

Victorian Government Parliamentary Inquiry into Electricity Supply for Electric Vehicles

Submission by City of Greater Bendigo

Summary

The Greater Bendigo City Council (Council) is pleased to provide a submission to the Victorian Government's Parliamentary Inquiry into Electricity Supply for Electric Vehicles.

The submission addresses three (3) of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference which are most relevant to the City and has provided commentary about "other related matters" we feel are relevant for consideration.

As outlined in the submission, local government plays a critical role in supporting EV take up by providing land for public EV chargers, leading by example with our own fleet transition and promoting EVs through our communications and engagement with the community.

The submission makes the following recommendations based on our experience supporting EV adoption and the deployment of public EV chargers on Council managed land:

1. Incentives and support should be provided to ensure EV charging coverage across regional and rural areas, recognising public charging is a public good as well as a commercial enterprise.
2. Strategic, centralised delivery of power supply upgrades and transparency in power availability and planned network improvements would enable the efficient and accelerated deployment of public EV charging.
3. Policy levers and financial support for low income homes, tenanted properties and body corporates will help ensure equitable access to the EV transition.
4. Stronger fuel efficiency standards and tax incentives would help shift investment from internal combustion engine vehicles to electric vehicles.
5. Support for businesses to transition their fleet would help increase EV take up and support the second hand EV market.
6. Standardising reliability expectations, payment systems and signage will improve the user experience and consumer confidence.
7. Policy and funding models should support integrated and sustainable transport outcomes, including a mode shift to active and public transport.

Please note that this submission was not considered by Council for formal endorsement and should be considered to reflect the views of Council officers only.

Background

Role of local government

Local government plays a critical role in supporting the EV transition. In particular, local government managed roads and reserves are often required to host public charging infrastructure for both residents and visitors. We also play a role in promoting EV take up taking a leadership position with our own fleet vehicles and through community education and engagement.

Partnerships between local government and charge point operators have been successful in the past in establishing public EV charging in previously un-serviced locations. Without the active engagement and investment of local government through programs such as [Charging the Regions](#), many rural towns and regional centres in Central Victoria would not have public fast chargers available to residents or visitors today.

About the City of Greater Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo is located in Central Victoria, covering nearly 3,000 km². It includes the third largest urban area in the state and a network of small towns and villages such as Heathcote, Axedale, Huntly, Marong, Elmore, Goornong, Kamarooka, Lockwood, Neilborough, Sebastian, Woodvale, Raywood, Mia Mia and Redesdale. The population is approximately 125,000 and is forecast to grow to 200,000 by 2050. This growth will place increasing pressure on the City's transport and energy systems.

Local policy context

Council's [Managed Growth Strategy](#)¹ articulates the organisation's commitment to urban consolidation, setting a long-term policy direction for 70% of urban residential growth to occur in infill areas in line with the Victorian government's housing targets. This approach seeks to support walkable neighbourhoods, reduces car dependency, and leverages existing infrastructure and services.

Council's [Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026](#) includes a goal to achieve zero emissions by 2030 across the municipality². Achieving this target, even within a longer timeframe, will require a transformation of the City's existing transport system, including a significant increase in EV charging infrastructure across both public and private domains.

Transport emissions

¹ *Managed Growth Strategy* – City of Greater Bendigo, October 2024

<https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/about-us/plans-strategies-and-documents/managed-growth-strategy>

² *Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021-2026* – City of Greater Bendigo

<https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-06/City-Greater-Bendigo-Climate-Change-Environment-Strategy-2021-2026.pdf>

In 2023/24 transport accounted for 27% of the City's total emissions with light vehicles accounting for approximately 20% (231,000 tonnes CO₂-e)³. This highlights the need to decarbonise the City's private vehicle fleet and reduce car dependency.

Mode share in the City

Greater Bendigo demonstrates high levels of car dependency. In 2021, 92.6% of trips to work were by car, with only 1.4% by public transport, 0.8% by bicycle, and 3.3% by walking⁴.

EV charging context

Greater Bendigo's housing stock consists predominantly of detached dwellings (92.3%), which generally support home-based EV charging. Approximately 6.3% of dwellings are semi-detached or apartments, some of which are on strata titles and are more likely to face challenges with access to on-site charging.

There are currently five (5) locations hosting fast chargers in the municipality: two sites in the Bendigo City Centre as well as Bendigo TAFE, Kennington Village shopping centre, Marong, and Heathcote. An additional fast charger is soon to be installed behind Galkangu (GovHub offices hosting state and local government functions).

In 2023, Council assessed 40 potential sites for fast chargers in partnership with *EVIE Networks*. Most sites were found to have power supply constraints.

Submission

(2) whether public charging infrastructure is being installed at a sufficient rate in different parts of Victoria, including older suburbs where most people do not have access to off-street parking;

Recommendation 1: Incentives and support should be provided to ensure public EV charging coverage across regional and rural areas, recognising public charging is a public good as well as a commercial enterprise.

As mentioned above, there are currently five (5) locations hosting fast chargers in Greater Bendigo. This supply is not sufficient to meet current demand. During busy periods such as public holidays or festivals and events, anecdotal evidence indicates that the existing chargers can experience high demand, resulting in queuing which frustrates drivers and increases traffic.

Alternatively, some small towns such as Goornong, Elmore, Axedale and Redesdale have no fast chargers. This may be due to the lack of sites with sufficient power and the lower financial return likely to be achieved by private operators in these small population centres away from highways or freeways.

³ [Snapshot Climate – Greater Bendigo](#)

⁴ ABS Census Data 2021

In terms of future demand, a recent [Regional Charging Framework](#) developed for Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and the subsequent implementation plan developed for Greater Bendigo (not public) estimates that up to 1,500 public charging ports will be needed in Greater Bendigo by 2045 to support full EV adoption, assuming car ownership patterns remain the same as they do today. Without dedicated investment and strategic deployment of chargers, the municipality risks under-servicing the growing number of EV drivers.

The *Destination Charging Across Victoria Program* has already demonstrated success, deploying 133 fast-charging stations across 116 high-use regional and tourist locations⁵. Re-establishing this type of funding program would de-risk investment in the infrastructure necessary to support the transition, particularly in less profitable locations. To ensure access to charging across rural and regional areas, future similar funding programs should include incentives for proponents or operators to cross subsidise their network and install chargers in less visited towns and localities. This would ensure small towns have sufficient chargers during times of peak demand, while also enhancing coverage across parts of rural Victoria where demand is not likely to generate a high return in the short to medium term. This approach treats public charging infrastructure as a public good, rather than exclusively as a commercial enterprise which is subject to market forces.

(3) the best role for electricity distribution businesses in rolling out EV charging infrastructure, and how distribution network tariffs should be set for EV chargers;

Recommendation 2: Strategic, centralised delivery of power supply upgrades and transparency in power availability and planned network improvements would enable the efficient and accelerated deployment of public EV charging.

Distribution businesses play an important role in supporting power supply upgrades to sites proposed for EV chargers and ensuring the broader distribution network can meet the future demand created by increased EV chargers on public and private land.

In 2023, Council assessed 40 potential sites for fast chargers in partnership with *EVIE Networks*. Most sites were found to have power supply constraints and/or financial barriers to connection. For example, taking the adequate power supply on one side of a road to the other side where the parking layout was suitable may have required a new power pole, or a long underground cable. The cost to extend or upgrade the power supply came to anywhere from \$30,000 to \$100,000+. These costs are prohibitive for local government or charge point operators, significantly reducing the return on investment for a project, especially in locations likely to attract lower usage.

In addition, the time required to gain approval for power upgrades and the uncertainty associated with the cost of these upgrades, creates delays and makes it difficult to make commercial decisions. Receiving a response from distribution network providers to requests for power upgrades can take several months while ordering new transforms can take even longer. This process can delay projects by anywhere from 6 to 12 months. The cost of these upgrades

⁵ *Destination Charging Across Victoria Program* – Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/grants/destination-charging-across-victoria-program>

is generally unknown at the feasibility stage of projects. This increases the risks for project proponents, including local governments who are aiming to take a more active role in expanding charging networks in their municipality.

Relying on project proponents to explore power availability, wait for approval and fund power supply upgrades incrementally for each EV charging project is inefficient and reduces the capacity for local government and private operators to engage in large scale deployments of public EV charging. Instead a coordinated approach to power supply upgrades and encouraging distribution networks to work collaboratively with local government to share information on power availability and constraints would enable acceleration of public EV charging infrastructure. For example, supporting Powercor to improve its network mapping tools to highlight locations where the existing power supply can support fast chargers would enable better strategic planning by local government and charge point operators. Additionally providing a schedule of average connection costs for low, medium and high-capacity sites would also increase certainty for proponents, enhancing efficiencies and speeding up project delivery.

(4) strategies to facilitate the take-up of EV ownership, including the facilitation of bidirectional charging;

Recommendation 3: Policy changes and financial support for low income homes, tenanted properties, body corporates and new homes will help ensure equitable access to the EV transition.

There are approximately 13,000 low income households in Greater Bendigo (29% of households in the 2021 Census). These households generally do not have the up-front funds available for an EV or EV chargers. Without targeted support, these households risk exclusion from the EV transition.

Retrofitting older buildings also remains a challenge due to wiring, metering, and strata governance barriers. Grants and policy incentives targeted at body corporates and landlords would help overcome some of these challenges.

Whilst recent changes to planning and building regulations have mandated EV charging for certain building types, these regulations do not require EV chargers to be installed in all new residential homes or apartment buildings. Updating planning and building regulations to support new homes to be EV ready would support take up of EVs amongst owners and occupiers of new homes.

In addition, a phased introduction of EV charging requirements for rental properties and financial incentives for landlords would help close the gap in private charging infrastructure in tenanted homes.

Recommendation 4: Stronger fuel efficiency standards and tax incentives would help shift investment from internal combustion engine vehicles to electric vehicles.

Financial mechanisms incentivising electric vehicle purchases and disincentivising combustion engine purchases play an important role in accelerating EV take up. Current federal tax incentives such as Luxury Car Tax exemptions, instant asset write-offs and fringe benefits tax

concessions have disproportionately favoured internal combustion engine vehicles, especially utes, contributing to a surge in high-emission vehicle ownership. The success of these incentives demonstrates their effectiveness at driving change. In this case however, they are undermining transport decarbonisation goals and delaying the transition to EVs. To support a shift to EVs, Victoria should introduce or advocate for tax reforms such as increased fuel efficiency standards and changes to road use taxes that disincentivise EV use.

Recommendation 5: Support for businesses to transition their fleet would help increase EV take up and support the second hand EV market.

Fleet vehicles make up a material proportion of the cars on the road. In addition, ex-fleet vehicles are one of the primary contributors to the second hand car market. Local governments generally have large passenger fleets which they are slowly transitioning to EVs. For the City of Greater Bendigo, the transition of our passenger and light vehicles is reliant on having sufficient EV charging available at our offices and depot. This transition is currently delayed due to the time and cost involved in upgrading existing power supplies. From discussions with other larger employers in Bendigo, this constraint is shared across the public and private sector in the City. Supporting organisations to install fleet charging will accelerate the transition of fleet vehicles, increasing the number of EVs on the road and significantly contributing to the second hand EV market which supports adoption across low and medium income households.

(7) any other related matters the Committee considers relevant.

Recommendation 6: Standardising reliability expectations, payment systems and signage will improve the user experience and consumer confidence.

The City of Greater Bendigo was a partner to the Charging the Regions project which resulted in the installation of two Tritium fast chargers by Evie Networks. While considered a successful project, these chargers are often offline due to faulty software or parts. The resulting repairs have been costly for Council. This experience is common to the local governments who participated in the program and has undermined confidence in progressing the roll out of future public chargers on public land. NRMA's decision to replace Tritium units after repeated failures at regional sites⁶ also highlights systemic vulnerabilities. Independent audits show actual charging success rates as low as 75–83% which is below the 95–98% uptime often claimed⁷.

Failures stem from hardware faults, payment errors, and poor remote monitoring, leaving drivers stranded and undermining confidence in EV adoption. Each element of a reliability framework addresses these gaps: true uptime requirements ensure chargers are usable, not just “online”; real-time status reporting prevents “ghost” chargers and improves transparency; certified maintenance and rapid response times reduce prolonged outages; data auditing builds accountability; and penalties for non-compliance create strong incentives for operators.

⁶ NRMA Ditches 16 Unreliable Tritium Chargers for SINEXCEL, starting at Holbrook and Jugiong – ZeCar <https://zecar.com/reviews/nrma-ditches-unreliable-tritium-chargers-for-sinexcel-starting-at-holbrook-and-jugiong>

⁷ Many public EV chargers are unusable – despite being ‘online’, University of Queensland <https://news.uq.edu.au/2025-10-many-public-ev-chargers-are-unusable-despite-being-online>

International best practice—such as the U.S. NEVI program⁸ and EU AFIR regulations—mandates ≥97–99% true uptime, certified maintenance, and real-time data transparency. Adopting similar standards would ensure chargers are not only installed but consistently operational, safeguarding consumer trust and accelerating the transition to zero-emission transport.

Standardising signage and payment system requirements would also improve the user experience.

Recommendation 7: Policy and funding models should support integrated and sustainable transport outcomes, including a mode shift to active and public transport

Transitioning to EVs alone will not enable Victoria to meet its emissions reduction targets within the proposed timeframes. Private vehicles typically remain in use for 10–15 years, meaning that even with strong EV uptake, a large proportion of the fleet will continue to emit for decades. Complementary strategies—such as reducing car dependency, increasing active and public transport mode share, and supporting infill development—are essential to accelerate emissions reductions, transport choice, equity and health outcomes.

Investment in active travel and public transport that creates significant mode shift will significantly reduce the number of cars that will need to transition to EV. For example, in a recent transport discussion paper, the Institute for Sensible Transport estimated that at current rates of growth, Greater Bendigo will have 38,000 more cars by 2045. This increased traffic would be a significant cost to our community and to road budgets and could be avoided if public transport and active travel choices are available.

In addition, in 2021 approximately 14% of the Bendigo population (17,000 people), did not have a car, were unable to drive due to their age or ability, or were likely to be less confident drivers due to their age. The EV transition will not support these residents to get to the places they need to go. Instead transport choice and transport equity will be facilitated by improved public transport services and places that support walking and cycling.

⁸ *National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Standards and Requirements* – Federal Register of the United States Government <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/02/28/2023-03500/national-electric-vehicle-infrastructure-standards-and-requirements>