



# Bendigo Sustainability Group



## 2022 - 2025 Strategy

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The Bendigo Sustainability Group acknowledges that we undertake activities on Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country.

The Bendigo Sustainability Group acknowledges and extends our appreciation for the Dja Dja Wurrung People, the Traditional Owners of the land that we are standing on today.

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 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.

# Committee's foreword

Since we began in 2007, The Bendigo Sustainability Group has built a reputation as a leader in ground-up change making.

We are an independent, not-for-profit, apolitical and community focused organisation. Our goal is to create a supportive culture – for understanding, inspiration, action and hope – from which the wider Bendigo community can grow a sustainable future together.

BSG makes significant contributions each year to all aspects of sustainability in our region through involvement in a range of projects and action groups.

We are proud and invigorated by what the past and present members have achieved over the last 14 years, and we now see an even brighter future through innovation, leadership and community empowerment.



# The Bendigo Sustainability Group

The Bendigo Sustainability Group (BSG) is an organisation that brings people together who have a shared interest in sustainable living in Bendigo.

The group began in 2007 and has since built a reputation as a leader in grass roots change making. The BSG is an apolitical, independent, and community focused not-for-profit organisation and supports a range of action groups who work on specific sustainability issues related to local environment, community and culture, health and wellbeing, and creating a sustainable economy. For more than 14 years the BSG has taken and supported action in these areas.

## BSG purpose

The BSG exists to support the wider Bendigo community to grow a sustainable future together, through the implementation of sustainable practices and projects; community education and inspiration.

## Vision

In moving beyond 2022, BSG will become a community leader in sustainability.

## Our strategic plan

Our strategic plan aligns closely with the Greater Bendigo +25 Community Plan: Greater Bendigo 2036 Liveable, Productive, Sustainable [https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2016-08/Greater\\_Bendigo\\_Community\\_Plan\\_2036\\_4\\_page\\_summary.pdf](https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2016-08/Greater_Bendigo_Community_Plan_2036_4_page_summary.pdf) including the need to engage with communities, improve liveability, enhance wellbeing and fairness and improve environmental sustainability for Bendigo. To that end, our strategic plan also aligns with the One Planet Principles and the City of Greater Bendigo Climate Change and Environment Strategy 2021 - 2026 <https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-10/Climate%20Change%20and%20Environment%20Strategy%202021-26.pdf>

The CoGB Vision from their Climate Change and Environment Strategy document states:

*The 2021-26 Climate Change and Environment Strategy has been designed to align with the community vision for Greater Bendigo. This recognises that the success of Greater Bendigo is inextricably tied to the health of our environment and the sustainability of our systems. Without these, we cannot have a healthy, sustainable and prosperous community.*

## Alignment with other strategies in our region

Our strategy recognises that there are many organisations in the region who are working on sustainability. This strategy has been designed to align with the strategic objectives of other organisations within the region on issues such as: water, environment, health and wellbeing, renewables, waste, biodiversity, food, sustainability, equity and local culture. We will seek to work alongside these organisations to ensure we are working towards the same shared goals of a liveable and sustainable Bendigo.

Whenever possible, the BSG will align with other new regional strategies as they emerge and seek to partner with the region's key organisations and community groups.

## Strategic areas of focus

This strategic plan focuses on four key areas, each with clear goals and indicators:

1. Empower people to act
2. Demonstrate sustainability in action
3. Partner to extend our impact
4. Develop our organisation



# Strategy area 1: Empower people to act

## Context

Our community, like others across the world, continues to face environmental challenges like climate change, maintaining water quality, and biodiversity loss. The BSG has long driven and enabled action on projects to combat these challenges, which has enhanced the social and environmental wellbeing of Bendigo and surrounds.

Over the last 10 years, we have helped 800+ people purchase solar systems for their homes, community groups and businesses, held community festivals, established green teams in local businesses and built a network of reliable local suppliers to help many households to refit their homes with energy saving upgrades.

The BSG currently provides a platform for grass roots action on sustainability issues that impact all of us. It also auspices many action groups and programs, including:

- | <u>Programs</u>   | <u>Action Groups</u>   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Community Scale Solar – Community Power Hub</li><li>▪ Residential and Commercial Solar &amp; Battery Storage</li><li>▪ Docos for a Difference</li><li>▪ Sustainability at the Pub</li><li>▪ Waste Education &amp; Communication</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Bendigo Family Nature Club</li><li>▪ Bendigo Repair Café</li></ul> |

The community's need for up-to-date information, knowledge, and use of sophisticated tools is growing and expected to grow over the future. BSG can evolve to meet these needs as the region transitions to a more sustainable future

## Goal

The goals of this strategy area is:

- The BSG is available to provide the tools and knowledge to support community members who come to BSG to form and create sustainability action.
- BSG will seek to auspice and support newly forming and small ongoing programs, groups and / or projects where BSG is an active partner and where there is a clear alignment of values and purpose.

## Indicators

The indicators of success are:

- Increased number of community actions
- Increased number of community groups utilising BSG's tools and resources
- Supported action groups to become independent organisations

## Strategy area 2: Demonstrate sustainability in action

### Context

The BSG has a history of projects and events that people in the region can come to see. Events such as the Sustainability Festival, Sustainable House Day, demonstration of solar panels in public areas, and tree planting days allow people to be involved first-hand.

First-hand experience is an integral part of encouraging adoption of environmental sustainability actions on a community scale. Eco-tourism research indicates that when a person experiences the natural environment or environmental projects first-hand, they are more likely to change their behaviour and adopt environmental sustainability actions<sup>1</sup>.

The BSG currently holds events such as Docos for a Difference, which regularly show films and discussions about environmental sustainability action. We have also held sessions such as the Residential Efficiency Score Card assessment where people can bring along their home designs and get an expert opinion on how they can improve their energy rating. BSG has also undertaken energy efficiency assessments and solar installations on low income and social housing.

The BSG intends to continue hosting and supporting these events to encourage a future where adoption of sustainability actions is business as usual for Bendigo.

### Goals

The goals of this strategy area are:

- People in Bendigo will see sustainability projects up close – demystified and normalised
- People in Bendigo will be more inspired and feel more confident in investing in sustainable products

### Indicator

The indicators of success are:

- Minimum of two demonstration events each year
- Demonstrate improved sustainability within BSG offices and facilities
- Increased number (Health regulations permitting) of community members at BSG sustainability demonstrations
- Increased statistical analysis of BSG activities showing increased numbers of attendees, uptake of demonstration projects, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Zeppel, H., (2008) Education and Conservation Benefits of Marine Wildlife Tours: Developing Free-Choice Learning Experiences, *The Journal of Environmental Education*, Vol 39, Issue 3.

## Strategy area 3: Partner to extend our impact

### Context

The BSG is a nimble, grass roots connected organisation that can work with agencies, businesses, not-for-profits and community groups to take action in ways that are cost effective, embraced by the community, and free from bureaucracy.

The actions that are driven and supported by the BSG fulfil the strategic priorities set by many regional organisations. Likewise, other organisations are driving action on sustainability that fulfil the vision of the BSG community.

The BSG recognises that fruitful partnerships with organisations like the CoGB and local businesses will lead to bigger and better sustainability action. Working together, we can make our collective action and advice have a stronger impact across our communities. BSG intends to pursue a future of partnering with other organisations including: DELWP, RDV, North Central Catchment Management Authority, Coliban Water, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance, the Community Power Hub, Bendigo Manufacturing Group, Be.Bendigo, banks, social and cultural organisations, investors and education providers.

### Goal

The goal of this strategy area is:

- BSG to form effective and beneficial partnerships that lead to stronger and more integrated action on sustainability.

### Indicators

Indicators of success are:

- Increased number of individual relationships between BSG committee members and staff/members of partner organisations
- Increased and regular engagements/meetings with existing and potential partners
- Increased recognition of BSG's involvement in regional activities





## Strategy area 4: Develop our organisation

### Context

BSG is a community grounded, volunteer-based organisation that has developed with limited resources over the last 10 years. While this is a major strength, it also presents challenges including succession, volunteer burnout, and continuity.

BSG's ability to provide quality and timely action has fluctuated according to the capacity of the committee and the ability to resource paid staff. BSG needs to build its reputation and its brand to cement itself as a leader in environmental sustainability. Growing and maturing will involve development of good governance arrangements, strong processes, consistent messaging and the resources to do what we say we will do.

To achieve this strategy the BSG must evolve as an organisation in order to achieve funding for base level operations and administration. Current income streams have improved but are limited and/or tied to annual grants for specific projects (e.g. the Community Power Hub) or annual grants from the CoGB and membership fees, which are not sufficient to cover all operation and administration costs. Therefore, ongoing base funding will be sought and commercial opportunities explored.

### Goals

The goals of this strategy area are:

- Increase our membership and increase our communication with the membership
- Diversify income streams
- Secure continuous base funding
- Develop a plan for a social enterprise arm of the BSG
- Leverage funding opportunities
- Be recognised and respected as a leader, facilitator and reliable advocate for a range of environmental and sustainability issues
- Broaden reputation and expertise in other fields
- Support and inspire innovation
- Install appropriate governance structures for BSG's future growth

### Indicators

Indicators of success are:

- Hold an annual members forum, separate from the AGM
- Seek to increase membership by approximately 20%
- Dedicated paid resourcing for BSG
- Agreed model towards a social enterprise arm of BSG
- Existence of multiple income streams and leveraged funding
- Measured success of branding and reputation: recognition, media articles, stories,

- Appropriate diversity of Committee members: knowledge, expertise, demographic
- Regular community survey showing the BSG is a trusted voice for its community

## Next Steps:

In order to further understand which activities the BSG will invest time and resources into and therefore where to seek funding and resources, the BSG Committee will need to undertake ongoing planning work. This will include the process of reviewing existing governance to ensure policies and documentation is fit for purpose, up to date and able to support BSG's future role.

Next steps include to:

- review and develop policies, procedures and guidelines in line with BSG's future sustainable direction
- explore appropriate models for commercial activity, including establishing a solar energy rolling fund
- develop a focussed BSG led 'Circular Economy, Waste and Recycling' Group
- stipulate specific goals and objectives for agreed and identified activities
- develop an annual operations plan
- develop a Communications Plan
- develop a monitoring and Evaluation program for all of BSG's activities

All of these documents will then form part of BSG's four-year Strategic Plan.