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### **Our office**

18 Myers Street, Bendigo 3550  
9:00am – 5:00pm Monday to Friday  
(03) 5441 2666

[www.amicus.org.au](http://www.amicus.org.au)

# A message from our CEO

ANN-MAREE DAVIS

## Welcome to 2021 and our first edition of the Amicus Exchange for this year!

After a difficult 2020, I know that so many of us were looking forward to a fresh start and hoping for a year with no COVID-19. Unfortunately this was not the case as we responded to a short notice lockdown in mid-February.

As you would imagine this requires a lot of work to follow up with all of our participants to make sure their needs were met during the lockdown, and I would like to thank the large team who worked into the evening on the date of the announcement to make sure that we had the right supports in place during that time.

The rollout of COVID-19 vaccine has commenced across Australia and we hope that this will reduce the occurrence of future lockdowns and there is further news regarding this in the following pages.

We were due to have our auditors from Quantam visit us onsite during lockdown to undertake our accreditation against the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Framework. The audit was changed at late notice to remote format and I again thank staff who coordinated this and our participants, families and staff who participated in interviews with the auditors and were flexible in moving to phone interviews.

We had a great result for our audit and were recommended for certification against the standards as well as achieving a best practice recognition for our new approach to incidents, complaints and investigation, with the new role that commenced in November of last year.

The transition to the new framework has been a very big piece of work and whether we are receiving or delivering NDIS supports there have been some very big changes we have all needed to learn about. We all have something to celebrate with this outcome. Well done team!



As mentioned in the December newsletter all of our participants and families have the opportunity to be involved in the development of our next Strategic Plan, which we are currently working on. As it is also time to get your feedback through our annual survey, we have combined both into one survey.

For participants who have their newsletter mailed, a paper survey with a return envelope will be provided with this newsletter. For those who receive their newsletter electronically a link will be included in the email for you to complete online. If you would like some assistance to complete the survey you can call the Pathways team on **5441 2666** who will be more than happy to assist.

Lastly, after a few delays with building permits our SDA units are about to commence in March and later in the newsletter you will find out more about SDA and eligibility and how to express your interest or finding out more information.

2021 is shaping up to be a big and exciting year for Amicus and we look forward to working with you to live your good life!

**Ann-Maree Davis**  
*Amicus CEO*

# COVID-19 information and updates

## COVID-19 VACCINE ROLL OUT

The COVID-19 vaccine is free and voluntary. The Commonwealth Department of Health has published a dedicated web page for people with disability.

This page will be regularly updated as more details are confirmed but is a great resource for our participants and their families and our team.

The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine started on 22 February and will occur in a phased approach for our sector with the first phase (1a) aimed at:

- A person with disability living in residential accommodation (in settings with two or more people with disability only).
- A paid worker providing support to people living in residential accommodation with two or more people with disability.



The next priority group (1b) will include some people with disability, who are at greater risk of becoming very sick with COVID-19, including:

- People with disability aged 70 and over
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability
- People with disability with underlying medical conditions such as:
  - Immunocompromised
  - Multiple comorbidities
  - Chronic lung disease
  - Diabetes
  - Cardiovascular disease
  - Severe obesity

Other priority groups include quarantine and healthcare workers, elderly people and workers in aged care homes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and frontline emergency workers.

This information has been developed into easy read and Auslan which we have shared on our Facebook page.



## REMINDER TO KEEP PRACTICING GOOD HYGIENE

You must always carry a face mask with you when you leave home unless you have a lawful reason not to.

**To minimise the risk of contracting COVID-19 you should continue to:**



Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating and after going to the toilet.



Avoid physical contact with others where possible (touching, kissing, hugging etc.).



Use alcohol-based hand sanitiser often.



Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze and dispose of tissues.

## RESTRICTIONS UPDATE

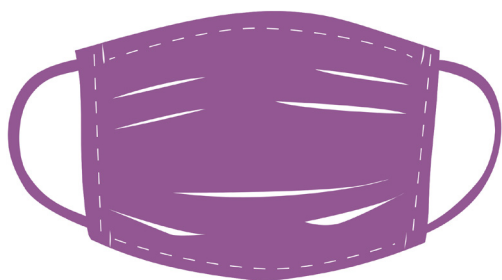
Victoria has returned to COVIDSafe settings as of 26 February 2021.

### Current restrictions

- The limit on the number of people gathering in a household is 30 people per day.
- Public gatherings with friends and family are up to 100 people.
- Face masks are only required in the following settings:
  - On public transport
  - When riding in a rideshare or taxi
  - Large retail stores such as supermarkets, shopping centres and department stores
  - At hospitals or in a care facility
  - When you cannot physically distance from others

As restrictions ease, it's important that we continue to act to keep ourselves and others safe.

At Amicus, we are extremely proud of our response as an organisation and that we have had no staff or participants contract COVID-19.



### Restrictions applicable for the disability sector

Please note that the situation is fluid and the details could change.

### Visitors to SDA

Some visitor restrictions have changed for community-based residential services, which includes eligible Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA):

- One household may visit a resident in a care facility once per day.
- Secure welfare services for children no longer have limits on the number of family members that can visit.
- Existing exceptions allowing visits to care facilities continue (parent, guardian, partner, carer, support person, end-of-life, interpreters).

There are no other changes to excluded persons and requirements for visitor declaration.

### Face masks

Face masks must be worn by all staff, contractors and volunteers working in disability services, both indoors and outdoors. All visitors must also wear a fitted face mask at all times indoors and outdoors where physical distancing is not possible.

### Testing

Anyone who is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 must isolate and get tested.

### More information

Victorian Government Coronavirus website:  
[www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au)

The DFFH website:  
[www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus](http://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus)  
or call **1800 675 398**

NDS Victorian COVID-19 Response Hub  
[www.nds.org.au/covid-19-hub](http://www.nds.org.au/covid-19-hub)

# Participant updates



## HARRIETT GETS CREATIVE

Harriett loves to draw and show off her artwork.

Harriett plans to join a creative art group in the near future to help her develop her skills. Her goal is to one day have her artwork advertised and displayed.



## AMICUS HELPS TO HIT THE ROAD

This young gentleman had a goal to get his Ls and on Christmas Eve he passed, which is the best present he could ask for. After a lot of hard work and studying, he is extremely excited to be able to learn to drive with the help of his L to P mentor.



## EDDIE'S CLOCK

Eddie put together this amazing clock at the Long Gully Men's Shed where he attends weekly with his support worker Rochelle. We think Eddie is very talented!



## LOOK OUT, WE HAVE ANOTHER LEARNER ON THE ROAD!

A young person in Children's Services has been working very hard on passing his learners permit and on the 11th of February he was successful!

We are all very proud of his efforts and will be looking forward to helping him get his hours up.



## HAPPY 21ST BIRTHDAY JOE

Joe had a lot to celebrate over the Christmas holidays. Not only did he enjoy the festive season, he also turned 21!

Joe visited the Maldon steam train, went swimming and was able to celebrate his 21st birthday at a local eatery.



## SUMMER FUN IN MELBOURNE

Recently a team from Children's Services took a family to Melbourne for the weekend.

They spent time playing board games and visited Funfields where they enjoyed the waterslides, getting dunked by giant waves and staff panicking on the pirate ship. It was an enjoyable weekend had by all!



## FAREWELL TO LEIGH AFTER TWO GREAT YEARS

TCP has worked with Leigh over the last two years when he was reunified home to his mother's care. The TCP team have provided a lot of daily support to Leigh and have watched Leigh grow and develop over time.

The staff are very proud of the kind and courageous boy that Leigh has become, but we are now saying goodbye to Leigh and his mother who have recently relocated to Adelaide where they have much-needed support from their family and friends.

This is a great result for Leigh, as he is still so happy being home with mum in his 'forever home.' Pictured here is Leigh at his farewell lunch, where he chose to go to Lazy Moes and have pancakes with loads of ice cream. Well done to all Leigh's care team and thank you!



# Announcements and updates

## WE WANT YOUR INPUT INTO THE AMICUS STRATEGIC PLAN

Amicus has commenced the process of refreshing our Strategic Plan. Building on our successes to date, the Amicus Strategic Plan 2021-24 will set out a clear direction for our work in the years ahead so together we can continue to build a wonderful workplace for our people and create the best possible impact for the communities we serve.

We are partnering with Right Line Consulting, a specialist in strategic planning, that will support us through this rigorous and inclusive process.

Integral to the process is listening to our people, our participants and our community by considering each and every perspective in the development of our new strategy.

You will have the opportunity to contribute to our new Strategic Plan in various ways:

- If you received this newsletter via email, please click the Strategic Plan survey link in the body of the email
- If you received a printed version of this newsletter, you will have also received a hard copy of the survey and a return envelope. Once completed, please return the survey in the envelope.

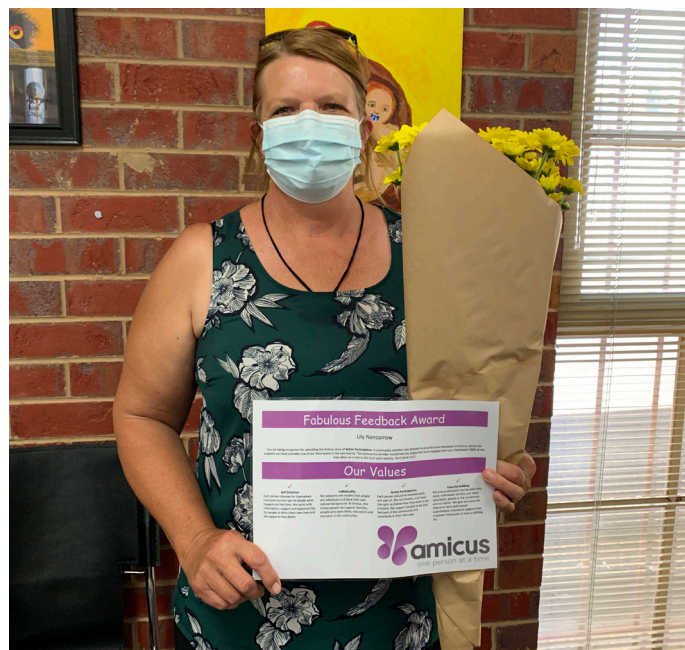


## FABULOUS FEEDBACK

Our Support Worker Lily Nancarrow received some fabulous feedback from a community member.

They contacted us to say they witnessed Lily providing support to one of our participants at the local pool and they were very impressed to see that Lily supported and engaged with the participant 100% of the time.

Well done Lily and thank you for representing Amicus so well by putting the needs of our participants first!



## OUR NEW WAY OF COMMUNICATING

# pendula

At Amicus we have been implementing new software systems and the next exciting development is Pendula.

Pendula is a tool that we can use to communicate with participants, family members and our support workers using SMS or email.

We will be able to more effectively and more quickly contact everyone about code red days, COVID-19 emergencies and service interruptions, and even automatically let you know who will be supporting you over the next 24 hours.

Before we automate any messaging, we will be in contact with you to ensure that you only receive the information and messages that you choose.



# Amicus updates

## WELCOME TO AMICUS

We would like to welcome some new Amicus staff that have joined the team in recent months. We are excited to welcome our new additions and the expertise they bring to the team.

### Quality Team

We are very excited to introduce to you the newest members of our Quality Team.

Paula Yorston, our **Quality Coordinator** and Madolyn Claney-Ranson, our new **Quality Officer**. Paula and Madolyn bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience and we look forward to having them part of our Amicus Team.

Paula has worked in the aged care and disability field for over 25 years, having a strong focus on quality. Her number one priority is improving systems of work to make sure participants are supported.

Madolyn (Mads) has worked for Bendigo Senior Secondary Collage for the past three years in a variety of positions. All her previous roles there included aspects of quality which she enjoyed, and is looking forward to taking on this role.



### SIL Manager

We are excited to announce the appointment of Jess Parker to the role of **SIL Manager**. Jess will commence her new role on March 10.

Jess has been employed with Amicus Group for seven years, most recently she has been in a support coordination role, working with complex participants and families, mentoring staff and managing participants in crisis.

Jess has been supporting individuals one person at a time to achieve their NDIS goals and support their individual choices.

Prior to working for Amicus, Jess worked for the Department of Health and Human and has an extensive history in supporting young people in the residential care system, adults and young people at risk, participants in an outreach setting and has played an active role in supporting children in schools including Kalianna school in Bendigo.



## Payroll and Billing Officer

Robert, our new **Payroll and Billing Officer** has joined Amicus from a local accounting firm and has a background in accounting and bookkeeping.

Robert originally hails from Castlemaine, but now lives in Bendigo. In his free time, he plays the cornet with the Thompson's Foundry Band and the Maldon Brass Band.



## Self-Directed Teams Coach

In December 2020 we appointed Caieta (Cia) Hyde as our new **Self-Directed Teams Coach**.

Cai previously worked at Intereach where she was a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), then Senior LAC and program manager. Cai helped to roll out the NDIS in both the Loddon and Goulburn Regions, including supporting participants to develop their NDIS funding plans and connect to local service providers.

Prior to that Cai worked for Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS), where she supported our local culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community as a Community Development Officer. This included facilitating programs to connect people to local services and create long lasting friendships within the community.

Cai will now be supporting our new staff through their orientation and induction, and our existing staff to further develop their skills in their everyday practice.

Cai works alongside our Behaviour Support Coach, Jodie Duckworth, to support our teams to develop their skills and understand the complexities of our participant's support needs. Cai's vision for her role is to be the go to person for our teams to help build their capacity so they can be the best support workers in the region.



# Information for participants

## HOUSING OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTICIPANTS

In some very exciting news, we will soon have an Amicus housing opportunity for our participants. We will soon be commencing an expression of interest process for our two specialist disability accommodation (SDA) units. Amicus is building two two-bedroom units in North Bendigo and we would like to give our participants the first opportunity to express an interest.

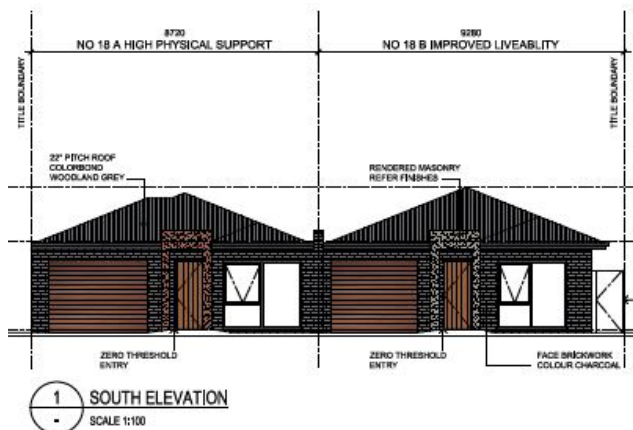
### What is SDA?

SDA is a specialist disability housing solution for NDIS participants with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. SDA is the home, not the support services.

### What sort of SDA are the units?

One unit is High Physical Support, which is designed to incorporate a high level of physical access for people with a significant physical impairment.

The second unit is Improved Liveability, which is designed to include a reasonable level of physical access and enhanced provision around disability needs with additional design features.



### I have SDA funding in my NDIS plan and I am interested, what do I do next?

Please call Melissa Zera (Pathways Capacity and Engagement Manager) at Amicus on **5441 2666**.

### I would like to read more about SDA where should I go?

[www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au) has lots of information on SDA. Visit their website and search 'Specialist Disability Accommodation overview'.

### I don't have SDA funding in my NDIS plan and I am interested, what do I do next?

That's ok, there is plenty of time! Please call Melissa Zera on **5441 2666**. There are lots of housing options and our Pathways and Support Coordination teams are experts in navigating the system and identifying appropriate housing solutions with you. You have time to seek SDA funding if this is the right solution for you. Just give us a call and we can talk through your options.

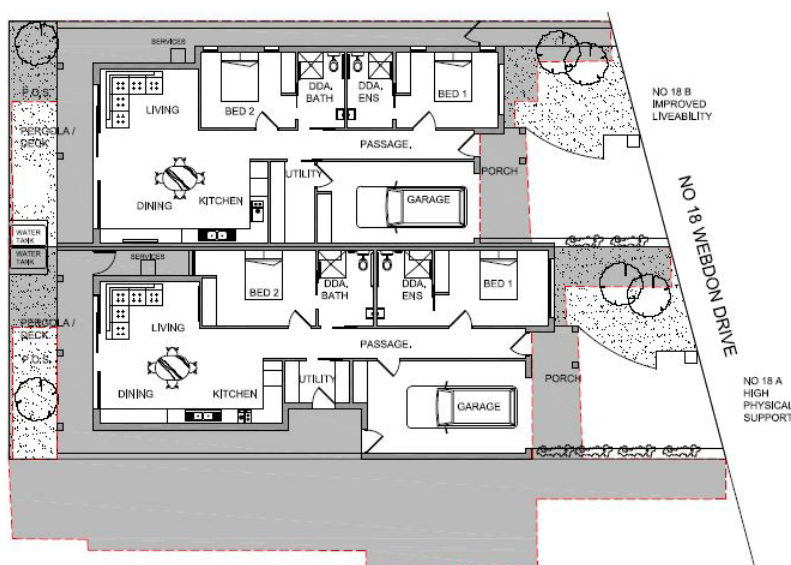
### I need support to live as independently as possible but I don't need SDA, what should I do next?

At Amicus we also provide Supported Independent Living (SIL) services which can provide 24 hour support in your home. If you are eligible for SIL funding or would like to know more about this please contact us on **5441 2666**.

### I have a housing goal in my NDIS plan but don't know what to do next?

Amicus has a highly experienced Support Coordination team, who are experts in housing that can assist you with a plan that suits your needs which may include applying for SDA eligibility and funding.

If you need Support Coordination support please call Amicus and speak to the Pathways team on **5441 2666**.



## AUTISM AWARENESS WEEK

Autism Awareness Week runs from 29 March to 4 April, 2021. During this week look at how we can create a more inclusive community for children and adults living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

We recognise there is still a great need to increase understanding of ASD and what it means to be a fully inclusive community.

Let's talk first about ASD, and how it can affect the lives of the people and families who are diagnosed with it.

### **What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?**

ASD is a lifelong neuro-development condition that, among other things, affects the way people with the condition may relate to their environment and how they interact with other people.

Autism is a spectrum disorder, which means people living with autism experience a range of physical and social difficulties, plus the degree to which each individual is affected varies from person to person.

### **How does interacting with everyday environments affect people with ASD?**

Many people with ASD experience heightened sensory sensitivities around sight, sounds, touch, taste, and smell. Trouble processing sensory stimuli is common among people with ASD but every person is different.

Some people have increased sensitivity to what they feel and see and hear, and others may experience reduced sensitivity or have trouble putting together information from multiple senses at once. Experiencing places with bright lighting, loud environments and busy atmospheres can be particularly overwhelming, painful, or even scary.

### **How can local businesses support individuals with ASD and their families?**

For many of the participants and their families that we support at Amicus, low-sensory shopping times are a welcomed introduction.

We have had multiple families with a child on the spectrum share instances where they have avoided taking children to bustling places such as shopping centers, public events, and waiting rooms because they are too noisy or overstimulating.

The quiet hour concept offers a low-sensory shopping experience designed to be easier on the eyes and ears by reducing background noises, bright and flashing lights, and other distractions in-store.

Businesses who implement a regular quiet time to shop each week with less noise, duller lighting and understanding staff, will really make a difference many families.

### **Who offers a quiet hour in our region?**

A selection of Coles and Woolworths supermarkets across Australia are implementing quiet hours to help customers with sensory processing disorders, such as ASD and other conditions, to have a more enjoyable and inclusive shopping experience.

We welcome this as a progressive step towards community inclusiveness. Currently, Quiet Hour is being trialled at Kangaroo Flat every Tuesday between 10:30am – 11:30am.

You can check if your local Coles and Woolworths supermarket has introduced a quiet hour by viewing the locations at Coles and Woolworths online.

If you know any other businesses from the Central Victoria region who also provide a supportive and inclusive service, shopping or dining environment, OR would like to know what small changes you can make in your own business to be more accessible and inclusive, please let us know at [marketing@amicus.org.au](mailto:marketing@amicus.org.au)

### **How can Amicus help me or my child cope with distressing sensory stimuli?**

Amicus support principles believe that people with ASD and their families are experts in their own lives and work with families to understand how to support each individual best.

We deliver NDIS Supported Independent Living (SIL), skill building supports and higher intensity support, working closely with families to provide continuity of support for people with ASD.

Amicus supports can assist people with ASD and their families work towards their goals, build capacity by learning new skills or refining skills and accessing respite if required.

For more information about our services visit [www.amicus.org.au](http://www.amicus.org.au) or telephone (03) 5441 2666.

## SPEAK UP SESSIONS

Speak Up is an empowerment program for young people with out of home care experience. It is a three-level training program for young people aged 14 to 25 who want to become a CREATE Young Consultant.

Participants learn about the care system and develop advocacy, leadership and public speaking skills.

Young Consultants use their stories and experiences to represent CREATE at local, state or national events and forums.

Speak Up can help young people to:

- Develop more confidence and self-awareness
- Better understand their care experience and the care system
- Strengthen their communication skills and become a part of the CREATE team



The program is designed to empower young people with a care experience to speak up about their own experiences and learn to advocate for change.

Statewide Online Speak Up Level 1  
March 18 and 19, 2021

If you want to gain confidence, learn new skills and meet new people, email [create@create.org.au](mailto:create@create.org.au).



## STAYING SAFE ON THE INTERNET

The internet is an integral part of the digital lives of Aussie teens. While their high use of technology offers many benefits, there is a downside – negative online experiences.

Create Australia has created a list of tips to stay safe on the internet.

- 1. Keep your online friends list small.** Only befriend people you know. If you don't feel close enough to them to wish them a happy birthday when Facebook reminds you to, then reflect on your friends list!
- 2. Keep your privacy settings private.** Whether on Facebook or Instagram, you can choose how private you want your profile. Keep your personal information only visible to people you trust.
- 3. Think before you post.** In the age of social media, it's commonplace to share multiple aspects of our lives, personalities and interests on our profiles. Something to think about is your digital brand – and things that go up online can hang around. So think carefully about the type of pictures and things that you share online.
- 4. If you want to join online groups/communities and you're underage, talk about it with your carer.** While Facebook communities are a great way to connect and share common interests with people from afar, you always want to be extra careful if you're interacting online with people you don't know personally. Ask your carer to go through your privacy settings with you, and look at the group rules and guidelines before joining. If there's anything that doesn't seem appropriate or makes you feel worried, look for a different community group!
- 5. Be aware of cyber-bullying or trolling.** If you feel like you're getting treated unfairly, are being bullied, or don't feel comfortable with something happening online, you can report this to the social media platform. You can also report this to eSafety and the police if you feel really unsafe. Reach out to places like Lifeline or Kids Helpline for support if you're feeling upset or worried about something that has happened online.

# Seasonal health information

## FLU VACCINE VS COVID-19 VACCINE

Whilst Australia has started delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine nationally, it's important to keep up good hygiene practices to not only help prevent COVID-19, but to also prepare for the flu season.

The roll out of the flu vaccine may look slightly different this year due to the COVID-19 vaccine. The Australian Government Department of Health currently provides this advice about receiving both the COVID-19 and influenza vaccines:

- It is not recommended to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine on the same day.
- The minimum time between receiving the vaccines is 14 days.

There is no particular requirement regarding the order of receiving a dose of influenza vaccine and either the first or second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

If you belong to any of the categories below, you are eligible to receive a free flu shot each year.

- Person with a medical risk factor or chronic illness
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person
- Person aged 65 years or older
- Pregnant women

Remember, if you do get sick this Autumn, stay home and get tested to help stop the spread of the virus.



## OFFICE CLOSURES AND IMPORTANT DATES

Amicus offices will be closed on the following public holidays. If you require support for these days, please contact the office prior to the day to ensure you have everything you need.

**Labour Day** Monday 8 March, 2021

**Good Friday** Friday 2 April, 2021

**Easter Sunday** Sunday 4 April, 2021

**Easter Monday** Monday 5 April, 2021

**ANZAC Day** Sunday 25 April, 2021

**National Epilepsy Awareness Month**

March 1 - 31, 2021

**International Women's Day**

Monday 8 March, 2021

**National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence**

Friday 19 March, 2021

**World Down Syndrome Day**

Sunday 21 March, 2021

**World Autism Awareness Day**

Friday 2 April, 2021

**World Health Day**

Wednesday 7 April, 2020

**Ramadan**

April 12 - May 12, 2021

**National Reconciliation Week**

May 27 - June 3, 2021



# Autumn community events

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Monday March 8, 2021**

For over a century, International Women's Day has marked a day of celebration and advocacy for women's rights and equality around the world.

This year's official International Women's Day 2021 theme is #ChooseToChallenge. It's a call-to-action to challenge the status quo by raising awareness against bias, celebrating women's achievement, and taking action for equality.

**Location:** Various in person and online celebrations

Find a list of events at:

[www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com)



## SUMMER IN THE PARKS

**January, February and March**

This summer, Greater Bendigo's beautiful parks will come alive with a range of fantastic music, movies and other great free events.

The 2021 Summer in the Parks Program features free or low cost events and activities during the months. Whilst the event is free, you will need to book a ticket online prior to your chosen event due to limited capacity.

**Location:** Various parks across Bendigo

**Price:** Free

[www.bendigsummerintheparks.com](http://www.bendigsummerintheparks.com)



## CASTLEMAINE STATE FESTIVAL

**19 March - 4 April, 2021**

The Castlemaine State Festival will take place in various locations across Castlemaine from 19 March to 4 April 2021. Returning with a bright and colourful program of visual arts, performance, music, talks, workshops and a variety of outdoor performances shining a light on the diversity and culture of the region. The Festival is filled with special events for all ages and curious minds and features a vibrant music and arts program.

**Location:** Various locations across Castlemaine

**Price:** Free

[www.castlemainefestival.com.au](http://www.castlemainefestival.com.au)



## MARY QUAINT: FASHION REVOLUTIONARY

**20 March to 11 July**

Bendigo Art Gallery's newest exhibition explores the years between 1955 and 1975, when Mary Quant revolutionised the high street, harnessing the youthful spirit of the sixties and new mass production techniques to create a new look for women. This will be a fun exhibition full of colour!

**Location:** Bendigo Art Gallery

**Price:** \$25 Adult, \$22 Concession, \$12 under 16, Free for children under five

[www.bendigoregion.com.au/bendigo-art-gallery](http://www.bendigoregion.com.au/bendigo-art-gallery)



## SUSTAINABLE LIVING FESTIVAL

**Saturday 27 March, 2021**

The Bendigo Sustainability Group and the City of Greater Bendigo invites you to join in with a celebration of sustainability at the Bendigo Town Hall and gardens. The Sustainable Living Festival aims to showcase the absolute best of sustainable living products, programs, goods, and services that are active here in Central Victoria. Attendees will have the chance to purchase, learn and explore many new and creative ways to live and then implement them into their everyday life at home and at work.

**Location:** Bendigo Town Hall and Gardens

**Time:** 10am - 4pm

**Price:** Free

[www.bsg.org.au](http://www.bsg.org.au)



## BENDIGO EASTER PROGRAM 2021

**2 April - 5 April, 2021**

The traditional Bendigo Easter parade will not be returning this year due to COVID-19. A smaller, three-day program will replace the 150th Bendigo Easter Fair celebrations and will take place over a number of locations.

Keep an eye out for more information on the Bendigo Easter Fair closer to the dates.

[www.bendigoeasterfestival.org.au](http://www.bendigoeasterfestival.org.au)

