

Case study: Leading change towards inclusive practice

Cultural Luncheon and Presentations

Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre is the lead agency for volunteering in Central Victoria. It provides vital links for resourcing, supporting, and connecting volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations across the region.

Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre fosters effective volunteering by:

- Mentoring and linking volunteers to meaningful volunteer roles with local community organisations.
- Training volunteers (Step into Volunteering sessions).
- Promoting best practice volunteering.
- Supporting and mentoring volunteer managers (Bendigo Volunteer Network and Skilled Volunteer Team).

In 2022 the Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre was successful as part of a Consortium to increase its activities across the Loddon Mallee region, it is funded as part of this Volunteering Loddon Mallee Initiative to offer region-wide digital solutions to promote volunteering and to provide focused activities to enhance volunteering for three target groups: First Nations Peoples, newly arrived migrants, and people living with disability.

One element of the Volunteering Loddon Mallee Initiative involves promoting greater inclusion in volunteering programs through supporting volunteer-involving organisations in their practices.

The Cultural Inclusion Lunch was the second of three activities designed to upskill and inform volunteer managers in promoting inclusion and achieving greater diversity in their volunteer programs. It involved a meal provided by the Paw Paw Catering Social Enterprise and presentations by five newly arrived migrants or subject experts who work with newly arrived migrant communities.

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The presenters were all connected with Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services. Around thirty participants gathered in the resource room of the Bendigo Library for this purpose.

Attendees were distributed around the room at small tables where they were accompanied by at least one person from Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services and at least one person from the Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre. The attendees were invited to begin the session with questions they felt, if answered, would help enhance the diversity of their volunteer programs.

We learned some things and started to do some things to find out more.

A specific outcome was that we designed a short program that aimed to address the perception that newly arrived migrants did not volunteer because their experience had not taught them the benefits of volunteering in a way that someone who had been in Australia for longer would have recognised. We will deliver this by way of a workshop.

The findings with respect to barriers, tips and tactics offered as recommendations from the Cultural Inclusion Lunch will also be shared with volunteer-involving organisations and they will be encouraged to review their procedures accordingly.

Project

In a targeted way, newly arrived migrants will be introduced to the benefits of volunteering and introduced to volunteer-involving organisations and volunteer programs which address other issues that arose during the session:

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Project elements:

- We will recruit a group at once into the volunteer program so that participants are not “the only one”.
- Our focus will be on programs that can be easily seen as supporting the community in which the volunteer identifies.
- Other individual benefits will be presented including, pathway to employment, integration into Australian society, learning about Australia and its institutions.
- These initiatives will be evaluated to see if they are successful and the extent of which each part of the project contributes to its overall success (in terms of recruitment, retention, and reward).

In addition, having a formal relationship with Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services will enable:

- Some additional ease with compliance – for example, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services already do background checks as part of their employment service.
- Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services will do a cultural competency check on the volunteer-involving organisation to offer suggestions that they might not have considered.
- As a result of the cultural competency check, a range of practical initiatives will be suggested.

Our goal will be to find generalisable findings which can be shared. We will also be looking as we go for other programs, including in other local government areas across our region, in which we can replicate the successful elements.

Note: This will also be on a targeted, managed and evaluated case-study basis for the duration of the Volunteer Loddon Mallee Initiative project.

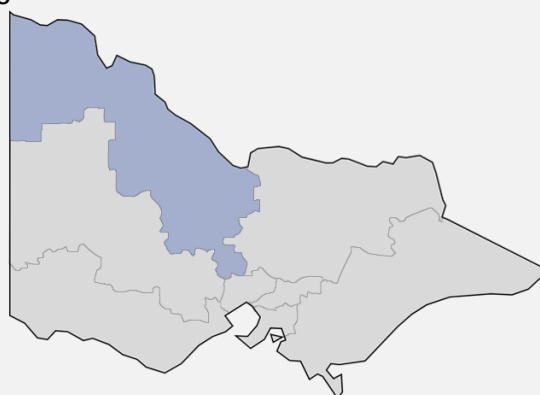
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Consortium region: Loddon Mallee

Date: August 2023



This case study was produced with funding provided through the Volunteer Management Activity 2022-2026 grant. You may learn more about the program by visiting this website:

<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/vma-2022-2026/>



Funded by the Australian Government
Department of Social Services.



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Volunteering Victoria acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.