

Be.Bendigo  
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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**21 February 2024**

### **Bendigo Accelerates Progress by Investing in the Stories of Women**

The theme for International Women's Day – 8 March 2024 – is *Count Her In: Invest in Women; Accelerate Progress*.

"International Women's Day provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of prominent women in our business and community organisations across the region, and the contributions they are making to our economic, social and cultural development", according to CEO of Be.Bendigo, Mr Rob Herbert.

"Importantly though, it is also a time for us all to focus on the significant work that remains to be done to improve gender equality and support economic empowerment, because when women have equal opportunities to earn, learn and lead, entire communities thrive", he said.

"The way that many businesses adapted to increase flexibility around working from home and with rosters that supported carer obligations, provided some innovative opportunities for increasing workforce participation, but many barriers still remain, particularly in industries where physical presence in a workplace is necessary, and where carer obligations are restrictive", Mr Herbert continued.

Representing more than three hundred and fifty partner and member businesses in the City of Greater Bendigo, Be.Bendigo recognises the importance of collaboration to improve outcomes. "By working with other organisations to support and amplify stories of success and achievement by women in Bendigo, we believe that we can also help to address some of the structural and other issues that sometimes limit women from achieving their full potential", Mr Herbert said of the Chamber's work with Zonta Club of Bendigo and Women's Health Loddon Mallee.

In addition, Be.Bendigo has been a strong supporter of 'Women of Gold', a project developed by Megan Champion as an immersive multimedia art experience, showcasing stories from diverse, cross industry women, and their contributions to our community.

"Building confidence and optimism is important, but building economic empowerment and participation also means we must attend to the structural issues that have kept many women out of the paid workforce for too long", Mr Herbert said. "Free TAFE and additional support for some university students committing to work regionally are assisting, particularly for those women seeking to retrain after a career-break, but we know – from our discussions both with employers and potential employees – that issues such as accessible and affordable childcare still present a substantial barrier for many women."

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**The following events are planned for International Women's Day:**

**Links to the following events can be found here:**

<https://bebendigo.com.au/events/>

**International Women's Day 2024 Zonta Dinner**

Tuesday, 5 March 2024 6.00pm for 6.30pm start  
All Seasons Resort

Count Her In: Accelerating Gender Equality Through Economic Empowerment

Guest Speakers:

Marnie Baker – Managing Director, Bendigo Adelaide Bank

Amy Doak - Freelance Writer and Author

<https://www.bendigoregion.com.au/arts-culture-theatres/event/zonta-bendigo-international-womens-day-2024>

**WHLM Breakfast**

Friday 8th March 8am to 10am  
Women's Health Loddon Mallee  
47 Myers Street

Guest Speakers:

Luz Restrepo – Migrant Women in Business / Made by Many Hands

Megan Champion – Women of Gold

<https://events.humanitix.com/iwdbreakfast2024>

**Women of Gold**

Multimedia Public Art Project Launch  
Where: Emporium Creative Hub  
When: IWD 2024 Friday 8th March, 11am

[www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1177830](http://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1177830)

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#### **ATTRIBUTABLE QUOTES:**

"In line with the IWD 2024 theme 'Count Her In', Women's Health Loddon Mallee (WHLM), will be highlighting the ways community can accelerate gender equality through economic empowerment at their annual IWD Breakfast in Bendigo, 8am-10am on Friday 8th March, featuring guest speakers, entertainment, and networking opportunities.

WHLM's IWD toolkit, set for release on their website in early 2024, will support community groups and businesses to take part and lead their own IWD activities, containing practical tips and interesting ideas for how to get involved, useful resources and educational tools, a set of customisable campaign resources, and an online events hub spotlighting IWD activities happening across the whole Loddon Mallee region."

**Tricia Currie – CEO, Women's Health Loddon Mallee**

"The Zonta Club of Bendigo is once again pleased to be celebrating International Women's Day (IWD) with the popular Bendigo event, the IWD dinner brings together the Greater Bendigo community to celebrate the achievements and efforts of women and girls making an impact in their community."

**Naidene Parry – President, Zonta Club of Bendigo Inc**