

**MUNICIPAL PROFILE**

The City of Greater Bendigo covers an area of approximately 2,995 square kilometres and is located in north central Victoria 150 kilometres north west of Melbourne. It adjoins the municipalities of Campaspe, Strathbogie, Mitchell, Mount Alexander and Loddon. The municipality is located within the Murray-Darling Basin, the North Central Catchment region and the catchments of the Loddon and Campaspe Rivers.

Bendigo is one of Victoria's leading regional cities. It is Victoria's third largest urban centre outside metropolitan Melbourne and the major centre for north central Victoria. Projected population growth on current rates is for the city to reach 144,800 people by 2031 (*Victoria in Future*, 2015). The *Loddon Mallee South Regional Growth Plan* (2014) has an aspirational population target for Greater Bendigo of 200,000 persons by 2041.

Greater Bendigo performs a regional service role with construction, manufacturing, health care, education and financial services being the major contributors to economic output. Mining, retailing and tourism also continue to play an important role for the municipality and represent an important link to the development of central Victoria. The regional hinterland surrounding Bendigo contains diverse agricultural activities, natural resources, and a number of townships, Heathcote being the largest. Bendigo's economic and social influence extends well beyond the municipality's border.

The municipality is located strategically in the centre of the State and with a well-connected network of highways and railways that provide important social and economic links to other parts of Victoria and interstate. Improvements to the transport infrastructure with the duplication of the Calder Highway and the Regional Rail project have improved the competitive strengths of Bendigo and the region.

Greater Bendigo presents a complex land use planning environment that is underpinned by its increasing desirability as a place to live, greater accessibility to the Melbourne employment market, a significant heritage stock of buildings and places, a unique landscape setting, and the ongoing need to provide employment opportunities.

Bendigo is known as the "city in the forest" with an urban area that is virtually encircled by box ironbark forest that is both publicly and privately owned. This physical setting has constrained growth in certain areas and directed growth into a number of distinct corridors. This has led to a focus on infill as a solution to accommodating growth.

Bendigo's residential and industrial land supply has historically been met by the development of a series of sites scattered throughout the existing urban area and through traditional greenfield development. Many of these locations are constrained in terms of expansion, environmental risk, and transport access. Looking ahead, residential development is being focused in a limited number of greenfield sites and by extensive infill opportunities while existing industrial areas will be consolidated and a new major node in Marong will take advantage of access to major transit and freight corridors.

Greater Bendigo's heritage is of outstanding historical, social, aesthetic, architectural and scientific significance. Our heritage assets play an important industrial and tourism role for the municipality and represent an important link to the initial development of central Victoria.

Aboriginal clans occupied the forests and plains of the area, before the arrival of pastoralists in the later 1830s and 1840s and still maintain a connection to this country. The discovery of gold in the municipal area in the early 1850s generated an extraordinary period of development. It brought diggers and settlers to Greater Bendigo, who established a rich and culturally diverse society. The expansion and influence of gold mining also impacted on the development of industry, manufacturing and commerce. The municipal landscape of today reflects all these layers of history and culture, in the spatial layout of urban areas, agricultural land, and natural environments.