A STRONGER GREATER BENDIGO 2030 Where all people can thrive.

Economic Development Strategy 2020-2030

Greater Bendigo takes a bold, transformative approach to its future.

But our history and our deep cultural heritage are also a big part of our strength. We are on Djaara Country. Thousands of years of settlement by the Traditional Owners and the pioneering spirit of gold miners are embedded in our DNA. They represent a crucial part of our story and what we strive to be and what we want to be known for. They provide a binding, often unspoken journey that people gravitate towards in building our identity.

Who we are encompasses a number of qualities. We want all our people to see a city that cares for all its people, that is in tune with its environment and that seeks a softer imprint on the planet. A city that values those who are creative and respects those who need support. A city that has a global perspective and reach but is attuned to the importance of local community, identity and networks.

Small cities - even great small cities, particularly those in regional settings, often struggle to state their value proposition for their people and for the outside world. Often such statements are characterised by clichéd sentiment that is essentially generic. They seek to try to mean everything to everyone and end up meaning nothing to anyone.

While we want to share what we have we don't simply want to be a tourist destination. While we acknowledge our links to other regions and to Melbourne and we will grow those links, we are much more than an outer commuter suburb. We have built enviable businesses and services in finance and health and our advanced manufacturing sector has a distinct global profile, yet there is more, much more to a community than that. Our housing is affordable for most and our lifestyle is enriched by great heritage buildings and places and as a city in a forest we are envied by many. Those who come for education find a safe and welcoming community. But are these all our value propositions to the world?

Why will people come, why will they stay, why will they invest, why will they choose to raise a family and why will they value Greater Bendigo? Different people will have different responses according to their specific needs. Ideally each will find that their needs are met.

So what is our identity as we go forward? What will we look like and be known for? When people ask where are you from, what image will they conjure up when you tell them?

We will develop and share that response together. It will be the response of an inclusive community. One where everyone feels valued and self-determination is a recognised strength. A community that embraces its past, acknowledges the present, but has a very strong eye on the future.

All our people will say - we live in a great place, one that I care for and one that deeply cares for me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

A CORPORTOR

- Andrews

The City of Greater Bendigo is on 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 spirt of healing.

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE FOREWORD

Greater Bendigo is a great place to live and invest and our assets are the envy of much larger communities.

We are a highly liveable, growing regional centre. Businesses are investing and our residents are proud of where they live. Nearly 2,000 additional people call Greater Bendigo home every year. We have a strong base and by empowering all our people to thrive we will ensure we can reach our full potential. We are strongly connected to Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra through our transport and communications networks, and through our business and government relationships. Globally we are engaging with the world; our manufacturers are exporting to over 50 countries, in the arts and creative industries we have worldwide links and relationships.

Our plan is for Greater Bendigo to be much more widely recognised as a great liveable city. By 2030 we will have built further on our strengths, we'll be more known nationally and globally for welcoming and caring for all and that we are living sustainably within our environmental setting. By 2030 more than 140,000 people will be calling Greater Bendigo home. The city will have a notable track record. It will be renowned for a strong, robust, innovative and diversified workplace that creates long term jobs. We will be a place where people can continue to enjoy an exceptionally high-quality lifestyle as we work towards being recognised as the world's most liveable community.

Importantly in 2020, the community recognises that not everyone is able to fully participate in Greater Bendigo's prosperity. We know that education levels on average need to be higher and the skills possessed by many of our people need to be broader and deeper in a rapidly changing economy with new and challenging workplaces. We recognise that increasing household income levels for many people will be critical and that far too many people find themselves the victims of rapid change rather than the beneficiaries of new opportunities. Our 2030 plan is about building on our strengths and opportunities, but also squarely facing and acting on what are some emerging and growing issues. The plan is designed to uplift people and ensure that everyone can participate.

We want to make a difference and want to be able to measure progress that is indicative of a city that is achieving significant social, economic and environmental outcomes. Greater Bendigo will be more inclusive and sustainable and a community where more people can thrive.

We are working towards a focused, collective impact approach that builds on the strength of our city and the local and regional collaborative partnerships that are already in place. We are actively adapting to the challenges of economic change, taking practical actions to manage environmental risks, protecting and building on the liveability of our region, strengthening the resilience of our economy and deliver on initiatives for climate change.

We will work with our Boards and organisations to ensure the on-going development of Greater Bendigo, by achieving the vision and strategic directions outlined in this Strategy. We invite you to join us on this journey.

The following people are the members of the Implementation Committee:



Cr Margaret O'Rourke Mayor City of Greater Bendigo (Chairperson) Craig Niemann CEO City of Greater Bendigo



Damian Wells Managing Director Coliban Water



Rodney Carter CEO Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation

The following people have at times represented the members at meetings and City of Greater Bendigo staff have provided support services:

- Shaun Eldridge / Executive Director Finance and Resources Bendigo Health
- Steve Jackson / General Manager Economic Development Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation
- Jeff Rigby / Former Managing Director Coliban Water



Marnie Baker Managing Director Bendigo and Adelaide Bank



Peter Faulkner CEO Bendigo Health



Nigel McGuckian Committee Member for Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership **BE.BENDIGO**

Dennis Bice CEO Be.Bendigo



Ryan Peterson Mayor Greater Bendigo Youth Council



Danielle Derksen Chair, Bendigo Education Council (2020 - current)

- Darren McGregor / Former Chair, Bendigo Education Council
- Neville Pearce / Interim Managing Director Coliban Water
- Khayshie Tilak Ramesh / Former Mayor Greater Bendigo Youth Council
- Annika Ritchie / Former Deputy Mayor Greater Bendigo Youth Council
- Bernie O'Sullivan / Director Strategy and Growth City of Greater Bendigo
- Trevor Budge / Manager Regional Sustainable Development City of Greater Bendigo

- Kylie Ovenden / Senior Economic Development Officer City of Greater Bendigo
- Alison McKenzie / Senior Economic Development Officer City of Greater Bendigo

The Strategy Implementation Committee thanks all those people who have contributed their time and thoughts through submissions and attendance at Advisory Group meetings. The Strategy's vision for 2030 is to 'shape an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous community where all people can thrive'

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 – where all people can thrive is Greater Bendigo's Economic Development Strategy 2020-2030.

The Strategy targets better and more sustainable businesses and jobs; improved health and wellbeing; strengthened skills and education levels; and actions that improve the environment and tackle climate change.

A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 recognises the unprecedented speed and severity of COVID-19 on households, communities and businesses. Greater Bendigo's progressive responses to the impacts of COVID-19 align with the Strategy's longer-term vision.

The Strategy has been developed and will be implemented through a collaborative partnership led by the Mayor, CEO's, Chairs and key members of the following organisations:

- City of Greater Bendigo
- Bendigo and Adelaide Bank
- Be.Bendigo
- Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Clans Corporation
- Loddon Campaspe Regional
 Partnership
- Bendigo Health
- Coliban Water
- Bendigo Education Council
- Greater Bendigo Youth Council

Each member has committed to work together as an Implementation Committee to build a better future for the people of the City of Greater Bendigo. A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 evolved from the Greater Bendigo Economic Development Strategy Discussion Paper which was released for public discussion and comment in July 2019. There was strong support from members of the public and feedback through formal submissions and commentary from internal and external advisory groups and the Steering Committee.

A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 is an action plan for our region's future. It links to the wider Loddon Campaspe region and it builds on Greater Bendigo's outstanding attributes. It is planning for sustained population growth, a robust and diversified economy and a place where people can enjoy an exceptionally high-quality lifestyle.

While Greater Bendigo aspires to be 'the world's most liveable community', we know that not everyone is able to participate unless decisive action is taken - education levels on average need to be higher; skills possessed by many are limited in a changing workplace; there are large pockets of disadvantage including high levels of poor health and wellbeing; and, too many residents find themselves the victims of rapid change rather than the beneficiaries of new opportunities.

The Strategy's vision for 2030 is to 'shape an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous community where all people can thrive'. A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 is designed to improve the living standards of all members of our community by building better, more sustainable jobs and by significantly improving our health, wellbeing, education levels and our environment. At the Strategy's heart is an undertaking to ensure that everyone living in Greater Bendigo can have the opportunity to thrive and participate in a great and liveable community.

Too often economic development strategies are built purely on the successes and attributes enjoyed by a city and region. This Strategy is a considered, aspirational and ambitious response to the challenges and opportunities that Greater Bendigo and its wider region will confront over the next decade.

The Strategy capitalises on and responds to global forces and their local and regional impacts and opportunities. These include: climate change; the rise of Asia; rapid urbanisation; demographic and social change; and digital innovation. These forces are confronting, but they are also creating opportunities as they impact on lifestyles, the structure of work, the skills required for future jobs, the demand for services and the current and likely future structure of the economy.

Failure to respond proactively will mean that the benefits of growth will not be shared by all

Greater Bendigo, similar to other advanced economies, needs to position itself to be able to reap the benefits of these changes and deliver substantial benefits for the community. Failure to respond proactively will mean that the benefits of growth will not be shared by all. Further, changes in the economy, the structure of the workforce and the types of skills needed in the future are likely to mean that generally those with limited education and skill levels will be further left behind.

Failure to transition to the future economy could mean more people will have limited employment opportunities and may experience long term disadvantage. These circumstances often compound poor health and wellbeing and lead to children and young people being unable to take advantage of the opportunities that arise from a growing, buoyant economy.

Bendigo as a major Australian regional centre has the critical mass; the liveability, the employment and business diversity; the physical and locational advantages and connections; and the collaboration and partnerships between key organisations to respond to these opportunities and comprehensively tackle the challenges.

A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 builds on our existing strengths and our people, embraces a wide agenda and seeks to implement actions and programs which can strengthen our economy through a program of progressive transformation. Many widely used indicators demonstrate that Greater Bendigo is not only travelling very well but is the envy of many other regional centres:

- Population growth has been strong for many years and on current indications is likely to be sustained into the future – projected rates are in the order of 1.7 per cent pa
- Our gross domestic product continues to rise
- The economy is buoyant, there is consistent jobs growth and overall unemployment levels are below national rates

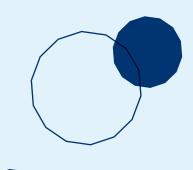
- The visitor and events economy has become an important economic pillar with an estimated three million visitors last year
- There is nearly \$400M worth of new government buildings and construction locked in and there are significant private sector developments approved or in progress

Bendigo is not only a major service centre for an expansive region but has developed a distinct and important role as Victoria's third largest urban economy. Increasingly that role draws on the attributes of an open, innovative and creative city.

The city and region are entering a new and exciting period as they are capitalising on a series of attributes and qualities that give them a national, and in some areas an international, profile and reach. Greater Bendigo in many respects continues to reinvent itself. Where it is transforming it is poised to seize the opportunities that have been identified in this Strategy.

Where a business as usual approach has characterised the last 30 or so years the city has comparatively fallen behind. Expecting to tackle a current challenge by applying the same strategies and actions have been called out in the Strategy. Greater Bendigo needs to continue to transition and transform.

The region enjoys a large scale, a wide range of services and facilities, lead organisations with the needed passion and capability and the civic leaders to collaboratively work towards this transformation with widely agreed outcomes.





A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 is built on an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous growth model and is deliberately people-focused, uses a collective impact approach and is outcomes based.

The Strategy incorporates four strategic directions which set deliberate themes around more sustainable businesses and jobs; improved health and wellbeing; strengthened skills and education levels; and the environment. They being:

- 1. Grow sustainable jobs and investment
- 2. Increase liveability for all
- Better link jobs, education, skills and training offerings to the city and region's needs
- 4. Be widely envied as a leader in innovation, environmental and climate change initiatives

Fourteen broad initiatives have been developed from the strategic directions and provide outcomes to deliver. An action plan has been developed and included within this Strategy. While action is proposed on all, eight initiatives have been nominated as the highest priority (marked with an asterisk):

- 1. Transform and revitalise our city centre*
- 2. Capitalise on the opportunities presented by our new gold rush*
- Unlock land and build new key infrastructure particularly transport, to support major jobs growth and investment*
- 4. Invest in and support business innovation
- 5. Strengthen our brand and connections to the world

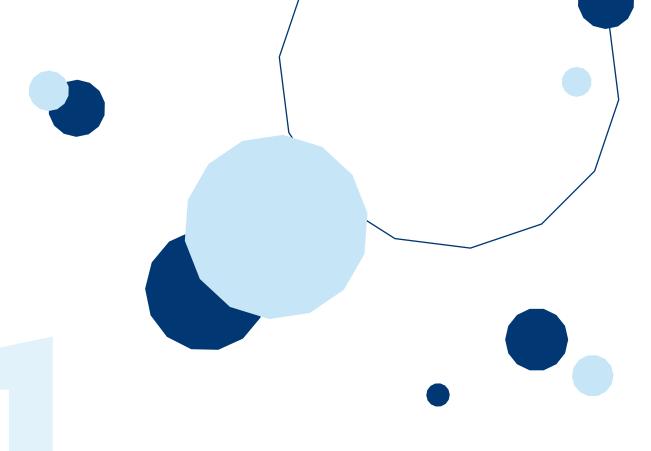
- Support and enable a much healthier community*
- Target investment in services, facilities and programs to communities most in need*
- 8. Support all our communities and people to reach their full potential*
- Invest in building our higher education and skills training offerings and the transition pathways between them*
- 10. Build on current local and regional procurement programs
- 11. Grow our unique leading-edge work experience and industry engagement programs
- Plan and develop Bendigo and region as low carbon and circular economy leaders*
- 13. Transition to a regionally owned new energy economy
- 14. Strengthen the city and region's longterm water services plan

Members of the Implementation Committee will lead the strategic directions and initiatives listed, deliver on actions and report on their progress. In a number of initiatives, the Implementation Committee has listed other organisations it is keen to see as strong supporting partners.

There is a range of ways to track and measure success, including the use of continuous data and local-level monitoring, which it is proposed will be aligned with International Standards on Sustainable Cities and Communities¹. These standards provide a framework that supports baseline and historical data and opens opportunities for future forecasting and predictive analysis. Success can be measured through the following outcomes, with a suggested list of localised indicators outlined within the Strategy:

- A 2.65 per cent increase in per capita gross regional product each year, equating to approximately \$85,500 per capita GRP by 2030
- A 2.2 per cent increase in jobs per annum, equating to 13,000 additional jobs over 10 years
- A 5% increase by 2030 in the region's key liveability indicators
- An increase in Year 12 or equivalent education completion levels and higher education participation rates to at least match the Victorian state averages
- Comprehensively reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to deliver a net zero carbon city by 2036 or earlier

Measurable progress on the initiatives will be indicative of a city that is achieving social, economic and environmental progress. Progress will reflect a place that is a more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous community where more people are thriving.



IMPACTS AND REALISING THE OPPORTUNITIES - THROUGH RECOVERY AND POST PANDEMIC

A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 recognises the unprecedented global speed, impact and severity of COVID-19 on households, communities, businesses, cities and nations. Greater Bendigo, similar to every other regional city has been impacted but generally not to the extent of many other cities, particularly larger cities in Australia and overseas.

This Strategy is released in uncertain times. But in many respects the need for this Strategy is even greater than ever. Cities that come out stronger will be those that not only embrace the challenges of the pandemic and its aftermath, but have widely supported strategies, actions, structures and processes in place. Cities that will be best placed are those that have a clear plan of where they want to head to and how they are going to get there. A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 was due to be released on April 2, 2020. With the pandemic lock down the launch was deferred. In light of the overwhelming impacts and consequences of COVID-19 the Strategy has been reviewed and where necessary updated to accommodate the changes that have occurred. An Economic Impact Analysis for COVID-19 in Greater Bendigo is attached in Appendix A. However, that review has identified that the 14 actions which framed the earlier version of the Strategy are still sound, and in fact a number of the actions have become even more significant, while some new opportunities have emerged.

The pandemic has provided an opportunity to reset and sharpen priorities and the specific measures that need to be taken. Greater Bendigo's progressive responses to the impacts of COVID-19 comprehensively align with the Strategy's longer-term vision to 'shape an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous community where all people can thrive'.

The Strategy's initiatives and actions, along with our existing robust and

diverse economy, places the city and region well to move forward through turbulent times. Planning for long-term prosperity that can be shared by all, needs a secure economic and ecological base, targeting support to those persons, communities and businesses that have been the most impacted alongside an increased willingness, and invested capacity, to leverage any opportunities presented by the pandemic. As the Mayor Cr Margaret O'Rourke has stated to a national Inquiry "[In Bendigo] there is that deep DNA of bringing people together really easily and quickly, and that is business leaders or government officials. When there is an opportunity for something to be done on that stage from a collaborative point of view, we have always been able to pull people really closely together."2

The future is uncertain about the pandemic's short and long-term impacts, however, there has been some clear thinking and lessons learnt that are shaping future agendas.



There are emerging and potentially favourable outcomes that can underpin Greater Bendigo's prospects in a post pandemic environment. The capacity of new ways of working to break the nexus between where people work and live has been reinforced:

- Many people have been able to demonstrate through new working from home arrangements, that they have an increased opportunity to 'live where they love' rather than be tied to a work location.
- Meeting virtually has not only been a revelation within organisations and businesses, but it has emerged that work can in many respects be more efficient and that location is no barrier for many transactions.
- Many people have realised the productivity gains by being able to avoid commuting which assists regionally based locations and businesses.
- Affordable living options, particularly in relation to housing, are now high on many people's agendas. Currently with government stimulus packages,

persons building a new house in Victoria's regional areas can access \$45,000 towards construction, which add to the cost savings through lower serviced land costs compared to metropolitan locations. Affordability for existing housing stock presents the opportunity for people to enter the housing market in urban Bendigo for a house and land package at under \$350,000. With 875 new dwelling approvals between June 2019 and May 2020 Greater Bendigo is in the top 10 local government locations in the state.

 Clara's Melbourne Market Study reveals the high levels of discontent with city living outlining the 5 biggest challenges for individuals living in Melbourne as; cost of living, housing/ rental prices, traffic and travel time, crime/safety and population growth. In addition to this, 1 in 2 (55%) have considered moving out of Melbourne and 65% of people are either unsure or expect things in the metropolitan area to get worse³. There are emerging and potentially favourable outcomes that can underpin Greater Bendigo's prospects in a post pandemic environment

Greater Bendigo has two of the state's four major goldmines employing in excess of 1,000 people

Other factors have emerged that are likely to better position regional cities like Bendigo as the full impact of the pandemic become evident.

Population growth in Greater Bendigo has had limited dependency on overseas migration, in contrast to it being the main driver of population growth in Australia's major capital cities. With only about 25% of Greater Bendigo's population growth of about 2,000 persons p.a. derived from this source, the impact of projected significant reductions in overseas migration will have far less impact compared to Melbourne and other capital cities.

With a stronger focus on the need for Australia being less reliant on importing manufactured items, the strength of Greater Bendigo manufacturing and advanced manufacturing sector places the city well to capitalise on new opportunities. The strong feedback from the Bendigo Manufacturing Group representing businesses employing some 5,500 people in Bendigo and region is that there is significant capacity and opportunity for this sector to capitalise on new opportunities.

The price of gold generally rises in times of uncertainty. Since the start of 2016 the price of gold has risen 55%. Since the start of the pandemic impacting Australia in late March it has risen over AU\$450 per ounce. Bendigo is sitting on the cusp of the next gold boom. Greater Bendigo has two of the state's four major goldmines employing in excess of 1,000 people and with the goldmine at Fosterville mining what is widely regarded as the world's highest-grade, lowest-cost mining operations.



The official Geological Survey of Victoria believes that at least 75,000,000 ounces of gold is waiting to be discovered across the state. To place the scale of this in historic context, 88,000,000 ounces of gold have been mined in Victoria in the last 170 years. There is extensive international interest in the release by the state government of the successful tenders for the four exploration licences for what is known as the North Central Victorian Goldfields Ground Release Tender. Bendigo is strategically located to be the major service centre for the exploration and mining jobs which will come from these tenders.

With construction activity and future contracts uncertain because of the impacts of the pandemic, those cities that have locked in investment are exceptionally well placed. The Bendigo city centre has a pipeline of government contracted building construction totaling nearly \$400million through a new GovHub, new Law Courts, TAFE College expansion, additions to Bendigo Health and new CFA headquarters. Bendigo is far better placed than most comparable regional cities.

A strong post-secondary education and training presence with four institutions with a physical presence in the city. As the Regions at the Ready: Investing in Australia's Future report notes, "The presence of regional universities in rural and regional communities facilitates more than just the provision of tertiary courses to students. As a central institution, regional universities can provide the mechanisms needed for regional towns and cities to thrive ... they directly link new ideas with regional industries and investment [and] provide the foundation for government, industry and business to work collaboratively and in partnership; and develop necessary education, training and skill course to support the region's needs."4

"Having a strong university presence in Bendigo is vital for our economy, our social and cultural life and for our liveability. Greater Bendigo supports all higher education providers who want to secure a base in Bendigo and embraces exploring a collaborative model with the scope to provide shared delivery points including in the city centre. What is needed are programs delivered and supported locally that are relevant to student needs and the long term workforce needs of the city and region."⁵

Whether it's the overall strength of the Bendigo economy, the emerging major regional role the city is playing, the boost to local businesses and the connections provided by the Qantas flights to Sydney, the assured government construction jobs, the sustained growth in population and tourism, the resurgence in gold mining and exploration, or more likely a combination of all these factors, but there has been a major commercial interest in the city centre to build hotels.

Recognising the strategic opportunities of Bendigo the City Council in the last two years has fielded enquiries from at least seven separate firms generally proposing 5-6 storey 100-130 bed 4.5 star hotels. Significantly a number of these are from developers who have purchased their site.

Currently the City has granted one planning permit and is assessing two more. The level of interest in this form of development is unprecedented.

While circumstances can change, the emerging evidence is that Bendigo is less impacted by the pandemic than large cities and is well placed to take advantages of new ways of work, enhanced emphasis on lifestyle locations, greater focus on affordability and the emergence of new investment and jobs opportunities. The historic attributes of regional living have, in many instances, been strengthened. Greater Bendigo is now building on a strong base of:

- Sustained population growth
- A vibrant service sector and facilities with major investment in areas such as health, post-secondary education and training and government service facilities
- · Acclaimed arts and creative industries
- · Living affordability
- Continuing investment in transport at the Bendigo airport and with three new stations as part of Bendigo Metro Rail
- Housing choice from inner city, to suburban to rural and small town lifestyle – all with short commutes
- Strong 'ten-minute' neighbourhoods in a 'twenty-minute city' with exceptional community identity and support
- Great lifestyle attributes such as recreation and sporting facilities
- Outstanding built heritage as part of the city's DNA
- Access to nature through the whole urban area being a 'city in a forest'

The recently released report Regions at the Ready: Investing in Australia's Future, identified the importance of what they referred to as 'catalytic investment'. This type of investment drives development and growth, and leads to further investment. For example, the presence of an airport, hospital, university or government department. These investments can set off a chain of related outcomes including population growth, education and employment opportunities, improved social and cultural capital, and related infrastructure investment. All of which can markedly influence and transform the economic and social prosperity of regional towns.6



These attributes, together with being, 'separate but highly accessible' to Melbourne (and Sydney via our new Air route once re-opened), has positioned Greater Bendigo to look for the silver lining in meeting the challenges of a COVID-19 recovery. The reality is that our city makes an exceptionally strong pitch to prospective residents and businesses to shift and invest.

This trend is not new. The Regional Australia Institute (RAI) has identified through a study of the 2011 and 2016 Census results that, contrary to popular perceptions, "more people were moving from capital cities to regional areas than there were moving the other way. Our two largest cities showed a net loss of people to regions between 2011 and 2016."⁷

By launching this Strategy during the time of COVID-19, we are actively adapting to the challenges of economic change In their submission to the House of Representatives Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation, the RAI identified that promoting the movement of population out of the cities will also have benefits for the nation's economy in general. The RAI submitted that "for every 100,000 Australians who choose to live in growing regional cities rather than our big five cities, an additional \$50 billion will be released into the economy over 30 years in reduced congestion costs and increased consumption."⁸

The initiatives and actions set out in *A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030*, target improved living standards of our residents by building better, more sustainable jobs and by improving our health, wellbeing, education levels and our environment.

The inclusive, sustainable and prosperous growth framework has been built through an economic, social and environmental context, recognising that everyone living in Greater Bendigo needs to have the opportunities to develop to their full potential through deliberate actions to address their needs and a city wide inclusive approach to leverage all our existing strengths. At the same time the Strategy does not avoid confronting the impacts of climate change and lifestyle and business practices that exceed our resources.

The Strategy includes actions to sustainably operate and manage within the earth's resources and critical ecological boundaries. The pandemic is having a deleterious effect, but it also offers opportunity for the future shaping of the Greater Bendigo economy into one which aims for a more balanced delivery with a clear social foundation and ecological celling to work within. A future more in harmony with that a few generations ago led by the Dja Dja Wurrung.



Alongside existing short term actions currently being delivered, actions outlined in the strategy aim to minimise the impact of immediate job losses, such as:

- Realising the potential of creating a Circular Digital economy and a super high speed digital City with the 100GB Bendigo initiative
- Supporting the continuing transformation of the city centre and the adjustment of retailing to new ways of doing business
- Building local jobs through the nearly \$400M State Government building investment in jobs
- The growing private sector interest in building accommodation and housing development
- Council's new industrial strategy leading to a new business-industrial park with up to 3,000 jobs
- Planned expansion of the airport to increase flight capacity and establish a dedicated airport business park
- New strategies and plans aimed at enhancing the City as a place to live such as Greening Greater Bendigo and Re-imagining the Bendigo Creek
- The realisation of the benefits of Bendigo's UNESCO designation as Australia's first city of gastronomy which also relates to the wider region

All of these are not only adding to Greater Bendigo being a visitor and new resident destination of choice but to attracting investment in businesses and jobs.

Greater Bendigo is working towards a focused, collective impact approach that builds on the strength of our city and the local and regional collaborative partnerships that are already in place. By launching this Strategy during the time of COVID-19, we are actively adapting to the challenges of economic change, taking practical actions to manage environmental risks, protecting and building on the liveability of our region, strengthening the resilience of our economy and delivering on initiatives to combat and lessen the impacts of climate change.



GREATER BENDIGO - THE STORY SO FAR

The City of Greater Bendigo, with a population of over 118,000 people is located in the geographic centre of Victoria.

The region is part of Jaara Country, the traditional land of people of the Dja Dja Wurrung language. With Bendigo as its largest centre, the municipality also has thriving smaller communities including Heathcote, Elmore, Goornong, Marong, Redesdale and Axedale. Bendigo has been a major business and industry centre since the gold rush in the 1850s. The growing economy and vibrant community make Bendigo an exciting and progressive place to live.

Many widely used indicators demonstrate that Greater Bendigo is not only travelling very well but could be the envy of many other regional centres:

- Population growth has been strong for many years and on current indications is likely to be sustained into the future – projected population growth rates are in the order of 1.7 per cent
- Greater Bendigo has a projected 2050 population of about 200,000 people
- Our gross regional product continues to rise – averaging 8.32 per cent between 2014 and 2018
- The economy is buoyant and overall unemployment levels are below national rates
- There is nearly \$400M worth of new government buildings and facilities construction locked in and there are significant private sector developments approved or in train

• The visitor and events' economy has become an important economic pillar with over three million visitors to the Bendigo region, including 1.3 million overnight visitors, a 19.5 per cent growth on the previous year and a 92 per cent growth over the past 10 years

Liveability in Greater Bendigo by many common measures can be judged to be very high:

- The economy and employment are diverse and cover a wide range of sectors and offers a variety of jobs rarely seen in regional centres of similar size⁹
- The completion of Bendigo Health's new \$1B hospital and fitout has given the region Australia's leading regionally based digital hospital
- Bendigo and Adelaide Bank, which is headquartered in Bendigo, is Australia's fifth largest retail bank and the only bank with its headquarters located outside of a capital city
- The direct connections to the rest of the globe offer daily flights to and from Sydney via the Bendigo Airport
- The Bendigo arts and creative industries scene is exceptionally strong. The Bendigo Art Gallery is now the national leader in regional galleries, the 1,000 seat Ulumbarra Theatre is exceeding attendance forecasts and Bendigo's recent admission to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network is international recognition of the city and region
- Our residents enjoy 'a city in a forest' with its amazing access to an extraordinary natural environment

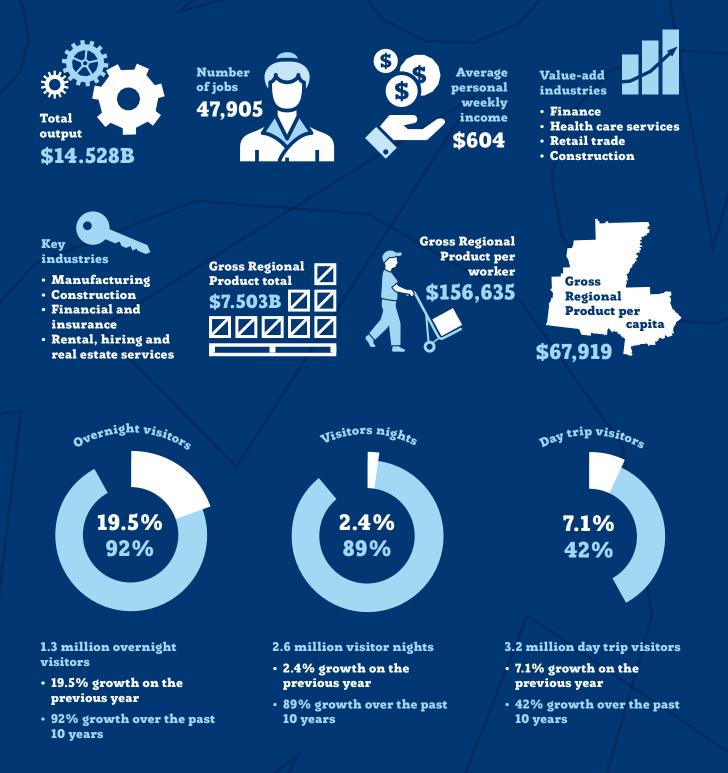
 unique among Australia's regional centres, urban Bendigo is virtually surrounded by national parks

- Bendigo's nationally renowned built heritage provides the city and surrounds with an extraordinary asset and defining legacy from our gold mining past
- Major sporting and recreation facilities are the envy of much larger cities
- Housing costs are comparatively low whether people choose to live in urban Bendigo or in the many surrounding small towns and rural communities
- Residents enjoy short work commutes, free of the traffic congestion and wasted time and costs that afflicts Australia's major cities

These qualities provide a critical foundation for a widely supported economic development strategy with a strong local commitment to deliver and implement the key actions. Greater Bendigo is now poised to build further on its past and current successes and its extensive assets, attributes and opportunities. As a great small city, Bendigo knows that it can continue to perform well above its size. Greater Bendigo enjoys:

- A single local government jurisdiction covering the city and rural surrounds
- An agreed and shared productive set of goals and priorities with its neighbouring local governments across the Loddon Campaspe region
- Civic leaders who are committed to working together to deliver shared actions and outcomes
- An enduring collaborative partnership approach between the city's leading organisations
- A proud track record of delivering projects

Key highlights and industries of Bendigo as at February 2020¹⁰ are:



2.1 How did Greater Bendigo adapt to a changing agenda and reinvent itself?

The past one hundred and eighty years have seen an extraordinary transformation. Land which was violently taken from the Dja Dja Wurrung - the Traditional Owners - to firstly become an obscure pastoral run, was dramatically impacted in the 1850s by what was to become the world's richest gold mining centre. Bendigo in the early twentieth century then transitioned into a traditional manufacturing and agricultural centre. Now, at the commencement of the third decade of the twenty first century, Bendigo is not only a major service centre but has developed a distinct and important role as Victoria's third largest urban economy. Increasingly that role draws on the attributes of an open, innovative and creative city.

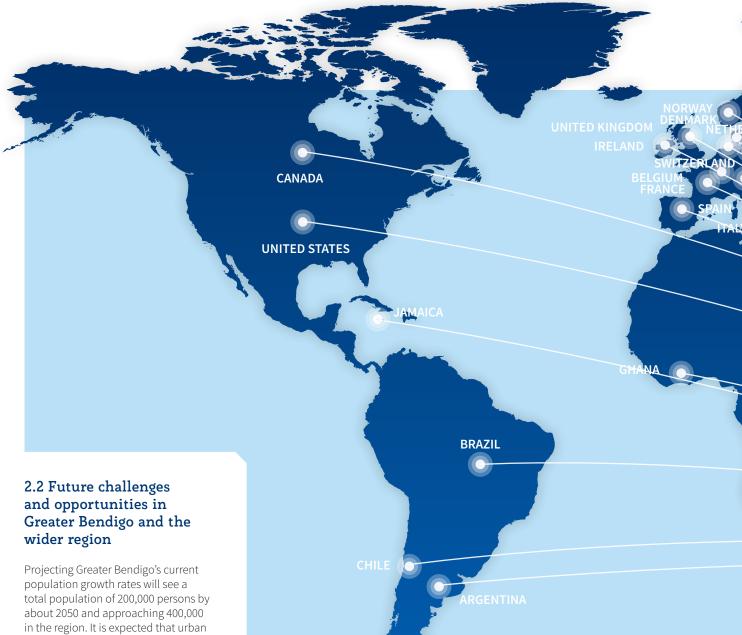
The region is entering a new and exciting period as it capitalises on a series of attributes and qualities that give a national, and in some areas an international profile and reach The region is entering a new and exciting period as it capitalises on a series of attributes and qualities that give a national, and in some areas an international profile and reach. Greater Bendigo is reinventing itself once again and is poised to seize the opportunities that have been identified in this Strategy.

The changes, growth and development that has taken place over the last three decades reveal that since 1990 the city has again changed tack in response to many forces. Greater Bendigo and its wider region has largely reinvented itself through a combination of:

- Deliberate priority actions
- Fortuitous public and private investments
- Bold new directions and initiatives that capitalised on the circumstances of the time
- Embracing global trends and using new technology
- Leveraging the benefits of government investment in infrastructure particularly in areas such as transport and health
- Building a diversified economy that is not tied to any one declining sector in contrast to the circumstances that some other regional centres found themselves in

By realising a series of strategic opportunities as they arose, by deliberate, considered and well thought out strategies and initiatives and perhaps in some cases by chance, the city and region has repositioned and greatly strengthened itself over the last generation. Over \$3B has been invested by Federal, State and Local governments over the last 14 years in key infrastructure. Facing the need to think bigger and bolder, a 'collaborative, collective impact approach' guided the actions of Council, many of Bendigo's leading institutions and some notable visionary leaders. The city has reaped the benefits from:

- A diversified economic base
- Growing a number of local 'anchor' institutions into national icons
- Developing a strong visitor economy
- Investing in health facilities and secondary and post-secondary education facilities
- Building liveability through an emphasis on great new community facilities
- Linking to a wide grid of water sources and securing water for population growth and climate change
- The revival of regional passenger rail services to and from Melbourne
- The construction of a freeway linking Bendigo to Melbourne
- Upgrading the Bendigo Airport and attracting the nation's major carrier to provide daily flights
- Sustained population growth with an increase of nearly 50,000 people in the city's population in the last 30 years
- Engaging with the rest of the world for new markets and ideas
- Further supporting Greater Bendigo as a major agricultural services support centre
- An exceptionally strong local and regional food industry enhanced by the international UNESCO designation as a City of Gastronomy
- Innovative advanced manufacturers bucking national trends and growing jobs



Projecting Greater Bendigo's current population growth rates will see a total population of 200,000 persons by about 2050 and approaching 400,000 in the region. It is expected that urban Bendigo would be a regional centre of about 200,000 people – one of the twenty largest cities in Australia. In effect, the next three decades will see the city almost double its population, dwelling stock and the number of jobs. Growth across much of the region, and particularly in the Melbourne - Bendigo - Echuca corridor, will be strong and transformative.

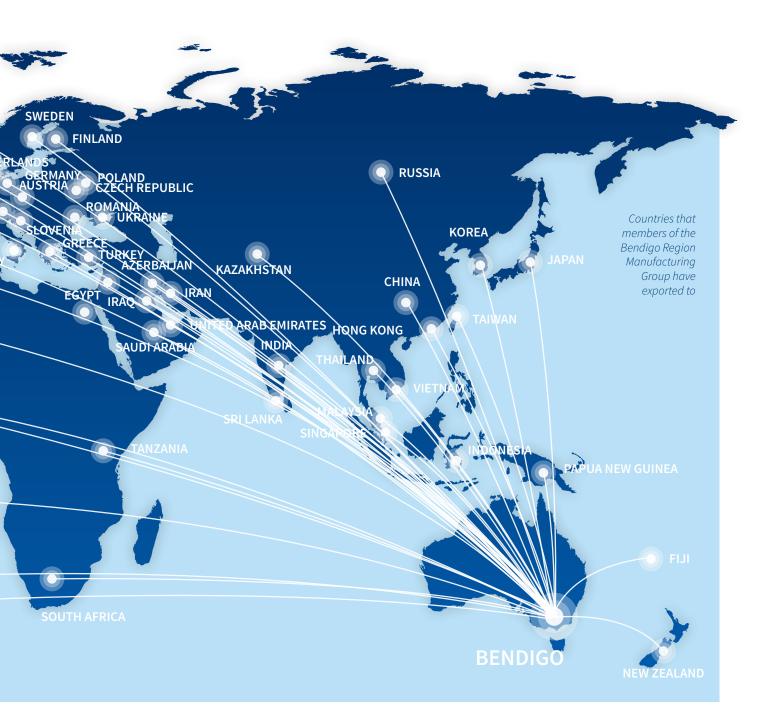
The Strategy Discussion Paper released in mid-2019 identified the following five major external changes and forces that will impact on Greater Bendigo and the region. The city and region have little, if any, control over these forces but each of them presents distinct opportunities that Greater Bendigo will need to capitalise on.

1. Growing urbanisation

People are increasingly mobile and attracted to cities with jobs, safe places, quality health and education facilities and affordable housing. Place now matters like never before. Congestion in large cities means that regional cities can be increasingly attractive. Greater Bendigo and region can capitalise through planning and actions to create an urban environment that is smart, sustainable, focused on local jobs, education and enhanced liveability.

2. Demographic and social change

There are profound changes underway relating to a much greater level of aged persons and changing household structures. An ageing population has workforce implications. Providing suitable housing, relevant education and training and long-term employment opportunities for all people - but particularly young people – are critical ingredients for a sustainable Greater Bendigo and wider region.



3. Climate change

We need to develop and deliver local solutions so we can better adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change on businesses, agriculture, communities and people. We can move to local renewable energy generation, plan our region to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, build resilience around our water services and contribute to sustainable global solutions.

4. The rise of Asia

The rising incomes of Asia have the potential to shape Australia's regions through an inflow of investment, a growth of exports and tourism and by accommodating those seeking higher education and training. There are growing opportunities for more international markets with good transport and connectivity becoming key enablers for the wider region.

5. Digital disruption and innovation

Knowledge-intensive businesses with the ability to use new communication systems will provide the most productive opportunities in the future. Greater Bendigo will need to position itself to capitalise on this in order to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce and continue to be a leading regional centre. The alternative is disruption, scrambling to compete with other centres for talent and coping with the impacts of rapid change.



The Discussion Paper asserted that an effective Strategy would need actions to substantially increase the overall living standards of all members of the community. This would mean a Strategy with a strong focus on delivering what is termed inclusive growth¹¹.

An inclusive growth outcomes approach means that those people and communities who have been marginalized and disadvantaged by change are not 'left behind' and the advantages of increased wealth and opportunities are shared more equitably. This means tackling a difficult agenda of issues including; the changing nature of work and the implications of such changes; the provision of better and more relevant education and skills development; increasing the employability of people particularly young people; and building the capacity of businesses to embrace innovation.

The Discussion Paper identified that more occupations in the future will require better complex problem-solving skills, enhanced critical thinking and greater creativity. Future workplaces will require better digital literacy skills and the ability to use digital platforms and programs to communicate, market, transact and find information.

Digital literacy is a basic workforce requirement. The future of many occupations is uncertain, but many jobs will require workers to rely more on creative thinking rather than on physical labour or other traditional skill-sets.

The first thousand days of a child's life is recognised as a period of maximum developmental plasticity, when the foundations of optimum health, growth, and neurodevelopment across the lifespan are established. A child's home and community environment during the 'first thousand days' impacts the lifelong health, wellbeing and opportunity for the child.

Education and employability are also the fuel for further growth and prosperity, not only for people but also for the success and prosperity of places. The youth of Greater Bendigo have identified that meaningful and recognised work experience through local businesses is an essential element of strengthening their prospects. Our education and training systems must provide the required skills for our current and future workforce. If these critical elements are neglected, a growing proportion of our community will be further marginalized and disadvantage will be entrenched and will span generations.

2.3 Profound issues that a new Strategy must confront and resolve

The Greater Bendigo narrative presented so far has emphasised:

- Past successes
- Current attributes
- The capacity to innovate and transition
- The value of not pursuing a business as usual approach
- The need for continuing reinvention and transformation to support people and the economy and build liveability

The reality though is that this progressive agenda is now confronted by the stark reality of data about the city that identifies a major challenge to deliver the sort of place that the city aspires to be. Greater Bendigo, similar to many other cities around the world, has a growing set of issues relating to the employability of many people, but particularly youth, and their long-term capacity to lead fulfilling lives in a rapidly changing economy.

The number of people and households who are being marginalised by changes in the economy is increasing, and many skills possessed by the current workforce are becoming redundant or at least are in far less demand. While there is a shortage of trained and experienced people in some occupations there is also a growing casualisation of labour and in the nature of work itself. A social and economic geographical divide has emerged in Greater Bendigo where household location and family circumstances influence and in some cases are major determinants of likely opportunities and future outcomes

This situation is creating major divisions in society, it is entrenching disadvantage and in some instances, it is leading to poverty and disengagement.

Greater Bendigo's civic leaders and key organisations are increasingly aware that there are increasing numbers of people in the region with limited employment prospects and opportunities; a growing proportion of households are experiencing systemic disadvantage; greater numbers of both young and older workers are poorly equipped to deal with a rapidly changing work scene; and there are too many children and young people, who because of their circumstances, have limited opportunities to secure long term employment in satisfying jobs.

While this situation does mirror an increasing global trend, in some respects this situation may be more entrenched in places like Bendigo than in many larger centres. Why would this be the case? It is likely that those who find themselves in such circumstances in Greater Bendigo are not necessarily attracted to shift to larger centres. This can be the case particularly if they are unfamiliar with other places, lack family and workplace connections and face higher housing and other costs. The depth and scale of this situation in Greater Bendigo is such that this could be seen as so entrenched that it could become a permanent feature of the city and regional social and economic landscape. Such an outcome is not acceptable.

In raw numbers and particularly in comparison to metropolitan Melbourne, but similar to many other regional centres, Greater Bendigo has:

- A low year 12 or equivalent education completion rate
- A low level of participation in higher education
- High rates of young people who are leaving school at 16 years of age and are not entering the workforce or skills training
- High levels of people with mental health problems
- High levels of households in nominated suburbs who experience food insecurity and live in households which are characterised by poor nutrition and health outcomes
- Major concentrations of households and people who are living in poverty
- A limited range of higher educational offerings that enable it to retain, educate and train many of its best and brightest students and place them in the local and regional workforce
- High rates of people under 25 years of age who have been unemployed for longer than 5 years
- Great difficulty in recruiting and attracting persons for specialised positions in the workforce

More 'business as usual' approaches are not likely to provide the longterm solutions to the current circumstances which contain within them the seeds of the likely ongoing problems

The Implementation Committee has formed the view that these issues must be tackled in the Strategy. They recognise that in a number of ways the present structures, arrangements and approaches in Greater Bendigo are likely, in part at least, to have contributed to the situation described.

A social and economic geographical divide has emerged in Greater Bendigo where household location and family circumstances influence and in some cases are major determinants of likely opportunities and future outcomes. The raw numbers, their characteristics and implications not only provide a picture of the depth of the problem but highlight that there is a need for a fundamental shift in approach. It is hard to see that continuing to pursue the current arrangements is going to change the current profile and deliver the outcomes that are needed.

The current configuration, composition and arrangement of the city's education and training facilities and the existing pathways, programs, courses and services are brought into question, as are the location and limitations of physical access and connections to



workplaces, and the opportunities for meaningful work experience as a preparation for employment. All these factors compound the family and household circumstances that a growing number of people find themselves in.

How all these factors interact and individually and collectively account for the current situation is not fully clear.

A better focus on outcomes and opportunities is needed as the basis to comprehensively tackle the current situation. More 'business as usual' approaches are not likely to provide the long-term solutions to the current circumstances which contain within them the seeds of the likely ongoing problems.

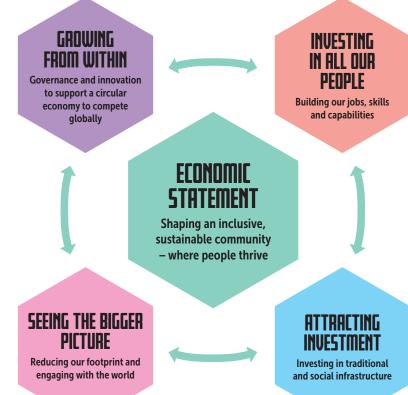
While this situation may appear to be entrenched and not able to be resolved, it is strongly suggested in this Strategy that Greater Bendigo has sufficient scale, the range of services and facilities, the lead organisations with sufficient passion and capability and the civic leaders who are already working collaboratively towards agreed outcomes.

Greater Bendigo and region are not alone in having to confront and resolve these issues but in many ways they are likely to be far better placed to tackle them than many larger centres. There is strong, shared goodwill and a willingness to work together for agreed outcomes. Importantly the Implementation Committee sees tackling this situation as one of the prime motivators for developing and implementing the Strategy. Rarely does an economic development strategy prioritise such issues.

These priorities are emphasised through the Strategy's approach which embraces four components:

1. Growing from within

Develop the city's business sector, assist innovation, export and trade, support locally and globally competitive businesses and encourage the development of what is known as a circular economy - that is one where local procurement takes precedence.



2. Investing in all our people

Take an industry-led and people centric approach to education, training and skills development that results in meaningful long term and sustainable work and income gains. Break down the entrenched social barriers to enable all to participate while improving the health and wellbeing of all our residents.

3. Attracting investment

Build long term, sustainable jobs and the liveability of the region by attracting investment in both traditional and social infrastructure that grows our comparative advantage and transforms our energy, technology and transport capabilities.

4. Seeing the bigger picture

Develop our city and region's compelling economic and liveability profile to retain and attract youth, entrepreneurs and skilled workers. Provide an attractive eco-system for public and private investment and deepen our engagement and collaboration with partners in the region. Position the city to support and enable export growth and trade with new markets. Capitalise on and strengthen our employment and industry specialisations and attract new sustainable investment that delivers environmental gains.

The Discussion Paper flagged the approach to be taken. Subsequent discussions and consultation have reinforced the value of this approach. It has been endorsed by the Strategy Steering Committee agreeing to become the Strategy Implementation Committee. With this comes a commitment to meet regularly beyond the release of the final document in order to drive actions through their own organisations, encourage other organisations to commit to actions, monitor progress and ensure that the intended outcomes are delivered.

2.4 Alignment with the Loddon Campaspe Regional Economic Growth Strategy

In 2016 the State Government established Regional Partnerships to provide a forum for direct advice to the State on priorities. This Strategy has been prepared in a collaborative spirit with the work of the Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership. Both have focused on high level advice. There is alignment and mutual support between the work of the Partnership and the Strategy Implementation Committee.

The Regional Partnership established six priorities for action:

1. A Growing Economy

A strong, diverse economy that enables people to actively contribute to their community.

2. Healthy Heart of Victoria

Active communities, healthy settings and productive lives at all stages.

3. Create the Best Start for Every Child

Families and communities that give children the best start in life.

4. Youth Our Critical Asset

Safe, supported and engaged young people.

5. A Great Environment to Live

Our culture, heritage and environment is protected and enjoyed.

6. A Connected Region

All people in the region benefit from economic activity and access to services.

During 2019 the Regional Partnership prepared the Loddon Campaspe Regional Economic Growth Strategy¹². The document was built around a series of economic actions. These are summarised below:

1. Bendigo the Regional Capital

Supporting population growth, regional city infrastructure investment, the attraction of a government agency or corporate headquarters to Bendigo.

2. Regional Employment and Innovation Corridor

Expanded tertiary education investment, establish the employment and innovation corridor, facilitating entrepreneurism in the region, improved connectivity infrastructure, township renewal.

3. Strong Regional Food Industry

Leveraging pipeline infrastructure and water policy reform. A more productive future for the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, realise opportunities in the food industry supply chain, develop a skilled and innovative workforce, growth in sector productivity.

4. Visitor and International Economy

Grow International engagement, develop the region's nature tourism potential, develop the region's reputation as a food and artisan destination, cohesive regional tourism product development, preserve and enhance the unique character of our towns and villages.

5. Industries of the Future

Enablers creating our future workforce, linking industry, education and employees, attract new business investment, Land use planning to support appropriate growth sectors, a world class health sector, regional renewable energy network waste and resource recovery, comprehensive future skills study, export strategy for advanced manufacturing.

2.5 Alignment with other strategic work

The preparation of *A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030* includes an extensive engagement and consultation program and alignment with other strategic work undertaken by a range of organisations that operate in and support the region. The Strategy is designed to align with key documents such as:

- Be.Bendigo Strategic Plan
- Bendigo City of Gastronomy Action Plan
- Bendigo Education Plan 2018-2028
- Bendigo Health Strategic Plan
- Bendigo Manufacturing Group Strategic Plan
- Bendigo Sustainability Group
 Strategic Plan
- Building for Growth LaunchVIC Strategic Plan
- City of Greater Bendigo Reconciliation Plan
- Coliban Water Strategy 2030

- Commercial Land and Activity Centre
 Strategy
- Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014-2034
- Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network Work Plan 2020-2021
- Greater Bendigo Food System Strategy
- Greater Bendigo Community Plan
 2017 2021
- Greater Bendigo Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan
- Greater Bendigo Environment Strategy 2017-2020
- Greater Bendigo Industrial Land
 Development Strategy
- Greater Bendigo Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy (ITLUS)
- Greater Bendigo Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021
- Greater Bendigo Residential Development Strategy
- Greater Bendigo Rural Communities
 Strategy

- Greater CREATIVE Bendigo: Arts and Creative Industries Strategy
- Greening Greater Bendigo
- Loddon Campaspe Economic Growth Strategy
- North Central Regional Catchment Strategy
- North Central Victoria Regional Sustainable Agriculture Strategy
- One Planet Living Principles
- Passions and Pathways Primary Schools and Workplaces in Partnership
- Plan Greater Bendigo
- Re-imagining the Bendigo Creek
- StartupAUS Action Plan Crossroad
- The Bendigo City Centre Plan
- The Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan
- Vision and Transition Strategy for a Water Sensitive Bendigo
- Water for Victoria Plan



In adopting its Community Plan, the City of Greater Bendigo embraced the One Planet Living Framework.

This in an internationally accredited program being applied by a range of cities around the world. It sets out ten principles to guide decision-making and measure progress.

The One Planet principles are drivers of the Economic Development Strategy and that progress should be measured against the following 10 principles:

- Health and Happiness
- Equity and local economy
- Culture and community
- Land and nature
- Sustainable water
- Local and sustainable food
- Travel and transport
- Materials and products
- Zero waste
- Zero carbon energy

2.6 Two Contrasting Future Scenarios for Greater Bendigo

Bendigo is one of Australia's major regional service centres with a catchment of over 300,000 people. It has a distinct and important role as Victoria's third largest urban economy. Increasingly that role draws on the attributes of an open, innovative and creative city.

Greater Bendigo are entering a new and exciting period as it is capitalising on a series of attributes and qualities that give it a national and international profile and reach. Greater Bendigo continues to reinvent itself. Where it has transformed it is well poised to seize identified opportunities. But it can't stand still. A 'business as usual' approach will not serve the region well. Expecting to tackle a current challenge or opportunity by applying the same strategies have been called out in the Strategy.

Our city has the scale, the range of services and facilities, the lead organisations with the needed passion, capability and the civic leaders, to collaboratively work towards further transformation with widely agreed outcomes. The following section explores two contrasting scenarios. Firstly, what would result from not taking a transformative approach to the future. Secondly, what would success look like if we continued to respond to the opportunities that have been identified and we continued to transform through a systematic, collaborative and planned approach.

By leveraging the region's strengths and our national and global connections, Greater Bendigo can reach its full potential and deliver for future generations.

Not taking a transformative approach to the future	What success looks like in 2030
Greater Bendigo is not always seen as a destination which fosters entrepreneurship and innovation	Greater Bendigo is a place for entrepreneurs, retains and attracts businesses and is a great location for startups and scaleups
The city centre is in danger of losing further retail businesses as the economy and the city centre transitions	Targeted investment, creatives, tourists, residential and commercial growth builds a more vibrant city centre
Inequity grows, health and wellbeing declines, disadvantage becomes further entrenched and liveability for some people in the community declines	Economic success is more evenly and fairly distributed, less people are marginalised in a changing economy and work place
Small towns and rural communities are not able to fully capitalise on their assets	Rural communities are better able to capitalise on their strengths and attract new jobs and residents
Unprecedented potential levels of profitability in expanded local gold mining and service industries are not fully realised and this brings social and economic disadvantage	A highly prosperous city and region profits from its natural resources and capitalises on a remarkable new opportunity
Lack of serviced zoned industrial land makes it difficult to attract and grow jobs, industries and businesses	Serviced, zoned industrial land is readily available for businesses looking to open or expand
New businesses are attracted to other regions with a more educated and skilled labour force	Opportunities in the region are harnessed and Bendigo is viewed as an enviable location to do business
Resources may not be targeted at facilities, infrastructure and locations where they will have the greatest benefit to residents and businesses	Investment takes place in key facilities, infrastructure and locations that drive jobs, better more accessible facilities and sustained population growth
Greater Bendigo does not maximise the opportunities to grow jobs and links to the rest of the world.	The city and region capitalises on strong brand promotion and global links to drive and strengthen the economy
Rising costs to government to support persons who have limited job prospects, those who are unemployed and communities that are disadvantaged	Job prospects and employability of the local workforce are increased, the number of persons who are unemployed or experiencing financial hardship reduces



Not taking a transformative approach to the future	What success looks like in 2030
Skill shortages limit local job opportunities, business growth and investment	Skills and education are closely aligned with current and future needs of business and industry
Year 12 completion rate remains comparatively low impacting on employability and the number who are long term unemployed	Educational attainment levels increase which grows long term sustainable jobs, investment prospects and a stronger, more resilient economy
In comparison with other regional centres, Bendigo's lack of a major higher education campus and expanding university enrolments further economically disadvantages the city and region	Significantly expanded higher education and skills training enrolments strengthen the economy and build the city and region's profile and attractiveness for students, jobs, employers and investment
Barriers continue to exist for people and particularly students to complete education and/or enter the workforce	Greater local and regional employment opportunities for youth and long term unemployed
Youth continue to leave Greater Bendigo for education and training and better employment prospects	Youth are attracted by better jobs, lifestyle, services and training and higher education places are substantially boosted and linked to the needs of the economy
High levels of the population continue to experience food in- security, poor nutrition and low levels of active living leading to poorer health and wellbeing outcomes and increased disadvantage	Improved health and wellbeing outcomes for residents, reduced health costs and a more liveable community
Climate change adaptation, mitigation and direct action on the drivers are not realised and opportunities are missed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build a circular economy where local expenditure leakage is reduced	A circular economy approach captures more local expenditure, creates new industries that deliver against greenhouse gas emission targets and the city and region is seen as a national leader
Rising energy costs impact most on those least able to afford them and the opportunity to build a comprehensive circular economy around waste is not realised	The city progressively moves to fully renewable sources of energy, reduces costs and achievement of zero net emissions of greenhouse gas by 2036

GDP... measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile

- Senator Robert Kennedy, 1968

A STRONGER GREATER BENDIGO 2030

3.1 An Inclusive, Sustainable and Prosperous Growth Framework

The Strategy's inclusive, sustainable and prosperous growth framework has been built through an economic, social and environmental context, advocating for a people focused, collective impact and outcome-based approach. Inclusive, sustainable growth combines the traditional economic measure of gross domestic product (GDP) with a strong focus on social and environmental progress.

This model recognises a future where everyone living in Greater Bendigo will have the opportunity to develop to their full potential. A future where:

- All children can achieve full potential
- Adults have the opportunity to reach their full employment potential regardless of their income, where they live or their access to health and housing services, training, skills development and networks

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines inclusive growth as "economic growth that creates opportunity for all segments of the population and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity, both in monetary and nonmonetary terms, fairly across society"¹³. Increasing use of the term reflects concerns that economic growth over the last 30 to 40 years has failed many communities and increased inequality.

For Greater Bendigo, inclusive growth means ensuring that economic growth reaches and benefits all people in our community, including the most vulnerable members. To achieve this, economic growth should not be seen in isolation, but as connected to people, wellbeing, the environment and overall living standards in a community. An inclusive growth approach recognises that a continuing failure to tackle inequality will create greater social and economic issues in the future. This inequality will ultimately come at a great cost to the local and regional economy, to many people, households and communities.



Historically, GDP has been used as the main or even sole measure of growth and that has often been assumed to be measure of a population's wellbeing. Although still an extremely important measure, GDP can distort the true state of the economy. It focuses on material wellbeing in isolation from the full dimensions of what a society values. It fails to include wellbeing in terms of health, education and the environment, which are all vital in creating a liveable community. As Senator Robert Kennedy famously noted in 1968, "GDP ... measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile".

It is increasingly recognised that the traditional approach to economic development of 'grow now and redistribute later' is not working and a new, more inclusive model needs to be established. The traditional approach to economic development has often led to increasing inequality and a growing social divide; a situation which can be observed in Greater Bendigo and regional Australia as well as in large urban areas. This can result in considerable differences in the guality of life between neighbourhoods, suburbs and towns, along with unequal access to education, healthcare, quality housing, jobs and public space. In part, this gap is a result of the divergence between those without the opportunity to generate a living wage and those who are highly skilled and command large incomes

The resulting impacts on liveability presents a significant challenge to a healthy economy but more so it impacts on the capacity of people to share in the benefits of growth.

There is a growing body of international research that supports the view that a strong economy is underpinned by a fair and equitable society. We know these economies typically enjoy stronger and more sustained growth over the long term and that communities are stronger when and where welfare economics and economic development policies are combined.

In light of the challenges to the 'grow now and redistribute later' model, growth and wellbeing should be viewed in inclusive terms. Ensuring economic growth is distributed more equally is just as important as boosting growth overall.

An inclusive sustainable growth framework has been built in the Strategy through an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental development. The framework advocates an inclusive and sustainable growth methodology which views economic, social and environmental outcomes through a single lens.

3.2 Vision

The vision for *A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030* is to 'shape an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous community where all people can thrive'. At the Strategy's heart is an undertaking that we will endeavour to ensure that everyone living in Greater Bendigo will have the opportunity to thrive and participate in a great and liveable community.

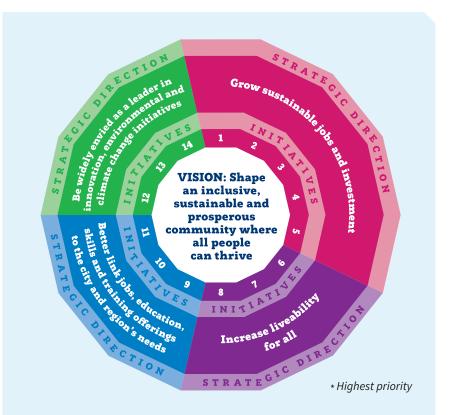
To realise this ambition, we need a people-centric approach to the Strategy and its implementation. Growth needs to be not only sustainable but inclusive, that is, it is shared by all.

The ambition includes actively and collaboratively working towards a city and community where our economy is contributing to a fairer and more prosperous place; people are much healthier and have greater levels of wellbeing; young people have more opportunities and relevant pathways to achieve at school and transition to better jobs, and our environment is looked after and better protected.

The Strategy's inclusive, sustainable growth framework will assist in achieving our vision and goals.

3.3 Strategic Directions and Initiatives

A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 incorporates four strategic directions and fourteen broad initiatives. While action will be taken on all initiatives, to provide focus and drive transformational change, eight have been nominated as the highest priority (*). The graphic on the right provides an overview of the Strategy and is expanded on in further detail in the remaining document.



Grow sustainable jobs and investment

- Transform and revitalise our city centre*
- 2 Capitalise on the opportunities presented by our new gold rush*
- 3 Unlock land and build new key infrastructure particularly transport, to support major jobs growth and investment*
- 4 Invest in and support business innovation
- 5 Strengthen our brand and connections to the world

Increase liveability for all

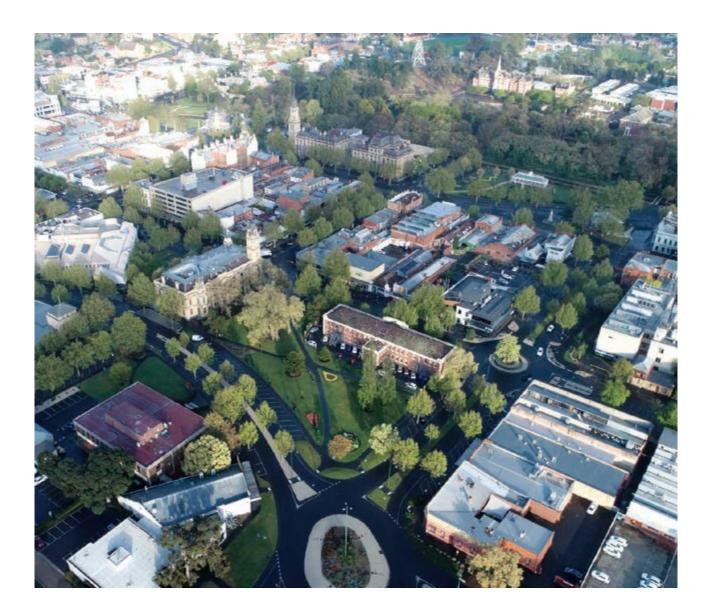
- 6 Support and enable a much healthier community*
- 7 Target investment in services, facilities and programs to communities most in need*
- 8 Support all our communities and people to reach their full potential*

Better link jobs, education, skills and training offerings to the city and region's needs

- 9 Invest in building our higher education and skills training offerings and the transition pathways between them*
- **10** Build on current local and regional procurement programs
- Grow our unique leading-edge work experience and industry engagement programs

Be widely envied as a leader in innovation, environmental and climate change initiatives

- 12 Plan and develop Bendigo and region as low carbon and circular economy leaders*
- **13** Transition to a regionally owned new energy economy
- **14** Strengthen the city and region's long-term water services plan



3.4 Objectives

A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 is structured around the following objectives:

- Develop a smarter city and region
- Increase the number of longer-term sustainable jobs
- Enhance the capacity of our businesses and workforce
- Invest in our connections to the world
- Further develop our liveability

- Build on industry and community collaboration, engagement and creativity
- Increase the fairer distribution of social and economic prosperity
- Focus on a more inclusive and fairer approach to growth
- Ensure there are opportunities for all to participate
- Deliver more relevant quality higher education and skills training programs
- Link to a wide grid of water sources

- Strengthen the economy through investment in higher education
- Uplift the employability of all our people
- Build a more circular local and regional economy
- Improve the quality of our environment and biodiversity
- Comprehensively tackle the systemic drivers of climate change
- Use our community and business collaboration to be a leader



3.5 Implementation and Measuring Success

A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030 is an ambitious commitment to collectively address multiple challenges across Greater Bendigo. The Strategy incorporates four strategic directions and fourteen broad initiatives. In reality there is action taking place on all fourteen now. The Strategy is about leveraging, harnessing effort, and prioritising further collaborative action which will have the greatest collective impact and target achievement on the key outcomes that are sought and set out in the Strategy.

Further action will be taken on all initiatives, to provide strong focus and drive transformational change, eight have been nominated as the highest priority (*). Other initiatives will be assessed periodically by the Economic Development Implementation Steering Committee to determine strategic changes or resource requests.

The Strategic Directions and Initiatives outlined within *A stronger Greater Bendigo 2030* require strategic leadership, oversight, and support, particularly where additional and complex resourcing requirements are required for the highest priority areas. The continuation of the Implementation Committee plays a critical leadership and guidance role at the centre of our ecosystem of initiatives, programs, working groups, institutions, and the community.

It is proposed that the Committee will be supported by several operational

Working Groups established to drive individual initiatives. Within these working groups a Backbone Organisation will be appointed and established to lead and deliver each initiative. Each Backbone Organisation, with the appointed working group Chair is accountable for achieving agreement amongst relevant stakeholders on the problem definition, strategic interventions, benefits, and success metrics that would provide resolution to the problem. Each would be accountable for facilitating both a sectoral and cross-sectoral approach to achieving those targets where appropriate.

The Implementation Committee will communicate the strategy to their stakeholders in ways that inspire, motivate, and engage people to achieve it. The Committee will adopt a Collaborative Engagement Model to implement the Strategy which includes four levels of engagement effort – the four "C's" – from its simplest form, delivering effective communication; to moving to a more nuanced coordination of services; to an increasingly deliberative collaboration model; and finally, to a collective impact model.

Of the four "C's" the Collective Impact¹⁴ approach has proven to be one of the most effective ways of grappling with highly complex and interconnected systemic social issues, in effect the wicked problems. The three other modes, within the Collaborative Engagement Model, provide a framework for other initiatives to be addressed via a more standard and less resource-intensive approach.

Emerging first in the United States in the field of improving educational attainment, Collective Impact has been used as the implementation model for global initiatives such as education, health, women's empowerment and food relief. Collective Impact is a unique approach to addressing collective challenges. the driving principle behind the model is that, implementation requires very different approaches and models of engagement and capacitybuilding across several stakeholder sectors. There is a range of ways to track and measure success, including the use of continuous data and local-level monitoring, which it is proposed will be aligned with International Standards on Sustainable Cities and Communities¹⁵ (See Appendix B – Suggested Localised Indicators). These standards provide a framework that supports baseline and historical data and opens opportunities for future forecasting and predictive analysis.

International standards are sources of best practice developed with experts from around the world. The International Standards on Sustainable Cities and Communities are particularly useful in holistically measuring how cities are becoming more sustainable and resilient. The standards provide a foundational comprehensive framework to allow the city to rethink its operating model for the 21st century. This will be an even more relevant approach in a post pandemic world.

The pandemic has placed greater emphasis on improving citizen centric service management, integrated strategic approaches, and new digital and physical resources management. These areas will be need to be adapted to deliver against the broader goals of the Strategy. Each initiative will enable a clear program logic and measurement for achieving success in the short, near, and longer-term horizons. Success in delivering the Strategy will be measured through the following outcomes with a suggested list of localised indicators outlined in the Appendix:

- A 2.65 per cent increase in per capita gross regional product each year, equating to approximately \$85,500 per capita GRP by 2030
- A 2.2 per cent increase in jobs per annum, equating to 13,000 additional jobs over 10 years
- A 5% increase by 2030 in the region's key liveability indicators
- An increase in Year 12

 or equivalent education completion levels
 and higher education
 participation rates to at
 least match the Victorian
 state averages
- Comprehensively reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to deliver a net zero carbon city by 2036 or earlier





The Strategy Implementation Committee has identified four strategic directions and 14 initiatives and provided action statements for each.

The Strategic Directions are:

- 1. Grow sustainable jobs and investments
- 2. Increase liveability for all
- 3. Better link jobs, education, skills and training offerings to the city and region's needs
- 4. Be widely envied as a leader in innovation, environmental and climate change initiatives

Lead partners from the Strategy Implementation Committee have also been nominated, along with potential Supporting Partners who will be asked to provide advice and assistance where required.

The Strategy Implementation Committee acknowledges the work already in progress on some of the initiatives listed and looks to further promote and extend collaboration and support.

Grow sustainable jobs and investment



Varaproos

40 A STRONGER GREATER BENDIGO 2030



1) TRANSFORM THE CITY CENTRE

Transform and revitalise our city centre.

≠ Highest priority

Lead partners

- City of Greater Bendigo
- Be.Bendigo
- Bendigo Health
- Bendigo and Adelaide Bank
- Coliban Water

Potential supporting partners

 Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership

Challenges and Opportunities

A city's centre is its heart beat. Businesses cluster, visitors gravitate and employment often seeks to locate in thriving city centres. The health of a city is often judged by the appearance of its city centre. City centres compete with each other. A vibrant city centre is a much loved and sought-after place to be.

Bendigo's city centre (Map 1), is the region's largest concentration of jobs by far. Importantly, it has a strong diverse employment base – far more diverse than most regional centres.

The headquarters of the nation's fifth largest retail bank, Australia's largest regional digital hospital and the most visited regional art gallery in Australia are all in Bendigo's city centre. Three very large schools, a major TAFE campus and two university campuses provide a substantial education and training profile in the city centre.

\$400M of State Government investment in community and business facilities in the next three years will further consolidate the city centre's role and add further jobs. The four major banks and other financial institutions have major regional offices in Bendigo's city centre. The city centre is also a public transport hub for rail and bus.

The city centre visitor economy is very strong and accommodation and residential living in the city centre is growing. Retail in the city centre is the largest concentration in the region but like in every centre it is transitioning and major chains are under pressure from online shopping. Food and beverages and outdoor dining are now a significant part of the retail scene. The Bendigo city centre performs unevenly; many parts have adapted to and taken advantages of new opportunities, others still need to transition.

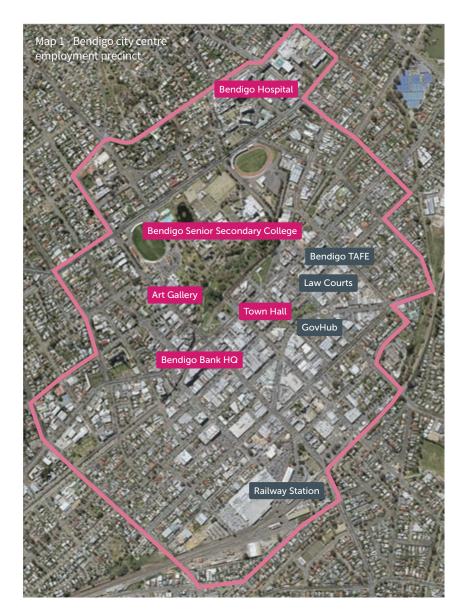
The city centre has the region's highest land values and generates the greatest wealth and revenue. Private investment and public expenditure in the city centre yield greater returns. The experience from cities all around the world is that renewal and investment in a city centre's public realm and infrastructure are critical for long term appeal and liveability.

Some of the infrastructure, including that below the ground, in the Bendigo city centre will need renewal and in some locations has capacity constraints. Successful, vibrant city centres are highly walkable, their public spaces are places where people want to be, their built heritage is conserved and buildings are put to use, good design is mandated, they provide great residential living places, they attract creative people to live and work in them and they are safe, pleasant environments that appeal to all ages.

Bendigo's city centre is strong – with an estimated 18,000 jobs. A very diverse range of what are known as 'anchor institutions'¹⁶ underpin the city centre's economy. A progressive program to create vibrant precincts in the city centre is underway. Leafy tree lined streets abound. The city centre's gold mining era heritage is of national significance and much of it houses vibrant businesses.

City centres have few ways to substantially revitalise their appeal and attraction in the short term. Transformation is usually a longer-term program of planning and investment. However, one factor has become transformative for many cities in terms of attraction to business, generating jobs and providing a major competitive edge - digital connection speed. Cities can now thrive on high speed digital connections.

The Bendigo city centre has a unique opportunity among Australian cities to realise its potential for high speed digital



connection. The implementation of a world class globally connected region and city centre is achievable.

Through the existing infrastructure assets of a local Telco, the Bendigo city centre could deliver speeds of 100GB/second to customers and the community. We know from other small cities such as Chattanooga – USA and Dunedin – NZ, that speeds in this order can be transformative in terms of growing businesses, attracting startups, scaleups and creatives, and putting a city on the international map. Adelaide is the best example in Australia that is utilising high speed digital connections to revitalise its city centre and grow jobs and investment. This opportunity in Bendigo links the urban areas along the Bendigo to Melbourne rail corridor into this digital capacity and builds on one of the key actions in the Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership's Economic Growth Strategy.

The Bendigo city centre is uniquely placed with a cluster of businesses, health and education facilities, arts and creatives industries and the prospect of high speed digital connection, together with locked in major state government and private sector investment, to be part of the new wave of economic development and job creation that aligns with leveraging these unique assets through what is known as an innovation cluster or district.

Such places "foster innovation across industries by concentrating people with different knowledge and expertise in dense urbanized areas; experts in technology, for example, work closely with experts in bioscience, finance, education, and energy. Innovation districts are, in essence, the vanguard of a new 'convergence economy' which is galvanizing the growth of more competitive firms and higher quality jobs and spurring expansion in supportive professional and commercial service sectors."¹⁷

🍟 What is needed

Every City Centre is the beating heart of their city and region. This action is geared to capitalising further on the cluster of major institutions (commonly known as anchor institutions) which are located in Bendigo's city centre and underpin its local and regional role. Bendigo's city centre has an extraordinary diversity in its businesses, institutions, roles and creativity. It is the region's major employment cluster, it is the region's centre of innovation and the key focus of the transport corridor that stretches from Melbourne to the NSW border at Echuca-Moama.

In order to realise the city centre's full potential, the following actions are needed:

- Implement the Council's adopted City Centre Plan which invests in transforming the role, development potential and presentation of the city centre including the revitalisation of the Hargreaves Mall
- Reap the full benefits of the State Government's investment in \$400million worth of new facilities
- Partner with the State Government and infrastructure providers and work with the development sector

as new investment occurs, to renew and expand the capacity of the city centre's facilities and services

- Drive the investment in facilities and infrastructure that will deliver a 100GB city centre that can further attract jobs, new institutions and residential living in the city centre
- Capitalise on the benefits of new hotel and residential development investment and enhance the public realm, vibrancy, walkability and liveability of the city centre
- Plan for a resident population in the city centre of 10,000 people by 2050
- Continue to shift from a 'drive-thru' to a 'go-to' city centre
- Grow city centre jobs, diversity of residential living options and the attraction for creatives to establish businesses
- Build much greater university program and access presence in the city centre potentially through a multi-university facility
- Expand the footprint, role and presence of the Bendigo Art Gallery and further develop the Golden Dragon Museum, as the Chinese Cultural Centre of Australia
- Recognise and celebrate in the city centre that the Dja Dja Wurrung are the Traditional Owners through implementation of the Re-imagining Bendigo Creek Plan
- Revitalise the railway station precinct by unlocking land development opportunities by relocating the overnight stabling of trains
- Encourage and support owners of heritage buildings that are not in use to be given contemporary uses
- Make the city centre a safe, highly attractive place for residents, businesses and visitors

Realising the city centre's opportunity to provide very fast digital speed is the priority action. It requires a strong collaborative commitment and investment by leading local businesses and some key State agencies. They can jointly provide the critical mass of users to enable this commercial and community opportunity to be financially feasible. A joint approach between the City of Greater Bendigo and the State Government to adopt an agreed business and implementation plan is critical to securing the necessary financial investment.

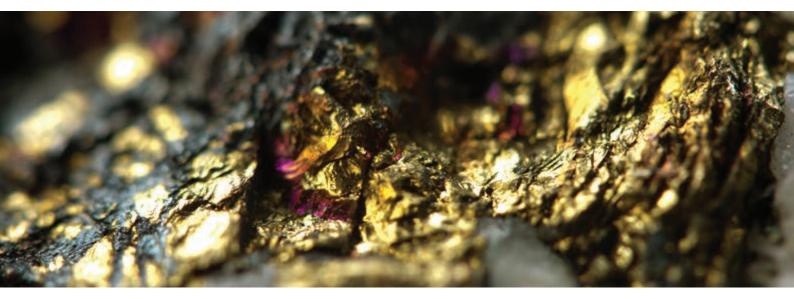
」 ✓ Next Steps

The City, through the Mayor's Office, will lead a locally convened working party of key stakeholders to work with the State Government to:

- Implement the Council's adopted City Centre Plan
- Strengthen the cluster of anchor institutions in the city centre
- Reap the full benefits of the State Government's investment in \$400million worth of new facilities
- Drive the investment in facilities, infrastructure and the necessary commitments by key stakeholders to deliver a 100GB city centre
- Plan for a resident population in the city centre of 10,000 people by 2050.
- Grow city centre jobs, diversity of residential living options and the attraction for creatives to establish businesses
- Build much greater university program and access presence in the city centre potentially through a multi-university facility
- Revitalise the railway station precinct

Key Actions

- Realise the potential of the existing '100GB/sec' digital capacity infrastructure in the city centre
- Implement Council's City
 Centre Plan
- Build on our unique city centre 'anchor institutions'
- Invest in the infrastructure, services and facilities needed to support residential living and commercial investment in the city centre



2 CAPITALISE ON OUR GOLD RUSH

Capitalise on the opportunities presented by our new gold rush.

≠ Highest priority

Lead partners

• City of Greater Bendigo

Potential Supporting Partners

- Be.Bendigo
- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership
- Bendigo Region
 Manufacturing Group
- Mineral Development
 Victoria
- Bendigo TAFE
- La Trobe University
- Deakin University

ho Challenges and Opportunities

Gold made Bendigo and much of the region. In the nineteenth century Bendigo was variously known as 'Quartzopolis', reflecting the scale of gold mining, and the 'Vienna of the South', for its marvellous German inspired, gold funded architecture. Gold ceased to be an important part of the city's economy around World War 1, however there is now a new gold rush on the way.

Kirkland Gold's Fosterville mine east of Bendigo has revived gold mining in the region, together with Mandalay Resources gold and antimony mine at Costerfield near Heathcote. With workforces of over 800 and 200 respectively they have again put Bendigo and region on the gold map.

The Fosterville mine has achieved an international profile with identified gold resources valued at \$4B. Minerals Development Victoria has identified that the gold resources to the east and north east of Bendigo could be in the order of 80 million ounces, valued at around \$220B on today's prices.

In order to support large scale exploration and ultimately mining, a large area of 1,500 square kilometres has been earmarked for exploration based on large scale operations. Allocation of exploration licences is expected shortly.

The jobs and investment potential of what could be Bendigo's second gold boom is emerging as perhaps Bendigo and the region's most significant economic development opportunity. While mining itself generates jobs, the support industries and services are very substantial.

A labour force for mining can be imported and can be fly in fly out, or it can be grown and developed in the region. The support industries and services can be contracted in or developed locally.

Bendigo and region possesses a very strong advanced manufacturing sector. The Bendigo Region Manufacturing Group has been operating for nearly 20 years with an extraordinary record of collaborative initiatives, much of its strength is in heavy engineering for the mining sector, transport and specialist services, together with continuing growth in food processing.

There is sufficient lead time to plan and ensure that the economic development and workforce implications and potential of the new gold rush directly benefits Bendigo and the region. There are substantial implications for education, training and skills development in a whole range of occupations that will be needed to support a major expansion in mining.

In order to ensure that the benefits are maximised it is now timely to consider and plan for a population increase in towns and communities that will develop to support mining. Along with this change will come the need for services and facilities, infrastructure upgrades, environmental management, protection of natural resources and the cultural heritage of areas.

Bendigo and region has an unrivalled opportunity to be the centre piece of Victoria's second gold boom. These factors will be considered in the processes that would be need to be followed in gaining approvals for mining, but planning and preparation needs a long lead time – the time to start the process is now.

Gold resources to the east and north east of Bendigo could be in the order of 80 million ounces, valued at around \$220B on today's prices

🖞 What is needed

To maximise the return to the city and region will need a strong partnership with the State Government and key departments and agencies together with a close working relationship with mining companies, service industries and suppliers. The city and region in partnership with the State Government needs to position itself to take advantage of this new opportunity and ensure that the benefits flow to Greater Bendigo and region and that the social and environmental impacts and costs are identified and planned for.

At this stage it can be anticipated that a comprehensive exploration program will create economic opportunities, jobs, investment and potentially may impact on some local infrastructure. Exploration though is a program that will have modest impact, it is preparatory to mining, which will require lengthy processes before relevant approvals are given and before it can commence.

While these processes provide for a full scale assessment of social, economic and environmental impacts in relation to the proposed mining, it is highly likely that the ultimate scale of mining and development will be substantial and have potential impacts in relation to matters such as; housing, community services and facilities, education and training for a greatly expanded workforce, communications and logistics, key infrastructure, services and facilities, transport, and the development of local industries and service suppliers.

While the timing and potential scale of the full development of the mining operations is some years off, the experience of major, new large-scale mining has often been that the full implications and transformative effects are not realised until operations commence. Greater Bendigo and the region have sufficient lead time to plan and prepare for this eventuality.

✓ Next Steps

Following the release of the exploration licences by Minerals Development Victoria, the City of Greater Bendigo will need to collaborate with key government agencies and stakeholders to establish a working party to identify the major infrastructure development required to facilitate and support the exploration program and commence the identification of the longer term social, economic and environmental agenda items in relation to the potential for large scale mining activity in the future. The City will need to work with key industry groups such as the Bendigo Region Manufacturing Group, Be.Bendigo and relevant education and training organisations to create a roadmap to support the city and region to enable it to be able to fully capitalise on the opportunities provided by the exploration program and more particularly by the potential of a longer term large scale mining program.

Key Actions

Prepare, plan for and progressively develop the infrastructure, facilities, services, businesses and workforce needed to maximise the benefits to Greater Bendigo and region of this projected major expansion in gold exploration and mining to the east and north east of Bendigo.



3 UNLOCK LAND AND FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURE

Unlock land and build new key infrastructure, particularly transport, to support major jobs growth and investment.

≠ Highest priority

Lead partners

• City of Greater Bendigo

Potential Supporting Partners

- Department of Transport
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership
- Victorian Planning Authority
- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
- Coliban Water

Challenges and Opportunities

Similar to other regional centres, Bendigo has underutilised land in its city centre and in some suburban locations. There are vacant sites and buildings in the city centre, often with underutilised and inefficient ground level car parks.

Council owns large ground level car parks which have low net returns. Many city centre sites could be better utilised for commercial and residential purposes. Land needs to be 'unlocked'.

Owners need to be encouraged and supported to make better use of existing sites and buildings. Vacant suburban land, much of it mine despoiled land, needs to be rehabilitated where feasible.

In comparison with other similar regional centres, Bendigo has limited 'greenfield' sites set aside for business and industrial expansion. Most of Bendigo's land zoned for such purposes is constrained by proximity to sensitive land uses and they are not easily accessible to the transport network.

With the appropriate planned areas, infrastructure and investment in place, Bendigo and region is well placed to



Bendigo and region needs serviced, suitably located and zoned land to accommodate the growing demand for employment to service and support the city's future growth and development Road, rail and air services provide access for business growth, jobs, education and training, commuting and connecting people to facilities and services

DANTAS



deliver significant local and regional economic development and job opportunities.

Bendigo and region needs serviced, suitably located and zoned land to accommodate the growing demand for employment to service and support the city's future growth and development, that will retain existing businesses which wish to expand, facilitate further investment and jobs, and provide attractive locations for new businesses to locate. It will also increase Bendigo's competitive ranking with many other regional centres who have established large scale modern business park facilities that can attract new investment and drive local employment growth.

Many businesses and industries need to be able to easily access markets - primarily Melbourne, for local and international delivery. They want to be able to draw upon a conveniently located workforce, work with local education and training providers to build the skilled workforce they need, have direct access to the state's highway network, use safe transport route options and avoid travelling through the centre of Bendigo.

Much of Greater Bendigo's existing and planned future urban growth is to the

west and north of the Bendigo urban area. Selected sites on the western and northern edges of Bendigo are able to provide:

- Direct access to the Calder Alternative, Calder, Wimmera or Midland Highways
- Land for major employment, business and transport hubs that is linked to but buffered from future residential development
- With future infrastructure investment, serviced land for Bendigo's employment and business growth
- Land suitable for high quality, environmentally leading edge, competitive business parks
- Ready access to Melbourne and links to the region to the north and west of Bendigo

The City has conducted an extensive project to identify the opportunities to resolve its shortage of future industrial – business park land and develop a new business park. Site selection, using a range of criteria, has established the potential locations for such facilities. New business areas to the west and north of Bendigo will require a new outer connector road linking Ravenswood to Marong to Huntly to facilitate transport movement, remove transport conflicts and improve safety. Rail services are vital for the development of Greater Bendigo and particularly for the Melbourne – Bendigo – Echuca corridor and the cities and towns along the route.

Road, rail and air services provide access for business growth, jobs, education and training, commuting and connecting people to facilities and services. The increase in passenger services along the corridor has facilitated development and the liveability of the corridor.

The development of Bendigo Metro Rail, the provision of new stations, improved signalling, better track supporting faster services between Bendigo and Echuca, improvements to stations and increased car parking at stations, have all strengthened connections.

There is a need to move to a higher and better level of service to grow the capacity, better connect people and support jobs and investment. Increased track capacity between Kyneton and Bendigo will facilitate more services, the provision of new stations at Huntly, Goornong, Raywood and Harcourt will strengthen local and regional commuting, and relocating the stabling of trains from the Bendigo station will unlock land for development. Bendigo Metro Rail and the Melbourne – Bendigo – Echuca corridor need further investment to realise their full potential to support their communities.

To fully realise the capacity of the Bendigo rail system, and as set out in Council's Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy (ITLUS), new stations are needed, including at Lansell Square Shopping Centre and Golden Square. The line to stations at Maiden Gully and Marong and to Bridgewater –Inglewood (to connect to the Murray Basin Standard Gauge network), needs to be reopened.

In order to address capacity constraints in the Melbourne metropolitan network, which limits the timetabling and provision of more services on the Bendigo line, intra-region commuting services between Kyneton – Bendigo – Echuca need to be introduced. The State Government has already flagged infrastructure improvement to provide faster services between Geelong and Ballart to Melbourne. A similar commitment needs to be made for Bendigo.

Completing the public transport upgrade Bendigo needs to convert to an all-electric vehicle bus service which runs frequently enough that using buses for commuting is a realistic alternative for a much larger number of people.

An expansion of the walking and off road and separated lane on the road cycling network needs to complement other forms of transport and shift a lot more short and local trips to car free travel.

🍟 What is needed

Greater Bendigo is a major, rapidly growing regional centre, with a projected increase of 80,000 people over the next 30 years. It needs to unlock land in the city centre, in some suburban locations and in planned greenfield areas and sites to:

- Support growing local and regional businesses
- Provide for 40,000 more dwellings
- Integrate land use development with transport and other key infrastructure including water, sewer and community facilities
- Meet the needs of businesses looking to relocate
- Provide modern, well located facilities that are geared to 21st century needs for; energy, waste management and reuse and environmental requirements and opportunities
- Utilise a 'smart city' approach to improve sustainability and resilience, engage with the community, use collaborative leadership, work with relevant organisations and use data and integrated technologies to transform services and liveability

These initiatives need to be undertaken in the context of a plan that provides for the growth of Greater Bendigo's population to about 200,000 in 2050, without all the detriments associated with urban sprawl and integrated with a greatly expanded capacity of the public transport network and low carbon travel options.

」∽ Next Steps

Form a high-level, State Government backed working partnership led jointly by the City of Greater Bendigo, the Department of Transport and Coliban Water and backed by the Victorian Planning Authority, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to:

- Prepare a collaborative 30-year Managed Growth Strategy which integrates land use planning and development with transport infrastructure investment and provision of water and sewer and related community facilities for a population of 200,000 people predicated on minimising sprawl, the need for the growth of car travel and reducing our environmental footprint
- Link the Managed Growth Strategy to the development of leading edge business parks to accommodate the demand for future jobs growth, and the transformation of the city centre which aims to accommodate a resident population of 10,000 persons

🛻 Key Actions

Prepare a 30-year Managed Growth Strategy which:

- Unlocks underutilised land in the city centre, suburbs and in greenfield sites to support jobs growth, residential development and investment
- Develops leading-edge business parks for the expansion of businesses in strategic locations
- Better links employment areas with key transport links and residential areas
- Plans and build a new outer western transport connector to support investment and jobs in the city and region
- Expands the airport terminal and develop an airport business park
- Rationalises land uses and infrastructure in the Bendigo East industrial and business area to maximise opportunities for jobs and growth
- Integrates land use, transport and infrastructure provision for Greater Bendigo to accommodate an expected urban population of 200,000 that minimises urban sprawl



4) INVEST IN BUSINESS INNOVATION

Invest in and support business innovation.

Lead partners

- Be.Bendigo
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Bendigo Health

Potential Supporting Partners

- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership
- La Trobe University
- Bendigo TAFE
- Bendigo Tech School

Challenges and Opportunities

The nature of work, occupations, skills needed, how businesses grow and expand, and how the workforce and workplace are structured are all changing. While many people work in what could be termed the traditional workplace, new ways of working have emerged and these are driving business development and investment. The gig economy provides flexibility and new opportunities. Increasing numbers of people are working part time by choice, work hours are often flexible, businesses are finding that many jobs can be partly undertaken by people from home or being highly mobile.

In some cases, particular jobs are being undertaken remotely from a workplace. New business ventures often involve startup enterprises that are seeking to find new markets and services. Most of the world's largest companies – generally IT and technology based, grew in the last decades off the back of this new innovative and creative job scene.

Greater Bendigo needs to position itself to retain and attract talent that operates in this space. Innovation and entrepreneurship are key drivers of the emerging creative economy with startup communities quickly becoming a global phenomenon. Entrepreneurial ecosystems are driving innovation, new business creation and job growth and Bendigo is well placed to leverage off their existing accelerator programs through La Trobe University and Bendigo Health who are establishing the first regional Health Accelerator program in Victoria with the support of the Melbourne Health Accelerator Program¹⁸. Ensuring our local businesses are strong and vibrant is the key to growth and building an ecosystem that embraces innovation and creativity that will drive productivity

The Federal Government's Innovation and Science Australia report, 'Prosperity through Innovation - Australia 2030'19 recognises innovation as imperative in shaping opportunity in Australia. The report notes the impacts that the easing resource boom and an ageing population are having in reassessing new opportunities for growth and increased productivity in order to maintain current living standards. It suggests that knowledge-intensive companies comprising innovative ideas coupled with the ability to export, will provide the 'most profitable, competitive and productive' opportunities for Australians. The success of these companies will provide significant contributions to job growth in Australia through both direct and indirect employment.

Innovation-active organisations have significantly higher contributions to income and employment growth compared with innovation-inactive organisations and these firms have consistently outperformed other organisations that don't use innovation. The challenge our city faces is to harness the power of creative entrepreneurs for long-term economic growth and development.

🍹 What is needed

Economic growth requires continued local and regional investment to drive productivity and innovation and to deliver more jobs, better jobs and higher wages.²⁰ Ensuring our local businesses, including our farm sector, are strong and vibrant is the key to growth and building an ecosystem that embraces innovation and creativity that will drive productivity. We want a region that not only encourages aspiration, ambition, hard work and endeavour but also fosters innovation, imagination and invention.

A thriving ecosystem comprises entrepreneurial hubs and co-working spaces; connections between entrepreneurs and mentors; access to angel investment and venture capital; access to entrepreneurial education; and events and activities that activate participation within the startup community. The expansion of educational programs for retailers and small businesses in understanding digital disruption and the impact of working in a globally competitive market is also required. Further investment in our libraries recognises the major role they play as smart city hubs.

The implementation of a locally based capital raising fund to support local startups and scaleups, creatives and entrepreneurs will attract new investment, create new jobs and retain existing jobs in the region. It will support businesses to improve their productivity and competitiveness, driving knowledge and innovation.

」 ✓ Next Steps

Establish a working party comprising key stakeholders within the innovation space charged with the task of building a robust ecosystem. That ecosystem will include the development of hubs that drive and nurture knowledge and innovation and the implementation of a locally based capital raising fund to support local startups, scaleups, creatives and entrepreneurs.

Key Actions

- Establish a "regional seed fund" to financially support local and regional startups and scaleups
- Further build on the city's creativity by supporting existing and new innovation hubs
- Develop mentoring services, skills training and knowledge sharing to support startups and scaleups





Strengthen our brand and connections to the world.

Lead partners

• City of Greater Bendigo

Potential Supporting Partners

Strategy
 Implementation
 Committee

Challenges and Opportunities

Greater Bendigo currently utilises a multi-brand and traditional destination marketing model. In the tourist sector a strong brand focus on arts and culture has been very successful in positioning Bendigo. The expansion of that to embrace gastronomy linked to UNESCO's designation of Bendigo as Australia's first City of Gastronomy, will further brand the city in terms of the visitor economy.

Working with the City of Ballarat and 10 other local government areas across the central Victorian Goldfields, the City of Greater Bendigo is backing a



major collaborative effort to gain World Heritage listing for key sites across the region. Designation will further brand the region.

At its simplest, a destination is a place where people want to be. Destinations have always driven the flow of people, capital and trade. But there is no winning post in the destination race – destinations must undergo constant renewal and refreshment.

'One city, one brand' takes an holistic view, using values and traditions to connect real people to a city's identity. Greater Bendigo has examined a number of other similar sized cities such as; Dunedin NZ, Dundee Scotland and Chattanooga USA to provide an insight into potential opportunities and positioning.

Dunedin refers to itself as 'one of the great small cities of the world'. The city identified that it needed a brand which collectively expresses the city to the outside world and must be authentic and intelligent as well as intriguing and creative. It needed a brand that demonstrated that it is internationally connected and future focused in a fast-changing world.

Dundee, reflecting on the fact that many large cities are wracked by division and conflict, brands itself as 'one city – many discoveries'.

Chattanooga, rather than speaking in flowery language and exaggerating the city's upsides, which would have risked coming off as fake, opted to embrace the city's "meh" factor by releasing a series of short, laugh out loud musicals that dubbed Chattanooga as a "literally perfect" city.

The distinct advantage and power of a single place brand is the use of storytelling that connects people with a place. The strength of using stories as a communication tool is the way to connect traditions and values – our DNA. The distinct DNA of Greater Bendigo encompasses gold, the railways, manufacturing, heritage buildings, forests, agriculture and water supply. These were historically fundamental to Bendigo's growth and development into a mature, self-contained, confident city. More recently, Bendigo has added to its identity with a nationally prominent art gallery, the head office of Australia's fifth largest retail bank, a national ranking digital hospital, greater recognition of its outstanding built heritage and a direct air connection to Australia's international gateway city of Sydney.

Creating prosperity entails bold decisions and long-term investment in people and infrastructure. A story draws us in, coerces us to partake in the journey and is a powerful instrument for inspiring a shared vision.

🍟 What is needed

A growing number of examples, particularly international, reflect that the branding of the city as a whole in terms of its economy and as a place to live are moving to a focused strategic city brand. In a highly competitive environment Greater Bendigo needs to ensure that it has broad appeal and is able to position itself on a strong footing with other comparative cities at the state, national and international level. However, much of what passes for a broad ranging prospectus of virtues and assets can often read as very similar to what many other cities are promoting. This action has identified the value of using branding to create a sustained competitive advantage.

→ Next Steps

The Strategy Implementation Committee through the City of Greater Bendigo will lead the key actions associated with this initiative.

Key Actions

- Expand on our emerging global connections and opportunities
- Project a stronger and clearer city and region brand
- Prepare a city and region prospectus
- Continue to build our strong visitor economy

I love the wonderful combination of a thriving and vibrant city nestled in Box-Ironbark Forests with our grand historical buildings and respect for our history (Indigenous, European, Chinese, etc.) and the passion we have for shaping our future as a sustainable, sociable, well-connected city²¹

> - Survey response to the Greater Bendigo Community Plan 2017-2021

Increase liveability for all

70



5) SUPPORT A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

Support and enable a much healthier community.

🗡 Highest priority

Lead partners

- City of Greater Bendigo
- Bendigo Health
- Bendigo Education
 Council
- Bendigo Youth Council

Potential Supporting Partners

- Bendigo Community Health Service
- Local Health Services
- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership
- Bendigo Loddon Primary Care Partnership
- Murray Primary Health Network
- DHHS
- RDV

Challenges and Opportunities

Greater Bendigo has high levels of overweight and obesity and poor mental health²². The rates of avoidable deaths among people aged less than 75 from cancer and heart disease are the highest in the state. Poor health is costing the Greater Bendigo community an estimated \$165M per annum, or approximately \$3,500 per household with the combined effects of healthcare costs and lost productivity from illness.

As with other parts of Australia, rates of chronic disease are higher amongst socioeconomically disadvantaged groups²³. Healthy eating, increasing physical activity and not smoking are key to improving overall health and reducing premature age death, hospital admissions and the growth in cancer, cardiovascular and other chronic diseases. These measures will also save people and households money, grow the economy and contribute to greater individual and collective liveability.

While rates of ill-health are high in Greater Bendigo, the organisational structures, programs and resources are already in place to tackle these issues, including Healthy Greater Bendigo, the Healthy Heart of Victoria initiative, and a comprehensive Health and Wellbeing Plan along with a range of key collaborations between health The rates of avoidable deaths among people aged less than 75 from cancer and heart disease are the highest in the state

providers, community and other stakeholders. Greater Bendigo and the Loddon Campaspe region now possess the most comprehensive data on people's health, nutrition, physical activity and health behaviours as a result of the delivery of the ground-breaking Active Living Census initiative. A survey of more than 24,000 residents across the region provides an extraordinary data base to guide efforts to improve community health and wellbeing.

🍟 What is needed

Many factors affect the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, where and how we live, work and play, the health of the environment, our income and education level, and our relationships with family and friends. Local government, community organisations, businesses and individuals all have responsibilities and a role to play in supporting improvements to local health and wellbeing. This can be through changes to policy, community action, cultural and individual behaviour change, and through improving our neighbourhoods and environment. This means we need to take a long term collaborative, integrated, systems based approach to making change using platforms such as the Greater Bendigo Health and Wellbeing Plan and building on current initiatives such as Healthy Greater Bendigo, a partnership between the City of Greater Bendigo, Bendigo Health, Bendigo Community Health Service, Bendigo Loddon PCP, Bendigo Education Council, Coliban Water, DHHS and the Bendigo Youth Council.

Bendigo Health holds Australia's leading provision of regional digital health and has potential to include a major, largescale research facility associated with an Australian or internationally known research partner or university. This would capitalise on the strength of the hospital in the provision of regional and rural service delivery that utilises digital technology. In addition, two national profile universities have campuses at Bendigo Health. They provide a base to further develop new accelerator and incubator programs for research, entrepreneurial activity and innovation.

→ Next Steps

This Strategy acknowledges the extensive work currently being undertaken by all health providers and the leading-edge work being undertaken by the Healthy GREATER movement in conjunction with the City of Greater Bendigo. The Greater Bendigo region is supported by a national leading digital hospital, a strong integrated health sector and an investment in major health initiatives such as the Healthy Heart of Victoria²⁴. Greater Bendigo is well placed to turn around this major economic strain whilst increasing liveability of the city.

The next steps will see a continuation of the strong collaboration to support and promote general health and wellbeing by collectively investing in major health initiatives and utilising the data from initiatives like the Active Living Census. Collaborative programs are needed on major policy decisions, further development of the city and region's digital health delivery model, preventative health initiatives and associated research opportunities and capacity to reduce high levels of chronic poor health and wellbeing.

• Key Actions

- Strengthen the Healthy Greater Bendigo movement to lead a system-based approach to improving community health and wellbeing across the Greater Bendigo region
- Engage all sectors of the community in the development of the 2021-2025 Greater Bendigo Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Advocate for continuation of the Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership Healthy Heart of Victoria initiative
- Build on the city and region's digital health delivery, research and innovation capacity
- Support the establishment of research partnerships that leverage the capacity of the new Bendigo Hospital and its cutting-edge capabilities as identified in the Loddon Campaspe Economic Growth Strategy²⁵

Local government, community organisations, businesses and individuals all have responsibilities and a role to play in supporting improvements to local health and wellbeing

NAME OF TAXABLE PARTY.



7 INVEST IN ALL OUR COMMUNITIES

Target investment in services, facilities and programs to communities most in need.

≠ Highest priority

Lead partners

• City of Greater Bendigo

Potential Supporting Partners

- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership
- Strategy Implementation Committee
- Local health and community service providers

Challenges and Opportunities

The available evidence points 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. Disadvantage for many has become intergenerational and entrenched.

This situation is not confined to Greater Bendigo, it is widely seen in the region, across Australia and the globe. The Strategy and the Lead Partners cannot resolve all the issues targeting investment to communities most in need. The challenge and the opportunity is to directly address some of the fundamental causes and a number of the actions in this Strategy around infrastructure investment. jobs, education and skills training will have a profound impact if they can be delivered. Greater Bendigo is of a size and has a high level of collaboration between agencies and organisations

such that real approaches can be developed and delivered to make a real difference.

Many organisations have discretion over where and to whom expenditure will be targeted. Council has the data and capacity to lead by increasingly targeting its expenditure in programs, facilities and services to those areas and communities most in need. Three significant areas of support and service need to be targeted; housing, public transport and digital inclusion.

Access to safe and secure housing is considered a fundamental human right. While those with access to adequate housing often think little of it, those without this necessity can find life a constant struggle. Without a right to housing, many other basic human rights are compromised.²⁶ This includes the right to family life and privacy, the right to freedom of movement, the right to assembly and association, the right to health and the right to development.²⁷ Housing and community services to meet specific needs are very important, particularly in small communities, and can present unique opportunities for innovative facilities and services such as the proposal for a Heathcote Dementia Village.

There is a clear relationship between housing and wellbeing, and access to adequate housing has a multitude of broader benefits, from better health outcomes to improved learning outcomes for children in school.²⁸ In Greater Bendigo, suburbs with higher proportions of households reporting that they ran out of food in the last 12 months are generally more likely to be within the low-income ranges.²⁹

Equitable access to transport systems to those in need is fundamental. Greater Bendigo, similar to most other cities has been largely predicated and developed on the basis that 'everyone' has access to private transport. This is a false assumption; persons under 18, aged persons, many with a disability, those who cannot afford a car are locked out of the major transport option.

Further the design of the city necessitates that many families and households need more than one car to fully participate – this situation seriously disadvantages many people in terms of access to jobs, education and basic services and facilities. Young people, elderly people, those unable to drive or without the financial means to run a car are disadvantaged by

A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars. It's where the rich use public transportation³¹

- Gustavo Petro, Mayor of Bogotá June 25, 2013 developments which create a reliance on private vehicles.

Providing equity and inclusion means ensuring everyone can access transport that is relevant to their needs and circumstances³⁰, especially accessing places in local neighbourhoods, commuting to work and travelling to and from school.

The internet has transformed almost every aspect of our lives and is increasingly regarded as an essential service. However, for the more than 2.5 million Australians who are still not online, the education, health, social and financial benefits of being connected remain out of reach and is recognised as a key social justice challenge.

There is strong evidence to substantiate that digital disadvantage aligns with other forms of disadvantage such as social and economic³² and the benefits of the digital economy cannot be shared when some members of the community are still facing real barriers to online participation. Digital inclusion is based on the premise that everyone should be able to make full use of digital technologies – to manage their health and wellbeing, access education and services, organise their finances and connect with friends, family and the world beyond.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index measures three vital dimensions of digital inclusion: Access, Affordability and Digital Ability. Higher scores mean greater digital inclusion. In 2019 the score for Australia was 61.9, for Victoria it was 63.3 whilst for Rural Victoria it was 56.3.³³ These figures present an opportunity to support initiatives for improving digital literacy and access to digital services, including but not limited to the expansion of services from public libraries.

🍟 What is needed

Greater investment in government and business-led programs, including addressing housing affordability/ availability and the facilitation of more liveable higher density urban environments that link residential living to employment nodes with greatly improved public transport services, local walking and cycling networks. Using clever and innovative city design to support these initiatives will better connect people and places and make big improvements in the health of everyone and economic development of the city.

→ Next Steps

This Strategy acknowledges and supports the continued collaborative work identified within the development of the City of Greater Bendigo's Affordable Housing Action Plan³⁴ and the relevant ongoing initiatives from the Bendigo Metro Rail Plan, and the Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy.³⁵

Key Actions

- Support increased affordable and available housing options that are relevant to households' needs
- Focus on an equitable investment strategy by government and business on those areas of the city and communities most in need
- Increase the provision of services which enhance access to jobs, education and training
- Provide much greater levels of better connected and accessible local public transport
- Break down barriers for online participants



8 HELP ALL OUR COMMUNITIES REACH THEIR POTENTIAL

Support all our communities and people to reach their full potential.

✗ Highest priority

Lead partners

 Strategy Implementation Committee

Potential Supporting Partners

- Women's Health Loddon Mallee
- Department of Education and Training
- First Thousand Days Partner Groups
- Bendigo Community Health

Challenges and Opportunities

Growing importance is being placed on the 'first thousand days' of a child's life which is now recognised as a period of maximum developmental plasticity, when the foundations of optimum health, growth, and neurodevelopment across the lifespan are established. A child's home and community environment during the 'first thousand days' impacts the lifelong health, wellbeing and opportunity for the child.³⁶ The science suggests that education starts at birth.³⁷

The Australian Early Childhood Development Census³⁸ is a national measure of vulnerability across six domains undertaken in the first year of schooling. In 2018 in Greater Bendigo 22.5 per cent of children surveyed were vulnerable in one domain and 12.5 per cent were vulnerable in two. This is compared with the Victorian averages of 19.9 per cent and 10.1 per cent.

Economists have also highlighted the economic benefit that high quality

childhood programs can deliver with research uncovering a return between \$4 and \$9 for every dollar invested in early learning programs for low-income children. Program participants were followed into adulthood with increased earnings being sought in reduced special education costs, welfare and crime costs, and increased tax revenues later in life.^{39,40,41}

The national SEIFA index⁴² provides a widely used method of measuring advantage and disadvantage at the neighbourhood level. Across Greater Bendigo and the Loddon Campaspe region there are communities and neighbourhoods with some of the highest levels of disadvantage in Australia. The size of Bendigo compared with the rest of the region means that numerically there are large numbers of people in the highest disadvantage groups.

In Greater Bendigo there are six neighbourhoods represented in the bottom 25 per cent of the country.⁴³ Generally, people from more disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely to secure long well-paid long-term employment and to have high education achievement levels including proceeding onto further study following school.

In Greater Bendigo, students classified as lower socio-economic status (SES) are more than 10 per cent less likely to be studying a university degree immediately following school than those in the highest SES cohort (32.6 per cent compared with 43.8 per cent).

Even though Greater Bendigo has one of the highest rates of regional employment growth in Australia, it also has one of the highest youth unemployment rates, including

Educational attainment is an important predictor of future health, employment and welfare needs long term youth unemployment, in the country, and the numbers are increasing⁴⁴. Our youth unemployment rate sits at 13 per cent (last five-year average). This is higher relative to other areas in regional Victoria.⁴⁵

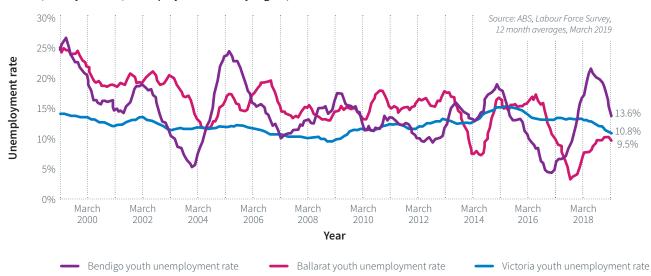
Significantly the number of persons under 25 years unemployed for five years or more in the Bendigo region (City of Greater Bendigo, Loddon and Mount Alexander Shires and the northern part of Macedon Ranges Shire) now totals over 1,300. Without a serious concerted program to tackle this, there is likely to be a large cohort of young people in Greater Bendigo and the immediate region who face continuing poverty, disengagement, limited prospects of long-term employment and being able to lift themselves out of disadvantage⁴⁶ - a cycle which can become intergenerational and increasingly difficult to break out of. This will also have detrimental effects on health and wellbeing.

Education and prosperity go hand in hand. As we move into a fast changing and globalised world, the relationship between the two becomes interdependent. Educational attainment is an important predictor of future health, employment and welfare needs and improves the ability of people to participate socially and economically in our community.⁴⁷

Students' educational outcomes are influenced by many factors including their social and economic background, their family situation, their engagement with education, and personal qualities such as resilience and self-confidence.⁴⁸ Completion of a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent has become a marker and widely used indicator of likely future prospects and opportunities.

When young people do not complete a Year 12 certificate or its equivalent, they significantly increase their risk of serious lifetime social and economic disadvantages. There is a positive correlation between increased individual learning and a reduction in the risk of future unemployment and long-term social and economic disadvantage.⁴⁹

Overall, Greater Bendigo has comparatively low levels of educational attainment compared with the state average – 81.1 per cent of 20-24year olds have completed Year 12 or equivalent compared with 86.5 per cent across Victoria with even higher percentages in metropolitan Melbourne.⁵⁰



Youth (15-24 year olds) unemployment rates by region, March 2019

A child's home and community environment during the 'first thousand days' impacts the lifelong health, wellbeing and opportunity for the child Gender is another important focus for equal opportunity. Women in Greater Bendigo are more likely to have a Diploma or Advanced Diploma, Bachelor Degree, Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate or Post Graduate Degree than their male counterparts. This is consistent with Australia's shared number one global ranking in educational attainment for women⁵¹ but stands in contrast to the persistent national gender pay gap of 14.1 per cent.⁵²

Harnessing the knowledge and skill of women, by uplifting their participation in the workforce, is one of the principal economic levers we can pull that will drive greater productivity and build economic prosperity.

🍟 What is needed

There is now an opportunity to map out the next 10 or so years of Federal and State infrastructure expenditure and directly link this to sustainable and inclusive growth outcomes by targeting such items as, school completion rates, school to work, skills training and higher education opportunities, increasing higher education places to tackle the low levels of higher education participation, lowering the number of persons on long term unemployment, improving health and wellbeing outcomes, gender equity and lifting people and households out of poverty.

There is an opportunity to develop a proposal for a pilot to establish a comprehensive 0 to 25-year-old collaborative and coordinated approach to education, training, skills development, work experience, unemployed/underemployed and disengaged youth.

The Greater Bendigo region is recognised as a leader in the delivery of highly successful programs and initiatives that are being undertaken such as those by the Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network, Passions & Pathways, Bendigo Tech School, Bendigo Region Manufacturing Group, the Regional Engineering Advanced Manufacturing project and the Bendigo Education Plan. Currently, there is no single coordinating body that seeks to bring the whole 0 to 25-yearold spectrum into a clear consolidated approach.

Harlem Children's Zone research⁵³ suggests a comprehensive set of services should be provided to children that support them through their entire education. This creates an environment that provides children with the opportunity to find meaningful work as adults.

A prime example of targeting programs is the commitment in Greater Bendigo to Victoria's first land settlement agreement⁵⁴ which has now been in place with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation for six years. This agreement covers a large range of management issues, integral to the work of the Corporation in building sustainable employment, based on supporting Traditional Owner aspirations for living culture and economic self-determination. Improving gender equity across Greater Bendigo is being led by the Coalition for Gender Equity. This alliance of more than twenty public and private sector organisations is currently developing a Gender Equity Strategy for the City and is working together to implement workplace approaches that improve gender equity for staff and the community. The Coalition's vision is "a community where all people are respected, safe to participate in all aspects of community life and have equitable access to the resources they need to succeed in achieving their aspirations, whilst living in a community that is free from violence against women"

→ Next Steps

The Strategy Implementation Committee will:

- Convene a 'summit' to explore key issues
- Establish an alliance of key stakeholders
- Undertake research to identify approaches being taken by other communities
- Identify gaps and the targeted initiatives that are needed
- Identify key services and facilities needed to lift the capacity and opportunity of people
- Leverage the work of Infrastructure Victoria to influence local investment in infrastructure that reduces disadvantage

Key Actions

- Target programs on children's first thousand days, early years' education and the gaps in the 0-25-year-old support and assistance
- Build on existing innovative and collaborative programs with

governments, businesses and relevant local organisations to systematically address disadvantage

- Focus on communities, neighbourhoods and people disadvantaged by location, educational attainment, skill levels and financial circumstances
- Continue our leading-edge engagement with Traditional Owners and reconciliation in general, building on Victoria's first land settlement agreement
- Support the community to engage with the work of the Coalition for Gender Equity

Better link jobs, education, skills and training offerings to the city and region's needs



9) INVEST IN EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Invest in building our higher education and skills training offerings and the transition pathways between them.

≠ Highest priority

Lead partners

- Bendigo Education Council
- Greater Bendigo Youth Council
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
- Bendigo Health

Potential Supporting Partners

- La Trobe University
- Bendigo TAFE
- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership
- Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network
- Bendigo Tech School
- Department of Education and Training
- Catholic and Independent Schools
- Early Childhood Educators

Challenges and Opportunities

The system and structure of higher education and skills training that has developed in Australia largely follows the population distribution pattern. Large institutions are concentrated in the metropolitan cities and smaller campuses are found in regional cities. Unfortunately, the disparity in offerings, the concentration of prestigious courses, the attraction of large research campuses for academics and the far-flung nature and generally small size of Australia's regional centres has produced unequal outcomes in provision and participation.

Numerous inquiries and reports have consistently shown that participation and achievement levels in regional areas are markedly lower than in metropolitan areas. Students from regional areas understandably gravitate to higher entry courses. The contribution of La Trobe in nursing, midwifery, mental health and allied health, as well as dentistry and pharmacy are particularly important to our community, along with Bendigo TAFE's contribution to Nursing and Personal Care and the medical training effort of Monash are a particular strength of our local ecosystem. Additionally, the presence of Monash and La Trobe Rural Clinical Schools in the Hospital Precinct adds significant benefit and builds on a cluster of important facilities which could be enhanced and expanded in the future.

While these examples provide exceptions to generalisations, the reality is that higher education offerings on the whole in regional campuses have lower entry levels. The Bendigo campus of La Trobe University is no exception; it offers some high entry level courses such as dentistry and pharmacy, it has a strong research profile and program in areas like rural health and it has invested heavily in new facilities, but on the whole, similar to regional campuses across Australia, it struggles to compete for school leavers outside its immediate region and for international students.

At the 1991 census the population of Greater Bendigo was about 71,000 people*. About 5,000 students were enrolled in higher education in Bendigo in what was then called the La Trobe University College of Northern Victoria (in 1994 the institution was incorporated into La Trobe University and became the Bendigo campus of La Trobe). Thirty years later, with the Greater Bendigo population having grown by about 47,000 people the student population at the La Trobe University's Bendigo campus is actually less than it was in the early 1990s.

If the Bendigo campus student numbers had grown at a similar rate to the city's population it would now have over 7,000 students. Even though Bendigo has attracted a small Monash campus and RMIT University has opened a facility at the airport for pilot training, university education in Bendigo by student numbers has gone backwards. The Strategy Steering Committee heard how more courses than ever before are delivered remotely and that attendance at the campus is less of a requirement. It is much more than the student population that has not materialised.

Universities employ considerable staff many in highly paid positions. Universities consume goods and services, students require accommodation and add to the vibrancy of a city.

Large university campuses are economic drivers in a city

Large university campuses are economic drivers in a city. Staff engage with the agenda of the city, there is research collaboration, a university attracts conferences, events and visitors. The university and its profile is part of the branding of a city. Even a cursory look at other countries provides a dramatic contrast with the Australian regional picture of higher education.

In countries like USA, Canada, New Zealand and indeed in much of Europe, high prestige, large universities are found in regional cities of similar size and often smaller than Bendigo.

Building Bendigo's higher education profile and offerings, increasing student numbers and growing an economic role for universities is critical for the future of the city and region. It's not a realistic option for the Greater Bendigo community and businesses to look at the next 30 years with 200,000 people and accept that we will still have 5,000 university students. A higher education student population of 20,000 is a marker of a vibrant institution. While this may appear to be aspirational, it is commensurate with similar sized cities around the globe. Without such numbers Greater Bendigo and region will simply not achieve or deliver on its potential.

Greater Bendigo's workforce is growing. Overall unemployment is low, businesses are finding that skilled labour with specialist knowledge and experience often needs to be imported from elsewhere. The level of competition for a skilled workforce is high, with Bendigo needing to compete on a number of fronts and against metropolitan areas and other regional centres.

It is critical that Greater Bendigo is able to compete as a highly liveable centre and able to offer an excellent range of services and facilities that will attract not only the workforce it needs but ensure that families are attracted and want to stay. The City is actively working with major employers and employer groups to ensure that information and support is provided so that we are competitive. Programs are also supported which seek highly talented migrants looking for work opportunities.

Bendigo's focus on advanced manufacturing and the need for collaborative research has spawned a unique facility at La Trobe University. Using the example of Germany's Fraunhofer Institute model and inspired by the City of Kaiserslautern, La Trobe University and the City of Greater Bendigo have implemented a responsive research facility that is working with the Bendigo Region Manufacturing Group. Initiatives like the Regional Engineering and Manufacturing Road Map project has been designed to address immediate shortfalls in the labour force in nominated occupations.

Hospitality and the health sector are two other areas where the demands are outstripping the local supply. There is considerable scope to work with the Dja Dja Wurrung on indigenous food initiatives and in training in the hospitality sector.

Longer term it is essential that Bendigo and region works with education and skill training providers to grow its own workforce with the skills that are relevant to the needs of businesses and industries. This will require investment in education and training but with a greater focus on the structure and needs of the current workforce and more particularly on the future shape of skills, occupations and businesses.

Initiatives like the proposed Institute of Gastronomy and Good Food at Daylesford in association with the William Angliss Institute with a focus on artisan productivity is an example of regional development with national and international links, particularly through the Bendigo City and region of Gastronomy UNESCO designation.

* At this time, the population of the area that was to become the City Greater Bendigo following the amalgamation of all or the larger parts of six municipalities is estimated to be 63,500. This figure comprises all or most of the former City of Bendigo, Borough of Eaglehawk and the Shires of Huntly, McIvor and Strathfieldsaye and most of the Rural City of Marong and a small part of the Shire of Metcalfe.

🍟 What is needed

Success is often measured by developing a skilled workforce that uses knowledge to add value and balance supply and demand for the skilled people who power a 21st century economy.⁵⁵ Greater Bendigo, through the Bendigo Education Plan 2018 is committed to re-shaping education and training so all people can continue to learn throughout their lives and have access to the skills they need to stay in work.⁵⁶ The following actions are needed to meet the needs of our future city:

- Deliver a major increase in the provision of quality higher education programs and research that are:
 - Accessible, developed locally and engage with the community and business
 - Linked to the city and region's future economy and liveability
 - Built on the city and region's creativity, innovation and advanced manufacturing strengths
 - Able to strengthen the workplace and the workforce
 - Providing young people with locally delivered quality education options
- Boost the number of STEM subjects and improve digital proficiency with a strong focus on developing the skills that employers need now and in the future
- University campuses with a total of at least 10,000 students by 2030 and 20,000 students by 2050 and a national – international profile in at least three to five program areas
- Address high levels of youth unemployment, support students to stay in school longer, create local education, training and employment pathways for school-leavers and unskilled workers, and develop further social support programs to aid workplace participation
- Attract skilled workers and build the skill base of our existing workforce

→ Next Steps

The establishment of a working group that complements the work of the Bendigo Education Council and the Bendigo Education Plan and aligns with the outcomes listed above to:

- Increase young children's literacy and numeracy levels
- Increase participation, retention and achievement rates in secondary education and skills training
- Better align education with jobs and skills for the future
- Increase the number of higher education places where programs are locally delivered
- Provide greater access to higher education for local students

• Key Actions

- Strengthen the economy and support local and regional jobs by building a competitive higher education offering
- Strengthen and expand the higher education sector's role in Health and Human Service programs, including supporting the need for skilled workforce to tackle mental health issues within the population
- Provide significantly more places in quality education and skills training programs
- Meet the future education, employment needs and service provision of a city and region approaching 400,000 people by 2050
- Boost the number of STEM subjects available and improve digital proficiency



10 BUILD ON OUR PROCUREMENT PROGRAMS

Build on current local and regional procurement programs.

Lead partners

- Be.Bendigo
- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation

Potential Supporting Partners

 Strategy Implementation Committee

Challenges and Opportunities

Local procurement programs, particularly for large regional cities, are demonstrating significant results. By focussing on increased opportunities for businesses to purchase goods and services locally, keeps money recirculating in the economy and builds businesses.

The overall result of these programs has identified substantial expenditure which is leaving the region to purchase goods and services that could just as easily and for a similar cost be purchased locally. In many cases, this challenges organisations to re-examine where they source goods and services and proactively look for whether the same or similar could be supplied locally. This whole concept originated in the USA and has been further developed in the UK with the northern City of Preston being a stand out demonstration project. In late 2019 Bendigo launched the Generating Regional Opportunities for Work (GROW) program managed by Be.Bendigo and supported by the City of Greater Bendigo. This program is based on the very successful Geelong program which managed to build extensive local procurement and then target recruitment for the new job opportunities that arose in localities in Geelong with high unemployment and disadvantage. The program has produced very impressive results.

The Bendigo program will expand further and progressively extend to

the wider region. It needs business, community and extended government backing so that it is placed on a secure long-term financial foundation and becomes integrated into the way in which people and organisations do business.

Local procurement programs can be used as a collective impact initiative with business, government, community organisations and individuals working together to address disadvantage in areas of high unemployment. Evidence suggests that the most effective way to improve outcomes for persistently disadvantaged communities is to provide long term jobs and reduce unemployment rates within those areas and, by doing so, strengthen the social and local economic fabric of the region.⁵⁷

Further development of local procurement programs will create new jobs, build on local investment through electing to buy goods and services that contribute economically and socially to our local community and injecting capital into businesses and non-forprofit enterprises to target communities.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation through the local procurement initiatives are seeking to be much more self-reliant and to particularly build the skills and workforce capability of their members. This is a program which extends across much of the Loddon Campaspe region from its headquarters in Bendigo.

🌹 What is needed

The creation of social support programs that break down barriers to workplace participation and support those in need. Examples include programs that provide services such as childcare and services for victims of domestic violence. Programs are often targeted to those with limited education and skills levels. Per Scholas⁵⁸ in the USA is an organisation that delivers world-class labour market demand programs that connect people (many disadvantaged) to sustainable career opportunities. The difference with these programs is that they take an holistic approach by creating support ecosystems that are designed to dismantle common workforce participation barriers. This includes support in areas such as: childcare, mental health and financial management.

But that is not a criterion, there is a wide range of programs. An example is Dunedin's SHIFT49 program⁵⁹ – that helps transition degree holders and equip them with technology skills, into the innovation sector and enables them to increase their earning potential. This program is targeted at new graduates who are looking at enhancing their employability.

Support and build on the Be.Bendigo GROW project and other relevant local procurement programs . The Lead Partners from the Strategy Implementation Committee will establish a locally convened working party of key stakeholders to facilitate the expansion and promotion of local procurement programs throughout the city and region and to support a city-wide initiative that provides for a comprehensive transition to work program. This challenges organisations to re-examine where they source goods and services and proactively look for whether the same or similar could be supplied locally

Key Actions

- Support the GROW initiative and other programs supporting local procurement to significantly increase the sourcing of local and regional products and services
- Drive local employment opportunities and target recruitment of workers from disadvantaged communities through a collaborative program of local and regional procurement



DEVELOP OUR INDUSTRY AND WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

Grow our unique leading-edge work experience and industry engagement programs.

Lead partners

- Greater Bendigo Youth Council
- Bendigo Education
 Council
- Be.Bendigo

Potential Supporting Partners

- Strategy Implementation Committee
- Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network
- Bendigo Region
 Manufacturing Group
- Department of Education and Training
- Key organisations in Bendigo

Challenges and Opportunities

Work experience for students and young people has often been provided and characterised as a series of 'low level' tasks with very limited actual 'real work experience'. The Bendigo Youth Council has identified as one of the major changes they want to see is to substantially raise the employability of young people. This means structured work place learning, work-experience and engagement programs that build the skills of young people, expose them to the opportunities in the world of work, and provide them with experiences and skills that are acknowledged by future employers.

Many more employers need to see these work experience and engagement programs as providing real opportunities for young people to make a contribution to the work place, to market their business as a prospective employer of choice and to build career paths. This is a high priority in the work of the Bendigo Education Plan.

There are substantial opportunities to build on a range of existing programs that some employers, such as members of the Bendigo Region Manufacturing Group are offering, to build on strong links some schools have built up with particular employers, and to build on the industry engagement programs that the Bendigo Tech School has built into their programs.

Significantly the Goldfields Local Learning Employment Network has built an enviable program of work experience for students and has pioneered the highly successful Young Ambassadors and Passions & Pathways program. The latter is a state recognised program that has been operating for nearly a decade and matches Year 6 students from disadvantaged schools to over 60 employers in an immersive work experience program. For many students this is the first taste of the world of work given their family situation. The success of the program led to funding that has now taken it to Heathcote, Castlemaine and Maryborough.

Ensuring local people, particularly students and young people, are provided with the opportunity to gain skills, find out about the world of work, experience programs that comprehensively build their employability and build their capacity to adapt to change are critical. Bendigo is uniquely placed because it has many of the support structures and collaborative arrangements already in place to pilot a major program on behalf of the State Government. Many more employers need to see these work experience and engagement programs as providing real opportunities for young people

🌹 What is needed

A comprehensive, collaborative, resourced program for all students and young people to build skills and employability and provide them with a far better chance of thriving in a changing economy. This will include processes and programs that ensure that our youth have employability skills and are given the opportunity to obtain these through targeted programs such as work experience placements or internships and through structured approaches to part-time or casual work.

The Strategy Implementation Partners will collaborate with other key organisations in Bendigo to prepare a pilot program initiative for State Government support to facilitate the expansion and promotion of a citywide initiative that provides for a comprehensive business-supported, structured and recognised work experience program.

• Key Actions

- Develop and implement collaborative business-led, supported and recognised work experience programs that strengthen the economy and young people's employability
- Work with the existing bodies in this space to expand our innovative and collaborative programs
- Provide the opportunity for the State Government and relevant responsible bodies to support a unique collaborative pilot program for Victoria, building on the foundations that already exist in Bendigo

Be widely envied as a leader in innovation, environmental and climate change initiatives



12 LEAD LOW CARBON AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY INITIATIVES

Plan and develop Greater Bendigo as low carbon and circular economy leaders.

🚿 Highest priority

Lead partners

Strategy
 Implementation
 Committee

Challenges and Opportunities

Our communities, like other communities around the world, are confronted by climate change, a

reliance on depleting natural resources, continuing loss of biodiversity, increasing energy costs, water scarcity and developmental pressures. These challenges are not only a threat to the health of the natural environment, they threaten the health of our community and the wealth and liveability of our region.

The impact of rapidly increasing energy prices, increasing pressure on the long-term sustainability of food and water systems, limited recycling and a local landfill running out of space are all affecting the quality of living for Greater Bendigo residents. Many of these challenges will impact greater on those least able to cope and manage such as aged people and those who have limited income.

Greater Bendigo can harness a strong culture of collaboration and its progressive stance on climate change to make real change that will mitigate and adapt to these impacts. The real challenge is to not only mitigate the impact of these changes and better adapt to them, but to take real action and be part of a global movement to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

🍟 What is needed

One of the characteristics of climate risk is that it manifests in disturbing ways that our social and economic systems may not be capable of responding to. McKinsey Global Institute discussed the characteristics of physical climate risk and the impacts of these on our current systems. To manage that risk, we need to move past future ideals of moving to a 'new normal' to adapting our systems to function in an environment of constant change. This is not something our financial markets, governments or communities have had to do before and as a result, decision making based on experience may no longer be reliable as it is today.60

It is this series of risks and knock-on effects that presents that need for our region to initiate actions such as the following:

- Develop locally based opportunities and enterprises for industry to deliver local jobs through waste reduction, waste utilisation technology and deliver a circular approach to local waste
- Further support and develop the city and region's agricultural and horticultural strengths, food processing and manufacturing industries
- Progressively transform Bendigo's urban development model to combat the current carbon-intensive urban sprawl model which increases bushfire vulnerability, loss of habitat and biodiversity
- Development of a circular economy, inclusive of food, energy, water and waste, that captures more local expenditure and the creation of new industries
- Prepare and implement plans that manage the growth of Greater Bendigo to support a population of 200,000 people and a population of 400,000 people across the Loddon Campaspe region
- Further development of a food hub to support better nutrition, local access to food production, reduce food waste and increase local sustainability

Greater Bendigo can harness a strong culture of collaboration and its progressive stance on climate change to make real change

」 ✓ Next Steps

Develop a specific accountable Climate Resilience (Mitigation and Adaptation) Strategy for Greater Bendigo.

The City in collaboration with a range of partners can deliver the Drawdown Alliance Plan engaging and mobilising all parts of the community and economy to support climate mitigation and adaptation that have significant return on investment opportunities and other benefits. This will form the key implementation arm and governance for this priority area.

Within the context of the Bendigo Drawdown Alliance, continue to work with all sectors to develop a local circular economy outcome for waste and create a joint zero waste plan for Greater Bendigo. This could form part of a broader plan to investigate the interactions and economic benefit nexus between food, water, energy and waste locally.

Key Actions

- Initiate a city-wide Carbon Drawdown project and enlist key government, business and community bodies to implement it
- Prevent urban sprawl through planned and targeted, well-located, new housing options that match household needs and that are better connected by low energy use transport services and networks
- Retain and enhance our unique biodiversity
- Long term transition to more sustainable agricultural practices and products
- Support investment in a circular economy approach for food, energy, water and waste
- Develop community and business supported innovative reuse of waste products





13) LEAD REGIONALLY OWNED ENERGY

Transition to a regionally owned new energy economy.

Lead partners

• City of Greater Bendigo

Potential Supporting Partners

- Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnership
- Central Victorian
 Greenhouse Alliance
- Strategy
 Implementation
 Committee

Challenges and Opportunities

Given its size, location and collaborative, innovative culture, Greater Bendigo has the opportunity to become virtually self-sufficient in terms of energy and committing to zero waste.

Currently, our use of fossil fuels for energy is a contributor to the climate crisis. Cities around the world are leaders in this space. Cities that want to be known for their leadership and which retain and attract people will be those that lead in this space. Addressing this issue will not only have positive effects for the environment but can have significant benefits for the economy.

The clean energy market will continue to grow and renewable energy represents one of the biggest investment opportunities the world has ever seen. Despite waste recovery efforts and The city is well placed to embrace bold, placed based, locally owned energy generation solutions

targeted industry sector work, there is a significant opportunity to expand our capacity for waste to energy solutions.

Additionally, with significant solar opportunities, direct access to the grid and a relatively small number of major energy users under a single Local Government jurisdiction, the city is well placed to embrace bold, placed based, locally owned energy generation solutions.



🍟 What is needed

Deliver lower cost energy for businesses and households through a locally based and owned network of renewable energy production.

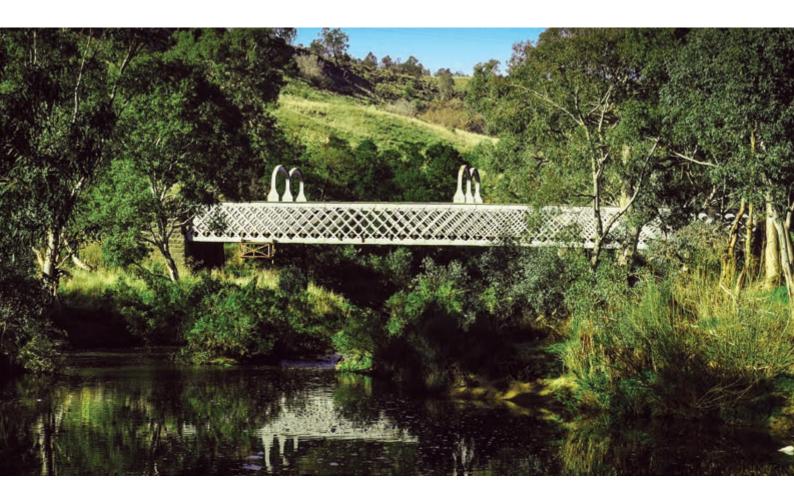
Within the Loddon Campaspe region there is opportunity to build on the large-scale Solar Feasibility Study commissioned by the Victorian Greenhouse Alliance to leverage development opportunities particularly in the north of the region. In addition, the local appetite amongst manufacturers and commercial businesses warrants further investigation around de-centralised and local solutions that ensure lower cost energy solutions and in turn promote economic development.⁶¹

Catalyse a local and renewable energy network to strengthen the local economy, secure energy supply in a more distributed system and reduce our carbon outputs.

Continue to investigate a portfolio approach to the energy transition with a range of generation and storage options, including continued investigation of managing rising groundwater using renewable technologies building on the Underground Pumped Hydroelectricity Scheme pre-feasibility study.

Key Actions

- Develop a local energy transitional plan to deliver an equitable new energy economy for the region
- Implement partnerships with the regional community and local businesses to drive sustainable practices



14 BUILD RESILIENCE AROUND OUR WATER SERVICES

Strengthen the city and region's long-term water services plan.

Lead partners

• Coliban Water

Potential Supporting Partners

- City of Greater Bendigo
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

ho Challenges and Opportunities

Resilience of water services is being raised as an issue facing urban areas across Australia, particularly inland centres that do not have the option of desalination plants. Climate change has already led to both reduced average rainfall and run-off and to more frequent intense rainfall events.

Becoming smarter in the way we harvest, manage and use our existing water resources will reduce the need to rely on water from other regions.

Coliban Water has a strong focus on Integrated Water Management and is investigating options for making the most of alternative water sources such as recycled and stormwater. Bendigo is also one of the five Australian cities chosen to be part of an integrated research and action project with the Cooperative Research Centre in Water Sensitive Cities⁶² and one of two cities chosen to research how to develop a full transition strategy and implementation plan.

The rising groundwater in Greater Bendigo is currently a problem but investigations are underway into long term solutions.

🍹 What is needed

Current projections show that Greater Bendigo will have less water to support a growing population. Changing the demand and use by consumers – domestic, industrial and rural are part of the answer.

The region needs to ensure it is aligned with Coliban Water's Strategic Plan for 2030. This includes improving demand management, a long-term plan to progressively shift water from highly inefficient open water races in Bendigo's urban area and surrounds and the better use of recycled water.

To ensure our water supply is resilient in the face of climate change, we must continue to innovate in the way we plan for, design and deliver water services.⁶³ This includes reducing our per capita water use and using alternative water sources for non-potable purposes in all developments. Continue investigations into the use of recycled potable water and technology to improve water management. The effective execution (governance, coordination, funding, and delivery) of the Bendigo Water Sensitive City Transition and Implementation Plan is critical.

J → Next Steps

Implement Coliban Water's 2030 Strategy and four pillars and align these with Bendigo's Water Sensitive City Indicator scores to deliver; equity of essential services, productivity and resource efficiency, ecological health, quality urban spaces, adaptive infrastructure and good governance.

Substantially commit to the Water Sensitive Bendigo Partnership and expand the existing Memorandum of Understanding to other interested parties to ensure a full and agreed integrated transition plan can be developed.

Strengthen the city and region's long-term water management plan and long-term investment in water assets.

Support the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to continue to implement groundwater initiatives. To ensure our water supply is resilient in the face of climate change, we must continue to innovate in the way we plan for, design and deliver water services

• Key Actions

Drive better and more sustainable management, conservation and reuse of our water resources and provide water for growth.



APPENDIX A - ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS FOR GREATER BENDIGO

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated social lockdown policies have resulted in numerous businesses having to close operations. Some of these closures will be temporary however for others this will be a permanent closure. Those businesses undergoing a temporary closure may not have the capacity, or the demand to return to pre-COVID-19 levels of operations. There is an urgent need to understand these changes at a local geographic level.

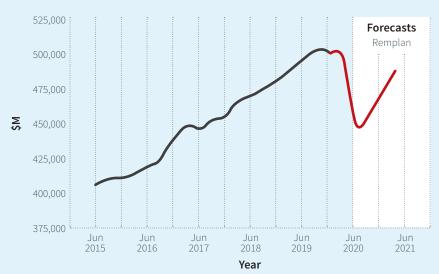
Economic forecasts at the national level, together with detailed local economic and demographic data, are the basis upon which the economic impacts for Greater Bendigo have been estimated. In undertaking this analysis there has also been a focus on the role of tourism in the Greater Bendigo economy, as well as the overall implications of the social lockdown policies. The timing of economic (both employment and revenue) impacts across the respective local industry sectors over coming months has been taken into consideration.

Over the 12-month study period to the end of February 2021, it is forecast that Australia's nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will fall by 6.9 percent. The expected decline takes into consideration both the summer bushfires, the COVID-19 restrictions including the flow-on effects on the economy and accounts for the various stimulus measures announced by government in April. SGS Economics⁶⁴ estimates that without the stimulus measures, Australia's 2019-20 GDP would likely decline by over 14 percent.

Industry Context

The following section outlines the impact to the visitor economy and the regions industry's most negatively impacted by the pandemic. The visitor economy has seen a significant





reduction in activity since March, with industry lows forecast during May and June, and this is expected to continue as a period of gradual recovery over the next six months. Over this period visitor economy activity is not forecast to return to pre-crisis levels. In relation to overseas visitation, this may not return to pre-crisis levels for many years.

Greater Bendigo has a marginally lower reliance on tourism compared to the Victorian and Australia economies. Tourism supports 5.9% of jobs in Greater Bendigo, compared with 6.6% for Victoria and 6.2% for Australia.

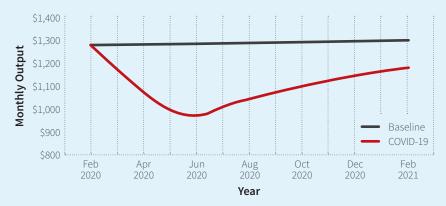
Research on household consumption⁶⁶ indicates that spending has fallen significantly in some areas. For instance, compared to the same time last year, clothing and footwear has undergone a 60% drop in trade.

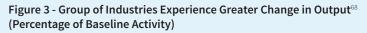
Greater Bendigo has a mix of food related and other store-based retail (e.g. clothing and footwear) and so impacts are forecast to be in-line with the experience of the broader retail trade sector. These impacts are relatively high and the ABEIS findings indicate that losses in revenue are resulting in proportionate job losses.

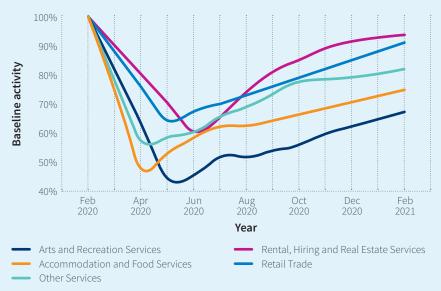
Accommodation and Food Services is the one of the largest employers in Greater Bendigo, supporting 7.4% of all jobs in the region (compared to 6.9% for Victoria). The sector is the largest component of the Greater Bendigo visitor economy and has been heavily impacted by COVID-19. It is important to note that tourism contributes around 3.4% of total economic output for Greater Bendigo (compared to 3.6% for the State). For Australia overall, research indicates that that food service spending has fallen by -38 percent compared to the same time last year.

The Arts and Recreation Services comprises museums, parks and gardens, creative and performing arts and sports and recreation activities. All these activities have been directly affected by the social lockdown policies. It is forecast that many of these activities will be the last to return to normal levels of activity as they typically involve the congregation of, and interaction between, many people. DISCLAIMER: It is recognised that at the time of writing in early June 2020, the economic and social context for Greater Bendigo, that the nation is changing rapidly in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The economic impacts for Australia presented in this report have been informed by a meta-data analysis of forecasts published by key Australian government agencies including the Australia Bureau of Statistics, international authorities including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and leading Australia and international banks. Various national economic forecasts, together with detailed economic and demographic data, to form the basis upon which the economic impacts for Greater Bendigo have been estimated. There has been a particular focus on the key industry sectors in the Greater Bendigo economy, as well as the overall implications of the social lockdown policies, and transitional easing of restrictions in slowly reopening the economy. The timing of impacts across the respective local industry sectors over coming months has been taken into consideration.









Output

The baseline value of economic output for Greater Bendigo is estimated at \$15.341 billion.⁶⁹ Output data represents the gross revenue generated by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors in a defined region. Gross revenue is also referred to as total sales or total income.

While there has been an easing of restrictions, the travel restrictions and other social lockdown measures associated with controlling the COVID-19 pandemic are estimated to impact the regional economy, resulting in a lower output estimate for Greater Bendigo of \$13.091 billion until February 2021. This represents an estimated reduction in economic activity valued at -\$2.250 billion, or 14.7 percent.

The Greater Bendigo economy is forecast to experience a greater contraction in relative terms than Australia (a forecast decrease of 6.9 percent from the baseline). This is due to the role Greater Bendigo plays in providing employment, essential services and infrastructure in the broader regional economy, and the overall industry sector composition of the local economy, in contrast to what we observe at a national level. In Greater Bendigo, the respective industry sectors are forecast to be impacted to varying degrees over this period. This also applies to the timing of the impacts and timeframes for recovery. Industries have been displayed based on the current (June 2020) extent of change experienced as a percentage of baseline output.

In percentage terms, it is the 'Arts & Recreation Services' sector, followed by the 'Accommodation & Food Sector' that are forecast to be the most impacted, with both these sectors expected to experience an impact on output of more than 50%. The 'Arts & Recreation Services' sector comprises, Museums, Parks and gardens, Creative and performing arts and Sports and Recreation Activities. The 'Accommodation & Food Services' sector includes, Accommodation, Cafes and restaurants, Takeaway food services, Catering services, Pubs, Taverns and Bars and Clubs (Hospitality).

Employment

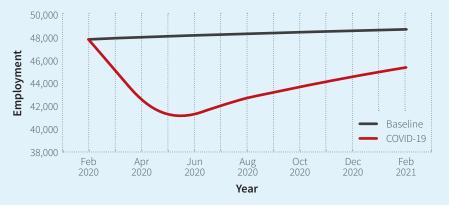
Based on baseline ratios of output to employment, the -14.7 percent decrease in economic activity in Greater Bendigo would typically correspond to a -16.55 percent loss of jobs. That is a decrease in output of \$2,249 million would typically result in a loss of 7,928 jobs. By the end of February 2021, the modelling indicates the total loss of jobs to be -2,451, or a -5.1 percent reduction.

Pre-COVID-19 employment is estimated to be 47,905 jobs, with the impact of the pandemic seeing jobs reach a low point of 41,311 in the May to June period, with a gradual recovery in line with the easing of restrictions occurring over the following months, however, not expected to reach pre-COVID-19 level during the forecast period.

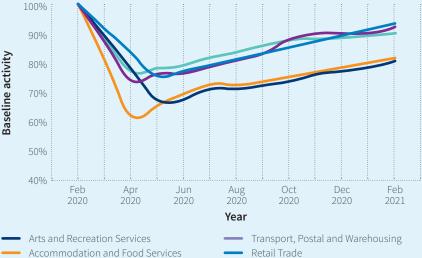
The above employment impact analysis was informed by responses to the Australian Business Economic Impact Survey (ABEIS) regarding revenue impacts versus changes to staffing levels by industry sector. The largest impact on employment is expected during the May and June period, where there is expected to be approximately 6,600 jobs lost. By February 2021 there is expected to be incremental increases in employment with a net total of -2,451 jobs lost from the pandemic. Relative to baseline employment, the sectors to experience the greatest forecast reductions in employment levels at points in time during the study period are:

- 1,418 jobs in Retail Trade, May 2020
- 1,314 jobs in Accommodation & Food Services, April 2020
- 871 jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance, May 2020
- 781 jobs in Education and Training, June 2020
- 586 in Construction, June 2020
- 434 jobs in Other Services, April 2020

Figure 4 - Forecast Impacts for Greater Bendigo – Employment⁷⁰







Other Services

It is noted the job numbers reflect the lowest peak of modelled jobs lost, with easing of restrictions impacting on jobs recovery, for instance, the net loss of jobs for 'Retail Trade' is expected to be -355 jobs by February 2021. In percentage terms, the industry sector

expected to have experienced the greatest reduction in employment due to COVID-19 and the social lockdown policies is Accommodation & Food Services, followed by Arts & Recreation Services.

Wages and Salaries

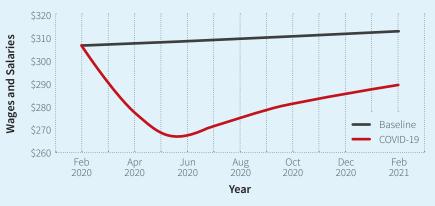
Employment levels are forecast to be relatively resilient over the study period, in comparison to the greater percentage falls in economic output. Applying standard baseline ratios between employment wages and salaries, the net change in total wages and salaries would be -14.7 percent. That is a decrease in output of -\$2,249 million would typically result in a loss of 7,928 jobs and \$3,143 million in wages and salaries, however, by the end of February 2021 the modelling indicates the total loss of wages and salaries to be -\$147.5 million or -4%.

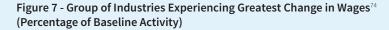
However, according to the ABS Weekly Payroll Jobs and Wages in Australia data⁷², for many industry sectors in Australia the negative impacts on wages and salaries have been greater than the reductions in employment levels. It is likely that this reflects many factors, including reduced working hours across many industry sectors, combined with some employers asking their staff to accept lower incomes over this period to support their businesses' viability.

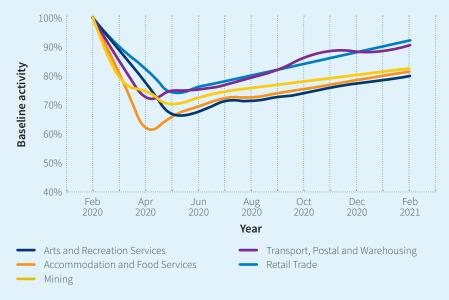
The aggregate value of wages and salaries paid to people working in Greater Bendigo is estimated to decrease by \$367.7 million or 9.87 percent over the study period.

The industry sector in Greater Bendigo forecast to experience the greatest reduction in total wages and salaries relative to its forecast change in employment is the 'Accommodation & Food Services' sector. That is, this sector's proportionate reduction in wages and salaries is greater than its loss of jobs would otherwise indicate.









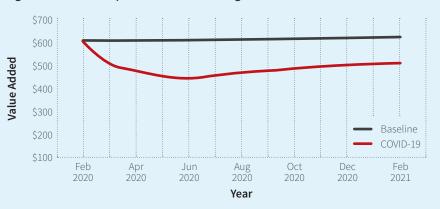
Value-Added

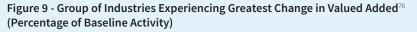
Value-added data represents the marginal economic value that is added by each industry sector. Value-added can be calculated by subtracting local expenditure and expenditure on regional imports from the output generated by an industry sector, or alternatively, by adding the wages & salaries paid to local employees, the gross operating surplus and taxes on products and production. Value-added by industry sector is the major element in the calculation of Gross Regional Product (GRP).

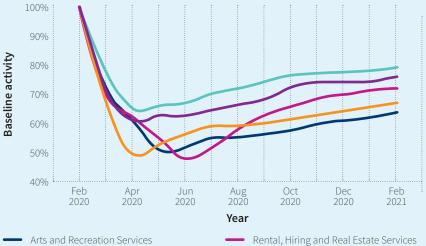
Under the current COVID-19 environment the relationships between industry sector output and the components of value-added are nonstandard and non-linear.

Applying insights from the Australian Business Economic Impact Survey (ABEIS) and the ABS Business Impacts of COVID-19 it is estimated that the negative impacts in terms of total value-added will represent a greater percentage decrease than for Output. One of the sub-components of valueadded is wages and salaries (income earned by workers). It is forecast that aggregate wages and salaries will decrease at a greater rate than the employment forecasts would indicate. Reflecting reduced hours for many workers, as well as reduced rates of pay for some. This is factored into the forecast estimates for valueadded by industry sector, as are the forecasts for many industry sectors that the percentage impacts for gross profits (gross operating surpluses) will be greater than a given percentage decrease in gross output (revenue). That is, a 20 percent decrease in revenue for some businesses may correspond to a 100 percent decrease in profits (income earned by businesses and organisations). Consequently, there are implications for net taxes (government income). It is forecast that over the study period, total value-added for Greater

Figure 8 - Forecast Impacts for Greater Bendigo – Value Added⁷⁵









Accommodation and Food Services

Bendigo will fall by \$1,607.1 billion, or 21.6 percent. Gross Regional Product is forecast to decrease by 19.3 percent from \$7.923 billion to \$6.397 billion.

Relative to output and employment, the recovery trajectory in terms of valueadded (i.e. wages and profits) is forecast to be flat and incremental. The time required to return to pre COVID-19 levels of wages and gross profits is likely to Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
 Transport, Postal and Warehousing

extend well beyond the study period in this report. Providing further insights in relation to this, the chart presents the forecast estimates of total value-added by industry sector as a percentage of the respective baselines at points in time over the study period.

Extracts provided by REMPLAN - COVID-19 City of Greater Bendigo Economic Impact Assessment Report, June 2020.

Other Services

APPENDIX B - SUGGESTED LOCALISED INDICATORS

Grow sustainable jobs and investment

- Employment/unemployment rates, including youth unemployment
- Number and size of businesses, including activity generated by startups
- Number of jobs
- Visitor Economy, including number of visitor stays
- Average personal income
- Industry sector output and exports
- Gross Regional Product
- Kilometres of bicycle paths and lanes and public transport system per 100,000 population
- Annual number of public transport trips per capita
- Percentage of commuters using a travel mode other than a personal vehicle
- Percentage of population living within 500m of public transport running at least every 20 minutes during peak periods
- Transportation deaths per 100,000 population
- Average commute time
- Number of personal automobiles and two-wheeled motorised vehicles per capita
- Total urban agricultural area per 100,000 population
- Amount of food produced locally as a percentage of total food supplied
- Percentage of city population undernourished and/or overweight/ obese – Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Jobs-housing ratio

Increase liveability for all

- Key population and demographic statistics
- Percentage of city population living in inadequate/affordable housing
- Average life expectancy
- Number of homeless per 100,000 population

- Number of households
- Living space (square metres) per person
- Residential rental dwelling units as a percentage of total dwelling units
- Percentage of city population living below the national poverty line
- Percentage of population that are foreign born/new immigrants/noncitizens
- Number of in-patient beds and physicians per 100,000 population
- Under age five mortality per 1,000 live births
- Number of nursing and midwifery personnel per 100,000 population
- Suicide rate per 100,000 population
- Number of residential/non-residential dwellings and alterations to existing homes
- Commercial air connectivity
- Square metres of public indoor/ outdoor recreation space per capita
- Number of firefighters/police officers per 100,000 population
- Number of homicides per 100,000 population
- Number of violent crimes against women per 100,000 population
- Number of cultural institutions and sporting facilities per 100,000 population
- Annual number of cultural events per 100,000 population
- Number of mobile phone and internet connections per 100,000 population

Better link jobs, education, skills and training to the city and region's needs

- Percentage of students completing Year 12 or equivalent
- Percentage of students completing primary education
- Percentage of students completing kindergarten
- Percentage of school-aged population enrolled in schools
- Number of apprenticeships

- Number of enrolled university students
- Number of higher education degrees per 100,000 population
- Primary education student-teacher ratio
- Number of students graduating from higher education

Be widely envied as a leader in innovation, environmental and climate change initiatives

- Greenhouse gas emissions measured in tonnes per capita
- Percentage change in number of native species
- Percentage of areas for natural protection
- Total end-use energy consumption per capita
- Percentage of total end-use energy derived from renewable sources
- Number of gas distribution service connections
- Energy consumption of public buildings per year
- Electricity consumption of public street lighting per km of lighted street
- Average annual hours of electrical service interruptions per household
- Percentage of population with regular solid waste collection
- Total collected municipal solid waste
 per capita
- Percentage of the city's solid waste that is disposed of in a sanitary landfill
- Percentage of the city's solid waste that is treated in energy-from-waste plants
- Percentage of city population served by wastewater collection
- Percentage of the city's wastewater receiving centralised treatment
- Percentage of population with potable water supply service
- Total domestic water consumption per capita (litres/day)

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