

City of
Greater Bendigo

Cultural Diversity & Inclusion Plan

2021-2025



ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT



CITY OF GREATER
BENDIGO

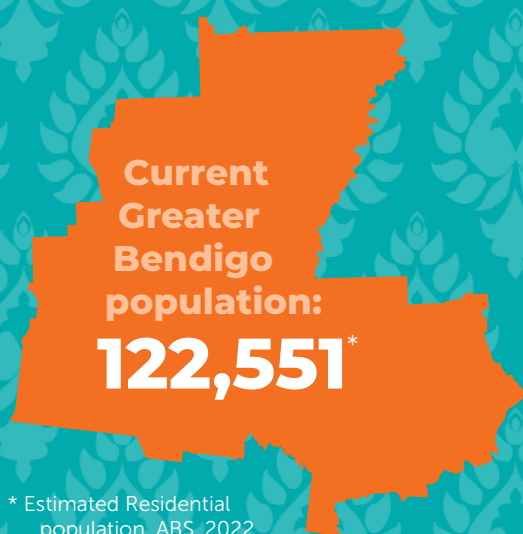
Acknowledgement of Country

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 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.

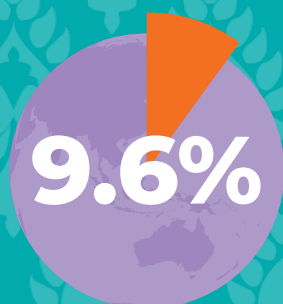
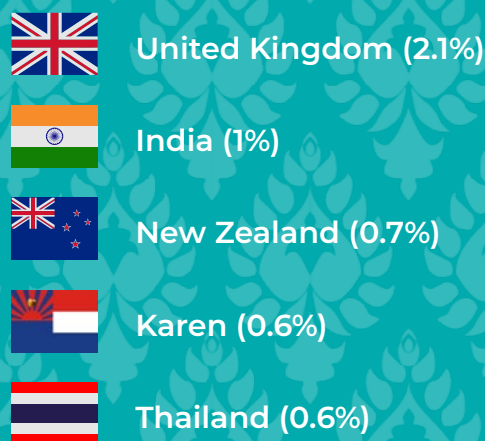
Acknowledgement of First Nations Peoples

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.

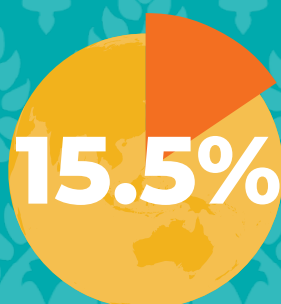
Key statistics about Greater Bendigo's multicultural communities



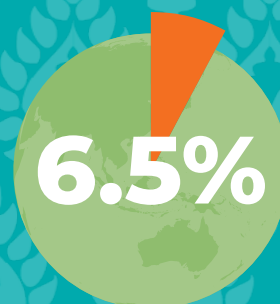
Top 5 countries and ethnicities of birth:



of residents in the City of Greater Bendigo in 2021 were born overseas (11,733)*



of residents born overseas have arrived in Australia since 2016 (1,816)*



of residents speak a language other than English at home (7,965). 1,492 of these people reported difficulty speaking English*

*<https://profile.id.com.au/bendigo/overseas-born-introduction>

1. Leadership

Cultural and religious diversity is celebrated in Greater Bendigo and social inclusion strengthened.

Objective 1: Promote and celebrate Greater Bendigo's accreditation as a Welcoming City with the Australian Welcoming Cities Network

Representatives of the City of Greater Bendigo's Cultural Diversity team attended four Welcoming City Technical Committee Meetings over the reporting period, and significantly contributed to the review and update of the Welcoming Cities Standards.

The draft updated standards are currently open for public consultation https://welcomingcities.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/WelcomingCitiesStandard_2-8-PublicDraft.pdf

Objective 2: Ensure effective governance, monitoring and reporting on the Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan (CDIP) to deliver outcomes

The CDIP Consultative Committee comprising of 14 representatives including staff from the City, local community organisations and ethnic associations, has been established as the new governance structure.

Over the reporting period four quarterly meetings have been held to discuss, monitor and report on the implementation of CDIP Actions.

Objective 3: Enhance our delivery of policy and programs for multicultural communities through partnerships, networks and advocacy

As the lead agency, the City has coordinated the Strategic Partnership Program (SPP) funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. This program is implemented in partnership with Bendigo Community Health Services (BCHS) and Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS). The program has delivered projects and activities in the areas of health, education, employment, social cohesion, community leadership and access to information.

Together with the City's Strong Communities Grants team and Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, a grants workshop was held on August 10, 2023, for community for capacity building. 15 people attended. This session created room to better learn about grant opportunities through the City, the requirements, and learning the language around grant applications and acquittals.



Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services partnered with the City's Tourism and Major Events team on August 17, 2023 to deliver a community session on event management. This session provided information on holding an event in Bendigo and the various aspects to consider, such as permits and bin hire. It was attended by eight people from the community.

The following multicultural community groups were successful grant recipients through the City in the reporting period July 2022 - June 2023:

Small Grants

- Hispanos Unidos de Victoria Inc.- Bendigo Latin Festival 2023 - \$3,000
- Karen Organisation of Bendigo - Karen New Year Soccer Event - \$1,200

Medium Grants

- Mother Tongue Stories - Mother Tongue Stories Workshops - \$7,830

Large Grants

- Karen Culture and Social Support Foundation - Supporting the Karen Community (Administration) - \$20,000

Essentials

- Hispanos Unidos de Victoria Inc. - HUDV Insurance - \$1,564.91

Christmas Meals Grants

- Bendigo Filipino Foundation Inc
- Regional Victorians of Colour

2. Social and Cultural Inclusion

Greater Bendigo is a place where multicultural communities can safely connect with their cultural and religious identity.

Objective 5: Support initiatives that prevent racism and discrimination

27 City employees and 25 CDIP partner agencies attended the Reducing Racism and Human Rights Advocates Course on March 16 and 21, 2023 delivered by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC). The participants learned about race related unlawful behaviour, the legal framework to address racism, steps to reduce racial discrimination, racism reporting and bystander action.

19 community members attended Reducing Racism Information Session on March 16, 2023 at the Old Church on the Hill, in partnership with Neighbourhood Collective and VEOHRC. The participants learnt about the community reporting tool (CRT) and their human rights when facing discrimination, unconscious bias, systemic racism, and racism in general.

Objective 6: Support Greater Bendigo's multicultural communities to celebrate significant cultural and religious events, and to safely connect with their cultural and religious identity

The City provided sponsorship to the 2022 Zinda Multicultural Festival. The festival was delivered by Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services on October 8, 2022 at the Garden for the Future in White Hills. Zinda created a safe and inclusive space for multicultural communities and provided individuals and community groups a platform for traditional culture to be shared in a respectful manner. The festival also provided support for local businesses and helped build their capacity for future business development and events. About 3,000 people attended the event with surveys capturing cultural backgrounds primarily from South Sudan, Anglo, Afghan, Indonesia, Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Philippines, India and China.

Diwali Utsav on November 5, 2022 had an incredibly positive impact for the Bendigo and wider Victorian community by highlighting cultural and religious diversity in Greater Bendigo to strengthen social inclusion.

Indian Association of Bendigo proudly delivered 2023 Holi Festival in partnership with Golden Square Pool and generous funding from the Victorian Government on March 4. The event attracted over



1,600 locals who experienced cultural food, drinks, activities, live music and dance. 2023 Holi Festival established Bendigo's reputation as a vibrant, inclusive, harmonious, and welcoming multicultural town in regional Victoria.

City staff and Councillors attended Bendigo Interfaith Council's Annual Interfaith Dinner on March 16, 2023.

The City's first Multicultural Calendar has been created and widely distributed since March 2023 as a tool to spread awareness and understanding of the various religiously and culturally significant dates and celebrations observed by Greater Bendigo's multicultural communities. To view the calendar visit www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/community-services/community-and-care/cultural-diversity#multicultural-calendar-2023

A hit with more than 300 community members, Harmony Fair 2023 delivered upbeat, colourful, and vibrant performances and offered delicious multicultural food. The fair was held on Saturday March 18 at Dai Gum San. For a video of highlights, please visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3QvNDjz4L4

Objective 7: Ensure multicultural communities have access to culturally and religiously safe and inclusive City of Greater Bendigo services

14 Equity Impact Assessments (EIAs) were conducted at the City across ten policies and four services during the reporting period. EIAs consider the range of needs of different genders and diverse groups, particularly those facing multiple forms of discrimination, and help to identify and remove barriers to equality in policy, program, and service delivery. The policies and services assessed were:

- Fleet Policy
- Healthy Facilities Policy
- Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan
- North Bendigo Recreation Reserve (service)
- Maiden Gully Site + Infrastructure Plan
- Heathcote Civic Precinct
- Golden Square Pavilion Upgrade (service)
- Galkangu Customer Experience (service)
- Managed Growth Strategy
- Kerbside Bin Collection Service Review (service)
- Draft Positive Ageing Action Plan
- Draft LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Action Plan
- Flexibility At Work Policy
- Revenue and Debt Collection Policy

400 copies of the beautifully designed Welcome Resource 2023 have been printed and widely distributed since March 2023. The Welcome Resource was created to provide newly arrived refugees and migrants with access to key information about essential services, ethnic and religious agencies, and other support services available in Greater Bendigo that can assist with successful settlement. To view the resource visit www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/community-services/community-and-care/cultural-diversity#welcome-resource

The City CALD Communities Officer - Kindergarten Outreach assisted 60 families to register and enrol into kindergarten through direct support, helping to fill out registration and enrolment forms, taking them for tours and parent and teacher meetings. They also supported ten children in the transition to school, and 13 children to engage in other early childhood supports.

Objective 8: Improve the knowledge and understanding of the wider community on diversity, inclusion, and Greater Bendigo's multicultural communities

50 community members attended a multicultural seniors' lunch and story-telling event on October 7, 2022 at the Old Church on the Hill as part of the Victorian Seniors' Festival. This event created greater awareness about the contributions of the culturally diverse seniors in the community through sharing a meal and personal stories.

The Karen Organisation of Bendigo held Karen New Year celebrations on December 31, 2022 at the Garden for the Future. The event was filled with vibrant Karen cultural dances and music and was a great way to showcase Karen culture to the wider community. 500 individuals attended the event both from the Karen community and the wider Greater Bendigo community.

40 community members attended the Interfaith Panel and Q&A at the Bendigo Library on March 7, 2023 to better understand the religious diversity of Greater Bendigo. This event was organised in partnership with Bendigo Interfaith Council and Bendigo Library to promote a better understanding of religious diversity and intercultural/interfaith sharing. Faith leaders representing Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Ba'hai faith shared the key principles and values of their faith, and what their faith means to them personally.

Hundreds of locals enjoyed the Kangaroo Flat Family Fun Day on May 21, 2023 with a taste of Indian culture. Indian Association of Bendigo created a cultural program providing dance and music, Henna art, and kids activities, colouring and crafting.



Kangaroo Flat Family Fun Day

3. Economic Development

Greater Bendigo is a sustainable and prosperous community where all people from diverse backgrounds can contribute and thrive.

Objective 9: Promote inclusive employment and increase the cultural diversity of the City of Greater Bendigo workforce

22 multicultural jobseekers attended the information session organised by the Community Employment Connector (CEC) Program on May 24, 2023 at the Bendigo Library to learn more about the opportunities to work or volunteer for the City. 11 City staff of culturally diverse backgrounds participated as panel members/speakers and shared their lived experience and career pathways into the City. Post-event, many of the attendees were referred to the CEC program for further support with employment, study, and training goals. This continued engagement with CEC program led to outcomes such as one participant securing a student placement with the City's Environmental Health and Safety unit, and many others pursuing employment goals and building further career networks with a greater understanding about work opportunities and roles within local government.

In the reporting period, the City hired one female trainee of Chinese nationality in the Community Partnerships unit and one male apprentice of Karen ethnicity in Works. Out of 55 new staff employed by the City between July 1, 2022 and June 30 2023, 19 people identified as having a culturally diverse background, which is 35 per cent of the total recruitment.

Objective 10: Support small businesses owned by multicultural community members

Delivered in partnership with the City's Environmental Health and Safety unit, ten multicultural business owners were supported in pursuing their goals in establishing and strengthening their food businesses. These supports enabled businesses to apply for tender to be on the City's vendor panel as a catering business; providing information relating to starting a small food business in Greater Bendigo; better understanding industry related regulations; and assistance with paperwork and registrations.

Rural Financial Counselling Service Victoria West has supported ten multicultural small business owners with improving their financial situation and better understanding their business planning and other needs. This clip featuring two local small businesses sums up their work: https://youtu.be/jjJL_S6Lwfc

Objective 11: Support access to training and employment pathways for multicultural jobseekers

Over the reporting period, the CEC Program supported 243 multicultural jobseekers, with 106 referrals and connections to employment services, 56 to vocational training and education providers, and 75 to non-vocational, wrap-around support services in Greater Bendigo. This program was funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) in response to COVID pandemic impacts, providing support to address barriers to employment, study, and training for multicultural jobseekers.

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS) successfully delivered their education and employment pathway services during the reporting period. 207 multicultural jobseekers signed up with the LCMS employment team. 121 were assisted into employment and 110 have remained employed during the reporting period. Five classes in Starting Work in Cleaning, Starting Work in Food Processing, Starting Work in Engineering and the Childcare Taster Course were delivered to the community, with a total of 85 students attended.

Community Employment Connector Program



4. Learning and Skills Development

City staff and the broader community have more knowledge and understanding about Greater Bendigo's cultural and religious diversity.

Objective 12: Enhance cultural and religious awareness and cultural competency of City of Greater Bendigo Councillors, leadership, and staff

28 City staff from customer-facing units received Cultural Competency Training delivered by LCMS. This training provided the participants with enhanced understanding of Greater Bendigo's multicultural context, and the competency to deliver culturally appropriate services to the community.

50 City staff from customer-facing units received Understanding the Refugee Journey training delivered by BCHS. This training provided the participants with better understanding of the three local refugee communities (Karen, Afghan and South Sudanese) and their settlement journey and experiences in Greater Bendigo.

Objective 13: Enhance local employers and service providers' cultural competency and understanding through workplace training and education

BCHS delivered 20 training sessions on Understanding the Refugee Journey, Understanding Karen Culture, and Understanding Islam to 205 employees of various local service providers. 98 per cent of the service providers reported uptake of knowledge, and 96 per cent reported intention to use new knowledge in different settings.

LCMS delivered Cultural Competency Skills training to all the staff at the Bendigo Law Courts upon transition to their newly built building on Hargreaves Street in February 2023.



Indian Consul General Dr Sushil Kumar, Abhishek Awasthi and Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf at the 2023 Bendigo Holi Festival, Golden Square Swimming Pool. Photo: Brendan McCarthy

5. Civic Participation

People from diverse multicultural backgrounds can actively participate in community life.



Intercultural Ambassadors

Objective 15: Promote and support volunteering and leadership opportunities for multicultural communities.

The City is currently delivering its second Intercultural Ambassadors Program, fostering community leadership among Greater Bendigo's diverse cultural communities. 12 Intercultural Ambassadors were selected out of 27 applications through a transparent and fair process in December 2022.

These Ambassadors represent nine different nationalities (Sri Lanka, India, Mexico, Myanmar, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, South Korea, Indonesia and Afghanistan) with eight females and four males aged between 24 and 53.

Intercultural Ambassadors are volunteers with the City with the mission to increase intercultural understanding and activities, as well as enhance the knowledge and understanding of the wider community on cultural diversity and inclusion. The newly elected Intercultural Ambassadors were officially launched at Harmony Fair 2023.

Objective 16: Support multicultural community members to achieve citizenship and ensure inclusive citizenship ceremonies

A Citizenship Workbook, based on the Australian citizenship test 'Our Common Bond', was developed in partnership with Stanford Marketing, BCHS, and LCMS. The digital version of the workbook and 100 printed copies were widely distributed among multicultural community members to assist them with their learning and practising for the Citizenship Tests. It was reported that the use of the workbook greatly contributed to helping people pass the citizenship tests.

During the reporting period, extensive efforts were made to make a Welcome to Country by a Dja Dja Wurrung Elder a permanent feature of the citizenship ceremonies, as well as the presence of Greater Bendigo's Intercultural Ambassadors at these ceremonies to meet and greet the new citizens, make themselves known as Intercultural Ambassadors, and share information about the local multicultural services on offer.

6. Places and Spaces

There is equitable access to public places and spaces, which are culturally safe for multicultural groups in the community.

Objective 19: Provide public places and spaces that are inclusive and enhance social cohesion

Sports Focus and BCHS, in partnership with the Bendigo Basketball Association, delivered a Meet and Greet Basketball Tour at the Red Energy Arena for the Karen community. 34 Karen community members attended the session on April 19, 2023 resulting in four families registering their kids to pursue basketball as a sport.

Sports Focus and BCHS delivered two sessions of Understanding Karen Culture to local sporting clubs on April 4 and June 7, 2023. A total of 23 participants from nine sporting clubs attended these sessions. As a result, three sporting clubs signed up to do more work with these agencies to build their capacity to provide targeted participation opportunities to Karen and other local multicultural communities.

The Eaglehawk Tennis Club on Crowther Street created two specially marked courts for the local Karen community to play their traditional sport of cane ball. The development of these cane ball courts was funded by City and was completed in partnership with Eaglehawk Tennis Club, Eaglehawk District Tennis Association, Sports Focus, and the Bendigo Karen Youth Network. Cane ball is one of the three most popular sports in South Asia alongside soccer and volleyball, and is Myanmar's national sport. While it is like volleyball, players use their feet instead of their hands to pass a ball made from woven rattan.



Cane ball courts at the Eaglehawk Tennis Club

7. Health and Wellbeing

Multicultural community members are healthy and well, supported by responsive and culturally safe service provision.

Objective 20: Develop and strengthen partnerships to understand and respond to current and emerging health and wellbeing needs of multicultural communities.

The City CALD Communities Officer - Kindergarten Outreach has supported 68 CALD families in Bendigo. This includes getting their documents translated (overseas birth certificate and immunisation), creating MyGov accounts, applying for new birth certificates or Immicard (lost), supported with Centrelink (e.g. a family payment has been affected because they haven't done health checks), and booking doctors appointments.

Refugee Health Navigator Program

700 clients were assisted with navigating complex health systems and building health and service literacy through BCHS's Refugee Health Navigator Program. One of the key aspects of this program is identifying service system barriers and enablers resulting in the Navigator project collating sufficient evidence of need to fund two additional health projects:

- BCHS NDIS Refugee Project – In its first year, the project commenced in July 2023. This pilot project will work with NDIS providers and former refugee communities to identify enablers and barriers to the system (including understanding current barriers and access for former refugees and issues relating to service). A concept of proof report will be developed by June 30, 2024
- Refugee Cancer Project - In its second year, the project commenced in November 2022. In collaboration with Bendigo Cancer Service, Department of Health, and Cancer Vic, the project's purpose is to identify enablers and barriers to understanding and accessing about prevention, treatment, screening, and palliative care along the cancer continuum for former refugee communities.



Zinda Multicultural Festival

Bendigo Settlement Network

BCHS facilitates the quarterly meetings of the Bendigo Settlement Network with 52 members from across local and state governments, educational institutes, employment agencies, health organisations and settlement providers. The network has three sub-groups that meet bi-monthly, and these are early years, refugee health, and EEE (English, Education, and Employment).

The network and the sub-groups met regularly over the reporting period and discussed the unmet needs of the refugee communities, and enhanced service coordination and professional development to address these needs.

Objective 21: Support initiatives that enhance multicultural communities' understanding of the climate change, how they can respond, and limit its impact on their health

BCHS, SES, CFA and the City have collaborated to work with local refugee communities (Afghan, Karen, and South Sudanese) to help them build their awareness and understanding of preparing for and managing floods, bush fires, and heat events. This project has produced 1,150 fact sheets, 17 audio-visual resources in three languages, 110 face-to-face education sessions, and 4,850 views on the social media campaign.

Acknowledgements

The City would like to thank you the following organisations in their valuable contributions towards this report:

- Bendigo Community Health Services
- Bendigo Interfaith Council
- Indian Association of Bendigo
- Karen Organisation of Bendigo
- Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
- Rural Financial Counselling Service Victoria
- Sports Focus
- Neighbourhood Collective
- Staff who contributed from the City



List of Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
BCHS	Bendigo Community Health Services	IAB	Indian Association of Bendigo
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	LCMS	Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
CDIP	Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan	NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
CEC	Community Employment Connector	SES	State Emergency Services
City	City of Greater Bendigo	VEOHRC	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
CFA	Country Fire Authority		



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