Low
Spread of *Pittosporum undulatum* in areas outside its natural distribution	Low
The discharge of human-generated marine debris into Victorian marine or estuarine waters	Low
The introduction and spread of the Large Earth Bumblebee *Bombus terrestri*s into Victorian terrestrial environments	Low
The introduction of exotic organisms into Victorian marine waters	Low
The spread of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* from infected sites into parks and reserves, including roadsides, under the control of a state or local government authority	Low
Threats to native flora and fauna arising from the use by the feral honeybee *Apis mellifera* of nesting hollows and floral resources	Moderate-High
Use of Phytophthora-infected gravel in construction of roads, bridges and reservoirs	Low
Wetland loss and degradation as a result of change in water regime, dredging, draining, filling and grazing	High

1.3 EVC'S IN GREATER BENDIGO

Current Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC's) within Greater Bendigo	2005 Conservation status
127: Valley Heathy Forest (Goldfields)	EN
132: Plains Grassland (Victorian Riverina)	EN
175: Grassy Woodland (Victorian Riverina)	EN
273: Plains Woodland/Plains Grassland/Gilgai Wetland Mosaic (Victorian Riverina)	EN
55: Plains Grassy Woodland (Goldfields)	EN
56: Floodplain Riparian Woodland (Goldfields)	EN
65: Sedge-rich Woodland (Goldfields)	EN
67: Alluvial Terraces Herb-rich Woodland (Goldfields)	EN
68: Creekline Grassy Woodland (Victorian Riverina)	EN
72: Granitic Hills Woodland (Goldfields)	EN
74: Wetland Formation (Victorian Riverina)	EN
803: Plains Woodland (Victorian Riverina)	EN
851: Stream Bank Shrubland (Goldfields)	EN
104: Lignum Swamp (Victorian Riverina)	VU
47: Valley Grassy Forest (Goldfields)	VU
81: Alluvial Terraces Herb-rich Woodland/Creekline Grassy Woodland Mosaic (Goldfields)	VU
22: Grassy Dry Forest (Goldfields)	DEP
48: Heathy Woodland (Goldfields)	DEP
61: Box Ironbark Forest (Goldfields)	DEP
69: Metamorphic Slopes Shrubby Woodland (Goldfields)	DEP
70: Hillcrest Herb-rich Woodland (Goldfields)	DEP
20: Heathy Dry Forest (Goldfields)	LC
93: Sandstone Ridge Shrubland (Goldfields)	LC



Image by John Walter.

1.4 EPBC LISTED SPECIES AND COMMUNITIES WITHIN GREATER BENDIGO

ANIMALS

Common name	Scientific name	National status	Threats
Australian Painted Snipe	*Rostratula australis*	EN	Changed surface and groundwater regimes; Disrupted ecosystem and population processes; Climate change and severe weather; Invasive species and diseases
Australasian Bittern	*Botaurus poiciloptilus*	EN	Adverse fire regimes; Changed surface and groundwater regimes; Climate change and severe weather; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Invasive species and diseases
Eltham Copper Butterfly	*Paralucia pyrodiscus lucida*	EN	Adverse fire regimes; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation
Golden Sun Moth	*Synemon plana*	VU	Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation
Grey Falcon	*Falco hypoleucos*	VU	Disrupted ecosystem and population processes; Invasive species and diseases
Grey-headed Flying-fox	*Pteropus poliocephalus*	VU	Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Overexploitation and other direct harm from human activities
Growling Grass Frog	*Litoria raniformis*	VU	Changed surface and groundwater regimes; Climate change and severe weather; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Invasive species and diseases
Macquarie Perch	*Macquaria australasica*	EN	Adverse fire regimes; Changed surface and groundwater regimes; Climate change and severe weather; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Invasive species and diseases; Overexploitation and other direct harm from human activities
Murray Cod	*Maccullochella peelii*	VU	Changed surface and groundwater regimes; Disrupted ecosystem and population processes; Climate change and severe weather; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Overexploitation and other direct harm from human activities
Painted Honeyeater	*Grantiella picta*	VU	Climate change and severe weather; Invasive species and diseases; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation
Pink-tailed Worm-lizard	*Aprasia parapulchella*	VU	Invasive species and diseases; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation
Plains-wanderer	*Pedionomus torquatus*	CR	Climate change and severe weather; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Disrupted ecosystem and population processes; Invasive species and diseases; Overexploitation and other direct harm from human activities; Pollution
Regent Honeyeater	*Anthochaera phrygia*	CR	Climate change and severe weather; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Disrupted ecosystem and population processes; Invasive species and diseases
Spot-tailed Quoll	*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus*	EN	Adverse fire regimes; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Invasive species and diseases; Overexploitation and other direct harm from human activities; Pollution
Striped Legless Lizard	*Delma impar*	VU	Adverse fire regimes; Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation; Disrupted ecosystem and population processes; Invasive species and diseases

PLANTS

Common name	Scientific name	National status	Plans
Brilliant Sun-orchid	*Thelymitra mackibbinii*	VU	https://bit.ly/3LsEU8o
Clover Glycine	*Glycine latrobeana*	VU	https://bit.ly/3Pqf5sE
Erect Peppercress	*Lepidium pseudopapillosum*	VU	https://bit.ly/3MtqG8A
Fragrant Leek-orchid	*Prasophyllum suaveolens*	EN	https://bit.ly/3PoQQek
Green-striped Greenhood	*Pterostylis chlorogramma*	VU	https://bit.ly/3yJ6nzW
Large-fruit Fireweed	*Senecio macrocarpus*	VU	https://bit.ly/3yHHyEc
Maroon Leek-orchid	*Prasophyllum frenchii*	EN	https://bit.ly/3FTgxPP
Matted Flax-lily	*Dianella amoena*	EN	https://bit.ly/3PsSEmI
McIvor Spider-orchid	*Caladenia audasii*	EN	https://bit.ly/3NftG8k
Ornate Pink Fingers	*Caladenia ornata*	VU	https://bit.ly/3a5udeR
Plains Rice-flower	*Pimelea spinescens subsp. spinescens*	CR	https://bit.ly/3wk9eO5
Red Darling-pea	*Swainsona plagiotropis*	VU	https://bit.ly/3LmX5Mm
Ridged Water-milfoil	*Myriophyllum porcatum*	VU	https://bit.ly/3Ng9Vxx
River Swamp Wallaby-grass	*Amphibromus fluitans*	VU	https://bit.ly/3yGIl8p
Slender Darling-pea	*Swainsona murrayana*	VU	https://bit.ly/39pJeYw
Southern Shepherd's Purse	*Ballantinia antipoda*	EN	https://bit.ly/37R4je5
Sturdy Leek-orchid	*Prasophyllum validum*	VU	https://bit.ly/3leWhyE
Trailing Hop-bush	*Dodonaea procumbens*	VU	https://bit.ly/3sEvgsH
Turnip Copperburr	*Sclerolaena napiformis*	EN	https://bit.ly/3wzsNAK
Whipstick Westringia	*Westringia crassifolia*	EN	https://bit.ly/3lhM4S7

COMMUNITY

Community	National status	Plans
Grey Box *(Eucalyptus microcarpa)* Grassy Woodlands and Derived Native Grasslands of South-eastern Australia	EN	https://bit.ly/403QspG
Buloke Woodlands of the Riverina and Murray-Darling Depression Bioregions	EN	https://bit.ly/3Uz5zqf
White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland	CR	https://bit.ly/3o7oMmL
Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains	CR	https://bit.ly/3GAe6TZ



1.5 STAKEHOLDERS GROUPS INVOLVED IN BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Stakeholder	Relevant area of responsibility and available policies/plans
Land managers	
Dja Dja Wurrung	Manage the Greater Bendigo National Park with Parks Victoria through the *Joint Management Plan for the Dja Dja Wurrung Parks Strategy* which was returned to Djaara as Aboriginal title and is no longer held by the Crown. Have rights that acknowledge their obligations for caring for Country, generally under Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and specifically under the Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria that acknowledge their obligations for caring for Country as public land managers of land in the municipality west of the Campaspe River. All Crown land on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) is Aboriginal Title and Djaara has a goal to be the sole managers. Under the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) and Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) means that Dja Dja Wurrung People have procedural rights over what happens on Crown Land. Caring for Country through delivery of many strategies including, Galk-galk Dhelkunya – forest gardening, including Djandak Wi (fire) cultural burns to manage fire risk and support healthy country, revegetation and rehabilitation, regenerative practices, cultural thinning and water management. **Strategies/plans:** · *Recognition and Settlement Agreement* · *Natural Resource Agreement* · *Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan 2014-2034* · *Joint Management Plan for the Dja Dja Wurrung Parks Strategy* · *Galk-galk Dhelkunya (Forest Gardening Strategy) 2022-2034* · *Climate Change Strategy 2023-2034*
Taungurung	Caretakers and custodians of land to the east of the Campaspe River within the municipality boundary. **Strategies/plans:** · *Taungurung Buk Dadbagi - Taungurung Country Plan*
Parks Victoria (PV)	Jointly manage Greater Bendigo National Park with DJAARA and several other crown land reserves. Responsible for management plans and strategies associated with parks and reserves within their management, beekeeping and firewood collection.

Stakeholder	Relevant area of responsibility and available policies/plans
Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA)	Manages crown land reserves. Manages the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas and the online platform, NatureKit. Land for Wildlife program across private land. Funding for Victorian Landcare Program, including Victorian Landcare Grants & Landcare Facilitator positions (at least two positions hosted by Landcare networks in Greater Bendigo). State-wide planning policies and modelling regarding native vegetation. Assist regulators (such as the City) to ensure compliance with Acts such as the Planning and Environment Act 1987, particularly in relation to native vegetation removal and offsets. Funding for biodiversity conservation projects and on-ground works, e.g., Biodiversity Response Planning and Bushbank. **Strategies/plans:** · *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* · *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*
North Central Catchment Management Authority	Manages landscape scale projects for biodiversity protection on private land and Landcare programs including funding (both Australian and Victorian Government) for Landcare and friends group projects. Manage waterways and flood impacts, regulatory role in waterway permits. **Strategies/plans:** · *Regional Catchment Strategy 2021-2027*
Country Fire Authority (CFA)	Fire management, including planned burns for fuel reduction.
Coliban Water	Manage land at sites of water supply and treatment. **Strategies/plans:** · *Biodiversity Benefits Strategy (in development)*
VicTrack	Manage rail reserves and tramways.
Regional Roads Victoria (Loddon mallee)	Manage a range of roadsides across the municipality, including multiple road improvement projects.
Community and not-for-profit organisations	
Biolinks Alliance	Engaged in large-scale restoration to achieve connectivity across regions. Current local projects include the Heathcote Local 2 Landscape project and Spring Plains Watershed Repair project. **Strategies/plans:** · *Framework for Action for Connecting Landscapes in Central Victoria*

Stakeholder	Relevant area of responsibility and available policies/plans
Trust for Nature (TfN)	Promote long-term conservation on private land, through conservation covenants. A 100% rate rebate is provided to those properties that have a conservation covenant in the City. **Strategies/plans:** · *Strategic Plan 2021-2025* · *Statewide Conservation Plan 2021-2030*
Wilderlands	Provide an opportunity for individuals and organisations to purchase Biological Diversity Units', representing 1sqm of land protected in-perpetuity to help achieve 30% protection of nature by 2030. **Strategies/plans:** · *Wilderlands Whitepaper*
Landcare and Friends groups	On-ground action through grant funded local projects and regular working bees. Community education through walks and talks, land management workshops and the development of brochures and information. Monitoring programs, including nest boxes. The local knowledge and action of these groups is vital for the development and implementation of the biodiversity strategy. **Strategies/plans:** · *Honeyeater Bushland Reserve Management Plan 2021-2026* · *Ironbark Gully Trail Concept Plan - December 2016*
Spring Plains Steering Committee	This group formed to guide the management actions of the Spring Plains Habitat Enhancement Project, undertaken by Biolinks Alliance. They are also actively engaged in multiple biodiversity projects around Heathcote.
Bendigo and District Environment Council	Environmental advocacy group affiliated with Environment Victoria who campaign on climate, sustainability and nature protection issues.
Bendigo Sustainability Group	Community organisation focused on increasing access to renewable energy and supporting the community to minimise waste and act on climate change.
Field Naturalist Club of Bendigo	This club encourages the exchange of knowledge, stimulates interest in naturalist activities and encourages the protection of the natural environment. They hold monthly meetings, workshops and excursion for people to engage with nature. **Strategies/plans:** · *Whirrakke (monthly members newsletter with wildlife observations)*
Wellsford Forest Conservation Alliance	Group seeking the protection of the Wellsford Forest, particularly from the devastating effects of on-going logging.
La Trobe Environmental Action Forum (LEAF)	A network of people from La Trobe University, Bendigo with a common interest in the environment, social justice, animal rights and indigenous values.

Stakeholder	Relevant area of responsibility and available policies/plans
Bendigo Climate Alliance	A group working to connect, support and promote community groups, organisations and businesses in Bendigo that are actively working to combat the climate emergency.
Central Victoria Australian Conservation Foundation Group (CVACF)	Community group supporting the work of the Australian Conservation Foundation and co-ordinating local conservation programs and projects.
Bendigo Family Nature Club	A volunteer organisation helping families in Bendigo to discover more of their environment. Presented in partnership with Bendigo Sustainability Group and the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club.
Australian Plant Society (Victoria) – Bendigo and Heathcote Branches	Bendigo and Heathcote District Groups dedicated to promoting Australian native plants.
Wildlife rescue Information Network (WRIN)	A volunteer-run organisation dedicated to the rescue and rehabilitation of native fauna found injured, sick or orphaned.
Wildlife Rescue Emergency Service (WRES)	WRES rescue, rehabilitate and release wildlife back to their native habitat following emergencies such as bushfire or flooding, impacting on Victorian native wildlife.
Birdlife Australia (Bendigo-Echuca)	Ongoing observations and recording of bird species across Greater Bendigo.
Victorian National Parks Association	Non-profit nature conservation organisation seeking to protect Victoria's unique natural environment and biodiversity through the establishment and effective management of national parks and conservation reserves. **Strategies/plans:** · *Living Next to Nature: Being a Good Neighbour to Bendigo's Bushland*
City of Greater Bendigo	
Climate and Environment Unit	Environmental policies, strategies and plans Community engagement **Strategies/plans:** · *Climate and Environment Strategy 2021-2026* · *Reimagining Bendigo Creek June 2020*
Parks and Open Space Unit	Manage parks and open space, including natural, recreation, passive and heritage reserves Management of roadsides **Strategies/plans:** · *Greening Greater Bendigo 2020-2070* · *Invasive Plants and Animals Policy* · *Nature Strip Policy* · *Roadside Management Policy* · *Urban Tree Management Policy* · *Municipal Fire Management Plan*

Stakeholder	Relevant area of responsibility and available policies/plans
Active and Healthy Communities Unit	Strategic planning for public open spaces **Strategies/plans:** · *Greater Bendigo Public Space Plan*
Strategic Planning Unit	Develops land use strategies and plans for implementation through the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme. **Strategies/plans:** · *Managed Growth Strategy (in progress)* · *Review of Environmental Overlays (in progress)*
Safe and Healthy Communities Unit	Local laws, domestic animal management.
Greater Bendigo Environment Partnership (formerly SEAC)	Works together to coordinate and collaborate on environmental initiatives across Greater Bendigo.
Farm and Agribusiness Advisory Committee	Provides strategic advice to the City about farming and agribusiness matters.
Public Open Space Advisory Committee	Provides high level strategic advice to the City about Public Space matters.
Youth Council	Provides advice and input into the City's projects from a youth perspective.
Other	
Wood4Good	Currently a City contractor, trialling sustainable, biodiversity-driven carbon offset programs in City reserves. **Strategies/plans:** · *Baseline Ecological Assessment of the Crosbie Plantation – May 2021*



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CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2033

Consultation Report Phase 2

Background

The Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy seeks to set a vision for biodiversity conservation across the City, engaging and supporting actions by Council, land managers and the community to protect, enhance and connect natural values, and advocate on behalf of the environment.

Community and stakeholder consultation was vital for ensuring the Strategy was comprehensive and met with community expectations for where the City should act on biodiversity conservation.

What we did

Phase one

Phase one of consultation sought community input into the direction and major themes of the draft Strategy and led to the development of several of its actions.

The draft Strategy was produced with input from over 500 individuals who:

- Participated in a range of forums
- Engaged at stakeholder workshops and individual meetings
- Contributed to a Let's Talk survey and mapping exercise over a 3-month period (296 contributions)
- Provided extensive written submissions (11 in total)
- Attended community events
- Responded to our Environmental e-news or social media posts, particularly around particular concerns

DJAARA and Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation were provided extensive opportunity for input and engaged at several points in the drafting and consultation process.

Phase two

Phase two of consultation sought community feedback on the draft Strategy.

The draft Strategy was released for public feedback on 22 May for 6 weeks until 30 June (and extended by one week to allow for late submissions). The timing coincided with the release of the draft Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Roadmap. As such, a coordinated approach to the consultation program for both projects was pursued.

This consultation program included:

- Release of the draft Strategy on Let's Talk (22 May – 30 June).
- Official launch of the draft at the Climate Summit on 26 May, including opportunities for community feedback throughout the day.
- Community drop-in sessions at the City's libraries, community and neighbourhood centres and public spaces.
- Briefings with key stakeholders.
- Promotion of the consultation opportunity through traditional and social media.

Community and internal consultation closed on 11th July following Youth Council briefing, where they provided a letter of support for the Strategy.

Survey
An online survey was made live on the Cities Let's Talk platform between 22 May and 7 July (7 weeks) and included the following short answer questions:

- What is good?
- What is missing?
- Any other comments?

It also allowed users to rank the top 10 identified key actions of the Strategy in order of priority.

We received 32 survey responses and a further 10 written submissions from the community.

Community events
Drop-in sessions were held at the following community organisations/events:

- Climate Summit
- Neighbourhood Houses (Long Gully, Eaglehawk, Marong, Kangaroo Flat, Bendigo, Heathcote)
- Libraries (Bendigo, Kangaroo Flat)
- Community groups (Nature Network, Huntly Community Hub, Bendigo Field Naturalists Club)
- Elmore Main Street

In total, over 1100 people attended these events and actively engaged in dialogue and feedback.

Promotion
Community was informed about opportunity to participate in the Strategy via the following media channels:

- Social media (Facebook and LinkedIn)
- Climate Change and Environment E-newsletter
- Newspaper articles
- Flyers
- Other internal channels

What we heard
The following section highlights some of the major themes in community feedback in response to the draft Biodiversity Strategy in May-June 2023:

General feedback
Generally, comments on the draft strategy were complimentary, with stakeholders and the community feeling well consulted and that the Strategy met their needs. Example comments included:

- *The strategy provides a comprehensive summary of Greater Bendigo's biodiversity, both historically and at present, threats and issues, and detailed directions and actions to improve future outcomes for local biodiversity.*

- *Bendigo and District Environment Council (BDEC) applauds many of the initiatives in this draft, and appreciates the time and consultation which has gone into producing such a comprehensive document.*

- *We are appreciative of the wide-ranging consultation process which has been undertaken with the community and relevant agencies in its formation. We fully support its Vision for Biodiversity for the Greater Bendigo municipality to have, 'Protected, enduring and connected natural landscapes'.*

- *The North Central CMA would like to congratulate the City of Greater Bendigo on the Draft Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy sets out clear direction for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity for the City of Greater Bendigo.*

- *Firstly, this document is an important step forward to address some of the community concerns in relation to the importance of Biodiversity in the Greater Bendigo area and beyond. The document provides the backdrop to help build on actions currently being undertaken by many Government Organisation, Dja Dja Wurrung and Community Friends, Landcare, Advocacy and other associated groups: an avenue for an increased level of cross networking engagement and action.*

- *Supporters of this submission wish to congratulate Mark Hall and the team on the work done to create the draft document. It is comprehensive, inclusive, grounded and arguably the most important document produced so far in relation to challenging the impact of climate change on biodiversity at the local level. The final draft will be an important document that Conservation Groups feel they can own and use in partnership with Council to confront the current climate emergency. Thank you.*

- *The Nature Network (formerly Eastern Bendigo Landcare Network) would like to congratulate you on developing an excellent draft Biodiversity Strategy. Our Network is excited to be establishing at a time when governments of all levels are prioritizing the value of our environment. We see this strategy and the actions you have proposed, as a critical step for the City of Greater Bendigo in supporting and expanding the important work of volunteer environmental groups that have been working to preserve and protect Bendigo's environment for decades.*

- *Well researched, thorough document. Good to see how the connections between all the different council policies. Lots of good examples where this is positive change and the types of groups involved. The priority actions are very relevant.*

- *This is a great strategy it is comprehensive, well founded in relevant evidence and taking into account the whole LGA. Its focus on urban areas as well as rural, on biolinks, and the potential for optimising commercial activity for*

biodiversity outcomes (particularly regenerative forestry) are all really great points!

Broad themes of feedback

- Actions around housing development and the planning scheme are good, but stronger regulations suggested.
- Stronger action on mining impacts
- Greater recognition of Traditional Owner rights and biocultural values
- Habitat connectivity plan will be very important and need careful consideration of several key factors and how it can be best utilised.
- Urban biodiversity is very important and could have more focus
- Greater attention needed on roadside weeds
- Need to also focus on common species so they don't become endangered
- Could further highlight the work of other groups/programs and organisations
- Detail and action needed around roadkill/strike
- Some key actions missing from priority list/table
- Enforcement is needed for many infringements that impact biodiversity
- Specifics around measuring impacts/actions is missing

Response to community feedback

In response to feedback, we made several edits or additions to the Strategy, including:

- Adding or editing text to better reflect Traditional Owner rights, values and address concerns of cultural sensitivity, including addition of biocultural values.
- Adding further context for mining impacts
- Adding further text on urban biodiversity values
- Adding further context on offsetting
- Adding/amending actions and text on roadside management
- Additional text on other groups works/programs that support biodiversity conservation
- New action and text around partnership with Wildlife Victoria and other LGAs on injured wildlife (particularly road collision)
- An additional two key actions listed in priority list/table
- Expanded action around enforcement
- Added a table on measurables for annual reports

Responses to ranking of top 10 priorities

The following table shows how the top actions were ranked in order of priority.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score
Develop and implement Environmental Management Plans for Council managed natural reserves	11.54%	30.77%	7.69%	11.54%	3.85%	19.23%	3.85%	3.85%	3.85%	3.85%	**6.43**
Develop and implement a 'Habitat Connectivity Plan' to create biolinks across Greater Bendigo	19.23%	15.38%	11.54%	15.38%	11.54%	11.54%	3.85%	0%	3.85%	7.69%	**6.39**
Establish a permanent Biodiversity Engagement Officer position to meet growing community needs	23.08%	7.69%	11.54%	15.38%	15.38%	7.69%	3.85%	3.85%	11.54%	0%	**6.32**

Establish a biodiversity monitoring program that is representative, robust and strategic	8.00%	16.00%	16.00%	24.00%	12.00%	0%	24.00%	0%	0%	0%	**6.14**
Review the environmental policies and overlays included in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme	11.54%	11.54%	15.38%	7.69%	11.54%	11.54%	7.69%	7.69%	0%	15.38%	**5.5**
Continue and expand the Healthy Landscapes regenerative agriculture program	7.14%	7.14%	10.71%	10.71%	10.71%	14.29%	7.14%	10.71%	14.29%	7.14%	**5.29**

Implement a Significant Tree Register and ensure registered trees are properly protected	8.00%	8.00%	16.00%	0%	12.00%	8.00%	16.00%	16.00%	4.00%	12.00%	**4.68**
Investigate a specified Environmental Planner position	7.69%	3.85%	7.69%	7.69%	11.54%	11.54%	15.38%	15.38%	7.69%	11.54%	**4.54**
Conduct a Service Review of the Natural Reserves Team	4.00%	0%	4.00%	8.00%	8.00%	8.00%	8.00%	24.00%	28.00%	8.00%	**3.43**

Create a local carbon offsets program	7.69%	3.85%	3.85%	3.85%	0%	3.85%	7.69%	15.38%	23.08%	30.77%	**3.18**

19.2. Greater Bendigo 2030 Zero Emissions Roadmap

Author:	Ian McBurney, Coordinator Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration
Responsible Director:	Stacy Williams, Director Healthy Communities and Environments

Purpose

To seek Council adoption of the final Greater Bendigo 2030 Zero Emissions Roadmap.

Recommended Motion

That Council adopts the Greater Bendigo 2030 Zero Emissions Roadmap as attached to this report.

Executive Summary

The Greater Bendigo 2030 Zero Emissions Roadmap (the Roadmap) is the primary outcome to date of the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration (the Collaboration).

The Collaboration was established in late 2021. It brings together stakeholders from across the City to identify and implement projects and advocacy initiatives that will help the City achieve zero emissions by 2030.

The draft Roadmap was produced with input from over 1,000 individuals who participated in a range of forums, stakeholder workshops, focus groups and individual meetings.

The draft Roadmap was then released for public comment from 22 May 2023 until the end of June online, at libraries and neighbourhood houses and was the centrepiece of the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit on Saturday 27 May 2023.

Following this engagement, the final Roadmap has been prepared which can be summarised as follows:

- **Electrify everything:** Support homes and businesses in the City to get off gas, become energy efficient and install solar power.
- **Transport revolution:** Transform our walking and cycling infrastructure and bus and train services to prioritise active travel and public transport, facilitate transport choice and accelerate the transition to electric vehicles.
- **Protect and enhance nature:** Deliver Council's Biodiversity Strategy.
- **Sustainable food:** Facilitate the transition to zero carbon farms and support urban and peri-urban local food production.

- **Circular economy:** Support initiatives that reduce consumption and increase local reprocessing of resources.

Background

Climate Change in 2023

While global temperatures have risen just 1.2 degrees since 1880, this year we have seen the hottest ocean temperatures, largest melting of sea ice and the 21 hottest days on record occurring consecutively in July. We have seen record land temperatures in Europe and bushfires, storms and floods across the globe. An El Nino has been declared globally (although not yet in Australia), meaning we are likely to experience a hot, dry, summer.

The situation is dire, but not irreversible. The Earth's climate will stabilise when we stop burning fossil fuels. Every kg of greenhouse gasses not emitted matters.

The Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration

The Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration was initiated as an outcome of community meetings in 2018.

The Collaboration is co-funded by eight organisations: the City of Greater Bendigo, Agnico Eagle, RACV Solar, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank, Coliban Water and LaTrobe University, North Central Catchment Management Authority, CVGT Employment. Community partners include the Bendigo Sustainability Group, ACF Bendigo, Bike Bendigo and Bendigo Foodshare. The Governance Group also includes Be.Bendigo, the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance, the Bendigo Youth Council, DJAARA and DEECA.

Process to date

Stage 1 - The process to produce the draft Roadmap involved:

- Review of existing national, state and local plans and strategies.
- Community forums on energy, transport and agriculture.
- Focus groups and workshops with a range of stakeholder groups.
- Workshops with staff from the Collaboration's partner organisations.
- A Regional Zero Emissions Forum.
- Discussions with staff from across Council and state government departments.

Stage 2 - Consultation on the draft Roadmap involved:

- Release of the draft Roadmap on the Let's Talk platform that attracted 824 views.
- An online survey that attracted 46 survey responses.

- Official launch of the draft Roadmap at the Climate Summit on 27 May 2023, including opportunities for community feedback throughout the day.
- Community drop-in sessions at the City's 4 libraries and 6 neighbourhood houses
- Briefings with key stakeholders.
- Promotion of the consultation opportunity through traditional and social media.
- Promotion through partner organisation channels.

Further detail about the consultation undertaken is provided in the attached Consultation Report.

Report

Roadmap format

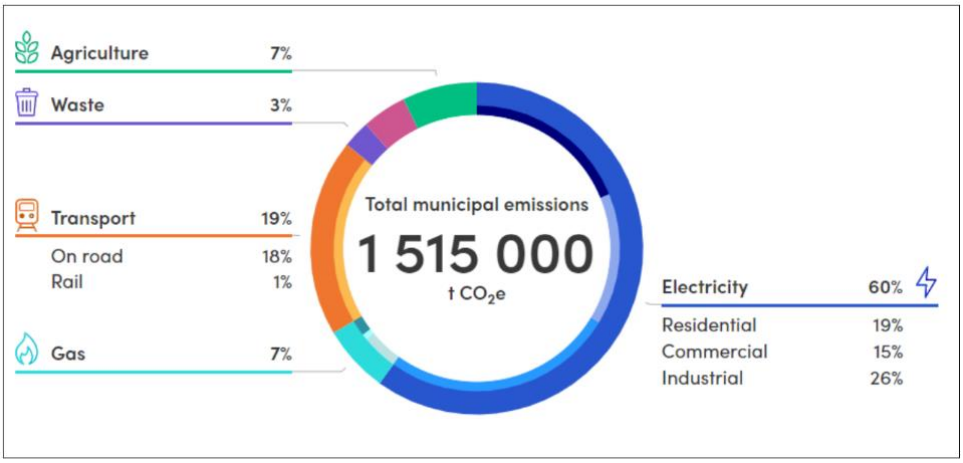
The Roadmap has been divided into two parts:

- Part 1 – The Roadmap – includes the 35 priority actions.
- Part 2 – Appendix – setting out all suggested actions and ideas.

Greater Bendigo Emissions Profile

In 2021/22, the City's emitted approximately 1,515,000 tCO2e. A breakdown of these emissions is provided in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Greater Bendigo emission profile 2021/22



Source: Ironbark Consulting Snapshot – Greater Bendigo

The City's emissions profile highlights that priority areas for action include:

- Businesses (44% of emissions excluding transport)
- Homes (23% of emissions excluding transport)
- Road transport (18% of emissions)

As Victoria's electricity network transitions to renewable energy, reducing transport emissions will become the highest priority. Secondary priorities will be reducing emissions from agriculture, gas and refrigerants (pink slice in the above chart).

While emission reduction priorities may change, ensuring equitable outcomes for lower socio-economic groups will continue to be a focus to ensure all community members benefit from the energy transition.

Key messages received during consultation

The key messages received in response to the draft Roadmap include:

- General support for the Roadmap, especially for actions related to transport and ongoing collaboration.
- Suggestion to include more background information.
- Suggestion to include information on monitoring and evaluation.
- Concern about broader issues such as population growth, urban sprawl and community wide culture change.
- Suggestion for more funding for implementation.

When asked to rank ten of the Roadmap's priority actions, the community prioritised **sustainable transport** and **household energy efficiency and electrification:**

1. Advocate for a complete overhaul of the City's bus services to get people to work and school effectively
2. Accelerate development of footpaths and traffic calming initiatives to make the City pedestrian friendly
3. Establish a program to support low-income households with the energy transition, including providing financial support or no interest loans
4. Establish a Home Energy Efficiency and Resilience Service that provides home energy assessments and supports residents to electrify and retrofit their home
5. Accelerate development of cycling lanes and infrastructure in the City
6. Continue and expand the Healthy Landscapes regenerative agriculture program
7. Support local community waste reduction and reuse enterprises with small grants and in-kind assistance
8. Facilitate the development of local, community led climate action plans
9. Continue the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration
10. Investigate delivery of an electric vehicle bulk buy program for the community

Reflection on the community consultation

The feedback received during face-to-face meetings and drop-in sessions was positive and constructive.

Feedback received via Council's online Let's Talk platform was more limited. Despite receiving a high number of views, this did not translate to high numbers of people providing feedback via the online survey. The comments received were also more general comments about climate change rather than feedback on the draft Roadmap itself.

Response to submission

In response to the feedback received, the following changes have been made to the draft Roadmap:

- Inclusion of additional data and background information under each theme.
- Inclusion of indicators which will be reported on annually through Council's Annual Environment Report.
- Inclusion of profiles of each partner organisation outlining their emission reduction targets and previous and current climate action.
- Updates to the actions to reflect stakeholder and community feedback.

Current implementation priorities

The draft Roadmap includes 35 actions, however the key priorities for the next 12 months involve:

1. Establishing a **business program** to support businesses to reduce emissions.
2. Establishing a **community engagement program** in collaboration with the Bendigo Sustainability Group.
3. Establishing **financing solutions** to help accelerate the transition to renewable energy and electrification and to support low wealth households.
4. Further exploring establishment of an independently governed **Community Wealth Fund** to receive philanthropic and partner financial contributions and to fund emission reduction projects.
5. Developing the evidence base to advocate for a **review of the City's bus services**.
6. Improving the **integration of sustainable transport** activities across the City and exploring opportunities to establish an Integrated Transport Planner position.
7. Exploring opportunities to embed the **Healthy Landscapes** regenerative agriculture program as an ongoing program.
8. Continuing to work with the North Central Catchment Management Authority on the **Community Carbon local carbon offsetting program**.
9. Gaining funding and cross-organisational support to continue the **Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration.**

Priority/Importance

High – The Roadmap establishes the priority projects Council and the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration need to pursue to achieve a zero emissions City.

Timelines

The Roadmap sets out a program of priority actions to be implemented between now and 2030.

Communications/Engagement

See above.

Financial Sustainability

The Roadmap assumes that most initiatives will be initiated and / or led by Council in the first instance. Many projects and programs will then be delivered by other organisations once a business case, feasibility study, grant application or pilot program has been completed. Much of this coordination function can be delivered with existing resources within the Climate Change and Environment Unit. Further resources will also be sought from the Collaboration partners, state and federal government and others to fund projects until 2030.

Additional Council resources required to facilitate delivery of the Roadmap include:

- **Integrated Sustainable Transport Planner** – This position could potentially be resourced by consolidating or repurposing existing human resources.
- **Agribusiness Officer** – Continuation of this existing position.
- **Walking and cycling** – Funds to deliver walking and cycling infrastructure and programs.
- **Programs** – Funds to deliver, extend and / or collaborate on local community climate action planning, community and business engagement, a pilot household retrofit program, bulk buy programs, extension support to farmers, the local carbon offsets program and Circular Economy Hubs.
- **Collaboration** – Financial contribution to continue the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration.

These items will be the subject of business cases for consideration in future Council budgets.

Priorities for consideration in the 2024/25 Council budget are likely to include:

1. **Agribusiness Officer** – continuation of the position.
2. **Collaboration** – continuation of Council's financial contribution to the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration.
3. **Healthy Landscapes** – continuation of Council's financial contribution to this collaborative regenerative agriculture program.

4. **Carbon offsets** – continuation of Council's contribution to the North Central Catchment Management Authority's Community Carbon local carbon offset program.

Risk Assessment

The Greater Bendigo 2030 Zero Emissions Roadmap addresses the strategic risk climate change presents to the organisation and broader City.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 5 - A climate resilient and healthy landscape

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 1 - Zero carbon

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

1. Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Roadmap [**19.2.1** - 45 pages]
2. GBZER Consultation Report Phase 2 [**19.2.2** - 19 pages]


Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration
CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO
GREATER BENDIGO 2030
ZERO EMISSIONS ROADMAP
EVS
HOME
EV
ALWAYS WAS ALWAYS WILL BE
SOLAR CO-OP
CIRCULAR HUB
TOOLS
PLANS
ACT NOW
SCHOOL STRIKE 4 Climate!
Net Zero Emissions 2030
GREATER BENDIGO climate collaboration
MAJOR PARTNERS
AGNICO EAGLE
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
RACV SOLAR
FOUNDING PARTNERS
Bendigo Bank
Coliban WATER
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
PREMIUM PARTNERS
North Central CMA
CVGT employment
COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Bendigo Sustainability Group
ACF Community Bendigo District
BIKE BENDIGO
FoodShare

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Our Partners at the launch of the Collaboration in June 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Greater Bendigo is on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We acknowledge and extend our appreciation to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung People, the Traditional Owners of the land.



We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

Acknowledgement of First Nations People

The City recognises that there are people from many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities living in Greater Bendigo.

We acknowledge and extend our appreciation to all First Nations Peoples who live and reside in Greater Bendigo on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country, and we thank them for their contribution to our community.



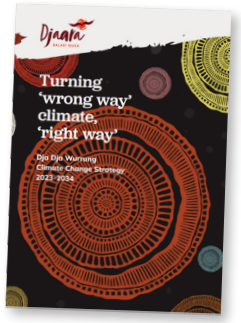
Rodney Carter, CEO Dja Dja Wurrung Group

WORKING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS ON CLIMATE ACTION

Dja Dja Wurrung

DJAARA's (Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation) vision, as set out in their Climate Change Strategy (released in May 2023), is a sustainable, resilient and equitable future where past injustices of colonialism, mining and pollution are addressed by empowering Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung people) led responses to climate change on Djandak (Dja Dja wurrung country) through self-determination, energy justice and biocultural knowledge. Djaara climate action focuses on healing People, healing Country and healing Climate based on the principle of People-Country-Climate being connected through Spirit.

Applying modern technologies like solar and wind energy, batteries and energy efficiency techniques will support healing. Nyauwi Mutjeka 'to keep the sun' is the Dja Dja wurrung's Renewable Energy Strategy and outlines Djaara's aspirations to partner with companies, government, and others on the clean energy transition and ensure benefits for Djaara and the whole community.



Walking together to heal People, Country and Climate.

CEO STATEMENT OF INTENT

Our organisations are proud to have shaped the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration and the Greater Bendigo 2030 Zero Emissions Roadmap. We are committed to delivering this Roadmap for our local environment, community and economy and to play our part in solving the climate crisis globally. Please join us!



Damian Wells
MD, Coliban Water

Marnie Baker
MD / CEO, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank

Agnico Eagle

RACV Solar

Brad Drust
CEO, North Central CMA

Jason Russell
CEO, CVGT Employment

Professor Susan Dodds,
Acting Vice-Chancellor,
LaTrobe University Bendigo

Anjum Chaudry
President, Bendigo Sustainability Group

Nicola Duncliff-Wells
President, Bike Bendigo

Ken Rookes
ACF Community Bendigo District

Michelle Murphy
CEO, Bendigo Foodshare

Rodney Carter
CEO, Dja Dja Wurrung Group

Rob Herbert
CEO, Be.Bendigo

Annika Kearton,
EO, Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance

Craig Neimann,
CEO, City of Greater Bendigo

THE ROADMAP ON A PAGE

Why?

- A Liveable Climate
- A better Greater Bendigo

How?

- Collaboration
- Equity
- Local economy



What?



Electrify everything

Support homes and businesses to get off gas, become energy efficient and install solar power.



Transport revolution

Prioritise active travel, buses and the train and accelerate the transition to electric vehicles.



Protect and enhance nature

Deliver Council's Biodiversity Strategy.



Sustainable food

Support zero carbon farms and urban/ peri-urban local food production.



Circular economy

Support homes and businesses to eliminate the concept of waste. Support reprocessing of resources locally.

BACKGROUND

The Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration

The Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration (the Collaboration) is designed to bring our city together for three years of climate action, education, planning and projects to put our City on the path to zero emissions by 2030.

In 2018, world-leading environmentalist Paul Hawken visited Bendigo to talk about climate change and its likely impacts. His address ignited a local desire for collective action on climate. Consequently, representatives 20 Bendigo businesses, organisations, community groups and local and state government set about designing, creating and financing the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration. The Collaboration was launched in July 2022.

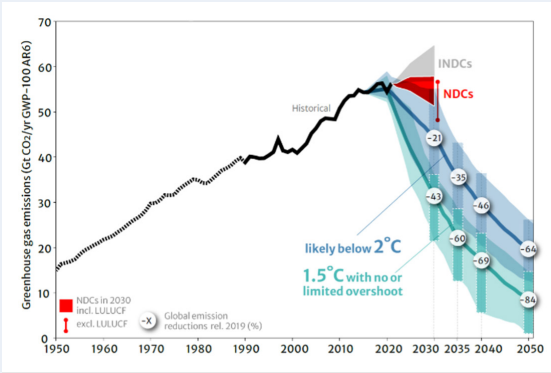
Collaboration partners

The Collaboration is being hosted and led by the City of Greater Bendigo. Funding partners are RACV Solar, Agnico Eagle, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank, La Trobe University, Coliban Water, North Central Catchment Management Authority, CVGT Employment.

Community collaborating partners are the Bendigo Sustainability Group, Bendigo Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), Bike Bendigo and Bendigo Foodshare.

Be.Bendigo, Bendigo Youth Council, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and Dja Dja Wurrung Corporation are supporting the Collaboration on the governance group.





The need for change

Climate science is the largest scientific undertaking in human history, with thousands of scientists from hundreds of countries working together over 60 years of data collection, analysis and debate. There is no doubt in the scientific community that climate change is real, is happening and is caused by us. Global temperatures are rising, sea levels are rising and extreme weather events are increasing. We have over 30 years of data since the first IPCC report in the 1990s that show climate science has accurately predicted the changes that have occurred over that time. Their predictions over the next 76 years show that failing to reduce greenhouse gases to zero well before 2050 will have devastating impacts on our way of life.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently released its 6th Assessment Report AR6 – Synthesis Report – Climate Change 2023. The report clearly states that this decade is our last chance to meet our 1.5-degree target and that we require an immediate, rapid and drastic drop in greenhouse emissions to prevent 3 degrees of warming.

The chart above, released September 9 2023 shows historical emissions from 1950 (black line), projected emissions in 2030 based on nationally determined contributions (shown in red), and emission reductions required by the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (shown in blue and teal).

We are currently falling well short of our 1.5°C goal.

BACKGROUND

The impacts of climate change are clear in 2023, despite global temperatures having risen just 1.2 degrees since 1880. This year we have seen the hottest ocean temperatures, largest Arctic and Antarctic sea ice and Greenland ice melting and the hottest July on record. We have seen record land temperatures in Europe (Italy, Spain and Greece), bushfires (across Europe, Canada and the USA) and floods (China, India, Pakistan and South Korea). An El Nino is very likely to be declared in 2023, meaning we are likely to be in for a hot, dry, summer.

The situation is dire, but not irreversible.

Did you know?

A 2^{0}C RISE IN GLOBAL TEMPERATURES WOULD REDUCE ECONOMIC OUTPUT IN THE NEXT FOUR DECADES BY BETWEEN $135 BILLION AND $423 BILLION IN TODAY'S TERMS.

(Australian Government Intergenerational Report, August 2023)

The Earth's climate will stabilise when we stop burning fossil fuels. Every kg of carbon not emitted matters.



"I WANT YOU TO ACT AS IF THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE, BECAUSE IT IS."

— **Greta Thunberg**,
World Economic Forum,
Davos, 24 January 2019

Ildi Clemens, CBCC Governance Group Member and Bendigo Youth Councillor 2022

BACKGROUND

Greater Bendigo municipal emissions profile

According to the most accurate data we have available, the municipality's direct emissions were approximately 1,515,000 tCO2e in 2021/22 (or 12 tCO2e/resident/year).

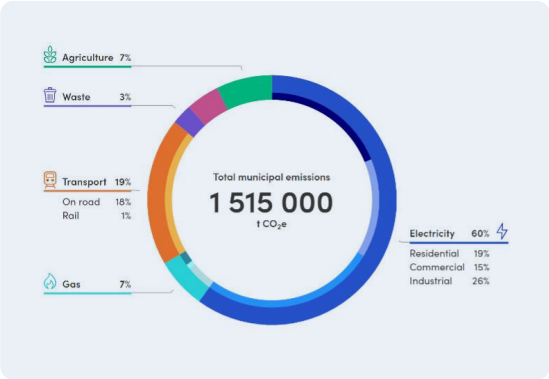


Figure 1: *City of Greater Bendigo municipal emissions 2021/22. Source: Snapshot tool, Ironbark Consulting*

Another way to breakdown this emissions profile is:

- Businesses – 44% of emissions (excluding transport)
- Households – 23% of emissions (excluding transport)
- Transport – 18% of emissions

Population and Emissions

The population of Greater Bendigo in 2021 was 122,551. Population forecasts suggest that by 2050 there will be 200,000 people living in Greater Bendigo. Reducing carbon emissions to zero whilst adding 1.6 times the population requires a clear plan and investment, education, advocacy and follow through. It creates an even greater need to act fast.

Indirect or scope 3 emissions

The Snapshot tool does not include embodied emissions that were created outside Greater Bendigo to create the goods that we buy and consume. Whilst they are almost impossible to quantify, this September 2021 report from the ACT, "Scope 3 Emissions in the ACT" provides an approximate per capita figure for Victoria of 22 tCO2e/capita/year which, when adjusted for our population ~122,551 suggests that the emissions from our consumption add a further ~2,600,000 tCO2e to our total municipal emissions.

This situation will improve as global supply chains and manufacturers are using more renewable energy and are electrifying transport and generally reducing their own impact. However, current consumption in Greater Bendigo is likely to be adding more than 1.5 times the emissions that the Snapshot chart opposite shows.

This demonstrates the importance of supporting businesses and homes to eliminate the concept of waste; to reduce consumption, to buy more climate friendly products and to support the reuse, repair, recycling and reprocessing of resources in our region.

Community and stakeholder engagement

The GBCC launched in July 2022 and has since engaged with over 1,000 people at community forums, stakeholder workshops and meetings to find out what the people and organisations of Bendigo think we should do to create a zero emissions city.

Forums and workshops were held with stakeholders from the energy, transport, circular economy, agriculture and carbon offsets. An interfaith group was bought together, a climate justice and equity group formed and community groups consulted. Our team met with multicultural groups, rotary, youth organisations, business groups, neighbourhood houses and partner organisations. Meetings were held with staff inside The City of Greater Bendigo and with transport, regional development and climate change state government departments.

A Regional Climate Forum was held in Castlemaine to receive ideas and feedback from over 150 people from across Central Victoria.

The draft Roadmap was then prepared and released for community consultation. It was the main focus of the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit held on May 27, 2023, which attracted 670 attendees.

During the consultation phase the team held listening posts and workshops with partner organisations at the Bendigo and Kangaroo Flat libraries and at

BACKGROUND

our neighbourhood houses. The City's Let's Talk consultation platform was also used for a month to receive feedback from 47 people online.

During consultation, 47 community members voted on their preference of projects, with three of the top five being transport related and all of them equity related. The top five priority projects were:

1. Advocate for a complete overhaul of the **City's bus services** to get people to work and school effectively
2. Accelerate development of **footpaths and traffic calming** initiatives to make the City pedestrian friendly
3. Establish a program to support **low-income households with the energy transition**, including providing financial support or no interest loans
4. Establish a **Home Energy Efficiency and Resilience Service** that provides home energy assessments and supports residents to electrify and retrofit their home
5. Accelerate development of **cycling lanes** and infrastructure in the City.

Following the consultation period, community feedback was included and this final Roadmap prepared.



One of many group discussions at our Regional Climate Forum in Castlemaine in March 2023

WHAT'S IN THE ROADMAP

This roadmap looks at how we can best transform our city to zero emissions by 2030, in energy, transport, circular economy, agriculture and natural systems. The 35 priority projects were chosen because they are the actions we can take together as a City. The advocacy positions are the actions we need support with from the State and Federal governments.

What we found at the Greater Bendigo level is threefold:

- **Collaboration is crucial:** We need a decade of serious collaboration, advocacy and investment that builds on the great work happening already at all levels of government, in business and in the community. While progress is being made in every sector, we are not progressing fast enough to reach zero emissions by 2030.
- **We must focus on an equitable transition:** This was a unanimous view across Greater Bendigo. Transport, energy and food choices need to be available to everyone and these choices can lower the cost of living.
- **A zero emissions city is better in every way:** It is a social and economic investment in a better future. If we invest now, we will be healthier, happier, more socially connected, more economically prosperous and more able to adapt to climate changes that are already locked in.

This roadmap lays the pathway to a much better Bendigo in a timescale that can help to create a habitable climate. Now to make it happen, together.

Part 1: The Roadmap

Includes the City's 35 priority projects that will be delivered in partnership with many local organisations.

Part 2: Appendix of all ideas

A table that lists all the ideas we received in the development of the Roadmap.

Resources:

It is assumed that the City of Greater Bendigo will continue to lead the actions listed in the Roadmap through the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration or other relevant departments. It is also assumed that partner organisations will continue to financially support the Climate Collaboration from 2024-2030.

Funding:

Not all projects are currently funded. Most are under development and are not fully costed. Where additional Council funding is required, this will be sought through Council's annual budget process, and state and federal government grants and programs.

$: Requires human and / or financial resources up to $100,000.

$$: Requires human and / or financial resources of $100,000 to $500,000.

$$$: Requires human and / or financial resources of over $500,000.



Greater Bendigo Climate Summit attendees showing their support for climate action in May 2023

WORKING TOGETHER



The community wants

- Action across government, industries and sectors.
- Support for community led action.
- Organisations to work together, including with Traditional Owners.
- The scale of actions to increase commensurate with climate science targets

What's happening already

- A number of active community organisations focused on environmental action including Bendigo Sustainability Group, Bike Bendigo, Bendigo Climate Alliance, Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) – Bendigo Branch, Bendigo and District Environment Council, the Bendigo Repair Cafe and numerous Landcare and Friends groups.
- Local coordination and collaboration through the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration.
- Regional coordination and collaboration through development of the Regional Zero Emissions Roadmap.

The problem

- Collaboration takes time and resources.
- Community organisations are often under-resourced and susceptible to burn out.
- Creating zero emissions homes and organisations is much harder alone

The strategy

Maintain an active culture of collaboration and support across organisations and sectors.

Actions to reach zero emissions

THEMES	PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Working together	**1. Continue the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration** Continue the Collaboration and seek collective funding for projects as needed.	$$ annually
	2. Partnerships Continue to actively seek out opportunities to collaborate with other agencies and organisations and to collectively resource organisations such as the Bendigo Sustainability Group, Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance, Bike Bendigo and DJAARA to deliver programs that progress shared priorities.	Existing
	3. Local community leadership and action Support local initiatives that build community-based climate leadership and action. This may include education, schools, engagement or art programs that target different demographics and / or neighbourhood and township scale climate action planning	$
	4. Regional Zero Emissions Roadmap Continue to work with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and other stakeholders to finalise and implement the Regional Zero Emissions Roadmap currently in development.	Existing
	5. Dja Dja Wurrung self determination Support and help resource DJAARA to deliver their Climate Change Strategy and Renewable Energy Strategy and to participate fully in climate action on Djandak, including in participating in the actions in this Roadmap.	TBC

$ = up to $100k; $$ = $100k to $500k; $$$ = over $500k.

WORKING TOGETHER

We will advocate for…

- Federal and State Government funding for community and business education and leadership programs.
- Federal or State Government funding for the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration to continue.
- Federal and State Government funding to support regional governance and collaborative projects.

We will measure and report on …

- Number of partnerships and community leadership actions established.
- Progress implementing Roadmap actions



Attendees at our Climate Collaboration CEO Roundtable at the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit in May 2023

> "WE CAN'T IMPOSE OUR WILL ON A SYSTEM. WE CAN LISTEN TO WHAT THE SYSTEM TELLS US AND DISCOVER HOW ITS PROPERTIES AND OUR VALUES CAN WORK TOGETHER TO BRING FORTH SOMETHING MUCH BETTER THAN COULD EVER BE PRODUCED BY OUR WILL ALONE."
>
> — **Donella Meadows**, Thinking in Systems



Did you know?

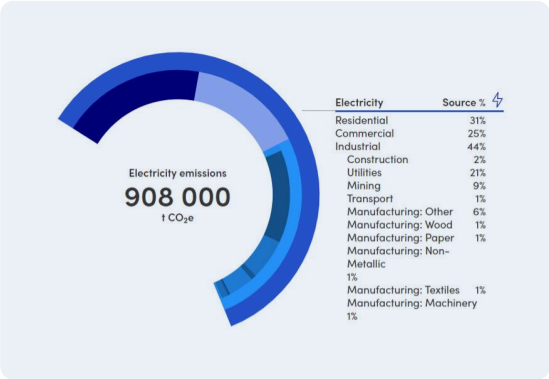
THE GREATER BENDIGO CLIMATE COLLABORATION WON A "HIGHLY COMMENDED" AWARD AT THE CLIMATE COUNCIL'S 2023 CITIES POWER PARTNERSHIPS CLIMATE AWARDS IN THE COLLABORATION CATEGORY.

(Cities Power Partnerships Program Climate Awards)

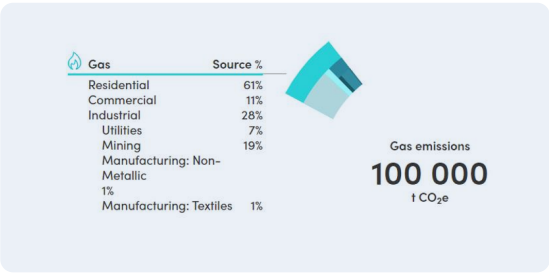
ENERGY: ELECTRIFY EVERYTHING

Emissions profile

Electricity makes up 60% of our Greater Bendigo emissions, with one third being residential emissions. As the national power grid is fast becoming powered by renewable energy, this percentage will drop rapidly in the next decade.



Gas makes up 7% of our Greater Bendigo emissions. Across its lifecycle, gas has the same impact on the climate as coal.



The current targets

- National: 80% renewable energy by 2030.
- State: 95% renewable energy by 2035. No new gas connections by 2024.
- Local: 50% renewable energy, no new gas connections, 40% of households and businesses have solar by 2026.

The community wants

- Equitable outcomes, including funding mechanisms to support low-wealth households.
- Support for households and businesses to transition – i.e. education, support with grants and financial incentives.
- Changes to existing regulations which can be a barrier to innovation.
- The end to tax breaks and government funding for fossil fuel industries. The Australia Institute estimates that in the 2021/22 year, the Australian Government provided $11.6B to subsidise the fossil fuel industry.
- Businesses powered by renewable energy, including potentially through small scale solar farms.



What's happening already

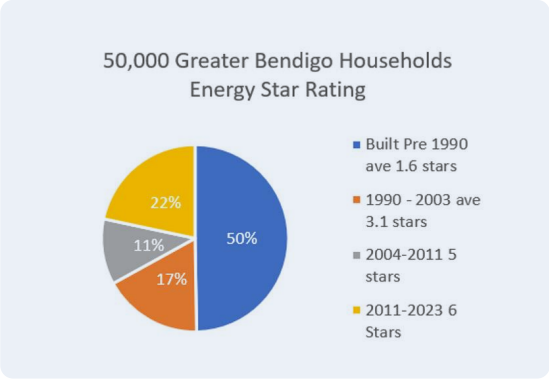
- Reinstatement of the State Electricity Commission.
- Investment in large scale offshore wind and high-capacity transmission lines – i.e. Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (which will now avoid Greater Bendigo)
- Federal election promise to fund solar gardens and community batteries.
- The Victorian Government announced that new homes requiring a planning permit will be required to be all-electric from 1 January 2024. This means new homes and residential subdivisions that require a planning permit cannot connect to the gas network.
- Bendigo Sustainability Group revolving energy fund and Giving Power program to fund retrofits of low income homes.
- Bendigo Sustainability Festival run by the Bendigo Sustainability Group.
- The Electrify Everything movement is demonstrating that installing solar and electric appliances will save the average home $3000 a year by 2030.
- In the 2023/4 Federal Budget $1.6 billion in funding was announced for electrification for low-income homes, energy upgrades for social housing and business incentives for electrification.
- DJAARA Climate Change Strategy and Renewable Energy Strategy.

ENERGY: ELECTRIFY EVERYTHING

The problem

Housing

- Our housing stock is performing poorly: Approximately 50% of Greater Bendigo homes were built before 1990. A Sustainability Victoria study found that these homes average 1.6 Energy Stars. Approximately 20% were built 1990-2004 and according to the same study, these homes average 3.1 stars. 30% were built after 2004 and were built to, but do not necessarily perform to 5 or 6 star standard.



- Only 28.2% dwellings have rooftop solar in Greater Bendigo.
- In the 2021 census there were ~44,000 Greater Bendigo homes, most of which need upgrading to reach zero emissions. 13,211 households (1/3) are “low wealth”. Of these, 10,840 are rented where residents need to negotiate upgrades with landlords and 1,747 are social housing.
- Existing grant programs can be difficult to navigate, especially for people with low digital literacy.
- Many households want to transition, however they do not have time or the upfront funds to take action now.

Did you know?

SWITCHING TO ELECTRIC VEHICLES AND APPLIANCES, COMBINED WITH IMPROVED ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES, COULD SAVE AN AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD AS MUCH AS $2250 PER YEAR.

(CSIRO Report 2023)

Business

- Commercial and Industrial emissions from electricity are 69% of the total and are spread relatively evenly across over 8,200 businesses. The top 15 emitting businesses in Greater Bendigo make up 20% of the emissions from electricity.



Rewiring Australia energy guru Saul Griffith in full flight at our Greater Bendigo Climate Summit in May 2023

ENERGY: ELECTRIFY EVERYTHING

- Businesses require support to take control of their energy use, costs and production.

Local small scale solar farms

- Community solar farms require significant government funding, transmission and regulatory support.

The power grid

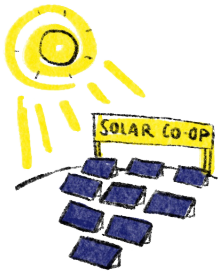
- Whilst significant funding is going towards the VNI West transmission lines to connect the national renewable energy grid, our local grid needs strengthening to reach 100% renewable energy and to support local renewable energy economic development.

Gas

- Most current buildings have gas connected, gas appliances are still being sold and the transition requires financial planning and assistance.

The strategy

1. **Electrify Everything: homes and businesses**
2. **Accelerate the transition to renewable energy and energy efficiency for homes and businesses**
3. **Leave no one behind**



Actions to reach zero emissions

THEMES	PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Electrify homes	**6. Community engagement** Deliver an engagement program in collaboration with the Bendigo Sustainability Group that builds awareness of how to electrify homes and access renewable energy.	$ annually
	7. Sustainable Design Advisory Service Investigate delivery of sustainable design advice and engagement to home owners and the building and construction industry.	TBC
	8. Funding mechanisms Work with lenders to develop and promote low and no interest loans, mortgage-based products and other financial mechanisms to help fund retrofitting initiatives.	Existing
	9. Low-wealth homes electrification and retrofitting Codesign and deliver a financially sustainable, ongoing program with welfare agencies to finance, support, electrify and retrofit low-income homes.	TBC
	10. Home Energy Efficiency and Resilience Service Investigate implementation of a pilot project working with the CVGA, Bendigo Sustainability Group, neighbourhood houses, CVGT Employment, Bendigo TAFE, DJAARA and Mens Sheds to retrofit homes for energy efficiency and climate resilience while building skills in energy assessments and trades	$$



Dr Jarra Hicks from the Community Power Agency on the benefits of community ownership at our Energy Forum in August 2022

ENERGY: ELECTRIFY EVERYTHING

THEMES	PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Electrify homes	**10. Home Energy Efficiency and Resilience Service** Investigate implementation of a pilot project working with the CVGA, Bendigo Sustainability Group, neighbourhood houses, CVGT Employment, Bendigo TAFE, DJAARA and Mens Sheds to retrofit homes for energy efficiency and climate resilience while building skills in energy assessments and trades	
	11. Bulk buy programs Work with the CVGA and / or the Bendigo Sustainability Group to implement a bulk buy program for renewable energy and / or electric appliances prioritising programs that deliver savings to residents.	$
Electrify businesses	**12. Business support program** Support businesses to create and implement their own zero emissions roadmaps to install solar, electrify and become energy efficient.	$ annually
	13. Big business collaboration Bring together Bendigo's big businesses to collaborate on large scale solar and power purchase agreements.	Existing
Building community wealth	**14. Community Wealth Fund** Investigate establishing an independently managed fund to receive and democratically allocate funds from partners, donors and local renewable energy projects	Existing
	15. Community Benefit Sharing Policy Establish a policy that sets out Council and the community's expectations for benefit sharing outcomes from renewable energy developments.	Existing
Electricity network	**16. Collaboration with Powercor** Continue to develop a collaborative relationship with Powercor to enable Council and the community to create a 100% renewable energy grid.	Existing

$ = up to $100k; $$ = $100k to $500k; $$$ = over $500k.

ENERGY: ELECTRIFY EVERYTHING

We will advocate for…

Electricity network and regulations

- Upgrades to the state and local distribution and transmission networks to cater for the City's generation capacity and growing electricity needs.
- Changes to regulations to enable businesses and households to set up microgrids to share power with neighbours (front of the meter energy sharing).
- Allow businesses to install larger inverters to export more power to the grid.
- Government funding and regulatory support to encourage community solar farms.

Fossil fuels

- Remove all tax incentives for fossil fuels and establish taxation structures that discourage fossil fuel use and encourage renewable energy.
- No new fossil fuel projects to be built in Australia.
- Phase out all existing fossil fuel projects by 2050.

Building and planning regulations

- Existing housing stock: all homes for lease and sale to require a Residential Efficiency Scorecard rating by 2026.
- The National Construction Code 2026 for all new houses to be 8 star NatHERs rating and be net zero by 2030.
- Seek joint funding for design advisors to support Environmentally Sustainable Development principles in new homes and renovations.
- The Victorian Government to establish state-wide planning policies that preference infill and medium density development over green field development.



Partner organisations and speakers at our Energy Stakeholder Forum in August 2022

Low wealth and social housing

- All new social housing to be net zero by 2030, all electric, solar powered and energy efficient.
- All current social housing to be net zero by 2040, all electric, solar powered and energy efficient.
- Funding to support low wealth households to electrify and improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

We will measure and report on …

- The percentage of solar power in the Greater Bendigo grid from Powercor data
- The number of rooftops with solar power installed from Australian government data
- The number of energy efficient appliances installed through the Victorian Energy Upgrade program
- Electricity and gas emissions from Snapshot
- The progress of individual projects and advocacy work

TRANSPORT REVOLUTION

Emissions profile

Transport makes up 18% of our emissions in Greater Bendigo. As the electricity grid becomes increasingly powered by renewable energy, transport will become our number one source of emissions.

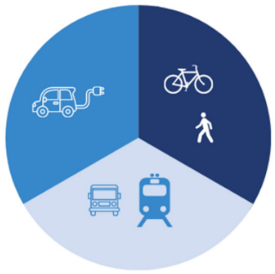
Transport	Source %
On road	99%
Automotive	62%
Freight	35%
Motorcycle	1%
Bus	1%
Rail	1%
Train	1%



Transport emissions
291 000
t CO_2e

The current targets

- National: N/A. Vehicle Emissions Standards planned for late 2023.
- State: 50% of new light vehicles will be electric by 2030, all new public bus purchases will be zero emissions by 2025, active transport will make up 25% of trips by 2030.
- Local: 1/3 trips are by active transport, 1/3 by public transport and 1/3 by electric vehicles by 2030.



The community wants

- Integrated walking, cycling, public transport and electric vehicle infrastructure and the associated land use changes.
- A City that is walking and cycling friendly.
- Cycling lanes that are connected and separated from cars.
- A new commuter bus network that is affordable, fit for purpose, direct, safe, frequent and appealing.
- More frequent trains in and around Greater Bendigo to enable commuting to and from Bendigo
- More electric vehicle charging stations.
- An electric vehicle bulk buy.
- Incentives for electric vehicles.

What's happening already

- National Electric Vehicle Strategy in development. Vehicle emissions standards will be enacted at the end of 2023.
- Victorian Government Transport sector emissions reduction pledge.
- Delivery of the Walk Cycle Greater Bendigo Strategy and 10-year Infrastructure Plan underway with targets for the strategic protected walking and cycling network of 13.6km complete by 2026 and 81.6km by 2036.
- The Bike Bendigo community group are advocating effectively for cycling infrastructure and behaviour change.



The amazing Transport panel from the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit: Peter Bourke (EO, We Ride Australia), Natalie Mitchell (ABC Big Ideas), Sara Stace (Director of Cities, WSP) and Elliot Fishman (CEO, Sensible Transport Intitute). Their discussion became a national podcast.

- Cities across Europe are demonstrating that the benefits of investment in active travel and public transport is economically effective, creates positive health outcomes and more vibrant public places with increased levels of local trade.
- The Healthy Loddon Campaspe partnership is supporting active travel across the region with programs aimed at schools and equitable access to walking and cycling.
- The City of Ballarat participated in a year-long trial of an e-scooter "micro-mobility" scheme, which has produced promising results in a similar regional Victorian city.

TRANSPORT REVOLUTION



The problem

A city with no transport choice: cars

- The City is dominated by wide, fast roads which are difficult to cross and feel unsafe for cyclists and pedestrians. Residents of Greater Bendigo do not currently have a choice to the car.
- Bendigo has 122,000 people and 80,000 cars. If this rate of car use is maintained, by 2050 we will have 200,000 people and 140,000 cars. Without intervention, the number of cars in the City is set to almost double. Electric or not, this would cause social, environmental, health and economic issues. We should aim for an average of one car per household.
- 95% of trips to work are by car. This equates to approximately 24,000 car trips to and from the City Centre every day.
- Residents are habituated to driving which requires culture change.
- Governments at all levels are spending the vast amount of transport funding on roads for cars which leads to more cars being driven, which leads to adverse health outcomes and extra spending on public health. Every km driven by car costs society 17 cents. Society gains 18 cents for each km cycled. Yet walking and cycling infrastructure is currently viewed as an extra cost.
- In Greater Bendigo most of our suburban streets have speed limits of 50km/hr. Research by the Journal of the Australasian College of Road Safety in 2017 found that 30km/h speed limits on local residential streets could reduce our national road toll by 13 per cent. Our Greater Bendigo suburban streets are very wide, which encourages faster driving and increases the cost of road maintenance.
- Many of Bendigo's suburbs are low density which does not support walking, cycling or cost-effective delivery of public transport. Developing medium density housing in established areas is not financially feasible in many cases

Transport and Equity

- The average petrol car costs $10,000 per year in Australia. Electric cars are currently even more expensive. Active travel is free and accessible to all and public transport should also be affordable accessible to all. The most equitable transport solutions are active travel and public transport.

Did you know?

ANNUAL VEHICLE EMISSIONS IN AUSTRALIA MAY CAUSE 11,105 PREMATURE ADULT DEATHS, 12,210 CARDIOVASCULAR HOSPITALISATIONS AND 6,840 RESPIRATORY HOSPITALISATIONS.

(Melbourne Climate Futures)

Active Travel:

- 62% of school children are driven to school, resulting in around 14,000 car trips in peak times. 86% of school children would like to walk or ride. Around one third of the traffic at peak times is for school trips. The number one reason parents do not want their children walking or riding to school is danger from cars.
- Funding the City's priority separated cycling network will be a challenge - costed at approximately $130M.
- Achieving the Victorian Government's active travel target will be a challenge unless suitable funding is allocated.
- Research clearly shows that painted, on road cycling lanes increase cycling by around 5% and separated lanes by over 50%. Bendigo has one separated cycling lane on Ellis St in Flora Hill.

Public Transport

- The public transport network does not meet the community's needs – it does not allow the numbers of people to travel where they need to go in the timeframes and at the times they need to travel. It is not a viable alternative to a car for nearly all trips.
- We are currently funding two separate bus systems. One a poorly used city service and another operated by the Education Department to transport students to and from school. We could have one bus system that supported everyone to travel to work and school.

TRANSPORT REVOLUTION

- The number one impediment to employment for job seekers in the City is lack of access to good public transport.

Electric Vehicles

- Electric cars currently make up 5% of sales in Australia and are currently too expensive for most residents.
- Fit for purpose zero emissions heavy vehicles are still in development and are not cost effective yet.
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure is lagging behind demand.
- E-bikes are growing in popularity. They allow more people to ride and increase the distance people ride by a factor of four.
- Community e-scooters schemes are proving successful and will likely be an option in Greater Bendigo in the near future.

The strategy

1. **Change the City – Footpaths and cycling paths everywhere, not just in priority locations. Electric vehicle charging at homes, offices and in strategic public locations.**
2. **Change the services - revolutionise the bus system and increase train services.**
3. **Change what's normal – normalise active and public travel and electric vehicles. Ensure everyone has transport choices**
4. **Change the spending: prioritize active travel and public transport and resource the change at the scale required**

Actions to reach zero emissions

THEMES	PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Active travel	**17. Cycling revolution** Accelerate implementation of the City's separated cycling network and develop an approach to filling in the network with a suite of temporary and permanent on-road paths, "greenways" and end of trip and parking facilities.	$$$
	18. Walking revolution Accelerate the City's program of walking infrastructure, including footpaths, crossings and traffic calming interventions, that transform car dominated roads into pedestrian prioritised and friendly streets. Special focus on pedestrian priority around every school, park and shopping centre.	$$$
Public transport	**19. Bus revolution** Advocate for an overhaul of the City's bus services with the aim of delivering a rapid transit system that is direct, frequent, safe, electric, replaces thousands of car trips daily and integrated with walking and cycling.	See 24
	20. Metro rail commute Advocate for a frequent Bendigo metro rail commuter service an hour each side and inside Greater Bendigo.	See 24
Electric vehicles	**21. Electric vehicle charging** Develop a policy that establishes Council's approach to supporting installation of charging infrastructure in strategic locations. Consider installing Council owned charging infrastructure if and when the business case is favourable.	Existing
	22. Electric vehicle bulk buy Investigate delivery of a bulk buy program for the community in collaboration with the CVGA, the Bendigo Sustainability Group and other stakeholders.	Existing



TRANSPORT REVOLUTION

THEMES	PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Electric vehicles	**23. Fleet and logistics collaboration** Bring organisations in the city together to investigate opportunities for collaboration relating to the purchase and sharing of fleet, e-bikes, plant, freight and commercial electric vehicles.	Existing
Resources	**24. Integrated Sustainable Transport Planner and Programs Officer** Establish a role in Council to lead strategic action, integrated transport planning, advocacy and behaviour change programs with schools and workplaces.	$ annually

$ = up to $100k; $$ = $100k to $500k; $$$ = over $500k.

We will advocate for…

General

- Government policy and City design to decrease the number of cars on our roads, even as our population increases. This includes reviewing funding policies and programs to increase funding to walking, cycling and public transport.

Active travel

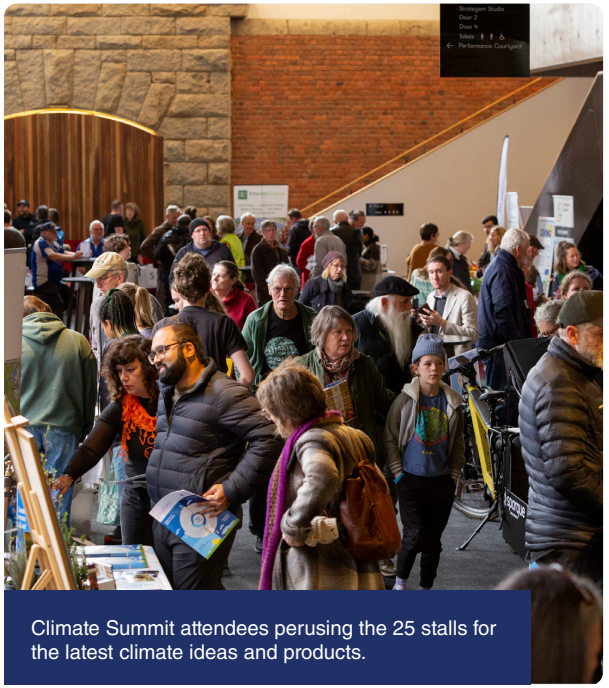
- National and state funding to implement the full Greater Bendigo Walking and Cycling Strategy in ten years. The strategy requires at least $130million to complete.

Public Transport

- A complete overhaul of the City's bus services – i.e. a review of the approach, the routes and timetables – to facilitate a dramatic increase in bus patronage, especially for commuting.
- Increased train services that support commuter use in and around Bendigo.
- Two train tracks between Bendigo and Melbourne.

Electric Vehicles

- Encourage the introduction of e-scooter micro-mobility schemes to Greater Bendigo.
- Improved national fuel emissions standards.
- Introduction of a target for all new passenger vehicles sold to be electric by 2035.
- All fleet vehicles from all levels of government to be electric by 2030.
- Support for businesses to transition to electric or zero emissions trucks for long haul and last mile delivery.



Climate Summit attendees perusing the 25 stalls for the latest climate ideas and products.

Did you know?

A COPENHAGEN STUDY IN 2011 FOUND THAT SWITCHING A CAR TRIP WITH A 20MINUTE CYCLING COMMUTE OVER 20 YEARS SAVES $100,000, CUTS 94 TONNES OF $C^{0}2$ AND INCREASES LIFESPAN BY SEVEN YEARS

(Our Cities Ourselves Report)



Bike Bendigo President Nicola Duncliffe-Wells at our Sustainable Transport Forum in October 2022

TRANSPORT REVOLUTION

We will measure and report on …

- Annual Super Tuesday and Sunday walking and cycling count data
- Four year census journey to work data
- Four year census car ownership data
- Four year COGB Active Living Census data
- Department of Transport State Government public transport Myki data
- Google real time data on transport modes (TBC)
- Electric vehicle sales data
- Walking/cycling shared path counter data
- Snapshot transport data
- Progress of individual projects
- Organisational e-bike salary sacrifice data
- COGB Active Travel Survey

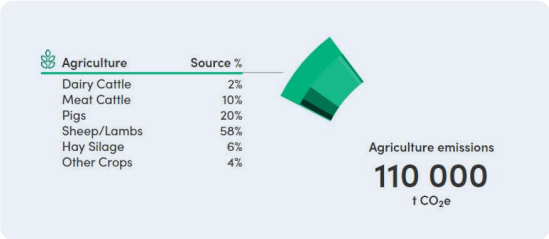


> "AT FIRST PEOPLE REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT A STRANGE NEW THING CAN BE DONE, THEN THEY BEGIN TO HOPE IT CAN BE DONE, THEN THEY SEE IT CAN BE DONE — THEN IT IS DONE AND ALL THE WORLD WONDERS WHY IT WAS NOT DONE CENTURIES AGO."
>
> — Frances Hodgson Burnet

SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Emissions profile

The agriculture sector makes up 7% of our Greater Bendigo emissions. Embedded or hidden emissions from the food we consume that is produced elsewhere is not included in this figure.



The current targets

- National: Australia has signed the United Nations "Methane Pledge" to reduce methane emissions by 30% below 2020 levels by 2030.
- State: N/A
- Local: N/A
- Meat and Livestock Australia: Carbon neutral by 2030.

The community wants

- Extension officers to support farmers to emission reductions, implement regenerative practices and access the carbon market.
- Advice from neutral and trustworthy sources.
- Opportunities for Traditional Owner growing.
- Long term funding and policy clarity

What's happening already

- Victorian Government Agriculture Sector Emissions Reduction Pledge
- Healthy Landscapes: Practical Regenerative Agricultural Communities Program delivered across Bendigo, Hepburn and Macedon councils.
- Greater Bendigo Food Systems Strategy 2020-2030
- Numerous regenerative agriculture groups active across Central Victoria.
- The Australian Government's Carbon Farming Outreach Program which seeks to fund an advisory service that supports farmers understand their emissions profile and emission reduction and carbon farming opportunities.
- Bendigo Food Share food redistribution and local, equitable food production organisation
- Community of Practice and sector-based pilot emission profiles being developed by Agriculture Victoria
- Grow it Local Platform delivered locally by Healthy Loddon Campaspe.
- Increasing consumer access to local foods



in several forms, and at several price points, including the Grower Market (Old Church on the Hill and Bendigo Food Share), Farmers Market, several community supported agricultural enterprises and locally owned butchers, fruiterers, green grocers and bakeries.

The problem

- According to Coliban Water, inflows to our water storages are down 53% over the last 25 years. This ongoing trend will continue to challenge our primary production and urban food enterprises to adapt.
- Farmers are not sure how to account for their emissions, are overwhelmed by information and do not know which sources of information to trust.
- Regenerative practices are increasing, however mainly amongst small scale livestock farmers. There is less take up amongst large scale farmers and cropping and horticulture industries.
- Urban communities are disconnected from food production.
- Farmers markets and other local and urban food suppliers are small scale, are less affordable and accessible than supermarkets who do not necessarily source their fresh food locally.
- Land owners are disconnected from sustainable traditional owner approaches to managing land that heals Country.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

The strategy

1. **Scale up and expand take up of regenerative, urban and peri-urban agriculture.**
2. **Provide integrated support to farmers - collaborate with other agencies on programs that foster sustainable land management, emission reductions and access to carbon markets.**
3. **Increase the community's connection to where their food comes from.**



Actions to reach zero emissions

THEMES	PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Agriculture	**25. Sustainable Farming Systems** Build on the successes of the Healthy Landscapes program and similar regenerative agriculture initiatives in the region and work with key partners to expand programs to other council areas and sectors, including exploring a partnership with DJAARA and employing additional extension officers	$ annually
	26. Sustainable Land Management Grants Provide small grants to farmers to implement regenerative, sustainable farming techniques.	$ annually*
	27. Net Zero carbon farms program Work with Agriculture Victoria, NCCMA and other relevant stakeholders to expand their Community of Practise and deliver an advisory service that coordinates with other local and regional programs to support farmers account for and reduce their emissions.	$ annually
	28. Agribusiness Officer Maintain Council's Agribusiness Officer role to run capacity building programs support young farmers to enter the industry and provide the conduit for information to farmers and the community.	$ annually
Urban food	**29. Food waste business programs** Deliver a food waste reduction program targeting businesses including farms, retail and hospitality.	$$
	30. Urban food production Support and promote existing programs that increase local food growing and food literacy, such as community gardens, food redistribution programs, backyard and communal growing and school engagement. Investigate establishing an "edible streets" pilot program that involves supporting a street or neighbourhood to install edible gardens and swap produce.	$$

$ = up to $100k; $$ = $100k to $500k; $$$ = over $500k. *proposed for funding in Council's draft 2023/24 budget.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Did you know?

PURCHASING LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE IS NO MORE EXPENSIVE THAN FOOD GROWN OUTSIDE THE REGION. THERE ARE ALSO ADDITIONAL BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH CONSUMING LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE, SUCH AS REDUCED FOOD MILES, SUPPORT OF LOCAL RETAILERS AND FARMERS, FRESHER PRODUCE, AND THE ABILITY TO EAT SEASONALLY.

(Healthy Loddon Campaspe Report 2023)

We will advocate for…

- Additional funding for extension officers to work directly with farmers and farmer capacity building programs and networks.
- Further funding to support the growth of urban food growing, logistics and selling initiatives.
- Peak bodies to provide leadership on climate action including the promotion of regenerative agriculture, zero emissions farming, farm energy efficiency, farm electrification, zero emissions food processing and distribution.
- Government organisations to buy local, regeneratively produced food.

We will measure and report on …

- Snapshot Agriculture data
- Grow it Local Platform data
- Progress and impact of individual projects
- % of Sustainable Land Management Grant funds which are allocated
- Number of grant recipients who implement additional sustainable land management changes on their properties
- % of farm rated properties that have participated in the Healthy Landscapes or a similar extension program

> **"OUR PURPOSE IS - WITH PASSIONATE COMMITTED VOLUNTEERS AT OUR HEART, WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER WITH PARTNERS AND COMMUNITY TO CONNECT PEOPLE TO HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE FOOD BY IMPROVING LOCAL SUPPLY AND ACCESS, DEVELOPING FOOD SKILLS AND SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT"**
>
> — Bendigo Foodshare

NATURE

Emissions profile

Our forests in Greater Bendigo absorb carbon and need to be protected and enhanced. Land use is a minor contributor to Greater Bendigo's emissions, contributing 1,000 tonnes CO2-e per annum.

The current targets

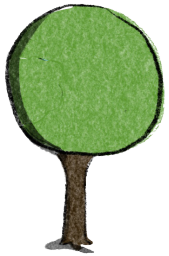
- National: Threatened Species Action plan pledge to protect 30% of land for conservation.
- State: Net gain in the overall extent and condition of habitats
- Local: Increase in tree cover by 35% from 2016 baseline by 2036 no patch of native vegetation over 20ha is fragmented.

The community wants

- Protection of our current trees and forests as carbon stores.
- Increased tree cover across the Greater Bendigo
- Biodiversity corridors and links across Greater Bendigo, including waterways, roads, nature strips and front gardens.
- Local carbon offsets that are legitimate, have integrity and do not absolve organisations from reducing their emissions to near zero.

What's happening already

- Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030
- Protecting Victoria's Environment Biodiversity 2037
- North Central Regional Catchment Strategy
- Galk-galk Dhelkunya, DJAARA Forest Gardening Strategy
- Victorian BushBank program which proposes to restore 20,000 hectares of private land.
- Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2034
- North Central Catchment Management Authority "Growing Habitat for Net Zero" carbon offsets program.
- Undertaking substantial tree planning as a part of implementation of Greening Greater Bendigo



The problem

- A number of carbon offset projects and accreditation schemes have been discredited.
- Australia's Emissions Reduction Fund is difficult to engage with and is not fit for purpose.
- Carbon offsets are often purchased in place of emissions reduction.

The strategy

1. **Protect the remnant native vegetation we have left.**
2. **Offset emissions as a last resort.**
3. **Keep carbon offsets local.**

Actions to reach zero emissions

THEMES	PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Carbon offsets	**31. Local carbon offsets program** Work with the NCCMA and other partners such as DJAARA, to establish a local carbon offsetting program that achieves local biodiversity, cultural and economic outcomes.	$$
Biodiversity	**#32. Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy** Finalise and implement the Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy that seeks to protect and enhance native vegetation across the City.	Existing and as outlined in the Biodiversity Strategy

$ = up to $100k; $$ = $100k to $500k; $$$ = over $500k.



Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance EO Annika Kearton at the launch of the Climate Collaboration June 2022

NATURE

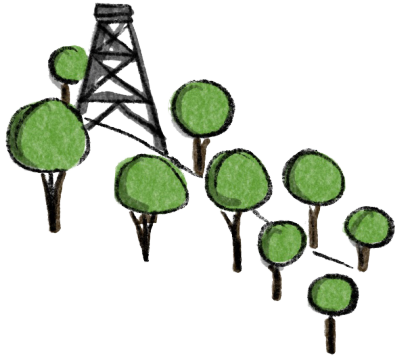
We will advocate for…

- Changes to the Emissions Reduction Fund to ensure it has integrity, is accessible and easy to engage with and supports projects that achieve urban greening and biodiversity co-benefits.
- Protection, enhancement and extension of conservation areas including covenanted land and state and national parks.
- Other organisations to invest in local revegetation programs to offset emissions that cannot be eliminated.

We will measure and report on …

- % of the City's 2030 residual carbon emissions that will be offset by biodiverse revegetation projects established through the NCCMA's Community Carbon
- Implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy and associated Biodiversity Monitoring Program

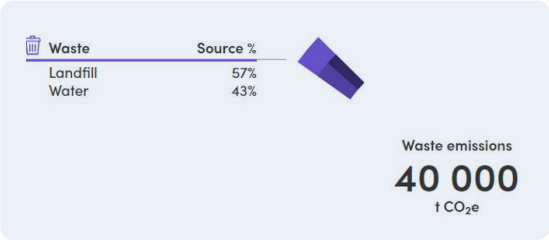
> "WHEN YOU GO OUT THERE INTO THE WILDERNESS YOU DON'T GET AWAY FROM IT ALL, YOU GET BACK TO IT ALL. YOU COME HOME TO WHAT IS IMPORTANT. YOU COME HOME TO YOURSELF."
>
> — Peter Dombrovskis



CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Emissions profile

Emissions from our landfill make up 3% of our Greater Bendigo Emissions.



Note: Hidden alongside our landfill emissions however, are the embodied, or hidden emissions generated elsewhere from the goods we buy and the materials businesses require to operate. Putting this in context, based on a UNSW report commissioned by the ACT Government, Greater Bendigo emissions from the consumption of goods, could be up to 2.7m t.CO2e/a. These emissions are in addition to those from energy use.

The current targets

- National: Reduce waste by 10% per person by 2030; recover 80% of waste by 2030; phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025; reduce organic waste to landfill by 50% by 2030.
- State: Reduce waste by 15% per person by 2025; reduce organic waste to landfill by 50% by 2030; divert 80% of waste from landfill by 2025.
- Local: Zero recoverable resources sent to landfill by 2036.

The community wants

- Increased waste education programs, including programs for CALD communities.
- Support for community waste reduction initiatives.
- Organics collections for hospitality venues.
- Education programs that encourage reduced consumption
- Circular economy industries.



What's happening already

- National Waste Policy and Action Plan
- National Plastics Plan
- Recycling Victoria: A new economy
- Victorian Government Waste sector emissions reduction pledge
- Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021
- Victorian Container Deposit Scheme – commencing in 2023
- City of Greater Bendigo Circular Economy and Zero Waste Policy
- Circular Greater Bendigo - tenders for recycling different waste streams and establishment of a Circular Economy Hub
- Regional circular economy scan. An analysis of regional material use and products and identification of 10 key, implementable circular economy opportunities across the Loddon-Mallee and Loddon-Campaspe region.
- Aspire platform. Support for use of a reuse and materials sharing platform by businesses in the region.
- Commercial organics collection
- Gas recovery at Eaglehawk Landfill to generate electricity.
- Recycle Shops at Eaglehawk Landfill, Strathfieldsaye Transfer Station and Heathcote Landfill, and various community enterprises such as the Bendigo Repair Café, Bendigo Toy Library and the Neighbourhood Collective Australia enterprises; the Old Church on the Hill Community Pantry and the Civic Wardrobe.

Did you know?

FOR EVERY RED BIN FULL OF STUFF THAT WE PUT OUT ON THE KERB, 70 BINS OF WASTE WAS CREATED UPSTREAM TO MAKE THAT STUFF.

(Story of Stuff, 2004)

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The problem

- Embedded emissions in products we consume are “hidden” and not well understood by consumers. Reducing consumption has a far bigger impact than recycling. Reducing consumption and use of primary materials also represents are far more complex challenge than the already difficult shift from fossil-fuels sources to renewable energy sources.
- Community organisations are under-resourced to scale up their circular economy projects.
- Most commercial/industrial and construction/ demolition resources are currently going to landfill.
- Legacy emissions from landfill can be reduced, but not eliminated.

The strategy

1. **Establish Circular Economy Hubs for commercial and community enterprises.**
2. **Reinforce the waste hierarchy – reduce, reuse, recycle.**

Actions to reach zero emissions

THEMES	PRIORITY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
Circular Economy	**33. Support community circular economy enterprises** Support local community circular economy enterprises with small grants and in-kind support to help them scale their impact.	$$
	34. Greater Bendigo Circular Economy Hub Finalise design and secure funding to develop a regional Circular Economy Hub to collect, sort and reprocess commercial and industrial resources, and enable local reprocessing enterprises to form.	$$$
	35. Resource Recovery Action Plan Develop and implement a Resource Recovery Action Plan that continues to support the community, businesses and schools to reduce waste and consumption.	Existing

$ = up to $100k; $$ = $100k to $500k; $$$ = over $500k.





The Green Magpies green team from Epsom Primary School telling the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit Youth Session about the brilliant work they are doing.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

We will advocate for …

- Allocation of the Sustainability Fund which receives money from landfill levies to circular economy projects in each municipality and / or local carbon offset projects that assist with offsetting residual landfill emissions that cannot be eliminated.
- Changes to taxation structures to disincentivise virgin/primary materials and incentivise recycled materials/products
- Government mandates (at all levels) to commit to buying 'reused or recycled first' to create demand for recycled products.
- Phasing out of single use items, including single use plastics.
- Government funded education programs that encourage reduced consumption.
- Support for regional solutions to waste materials, increasing regional ownership of the problem and reducing dependency on processors in metropolitan Melbourne.
- Stricter standards on refrigerants that reduce their climate emissions to zero.

We will measure and report on …

- Tonnes of waste collected across all waste streams from Council facilities
- % of recoverable waste from Council facilities diverted from landfill (or contamination rate)
- Tonnes of waste collected across all waste streams from the community per capita.
- % of recoverable waste diverted from landfill (or contamination rate)

> "WE SEE A WORLD OF ABUNDANCE, NOT LIMITS. IN THE MIDST OF A GREAT DEAL OF TALK ABOUT REDUCING THE HUMAN ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT, WE OFFER A DIFFERENT VISION. WHAT IF HUMANS DESIGNED PRODUCTS AND SYSTEM THAT CELEBRATE AN ABUNDANCE OF HUMAN CREATIVITY, CULTURE, AND PRODUCTIVITY? THAT ARE SO INTELLIGENT AND SAFE, OUR SPECIES LEAVES AN ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT TO DELIGHT IN, NOT LAMENT?"
>
> — **Michael Braungart,** Cradle to Cradle

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTION

This Roadmap focuses on emission reduction initiatives that will enable Greater Bendigo to achieve zero emissions by 2030. In other words, mitigation, rather than adaptation. We cannot adapt to climate change without reaching zero emissions. A 4-6 degree warmer world is not one that supports adaptation. In the meantime, the climate is already changing. Building Greater Bendigo's resilience and adaptive capacity is critical to the health and wellbeing of people and the environment. This section provides a brief overview of our approach to supporting climate adaptation while acknowledging that more detailed planning and community engagement is required on this topic to inform future action planning.



What's happening already

- Coliban Water is implementing its program to deliver net zero emissions water supply and treatment by 2030.
- National Climate Resilience and Adaption Strategy
- Building Victoria's Climate Change Resilience
- Victorian Government Adaption Action Plans
- ADAPT Loddon Mallee
- Loddon Mallee Climate Change and Health Framework
- Victorian Drought Resilience and Innovation Hub
- Regional Climate Leadership Program
- DJAARA Climate Change Strategy
- City of Greater Bendigo Climate Change Risk Assessment for the organisation.
- Northern Victorian Integrated Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2019
- Healthy Landscapes: Practical Regenerative Agricultural Communities Program which seeks to build farmer resilience to climatic changes.

The problem

- There are record levels of ocean temperatures, sea ice loss, land ice loss, land temperatures, extreme weather events and sea level rise. All of these measures will continue to rise until we stop using fossil fuels.
- More frequent and severe natural disasters and extreme weather including bushfires, droughts, floods and heatwaves are impacting infrastructure costs and the health and wellbeing of communities across the Greater Bendigo. One example is the growth in domestic violence incidents in the months following heatwaves, floods and bushfires.
- Generally hotter and drier conditions will have a severe impact on agriculture and liveability. There has been a 53% reduction in water inflows to the region's water storages over the last 25 years.
- Increased waterborne, vector and zoonotic borne diseases.
- Lack of climate ready housing and infrastructure resulting in increased energy costs and government expenditure on disaster relief and recovery.



At the Launch of the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit May, 2023. Aaron Gay, Regional Director Loddon Mallee (acting), DEECA, Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Climate Action, Maree Edwards MP, Member for Bendigo West, Rodney Carter, CEO Dja Dja Wurrung Group, Cr Jennifer Alden.



The Equity panel at the Regional Climate Forum in Castlemaine in March 2023



Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf, Collaboration Coordinator Ian McBurney and Cr Jennifer Alden accepting a Highly Commended award at the Cities Power Partnerships local government awards in Melbourne in September 2023

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTION

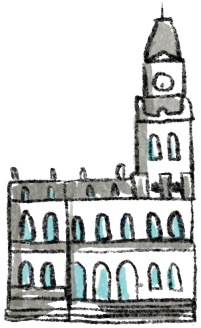
Did you know?

LIMITING GLOBAL WARMING TO 1.5°C RATHER THAN 2°C COULD RESULT IN UP TO 420 MILLION FEWER PEOPLE BEING FREQUENTLY EXPOSED TO EXTREME HEATWAVES AND AROUND 65 MILLION FEWER PEOPLE BEING FREQUENTLY EXPOSED TO 'EXCEPTIONAL' HEATWAVES.

("Preparing for the Heatwaves of the Future", UN and Red Cross Report, 2022)

The strategy

1. **Net Zero Emissions Water supply by 2030**
2. **Local climate action planning that addresses adaptation as well as mitigation**
3. **Programs with co-benefits – i.e. that achieve mitigation and adaptation outcomes.**
4. **Adaptive emergency response and recovery processes**
5. **Integration of first nations approaches into climate resilience programs.**



"OUR REGION IS HIGHLY EXPOSED TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND WE MUST PLAY OUR ROLE IN DELIVERING A RAPID GLOBAL REDUCTION IN CO2 EMISSIONS WHILE WE ALSO IMPLEMENT CLIMATE ADAPTATION STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN OUR STATUS AS AN OUTSTANDING REGION TO LIVE"

— **Damian Wells,**
Managing Director, Coliban Water

A NOTE ABOUT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Annual Report

The GBCC team will produce a public annual report based on the indicators listed in each section of the Roadmap above (and any new indicators that appear) and on the progress of the 35 priority projects.

Project Evaluation

In addition to this, the 35 projects will need their own individual methods of evaluation and reporting to ensure their success and to ensure that what we learn is available to other places for replication.



Our Faith Leaders launching their Climate Faith Statement at the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit in May 2023. Bishop Shane Mackinlay (Catholic Diocese), Imam Atalla Khawaldeh, Community Chaplain Lauren Lockwood-Porter (Anglican Diocese), Rev. Ken Rookes (Uniting Church) and Monsignor Frank Marriott OAM.



OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

Agnico Eagle

Agnico Eagle have an emissions reduction target of net-Zero emissions by 2050, with an interim target of a 30% reduction in absolute Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions by 2030 based on 2021 levels.

To reduce greenhouse gas emissions Agnico Eagle has:

- Established a climate action governance framework.
- Incorporated energy efficiency and emissions reduction into their strategy.
- Set metrics and targets.
- Carried out site-specific climate-related risk assessments.
- Published their first Climate Action Report.
- Implemented several greenhouse gas reduction initiatives including investing in electric vehicles and a battery electric loader in use at Fosterville.

There are three primary areas of focus across Agnico Eagle operations:

- Energy efficiency
- Technology transition
- Increased renewable energy

They will explore additional opportunities for collaborations with governments, industry, and communities, and continue to identify and evaluate opportunities to increase the proportion of energy from renewable sources.

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

Bendigo and Adelaide Bank

Bendigo and Adelaide Banks business plan is to reduce GHG emissions by 50% by 2030 and 95% by 2040 from their baseline year of 2020. This includes both the emissions associated with our operations and our portfolio (financed emissions).

To date, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank has undertaken the following emissions reduction activities:

- Expanded solar panel installations to feasible branch and office sites.
- Purchased green power to supplement solar power generation to ensure they are 100% renewable by 2025.
- Continue to phase out gas from branch and office locations, subject to feasibility.
- Transitioned their fleet to EVs where applicable.
- Conducted campaigns to increase adoption of paperless statements.
- Updated their green loan pricing to support our customers in taking up green products such as solar panels or EVs.

The banks Climate and Nature Action Plan, currently in development aims to achieve the following emissions reductions actions in the future:

- Uplift management and oversight of climate- and nature-related actions to embed them in BAU activity.
- Identify and quantify climate-related risks.
- Identify and assess nature-related risks.
- Scenario analysis: Enhance BEN's capability to execute physical and transitional climate risk scenario analysis.
- Empower the business to identify, assess and act on climate and nature-related opportunities.
- Embed climate risk and opportunity as a key consideration in our strategic choices, risk appetite and materiality.
- Build internal engagement and knowledge regarding the Bank's response to climate change and natural capital.
- Enhance understanding of climate change and natural capital impacts for our customers and communities.
- Explore opportunities to develop new or enhance existing solutions to support customers to reduce their carbon intensity, adapt to climate change and improve natural capital outcomes.
- Procure 100% renewable energy by end of 2025.
- Improve operational emissions data.
- Mature their approach to financed emissions.
- Engage customers for targeted, real-world financed emission reductions.
- Neutralise their emissions, with intentional impact.
- Establish themselves as bank with an aspiration for a positive impact on nature and biodiversity.
- Authentic reporting against relevant and evolving frameworks.
- Revised and reaffirmed corporate position on climate change and nature to reflect current understanding, science, technology, policy and sentiment.
- Influence the capital system by engaging with relevant industry, government, and other stakeholders to share knowledge, build capacity, and support action on climate change and nature issues.

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

RACV Solar

RACV Solar is one of Victoria's largest solar installers. Known for their premium products, service and reliability, RACV Solar acquired Central Victoria's largest solar retailer, Bendigo-based business Cola Solar, in 2022.

When Cola Solar's local team of over 40 employees joined RACV Solar, the company was eager to be a part of the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration to support our goal to become a world leading zero-emitting city.

Solar is an important part of the larger RACV organisation, which began back in 1903 as a motorist's club and has since expanded its products and services to suit the changing needs of Australians. With over 2 million members, RACV has made several investments to help homes, businesses and communities make the switch to clean energy.

The member organisation offers products and services such as:

- Solar panels and batteries through RACV Solar
- A carbon neutral retail energy offer, Arcline by RACV.
- Invested in electric vehicle charging companies JET Charge, Chargefox and Re:Start – a company that offers roadside and mobile EV charging
- A partnership with Hyzon, manufacturers of hydrogen vehicles.
- All RACV Resorts, Clubs and offices are now using renewable energy from a combination of on-site solar installed by RACV Solar and power the resorts buy from Snowy Hydro.

Now based in Bendigo, RACV Solar is investing in the local region, helping put solar on buildings across Bendigo through our Power it from the Rooftops project, the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration and RACV's Solar in the Regions program with three solar and battery systems donated to community facilities in the Greater Bendigo region.

The team has been operating in and around Bendigo with Cola Solar for over a decade, having completed over 7000 installations across the region to help thousands of Victorians make the switch to cleaner energy. Now, with the backing of RACV, the team is excited to be able to extend their support to customers and the community even further while continuing to deliver the same quality service and local knowledge Central Victoria has come to expect.

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

Latrobe University

La Trobe University is committed to achieve university wide Net Zero (scope 1 and 2 emissions) by 2029, from a 2019 baseline year. The Mildura and Shepparton Campuses certified by Climate Active as net zero for 2021. The Bendigo and Albury & Wodonga Campuses are on track for Climate Active certification for Net Zero for 2022.

A range of projects have been implemented at all La Trobe campuses, including

- the installation of rooftop solar panels,
- energy efficient LED lights,
- mechanical system efficiency upgrades,
- and batteries to store solar energy.

These projects have reduced carbon emissions by a significant margin. A more detailed list of actions per year can be viewed here https://www.latrobe.edu.au/sustainability/net-zero/our-journey-so-far

In the future Latrobe will be taking the following key actions to ensure they reach their emissions reduction targets.

- Increase onsite renewable generation for all campuses combined by 50% by 2025, from a 2019 baseline year.
- Reduce Scope 3 emissions from passenger vehicle fleet by 90% by 2025, from a 2019 baseline year.
- La Trobe will focus on reducing its scope 1 and 2 emissions through investment in onsite renewable generation and energy efficiency projects.
- La Trobe will continue its investment into green energy purchase and renewable energy as much as feasibly and economically possible. Then, purchasing offsets to offset the remaining carbon emissions.

To find out more about La Trobe's Net Zero strategy: https://www.latrobe.edu.au/sustainability/net-zero

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

North Central Catchment Management Authority

The North Central Catchment Management Authority plans to reduce greenhouse emissions by 85% by 2025 from our baseline year of 2020. The North Central CMA is committed to net zero emissions by 2030. To date the North Central CMA has:

- Developed the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy 2021-27 renewal through the lens of climate change.
- Benchmarked current carbon footprint to understand areas for improvement to reduce carbon emissions.
- Produced a Pathway to Net Zero Plan which outlines options to achieve targets.
- Purchased of 100% renewal energy for our office including the installation of a
- 50kW solar system.
- Established a Community Carbon Pilot program to achieve local carbon and biodiversity offsets including helping our council partners work towards net zero.
- Review and renewal of the North Central Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan
- Developed a Climate Ready Revegetation Toolkit which provides practical steps and tools for climate resilient works.
- Invested in several electric fleet vehicles and charging stations available for staff and the public.

In the future the North Central CMA will be taking the following actions to ensure they are reducing their emissions:

- Upgrading office heating and cooling to reduce carbon footprint.
- Expanding their fleet to all electric vehicles.
- Delivering a Community Carbon Pilot project and the establishing of an ongoing program.
- Updating their Procurement Policy to ensure contractors and suppliers consider carbon footprint.
- Regular touch points and reporting to their Board regarding the delivery of the North Central Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan.

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

City of Greater Bendigo

Council began reporting its corporate emissions in 2010-11 and setting emissions reduction targets. Council historically reported on Scope 1 and 2 emissions including emissions from landfill waste, purchased electricity, gas and transport fuels.

Council has endorsed a Zero Carbon Plan (ZCP) whose core action is removal of fossil fuel use in all city operations by a program of electrification of buildings, fleet, waste management; with all external electricity energy sourced from 100% renewable sources.

- In 2021 the City joined a partnership of 51 Victorian councils to source 100% renewable electricity generated by Victorian wind farms.
- The City is transitioning its fleet of vehicles to an electric powered fleet. So far, the City have purchased 9 electric light vehicles and planning for the introduction of electric heavy fleet and plant. We are facilitating the installation of vehicle charging infrastructure at our facilities and depots and at sites across the city.
- The introduction of a food and organic waste collection, diverts methane producing organic waste from landfill, converting this resource to valuable compost.
- The City introduced the "Be the Change" program to engage staff in taking positive action to reduce emissions, waste and improve efficiency in using resources.
- Council began reporting its corporate emissions in 2010-11 and setting emissions reduction targets. Council historically reported on Scope 1 and 2 emissions including emissions from landfill waste, purchased electricity, gas and transport fuels.

In the future, the City will be undertaking the following key actions to ensure they meet their emissions reductions targets:

- The City via the 'electrify everything' action under the ZCP, will continue replacing its fleet of light and heavy vehicles with all-electric alternatives.
- The City is undertaking a program of removing gas appliances and gas connections from all our building and facilities.
- Procurement of good and services will consider the lifecycle and carbon emissions of the product purchased, to enable the reduction of scope 3 emissions.
- The Circular Economy waste strategy will reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and increase the amounts of materials able to be recycled at the end of their product life.
- The City will align its emissions reporting to the Australian Governments 'Climate Active' standard for measuring, reducing and offsetting emissions, with the net result of carbon neutrality by 2030.

A percentage of the Cities emissions will need to be offset post 2030. The city is trialling a partnership program to generate locally sourced offsets whilst bringing environmental and biodiversity benefits to the local landscapes.

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

Coliban Water

At Coliban Water, their purpose is to deliver water and wastewater services for community needs now and into the future. Coliban Water's vision is "Water to live, grow and enjoy" and provides water and wastewater services to 49 towns across 16,500sqkm in North-Central Victoria.

Coliban Water is committed to supporting healthy country and communities, powered by our ethical and sustainable practices. As such, Coliban Water's strategic direction is towards zero carbon and zero waste. As an imperative, legislated through the Statement of Obligations (Emissions Reduction), we must shift to 100% renewable energy by 2025 and be emitting net zero carbon by 2030. Coliban Water is also committed to influencing greater action in our region by leveraging partnerships to drive down regional emissions.

So far, Coliban Water have undertaken the following emissions reductions actions in their business.

- Developed Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
- Partnered in Zero Emissions Water, a company consisting of 13 water corporations that have entered into a collective Power Purchase Agreement
- Commenced implementation of a 5-year Solar PV program

In the future Coliban will be taking the following key actions to ensure they reach their emissions reductions targets:

- Large scale implementation of Solar PV – electricity use is approximately 25GWh annually, we are seeking to install behind-the meter solar generation to substitute 50% of gris-sourced electricity.
- Carbon sequestration projects – these projects will address the "hard to abate" Scope 1 emissions that arise from vehicle use and sewage treatment emissions from nitrous oxide and methane gases through sequestering carbon in trees on Coliban Water owned land.
- Upgrades with energy efficient equipment – selecting equipment that is more efficient and designing out waste where possible
- Roll-out of electric vehicles – passenger vehicle fleet will transition over the next 5 years followed by the heavy fleet when technology becomes feasible.
- Hydro-generation projects – investigate and implement projects to utilise infrastructure to generate electricity using natural flows

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

CVGT Employment

CVGT Employment is a not-for-profit, for-purpose employment services provider. For 40 years we have been helping individuals secure sustainable and meaningful work, and employers secure the right staff. To date CVGT has undertaken the following actions to reduce business emissions including:

- Creating a three staged approach to their Sustainability Plan and commenced the Kickstart component.
- Creating a Green Team made up of employees to promote and implement environmental strategies.
- Trailing various initiatives at sites, including reusable cups and the removal of bins from office areas.

Governance and reporting

- Highlighted sustainability in their procurement policies and procedures with an emphasis on reducing wastage and greenhouse gas emission.
- Developed and adopted guidelines to help their 'environmental champions' provide valuable information and help drive initiative organisation wide.
- Continue sustainability education by attending forums garnering new ideas to drive initiative.
- All CVGT Employment staff now participate in environmental awareness training.

Waste consumption

- In 2021-2022 financial year, CVGT reduced their carbon emissions by 18% from their base line points.
- Successfully diverted from landfill over a 1000 kilos of old brand uniform to a textile recycler for recycling into bigger and better things!
- Progressed from a largely paper based company to using more electronic systems than ever before.

Transport

- In 2021, 9.8% of all company vehicles were hybrid. They have ordered an additional 31 hybrids which will increase their percentage to approximately 30% when they arrive.

Power and buildings

- Switched all electricity accounts to greener provider, with their three providers rated in the top 10 by Greenpeace as the greenest providers in Australia.
- Investigating battery storage solutions for our Long Gully head office to improve their solar panels, to remove the need for a diesel generated back up power.
- Installing LED lights at their business sites to reduce our electricity consumption.
- Installed solar at their owner-occupied properties.

In the future CVGT employment will be moving into stage 2 and 3 of their sustainability plans (Making Change and Sustainable Future)

- Stage 2 - Making Change: In this stage CVGT aims to initiate major strategies aimed at significantly reducing CVGT Employment's carbon emissions.
- Stage 3 - Sustainable Future: Reach net zero emissions, zero landfill, zero transport emissions and a hundred percent renewable energy sources.

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

Bendigo Foodshare

Bendigo Foodshare is an organisation focused on achieving positive social and environmental outcomes. Solving the social issues of food poverty, building food security; and reducing food waste. Central to this is rescuing food that would have once ended up in landfill and distributing it as food relief across central Victoria.

Foodshare's vision is that every person in central Victoria has secure access to healthy food. Foodshare works with partners and the community to connect people to healthy, affordable food by improving local supply and access, developing food skills and supporting a sustainable and healthy environment. Volunteers are the lifeblood of Bendigo Foodshare – a team of 240 active volunteers help us to rescue, pick, pack and distribute this food.

In the past 12 months Bendigo Foodshare has undertaken the following activities which has reduction in greenhouse gas emissions across the City.

- Sourced and rescued approximately 750,000kg of food from local businesses, farms, food charities and supermarkets.
- Saved an estimated 84 million litres of water through food recovery.
- Saved 1,130 tonnes CO2-e emissions through food recovery.
- Worked 28,015 volunteer hours at a value of $1.2million.
- Distributed food to nearly 13,000 vulnerable people each week across Central Victoria.
- Corporate Volunteering Pilot "Cooking for Change" - where end-of-life food is brought into the kitchen and turned into valuable meals for food relief. This program aims to save 600kgs of food and make 1,000 meals by the end of 2023.
- Grow Cook Share program aims to increase skills, access and affordability to healthy, sustainable and culturally appropriate local food to more people across Greater Bendigo
- Generating their own electricity by solar power and ensuring all waste entering the organisations is carefully managed.
- Reusing and recycling as much as possible to keep rubbish going to landfill to a minimum.
- Diverting over 8,000kg of green waste not fit for human consumption to their urban farm and community garden projects to be turned into compost to grow more food.
- Recycling all, food crates and egg cartons reused
- Excess bread is given to local farmers for animal feed.
- Using reusable pallet wrap made from polyester and PVC, rather than disposable plastic wrap.

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

Bike Bendigo

Bike Bendigo works to make going by bike easier – especially for local day-to-day trips. Taking local trips by bike is great for mental and physical wellbeing. This keeps us more connected to the community and the environment - and Bendigo is a beautiful place to enjoy the outdoors.

Biking is an easy way to get some outdoor physical activity every day. By switching some journeys from the car to the bike, we reduce carbon emissions. Bicycle travel is not yet viewed as a viable option by many. Many people are uncomfortable riding alongside cars, but gaps in Bendigo's cycling network mean people may not be able to ride safely.

Bendigo's strong driving culture is another barrier. Active travel and 'multi-modal' travel are not seen as mainstream or the norm, so going by bike or taking the bus can feel like swimming against the tide. Bike Bendigo looks for opportunities and innovative ways to improve Bendigo's cycling infrastructure and to build a culture where going by bike is seen as a normal and attractive transport option.

Bike Bendigo:

- Works closely with local and state government agencies to advocate for connected walking and cycling infrastructure so people can ride safely to where they need to go without having to mix with cars.
- Advocating for opportunities to inspire and support people to switch from going by car to using active transport modes (such as walking and cycling) to help reduce carbon emissions from the everyday short trips we all make, and to make our city a safer and more pleasant place to live and move around.
- Supporting people to ride safely and confidently – for example, through riding skills and road safety workshops. They have also developed resources, short videos and cycling maps to inspire, educate and support people to go by bike.
- Running monthly community rides, where they show participants great places to ride around Bendigo.
- Spreading the word about the benefits of going by bike – through their enews, media stories and on social media, to help build a culture where it's seen as normal, desirable option.

Supporting people to ride safely and confidently – for example, through riding skills and road safety workshops. They have also developed resources, short videos and cycling maps to inspire, educate and support people to go by bike.

Bike Bendigo is also working to normalise the idea of multi-modal transport – or 'horses for courses': walking and going by bike is a great way to move around for shorter local trips. Buses are another option, or trains for intercity trips. Or we might go by car for trips across town – or when a bike or bus just isn't practical.

OUR PARTNER'S CLIMATE ACTION

Bendigo Sustainability Group

The Bendigo Sustainability Group is an award-winning non-profit organisation which undertakes several emissions reductions projects across Greater Bendigo community. Some of their activities include:

- Advocating for proactive measures in addressing climate change.
- Educating on sustainable housing through organised talks and on-site evaluations of eco-friendly and sustainable residences.
- Highlighting community and business initiatives in sustainable living at the Bendigo Sustainability Festival.
- Providing insights into energy expenditure, specifically about electricity and gas and offering guidance on identifying cost-effective energy retailers and strategies for consumption reduction. Regular free public talks are conducted.
- Illustrating the economic and environmental advantages of solar energy and battery storage and assisting in discerning the cost-effectiveness of solar and battery proposals. Regular free public talks are conducted.
- Delivering high-level guidance on understanding carbon footprints.
- Serving as a trusted source for impartial counsel on diverse facets of sustainable living.
- Facilitating collecting and redistributing various waste types to minimise landfill contribution.

ACF Community Bendigo District

ACF is Australia's national environment organisation. They speak out for a world where forests, rivers, people and wildlife thrive. They are proudly independent and funded by donations from our community. ACF Community Bendigo District branch undertakes several activities to support community wide emissions reduction including:

- Active advocacy and submission writing to all levels of government about the need for strong climate action
- Organising community conversation stalls in public places, about the need for climate action
- Publication of brochures on: environmental consequences of climate change, electric vehicles, etc.
- Active involvement in the Bendigo Climate Alliance
- Care of the bush: monthly bushwalks and developing a bushwalking guide to get more people to appreciate our environment

GREATER BENDIGO 2030 ZERO EMISSIONS ROADMAP

Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Roadmap

Consultation Report Phase 2



COLLABORATION LEAD

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

MAJOR PARTNER

AGNICO EAGLE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

RACV SOLAR

FOUNDING PARTNERS

Bendigo Bank

Coliban WATER

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

PREMIUM PARTNERS

North Central CMA

cvgt australia

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Bendigo Sustainability Group

ACF Community Bendigo District

BIKE BENDIGO

Foodshare

Working in partnership with Djaara and Taungurung to heal Country.

Background

The Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration (GBCC) is designed to put our City on the path to zero climate-changing emissions by 2030. The Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Roadmap (the Roadmap) sets out the key actions and 35 priority projects to achieve this goal.

What we did

Community Consultation

Phase 1
Phase 1 of community consultation comprised of workshops and meetings with government agencies, partner organisations and community groups, research and community and stakeholder forums on the key issues and opportunities for emissions reduction under the themes of energy, transport, food and agriculture, circular economy, and nature. Over 1,000 people contributed their ideas which were considered in the creation of the draft Roadmap. As a result of this first year of consultation, the ideas of Greater Bendigo Residents were discussed, researched and included in the development of the draft Roadmap.

Phase 2
Phase 2 of community consultation sought community feedback on the draft Roadmap. The information contained within this report summarises this feedback and our responses.

Engagement Tools

Survey
An online survey was used to gather community feedback on the Roadmap via the Let's Talk Platform. The survey asked the following questions:

- What's good?
- What's missing?
- Rank 10 of the priority projects in priority importance

A total of 46 survey responses were received via the online portal.

Community Events

Greater Bendigo Climate Summit (Phase 2)
The draft Roadmap was launched and on display for community feedback at the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit. Over 600 people attended the event and were made aware of the draft Roadmap

Meetings

Discussions were held with key staff within the following organisations to gain input to and feedback on the draft Roadmap:

- Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration Governance Group
- Bendigo Sustainability Group
- Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance
- Powercor
- Economic Development Steering Committee
- North Central Catchment Management Authority
- Agriculture Victoria
- Huntly Landcare
- DJAARA
- Bendigo Bank
- Latrobe University
- RACV Solar
- Farming and Agribusiness Advisory Group
- Climate Equity Group
- Interfaith Leaders Group
- Circular Economy Community Leaders Group
- Bendigo Youth Council
- Council internal departments including Active and Healthy, Community Partnerships, Strategic Planning

CEO Roundtable
On the night before the Greater Bendigo Climate Summit a Roundtable was held with 25 CEOs of Greater Bendigo organisations to discuss the Roadmap and the Climate Collaboration. In attendance were: Mohammed Ali, Ion Dunn & John Landmark (for Agnico Eagle), Rob Herbert (Be.Bendigo), Liz Greenbank (RACV Solar), Crs Andrea Metcalf & Jennifer Alden (City of Greater Bendigo), Craig Niemann (City of Greater Bendigo), Damian Wells (Coliban Water), Annika Kearton (CVGA), Julie Rudner (Latrobe University), Anjum Chaudhry (BSG), Bridget Bentley & Helen Symes (Bendigo Foodshare), Nicola Dunnicliff-Wells (Bike Bendigo), Josh Stevens (Bendigo & Adelaide Bank), Rodney Carter (Djaara), Jason Russell & Matthew Frecker (CVGT Employment), Brad Dust (NCCMA), Julie Flynn (ACF Central Vic Community) , Ian McBurney (GBCC), Michelle Wyatt (COGB C,C & E Unit)

There was good support from the leaders of Bendigo for the Collaboration and the direction of the Roadmap. Some thoughts that were raised regarding the Roadmap were:

- Lots of support for the Climate Collaboration
- Strong evaluation and monitoring of the collaboration and the 35 projects will be needed
- Collaboration, investment and effort will be needed to reach zero emissions
- A big part of the challenge is healing country
- Equity is important
- Well-funded research and education are vital
- The journey is going to take courage, vision and commitment
- Industry should get involved in larger solar projects where power is needed

- Regional collaboration is crucial
- Financing mechanisms are important
- Once the low hanging fruit actions are completed within organisations, collaboration is the next step
- Young people need a voice and buy in
- Our transport system is not adequate for zero emissions

Community Drop-in sessions (Phase 2)
The following community drop-in sessions were held:

- Neighbourhood Houses
  - Long Gully
  - Eaglehawk
  - Marong
  - Kangaroo Flat
  - Bendigo
  - Heathcote

- Community Libraries
  - Bendigo Library
  - Kangaroo Flat

Overall, over 1060 people attended community events having conversations with Collaboration staff about the draft Roadmap.

Promotion
The community was informed about the opportunity to participate in the Roadmap via the following media channels:

- GBCC page on the City of Greater Bendigo website
- 483 views

- Let's Talk Greater Bendigo
  - 824 visits to the page
  - 46 surveys completed

- Social Media (Facebook)
  - Facebook - Posts on the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration Facebook which reached 15,480 people for the period of May 01 to June 30, 2023.
  - Posts on Council's Facebook page.
  - Posts on partner organisations social media pages including Agnico Eagle, RACV Solar, Coliban Water, NCCMA CVGT Employment, Bike Bendigo, Bendigo Sustainability Group, Bendigo Foodshare, Central Victoria AFC Community,

- Climate Change and Environment E-newsletter
  - 4 x newsletter articles

- 570 subscribers

- Newspaper
  - 1 x article in the Bendigo Advertiser

- Radio
  - 2 weeks of radio advertisements (4 x per day) on MMM Radio
  - ABC local radio interview with Epsom Primary School, who were presenting at the climate summit
  - Interview with Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration Coordinator on MMM Radio

What have we heard?

The majority of people talking to the Climate Collaboration team were supportive of the roadmap, its scale, scope and the project ideas. Some groups, such as Bike Bendigo and the Bendigo Youth Council argued for more speed and more action. The following section summarises the community feedback received to the draft Roadmap.

Energy

What's good:

- Ensuring equity for renters and low wealth households
- Community benefit sharing
- Ways for the community to get involved in Electrifying Greater Bendigo (i.e. A plaque residents can put on their fence that says “this home is all electric”)
- Handbook which tells residents how to electrify

What’s missing:

- Engage with property developers to provide a diverse range of energy efficient dwellings for all incomes
- Community owned batteries and solar farms
- Fair and equitable gas prices
- Investigations into off-grid potential for small communities
- Mandatory targets for new housing developments on energy efficiency, solar, and home orientation
- Localised education materials and workshops
- Grants for landlords to put solar on rental properties
- Induction cooking workshops
- Induction cookers at neighbourhood houses and community centres
- Climate change hubs or demonstration sites which showcase electrification and energy efficiency options

Other:

- Zero emissions energy targets are a State and Federal Issue that council should not be involved in
- Compulsory panels, inverters, and batteries in any new housing development

Transport

What's good:

- Advocating for a fully electric bus service
- Making the inner city more pedestrian friendly
- EV bulk buy
- A greater cultural shift in public transport perception / use
- Increased, connected and safer active travel infrastructure across neighbourhoods, the City centre and to surrounding regional areas including bicycle parking and repair stations
- Safer more effective, more frequent, and electrified public transport that gets people where they need to go within the City and connecting to the regions

What's missing:

- Greater commitment of resources to transport revolution – one staff member is not enough to widespread cultural change
- Free public transport
- Better and increased infrastructure and services for EV's including chargers, roadside assistance and end of life recycling for batteries – regardless of short-term financial viability
- A ring road or bypass from south to north and/or from east to west to take through traffic out of the city
- Strong advocacy on planning medium density development
- Upfront financing for people to make the transition to EV's or electric bikes.
- Better zero emissions policies for vehicles

Other:

N/A

Food and agriculture

What's good:

- The Healthy Landscapes Program

- Greater and longer-term funding support for urban food growing initiatives
- Support for farmers to understand carbon and navigate carbon markets

What's missing:

- A local target for fruit and veggie production in Bendigo
- Support and opportunity for young farmers to enter the industry
- Include more details of regenerative agriculture programs and activities already happening in the regions
- Support and opportunity for young farmers to enter the industry
- A community veggie garden at Ross Park in Kennington! Please council let us have one and give us a couple of boxes to get going and I will get local community on board to do the rest

Other:

- Research undertaken by Deakin for Healthy Loddon Mallee suggests that locally grown fruits and vegetables are no more expensive than fruits and vegetables grown elsewhere.
- Action #25 – (Change to) Sustainable Farming Systems: Utilise the successes of Regenerative Agriculture and the Healthy Landscapes program in the north central region and work with key partners to build and expand to other neighbouring councils, including a partnership with DJAARA and employing additional extension officers
- Action #27 – (Change to) Net Zero emissions farms program: Work with Agriculture Victoria, North Central CMA and other stakeholders to expand their Community of Practice and deliver an advisory service to support farmers account for and reduce their emissions

Circular economy

What's good:

- Reduce, reuse, repair campaigns

What's missing:

- Recycling centre / hub services in Huntly
- Local soft plastics recycling
- Better packaging from State and Federal Levels to reduce packaging waste
- Increase kerbside recycling collection, decrease greenwaste collection
- Recyclable packaging for events catering
- More incentives and deterrents for reducing and recycling building and construction waste

Offsets

What's good:

- Greater protection of trees, native's species and biodiversity
- Planning that prioritises regeneration of natural spaces over development

What's missing:

- Stop chopping down trees
- More compelling reasons required for tree removal
- Covenant for building a blocks sizes allow for canopy cover
- More pocket parks, less car parks
- Effective removal of invasive weeds to allow natives to flourish

Other:

- Stop the State Government chopping down trees too

Adaptation

Note: there is a chapter on adaptation in the roadmap, but the focus of the Roadmap is mitigation.

What's good:
N/A

What's missing:

- Detailed plans for community to prepare for extreme weather events
- Plans to prepare for pandemics and regional pandemic outbreaks
- None of the actions address the urgency and limited time we have left to be prepared for an increasing frequency of extreme weather events facing Greater Bendigo

Other:
N/A

Other feedback

What's good:

- The effort already made
- Lots of good / great small-scale initiatives & plans
- That you've done it! Comprehensive plans, informed targets
- Ambitious targets, ample opportunity for community input.

- It's a great roadmap. Let's get accelerating the actions, especially the transport infrastructure.
- The topic selection
- Work is being done
- Community Spirit
- Great collaboration and shared target setting.
- Comprehensive coverage of the most pressing issues and action plans.
- Exciting for the community.
- All the actions are great! Well done to everyone involved.
- Let's be ambitious!
- Outcome Measurement: I think there must commit to an annual CO2 emissions report for the COGB region. What gets measured get managed. Make it visible to the public as a way of enrolling individuals and business perhaps. A bit like the old publicly displayed fund-raising charts where the local CFA or similar cause publicly displayed their progress against fund raising goals except, we would be displaying a progress against reduction targets as we track to zero (or whatever is the best way to communicate in an accessible way for the community).
- Bendigo Foodshare is fully supportive of this Roadmap and one of our hopes for its delivery was brought up during the discussion and is well articulated in the strategy - We must focus on an equitable transition: A unanimous view across Greater Bendigo. Transport, energy and food choices need to be available to everyone and these choices can lower the cost of living.

What's missing:

- Provide a more robust and stronger evidence base for Roadmap
- Evaluation and reporting – stakeholders want to see how actions and outcomes will be measured and managed
- Larger and longer-term issues, sustainable population growth, restrictions on urban sprawl and community wide cultural change.

Youth Council Submission
The Greater Bendigo Youth Council provided a submission on the draft Roadmap:
We recognise the hard work already undertaken; however, we believe the Draft Roadmap can be strengthened.

- On page 8 of the Draft Roadmap, 'Energy,' the Youth Council would like to highlight our support to ensuring the equitability of reaching energy targets.
- As highlighted in the Draft Roadmap, 1/3 of households, approximately 13,000 homes, in the Greater Bendigo region are low-income. Subsequently, many Greater Bendigo residents require help to afford costly energy investments such as electric vehicles and solar panels.
- The Youth Council would like to stress the importance that as young people in this city, we believe that no one should be left behind in reaching net zero emissions. We believe that importance must be placed on ensuring the accessibility and inclusivity

of the Draft Roadmap for all. To this effect, we strongly encourage the City to engage with property developers and provide a diverse supply of sustainable, energy-efficient new housing for all needs and ranges of income.

- We also recommend that the City introduce a handbook outlining what individuals can do to reduce their emissions. Households and businesses require entirely different approaches to reduce carbon emissions than individuals. There is great merit in this, as it reduces confusion and provides community members with clear strategies on what they can do to help.
- Our wholehearted support is placed behind Action #19, Bus Revolution, as we believe the community will significantly benefit from a public transport reform. The overwhelming consensus of the Youth Council is that the current public transport system in Greater Bendigo is highly unsatisfactory. Currently, the City's public transport options do not allow frequent, efficient travel. More frighteningly, this network also has an increasing number of public safety concerns, with Youth Councillors citing antisocial behaviour, both on the buses and at major bus stops. The unfriendly and impractical nature of the public transport system fails to meet essential community needs, therefore driving community members to use private modes of transport. This leads to an avoidable increase in CO2 emissions and congestion on our road networks. The City must sufficiently address this to reach the targets outlined in the Draft Roadmap.

The Youth Council's feedback on the Draft Roadmap has been overwhelmingly positive. We believe that the community will significantly benefit from the Draft Roadmap by ensuring the strength of the above actions. The Youth Council would also like to highlight the excellent community engagement by the relevant team and is impressed by the positive steps taken to engage with young people and the wider community. We appreciate the time taken to brief the Youth Council on the draft Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Roadmap and hope you consider our submission

Community ranking of projects

The community was asked to rank the following projects in order of 1-10. 1 being the most important – 10 being the least important.



(Graph: Greater Bendigo Zero Emissions Roadmap Feedback – Community Ranking of Projects)

The community preference of projects, in priority order was:

1. Advocate for a complete overhaul of the City's bus services to get people to work and school effectively
2. Accelerate development of footpaths and traffic calming initiatives to make the City pedestrian friendly
3. Establish a program to support low-income households with the energy transition, including providing financial support or no interest loans
4. Establish a Home Energy Efficiency and Resilience Service that provides home energy assessments and supports residents to electrify and retrofit their home
5. Accelerate development of cycling lanes and infrastructure in the City
6. Continue and expand the Healthy Landscapes regenerative agriculture program
7. Support local community waste reduction and reuse enterprises with small grants and in-kind assistance
8. Facilitate the development of local, community led climate action plans
9. Continue the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration
10. Investigate delivery of an electric vehicle bulk buy program for the community

Appendix 1: Council Responses to Feedback

Theme	Council Responses
Energy	
Engage with property developers to provide diverse range of energy efficient dwellings for all levels of income	**Partially supported** Diversity of dwellings has been and remains a key policy position of council and the State, and the City has advocated to the State for mandatory provision of social housing under the housing scheme. Changes to the National Construction Code means that all new dwellings will be required to be 7 stars under the NatHERS scheme as of October 2023. Updates to the National Construction Code also mean the energy performance of appliances used for hot water, heating and cooling, solar energy generated onsite and battery storage will be included in a new Whole of Home rating.
Grants for landlords to put solar on rental properties	**Partially supported** GBCC will advocate for increased need for adoption of solar PV, energy efficiency measures for rental properties. Promotion of existing rebates available to landlords through Solar Victoria.
More support / equal opportunity for renters to install solar, electrify and retrofit for energy efficiency	**Supported** Action #9 in the Roadmap to support low wealth households to transition.
Community batteries to store local PV excess	**Partially supported** The GBCC is committed to working with Powercor to understand need for community batteries for grid firming. The financials around community batteries are not clear, community battery projects require almost 100% Government funding to be viable.
Fair and equitable gas prices	**Unsupported** Continuing to rely on fossil fuels will increase emissions. The GBCC supports transition away from fossil gas and towards electrification powered by renewable energy. We will be advocating to State and Federal Governments to help finance the transition.
Community owned solar farms	**Unsupported**

Theme	Council Responses
	Like community batteries the financials for community owned solar farms are unclear and would require Government funding. A significant number of solar farms are planned for the region and State Government is reintroducing a renewably powered State Electricity Service, therefore the focus for local roadmap is demand management, electrification, and energy efficiency. The GBCC is working on Community Benefit sharing policy and wealth fund to ensure community benefits from planned solar farms.
Further consideration given to Agrivoltaics	**Partially supported** We will consider developing a communications campaign on the advantages of implementing agrivoltaics on farm in the Bendigo Region.
Handbook for what residents can do to help reduce emissions	**Partially supported** We are developing a communications campaign on electrification and blog with this information.
Induction cooking workshops	**Partially Supported** Support the promotion of induction cooking, however, is best way to get message across might be able to reach more people with a video and a blog
Induction cookers at community centres such as neighbourhood houses	**Supported** Support installation of induction cookers at community centres and neighbourhood houses and places where cooking is taught.
Climate change hubs or demonstration sites which showcase electrification and energy efficiency options	**Partially supported** Education and communications programs are being designed and we already have the Bendigo Sustainability Festival and Sustainable House Day for demonstrations.
Transport	
A greater cultural shift in public transport perception / use	**Supported** As part of zero emissions transport plan will include educational, behavioural change and cultural change programs required to support the shift to a zero-emissions transport system.

Theme	Council Responses
Greater commitment of resources to transport revolution – one staff member is not enough	**Supported** We are advocating internally for an integrated transport planning and programs officer. We are also developing a zero-emissions transport plan – which may involve funding for further positions.
Need major shift in cultural perception of bike riding	**Supported** Agreed. The Roadmap contains key actions cultural shift toward active travel. We are also developing a zero-emissions transport plan which may identify further actions to support cultural change.
Increased, connected and safer active travel infrastructure across neighbourhoods, the City centre and to surrounding regional towns including repair stations and Dutch style bicycle parking	**Supported** Action #17 and #18 in the Roadmap is acceleration of the cycling infrastructure in Walk Cycle Greater Bendigo. We can also confirm this as we develop our zero-emissions transport plan.
Sharing of GovHub bike park with other central organisations	**Unsupported** The GovHub / Galkangu bicycle parking is already experiencing high usage and is anticipated that the bike park will be full especially during warmer months. The building hosts 1,200 staff and only 100 bike parks. We will investigate alternate bicycle parking for the city centre as part of our zero-emissions transport plan.
Safer more effective, more frequent, and electrified public transport that gets people where they need to go within the City and connecting to the regions	**Supported** This will be explored as part of the zero-emissions transport plan and bus review.
Free public transport	**Partially supported** As part of the bus review, we will be advocating for a review of the pricing structure (including looking at options such as free or low-cost public transport) to incentivise bus ridership.

Theme	Council Responses
Better zero emissions policies for vehicles	**Supported** The transport section of the Roadmap includes advocacy actions to State and Federal Government for greater emissions policies for vehicles.
Better and increased infrastructure and services for EV's including chargers, roadside assistance and end of life recycling for batteries – regardless of short-term financial viability	**Supported** The City of Greater Bendigo is currently developing an EV charging policy and will investigate EV Roadside Assistance as part of the zero-emissions transport plan.
Strong advocacy on planning for medium density development	**Supported**
Electrified public transport to and from regional towns	**Supported** The Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration will be advocating for a review of the bus system that will support this outcome. Regional Zero Emissions Roadmap and trains are longer term.
Upfront financing for people to make the transition to EV's or electric bikes.	**Supported** The GBCC team will be actively pursuing this. Projects and advocacy actions are in the Roadmap.
A ring road or bypass from south to north, and east to west is required to take through traffic out of the city	**Unsupported** Increasing road space seems a logical step in easing traffic congestion, however in practise creating road space for cars induces demand, leading to more cars on the roads. Cities where space is taken away from cars – cars disappear. So, we don't believe this is an emissions reduction action
Food and Agriculture	
A local target for fruit and veggie production in Bendigo	**Partially supported** A good idea which the GBCC will investigate further.

Theme	Council Responses
Greater and longer-term funding and support for urban food growing initiatives (seed funding, discounted access to workshops, incentives for small scale/neighbourhood growers to participate in farmers markets)	**Partially supported** Good idea which the GBCC will investigate as part of our urban food action.
Support for farmers to understand carbon and navigate carbon markets	**Supported** This is already happening via the Healthy Landscapes program.
Support and opportunity for young farmers to enter the industry	**Partially supported** This is already happening the Healthy Landscapes program.
Include more details of regenerative agriculture programs and activities already happening in the regions	**Supported / Actioned**
A community veggie garden at Ross Park Kennington	**Partially Supported** We are happy to investigate this if whoever wrote this can get in touch with us.
Action #25 – (Change to) Sustainable Farming Systems: Utilise the successes of Regenerative Agriculture and the Healthy Landscapes program in the north central region and work with key partners to build and expand to other neighbouring councils, including a partnership with DJAARA and employing additional extension officers	**Supported / Actioned**

Theme	Council Responses
Action #27 – (Change to) Net Zero emissions farms program: Work with Agriculture Victoria, North Central CMA and other stakeholders to expand their Community of Practice and deliver an advisory service to support farmers account for and reduce their emissions	**Supported / Actioned**
Circular Economy	
Recycling centre / hub services in Huntly	**Partially supported** The City of Greater Bendigo is currently undertaking planning work to future proof the City's resource recovery infrastructure and operations for residents and businesses, with sites under consideration across the municipality. The City remains committed to its historical stance of no further landfill's being built in Greater Bendigo.
Local soft plastics recycling	**Supported / Commenced** Soft plastics can be taken to the Eaglehawk Recycle Shop (at the front of the landfill), or the Strathfieldsaye, Goornong or Heathcote transfer stations.
Better packing policy from State and Federal Levels to reduce packaging waste	**Supported** The GBCC support government target in National Plastics plan of 100% of plastics to be fully reusable, recyclable, or compostable by 2025. This can be included in Circular Economy Advocacy Statement.
Increase kerbside recycling collection, decrease greenwaste collection	**Unsupported** These would increase emissions, increasing recycling collection would encourage consumption. Decreasing greenwaste collection would increase methane emissions from landfill.
Recyclable packaging for events catering	**Supported**

Theme	Council Responses
More incentives and deterrents for reducing and recycling building and construction waste	**Partially supported** Can be included in Advocacy Statement
Offsets	
Stop chopping down trees	Addressed in City of Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy
More compelling reasons required for tree removal	Addressed in City of Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy
Covenant for building a blocks sizes allow for canopy cover	Addressed in City of Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy
More pocket parks, less car parks	Addressed in City of Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy
Effective removal of invasive weeds to allow natives to flourish	Addressed in City of Greater Bendigo Biodiversity Strategy
Adaptation	
Detailed plans for community to prepare for extreme weather events	**Partially supported** Emergency officers at council are working on this.
Plans to prepare for pandemics and regional pandemic outbreak	**Partially supported** This is the role of the Public Health / Healthcare System.
Actions address the urgency and limited time we have left to be prepared for an increasing frequency of extreme weather events facing Greater Bendigo	**Partially supported** Emergency officers at council are working on this.
Other Feedback	

Theme	Council Responses
Provide stronger evidence base for the Roadmap – cite multiples sources of information other than just IPCC report	**Supported / Actioned** Climate science is the largest scientific undertaking in human history, with thousands of scientists from hundreds of countries working together with 60 years of data collection, analysis and agreement. There is no doubt in the scientific community that climate change is real, is happening and is caused by us. Global temperatures are rising, sea levels are rising and extreme weather events are increasing. We have over 30 years of data since the first IPCC report in the 1990s that show climate science has accurately predicted the changes that have occurred over that time. Their predictions over the next 76 years show that failing to reduce greenhouse gases to zero well before 2050 will have devastating impacts on our way of life. This Roadmap is therefore not concerned with establishing the evidence base for climate action, but with the best pathway to reduce emissions in our local economy.
Evaluation and reporting – stakeholders want to see how actions and outcomes will be measured and managed	**Supported** Evaluation and reporting section will be added to final version of the Roadmap.

20. A VIBRANT, CREATIVE COMMUNITY

20.1. Hargreaves Mall

Author:	Wonona Fuzzard, Coordinator Precinct Planning and Heritage
Responsible Director:	Andrew Cooney, Acting Director Strategy and Growth

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement for the Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023-2026, which outlines the City's three-year commitment to greatly enhancing the functionality of Hargreaves Mall and the broader City Centre, including attracting new businesses and improving the overall appearance.

Recommended Motion

That Council:

1. Adopt the Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023-2026, which supersedes actions from the Transforming the City Centre Action Plan 2018.
2. Note that the previously funded shade structure will not proceed at this stage, and funds are to be redirected to other public realm works in Hargreaves Mall.

Executive Summary

In response to recent concerns expressed by both the community and Councillors regarding the current challenges in the Hargreaves Mall, an updated and revised action list for the Transforming the City Centre Action Plan, previously adopted by Council in 2018, has been developed. The actions target areas of concern, such as high vacancy rates, cleanliness, graffiti, activation levels and anti-social behaviour. In response to recent concerns expressed by both the community and Councillors regarding Hargreaves Mall, in particular high shop vacancy rates, cleanliness, graffiti, activation levels and anti-social behaviour, an updated action list for the Transforming the City Centre Action Plan, previously adopted by Council in 2018, has been developed.

The action list provides a clear, outcome-focused approach to get *more people, more often* into the City Centre, including Hargreaves Mall. The overall Action Plan complements other key strategic work adopted by Council, such as the Bendigo City Centre Plan 2020 and Parking Futures Action Plan 2020.

The City is one of a number of organisations and stakeholders that have a responsibility for making the Hargreaves Mall and broader City Centre a safe, vibrant and functional place for everyone.

The City's primary roles in the context of the Mall and City Centre include:

- management of the appearance of the public realm; and
- advocacy and engagement with other agencies such as Victoria Police, support services, landowners, traders and community.

Businesses are continuing to feel the negative impacts of both the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living pressures. The City cannot directly fix many of the adverse issues affecting the City Centre, however, there is a need for the City to enhance its work with stakeholders to revitalise the City Centre in the coming years.

Background

The City Centre draws a mixed response from the community. Feedback captured from previous community engagement and social media and media commentary has found people value the look of the City Centre, such as Rosalind Park and heritage buildings, but the appearance of Hargreaves Mall, vacant shops and anti-social behaviour are continual issues.

History of the Hargreaves Mall

In May 1982, the block of Hargreaves Street between Mitchell and Williamson Streets was closed to traffic, transforming it into a pedestrian mall. In 2010, the Mall was upgraded to the current design. Feedback is regularly received that the space needs more colour, shade and softness.

Over the years modifications have been made to address this, such as the removal of a lantern at the Mitchell Street-end of the Mall and the additions of a bus shelter, FunLoong play space, lights/catenary, a large screen, music and a pop-up park. The play space has been the most successful addition to the Mall.

Retail in the City Centre

The Bendigo Marketplace was first established in 1995 and had a significant impact on the traditional retail core. Many ‘main street’ and independent stores found themselves in direct competition with almost identical chain stores.

The retail landscape of the broader Bendigo urban area also continues to change, with suburban activity centres (Epsom, Kangaroo Flat, Strathfieldsaye and Kennington) becoming the primary locations where people living in these suburbs do their regular supermarket shopping, impacting on visitation levels in the City Centre.

These issues have all resulted in a very different retail environment to the one that existed 15-20 years ago, but what is happening in Bendigo is not unique. Research suggests

bricks and mortar stores still have a strong role to play when they offer unique in-store experiences.

It is a complex situation and there is not one ‘silver bullet’ solution to fix the problems. Where cities have seen success is through coordinated action from a range of stakeholders – government, the private sector and the community.

The mixed-use nature of the City Centre and the fragmented ownership of the shopfronts are current challenges, however they may be great opportunities for the future. Successful city centres rely on having a diversity of uses that attract people to them at all hours of the day and evening.

In central Bendigo, we have seen several good, small-to-medium-scale developments completed recently that have added flexible, high quality office spaces and new apartments to the mix. We have also seen significant growth in the number of restaurants and cafes opened in the City Centre in the past decade; many of these are open well into the evening and on weekends. Despite these positive signs, other parts of the retail sector are clearly not performing as well as they have in the past or could in the future.

Business owners need to ensure they are providing the services and products that customers want, but the City also has a role to assist them and all other stakeholders (leasing agents, landowners, etc.) to work together to create an environment that is as attractive as possible.

For the City Centre to succeed, it needs to provide a compelling retail, hospitality and entertainment offer, and become the destination of choice for businesses, residents and visitors.

Transforming the City Centre Action Plan

The Transforming the City Centre Action Plan (2018-2023) was adopted in 2018 following concerns raised by the community regarding high vacancy rates, cleanliness, graffiti, activation levels and anti-social behaviour. The Action Plan was informed by a series of retail roundtable discussions in 2017 and 2018, and was adopted by Council with action items to be implemented by 2023. Most of these actions have now been implemented.

Previous Council decision dates

- 18 July 2018 – Transforming the City Centre Action Plan 2018-2023 adopted.
- 6 May 2020 – Bendigo City Centre Plan and Parking Futures Action Plan adopted.
- 12 December 2022 – Support for seeking authorisation from the Minster for Planning for Planning Scheme Amendment C279 which includes implementation of the City Centre Plan, Urban Design Framework, and City Centre Heritage Study - Precincts.

There has been a delay in the delivery of planned landscape works and a shade structure in the Mall, originally funded in the 2020/2021 Budget, due to the pending construction of a hotel. Advice from the hotel developer is that the project will not be proceeding for the foreseeable future, largely due to the current economic climate and recent escalation in construction costs.

Report

As a result of the City's role, the end of the 2018 Action Plan timeframe and negative issues continuing to affect the City Centre, it is timely to reconsider how Hargreaves Mall operates and key opportunities to support or influence positive changes for an evolving vibrant City Centre.

The future of Hargreaves Mall

The Mall is currently experiencing a high level of vacant shops, limited private investment in buildings, unkempt shop fronts and the general area looks a little worn due to age.

One option is to remove the Mall and reinstate the road. In practical terms this could be undertaken, however, the cost for reinstating the road would likely be between $3M - $5M. This would include capital costs for road construction, kerb and gutter, removal of the physical infrastructure such the play space, lanterns, recently installed LED screen, trees and relocation of services. There would also be a significant cost to upgrade traffic lights, which would impact the broader road network.

A partial road opening to one way traffic is also regularly suggested. Although it would not be as expensive as completely reinstating a new road, it would come at a cost from both a financial and amenity perspective. Returning a part of public space to vehicles creates significant risk for pedestrians. The location of existing infrastructure would also govern the location of the road and carparking.

As a result, safety would need to be the priority and measures to separate vehicles from pedestrians would have to include fencing the play space, bollards on both sides of the road to define the road area (as there would be no kerbs), and additional pedestrian crossings at each end of the block and a central one.

The cost for a partial road closure could be approximately $1 million but would be contingent on detailed design confirming potential requirements for service relocations or modification of traffic light and intersection infrastructure. However, the biggest impacts would be to pedestrian movement and the road network, due to the stacking of vehicles entering/leaving the Mall, location and operation of pedestrian crossings, loss of event space and proximity of traffic to a play space.

An aspiration for the Mall to feature more hospitality venues, outdoor eateries and nighttime venues is another theme in feedback from the community. The City has also reinforced this concept through strategic plans and actions plans, and will continue to encourage this type of offering. However, as the City does not own the shops, it cannot

invest in upgrades to individual shops or enforce the types of businesses that are operated.

In considering the history of the Mall and the value of public space in the heart of the City Centre, it is apparent that there has been a lot of effort over the years to revitalise this area.

If a road is reconstructed and the public space removed, it is unlikely that it would ever be returned. It is considered appropriate to put forward a clear plan to implement actions to revitalise the Mall with a defined timeframe to see a turnaround in the City Centre by 2026. At that time, Councillors and staff will review the updated Action Plan's level of success and make a final call with the community on the future of the Mall, including whether additional intervention is required or if the City ultimately reconfigures the Mall and reopens it to traffic.

It is intended that the City provide itself three years to fix the City Centre by 2026, with a particular focus on Hargreaves Mall, using the following actions.

A Three-Year Action Plan

How the City Centre looks and feels is a key driver of how Greater Bendigo is seen by residents, businesses and visitors. The updated Action Plan is based on a practical focus of what the City is able to influence, which is primarily the public areas. However, the role of advocate and facilitator is equally important, with complementary actions including to reinvigorate the appearance and amenity of the City Centre. Key issues are identified below, with a full list of actions included in the Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023-2026 at **Attachment 1**.

Landscape improvements

The pop-up park was installed as a temporary measure to provide colour and softness, while funding was sought to install permanent landscaping in the centre of the Mall. Allocated funding in the 2020/2021 Budget for a shade structure was put on hold pending construction of the hotel approved in the Mall. Recent advice from the developer is that the project will not be proceeding for the foreseeable future and there is no timeframe for a commencement date. Without a clear timeframe from the developer, it is considered appropriate to at least deliver all landscape elements in the centre area.

Due to the focus of this action plan being for a three-year timeframe, the shade structure is not recommended to proceed. Instead, it is recommended the budget earmarked for the shade structure be reallocated to landscaping and other public realm improvements. Should the shade structure be reconsidered in later years, a future budget allocation will be required. A proposed plan of works is included in the Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023-2026 at **Attachment 1.**

Action Item: Remove pop-up park and replace with a new landscaped area, including trees, seating and tables.

Bus shelter upgrades and Mitchell Street bus stop

The existing bus shelter waiting area located at the Mitchell Street-end of the Mall was initially placed there to provide a comfortable waiting area for people using real time bus system technology and reduce the need to congregate at the bus stop for long periods of time. Unfortunately, within six months of completion, changes were made to the bus network and the bulk of passengers were moved to the opposite side of Mitchell Street. At the same time, the three bus stops along Mitchell Street were modified into one main bus stop on each side of the street (at the intersection of Mitchell Street and Hargreaves Street/Mall). This has created an even greater issue of clustering and associated access issues for those using the footpaths.

To address these issues, three actions have been included. The first relates to modifying the existing bus shelter waiting area to maintain access to seating facing Mitchell Street bus stops and remove remaining seating that facilitates clustering of large groups.

Recommended modifications to the bus shelter:

- Removal of benches that face away from the bus stops
- Installation of festoon lighting to the ceiling
- Installation of additional adjustable lighting that can cast bright light to the entire space if needed
- Painting the columns in vibrant colours

The remaining two actions are both advocacy related. The Department of Transport and Planning has provided in-principle support to improve accessibility of the bus network across the City Centre, however, has been unable to secure funding to deliver this. In the interim, a firmer push to reinstate the original three bus stops will be undertaken.

Action Item: Reconfigure elements of the bus shelter waiting area in the Mall to continue to offer seating but eliminate clustering opportunities for large groups

Action Item: Continue to advocate for reinstating three bus stops along Mitchell Street to reduce clustering in a single location because of only one bus stop

Action Item: Continue to advocate for changes to the bus network to improve accessibility across the City Centre, using both Mitchell and Chapel Streets.

Cleanliness improvements.

A constant criticism of the Hargreaves Mall is its appearance and cleanliness. This is primarily related to high volumes of pedestrian traffic and several shop vacancies (i.e. the

owners of the shops not maintaining the building frontages). The City currently undertakes regular cleaning services in the Mall, including daily footpath sweeping each morning, cleaning of bin surround tops and movement of bins, and a quarterly pressure wash.

As part of preparing the City Centre to attract *more people, more often*, a new cleaning regime is an option. The City could either fund the outsourcing of additional cleaning activity, or fund additional cleaning equipment and staff to undertake the activity. With either option, it is important that additional sweeping, cleaning and graffiti removal is included. It is proposed to continue to monitor the cleanliness of the Mall and increase the service level in the future if required.

Action Item: Increase funding to cleaning services in the City Centre to improve presentation.

Anti-social behaviour

Another issue impacting on the attraction of some pockets of the City Centre relates to the perception of anti-social behaviour. Many people congregate near the FunLoong play space, the bus shelter waiting area in Hargreaves Mall, and opposite in Mitchell Street. Retailers in these areas report any incidents to the Police when they occur and they respond as best they can, but that is not a long-term solution to the issue. In recent years various working groups have developed actions to enhance the use of Hargreaves Mall and increase the perceptions of safety. It is worth noting that when events are on in the Mall and lots of people are around, City officers receive feedback the Mall is vibrant and safe.

Although there are broader social issues outside of the City's control, the City still has a role in facilitating improvements. Specifically, the City can undertake activation activities to create a more vibrant and busy atmosphere that attracts a range of people to the area. A recommended program, which is included in the Action Plan, has been prepared for 2023/2024 and is located at **Attachment 2**.

Action Item: Increase funding for the activation of public spaces to enable more events to be held to attract people into the City Centre.

The City is able to play an important role in facilitating stakeholder groups to focus on areas that affect the way the City Centre functions. The first stakeholder group is to be based on the existing Bendigo Safe Community Forum, with additional relevant members to be included and having a specific focus on social issues. The second roundtable group is to focus on the broader issues affecting the functioning of the City Centre and includes members who represent community safety, business attraction, activation, and transport interests. There will be instances of overlap between the two groups, however, each group will establish clear terms of reference to ensure optimum use of people's time.

Action Item: Establish formal City Centre stakeholder groups to work collaboratively to focus on social issues.

Business attraction

The City has clear strategic work that supports the City Centre to continue evolving away from a more traditional retail model to a mixed-use environment with a strong hospitality offering. Hargreaves Mall is a perfect place where an outdoor eating culture could thrive in a safe, pedestrian-oriented area located in the heart of the city, complemented by retail and other offerings.

Action Item: Develop marketing collateral / branding for the Bendigo City Centre.

Action Item: Engage a specialist Business Attraction Broker to identify gaps in the retail and hospitality sector, then work with leasing agents and property owners to target specific businesses.

Priority/Importance

This project is of high importance and will establish a clear direction for the future of the Hargreaves Mall over the next three years.

Options Considered

Option 1

Adopt the new Action Plan and commence implementation. This is the preferred option.

Option 2

Remove the Hargreaves Mall and reinstate the road. This is not the preferred option for the following reasons:

- Loss of public space;
- Loss of play space;
- Reduction of pedestrian amenity;
- Loss of event space;
- Cost of civil works; and
- Cost of intersection upgrades to the network.

Option 3

Allow one way traffic, fence the playground, place bollards on both sides of the Mall to manage hostile vehicle attack, add 11 parking bays, add entrance and mid-block pedestrian crossings. This is not the preferred option for the following reasons:

- Loss of public space
- Play space next to a road
- Reduction of pedestrian amenity – fencing control, ease of flow, cars etc.
- Network disruptions with stacking of turning vehicles into the Mall and pedestrians on crossings
- No separated cycling corridor (insufficient room)
- Asphalting of road surface
- Loss of event space
- Cost of civil works
- Cost of intersection upgrades to the network

Option 4

Take no further action.

Timelines

The Action Plan proposes a timeframe of three years.

Communications/Engagement

External Engagement

Initial engagement was held with traders on Monday August 14, 2023 to provide detail on the removal of the Kauri Pines prior to a press release being issued on Tuesday August 15, 2023. The opportunity was also taken to advise that there would be more information coming in September, which will address the many concerns currently being raised in the community regarding the function, relevance and presentation of the Mall.

A roundtable meeting to discuss the anti-social behaviour in the Mall and broader City Centre was held on Thursday August 10, 2023. Representatives included Victoria Police, support agencies such as headspace and Mad Cow, Bendigo Health, and City officers including the Chief Executive Officer. The meeting was chaired by the Mayor. The meeting allowed everyone to raise issues and provided an opportunity to consider solutions. It was agreed that there was a need to meet regularly to share information and facilitate working together to address the issues. The City will coordinate future meetings.

Internal Engagement and Coordination

A Hargreaves Mall Project Control Group has been established with the following representatives:

- Director Strategy and Growth
- Manager Community Partnerships
- Manager Engineering
- Manager Tourism and Major Events
- Manager Parks and Open Space
- Manager Strategic Planning

- Manager Economic Development
- Manager Resource Recovery and Education
- Manager Financial Strategy
- Manager Communications
- Urban Designer
- Strategic Project Manager

This Group will continue to meet monthly to ensure a coordinated approach to the management of the Mall occurs.

Financial Sustainability

Previous budgets nominated funds for a medium-sized capital project to construct a shelter in the Mall. These funds will be repurposed to support the Action Plan, including public realm and landscaping improvements. For 2023/2024, all other costs will be accommodated within existing budgets. In subsequent financial years, Council will consider additional budget allocations to support activation and implement recommendations from the Business Attraction Broker.

Risk Assessment

The City does not own property beyond the public realm areas, so has no say in the types of shops that open in the city centre, and is limited in its ability to manage anti-social behaviour. As such, the risks can only be managed through information sharing and actively working with agencies and the community to improve the way the Mall and the City Centre is perceived and how it functions.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 1 - Lead and govern for all
Outcome 2 - Healthy, liveable spaces and places
Outcome 3 - Strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
Outcome 6 - A vibrant, creative community

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 1 - Accountable, financially responsible, equitable, transparent decision making
Goal 2 - More activated spaces

Other Reference

Regional Strategic Plan Reference:

The Loddon Campaspe Regional Growth Plan includes a number of actions that relate to promoting the growth of ‘Bendigo - the regional city’. There is a particular emphasis on growing the Bendigo City Centre.

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

1. Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023 2026 [**20.1.1** - 5 pages]
2. Hargreaves Mall Activation Plan [**20.1.2** - 32 pages]

HARGREAVES MALL ACTION PLAN 2023-2026



Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023-2026

BACKGROUND

The City Centre draws a mixed response from the community. Feedback captured from previous community engagement and social media and media commentary has found people value the look of the city centre, such as Rosalind Park and heritage buildings, but the appearance of the Hargreaves Mall, vacant shops and anti-social behaviour are continual issues.

History of the Hargreaves Mall

In May 1982, the block of Hargreaves Street between Mitchell and Williamson Streets was closed to traffic, transforming it into a pedestrian mall. In 2010, the Mall was upgraded to the current design. Feedback is regularly received that the space needs more colour, shade and softness.

Over the years modifications have been made to address this, such as the removal of a lantern at the Mitchell Street-end and the additions of a bus shelter, Funloong play space, lights/catenary, a large screen, music and a pop-up park. The addition of the play space has been the most successful element in the Mall.

Retail in the City Centre

The Bendigo Marketplace was first established in 1995 and had a significant impact on the traditional retail core. Many 'main street' and independent stores found themselves in direct competition with almost identical chain stores.

The retail landscape of the broader Bendigo urban area also continues to change, with suburban activity centres (Epsom, Kangaroo Flat, Strathfieldsaye and Kennington) becoming the primary location where people living in these suburbs do their regular supermarket shopping, impacting on the level of visitation to the City Centre.

The above issues have all resulted in a very different retail environment to the one that existed only 15-20 years ago. These issues are not unique to Bendigo but research suggests bricks and mortar stores still have a strong role to play, as customers are attracted to unique in-store experiences.

It is a complex situation and there isn't one 'silver bullet' solution to fix the problems. Where cities have seen success is through coordinated action from a range of stakeholders – government, the private sector and the community.

The mixed-use nature of the City Centre and the fragmented ownership of the shopfronts are current challenges, however they may be great opportunities for the future. Successful city centres rely on having a diversity of uses that attract people to them at all hours of the day and evening. Across the western world we are starting to see large-scale shopping centres trying to recreate elements of traditional town centres in their redevelopments.

In central Bendigo, we have seen several good, small-to-medium-scale developments completed recently that have added flexible, high quality office spaces and new apartments to the mix. We have also seen significant growth in the number of restaurants and cafes opened in the City Centre in the past decade; many of these are open well into the evening and on weekends. Despite these positive signs, other parts of the retail sector are clearly not performing as well as they have in the past or could in the future.

Business owners need to ensure they are providing the services and products that customers want, but the City also has a role to assist them and all other stakeholders (leasing agents, landowners, etc.) to work together to create an environment that is as efficient, affordable, adaptable and attractive as possible.

For the City Centre to succeed, it needs to provide a compelling retail and entertainment offer and become the destination of choice for locals and visitors to the region.

Transforming the City Centre Action Plan

The Transforming the City Centre Action Plan (2018-2023) was adopted in 2018 following concerns being raised by the community regarding high vacancy rates, cleanliness, graffiti, activation levels and anti-social behaviour. The Plan was informed by a series of Retail Roundtable discussions in 2017 and 2018. The Plan was adopted by Council with action items to be implemented over a three-to-five-year period, ending in 2023. Most of these actions have now been implemented.

While the City cannot directly fix the structural changes that the retail sector is experiencing or address all societal issues, the City does have a role to play in getting *more people, more often* into the City Centre.

Concern has again been expressed by both the community and Councillors regarding the current state of the Hargreaves Mall. In addition to this, there has been a delay in the delivery of the planned landscape works and shade structure in the Mall due to the pending construction of a hotel. Advice from the developer is that the project will not be proceeding for the foreseeable future, largely due to the current economic climate and recent escalation in observed construction costs.

Businesses are continuing to feel the negative impacts of both the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living pressures. As stated, the City cannot directly fix many of the adverse issues affecting the City Centre, however, there is still an important role that the City can undertake as the manager of public domain areas such as the Hargreaves Mall.

Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023-2026

ACTION PLAN

	Short term (within 1 year)	Cost	Status
1.1	Remove pop up park and replace with new landscaped area including shade trees, seating and tables.	Pop up park removal - $30,000 New landscaped area - $500,000	A Request for Quote has been prepared for the landscape and seating work to replace the pop up park. It is anticipated that providing a good response from tenderers are received, the works should be completed by the 2024 mid year school holidays.
1.2	Increase cleaning services in the City Centre	$20,000	
1.3	Increase funding for the activation of public spaces to enable more events to be held to attract people into the city centre.	$100,000 for 2023/24. Budget approval required for ongoing funding.	The Tourism and Major Events Unit has prepared the Hargreaves Mall Activation Plan 2023/2024 in support of this action.
1.4	Engage a specialist Business Attraction Broker to identify gaps in the retail and hospitality sector, then work with leasing agents and property to target specific businesses.	$50,000	
1.5	Continue working with Myer to explore opportunities that reinforce the role of the department store as a City Centre anchor.		
1.6	Recommence a targeted Expression of Interest process for micro tenancy activation of in the two repurposed Lantern structures in the Mall.		
1.7	Establish formal City Centre stakeholder groups to work collaboratively to focus on social issues.		An initial meeting has been held which included representatives from Victoria Police, Department of Transport and Planning, MADCOW, Headspace, Bendigo Health, Bendigo Youth Justice, Be. Bendigo, Courts Victoria, Salvation Army and the City.
1.8	Develop marketing collateral/ branding for the Bendigo City Centre.		City officers will endeavour to deliver this action within existing budget.
1.9	Update the wayfinding signs at either end of the Mall and at key locations across the City Centre to reflect changes such location of Law Courts and Galkangu ensuring signs present positively from an accessibility perspective.		This action is yet to be costed. If endorsed, City officers will scope the project and seek quotes, and will endeavour to deliver it within existing budget.

Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023-2026

	Medium term (1-3 years)	Cost	Status
2.1	Reconfigure elements of the bus waiting facility in the Mall to continue to offer seating but eliminate clustering opportunities for large groups.	$100,000	Recommended modifications to the bus waiting facility include: • Removal of benches that face away from the bus stops. • Installation of festoon lighting to the ceiling. • Installation of additional adjustable lighting that can cast bright light to the entire space if needed. • Painting the columns with vibrant colours.
2.2	Continue to advocate the reinstating of the three static bus stops in Mitchell Street to reduce the cluster in a single location driven by the use of a dynamic single stop.		
2.3	Continue to advocate changes to the bus network to improved accessibility across the City Centre utilising both Mitchell and Chapel streets.		
2.4	Continue making the City Centre an easy place to move around on foot for people of all ages and abilities.		

Hargreaves Mall Action Plan 2023-2026

ACTION 1.1 – LANDSCAPE/ PUBLIC REALM IMRPOVEMENTS CONCEPT

LEGEND

1. Stage platform for live performances
2. Flexible multi-use seating platform and viewing space
3. Backrests to platform
4. Terraced seating viewing area
5. Informal picnic nodes on synthetic turf
6. Colourful and informal picnic seating
7. Irrigated planting atop of seating backrests
8. Existing Catenary Lighting
9. Existing LED viewing screen for events

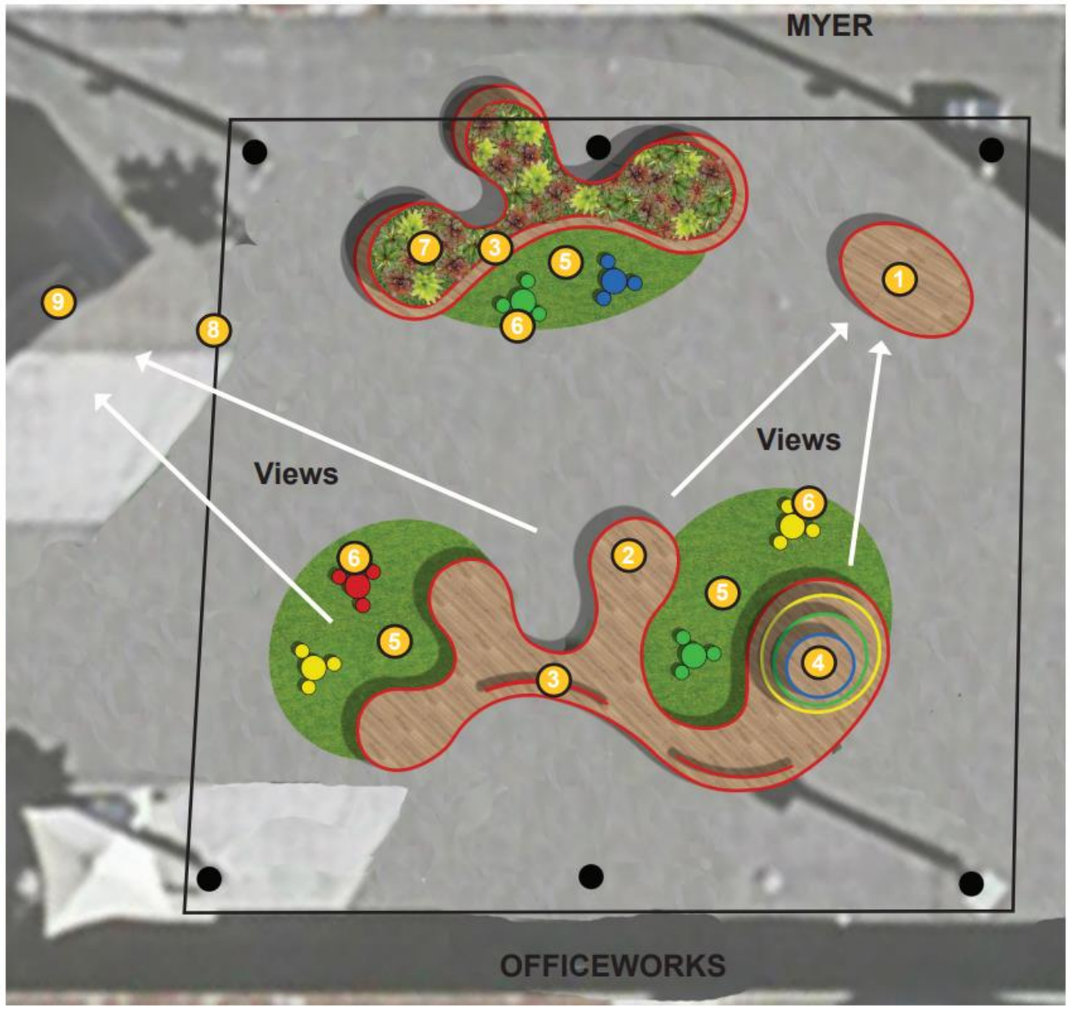
PRECEDENT IMAGES



















Hargreaves Mall

Activation Plan

2023/2024

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO


What We've
Done So Far

What We've Done

The Major Events team has rolled out activities and entertainment during the school holidays, bringing families into Hargreaves Mall, engaging with Greater Bendigo and tourists from out of town.

- Regular Local Live Music, like Music in the Mall at Christmas and Easter
- School Band Showcase
- Fair Dinkum Bush Dance & BBQ
- Lion Dancers
- Junior Football Activities
- Rock Climbing Wall

- Face painting
- Live Painting Sessions
- Parkour & Toddler Soft Play
- Circus Activities
- Jumping Castles
- Bendigo Braves
- AFL Live on the BIg Screen



The Big Screen

The Screen regularly displays music videos, with the community able to scan a QR code on the screen, to request music of their choosing to ply next. We have seen this feature used previously especially in conjunction with other events happening in the Mall.

A Welcome to Country message has been added to the rotation of videos on the big screen along with the other community messages, such as the 'Dear Bendigo' COVID creative project.

Live AFL Matches are broadcast onto the big screen with community members sitting and watching football games in the lawn area.

Event Collaboration

Hargreaves Mall has been collaborating with incoming City events, and hosting pop-up activations for the community. Recently the Sheep & Wool Show set up in Hargreaves Mall with displays of Wool fashion, along with sheep and a sheep dog for everyone to say hello and pet. This saw consistent engagement with the community, whilst promoting a City event.

This is low cost, easy and effective way to build engagement in the heart of Hargreaves Mall, whilst building excitement for locals and tourists with upcoming events/festivals.






Current Plans

Current Plans

Current Budget

Program	Amount $	Per Week $	Per Day $	Duration	Activities
School Holidays Activities	$24,000	$4,000	$1,000	April, June, September. 4 Activations Per Week	• Connected Circus • The Zone • Parkour • Bendigo Bricks
Live Music & Entertainment	$43,000	$1,000	$500	42 Weeks of the Year 2 Days Per Week	• Bendigo Blues & Roots Musicians • School Band Showcase • Fun Loong Fun Day
Christmas Activation	$9,450	$3,150	$450	Entertainment, Art, & Activities 3 Weeks in December	• Craft Activities • Sarah The painter • Stilt Walkers • Elves • Photo Ops
Christmas Movies On Big Screen	$1,950	$650	$650	3 Weeks of Christmas Movies	• 1 Movie Per Week
Moonlight Market	$3,000	$1,500	$1,500	Two Markets held in July and March	• Security • Lighting • Heating
Marketing	TBA			Marketing for ongoing Activities	
TOTAL				**$81,400.00**	Approx $20K over Budget



Current Plans

The current Hargreaves Mall Activations Calendar is divided by seasons and corresponding school holidays, with weekly activity to support these key dates:

School Holidays
Celebration of Arts & Culture and free fun family entertainment. Including Movies in The Mall.

Regular Pop Ups
Live Music, Art and Entertainment weekly, in the Hargreaves Mall; EG Music Performances in the Mall & School Bands Showcase fortnightly.

Special Events
Moonlight Market Pop Up July and March
Bendigo on the Hop
International Leggo Day
Roller Disco in the Mall with Dragon City Roller Derby
Fun Loong Day
Summer In The Parks Movies
Orchestra In The Mall
Public Art Installations (with additional funding from Creative Communities)


Future Plans



Future Plans

Paid Activations

Arts, Food & Culture In The Mall

- Art Projections on Building
- Painting Workshops with Sarah the Painter and Pinot&Picasso
- Craft workshops
- Food workshops with Bendigo Tafe and Bendigo Foodshare
- Multicultural Food Festivals in Hargreaves mall
- Having local business and Food vendors pop-up for events, eg. National Sandwich Day
- Food Waste Activation with Resource and Recovery, Bendigo Foodshare and Bendigo Sustainability Group
- Cooking Workshops with local chefs
- Zoo In The Mall - Reptile Display, Farmer Daryl with Farm Animals

Fitness In The Mall

- Morning Meditation
- Tai Chi
- Zumba workshops
- Parkour
- Climbing Gym

Dancing In The Mall

- Indigenous dancing with Djaara
- Latin dancing with Motion Dance studio, iDance, or community group
- Hip Hop with Hip Hopportunities or LM Dance School
- Cheerleading with Cheer N Dance
- Kids Dance Sport with iDance

Future Plans



Paid Activations

Movies in The Mall

- Purchasing City of Greater Bendigo branded bean bags and chairs
- linking with local businesses and community groups to provide popcorn and other snacks
- Having frequent movies in the Mall for the community to enjoy
- Wider variety or themed Movies
  - Retro Movie night
  - Bollywood Movies
  - Closed Caption Nights
  - Sensory Sessions
  - Multicultural Films

Music In The Mall

- Candlelight Concert Activation
- Orchestra In The Mall with Bendigo Symphony Orchestra
- School Band Showcase
- Yo Bandigo in The Mall
- Regional Busking Competition

Science In The Mall

- Workshops for World Space week, and Women & Girls In Science Day, held by the Discovery Centre

Future Plans



Community Events

Sport In The Mall

- Roller Disco with Dragon City Roller Derby
- AFL Clinic with AFLC Central Vic
- Basket Ball clinic Bendigo Braves
- Gridiron with Bendigo Dragons Gridiron Club
- Soccer in the Mall for the Women's FIFA World Cup in AUS/NZ
- Yoga/Meditation Workshops

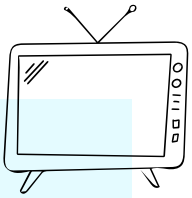
Art, Music, Culture In The Mall

- School Band Showcase (twice a Month)
- Multicultural Dance & Cooking
- Local artist showcase
- Silent Disco with Blue Light
- Working with groups to showcase significant days across the year

Future Use Of The Big Screen

Future Uses of The Big Screen

- Broadcast a 'What's On' for Hargreaves Mall or other City Events
- Host 10 Movie events across the year
  - 3 Christmas Movies in December
  - The Lego Movie on International Lego Day
  - 6 campaign related movies
- Video games broadcast onto the Screen
  - Mario Cart Competitions
  - E-Sport Competitions
- Local Sporting Events
  - Local Football or Netball leagues
  - Roller Derby
  - Grid Iron
  - Tennis
  - Soccer
  - Volley Ball
- Major Events
  - The Australian Open
  - Women's FIFA World Cup
  - Formula 1
  - Cricket
  - Netball
  - 2024 Summer Olympic Games
- Bendigo Waste Information
- Cooking Classes
- providing QR codes for the cooking a fitness videoes to watch & follow at home
- Mini Documentary
- local shorts
- Children made documentaries



- Koorie Film Festival
- Fitness Work outs
- Having visual Podcast on the big screen
  - Could be a local Podcast such as "Where To BendiGO"
- Hold Outdoor Film Festivals
- Having movies with Closed Captions or Auslan interpretations
- Having short clips from content creaters of things to do in Bendigo







Future Plans

Predicted Budget

Program	Amount $	Per Week $	Per Day $	Duration	Activities
School Holidays Activities	$24,000	$4,000	$1,000	April, June, September. 4 Activations Per Week	• Connected Circus • The Zone • Parkour • Bendigo Bricks
School Holiday Major Event	$10,000	$5,000	$715	1 Major Event Activation	• Such as Pop-Up Ice Skating Rink
Live Music & Entertainment	$64,000	$1,500	$500	42 Weeks of Year & Special Events 3 Days Per Week	• Bendigo Blues & Roots • School Band Showcase • Orchestras • Multicultural Music & Dance • Fun Loong Fun Day
Christmas Activation	$15,000	$5,000	$715	3 Weeks in December	• Art • Entertainment • Roving Characters • Photo ops
Movies on the Big Screen	$6,500	$650	$650	10 Movies across the year	• 3 Christmas movies in December • International Lego Day • 6 Campaign related movies
Moonlight Market In Mall	$3,000	$1,500	$1,500	Two Markets held in July and March	• Security • Heating
Moonlight Market in Dai Gum San	$9,600	$1,200	$1,200	August Through to April	• Security • Lighting • Heating
Bendigo Farmers Market	$5,000	$400	$400	Second Saturday each month	• Logistics
Cut & Paste Festival	$10,000	$5,000	$715	Two Week outdoor Art installation	• A series of Artists work displayed in the Mall
Equipment	$12,500			All year round seating for events	• 50 units of beach chairs/Bean Bags for Events
Renew Australia	TBC			Year Round on-going project	• Artists & start-ups filling vacant businesses
TOTAL				**$159,600**	Excluding Marketing ($40,000)


Activations
Calendar





Black: Current Plan & Budget

Blue: Future Plan Funding Required





Black: Current Plan & Budget

Blue: Future Plan Funding Required



2023 NOVEMBER

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
30	31	1	2	3 Sandwich Day	4	5
6	7	8	9 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	10 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	11 Bendigo Symphony Orchestra	12
13	14	15	16 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	17 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	18 Live Entertainment 10am - 2pm	19
20 World Childrens Day - Kids Activities	21 World Television Day	22	23 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	24 Live Entertainment 11am - 2pm School Band Showcase 4pm-6pm	25 Live Entertainment 10am - 2pm	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	NOTES:				



2023 DECEMBER

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
27	28	29	30 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	1 Live Entertainment & Traers sidewalk Sale	2 Live Entertainment 11m-2pm	3
4 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	5 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	6 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	7 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	8 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	9 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION Music and AM Movie	10 Human Rights Day Animal Rights Day
11 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	12 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	13 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	14 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	15 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION: Music and PM MOVIE	16 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	17
18 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION -	19 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	20 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	21 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION	22 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION Music		24 CHRISTMAS EVE
25 **CHRISTMAS DAY**	26 **BOXING DAY**	27	28	29		31
1 **NEW YEARS DAY**	2	NOTES:			23 CHRISTMAS ACTIVATION - Music and AM Movie	

Black: Current Plan & Budget Blue: Future Plan Funding Required



2024 JANUARY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1 **NEW YEARS DAY**	2	3	4 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	5 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	6 Movie on the Big Screen	7
8	9	10	11 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	12 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	13 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	14
15	16	17	18 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	19 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	20 Roller Disco w/DCRD @ Hargreaves	21
22	23	24 International Day of Education	25 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	26 **AUSTRALIA DAY**	27 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	28 SITP - International Lego Day w/ BENDIGO BRICKS
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	NOTES:				



2024 FEBRUARY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
29	30	31	1 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	2 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	3 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	4
5	6	7 Childrens Mental Health Week 7th - 13th	8 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	9 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	10 LUNAR NEW YEAR Dai Gum San: LIVE ENTERTAINMENT: LION DANCERS	11
12	13	14 Valentines Day ACTIVATION	15 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	16 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	17	18
19 PASTE UP FFESTIVAL	20 PASTE UP FFESTIVAL	21 PASTE UP FFESTIVAL	22 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm - Paste Up Festival 29	23 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm - Paste Up Festival 1	24 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm - Paste Up Festival	25
26 PASTE UP FFESTIVAL	27 PASTE UP FFESTIVAL	28 PASTE UP FFESTIVAL	Live Entertainment 11am-2pm - Paste Up Festival		2	3
4	5	NOTES:				

Black: Current Plan & Budget

Blue: Future Plan Funding Required



2024 MARCH

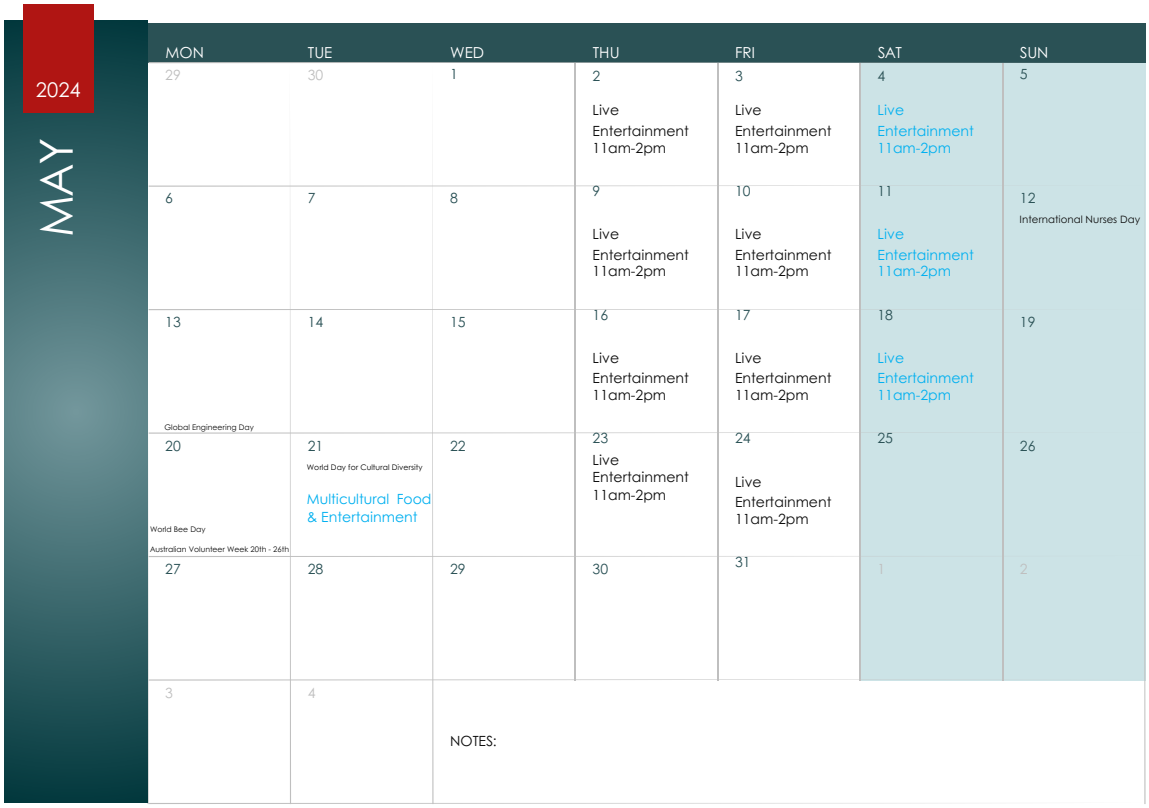
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
26	27	28	29	1 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm -Paste Up Festival	2 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm - Paste Up Festival	3
4	5	6	7 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	8 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	9 BENDIGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IN THE MALL 11AM-1PM	10
11	12	13	14 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	15 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	16 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	17
18	19	20	21 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	22 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	23 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	24
25	26	27	28 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	29 EASTER	30 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm MOONLIGHT POP UP MARKET	31
1	2	NOTES:				

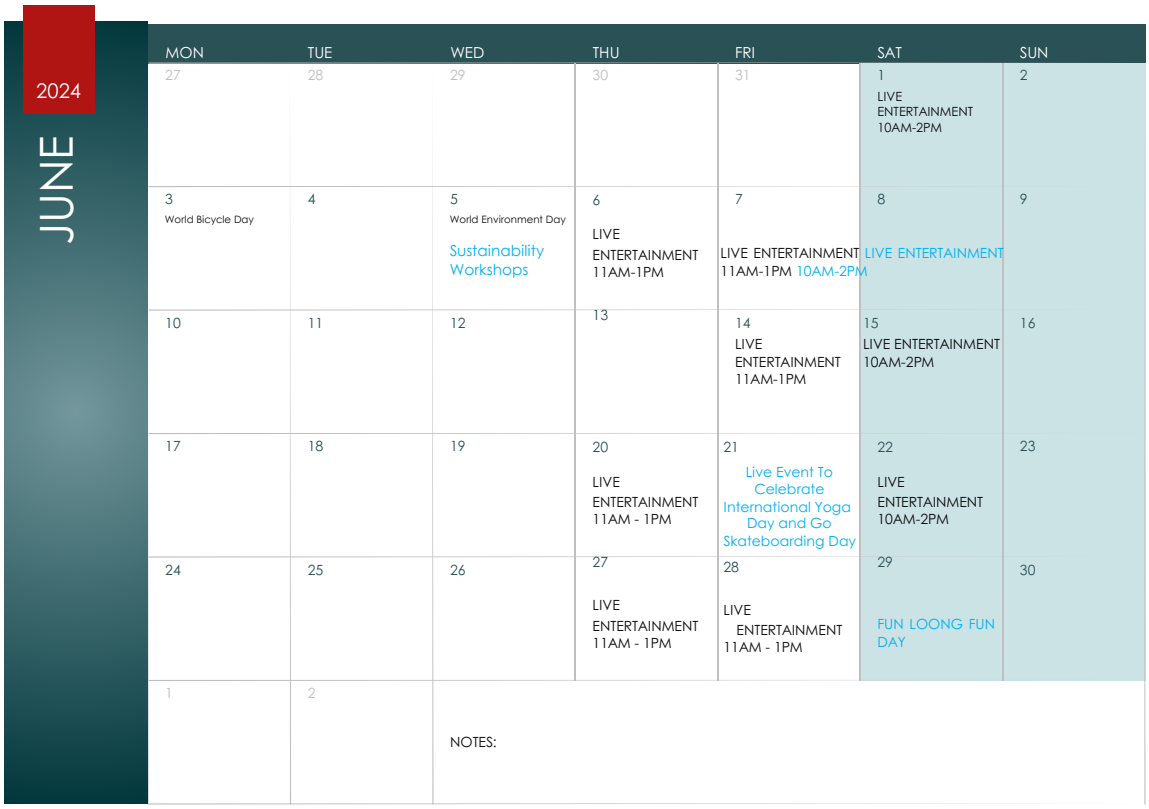


2024 APRIL

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2 SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVATION	3 SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVATION	4 SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVATION	5 SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVATION	6 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	7 World Health Day
8	9 SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVATION	10 SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVATION	11 SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVATION	12 SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVATION	13 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	14
15	16	17	18 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	19 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	20 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	21 International Creativity & Innovation day
22	23	24	25 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	26 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	27 Live Entertainment 11am-2pm	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	NOTES:				

Black: Current Plan & Budget Blue: Future Plan Funding Required





Black: Current Plan & Budget

Blue: Future Plan Funding Required


City Centre
Campaigns

Campaigns

BLOOM - Bendigo Spring



- A Bloom Festival Scavenger Hunt
- Have plater Boxes of Tulips in Hargreaves Mall
- A digital scavenger hunt, kids can follow along and find things in Hargreaves Mall and other beautiful locations in Bendigo
- Have a digital prize of some kind
  - get vegetable or flower seeds posted to you
  - a celebration video
- Tulip Colouring In competition that is displayed in Hargreaves Mall and on the Big Screen, vote for your favourite
- Tulip Murals painted on the ground of Hargreaves Mall.

Campaigns

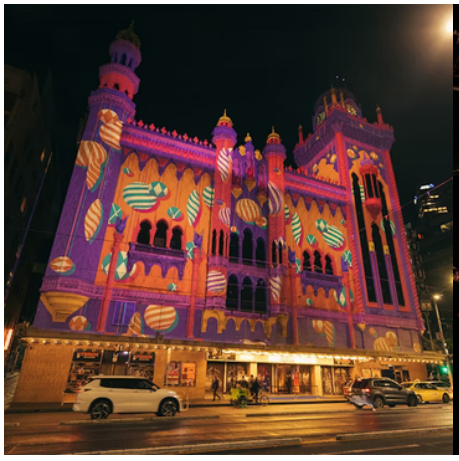
Christmas In The Mall

Taking Inspiration from how Christmas is celebrated in cities such as Brisbane or Melbourne. Bendigo's Hargreaves Mall could be host to a plethora of activations and entertainment for the whole family, perfect for the lead-up to Christmas.

- Gravy Day Christmas Choirs as Entertainment
- Wreath making workshop -as activities
- Bauble making workshop
- Christmas movie screenings
- Christmas choirs/brass bands
- photo op area
- Christmas stilt walkers
- Christmas projections on the Buildings
- Hot chocolate pop-up
- Elf help desk
- Make your own own gift (for Christmas)
- Christmas Mall Traders Sidewalk Event












City Centre
Research



Renew Newcastle

Renew Newcastle was a community lead project with the aim to revitalise the CBD of Newcastle. Following the earthquake in 1989, the town struggled to rebuild and fill the business spaces to their previous full capacity.
By 2008 Newcastle had over 150 visibly empty business spaces in the city centre, the town had correlating problems in record high unemployment rates, and increase in anti-social behavior.
The Renew Newcastle project was a not-for-profit that started in 2008 by the community as a way to tackle these economic problems. The aim of the project was to create opportunity for the wider community, both filling the empty spaces, and giving artists or start-ups the support they need.
Renew Newcastle acted as the middle-man making deals with the landlords and real-estate agents to create short term leases for the businesses and fill them with creative practices. Making empty buildings look more inviting and raising interest in sales, whilst providing artists a space for their work.

- Generate Activity till long term fixtures were met
- Community lead
- Intermediary between landlord and tenant
- offers opportunity to increase property value
- Focus on local business
- Greater likelihood of of business or development proposal
- $10-$14 returned for every $1 invested
- Occupation of spaces increases security and maintenance

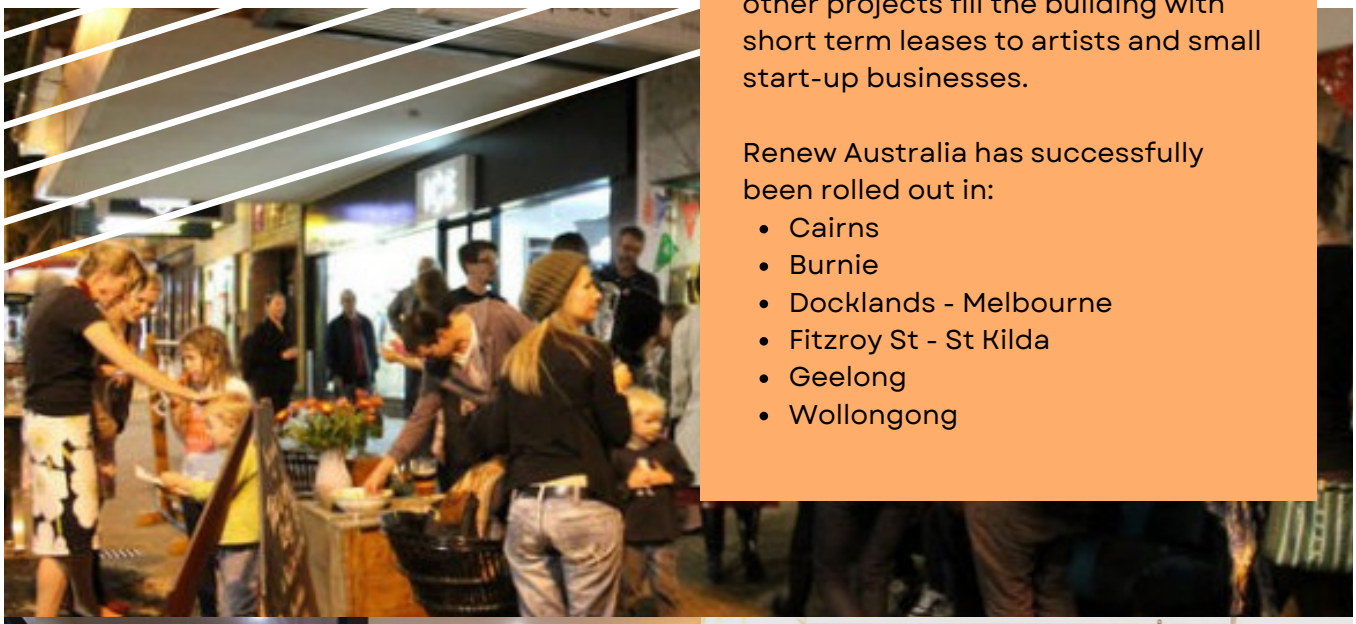
Renew Australia

The Renew Newcastle format was then used in Adelaide to revitalize their CBD. After completing this project the organisation transformed into Renew Australia, to then provide consultation and project activation is cities across Australia.
Renew Australia is still in operation, evolving their format over the years and transforming spaces spaces across Australia. There is no one particular formula to each towns/cities needs, and cater to each community.

Some projects look to reimagine the front of the space, creating decals to cover empty business. Where as other projects fill the building with short term leases to artists and small start-up businesses.

Renew Australia has successfully been rolled out in:

- Cairns
- Burnie
- Docklands - Melbourne
- Fitzroy St - St Kilda
- Geelong
- Wollongong







The Station

The Station is a creative business collective located in Newcastle, and is a direct result of the Renew Newcastle project. The Station set up shop in Newcastle's old train station that had been left unused for decades. The space is now filled with shop fronts, markets, local artists, craft beer, food, activities and more.

The Station provide pop-up spaces for local businesses to launch, trial or grow their business in a low-risk space. They provide flexible hire fees accommodating to new starters or established businesses.

These are supported through The Stations pre-existing events, with weekend markets, live music and food events, as well as family activities. New businesses are able to leverage off these events and the support of established local traders in the The Station.

In addition, The Station aid with marketing support, promoting these pop-up events and businesses through their social media, and be added to their "What's On" event calendar, that is updated monthly.

School Holidays

- Lego Workshops
- Meet the Artist (Demonstration)
- Book Club Brunch
- Busking
- Food Festivals (Eg. Sweet Treets festival, desserts, masterclasses, and demos.)

Scavenger Hunt

The Station provide a digital and print out Scavenger Hunt for kids to enjoy while visiting The Station. It includes simple landmarks that the kids can spot and mark off while the family spend time there.

Regular Activities

- Weekend Market
- Busking
- The Locker Room
  - Hired fitness space, indoor & outdoor
  - Pilates
  - Bootcamp
  - Baby Ballet
- Outdoor Eating & Drinks



THE STATION

NEWY WITH KIDS

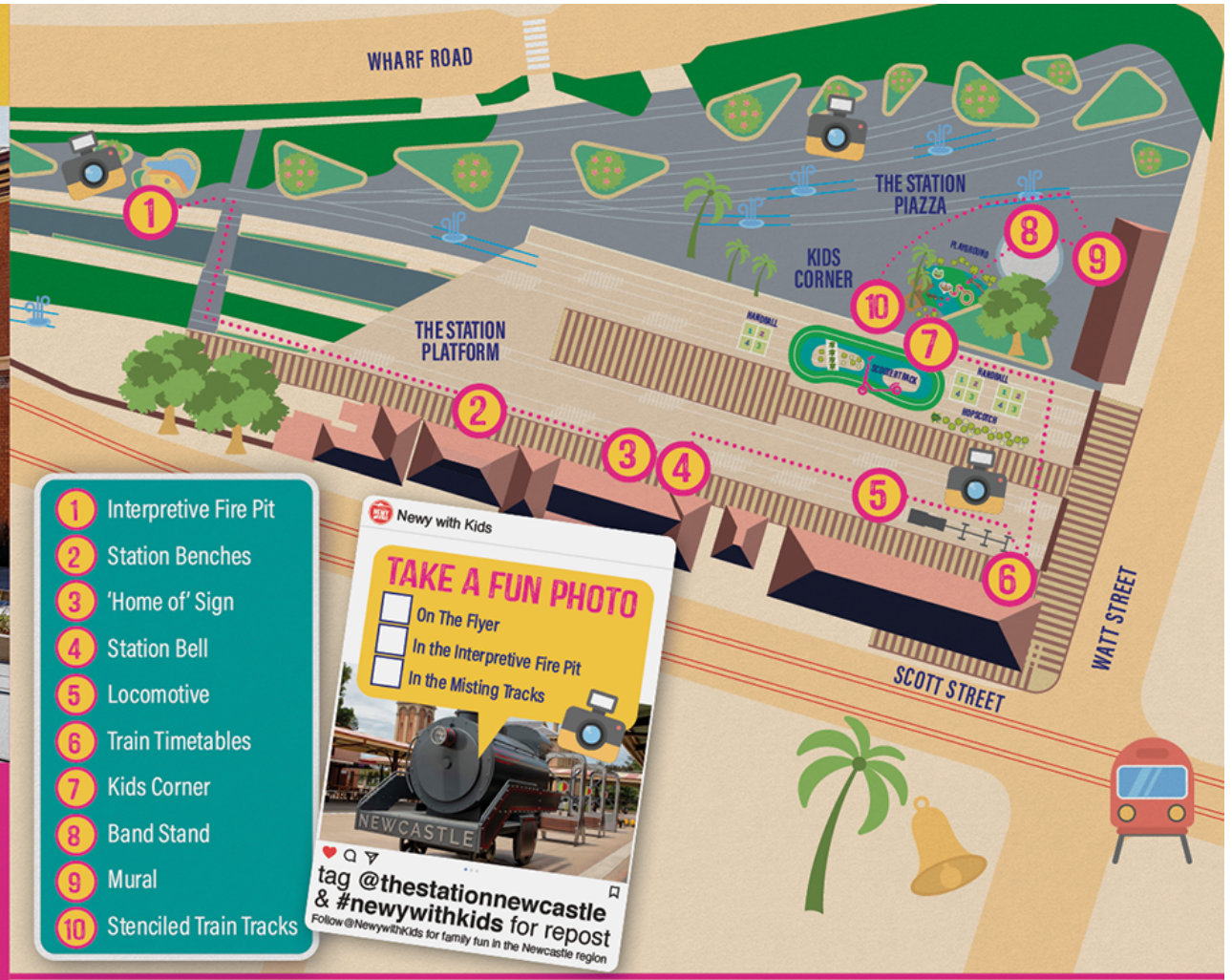


SCAVENGER HUNT
THE STATION

Explore the area marked on the map to find the answer to each question. Then use those answers to solve the mystery phrase.

THE STATION 1858 NEWCASTLE

HAVE FUN



1. Interpretive Fire Pit
2. Station Benches
3. 'Home of' Sign
4. Station Bell
5. Locomotive
6. Train Timetables
7. Kids Corner
8. Band Stand
9. Mural
10. Stenciled Train Tracks

SCAVENGER HUNT

While you're searching keep your eyes open! How many items can you find?

- ☐ Station bell
- ☐ Railway tracks
- ☐ Clock
- ☐ Mural
- ☐ Scooter track
- ☐ Palm tree
- ☐ Tram
- ☐ Bus
- ☐ The Station sign
- ☐ Coal ship
- ☐ Harbour
- ☐ Bench

Fed Square

Fed Square in Melbourne's CBD have a wide variety of activities, collaborations, shows, screenings and more held all year round. Fed square include entertainment for a range of demographics, to include different age groups, multicultural backgrounds, accessibility needs and more.
Fed Square is able to capitalise on current celebrations in the city, collaborating with events, festivals, art exhibitions, or days of celebration. Drawing on a crowd that would already be interested, and providing further entertainment.

- Interactive Art Installations
- Collaborations wit Events & Festivals (eg. Rising, Comedy Festival)
- Pop-Up Library
- Morning Meditation, held every Tuesday
- Gentle Dancers, a Chinese dance workshop held every Thursday
- Mask Making workshops
- Arts & Crafts
- Basket Weaving

- Little Eats Food Festival
- Koorie Film Festival
- NAIDOC Week Celebrations
- Collaborations with ACMI & Ian Potter Gallery
- Cooking workshops
- Sustainability and Waste information activation
- Movie Screenings
- Santa's Workshop
- Pop-up igloos, with dinner
- Live music & DJ's



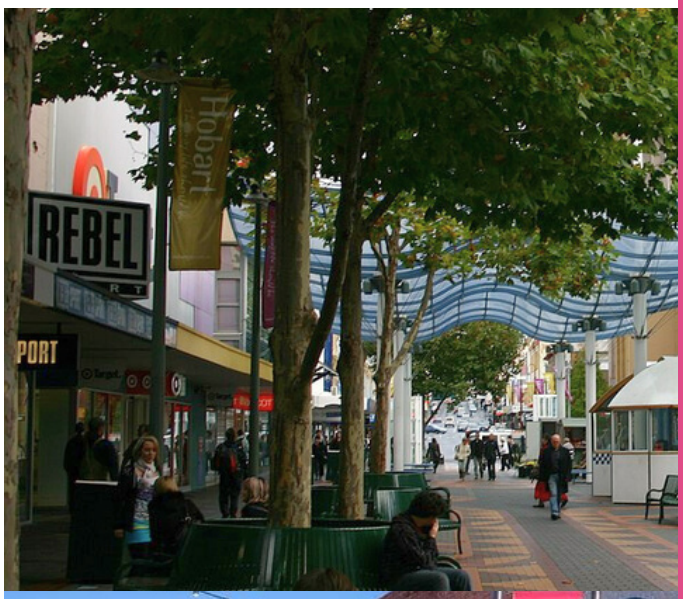


City Of Hobart

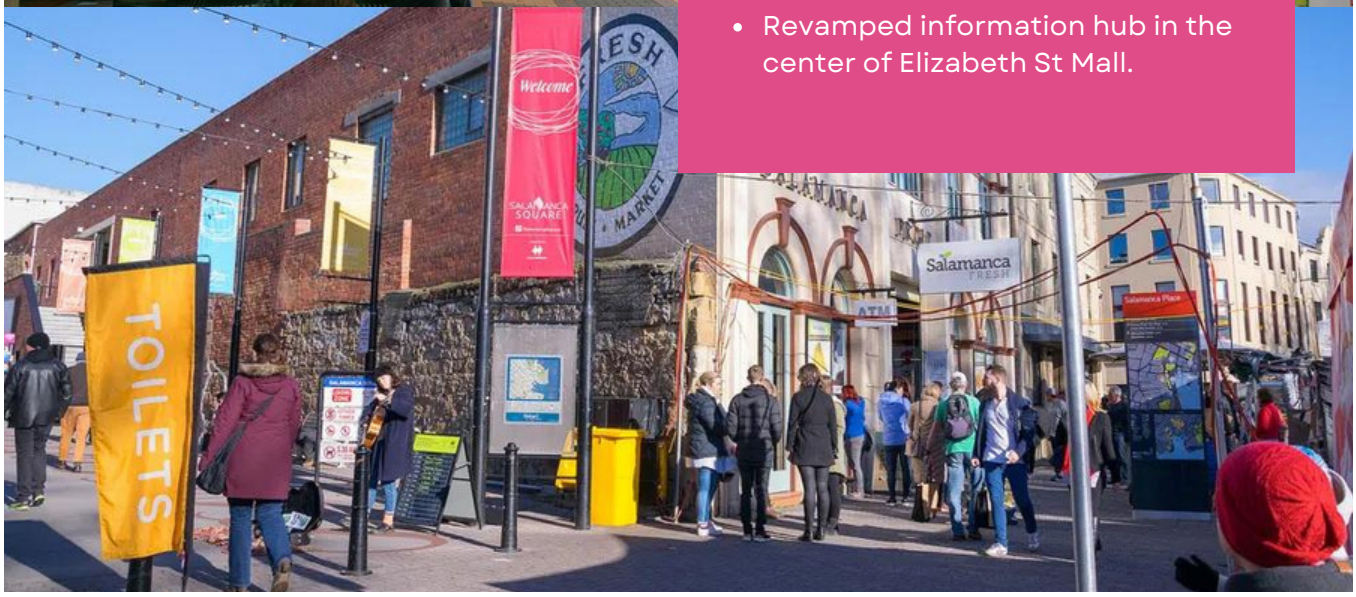
Revitalisation

The City of Hobart faced similar problems within thier CBD and in Elizabeth St Mall. Especially after Covid, this area needed drastic aid.

- Activating Shop Fronts with art
- Start up of "Hello Hobart" a website dedicated to promoting local businesses within the Mall, Salamanca, and CBD. Getting residents to explore local shops.
- Parking incentives for particular areas, times, or stores within the CBD.
- Free public transport on weekends, or free traveling into the city. This rolled out to other city is Tasmania to insentivise local shopping.
- Homeless drives in Elizabeth St Mall. St Vincent handing out blankets, food and hot drinks during the winter to people in need.
- Revamped information hub in the center of Elizabeth St Mall.









City Of Ballarat

Ballarat Winter Festival

Ballarat is a another city in Regional Victoria creating opportunities of engagement, both locally and to bring in tourism.
Every winter school holidays the City of ballarat hold the Ballarat Winter Festival.This is a 'Christmas in July' themed event, for the community to get out and enjoy the winter months. Held for only three weeks, it's a limited annual event.

Pop up Ice Skating Rink

The festival hosts a pop-up ice skating rink, provided at a low cost. smaller themed events are held at the ice-skating rink.

- Priced $9-18, $48 for the family
- Sensory Sessions (No music or flashing/colourful lights)
- Disco Sessions
- Bollywood on Ice
- Latin Fiesta Session
- Run by 'Stars On Ice' http://starsonice.com.au/winter-pop-up-ice-rinks/

Winter Wonderlights

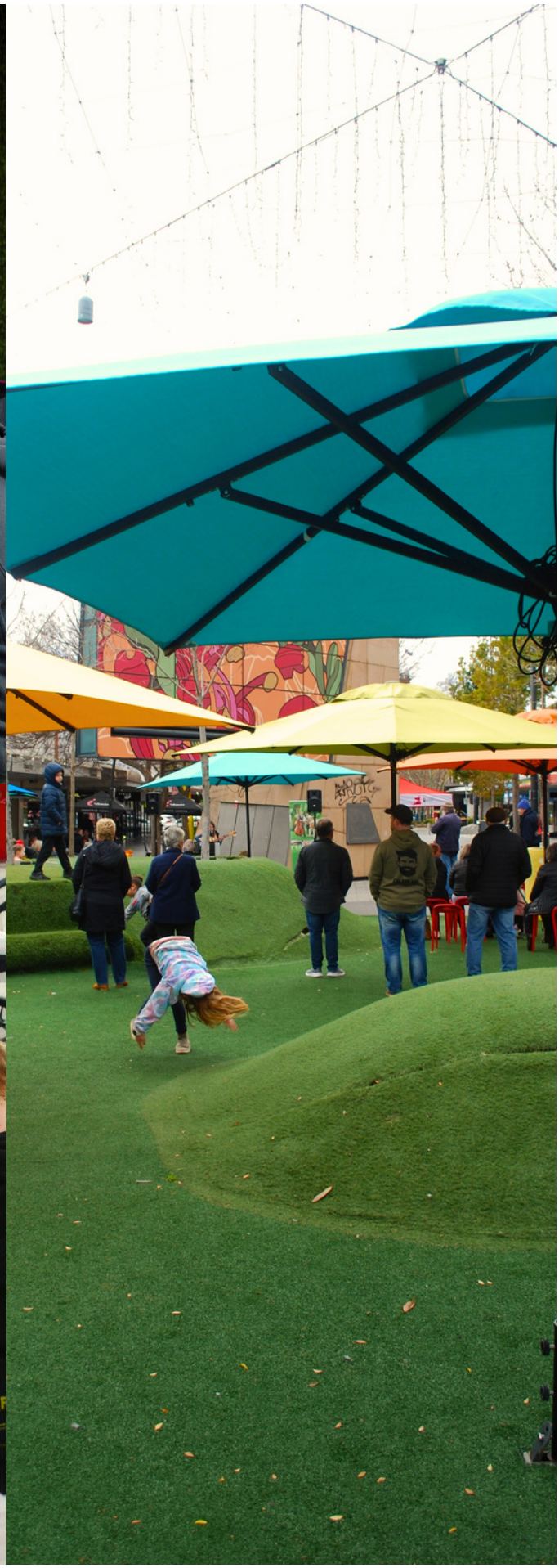
An exciting lightshow, with designs projected onto the heritage buildings in Sovereign Hill. An event reminiscent of White Night.

Knights of Fire

Hosted at Kryal Castle, the performers put on a thrilling fire show, with battles between knights, princesses, wizards, and ice queens.








DUCKS

20.2. Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan

Author:	Leah Morris, Stategic Planner - Design
Responsible Director:	Andrew Cooney, Acting Director Strategy and Growth

Purpose

To present the *Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028* to Council and approval to commence public consultation and engagement.

Recommended Motion

That Council:

1. Note the *Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028*, particularly the Action Plan.
2. Approve the release of *Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028* for public consultation and engagement.
3. Note that minor changes may be made to the *Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028* prior to consultation, in response to feedback from the Heritage Advisory Committee and internal stakeholders.

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Heritage Strategy project is to provide a framework for the continued protection and management of Greater Bendigo's rich natural, built, and cultural heritage. The proposed *Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028* contains a plan of prioritised actions to manage the City's many types of heritage assets.

Background

The City of Greater Bendigo undertakes a significant role in the protection, management, and communication of many heritage matters. The breadth of work across different City Units is vast and often separated due to the various types of heritage the City is responsible for. There is an opportunity to bring all aspects of heritage together in one plan. A Heritage Strategy will reflect and celebrate the City's current achievements and to identify heritage aspects and partnerships that should be prioritised into the future.

Heritage Victoria recommends each council to have a heritage strategy that articulates their position on heritage and the work program required to deliver on their management of heritage across the municipality. It should be noted that although the language used by Heritage Victoria requests the document to be a 'strategy', the reality is that it is primarily an action plan of prioritised future activities, tasks and projects.

The development of a Heritage Strategy is an action within City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025. Outcome 6: *A vibrant, creative community* lists 'development of a Heritage Strategy' as an action to recognise and celebrate our significant heritage.

Report

A heritage strategy will assist the City to provide direction on heritage matters, to better respond to the *Planning and Environment Act* 1987, Victorian Planning Provisions, *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006 and other related legislation.

The proposed *Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028* (the Strategy) identifies a range of prioritised heritage related actions and activities for the City to undertake over the next 4 year period (between 2024 – 2028). The Strategy can be found at Attachment 1 to this report.

The structure of the Strategy is based on the Heritage Strategy Checklist within the *Municipal Heritage Strategies: A guide for Councils*. These guidelines state actions should be responsive to the current heritage needs and address four main themes:

1. Knowing - identification, assessment and documentation of heritage places.
2. Protecting - statutory protection, policy development and appropriate management.
3. Supporting - assistance, advice and incentives to help conserve heritage places.
4. Communicating and Promoting - measures to raise awareness and appreciation of heritage (such as publications and events).

Heritage can be both tangible and intangible. Tangible heritage is identified in the form of physical elements like buildings, landscapes, trees, public gardens, statues and fountains. Heritage can also be moveable in the form of objects and collections such as the City's mayoral robes and portraits and Aboriginal cultural heritage artifacts. Intangible heritage is non-physical and includes aspects like First Nations connection to country and associated traditions. Annual events such as the Bendigo Easter Fair are also transitional and therefore considered to be intangible.

The Strategy will not be a statutory document for inclusion in the Planning Scheme as it will deal with more than just built and physical heritage. This Strategy builds on the existing legislation and policy the City currently abides by to protect and manage heritage in the Greater Bendigo area and will detail much of the internal work already being undertaken within the City. The document will equally help the community better understand the breadth of work and resources the City dedicates to heritage.

An example of existing work captured in the Strategy's Action Plan is the Strategic Planning Unit's Heritage Studies Program. The Heritage Studies Program captures and prioritises heritage studies identified in the *City of Greater Bendigo Heritage Gap Analysis*

2019, as well as the undertaking of planning scheme amendments to protect identified heritage places in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme. The current Heritage Studies Program can be found at Attachment 2.

It is important to highlight that whilst the Strategy will be an overarching list of priorities for different City Units, delivery of the actions will rely on partnerships with different tiers of government, heritage industries, heritage groups and the broader community. Every person has a duty of care to protect our heritage to ensure that current and future generations have an opportunity to experience it.

Background Research

The City's heritage related items, tasks and responsibilities have been identified and reviewed. Interviews were undertaken with staff who manage the City's built heritage assets, objects and collections, civic heritage gardens such as Rosalind Park, and with staff responsible for tourism and events. The interviews built an understanding of not only of the scope of heritage work being undertaken but also the day-to-day activities and challenges of each Unit. The interviews assisted in determining the processes and resources we currently have, and where there are gaps.

The City is already undertaking a wide range of heritage related activities and has good internal processes in the absence of a Heritage Strategy document. The background research revealed that whilst there is a significant amount of work being undertaken to manage and protect the City's heritage, there is limited promotion of this to the wider community. A recurrent theme in discussions was the need to promote the benefits of protecting our heritage and the need to provide support to facilitate this.

The internal project working group (PWG) identified that many actions are business as usual or an extension to a process already being undertaken to manage heritage. The PWG also noted the challenges in maintaining heritage buildings, places and gardens for use by events and the community. These works are often competing for funding against other important community infrastructure such as roads and footpaths. Due to limited resources, maintenance on heritage buildings is generally undertaken on a needs basis, rather than through a funded future works program.

The community reference group, which is a subgroup of the Heritage Advisory Committee, assisted in the background work and identified a greater need to support and promote heritage related events and good heritage outcomes - particularly the adaptive reuse and successful restoration of built heritage places. The group detailed a need to improve internal databases, and for more support to be provided for First Nations cultural heritage awareness - particularly intangible heritage. One of the community reference group members is a representative from DJAARA, who provided substantial guidance and information about their cultural heritage and supports the continued growth of their relationship with the City.

More work needs to be done internally around ‘Knowing our heritage’ before some of the other actions around communicating and promoting can be implemented. There is work to be done to review and revise heritage registers such as HERMES (the State Government register for place-based heritage), and the City’s internal databases for places owned or managed by the City. The heritage section on the City website requires reviewing and updating. There is a need to inform the community on current projects and resources that the City is already dedicating to heritage matters, noting it is not just the role of the City to protect heritage, but the community has responsibilities too.

Although the research revealed a long list of important activities to be undertaken, the prioritised actions need to be practical and achievable. In preparing the Action Plan, consideration has been given to the four-year lifespan of the Strategy, the progress and timing of existing heritage related projects, budgets and available resourcing.

Action Plan

The 20 prioritised actions to be undertaken over the four-year period are spread across the four Heritage Victoria themes of Knowing, Protecting, Supporting, and Communicating and Promoting. Many of the actions are business as usual or current projects involving the creation or maintenance of heritage registers, the review of existing processes or the management of heritage places.

Some examples include:

- Complete the review of HERMES heritage database and develop a program of work to allow accurate information to be available to the community.
- Commit to undertaking regular planning scheme amendments to correct errors identified within existing Heritage Overlays.
- Continue engagement with Traditional Owner groups and seek opportunities for staff training.
- Continue to support historical groups and event organisers through information sessions and advice.
- Continue to promote heritage and heritage venues through tourism events and heritage attractions to all ages.

The Heritage Advisory Committee has been invited to participate in one of the actions during their four-year term. At the August meeting, the group tentatively decided to be involved in creating an alternative heritage recognition program to promote successful heritage restoration or redevelopment. Further discussions with the group around the scale, resources and support from City staff will be undertaken to progress this action.

Options considered

Option 1

The proposed *Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028* is supported and released for community consultation.

Option 2

Take no further action.

Timelines

- Project commenced early 2020.
- Project recommenced April 2022.
- Community consultation on the *Draft Heritage Strategy & Action Plan* to be undertaken in late 2023.
- *Heritage Strategy & Action Plan 2024-2028* updated in response to feedback and provided for adoption in early 2024.

Communications/Engagement

Consultation has occurred throughout the project with external community groups including the Heritage Advisory Committee and particularly a subcommittee community reference group. An internal PWG ,made up of staff from across the organisation who are involved in heritage related aspects, have met at key points throughout the project. The PWG's comments have informed the project and they will continue to be consulted and assigned actions, as appropriate.

The internal PWG includes the following roles:

- Heritage Collections Officer
- Coordinator Heritage Gardens and Amenity Landscapes
- Built Heritage Advisor
- Manager Tourism and Major Events
- Marketing Manager (Tourism)
- Heritage Advisor
- Coordinator Precinct Planning and Heritage
- Strategic Planner (project manager)

Internal Engagement and Coordination

Internal Engagement	Date
Establishment of internal Project Working Group	June 2022
Project Meeting 1 - Introduction and scope	17 November 2022
Project Meeting 2 - Research	2 February 2023
Workshop - Discussion of potential priorities	20 April 2023
Project Meeting 3 - post workshop discussion	8 June 2023
Project Meeting 4 - draft Strategy discussion	17 August 2023
Project Meeting 5 - Post Exhibition	TBC 2023

External Engagement

Stage 1	Community Reference Group	Date
	Heritage Advisory Committee Presentation	May 2022
	Establishment of sub-community reference group	May 2022
	Reference Group Meeting 1 - Introduction and scope	6 September 2022
	Reference Group Meeting 2 - Research	8 November 2022
	Reference Group Meeting 3 - Research	8 February 2023
	Heritage Advisory Committee Presentation	14 June 2023
Stage 2	Workshops	Date
	Workshop 1 (online using Miro)	7 June 2023
	Workshop 2 (online using Miro)	13 June 2023
	Heritage Advisory Committee (Action Discussion)	17 August 2023
	Heritage Advisory Committee review	September 2023 *
Stage 3	Public Exhibition	Date
	Lets Talk online	October TBC

*Note: The *Draft Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2028* has been referred to the Heritage Advisory Committee for review and feedback. It is not anticipated that there will be significant feedback on the Strategy given the Heritage Advisory Committee's previous involvement in the Strategy, and the subcommittee community reference group's involvement in guiding the actions.

Financial Sustainability

The project is being managed within the Strategic Planning operating budget.

The actions will primarily be undertaken by City staff with an allocation within existing budgets. Additional budget submissions may be required.

Risk Assessment

Reputational risk remains a key risk to the project due to the time that has elapsed since the original commencement of the project in 2020 through to the actual project

recommencing mid-2022.The reputational risk for the organisation is also high due to the general awareness that this Council does not have a heritage strategy and that the project was identified years ago but not completed.

Other risks relate to the expectations of the community on the timing and funding of the long list of heritage work identified to be undertaken. Further, it is likely that the community engagement process will identify more projects or works that would require resources and funding to undertake. As a result, there may be pressure on the organisation to increase funding in this area even further.

This risk to project completion has been addressed through the allocation of appropriate staff resources.

Policy Context

Primary Council Plan Reference

City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul* 2021-2025
Outcome 3 - Strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
Outcome 6 - A vibrant, creative community

Secondary Council Plan Reference(s)

Goal 5 - A strong vibrant tourism sector
Goal 1 - A culture of creativity
Goal 5 - Recognise and celebrate our significant national and international heritage

Other Reference(s)

Greater Bendigo Thematic Environmental History 2013
City of Greater Bendigo Heritage Gap Analysis 2019

Conflict of Interest

No officer involved in the preparation or approval of this report declared a general or material conflict of interest.

Attachments

1. Heritage Studies Program - 29.08.23 [**20.2.1** - 2 pages]
2. DRAFT Heritage Strategy and Action Plan 2024 - 2028 [**20.2.2** - 24 pages]

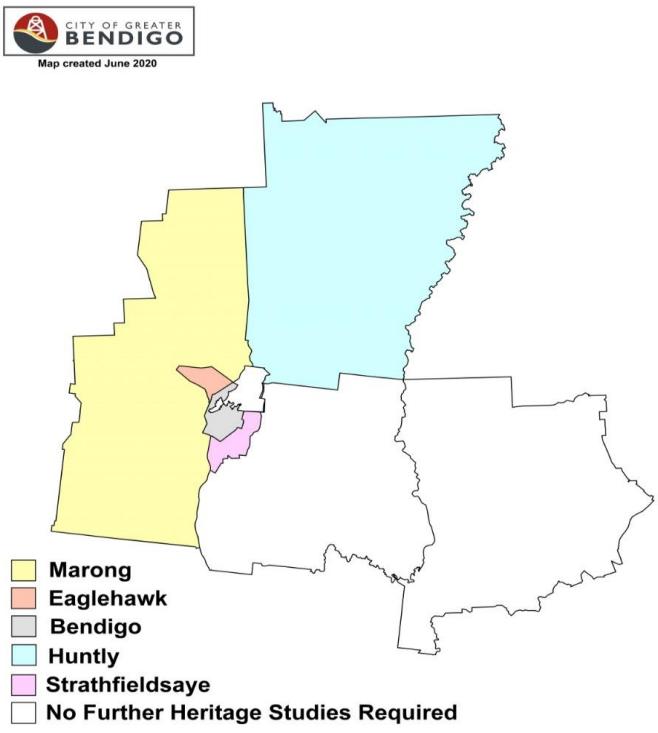
Heritage Studies Program

Overview of stages

- Stages rely on specialist skills, prepared by heritage consultants.
- **Stage 1:**
  - details the history of the area
  - identifies potential places of heritage significance for further study in Stage 2
  - e.g. Former Shire of Huntly Stage 1
- **Stage 2:**
  - detailed assessment of sites of potential significance for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay
  - e.g. current Golden Square Heritage Study
- **Stage 3**
  - planning scheme amendment to incorporate the heritage into the Heritage Overlay (e.g. City Centre).

Gaps

- Former urban area Shire of Strathfieldsaye Stage 1 Study in 2002 (Bendigo South East). Stage 2 not commenced.
- Former Shire of Huntly Stage 1 Study completed 2020. Stage 2 nearly completed.
- The Bendigo and Eaglehawk Study completed in 1993, needs review.
- The Marong heritage study was undertaken in 1994 and 1999 and needs review.



Program

Greater Bendigo Heritage Gap Analysis 2019	Timing and status
Golden Square Stage 1	2020 - complete
Golden Square Stage 2	2021 – complete
Golden Square Stage 3	2023/24 - working through pre-authorisation comments from DTP
Former Shire of Huntly Stage 1	2020 - complete
Former Shire of Huntly Stage 2	2023/24 - nearing completion
Significant Trees Stage 1	2020 - complete
Victorian Houses Serial Listings Stage 1	2020 - complete
Victorian Houses Serial Listings Stage 2	2023 - Panel Hearing held 24 August 2023
Former Shire of Strathfieldsaye Stage 1	2021 – complete
Former Shire of Strathfieldsaye Stage 2	2024/25
Bendigo/ Quarry Hill Review Stage 1 and 2	2025/26
Eaglehawk/ Sailors Gully Review Stage 1 and 2	2024/25
Post War Stage 1 and 2	2025/26
Aboriginal	2025/26
Former Shire of Marong review	2025/26



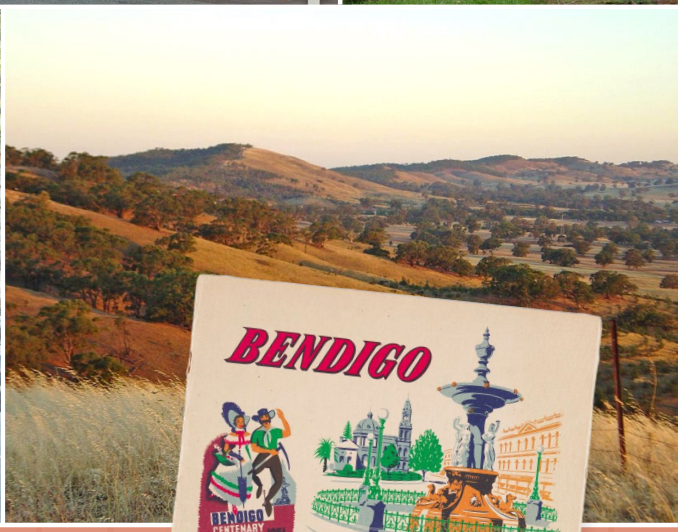












Draft Heritage Strategy

and Action Plan 2024 - 2028

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Greater Bendigo is on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We acknowledge and extend our appreciation to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung People, the Traditional Owners of the land.

We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

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Introduction

Heritage shapes our identity and fosters a civic pride of place, connecting us to our city and our region. Cultural heritage is not just a connection with the past, it implies a shared bond, and our belonging to a community. It represents our history and our identity, our bond to the past, to our present, and our future.

Heritage can relate to a wide variety of places, including a building, site or area, land or landscape, a memorial, a tree or garden, towns, archaeological sites, as well as spiritual and religious places. Heritage can also be interpreted through objects, collections and artefacts.

Heritage provides opportunities for storytelling and knowledge sharing, while enabling us to understand our complex relationships with the world around us and our place within it. Heritage can equally be embraced through Traditional Owners ongoing connection to Country and the cultural practices of the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples.

Today, there is a range of population, economic and social issues impacting heritage protection and management. The encouragement for residential and commercial infill to support population growth and affordable housing, places pressure on established heritage buildings and streetscapes to support diverse development. The need for homes to be more energy efficient in response to climate change and the rise of energy costs also increases requirements for private property owners. Pressures exist not only to maintain significant heritage places but also repurpose or redevelop heritage buildings so they can be used efficiently and be fit for purpose.

The City of Greater Bendigo plays a significant role in the protection, management and communication of heritage matters. The breadth of work which takes place throughout various departments within the City is broad, and currently not clearly articulated. The cost of maintaining and storing the City's heritage assets for the community enjoyment and events is also growing more expensive. Available resources and reduction of specialised trades to complete restoration works makes planning for these areas challenging. The need to update the City's own registers and procedures to adapt to the changing needs of heritage protection and management, is also something experienced across different staff who intersect heritage.

Given the challenges, there is an opportunity to bring all aspects of heritage work together in one plan and to identify environmental, physical and economic factors which affect heritage and opportunities for improvement. Through this process, we will also reflect and celebrate current achievements and identify our future priorities.



Figure 1: Clarke Street Heritage House

Purpose

The Heritage Strategy and Action Plan (the Strategy) has been designed to outline the City's heritage priorities over the next four years.

The Strategy builds on existing legislation and policies the City currently abides by to protect and manage heritage, including the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the Victorian Planning Provisions. This document is not intended to replace these nor become a statutory control in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme. The Strategy will assist with the City to prioritise actions and tasks with clear outcomes which will support longer term heritage goals.

The Strategy aims to guide the City's role in the identification, protection and promotion of heritage. It aims to set out a heritage management program which encompasses all aspects of heritage and heritage related activities across the municipality. It also outlines how the City can better support the community to promote and celebrate our heritage and enhance its ability to work together with other heritage organisations.

What will the City do?

The Strategy will be implemented through an Action Plan with goals and associated tasks to ensure the Strategy's success. The success of the Strategy will be measured by the completion of the actions within the set timeframe. The actions outlined in this document respond to current identified opportunities for improving the ways heritage is administered, resourced, communicated and promoted within the City.

At the end of the four years covered within this Strategy, the document is proposed to be reviewed to adapt to changing economic, cultural, environmental and social influences.

It is important to note that this document does not cover Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and artifacts. Traditional Owners are the custodians of their cultural heritage. Therefore, the City plays an advocacy and supporting role to Traditional Owners in conjunction with the *Reconciliation Plan*, *Barpangu 2021-2025* – meaning 'build together', and *Dhelkunya Dja Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014-2034.*

How has the Strategy been developed?

This Strategy has been developed in consultation with our community and heritage stakeholders. An internal working group, Heritage Advisory Committee and Sub - Committee Reference Group have met on several occasions throughout the duration of the project. These groups have informed the research process and actions in this document.

Individual interviews with key internal heritage staff have also been conducted to understand the extent of heritage work the City currently undertakes. The interviews revealed the day-to-day operations and the current challenges which are faced around heritage conservation and management. Key City staff include:

- **Heritage Collections Officer;**
- **Built Heritage Advisor (City assets);**
- **Manager Tourism and Major Events;**
- **Marketing Manager (tourism);**
- **Heritage Advisor (town planning);**
- **Coordinator Precinct Planning and Heritage;**
- **Strategic planner (project manager);**
- **Coordinator Heritage Gardens and Amenity Landscapes.**

A review of internal processes, heritage registers and heritage studies commissioned by the City of Greater Bendigo has also been conducted.

How will the Strategy be delivered?

Whilst this Strategy will provide an overarching list of priorities for departments within the City to complete, everyone has a role to play in the delivery of this document. Achieving the actions will best be achieved through partnerships with different tiers of government, heritage industries, heritage groups and the community. Every person has a duty of care to protect heritage and to ensure that current and future generations have an opportunity to experience and enjoy it.

The next steps are to engage with the broader community and interest groups to ensure the final document can support community expectations for heritage protection, management and promotion.

Heritage Context

The development of a Heritage Strategy is an action within City of Greater Bendigo Council Plan *Mir wimbul 2021-2025.* Outcome 6: A vibrant, creative community lists the *'development of a Heritage Strategy',* as a key action to recognise and celebrate our significant heritage.

The development of a Heritage Strategy is also encouraged by Heritage Victoria to assist a council to manage its heritage and meet its heritage obligations as guided by international, national and state heritage legislation.

The structure of the Strategy is based on the Heritage Strategy Checklist within the *Municipal Heritage Strategies: A guide for Councils*. These guidelines state actions should be responsive to the current heritage needs and surround four main themes. In addition to the Checklist, the actions have been influenced by the City's overarching heritage aspirations detailed within the Victorian Planning Provisions in the City of Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme and adopted strategic documents. Overarching policies which guide heritage preservation, management and use, have also been considered throughout this document.

A review of the heritage protection systems which inform this document is provided below:

Official Heritage Registers

World Heritage List

Commonwealth Heritage List
National Trust Heritage List

Victorian Heritage Register
Victorian Heritage Inventory
Victorian Aboriginal Heritage
Victorian National Trust Register

Local Heritage Overlay
Local Significant Landscape Overlay

World

- UNESCO World Heritage - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
- ICOM – International Council of Museums
- ICOMOS – International Council of Monuments and Sites

National

- Environment and Biodiversity Act 1999
- Australian Heritage Council Act 2003
- National Heritage Protocol 2004
- Australian Heritage Strategy
- Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018
- National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries 2022
- Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Heritage Protection Act
- Native Title Act 1993
- Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1986

State

- Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Sect 6B)
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006
- Victorian Planning Provisions
- Heritage Victoria (places and objects)
- Victoria National Trust
- Heritage Victoria Council (decisions)
- Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
- Registered Aboriginal Party: Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Land and Waters Council Aboriginal Corporation

Local Government

- Heritage Overlay (places)
- Significant Landscape Overlay
- Council Plan *Mir wimble 2021-2025*
- Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan 2015
- Greater Bendigo Thematic Environmental History 2013
- City of Greater Bendigo Heritage Gap Analysis 2019
- Numerous local heritage studies
- Civic Collections Policy 2022
- Strategic Report Heritage Artifacts 2017
- Draft Biodiversity Strategy

Best practice policies and procedures

- **Best practice built heritage management:** Burra Charter of Australia (ICOMOS)
- **Best practice collections:** *Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections 2009*
- **Heritage Victoria -** *Municipal Heritage Strategies: A guide for Councils*
- **Planning Practice Note 1** - Applying the Heritage Overlay (PPN1)

Organisations and Community Groups

- **Huntly Historical Society**
- **McIvor and Heathcote Historical Society**
- **Bendigo Soldiers Memorial Museum**
- **Bendigo Historical Society**
- **Heritage Organisation:** National Trust (Bendigo Branch)

What is heritage?

What is valued as 'heritage' is continually evolving. Heritage adapts, often depending on the society and economic influences at the time.

What we see today is the reflection of the changes in history, legislation and community values. We can also see how places and landscapes have developed to support change in the way people live, work and socialise. It is important to recognise the mosaic layers of different types of heritage which exist and have formed Bendigo into the place we know today.

Tangible Heritage - Heritage is identified in the form of physical elements like buildings, landscapes, trees, public gardens, statues and fountains. Heritage can also be moveable in the form of objects and collections such as the City's mayoral robes and portraits and Aboriginal Cultural heritage artifacts.

Intangible Heritage - Intangible heritage is non-physical and includes the practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities, groups and sometimes individuals recognise as part of their heritage. Annual events such as the Bendigo East Fair are transitional and are therefore also considered to be intangible.







Figure 2: (top right) Bendigo Easter Parade, 27 April, 1938, Figure 3: (middle) Bendigo Easter Parade 1962, Figure 4: (bottom) Todays' Bendigo Easter Parade 2012.

Why is heritage important?

Heritage is important as it provides a connection to the past and gives us identity and purpose - both personally and collectively. It provides an understanding of Bendigo's evolution and directions for our future. Appreciation of our heritage helps encourage connected communities that have access to diverse cultural and social experiences.

Heritage can evoke emotional and cultural experiences and feelings of nostalgia. It can promote appreciation for the traditional workmanship or natural phenomenon of landscapes and nature. These experiences of heritage are available for everyone to share and enjoy.

Recognition of the economic and social benefits of conserving and protecting heritage, including heritage places, continues to grow. Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings plays a vital role in securing their future and redefining their value as demands on commercial spaces and for residential housing evolve.

The way we use public spaces and buildings today is often very different to the way they were originally designed. And therefore, it is important to protect what is significant whilst allowing investment and change to ensure the ongoing use and enjoyment of our heritage assets.



Figure 5: Ulumbarra Theatre redevelopment (former early 1860s Sandhurst Gaol) with Aboriginal scar tree

Greater Bendigo Heritage

The Greater Bendigo area is on the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples. Traditional boarders were quite fluid and did not follow the typical road and watercourse boundaries we associate with when articulating boarders today.

For the purposes of this Strategy, the Greater Bendigo area can be described as including the urban suburbs like Huntly and Eaglehawk, it's surrounding landforms, rural land and box-ironbark forest. A series of smaller townships make up the wider hinterland of the municipality and include places such as Axedale, Elmore, Goornong, Heathcote, Raywood and Redesdale.

Indigenous Heritage

Traditional Owners have an ongoing spiritual and personal connection to Country. For thousands of years the landscape provided Aboriginal people with food and resources for tools and shelter and other activities. They worked as one with the environment as custodians to the land, only using the resources they required.

Knowledge, practices, objects and places that are valued and culturally meaningful to Traditional Owners are located and survive within the Bendigo area. These, along with the natural landscapes such as Big Hill and the sandstone of the Mount Camel Range, tell a story of our First Nations Peoples identity and Country.

Traditional Owners are the custodians of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* ensures that Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is protected. A long-standing statutory function of the City is to promote public awareness and understanding of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in Victoria. The City facilitates this through several core responsibilities relating to:

- Supporting Registered Aboriginal Parties
- Planning applications with potential Aboriginal Cultural Heritage impacts

Aboriginal cultural heritage mapping also offers statewide statutory protection. Mapping is publicly available which shows where potential Aboriginal artifacts, sacred objects and ancestral remains are located. This mapping is often seen within 200m of a named watercourse and 50m of a registered Aboriginal cultural heritage place. The mapping triggers the potential preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan if significant earthworks to landforms and soils are proposed.

As the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples are custodians to their cultural heritage and are supported through State legislation, this Strategy does not seek to set any direction in this context. Instead, the Strategy acknowledges the importance and need for ongoing relationships and collaboration where appropriate.

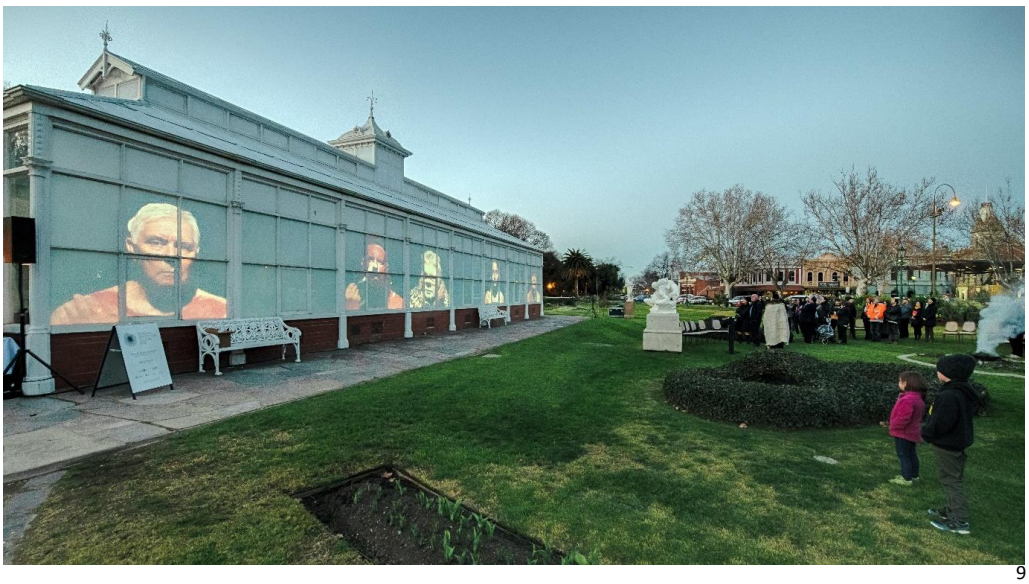


Figure 6: Enlighten Festival

Natural Heritage and Landscapes

The Thematic Environmental History 2013 provides an overview of the history of the municipality. It specifically covers the post contact physical evolution and development of Greater Bendigo, within a set of themes, and identifies the important distinguishing natural and built characteristics of the area.

The Thematic History details how Greater Bendigo's diverse environment has profoundly shaped the historical development of the area and how the landscapes and urban fabric reflect significant periods in Bendigo's history.

There are a number of geological and geomorphological sites in Greater Bendigo, including the internationally significant glacial pavement site located on the eastern shore of Lake Eppalock. The Loddon and Campaspe River basins and numerous watercourses like the Bendigo Creek are also significant to the natural history of the area.

The Thematic History explains the box-ironbark forest which surrounds and contains the City as the single influence of the affectionate name 'City within the forest'. The Thematic History highlights the impact of goldmining not only for the wealth of Bendigo through the construction of significant architecture but the physical impacts on the natural environment and landscape.

The impact that the Goldrush had on the landscape is still very evident today. The removal of trees and diggings was extensive and therefore the remnants of the goldmining landscape is characterised by box-ironbark regrowth, exposed Ordovician soils and mining infrastructure.



Figure 7: Big Hill landscape

Buildings and Streetscapes

According to The *Heritage Gap Analysis 2019*, heritage areas in Bendigo are not typically of one consistent period. They are usually a mix of periods and styles, unlike areas such as Melbourne that can be found with streets or suburbs of a similar period.

Until the 1970s there was limited statutory protection for heritage places in Victoria. Many significant buildings were demolished in attempts to modernise cities when heritage was not as widely valued in society. Since then wider changes in planning regulations have stemmed from a growing awareness and community appreciation of heritage significance.

There are different types of heritage protection for heritage places and objects ranging across national, state and local statutory levels. The most commonly known protection is the Heritage Overlay which is a tool used to protect places and buildings of local heritage significance. Properties with a Heritage Overlay are mapped and listed in the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme.

Councils are responsible for local significant heritage places. The State Government, through Heritage Victoria and the Heritage Council of Victoria, are responsible for state significant heritage and historical archaeology. An overview of local and state statutory heritage protection in Greater Bendigo is as follows:

- **40 Heritage Overlay Precincts**
- **570 Individual Heritage Overlays**
- **109 Victorian Heritage Registered Places**
- **433 Victorian Heritage Inventory Objects**

Non-statutory registers also include:

- **124 Register for the National Estate (RNE)** - These listings are across 21 localities and include both places of heritage significance and those of natural values.
- **202 National Trust Register (NTR)** – These listings are mainly nineteenth-century buildings (houses, public and commercial buildings, mining sites) and trees.

Heritage protection of buildings is becoming more about how people use places, and their links to social history and not just their architecture and aesthetics.

There is now recognition of heritage which has not previously considered old enough to be heritage. For example post-war housing is now sometimes controversially, considered to be a theme of recent heritage value.

Today, the best way to see heritage places protected is through people using them. This often comes with development pressures and a need to contemporise or develop certain parts of a site to the way we live today. Change can occur provided the main fabric and heritage integrity of a place is preserved.

Adaptive reuse and redevelopment of key City Centre sites is highly encouraged. The recently completed Bendigo Law Courts by Wardel Studio is an exemplary example of a design which has used sympathetic materials and is respectful of the surrounding heritage buildings. The façade has used the materials as tiles in a similar effect to the tiles of the adjacent Specimen Cottage building (one of the City Centres oldest buildings). The bulk of the Law Courts building has been broken up into sections. Similar angles have been used to the roof form of the cottage but in a contemporary manner. The lower ground level also responds to the height of the cottage visually reducing the scale of the new built form.

The design of Bendigo Law Courts also features an artwork by Indigenous artist Racquel Kerr which depicts the Djaara figure 'Bunjil' (eagle) on the main façade.





Figure 8 and 9: Bendigo Law Courts redevelopment with Specimen Cottage (Source: https://wardle.studio/)

Parks, Gardens and Public Spaces

Heritage protection can also mean looking after community spaces. The City of Greater Bendigo hosts an array of civic parks including Rosalind Park, which contains the Conservatory and Fernery, Lansell and Queen's Gardens, Bendigo Botanic Gardens, White Hills Canterbury Park, Eaglehawk Conservatory, the Mall and other City Centre areas. A significant amount of resources go into maintaining these places before and after events and also for the community to use and enjoy.

Some examples of Council heritage assets include:

- 5 Heritage Fountains
- 45 Heritage statue/monuments (older than 1990)
- 5 Poppet heads
- 514 significant Trees (within heritage overlays)







Figure 10: Canterbury Gardens Eaglehawk, Figure 11: Arch of Triumph at the Botanical Gardens, white Hills and Figure 12: Rosalind Park, Conservatory building and gardens

Tourism and Events

Greater Bendigo has earned its reputation as a world class events capital of regional Victoria. With local international and national events hosted throughout the year, our diverse parks, heritage, contemporary buildings and open spaces contribute a grand atmosphere. The beautiful tree-lined streets and impressive heritage buildings also create a picturesque backdrop where people can experience heritage gardens, streets and buildings.

The Tourism and Major Events unit is responsible for the coordination of activities relating to the attraction and support of major events in Bendigo. Many events that are not directly heritage related, support a heritage component whether that be the event occurs within a heritage building or is hosted within the one of the Citys' iconic civic spaces – such as Rosiland Park.

Bendigo's heritage is visible across the city where visitors can experience Bendigo's living history at the Central Deborah Gold Mine, the Golden Dragon Museum, Joss House Temple and Bendigo Tramways. Bendigo's stunning Rosalind Park Precinct and the Botanic Gardens in White Hills, offer great spaces to relax and take a break. Buildings like the Bendigo Town Hall, the former Post Office building (the Bendigo Visitor Centre) and many others, are beautiful examples of gold rush architecture visible in the City Centre.

The City also hosts a vast array of events – the most widely recognised being the Bendigo Easter Fair. Celebrating the Citys' Chinese heritage with their very own dragons, the event intertwines the main streets with spectators eager to capture a glimpse of the parade. More recent experience related events include White Night which is a light show featuring projections onto some of the City's most iconic buildings.

Smaller hinterland towns like Elmore and Heathcote also play an important role in Bendigo's heritage and tourism offerings. The towns embrace a historic commercial centre with charming heritage buildings which offer a unique village experience. The towns are individual in character and capture an array of passing visitor trade and locals enjoying the region.









Top to bottom - Figure 13: Central Deborah gold mine attraction, Figure 14: Festival in Bendigo with Town Hall backdrop, Figure 15: Campaspe Run and Miniature Railway attraction and Figure 16: Heathcote main street

Art, Objects and Collections

The City is custodian of thousands of civic artefacts across multiple locations. The artifacts encompass a variety of object and material types, ranging from photographs, artworks, paper-based material, textiles, furniture, photographs and ephemera. Caring for these collections takes substantial financial and human resources and their value is based on tangible and intangible aspects of their creation and use.

The City's Civic collection adds to the community's understanding of the evolution and administration of the City of Greater Bendigo. Ranging from pre to post council amalgamation, this collection continues to grow and evolve with time.

The Heritage Collections Officer role was created at the end of 2019 and is tasked with creating and managing this new collection in line with museum best practice standards. This has meant creating policies and procedures to guide its development and assist with decision making. In parallel, the Collection Officer undertakes formal significance assessments of objects to inform prioritising of objects for restoration and preservation.

Another important component of developing any collection is the need to facilitate access to all collections. Whether through curated displays or online digital storytelling, we need to enable people the ability to experience and develop a connection with their cultural heritage. To ensure the Civic Collection and other City based collections are not simply stored away, recommendation around future use needs to be explored in further detail.

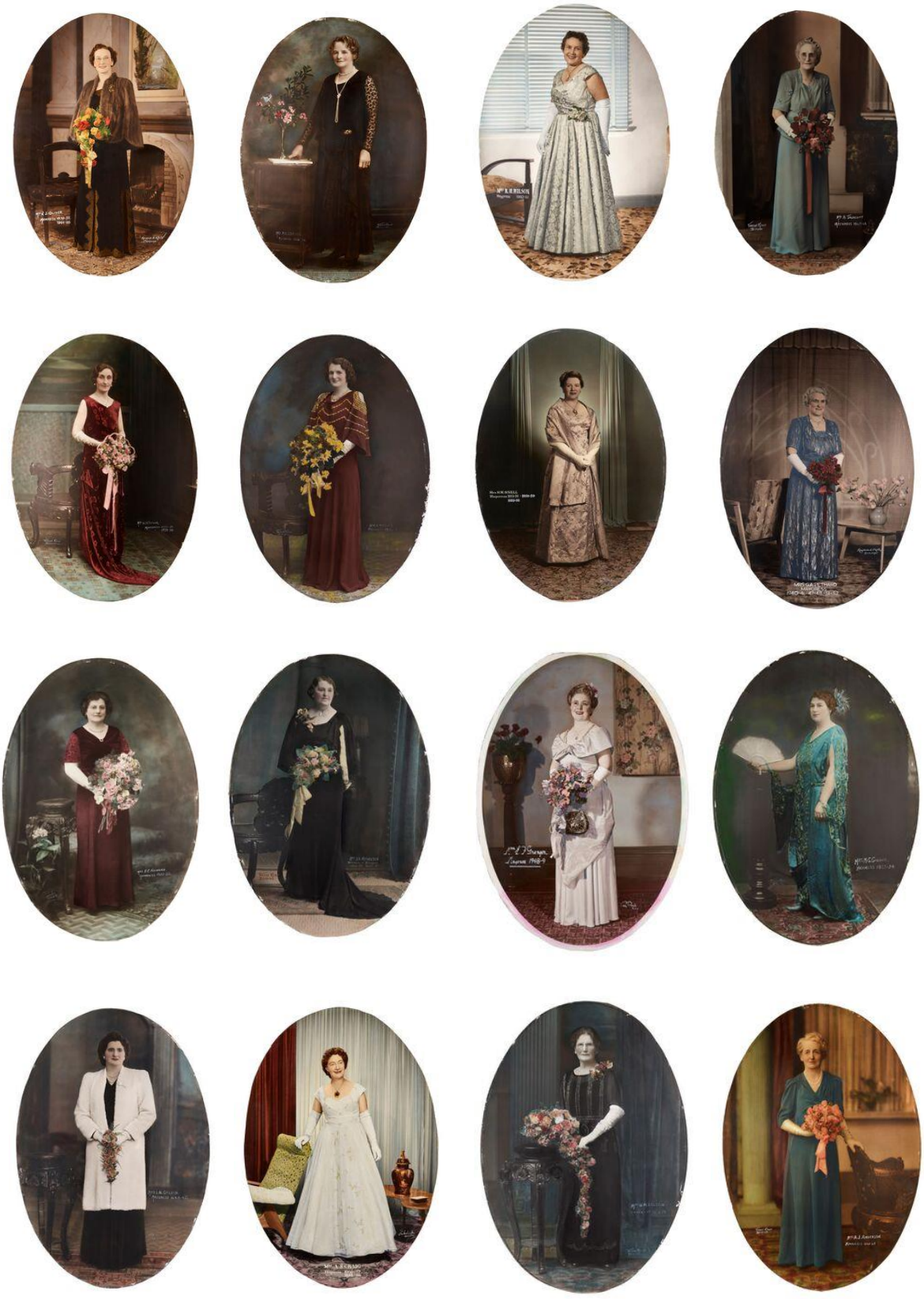
Greater Bendigo also has four main Historical and Heritage Societies along with specialist military, medical and family history groups. Also distributed throughout the community are sporting and service organisations which hold and house important heritage items. These groups collectively hold a substantial number of the City's heritage objects and archives and face a variety of challenges in caring for these varied and important social history collections.

Community collecting groups are largely staffed by retirees and groups have also seen a decline in active volunteers post the pandemic. The challenge to keep these organisations open and resourced enough to adequately care for complex collections is a substantial one as financial resources are stretched to meet the needs of people and the collections.

Collection storage remains one of the biggest challenges for community collecting organisations as the cost of housing items in a controlled environment is expensive and appropriate spaces are difficult to find.

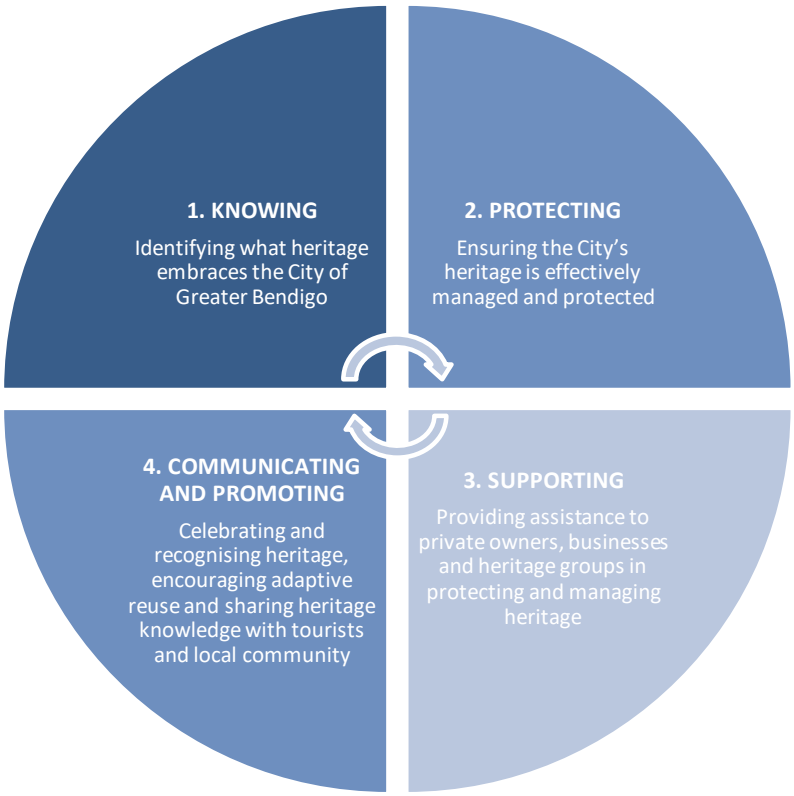


Figure 17: Heritage Collections officer preserving the Citys' civic objects, (following page) Figures 18-33: Mayoral Portraits between 1922 - 1956



The Action Plan

Heritage Victoria identify four key themes of focus for heritage management. The following themes, are featured in this document and make a basis for the identified actions:



1. Knowing our heritage

This theme involves identifying, assessing and documenting heritage places, objects and collections and establishing them on information registers.

What we know

The City has a statutory responsibility under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to recognise and protect heritage places using the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme. Once the significance of a place has been established through a heritage study, an amendment process is undertaken to include the site in the Heritage Overlay for protection. Heritage places are graded using the terms 'significant', 'contributory' or 'non-contributory. They also include a citation with statement of significance which details what elements of a place are important.

The *Heritage Gap Analysis 2019* reviewed all completed heritage studies. A range of gaps were identified including typology gaps such as Twentieth Century development – particularly post-war residential buildings. Archaeological, geographical and natural study gaps were also identified, as well as Aboriginal Heritage places and places on public land associated with gold mining. It is important to note that before a heritage knowledge gap can be studied the theme needs to be researched and included in the *City of Greater Bendigo Thematic Environmental History.*

Planning Practice Note 1 ' Applying the Heritage Overlay' (PPN1) encourages all heritage citations to be securely stored within the HERMES database. HERMES is a State Government online heritage and process management tool. It enables Councils to register citations and pictures of places included in a Heritage Overlay so that information can be viewed publicly on the Victorian Heritage Database website.

A review of the HERMES database was undertaken recently. The review revealed some inconsistencies in the information available on the database including incomplete records and limited photos. Some older heritage studies also lack suitable statements of significance and do not meet current standards.

Whilst staff resourcing is considered one barrier to uploading consistent data, the City's ability to manage the database is heavily constrained by the functionality of the State Government system. The HERMES database has poor functionality and there is limited state funding to manage the additional workload to upload consistent and accurate data.

In addition to the statutory databases for built heritage, internal research revealed that there are multiple registers used to record the City's assets. Buildings managed or owned by the City, statues, fountains, civic objects and amenity trees are all located on different registers. This is not unusual given the various types of physical heritage with differing protection however, there may be potential to improve efficiencies by integrating this information in the future.

The City's large number of civic objects and collections is an identified gap. Resources have already been allocated to undertake the considerable task of identifying, assessing, restoring and cataloguing items however more could be achieved with a review of other internal databases.

As the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples are custodians to their cultural heritage and are supported through State legislation, there is importance for ongoing relationships and collaboration where appropriate. Ongoing training should be sought to ensure we are supporting Traditional Owners in matters such as identifying works within planning applications with potential Aboriginal Cultural Heritage impacts and support community aspirations in line with the *Country Plan*.

Actions

1.1 **Provide** an ongoing commitment to heritage studies through a Heritage Work Program which prioritises heritage projects to be undertaken by the Strategic Planning Unit.

1.2 **Review** the City of Greater Bendigo Thematic History and update to include post-war theme.

1.3 **Ensure** gaps identified in the Heritage Gap Analysis 2019 are captured and prioritised in the Heritage Work Program.

1.4 **Complete** review of HERMES heritage database and develop processes to ensure accurate information is available to the community

1.5 **Continue** to catalogue the civic collections including assessing, registering, storing and digitisation of all objects (3-4 year project)

1.6 **Undertake** a review to consider consolidation of the many registers for City owned or managed places and buildings.

1.7 **Continue** engagement with Traditional Owners and seek opportunity for staff training

2. Protecting our heritage

This theme involves securing statutory protection and establishing appropriate management for identified places and objects.

What we know

Leading by example is an important element of promoting good heritage management. Ensuring places identified in heritage studies are accurately recorded in the Heritage Overlay of the Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme is one way of ensuring protection of identified heritage places. Ensuring old studies are updated to current requirements and heritage mapping is accurately applied when subdivision or other development changes occur are ongoing tasks for the City's Strategic Planning Department.

The City owns and manages a range of properties with recognised heritage value. Many places are iconic civic buildings that the City has a responsibility to maintain. These heritage buildings can require additional maintenance which is a cost to the community, due to the need for particular tradespeople and speciality materials. The cost of these works competes against other important community infrastructure such as roads and footpaths meaning maintenance on heritage buildings is often undertaken on a 'needs basis' rather than as part of a planned future works program.

Many of the City's heritage sites are protected by a Heritage Overlay or are listed on the Victorian Heritage Register, however, not all places have had an assessment or conservation management plan completed which details how the heritage place should be used and managed. Conservation management plans can detail where potential change could occur on site to ensure the most significant and contributory heritage elements are protected.

The Burra Charter - Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and its guidelines, have been widely adopted as the best practice standard for heritage conservation in Australia and is the basis for many conservation management plans.

A conservation management plan is an additional cost to the general maintenance budget. In the absence of a plan the City's Built Heritage Advisor oversees and manages proposed maintenance and works. An aim for the future is to ensure each Greater Bendigo asset has an up-to-date conservation management plan. Whilst this is a key goal, the delivery of these plans and the review on areas not covered will be dependent on available resources.

The City understands the need to review the management of heritage places at all stages of the development life cycle including the identification, assessment, management construction, compliance and enforcement. The City will continue developing initiatives which conserve and celebrate our cultural and built heritage character that resonate with the heritage values of the community.

It is important to recognise that heritage is constantly evolving. There will always be new buildings, places, objects and cultural items warranting heritage protection. In response, heritage studies and citations will require continual updating to ensure ongoing protection.



Figure 34: Former Elmore Water Tower protected by local Heritage Overlay HO416 and Victorian Heritage Register H1678

Actions

2.1 **Undertake** regular planning scheme amendments to correct errors identified within existing Heritage Overlays.

2.2 **Review** existing conservation management plans for Greater Bendigo owned and managed places and identify and prioritise which plans need review and which places require a plan to be prepared.

2.3 **Establish** routine heritage asset management and conservation of Greater Bendigo owned and managed heritage properties.

3. Supporting our heritage

This theme involves developing policies and guidelines to assist decision making, management, provision of advisory services and financial assistance.

What we know

The City provides a range of assistance to planning permit applicants, local heritage societies, event organisers and the wider community regarding heritage matters. An example of guidelines and services include:

Heritage Design Guidelines (residential) – The Guidelines provide property owners and planning permit assessors details of preferred design outcomes for places located within a Heritage Overlay. A property with a Heritage Overlay may regulate renovation options, but it does not prohibit change. The Guidelines help property owners understand the heritage significance of their building, assists with the planning application process, helps conserve heritage features and encourage good infill and extension design.

Heritage Advisory Service – The City's Heritage Advisor provides pre-application advice for planning permit application proposals to ensure appropriate heritage restoration and design.

Financial Assistance Program – The City provides financial assistance for approved private heritage restoration works. The current loan scheme requires the fund to be paid back over a specific timeframe.

Collections management and storage support – Support is provided to local heritage societies and groups through information sessions hosted by the City's Civic Collections Officer.

City of Greater Bendigo website – The website provides information on heritage studies, details on when a planning permit may be required and how to look up whether a heritage overlay applies to your property.

Expert event assistance – Assistance is available to event organisers from the City's Tourism and Major Events Unit. The City has a superb range of heritage civic spaces and venues, including White Hills Botanical Gardens, Rosiland Park, the Capital and Ulumbarra Theatre and Bendigo Town Hall which can be hired for events.

Events assistance includes:

- Sourcing venues
- Accommodation booking
- Traffic management
- Activities and attraction itineraries
- Permit requirements
- Promotional support and marketing
- Event sponsorship and partnership
- Ticketing services

Whilst the services above cover a broad range of heritage assistance avenues there is room to grow and diversify these services. Changes are underway to make the financial assistance program more accessible in the form of a grant. This means the funds will not need to be paid back once the works are complete making restoration works available for a larger number of properties.

The City is implementing updates to the website to improve navigation and content. The Heritage section of the website currently lacks links to external heritage websites such as Heritage Victoria and Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council.



Figure 35: Successful residential heritage restoration

Actions

3.1 **Review and update** current heritage website pages with a focus on ease of use and helpful resources to facilitate heritage protection.

3.2 **Implement** trial heritage financial assistance grant program for two years in place of previous heritage loan scheme for certain private restoration works.

3.3 **Continue** to support historical groups and event organisers through information sessions and advice.

3.4 **Develop** policies and tools to assist the City to manage digital records

4. Promoting our heritage

This theme involves celebrating and recognising heritage, encouraging adaptive reuse and sharing heritage knowledge with tourists and the local community.

What we know

There is great value in promoting and embracing our heritage in all aspects of Greater Bendigo life. Our heritage is an important tourism driver and our economic future can be enhanced through expanding opportunities linked to heritage-based tourism or by incorporating heritage components into contemporary events.

It has been recognised that there is opportunity to further promote heritage to local residents, as well as visitors, so they can also know and appreciate what Greater Bendigo has to offer.

The *Bendigo Regional Destination Management Plan 2015* is a key tourism strategy for the region. The document provides directions around a regional approach to tourism. There is a need to diversify and contemporise heritage information, advertisement, and experiences. Many events today have a heritage component – whether they are hosted in a heritage garden, building or streetscape or provide an opportunity to learn about something related to Bendigo's past. There is opportunity to expand on this in the upcoming revision of the Plan.

There are many opportunities for the cultural heritage of the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung people, the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land, to be further respected, celebrated, and represented in aspects of city life. Awareness of First Nations artifacts, stories and cultural practices are increasing around the City.

As custodians of their cultural heritage the Dja Dja Wurrung have been actively promoting and sharing their culture. This is becoming more prominent in the City with the presence of the Djaara Lights exhibition, the Aboriginal naming of civic buildings and culturally important visuals such as Bunjil (eagle) being incorporated into the main façade of the new Law Courts building.

The City has assisted by hosting a dedicated First Nations Gallery at the Bendigo Information Centre, showcasing contemporary and traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and makers who are living in or who are connected to the Greater Bendigo region.





Figure 36: Djarra Lights combining the display of Djaara artwork and QR stories. Figure 37: White Night Festival - projections onto iconic heritage buildings.

Actions

4.1 **Continue** to promote heritage and heritage venues through tourism events and heritage attractions.

4.2 **Continue** to promote heritage related stories through publications such as GB Magazine

4.3 **Develop** consistent interpretation signage of Greater Bendigo owned or managed buildings

4.4 **Heritage Advisory Committee** to be involved in an action during their four-year term

4.5 **Collaborate** with stakeholders to revise the Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan

4.6 **Increase** public education and awareness of built heritage with release and advertisement of the trial financial assistance grant program.

Monitoring and Review

This plan provides actions for the years between 2024 – 2028. It is important to recognise that numerous activities are already undertaken to manage heritage in the absence of this Strategy. The consolidation of these activities into a single document will support the City to plan more effectively and provides opportunity for the community to be informed on the vast range of activities the City undertakes to protect and manage all types of heritage.

It is important to note that the plan is not a conclusive list of all heritage needs. Not everything identified in the research can be undertaken in the short term. Some heritage goals will need to be completed in stages and there is opportunity to include actions in the following four years. For example, the action to catalogue all civic objects and collections is a 3–4 year project and will need to be completed before consideration can begin about how to physically display the items.

Monitoring 2026

Undertake a halfway milestone review of the Strategy to ensure the actions are on track for completion.

Review 2028

At the conclusion of the four year life of this Strategy, a review of the actions and outcomes will be undertaken. Actions which are not yet complete but still relevant can be carried over to the next Strategy cycle, to be considered and prioritised against new identified actions.

The actions identified within this first Strategy set strong foundations for the City's ongoing management of its heritage items, and with each Strategy review, new actions will be able to build upon previously completed work.

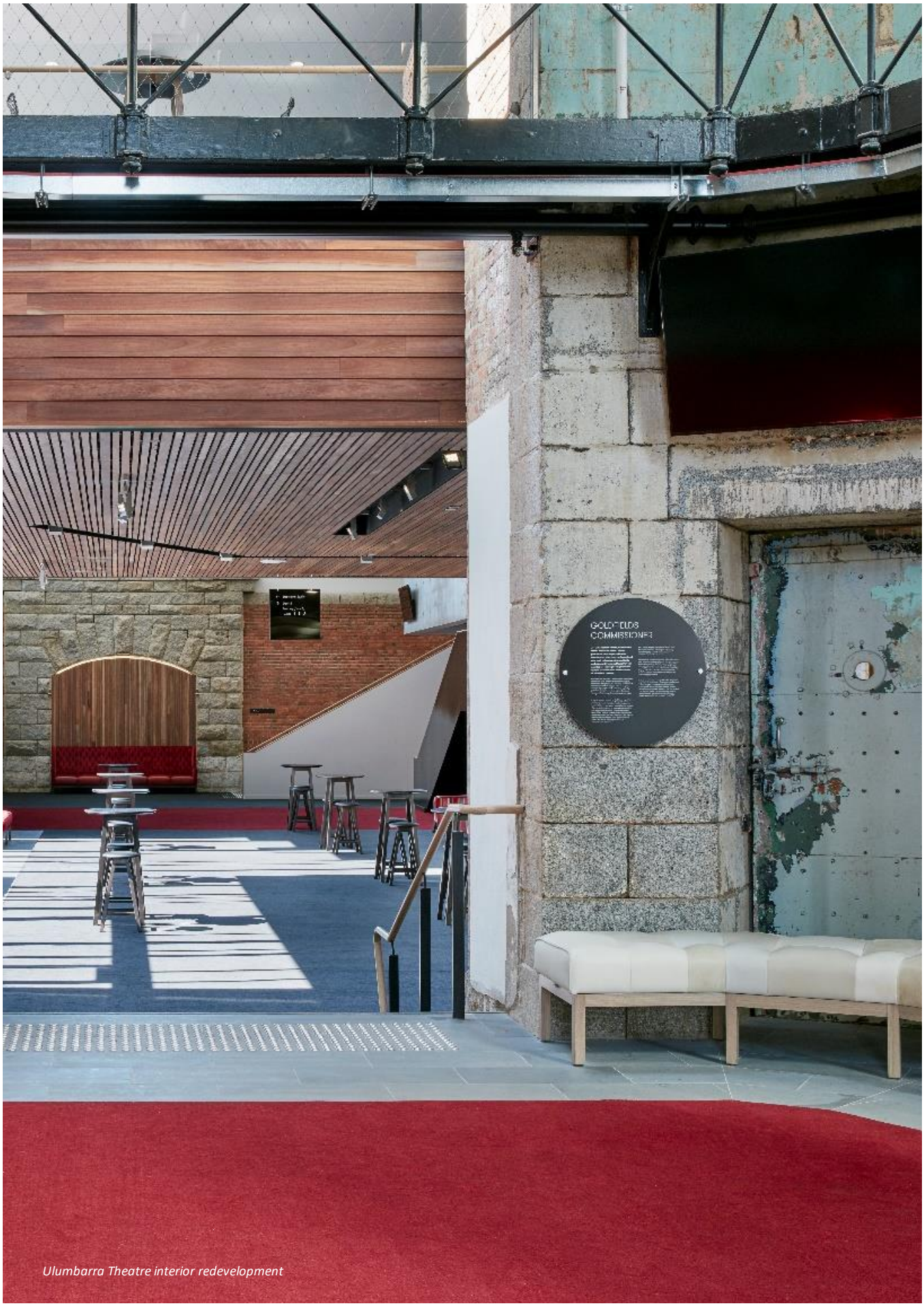
Action Summary

	KNOWING	CONTEXT	RESPONSIBLE
1.1	**Provide** an ongoing commitment to heritage studies through a Heritage Work Program which prioritises heritage projects to be undertaken by the Strategic Planning Unit.	**Ongoing**	**Strategic Planning**
1.2	**Review** the City of Greater Bendigo Thematic History and update to include post-war theme.	New	**Strategic Planning**
1.3	**Ensure** gaps identified in the Heritage Gap Analysis 2019 are captured and prioritised in the Heritage Work Program.	Ongoing	**Strategic Planning**
1.4	**Complete** review of HERMES heritage database and develop processes to ensure accurate information is available to the community	Ongoing	**Strategic Planning**
1.5	**Continue** to catalogue the civic collections including assessing, registering, storing and digitisation all objects (3-4 year project)	Ongoing	**Civic Collections**
1.6	**Undertake** a review to consider consolidation of the many registers for City owned or managed places and buildings.	New	**Property Department / Parks and Open Space**
1.7	**Continue** engagement with Traditional Owners in line with and seek opportunity for staff training	Ongoing	**Organisation Wide**

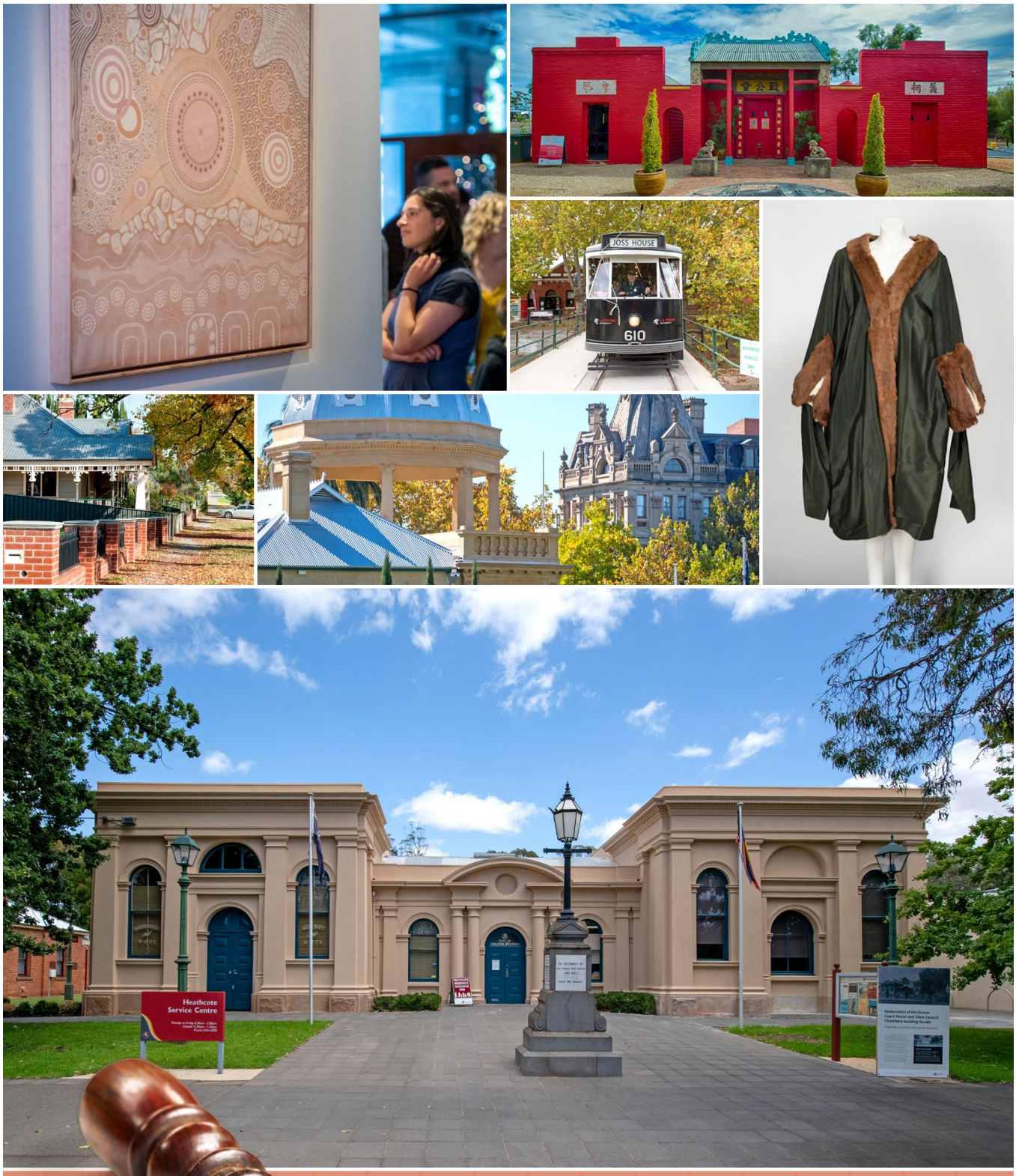
	PROTECTING	CONTEXT	RESPONSIBLE
2.1	**Undertake** regular planning scheme amendments to correct errors identified within existing Heritage Overlays.	**Ongoing**	**Strategic Planning**
2.2	**Review** existing conservation management plans for Greater Bendigo owned and managed places and identify and prioritise which plans need review and which places require a plan to be prepared.	**New**	**Property Department**
2.3	**Establish** routine heritage asset management and conservation of Greater Bendigo owned and managed heritage properties.	**New**	**Property Department / Parks and Open Space**

	SUPPORTING	CONTEXT	RESPONSIBLE
3.1	**Review and update** current heritage website pages with a focus on ease of use and helpful resources to facilitate heritage protection.	Ongoing	**Strategic Planning**
3.2	**Implement** trial heritage financial assistance grant program for two years	New	**Strategic Planning**
3.3	**Continue** to support historical groups and event organisers through information sessions and advice.	Ongoing	**Civic Collections**
3.4	**Develop** policies and tools to assist the City to manage digital records	New	**Organisation Wide**

	PROMOTING	CONTEXT	RESPONSIBLE
4.1	**Continue** to promote heritage and heritage venues through tourism events and heritage attractions.	Ongoing	**Tourism and Major Events**
4.2	**Continue** to promote heritage related stories through publications such as GB Magazine	Ongoing	**Communications**
4.3	**Develop** consistent heritage interpretation signage of Greater Bendigo owned or managed buildings	New	**Organisation Wide**
4.4	**Heritage Advisory Committee** to be involved in an action during their four year term	New	**Heritage Advisory Committee**
4.5	**Collaborate** with stakeholders to revise the Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan	New	**Tourism and Major Events**
4.6	**Increase** public education and awareness of built heritage with release and advertisement of the trial financial assistance grant program.	New	**Strategic Planning**



Ulumbarra Theatre interior redevelopment



www.bendigo.vic.gov.au

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

21. A SAFE, WELCOMING AND FAIR COMMUNITY

Nil

22. URGENT BUSINESS

Nil

23. NOTICES OF MOTION

Nil

24. MAYOR'S REPORT

25. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

26. CONFIDENTIAL (SECTION 66) REPORTS

RECOMMENDED MOTION

That Council close the meeting to members of the public pursuant to Section 66(2)(e) & (g) of the Local Government Act 2020, to consider (a) report(s) relating to;

1. (a) Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released;
2. (g) private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that -(i) relates to trade secrets; or(ii) if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage;