

WELL CATERED FOR



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- Our services, plus more.

Latest healthy catering guide to go

Egg and lettuce sandwiches now have some serious competition in the catering stakes.

The fresh and fabulous flavours of Karen Lady House are now officially endorsed as a healthy option for your next gathering.

The local eatery has joined the 2026 Greater Bendigo Healthy Catering Guide, developed by the BCHS Health Promotion team, in collaboration with City of Greater Bendigo.

The guide features a host of local food businesses who offer healthy options for workplaces, weddings, parties, anything – from classic café favourites to traditional tapas.

Health Promotion Officer Sebastian says Karen Lady House joins Little Sangria as the two cultural cuisines to receive the guide's tick of high health.



Acknowledgement of Country

Bendigo Community Health Services acknowledge we live, work and enjoy Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We extend our appreciation to the Djaara and Taungurung peoples. We pay respect to Elders past and present for their continued holding of memories, traditions, culture and community aspirations. We recognise sovereignty has never been ceded and express our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of colonisation and their lasting impact. May we walk forward together in harmony and the spirit of healing. It was and always will be Aboriginal land.



We support people to develop and maintain their personal, gender, sexual, cultural religious and spiritual identity.

Choose Karen cuisine and more for tasty, healthy share options

FROM PAGE 1

Karen Lady House proprietor Paw Kee has been dishing up delicious stir-fries and curries in Bendigo for more than six years, firstly as a home-based caterer, then from her colourful café in Lyttleton Terrace.

“It started as a hobby, cooking at home, then for community as a volunteer, then as a home catering business for four years. Then, people wanted my food every day,” Paw Kee says on the motivation to open in the CBD two-and-a-half years ago.

She says her traditional dishes are loaded with fresh vegetables and herbs.

“I want to take some of our Karen food to others,” she says on joining the local guide.

Sebastian says all menu items in the guide have been assessed through the Healthy Eating Advisory Services’ online ‘FoodChecker’ tool as having GREEN and AMBER classifications, to guarantee a great choice for any catering needs.

Find your copy [online at this link](#) or QR code.



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organisation’



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Program seeks funds

Support for those experiencing homelessness must continue beyond pilot program

Bendigo Community Health Services' InRoads program is taking some of the city's most vulnerable people from the "too hard basket" into the health care system.

The InRoads team connects people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to health services.

Over the past year, InRoads community connectors at Bendigo Library and BCHS' Hargreaves St site, plus a dedicated nurse practitioner have:

- Supported more than 70 people over more than 1000 hours
- Supported more than 300 appointments
- Made more than 230 internal and external referrals
- Contributed to housing stability for 14 people.

InRoads Program Leader Clare Woods said more than half the people supported had either never connected with BCHS or hadn't received medical care for at least five years.

"This is despite people experiencing homelessness often having high levels of mental ill health, chronic disease and pain," she said.

BCHS is highlighting InRoads' successes in a bid to secure vital funds for its continuation.



InRoads program staff Rhi, Karl and Clare outside the Bendigo Library.

Homelessness high in Bendigo

The most recent Census found 571 people were experiencing homelessness in Greater Bendigo: a 94 per cent increase since 2016 and four times the state average.

Clare said many of those people were in the CBD, and visited the Bendigo Library, and InRoads was designed to make it easy for them to get the right supports at the right time.

Bendigo Library a welcoming hub

Clare said libraries like Bendigo's were community sanctuaries that fostered learning, literacy and creativity, and that welcomed everyone.

"People from all walks of life access the library for a whole range of reasons, including our clients, so it's the ideal place to meet them," Clare said.

"The library is a neutral place that is non-clinical. There is no triage or reception desk.

"Embedding a community connector in the library has opened a network of cross-sector relationships we couldn't have engineered within the walls of a health service.

"The program acknowledges that life is messy but that shouldn't impact people's ability to access basic healthcare."

Permanent funding needed

Work is now underway to secure funds for the program to continue past June, 2026.

"We've proven this program works, and is vitally important," Clare said.

"It's also a wonderful example of diverse organisations working together towards shared goals, in this case BCHS, Goldfields Libraries and the City of Greater Bendigo."

For more information or to express support, email clarewoods@bchs.com.au

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2  ILLUMIN8: Festival of Light & Peace @ the Great Stupa
3 	4  National Family Day Care Week starts	5	6	7	8	9 Bendigo Bricks - Prince of Wales Showgrounds 
10  Mother's Day	11 White Hills Wanderers walking group 	12	13 Eaglehawk Explorers walking group 	14	15	16
17  IDAHOBIT Day	18 National Volunteer Week starts	19	20	21	22 	23 Exercise Right Week starts
24	25	26 National Sorry Day 	27 National Reconciliation Week starts 	28	29	30
31 World No Tobacco Day 						

What's on in May...

Bling bling in the Borough

The beautiful BCHS Eaglehawk site has been shortlisted for a Victorian Architecture Award.

The work of EBD Artichects transformed a 50-year-old building into a modern health service setting that's transforming lives.

CEO Mandy Hutchinson said; "We are living with the legacy of quality, considered, evidence-informed design each day, and it's making a remarkable difference to how we deliver healthcare, how we embrace and welcome community, and respect our staff and clients."

Congratulations to lead architect Darragh O'Brien - BCHS will be watching the outcome with keen interest!



MINIBEASTS IN EAGLEHAWK



It takes some serious patience to find the Whipstick's twig-mimicking Katydid. For obvious reasons. But there's not much about the forest on Eaglehawk's fringe that evades Michael Barkla (above).

The BCHS client of almost 50 years – and local field naturalist – has spent decades documenting this rarest of environments, and its beasts big and miniscule.

A selection of Michael's photographs of Whipstick invertebrates and flora are currently on show in the BCHS Eaglehawk site, delighting clients and staff.

"There's such a range of insects that exist there, and I feel a need for people to know about them," Michael says of sharing his work.

He says knowledge leads to care, and in his case, a life-long passion to protect the forest.

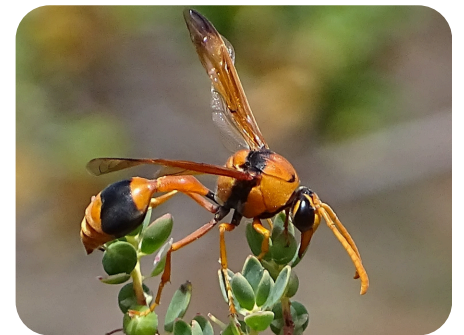


Michael says drought conditions over the past ten years have drastically cut the Whipstick's flying biomass and fragile flora – put further at risk by fire, whether natural or managed burns. And so, he shares his passion in a bid to protect the bush.

"I've got evidence of nearly 530 invertebrate species that I've identified in there," he says.

"It's unique. There's nowhere else in the world where this group of insects and spiders are together.

"Identifying them is part of the fun. There's up to seven species in there that have not been found anywhere else in Victoria."



"It's a matter of going out there and looking and looking and looking, and you've got to be patient," he says.

"You've got to have a lot of patience to photograph them."

Michael says bringing a little bit of the Whipstick to community is a way for others to see and appreciate its charms.

View the weird and wonderful, from jewelled beetles to bright butterflies, delicate orchids to wingless moths, now on the big screens in the Eaglehawk site waiting room, with thanks to valued client Michael.



smalltalk playgroups are open for Term 2

Bendigo families can join one of three supported playgroups for fun and learning this term, at:

- Kangaroo Flat: Mondays, 9.30–11.30am at Kidzspace, 19 Helm Street.
- Huntly: Tuesdays, 10am–12am at the Huntly Primary School.
- California Gully: Fridays, 9.30–11.30am at the California Gully Primary School.

smalltalk supported playgroups are a free service for local families.

Groups run during school terms and include a healthy morning snack for the children.

Why attend?

“It’s one of the best things,” says mum and playgroup member Renee.

There are some eligibility requirements to joining, which can be found on our [smalltalk page](#).

Contact the team to book your place, call 5406 1200 or email smalltalk@bchs.com.au

SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

Nova House

Detox unit is home away-from-home



Nova House staff Amanda, John and Jodie in the unit kitchen.

Did you know that BCHS runs a five-bed drug and alcohol detox unit? It’s called Nova House, and is more like a home than a medical facility.

Nova has all the comforts of home, including lovely gardens and calm living spaces.

Here are some things you might like to know about Nova:

- It’s for people of all genders, aged 18+, to safely detox from drugs and/or alcohol.
- The average stay is 7 days.
- There is 24-hour in-house support from nurses, welfare workers, and our smoochy therapy cat, Bruce.

Here’s what some of our past clients have said about the house:

“Nova is a great place to detox. It feels homely and comfortable and having Bruce the cat around helped to keep me calm.”

“Every single staff member was well informed, caring, helpful and were lovely to be around. They listened to me and I felt heard.”

For more info call 5406 1200.

UPGRADE FOR A 1970S-ERA CLINIC IS ON THE WAY...

Bendigo Community Health Services' Pharmacotherapy Clinic has been awarded \$1 million to create a space that matches its quality of care.

BCHS AOD and Mental Health Services Operations Manager Cilla Boucher said the grant would fund a total refurbishment of the clinic.

"With this funding our opioid treatment service can enter a new era," she said.

"We can't wait to create a building that is welcoming, modern, safe, accessible, and in keeping with what our community deserves."

With just two consult rooms to use for sometimes upwards of 35 clients a day, the small Kangaroo Flat site has been taking care of some of Bendigo's most vulnerable people for decades, delivering Opioid Dependence Treatment since 1992.

BCHS CEO Mandy Hutchinson said a lack of functional space and privacy were just two reasons the grant was applied for through the state government's Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Capital Renewal Fund.

"We have long been advocating for funds to improve the infrastructure of our sites and I am so grateful to the state government for this funding," Mandy said.

"We value dignity, respect and inclusion, and all of our clients deserve to be looked after in a space that reflects that."



BCHS leaders Cilla, Mandy, Naveen and Carlotta with Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards (centre).

BCHS Practice Manager Community Pharmacotherapy Carlotta Standen said her team was excited about the grant and all the good they can do with it.

"Our clients deserve a welcoming and safe space that is fit for purpose," Carlotta said.

"We are planning on expanding the number of consult rooms so we can provide more care to people more often."

"People cycle through readiness when it comes to getting treatment and the demand for our services is there."

"This service allows us to help people change their lives."

"It allows more stability in people's lives."

"It allows them to get back to study, to get back to work, to just get back to functioning in a better way for them, whatever that entails."

Navigating puberty session for families in May

The BCHS Health Promotion team are hosting an online info session for parents and caregiver in Greater Bendigo. The event will provide information and resources to promote ongoing chats with children around puberty.

It will cover:

- LGBTIQA+ information
- Changes in puberty (physical, emotional & social)
- Conception
- Consent
- Online safety
- Pornography.

headspace Bendigo HEY Diversity Worker Maree Dixon will be a guest presenter.
Registrations are free and essential [via eventbrite](#)



THE POWER OF EXERCISING



By Exercise
Physiologist
Ashleigh Oliver

Exercise is commonly associated with athletic performance, weight loss or physical appearance, but its true value goes far beyond that.

Regular physical activity plays a crucial role in maintaining both physical and mental health, making it one of the most powerful habits you can build into your daily routine.

From a physical perspective, exercise can improve heart health, improve circulation, and boosts overall endurance.

It helps regulate weight, supports muscle and bone health, and reduces the risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Even moderate activity, when done consistently, can lead to noticeable improvements in energy levels and overall wellbeing.

The mental health benefits of exercise are just as significant.

Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins, often referred to as "feel-good" hormones, which can help reduce stress, anxiety and symptoms of depression.



Exercise can also improve our sleep quality, sharpen focus, and provide a sense of accomplishment, all of which contribute to a more positive mindset.

One of the biggest misconceptions about exercise is that it requires a gym membership or expensive equipment.

In reality, you can create effective workouts using everyday items found around your home.

For example, our own body weight, water bottles or canned goods can serve as light weights for strength training.

A sturdy chair can be used for sit-to-stands and a sturdy step can be used for step ups and calf raises.

Alternatively light weights and resistance bands can be purchased at a reasonable price and can be utilised in many ways.

Resistance bands are also super practical to pack in your suitcase to take on holidays!

Additionally, simple activities like climbing stairs, doing household chores at a faster pace, or following online workout videos in your living room can provide excellent physical benefits.

The key is consistency and creativity. By incorporating exercise into your routine no matter how simple you invest in both your body and mind, building a healthier, more balanced life.

If you feel like you need more tailored advice to incorporate exercise into your daily life to help manage your health conditions or injuries please reach out to an Accredited Exercise Physiologist.

To access our Exercise Physiology service at Bendigo Community Health Services you will require a referral.

To find out more about what our Exercise Physiology team offer at Bendigo Community Health offer visit our website www.bchs.com.au or call 5406 1200.

Or, simply scan this QR code.



BOOKS ARE OPEN IN THE HUB

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Hub in Hargreaves Street has appointment openings for new and existing clients.

Ready to talk about **menopause or perimenopause**?

Need to know your **contraception options**?

The team is now welcoming bookings for these services and more. The hub provides outstanding care and service for a myriad ages and stages of life.

They're specialists in their fields, and many services are either free or low cost.

FAST STI/CST service

Need a swift STI test?

Are you due for a cervical screening?

The Hub is your go-to place for safe service.



Unplanned pregnancy support

Speak directly with a trained nurse to understand your options and to book an urgent appointment with us for:

- Non-directive pregnancy options (pro-choice)
- Medical abortions
- Referral for surgical abortions.

And so much more

See the [BCHS' SRH Hub webpage](#) for the full list of services.

And don't hesitate to pick up the phone and make an appointment on 5406 1200. Pictured about are some of our friendly Hub staff.

Paying it forward to Food Share

A drive to collect for people experiencing food stress has seen a whopping 250kgs of pantry staples donated to Bendigo Food Share.

BCHS initiated the drive for Pay it Forward Day in April, inviting fellow local workplaces to contribute.

Thanks to Bendigo Sustainability Group, Women's Health Loddon Mallee, Barbecues Galore, MacKillop Family Services, Annie North and Bendigo UFS for answering the call and taking part.

For information on accessing food relief or donating directly to Bendigo Foodshare, visit bendigofoodshare.org.au



CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

headspace Bendigo (and BCHS!) are getting ready to rep for the 2026 Push-Up Challenge and we challenge you to join us.

Running from June 3-26, the headspace Bendigo team 'Stronger Together' is aiming to complete 3,307 push-ups to honour the 3,307 lives lost to suicide in Australia in 2024.

It's free, it's fun and here are some fast facts:

- It's raising funds for those in our community who sometimes find the weight of their mental health too much.
- headspace Bendigo is proud to be one of three official beneficiaries of the challenge. In recent years they've put any funds raised towards their Fitness and Nutrition Coaching program.
- You can replace push-ups with sit-ups, squats and other alternatives to suit your fitness level.

In 10 years the challenge has raised more than \$60 million for mental health charities, plus more than 1 billion push-ups have been smashed out.



To join the team visit [The Push-Up Challenge - headspace Bendigo Stronger Together](#) and click the orange "Join us" button then follow the registration process.

To make headspace Bendigo your centre beneficiary, follow the registration process and when asked to select a beneficiary select the headspace logo then use the drop down box to navigate to Victoria and then select headspace Bendigo.



Big thanks to the Camp Hill kids

Sending lots of love to the kids at Camp Hill Primary School, whose recent Harmony Day celebration raised enough money to provide two newly-arrived Karen children of refugee background with all they need to start school in Bendigo.

Ku Htee and co from our Settlement Services team thanks you all - what a ripper group of kids to think of others in this way. Their kind efforts are Harmony Day in action.

Anyone can easily likewise make a tax-deductible donation to support children in need via our services. Simply go to the [Donate page at www.bchs.com.au](#)

Child safety commitment

Bendigo Community Health Services values children from all backgrounds. We are dedicated to making our community a safe, nurturing and welcoming place for children to grow and develop. We are committed to making sure ALL children reach their individual potential. We will do this by supporting families to keep children safe, healthy, happy; helping families support children to reach their full potential; and effectively advocating for children and being a champion for quality outcomes in child health and wellbeing. Visit [bchs.com.au](#) to read our child safety commitment in full.



Our services

We run a wide range of services for people of all ages, backgrounds, genders and lived experiences. How can we help you and your family?

Doctors & Specialists:

- GPs & nurses
- Sexual & Reproductive Health Hub
- Endometriosis & Pelvic Pain Clinic
- Trans & Gender Diverse Clinic
- Doctors in Secondary Schools
- Chronic Disease Management

Allied Health:

- Exercise Physiology
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Paediatric Podiatry

Youth:

- headspace Bendigo

Children & Families:

- Family Services
- Children's Health Services
- Loddon Children's Health & Wellbeing Local
- Bendigo Family Day Care
- Stepping Stones Early Childhood Intervention program
- School Readiness Program
- smalltalk Supported Playgroups

Former Refugees & Migrants:

- Settlement Services
- Cultural Diversity programs to build health and wellbeing literacy
- Community Harmony Program to build refugee & migrant-sensitive practice

Counselling & Mental Health:

- Counselling
- Culturally Sensitive Counselling
- Forensic Mental Health

Alcohol & Drugs:

- Counselling
- Family Support Group
- Residential Withdrawal
- Home-Based Withdrawal
- Pharmacotherapy
- Needle Syringe Program

In the Community:

- Health Promotion in schools, workplaces, clubs and at events
- Workplace Health & Wellbeing Program
- Elmore Social Support Group
- InRoads Community Connections program for people experiencing homelessness
- Community Health Nurse at the Bendigo Multidisciplinary Centre



5406 1200



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You don't need to be an expert.

Ask.
Listen.
Believe.



**ARE YOU
SAFE AT
HOME?**

A campaign by
**SAFE+
EQUAL**

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This May, start the conversation
to help **end family violence.**