

Media Release

3 June 2026

New social enterprise cafe opens in Bendigo

A new café with a purpose in Bendigo is set to create vital paid work and training opportunities for people with disability, while serving great coffee to the local community.

Where Is My Coffee? Bendigo, a new social enterprise café led by for-purpose organisation [VMCH](#), is now open at Bendigo TAFE's City Campus, following an official opening event on Thursday 21 May during [Education Week](#).

The café has been designed for participants to gain work experience in a hospitality environment to build skills and confidence in customer service, food preparation and barista work – with the goal of moving into award-wage employment.

Despite progress in recent years, people with disability continue to be under-represented in the workforce. National data shows fewer than half of Australians of working age with disability are in paid employment, compared with around eight in 10 people without disability, highlighting the ongoing need for inclusive employment opportunities.

Craig Tonkin, 30, has been training at the café for the past few weeks and says he has already found his feet.

"Training has been really good. I'm loving being here," Craig said. "I want to learn barista skills, and how to make sausage rolls and pies and how to serve customers. I'm looking forward to having somewhere to fit in and make friends."

Longer term, Craig is also keen to explore TAFE courses available on campus, with a view to building his skills and confidence for future employment.

Cafe Coordinator and Bendigo local Jacinta Teggelove-Jones says support from the local community and TAFE students in the cafe's first week has been "fantastic".

"We've had some great feedback on the coffee and food as well, already seeing our new daily regulars!"

Jacinta says new recruits Craig and Andrew are enjoying their new roles.

"Craig is absolutely loving it here, and fits in so well. He's been busy in the kitchen baking and learning how to make coffee. Andrew also started with us two weeks ago. He has been working on his barista skills – he made me an amazing latte last Friday!"

Jacinta is encouraging Bendigo locals to pop by, grab a coffee, and support trainees as they learn on the job.

VMCH CEO Sonya Smart said social enterprises like Where Is My Coffee? play an important role in breaking down barriers to employment.

"Employment is about so much more than a pay cheque, it brings confidence, connection and a sense of purpose," Sonya said. "Through initiatives like this café, we're creating real opportunities for people with disability to learn, gain experience and move into paid work, while being part of their local community."

The Bendigo café is part of VMCH's growing Where Is My Coffee? social enterprise network, including cafés across Victoria, an online shop, opportunity shops and gardening and maintenance crews.

Where Is My Coffee? Bendigo is located at Building E, Bendigo TAFE City Campus, 154 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo. It's open Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 9pm.

People with disability in the Bendigo region who are interested in hospitality training or employment opportunities can contact VMCH's Social Enterprise team to learn more on 1300 698 624.

Media enquiries

Cassie Zlonzak

Communications Manager

M: 0402 422 852

E: cassie.zlonzak@vmch.com.au

About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic, for-purpose organisation, love, joy, hospitality and courage aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and passionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

