



# Let the Games begin

**City of Greater Bendigo  
Victoria 2026  
Commonwealth Games**

*Legacy document*

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## City of Greater Bendigo Victoria 2026 Commonwealth Games

### *Legacy document*

The City of Greater Bendigo is proud to partner with the Commonwealth Games Federation and Victorian Government to be a host city for the Victoria 2026 Commonwealth Games.

The Games provide an opportunity to build on our reputation for delivering high-quality, world-class events, and attract people from around the world to experience Bendigo and regional Victoria.

It was an honour to have our Traditional Owners represented in the Birmingham Commonwealth Games closing ceremony, when Rodney Carter, CEO of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group, extended an invitation for the Games to be held on the lands of the Djaara people.

This display of leadership and inclusion is a significant and critical reference point for the 2026 Games and serves as a reminder of the importance of honouring our First Nations People. As a co-host for the Games, we want to ensure the event delivers a lasting, positive outcome for healing Country and furthering reconciliation.

We are seeking an integrated approach that considers not only the development of necessary infrastructure, but also includes achieving aspirational legacy outcomes for First Nations People, our community, the environment, culture and creativity, and the economy.

There is an opportunity to bring forward and implement ideas and plans that have been worked on with our community for many years. Through our engagement efforts, our community has already told us what it needs. Now is the time to act and accomplish our shared vision for the future of Greater Bendigo as we grow toward 200,000 people by 2050.

We know that surrounding councils and communities across the Loddon Campaspe region will also have a role to play in the delivery of the Games. These communities are very much a part of our Games story and we want to make sure there is a legacy for rural and regional communities across Victoria.

There is much to do and a compressed timeframe to get the work done. We must ensure the Games leave a positive legacy that aligns with the needs and aspirations of our community, and Council's strategic direction.

The benefits for Greater Bendigo and the wider region must continue long after the last race is run and the last medal is awarded.

**Let the Games begin!**



### **Acknowledgement of Country**

The City of Greater Bendigo is on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country.

We would like to acknowledge and extend our appreciation to the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples, the Traditional Owners of the land.

We pay our respects to leaders and Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Peoples.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing, and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.

# A legacy we can be proud of

This advocacy document outlines six key themes where the City of Greater Bendigo sees opportunities for the 2026 Games to leave a lasting and positive legacy for our community.

## First Nations

- First Nations People are meaningfully engaged in the design of the athletes' hub
- First Nations People benefit from the future use of the athletes' hub
- Educate athletes, visitors and the community on the culture, traditions and language of our First Nations People, and incorporate this into a complementary cultural program
- First Nations employment and business opportunities are created through the Games' procurement
- Support Traditional Owners to achieve their aspirations of 'healing country'

## Our community

- Expand the capacity and reach of Greater Bendigo's network connectivity
- Ensure a variety of free and low-cost activities are included in the Games' program
- Provide incentives and support to encourage volunteers to be involved in the Games' experience
- Work with the relevant support agencies to understand the potential impact of the Games on vulnerable members of the community
- Create an inclusive event that provides a safe experience for athletes, spectators and the community

## Climate and environment

- Delivery of a carbon-positive Games, including investment in local vegetation offset projects
- Delivery of a zero waste Games
- Delivery of a zero carbon athletes' hub
- Funding for the Bendigo Stadium solar and battery storage project
- Investment in alternative fuel vehicles to provide transport during and after the Games
- Additional tree planting and urban greening to cool streets and make it safer as people move around

## Culture, creativity and culinary

- Expanded Bendigo Art Gallery to be the cultural hub for the Games and host a major exhibition
- Australian Government to provide Central Victorian Goldfields with a 'tentative listing' to support the World Heritage bid
- Performances and events showcasing talented artists in venues, live sites and community spaces during the Games to activate precincts in and around the city centre
- Local food producers and hospitality venues to be promoted and supported to add to the vibrancy of the city centre and celebrate the City of Gastronomy designation

## Jobs and the regional economy

- A Victorian Government funding allocation to support investment in accommodation infrastructure
- Program to identify skills in demand for the Games and match people to jobs and training packages, including working with local agencies to engage with young people
- Continue to promote Bendigo's 100gb internet capacity and seek funding to extend this network
- Mandating local content for key construction and service contracts required to deliver the Games
- Investment in destination marketing and associated infrastructure to increase visitation and enhance the experience for tourists in small towns in the region

## Infrastructure

- Funding and construction of the Bendigo Low Line safe transport connection
- Funding and construction of key off-road tracks and trails to enable safe connections to the city centre, Games' precincts and athletes' hub
- Funding for the development of the Bendigo Showgrounds
- Provide passenger train access for the Bendigo Showgrounds and Harcourt, including the construction of new platforms
- Increase frequency of Bendigo-Melbourne, Bendigo-Echuca, Bendigo-Swan Hill rail services
- Restoring duplication of the Bendigo-Kyneton rail line
- Funding to significantly increase the delivery of universal access change facilities at rural and regional sporting facilities
- Funding for swimming pool refurbishment program for rural pools



## First Nations

The closing ceremony at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games included a celebration of the cultures and traditions of First Nations People, as well as a demonstration from the next generation of talented and inspiring young indigenous performers. This was effectively the launchpad for the 2026 Games.

Our planning will seek to identify opportunities to honour the culture, traditions and language of our First Nations People. There are no boundaries for this – it can include performance, art, food and education about local history.

The design process for the athletes' hub must continue to meaningfully engage our First Nations People and deliver on a key objective to heal Country. From our perspective, it will also be essential for First Nations People to benefit from future social and affordable housing outcomes that stem from the hub after the Games.

There are several talented First Nations artists and performers in Greater Bendigo and across regional Victoria. With ambitions for Bendigo to have a central role in a strong cultural and creative program during the Games, we will ensure First Nations artists and performers have the chance to demonstrate and share their culture.

Greater Bendigo has several local indigenous businesses that should also have the opportunity to benefit from business and employment opportunities throughout the Games' procurement.

### Legacy outcomes

- First Nations People are meaningfully engaged in the design of the athletes' hub
- First Nations People benefit from the future use of the athletes' hub
- Educate athletes, visitors and the community on the culture, traditions and language of our First Nations People, and incorporate this into a complementary cultural program
- First Nations employment and business opportunities are created through the Games' procurement
- Support Traditional Owners to achieve their aspirations of 'healing country'

## Our community

The announcement of the Games is already generating a level of interest and pride in our community. There is an interest in how our community can shape the Games and what the Games will do for Bendigo, and local clubs and volunteers are well placed to provide the necessary support.

We need to ensure they are engaged in planning for the Games, so they know how they can make a valuable contribution. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and they are the perfect ambassadors to share their knowledge and showcase the pride they have for their city to ensure the Games are a success.

Planning is already underway for the hub that athletes will call home during the Games. Providing social and affordable housing opportunities from the hub will ensure our community benefits after the athletes leave.

In keeping with the theme of inclusion, while the Games will bring many wonderful sporting and cultural events to Bendigo, it is important it delivers a range of free and low-cost events so that everyone has a chance to be part of the experience.

It will also be critical to work with the appropriate support agencies to manage the additional pressure hosting the Games will have on available accommodation (e.g., reduced rental properties or increased rent) and ensure, as much as possible, this does not then impact on cost of living for vulnerable community members.

We know internet and mobile connectivity across Greater Bendigo is already under pressure and, in some areas, reliability is a challenge. We must improve the capacity of the network and extend its coverage. This will improve the experience for spectators, visitors and emergency services during the Games, and leave a positive legacy for our community afterwards.

### Legacy outcomes

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- Provide incentives and support to encourage volunteers to be involved in the Games' experience
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## Climate and environment

The Games are a great opportunity to demonstrate Bendigo's commitment to caring for Country and enhancing our natural beauty.

Consistent with our targets of net zero carbon emissions from our operations by 2030 and for a 90 per cent reduction in waste by 2036, it is important to the City that the Games can be run as a zero net carbon and zero waste event. With thousands of additional visitors, planning and action for this must start immediately.

We must be able to move people to and around Bendigo safely and in large numbers. This means increased reliance on public transport and needs to include significant investment in electrified fleet and charging stations.

Autumn is a beautiful time of the year and we must encourage people, if they are able, to walk and cycle. Tracks and trails need to be safe, connected and clearly signed. A key part of this is the construction of the Bendigo Low Line project, which will enable Games visitors to easily and safely connect to the Games precinct and enjoy Bendigo Creek. This is a strategic connection that will also enable safe passage for our community into the future.

There are many positive messages about a 'zero waste Games'. This must be matched with action and all stakeholders must be engaged in this approach, including businesses, vendors and spectators.

Design of the athletes' hub and venue upgrades must also be sustainable and energy efficient.

### Legacy outcomes

- Delivery of a carbon-positive Games, including investment in local vegetation offset projects
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- Delivery of a zero carbon athletes' hub
- Funding for the Bendigo Stadium solar and battery storage project
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## Culture, creativity and culinary

Bendigo excels at delivering major events and this will be an event like no other. Whilst sport will be an entry point for people to have a Games experience, there must also be other options for our community, visitors, spectators and broadcast viewers to engage in the Games, our city, our natural beauty and the wider region.

A key priority for the City is for an expanded Bendigo Art Gallery to be the cultural hub for the Games, hosting a major exhibition and enhancing our reputation as Australia's leading regional gallery. The Gallery is also a designated Place of Keeping for repatriated Dja Dja Wurrung artefacts.

Our theatres, Ulumbarra and The Capital, are great venues and will also have an important role in the Games, which could be for events, performances and ceremonies. Our creative and cultural program that accompanies the Games will provide diversity of options for visitors and spectators.

As one of only two UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy in Australia, we will provide a unique culinary experience for visitors that will showcase food that is grown and produced in our region. This could include local farmers' markets, food stalls, tours and dining experiences in local venues. A range of complementary events could also be planned to celebrate the UNESCO Creative City designations of Melbourne (City of Literature), Geelong (City of Design) and Ballarat (City of Crafts and Folk Art).

Our goldfields region is an important part of local history and has world-wide significance. Greater Bendigo, in collaboration with 12 other Local Government areas, is working to have the Central Victorian Goldfields included on the UNESCO World Heritage list. A World Heritage listing for the Central Victorian Goldfields aims to share the extraordinary story of this region with people from around the world. The listing will also build local capacity to attract investment to deliver world-class visitor offerings across the goldfields region.

### Legacy outcomes

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- Australian Government to provide Central Victorian Goldfields with a 'tentative listing' to support the World Heritage bid
- Performances and events showcasing talented artists in venues, live sites and community spaces during the Games to activate precincts in and around the city centre
- Local food producers and hospitality venues to be promoted and supported to add to the vibrancy of the city centre and celebrate the City of Gastronomy designation



## Jobs and the regional economy

We have many skilled, talented and hardworking businesses in Greater Bendigo and across our region. Hosting the Games in Bendigo will drive increased economic activity and local businesses must have the chance to compete for this work.

A combination of low unemployment and skills shortages are resulting in a high demand for workers nationwide, particularly in the sectors that will be relied upon to deliver the Games, such as hospitality.

We also have more than 800 young people still in school that have completed certificate-level qualifications as part of their studies. Having already committed to this important training, these young people are ideal employees of the Games.

There must be a focus on identifying skill needs, matching this with available talent and providing additional training to support businesses to provide services and add to the Games experience.

It is important we maximise benefits to our regional economies from the increased number of people that will be visiting, ensuring the experience of our visitors is first-rate and enhances our reputation as being an accredited Welcoming City.

We must also continue to promote Bendigo's high-speed 100 gigabit per second broadband network as a key enabler for businesses that are already here and those that seek to capitalise on opportunities the Games present.

We need a diversity of accommodation products and increased transport connections to enable visitors to stay locally. A Victorian Government funding allocation to enable accommodation developments to be brought forward would be beneficial for the region.

We have a tight delivery timeframe; all governments and regulators must review approval times and, where possible, reduce red tape and other barriers that could impede the delivery of projects and investments.

### Legacy outcomes

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## Infrastructure

There is ongoing and understandable interest in the infrastructure required to successfully deliver the Games. While some planning is underway for venue upgrades, the sports program and venue selections are still being finalised and more work is required on this.

We know that some venues will require temporary upgrades, particularly seating, to ensure that we maximise the number of spectators that can view the sports. We are seeking a balance and for permanent upgrades to also be put in place to ensure our community benefits in the long term.

It is anticipated that people will come to Bendigo from around the world, other states in Australia and across the region to engage in the Games and associated cultural and entertainment experiences.

Bendigo is already well set up to enable people to visit using a variety of transport modes, including direct interstate flights to Bendigo Airport and intra-city rail travel on the Bendigo Metro Rail network. Additional investment and planning will ensure that more people can travel more often without needing to rely on a car.

Artist impression

This will create better environmental outcomes and avoid congestion challenges.

To complement this and deliver positive health outcomes, we are seeking to create a safe city for people to walk and cycle to and through. We are seeking to minimise the number of vehicles in the city centre and Games' precincts, and plan for a people-friendly experience.

There are several key strategic tracks and trails connections that can be planned and implemented prior to the Games, including the Bendigo Low Line project and the Ironbark Gully Trail to provide safe connection to the Games' precincts, entertainment sites and athletes' hub.

The Bendigo Showgrounds is ideally positioned to play a key role in the Games for Bendigo. The venue already successfully delivers events, concerts and the popular Sunday market that attracts more than 5,000 people. Further investment in this multipurpose facility, will enhance the potential to attract more events, sports, tourists and jobs for Bendigo.

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## Contact

**P** 1300 002 642

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

**www.bendigo.vic.gov.au**

