



# Social Justice Framework

Supporting Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights

2022  
2032



CITY OF GREATER  
**BENDIGO**

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Greater Bendigo is on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We would like to acknowledge and extend our appreciation to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples, the Traditional Owners of the 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.

## 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.





**Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence... We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability. – United Nations, World Day of Social Justice**

## Message from the Mayor

The City of Greater Bendigo is pleased to present its Social Justice Framework - Supporting Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights (2022-2032).

The Social Justice Framework builds on the City's earlier Human Rights Charter (2014) and will assist our work over the next 10 years to achieve our community vision of: *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.*

Fulfilling the community vision also requires a commitment to social justice. The Social Justice Framework seeks to ensure that as Greater Bendigo develops as a community it is equitable and fair, dedicated to inclusion and embraces diversity.

The City is committed to supporting all people to achieve their full potential and

to ensure they have equitable access to services and opportunities and are treated fairly, equitably and with respect.

Local government is well placed to provide infrastructure, resources, services, support and advocacy to enable people to lead healthy, happy and prosperous lives.

Embedding social justice principles of equity; access and inclusion; community participation in decision making; and human rights in all of the City's policies, plans, strategies, programs and services is key to furthering inclusion and social justice.

I look forward to the implementation of the Social Justice Framework as we support equity, inclusion and human rights, and ensure Greater Bendigo is a fair and welcoming city for all.

**Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf**



# Introduction

**The City of Greater Bendigo's Social Justice Framework (2022–2032) aims to provide Council and the City of Greater Bendigo (the City) with principles to guide decisions, planning and actions to improve equity and inclusion and support human rights in the community over the next ten years.**

The Social Justice Framework was developed following an evaluation of the City of Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter (2014); a review of relevant Local, State and Federal government legislation; analysis of local data; assessment of social justice and human rights best practice within other local government authorities; and engagement with the community and key stakeholders. Embedding effective processes alongside the Social Justice Framework, will assist in ensuring an integrated planning whole-of-Council approach to progress equity, inclusion and human rights. A social justice action plan and report card will provide an overview of actions that will be led or supported by the City (across multiple Council plans) to ensure an integrated whole-of-Council systems change approach to advance social justice.

The City of Greater Bendigo has a long-standing commitment to human rights. It developed and adopted the **City of Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter** in 2014. In 2020, the City was the first local government in Australia to gain accreditation from Welcoming Cities. This recognised the City's commitment to embracing diversity and building on the communities' strengths to create a social, cultural, economic and civic cohesion within a sustainable natural environment.

In 2021, Greater Bendigo developed its community vision: *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 Greater Bendigo community vision is underpinned by values strongly connected to social justice, including:

- Equity – provide support and give opportunity to others to be part of this community
- Inclusion – capturing our cultural and community diversity

The **Greater Bendigo Community Vision and Values (2021-2030)** are the basis of the **Council Plan 2021-2025 *Mir wimbul***, which embeds the social justice principles of equity, fairness and inclusion as a priority in Council's planning, policies, programs, and services. One specific objective in *Mir wimbul* was to "Implement the recommendations of the Bendigo Human Rights Charter evaluation" (Objective 7.6.1, p.26) and one action was to "Develop a Social Justice Framework" (Action 7.6.1, p.26). The **Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan (Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025)** has a guiding principle to 'promote social justice'.

Alongside this local context is the City's responsibilities under State and Federal government legislation (See Appendix 1: Policy Context, p.25). For example, the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020* legislates that "services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community" (section 106 (2) a and b).

This Social Justice Framework is the outcome of these four elements. It builds on the previous Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter to support a continuing culture of human rights while drawing on both the Charter evaluation; Greater Bendigo's Community Vision and Values; and new legislative requirements, to create a broader social justice framework which will progress equity, fairness and inclusion in Greater Bendigo.

Addressing inequity through local policies, plans and programs is key to furthering inclusion and social justice. Local government is well placed to provide infrastructure, resources, services, support and advocacy to enable people to lead healthy, happy and prosperous lives.

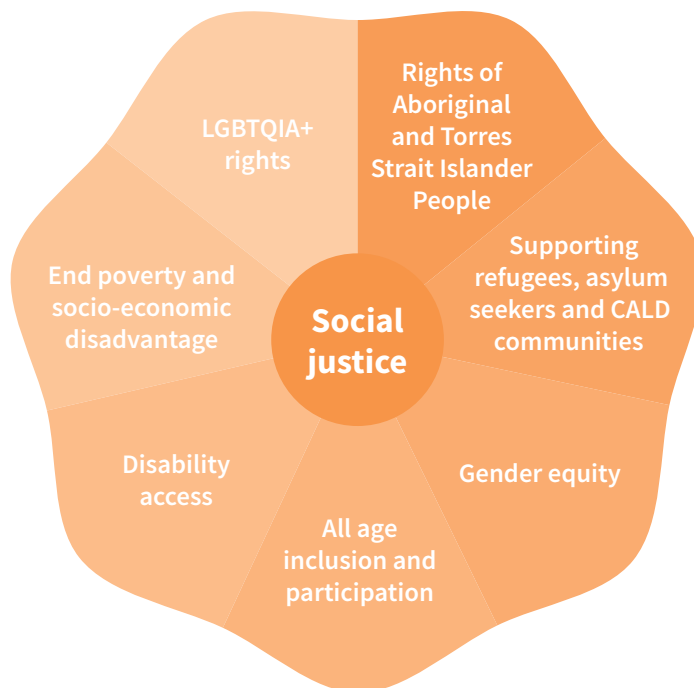
The City is committed to supporting people to achieve their full potential and to ensure all the community has equitable access to services, opportunities and every person is treated fairly, equitably and with respect.

**It has become increasingly evident that inequality manifests itself most clearly at the local level.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Benoy Jacob, *Governing for Equity: Implementing an Equity Lens in Local Government*, ICMA, 2020.



# What is social justice?



Social justice is the pursuit of equal rights, equal opportunity and human rights for all people in our community. Social justice embraces the concept of social inclusion and the principles of providing access, equity, participation and human rights to all people in our community. Social Justice acknowledges diversity, discrimination and disadvantaged groups in the community. Social justice principles address the impact that social and economic inequalities have on both the people experiencing them and on the wider community. Social justice incorporates community participation in decision making that impacts on their lives.

The shift from a narrower focus on protecting human rights to a broader emphasis on addressing social justice responsibilities is a significant change which has occurred across local government. This shift is reflected in the Victorian *Local Government Act's* requirement of equitable

service provision responsive to community diversity, but also under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. Under this Act, Parliament recognises that 'public health interventions are one of the ways in which the public health and wellbeing can be improved and inequalities reduced'. One responsibility of councils under the Act, is 'to create an environment that supports the health of members of the local community and strengthens the capacity of the community and individuals to achieve better health'.

Fulfilling the Greater Bendigo community vision of celebrating our diverse community and being welcoming, sustainable and prosperous, requires a commitment to social justice.



## Equality

The assumption is that **everyone benefits from the same supports**. This is considered to be equal treatment.



## Equity

**Everyone gets the supports they need**, which produces equity. This is the concept of affirmative action.



## Justice

All three can see the game without supports or accommodation because **the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed**. The systemic barrier has been removed.



# Evaluation of the City's Human Rights Charter

The **City of Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter (2014)** reflected the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

It was formulated during a time of protests for and against Council's decision to grant a planning permit to build the Bendigo Islamic Community Centre. The Charter developed a framework for the City and Council to meet its responsibilities under State and Federal government legislation and promote human rights via three areas: Compliance, Culture and Advocacy. The Charter focussed on four key areas: Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity.

In 2021, the evaluation of the Human Rights Charter noted the positive impact of the Greater Bendigo Charter in:

- Guiding Council when making decisions, adopting resolutions and making public statements
- Serving as a valuable guide to Council when promoting human rights to the Greater Bendigo community
- Aiding the City when advocating the region's interests to State and Federal authorities
- Setting standards for City staff to adhere to when performing their duties
- Contributing to a human rights culture in Greater Bendigo

The Evaluation also noted that since the Council adopted the Human Rights Charter *"The understanding of human rights has evolved, as has the community with respect to demographics and community attitudes. An updated Charter will ensure it maintains relevance to current community issues. Also, the new Local Government Act (2020) states that: 'Councillor Codes of Conduct must comply with the Victorian Human Rights Charter'. The Act has increased requirements for community engagement using the principles of deliberative engagement. These align with the values of equity and social justice."*

The evaluation concluded that *"Based on benchmarking the approach taken by other local governments, a focus on social justice provides clearer guidance to policy and strategy formulation, positioning the local government to directly redress vulnerabilities within their constituency. The social justice approach builds upon human rights with a focus on reducing vulnerabilities through addressing the barriers to equality in the economic, environmental, social and cultural domains."*

The two primary recommendations were:

1. To update the Human Rights Charter to be the City of Greater Bendigo Social Justice Framework
2. Develop an Action Plan to embed the Social Justice Framework throughout the City's operations



# Why is a Social Justice Framework important now?

## The value and purpose of a Social Justice Framework for Council is to:

- Ensure Council meets its obligations of progressing equity, inclusion and human rights, as required by State legislation
- Provide a mandate for Council to embed social justice principles of equity; access and inclusion; community participation in decision making; and human rights in all of the City's policies, plans, strategies, programs and services
- Enable Council to take a position of leadership by establishing clear positions on equity, access and inclusion, participation, human rights and social justice
- Support the City's social justice advocacy across Government, industry, business and community
- Facilitate the City bringing together key stakeholders to address discrimination and inequity
- Enable City partnerships with key stakeholders to leverage assets and resources to address social and structural barriers to achieving equity, access and inclusion and social justice

As well as the need to more effectively meet the requirements of recent State legislative change (*Victorian Local Government Act 2020* and *Gender Equality Act 2020*), five other contexts make a social justice framework in 2022 important:

- Incidents of racism against culturally diverse residents and communities in Greater Bendigo increased during COVID-19
- COVID-19 has contributed to increased inequity and disadvantage in Greater Bendigo
- Climate change (including issues of rising energy costs and heat health) will affect socio-economic disadvantaged families more severely
- The ongoing social change required to address violence against women and children; address gender power disparities; and advance gender equity
- A growing population who may bring different values and perspectives, and increasing diversity in Greater Bendigo, makes a statement outlining what Council stands for

A Social Justice Framework is crucial in providing a set of principles, which can guide Council, as the previous City of Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter did.

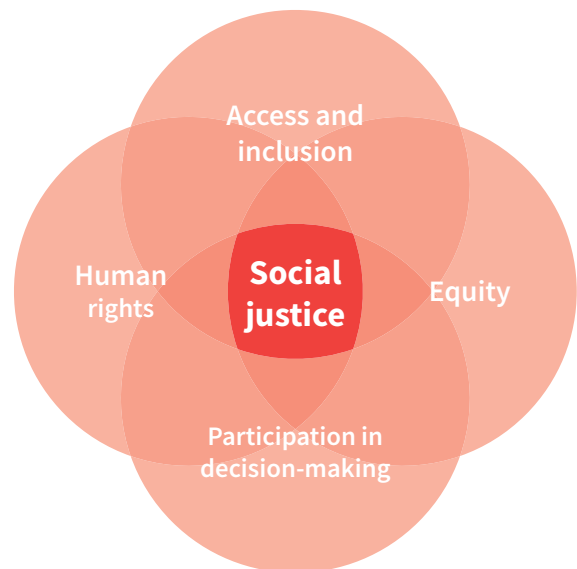
In 2020, Mayor Cr Margaret O'Rourke spoke out publicly against COVID generated racism and abuse against Karen and other Asian-Australian residents in Greater Bendigo, declaring it to be "deeply disappointing and unacceptable."

"It is not who we are and it is not who we want to be. We are a welcoming, inclusive and safe community that celebrates our growing diversity. The commitment to equity and respect as outlined in our Humans Rights Charter, means we wholeheartedly reject racism and discrimination of any sort. There is no room for racism or discrimination here."



# Social Justice Framework principles

The Social Justice Framework is a set of principles, based on Greater Bendigo's community vision and values, that will guide the City's work enabling Greater Bendigo to fulfil its vision of celebrating our diverse community and being welcoming, sustainable and prosperous, while walking hand-in-hand with the Traditional Custodians.



## The key principles are:

- Human Rights
- Access and Inclusion
- Equity
- Participation in decision-making

## These core principles are supported by seven pillars of action:

- 1 Recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples/First Nation's peoples**  
The City of Greater Bendigo acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land and recognises other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as First Nations Peoples; and values their traditions, knowledge and culture.
- 2 Uphold Human Rights**  
The City of Greater Bendigo is bound by the provisions of the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. The City's actions ensure a welcoming community, where dignity, equality and mutual respect are shared across cultures, religions, and beliefs.
- 3 Champion Social Justice**  
The City of Greater Bendigo advocates for equity, access and inclusion for all people in our community, acknowledging diversity and discrimination and disadvantage due to factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, age, sexuality, gender identity, disability and religion, or a combination of these factors.

- 4 Advance Equity**  
The City of Greater Bendigo addresses inequity by dealing with the impact that social and economic inequalities have on the municipal community and prioritising the available economic, social and political resources to those who are most disadvantaged.
- 5 Support Access and Inclusion**  
The City of Greater Bendigo services, programs and facilities are designed and delivered in a way that is available to all and incorporates diverse perspectives and skills, with a focus on reducing the barriers which may prevent access.
- 6 Enable Engagement and Participation**  
The City of Greater Bendigo engages the community to enable meaningful, equitable and informed input into decisions which affect their lives.
- 7 Support Environmental Justice**  
The City of Greater Bendigo commits to tackling 'environmental and climate breakdown' (recognising the serious risks to the health and wellbeing of residents, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged) alongside enhancing the natural environment through minimising the ecological footprint and rehabilitating natural ecosystems.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The climate motion was passed by Council in August 2019 (referenced in *Climate Change and Environment Strategy, 2021-2026* and also the *One Planet Report 2019-20*).





# Why is social justice important for Greater Bendigo?

As the state's fourth largest city, Greater Bendigo's demographic profile reveals marginalised or discriminated groups who are affected by barriers to social justice. It also reveals areas of extremely high socio-economic disadvantage.

**A Stronger Greater Bendigo** pointed to 'a growing geographical and social gradient across Greater Bendigo expressed in measures of wealth, access to facilities and services, health outcomes, and participation levels in education and employment'.<sup>3</sup> It emphasised that disadvantage had 'become intergenerational and entrenched' for many people.

Having an unequal community impacts on the whole community, as a steep social gradient has an overall impact on community health and wellbeing; on the liveability of a community; and on the local and regional economy.

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<sup>3</sup> A Stronger Greater Bendigo p. 58.



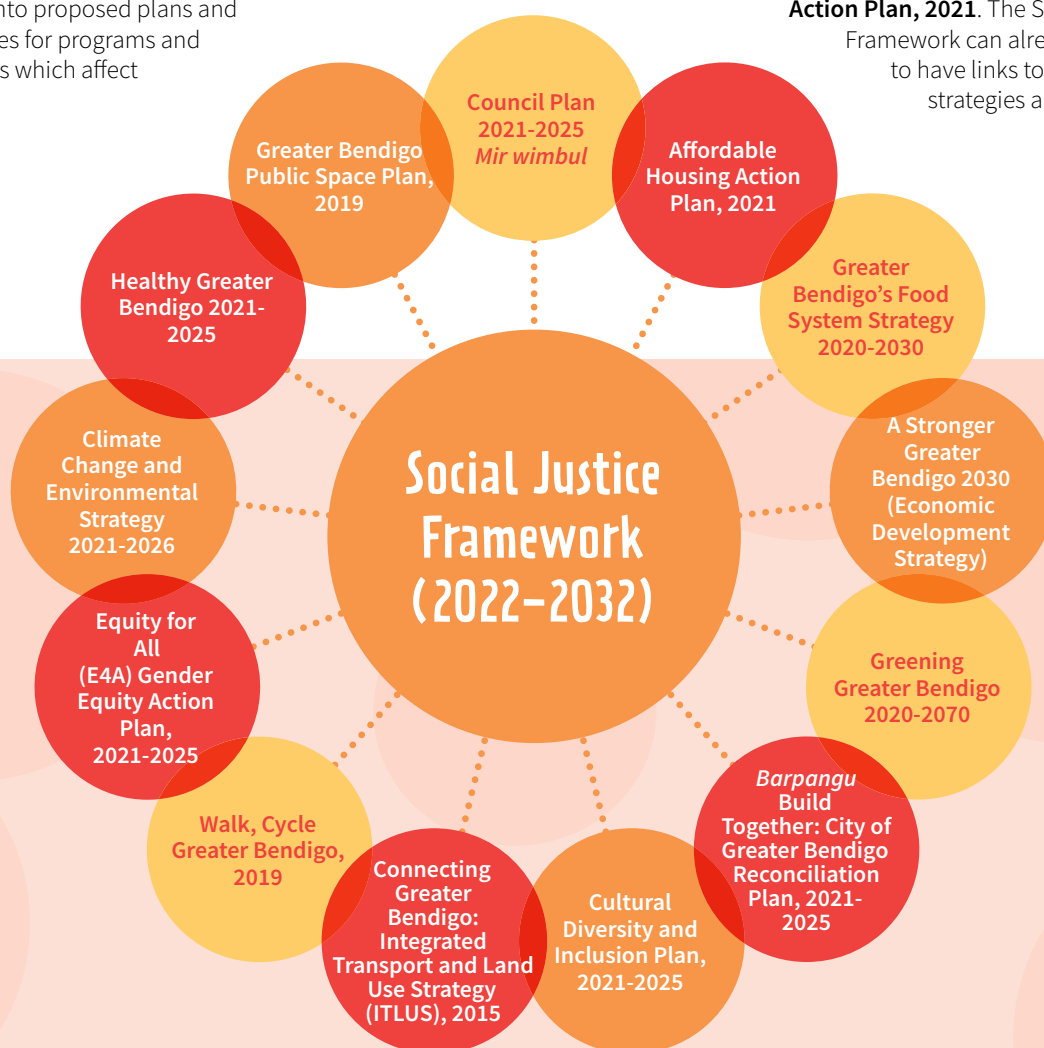
# Role of the City of Greater Bendigo

The City has a strategic responsibility to plan, lead, advocate for and work with the local community for social justice, as it is the level of government closest to the community and has legislated requirements. It will do this through the following roles:

- **Planner** - Developing plans and strategies which proactively address barriers that entrench disadvantage and inequality and focus on improving equity; access and inclusion; community participation in decision making; and human rights
- **Leader** - Establishing a clear position on equity, access and inclusion, participation and human rights and building an increased understanding of social justice issues
- **Advocate** - Advocating across all levels of Government, industry, business and community to improve outcomes in all areas relating to social justice
- **Engager** - Engaging with the local community to ensure that those experiencing disadvantage, inequity and discrimination have a voice and input into proposed plans and priorities for programs and services which affect them

- **Facilitator** - Connecting groups and bringing them together to build tolerance and understanding of difference and celebrate diversity; as well as bringing together key stakeholders to address discrimination and inequity and facilitate improved outcomes in social justice
- **Partner** - Partnering with key stakeholders to leverage assets and resources to address social and structural barriers to achieving social justice

Key strategies, such as the **Council Plan 2021-25 *Mir wimbul*** and **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025**, reflect the principles of social justice. These are further supported by other strategies which have included a social justice approach and address some of the different barriers to experiencing equity, access, community participation in decision making and human rights. For example: ***Barpangu Build Together: City of Greater Bendigo Reconciliation Plan, 2021-2025; Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan, 2021-2025; Equity for All (E4A) Gender Equity Action Plan, 2021-2025; and Affordable Housing Action Plan, 2021***. The Social Justice Framework can already be seen to have links to the above strategies and plans.







## Social justice commitments of the City

Emerging from its community vision principles of equity and inclusion, the City can already be seen to have a commitment to social justice through multiple plans and strategies, ensuring a ‘whole-of-Council’ approach to social justice.

For example, one of the principles of **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025** is to “promote social justice” (p.4). “Everyone deserves equal rights and opportunities, including the right to good health. Many people in our community face barriers to good health that are avoidable and unjust. We need to adopt a social justice approach to address these barriers and focus on access, equity, inclusion and human rights” (p.21).

An internal Social Justice Framework Action Plan will be developed to accompany the Social Justice Framework (as recommended by the Human Rights Charter Evaluation). This Social Justice Action Plan will detail existing actions within different Council Plans, which address social justice goals and objectives, as well as include new actions focused on strengthening other policy, developing tools and building staff capability to apply the social justice principles.

The Action Plan will bring together all of Council’s different social justice commitments and the measures of their successful implementation.

# Social justice in action at the City

The City's commitment to social justice and human rights is evident in its actions across multiple areas of its operations, not just in its policies, plans and commitments. These are a few examples of social justice in action in Greater Bendigo, of 'walking the talk' (see annual Social Justice Report Card for more details).

## Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

- ✓ Embedding Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners
- ✓ Recognising traditional owners and supporting their language and culture by Aboriginal place naming
- ✓ Providing Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training and On-Country Training sessions to staff

## Cultural diversity

- ✓ First local government in Australia to be accredited as a Welcoming City
- ✓ Implemented Intercultural Ambassador Pilot Program
- ✓ Facilitated Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Sports Action Group
- ✓ Supported emergency preparedness with refugee communities

## Gender equity

- ✓ Introduced Gender Impact Assessments
- ✓ Introduced Gender Equality Workplace Action Plan

## Families in poverty

- ✓ Developed social housing target to increase current supply of social housing

## LGBTQIA+ community

- ✓ Celebrated LGBTQIA+ community through Progress Pride Flag mural; the raising of the Pride Flag on IDAHOBIT and the Transgender flag on International Trans Day of Visibility; and the support of Bendigo Pride Festival

## Hardship and resource decisions

- ✓ Introduced a Budget principle of hardship
- ✓ Implemented Financial Hardship Guidelines



## Disadvantaged places

- ✓ Healthy Heart of Victoria Kitchen Garden project established in two disadvantaged areas, Long Gully and Kangaroo Flat
- ✓ Prioritising socio-economic disadvantaged areas by investing resources in Heathcote Civic Precinct Project

## People with disability

- ✓ Released Access Keys (accessibility guides with information about accessing venues, events and programs)
- ✓ Disability Inclusion Reference Committee ensured people with a disability could provide advice to Council on access and inclusion priorities

## Young people

- ✓ Youth Council enabled young people to have a voice and provide advice to Council on plans, strategies, policies and projects so that they better aligned to the needs of young people





## Social justice commitments

City of Greater Bendigo's Social Justice Framework focuses on people and their experiences and on place and is facilitated by systems change; integrated planning; and being strengths-based. This approach enables the framework to be responsive to the diverse needs of the community; engage effectively with different groups in the community; and provide services equitably (all required under Victorian *Local Government Act 2020*). Under the Social Justice Framework, the City makes a commitment to:

- The Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land and to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Greater Bendigo (underpinned by **Barpangu Build Together: City of Greater Bendigo Reconciliation Plan, 2021-2025**)
- Culturally and religiously diverse people and supporting refugees and asylum seekers by taking a stand against racism and being a welcoming community that respects cultural and religious differences and supports multiculturalism (underpinned by the **Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan, 2022-2026**).
- Gender equity and preventing violence against women (underpinned by **Gender Equity Action Plan, 2021-2025** and our legal obligations under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*).
- People with a disability and improving disability access across Greater Bendigo (underpinned by **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025**, and our legal obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*).
- People experiencing mental ill health, supporting them to participate, engage and be empowered to live well (underpinned by **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025**).
- Children, supporting them as citizens with rights in a Child-Friendly City and being a 'Child Safe' organisation (underpinned by **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025**, and working to being compliant with the Victorian Child Safe Standards).
- Young people, supporting them to explore, engage and be empowered to shape the world they live in (underpinned by **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025** and the Youth Strategy).
- Older people and strengthening Greater Bendigo as an Age-Friendly City where older people are valued, supported to engage and empowered to live well (underpinned by **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025**).
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse, queer and intersex people and to celebrate our LGBTQIA+ community and stand up against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and intersex discrimination (underpinned by **Council Plan 2021-2025 Mir wimbul** and **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025**).
- People in poverty, low-income families, or people experiencing economic hardship, homelessness or intergenerational social-economic disadvantage by addressing poverty and disadvantage (underpinned by **Affordable Housing Action Plan, 2021** and **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025**).
- Suburbs and regional areas where members of the community experience the most disadvantage by prioritising resources including infrastructure, services and programs to reduce disadvantage - and redress historical inequity in community infrastructure investment.

# Social justice statistics for Greater Bendigo

**2.4%**

identify as  
Aboriginal or  
Torres Strait  
Islander<sup>1</sup>

**51.5%**

of the City's population  
identify as women<sup>1</sup>

**1 in 10**

households are food insecure, up to  
1 in 5 households in some areas<sup>4</sup>

**7.6%**

are living with  
disability<sup>1</sup>

Rate of sexual offences  
against women is

**double**

the Victorian average<sup>5</sup>



**10.3%**

were born  
overseas, 20%  
had a parent  
born overseas<sup>1</sup>

**14%**

of people are  
living in poverty<sup>2</sup>

**51%**

of overseas  
arrivals speak a  
language other  
than English at  
home<sup>1</sup>

**19%**

of low income households  
earn less than \$650 per week,  
up to 25%-30% in some areas<sup>3</sup>

**9 areas**

in Greater Bendigo  
are in the top 15% of  
most disadvantaged  
Australian suburbs<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ABS, Census, 2021 - City of Greater Bendigo. <sup>2</sup> ABS, Census, 2016 - City of Greater Bendigo. <sup>3</sup> ABS, Census, 2021, 2016 - City of Greater Bendigo. <sup>4</sup> City of Greater Bendigo Active Living Census 2019. <sup>5</sup> Reported Incidents, Greater Bendigo Violence Against Women Fact Sheet, Women's Health Victoria, 2021.



36%

experience anxiety or depression<sup>4</sup>

14%

youth unemployment, up to 18% in some areas<sup>2</sup>

12%

of the City's population are young people (15-24 years)<sup>1</sup>

26%

of households are vulnerable to housing crisis or eviction due to rental or mortgage stress<sup>6</sup>

31%

of young people engaging with Headspace identified as LGBTIQ<sup>8</sup>

18%

are single parent families, 82% of these are women<sup>1</sup>



3,000

people have an acute need for social housing<sup>6</sup>

5.7%

identify as LGBTIQ<sup>7</sup>

36%

of low income families and 29% of children/young people have a cost barrier to increasing physical activity<sup>4</sup>

11%

are older lone person households, up to 15% in some areas<sup>2</sup>

16%

do not have a home internet connection, 26% in some areas<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> City of Greater Bendigo Affordable Housing Action Plan, 2020. <sup>7</sup> Victorian Population Health Survey 2017 - City of Greater Bendigo. <sup>8</sup> City of Greater Bendigo Submission to Vic Gov LGBTIQ Strategy. <sup>9</sup> <https://profile.id.com.au/bendigo/internet-connection>



## Approach

The approach to social justice is four-fold:

- 1) People, places and experiences equity lenses<sup>5</sup>
- 2) Systems change
- 3) Strengths-based
- 4) Integrated planning

### 1) People, places and experiences equity lenses<sup>4</sup>

The Social Justice Framework uses three evidence-based lenses to understand the risk of lack of access, exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage - people, places and experiences.

#### 1A) People

To determine who in Greater Bendigo might be more likely to be at risk of lack of access, exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage, the framework applies:

- A First Nations lens, with attention to Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land and to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Greater Bendigo
- A gender lens, with attention to how people of different genders experience gender inequality differently
- An abilities/access and inclusion lens, with attention to the risk of lack of access, exclusion, and discrimination experienced by people with a disability

- A lifespan lens, with attention to children, young people and older people
- A culture lens, with attention to culturally and religiously diverse people, including recently arrived migrants from non-English speaking countries, asylum seekers and refugees, international students, people of diverse faiths and people who experience language barriers
- A class/socio-economic status lens, with attention to poverty and its impacts, people on low incomes and/or in housing stress and intergenerational disadvantage
- A sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex lens, with attention to the risk of discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, queer or intersex people (LGBTQIA+)

NOTE: Not everyone who identifies as belonging to one of these groups will experience disadvantage, discrimination or injustice.

<sup>4</sup> The people, place and experiences framework was adopted from the City of Darebin's *Towards equality: equity, inclusion and human rights framework 2019-2029*.



## 1B) Places

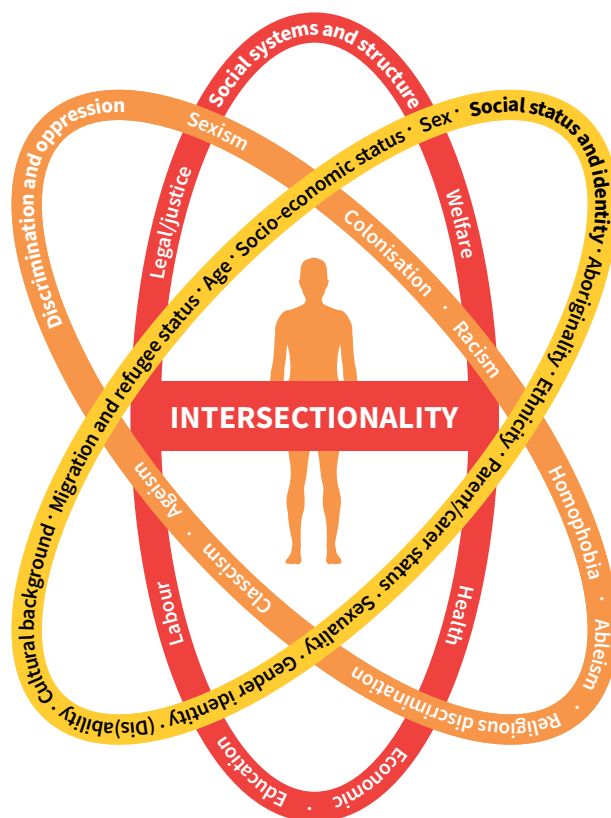
To assess where people might be most at risk of lack of access, exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage, the framework looks at place and location, applying a place-based lens. A place-based approach is important in identifying inequality across Greater Bendigo, identifying neighbourhoods, areas or regions that experience greater levels of socio-economic disadvantage. A place-based approach can:

- Provide an understanding of structural disadvantage within particular neighbourhoods, areas or regions
- Enable residents, groups and stakeholders to engage in a collaborative process, to address issues as they are experienced, within a neighbourhood, area or region, ensuring their strengths, connections and insights inform project, service and infrastructure development
- Assist Council to address inequities in the distribution of resources and infrastructure and other issues as they are experienced within particular neighbourhoods, areas or regions
- Increase social networks and community connections and reduce inequity between and within communities
- Improve residents' daily experiences, shaped by the locations where they live, work or play

A place-based approach is important in assisting Council to prioritise resources (for infrastructure, programs and services) in the context of limited financial resources and rate-capping.

## 1C) Experiences

The Framework also considers experiences or additional factors that might contribute to exclusion, disadvantage and inequality. Examples are included in the diagram below.



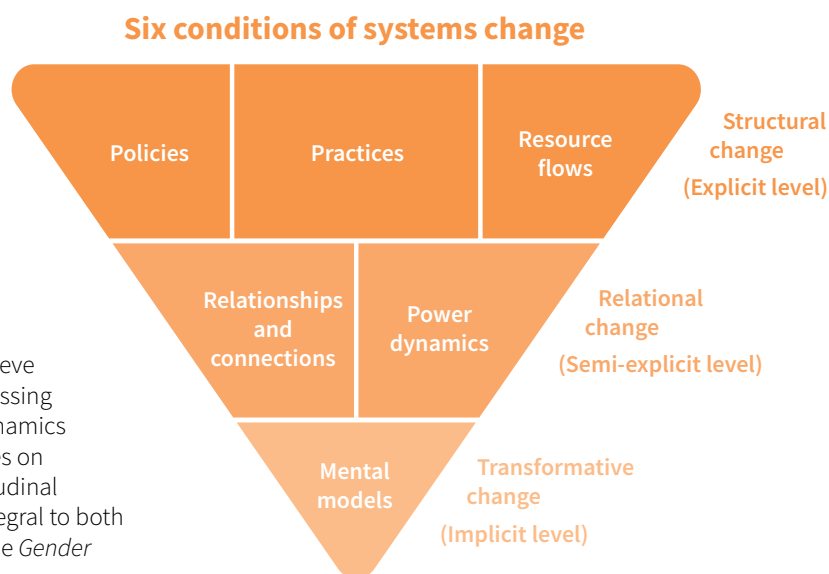
In considering both people and experiences, the idea of intersectionality is invaluable. Intersectionality understands how a person's identity is shaped by multiple realities (such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, geographic location, age, disability, religion). These factors can help identify multiple contributors to disadvantage and advantage, which impact on people's experiences.

Employment status (job insecurity, unemployment or underemployment)	Housing tenure or housing stress	Homelessness	Poverty or low income	Food insecurity
Migration, including being refugee or seeking asylum	Low level of English proficiency	Low level of literacy	Education level	Access to internet or technology
Family violence and violence against women	Violence or discrimination against LGBTQIA+	Carer role	Pregnancy and breastfeeding	Household composition (sole person, sole-parent families, families with young children)
Trauma and intergenerational trauma	Community safety	Faith	Wellbeing and physical health	Mental health
Social isolation	Out of home care	Engagement with the justice system	Adoption, foster care or institutionalisation	Access to transport



## 2) Systems change

Systems change is about addressing the barriers that keep the current conditions in place. They can be structural, relational and attitudinal. It identifies that for substantive and long-lasting change, change needs to occur at a variety of levels. This methodology is integral to the Social Justice Framework. It aims to address policies, practices and resource flows to achieve structural change; while simultaneously focussing on relationships, connections and power dynamics to obtain relational change; and also focusses on attitudes, beliefs and culture to achieve attitudinal change. The systems change approach is integral to both **Healthy Greater Bendigo 2021-2025** and the *Gender Equality Action Plan, 2022-2027*.



## 3) Strengths-based

Strengths-based is an approach that looks for opportunities to complement and support existing community and individual strengths and capacities as opposed to focusing on problems, vulnerabilities and deficits. Like asset-based community development, a strengths-based method identifies and mobilises community and individual assets including:

- Local knowledge
- Local culture
- Local resources
- Local skills
- Local processes

A strength-based approach will enable community aspirations, strengths, resources, connections and insights to inform policy, project, service and infrastructure development, while simultaneously supporting capacity building contributing to community and individual resilience and the ability to recover from adversity. A strength-based approach recognises the ways the City can learn a lot from different groups within the community (although they might initially be considered groups at risk) such as the holistic approach to health and wellbeing adopted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the importance of extended family to both culturally and religiously diverse communities and First Nations people.



## 4) Integrated planning

Integrated planning is a whole-of-council approach which determines the most appropriate course of action to equitably work toward the Community's vision in alignment with their values. It guides use of a whole of community approach when preparing and delivering plans, policies and projects and incorporates monitoring and evaluation.

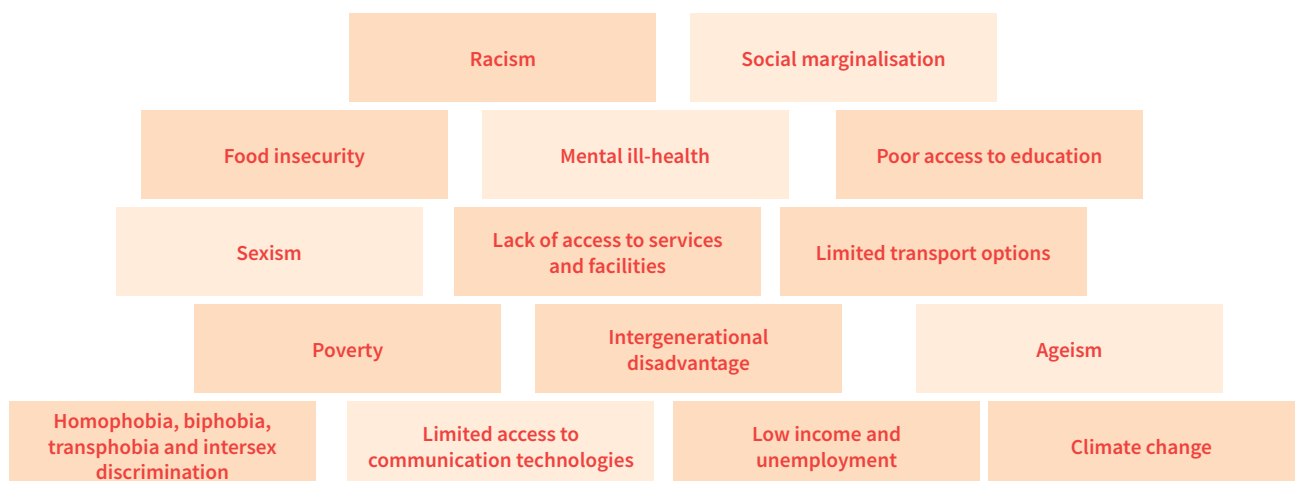


# Groups at risk of discrimination or disadvantage



**Please note:** Not everyone who identifies as belonging to one of these groups will experience disadvantage, discrimination or injustice. People who do not identify with one of the groups, may experience disadvantage, discrimination or injustice. People who identify with one or more of these groups, can experience a higher level of discrimination or disadvantage. These groups will change over time.

# Barriers to social justice







# Outcomes

The Social Justice Framework will lead to achieving the following outcomes through all levels in the organisation.

## Structural Change

### **Policies, Programs and Services -**

City policies, strategies, plans, programs and services are inclusive and accessible, meeting the rights and requirements of our diverse community.

**Practices** - The City's governance, leadership, organisational culture and practices display the principles and ethos of equity, access and inclusion and social justice.

**Resources** - City resources are oriented towards reducing barriers to increase equity and access and inclusion.

## Relational Change

**Working together** - The City supports engagement and partnerships with community members, community groups, agencies, business and tiers of government to create social justice for all.

**Power and Participation** - The City enables diverse community participation in decision-making.

**Advocacy** - The City advocates for people in the community who face discrimination, disadvantage and barriers to equity.

## Transformative Change

**Attitudinal Change** - Shifts in City staff and culture mindsets by developing individual, team and organisation adaptive capacity for equity impact assessment, systems thinking and strengths-based approaches.

**Training and HR practices** - City staff are equipped to support human rights; enable access and inclusion; and enhance relations with diverse communities seeking equity.









## Implementation

The Social Justice Framework will be implemented through the City of Greater Bendigo in an integrated ‘whole-of-Council’ approach through:

- Policies, strategies and plans
- Services and programs
- Advocacy
- Partnerships
- Resources
- Governance and organisational culture practices
- Staff awareness and training
- Equity Impact Assessments (EIA)

A Social Justice Framework Action Plan (as per recommendation 2 of the Human Rights Charter Evaluation, 2021, p.3) with a Social Justice Report Card will ensure implementation occurs effectively. The Equity and Disadvantage Working Group, with representation across the organisation, will assume responsibility for developing and overseeing the Social Justice Framework Action Plan and monitoring the implementation of actions. In developing actions to develop tools and build staff capability to apply social justice principles, the Working Group will draw on the learnings from the Human Rights Charter Evaluation, 2021, which identified City’s staff’s commitment to social justice principles but the challenge of application. The Working Group will also develop strategies to bring the voices of people with lived experience to the City’s social justice work over the life of the framework.

Equity Impact Assessments (EIA), which emerged from the City’s pilot Gender Impact Assessments (GIA), required under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, will ensure that all City policies, programs and services which have a direct and significant impact on the public consider equity (while also helping meet the different needs of different genders, eliminating barriers to gender equality; and actively promoting gender equality).

The Social Justice Framework will support Council to work towards equity, access and inclusion, and human rights being a priority in all of Council’s business. The Social Justice Framework will be championed across the organisation by:

- The Executive Management Team (Chief Executive Officer and Directors)
- The Organisation Leadership Team
- Members of the Equity and Disadvantage Working Group
- Members of the Gender Equity Working Group
- Equity Champions (staff from all levels and different units)

These Equity Champions will enable the City of Greater Bendigo to promote the Social Justice Framework throughout the organisation and the community. The Equity Champions would align with, and build on, the work of Gender Equity Champions, which has a strong intersectional focus and also connect with other Champions (such as Reconciliation Champions).



## Evaluation and monitoring

The evaluation of the Social Justice Framework will adopt the measurement, evaluation and learning (MEL) approach as a way of providing detail of strengths and areas for improvement. This process will help identify the impact of the Social Justice Framework and Equity Impact Assessment Tool; develop best practice case studies; and identify areas for development. The monitoring and evaluation measurements will be used to determine whether the City is on track to achieving the Social Justice Framework Action Plan objectives and if actions need updating to respond to changes in Government policy or legislation and new issues or opportunities.

A Social Justice Framework Action Plan will provide a structure for monitoring progress and outcomes across the whole organisation. The Social Justice Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed by the Equity and Disadvantage Working Group.

Best practice community engagement will enable community/stakeholder input on existing and emerging issues related to social justice, equity, access and inclusion and human rights which need to be included in other Council plans or the Social Justice Framework Action Plan. This community/stakeholder feedback will enable ongoing engagement to ensure the Social Justice Framework and Action Plan remains relevant to the community.

Changes in social justice and equity issues may occur over a longer period of time. Although the impact of the Social Justice Action Plan will be measured regularly, change may be incremental in the short term, however when viewed over the long term it is expected to be substantial and lasting.



# Appendix 1: Policy context

The Social Justice Framework has been developed in the context of the Bendigo Human Rights Charter evaluation (2021) and City of Greater Bendigo policies and plans but also from State and Federal government legislative requirements and from Australia's – and Greater Bendigo's – commitment to United Nations declarations and agendas. State and Federal legislation recognises that some people are at increased risk of discrimination or disadvantage. The protections in the legislation require Council to have an understanding and knowledge of which people, or groups of people, in the Greater Bendigo community may be more vulnerable to discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion, including systemic and structural discrimination.

## Local

The Social Justice Framework builds on earlier and existing City of Greater Bendigo policies and plans, particularly the principles, values, outcomes, goals and objectives in:

- **City of Greater Bendigo Human Rights Charter** (2014)
- **Greater Bendigo Community Vision and Values** (2021-2030)
- **Council Plan 2021-2025 *Mir wimbul***
- **Healthy Greater Bendigo: Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025**
- ***Barpangu* Build Together: City of Greater Bendigo Reconciliation Plan, 2021-2025**
- **Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan, 2021-2025**
- **Equity for All (E4A) Gender Equity Action Plan, 2021-2025**
- **Affordable Housing Action Plan, 2021**
- **A Stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 (Economic Development Strategy)**
- **Connecting Greater Bendigo: Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy (ITLUS), 2015**
- **Climate Change and Environmental Strategy 2021-2026**
- **Community Engagement Policy, 2020**

## State

In Victoria, the principles of social justice and human rights are protected by law as described in the following legislation.

**Victorian Local Government Act 2020** - Section 8 of Victorian *Local Government Act 2020* states that Council must act “for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community”, by:

- ensuring that “services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community” (section 106 (2) a and b)
- achieving the best outcomes for the community, including future generations (section 9 (2) b)
- engaging with the community (sections 9 (2) d and 56) and being transparent, and by providing understandable and accessible information (section 58 a and c), as well as collaborating with others (sections 9 (2) f)
- promoting economic, social and environmental sustainability, including planning for climate change (section 9 (2) c)

**Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006** - Council is bound by the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the Charter). The Charter sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria and requires:

- local government to take human rights into consideration when making laws, setting policies and providing services
- all public authorities to act in a way that is compatible with human rights

Under the Charter, local councils have an obligation to respect, and act compatibly with, human rights in the way they go about their work and deliver their services. They have a responsibility to demonstrate how all of their decisions align with the Charter and how they're not only upholding but also promoting human rights.

**Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020** - In accordance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, Council must:

- improve and promote gender equality, both as a workplace and through the policies, programs and services developed for the Greater Bendigo community
- support better outcomes for people of all genders
- address gender inequality in Greater Bendigo and publicly report on our progress

The *Gender Equality Act* adopts an intersectional approach, recognising that for many Victorians, “gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience due to other characteristics, such as race, Aboriginality, religion, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity.” The *Gender Equality Act* requires organisations to consider these when developing strategies and measures to promote gender equality.

**Multicultural Victoria Act 2011** - Recognises and values the cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity of the people of Victoria.

**Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010** - As an employer, a service provider and in all of its operations, Council is bound by the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, which prohibits discrimination. Under the Act, Council must:

- promote the elimination of discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation and work towards the gradual realisation of equality.
- protect people from discrimination and harassment in areas of public life including local government, workplaces and places that provide services.

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* aims for greater equality and the prevention of discrimination by placing a “positive duty” on local government to take proactive, reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. This includes being an equal opportunity employer, and reviewing Council and City policies, practices, services, programs, places and spaces to prevent discrimination.

**Victorian Family Violence Protection Act 2008**

**Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008** - Local government has a role in supporting community members to achieve optimal health and wellbeing (section 24).

**Victorian Disability Act 2006**

**Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001**

- Promotes racial and religious tolerance in Victoria
- Emphasises “the democratic value of the equal participation of all citizens in society”

The Social Justice Framework was also informed by **Pride in our future: Victoria’s LGBTIQ+ strategy 2022-32**.

## Federal

Under federal law, people are protected from discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. Legislation includes:

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth)
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth)

## International

Australia is signatory to several United Nations Declarations and Agendas related to human rights and social justice, including:

- *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)
- *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990)
- *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007)
- *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2007)
- *The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015)

The *Agenda for Sustainable Development* pledges “No one will be left behind” and the goals were developed to provide a roadmap for all countries to work toward a better world for current and future generations. All stakeholders, including local government, are expected to contribute to the realisation of these goals.

Greater Bendigo committed to address the 17 goals in the **Council Plan 2021-2025 *Mir wimbul***. The goals “recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change”.

The goals most relevant to the Social Justice Framework are:









**Address:**

15 Hopetoun Street, Bendigo  
125 High Street, Heathcote

**Phone:**

1300 002 642

National Relay Service: 133 677  
then quote 03 5434 6000

**Email:**

[requests@bendigo.vic.gov.au](mailto:requests@bendigo.vic.gov.au)

**Website:**

[www.bendigo.vic.gov.au](http://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au)