



Bendigo Easter Festival Fact Sheet Information

History

The first Bendigo Easter Fair, as it was known then, was started by Burnside and Aspinall in 1870 to raise funds for the Sandhurst Benevolent Asylum and Hospital raising over £1000 for this charitable cause. The fair was considered such a success that it has been held every year since, making this Australia's longest ongoing festival.

The Bendigo Easter Festival began as a celebration of the annual Christian festival of Easter and to raise money for the Bendigo Hospital. The festival was a time for sharing, goodwill and charity. Today, the festival continues this tradition, showcasing Bendigo's diverse community and cultural heritage.

Our goldfields heritage is celebrated annually through the cultural displays of the Bendigo Chinese Association during the festival.

The Torchlight Procession and Bendigo Advertiser Gala Parade are an opportunity for the Bendigo community to express their artistic talent and culture.

The Bendigo Easter Festival is the oldest ongoing festival in Australia and in 2012 will celebrate its 142nd anniversary. It is an integral part of cultural life in Greater Bendigo and we look forward to highlighting many sections of Bendigo's heritage during the festival.

The Bendigo Easter Festival Committee of Management is committed to the ongoing longevity and success of the festival.

Festival History

- Easter/ANZAC Day coincided only once before in 1943 (middle of WWII)
- The Gala Parade has always been held on Easter Monday. However, the Torchlight Procession started in 1893 and was held on Easter Saturday night, from 1940, for a period it was held on a Tuesday night.
- Activities at Lake Weeroona on Good Friday began in 1997 and was known as Vichealth Easter Fest at Lake Weeroona. Prior to 1997 for many years the only thing on Good Friday was the "Way of the Cross" street performance on Good Friday evening.
- According to the covers of programs the fair has run for up to 15 days. In 1987 it was held for 15 days from 11-26 April and it was held for four days in 1985 from 5-8 April.

BENDIGO EASTER FESTIVAL

6 - 8 APRIL 2012



Changes to the Bendigo Easter Festival structure in 2011 that we believe delivered significant benefits are:

- Three day festival followed by ANZAC Day
- All activities moved into central Bendigo
- RSL sponsored Torchlight Parade on Saturday night
- Bendigo Advertiser Gala Parade was held on Sunday
- Two fireworks displays - Showman's Guild (carnival) on Friday night and major RSL fireworks on Saturday night

The centralisation of all activity into the centre of Bendigo (Rosalind Park, Dai Gum San, Tom Flood and Bull Street) was embraced by patrons. Large crowds were comfortably accommodated and the flow of people through to all precincts worked well.

Major sponsors (Hazeldene's, Bendigo Bank, Bendigo & District RSL, Bendigo Advertiser) and participating groups including Rotary, Downtown Bendigo, Showman's Guild (carnival operators) and food vendors endorsed the festival format.

Research was conducted in 2011 by the S86 Bendigo Easter Festival Committee of Management members throughout the Festival and attendee feedback was extremely positive:

- 94% said the event was excellent or very good
- 95% found the venue/location to be excellent or very good
- 98% agreed that they would recommend the Festival to their friends/relatives
- 96% agreed that they would attend the event again

We are continually striving to 'raise the bar' on all aspects of the festival and strongly believe that the changes that were introduced in 2011 provided a structure to ensure the preservation and ongoing longevity and success of the Bendigo Easter Festival into the future.

As we have done with previous Easter Festivals we will review all components of the 2012 Bendigo Easter Festival with stakeholders to ensure that the structure, content and timing of the festival is relevant.





Frequently Asked Questions:

Why are the Festival activities being staged over three days?

In 2011 we experienced a rare occurrence of ANZAC day falling on Easter Monday. The Bendigo Easter Festival committee recognised the significance of ANZAC day in our country's history. To respect ANZAC Day the Festival was condensed to three days - Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Sunday with the fourth day of the festival being dedicated to ANZAC Day activities.

This allowed us to evaluate the three day format in terms of operations, programming, entertainment and patronage. Following the success of 2011 we have now adopted the three day format to ensure preservation and ongoing longevity of the festival.

What will happen on Good Friday?

- Hazeldene's Family Day
- Entertainment on stage in the Dai Gum San Precinct
- Vision Australia giant Easter Egg hunt
- Carnival
- Community Group activities (see below)

What will happen on Saturday?

- Bendigo Bank Kidzone
- Chinese Spring Festival and Awakening of the Dragon
- CFA Fire Truck rides
- Hidden Creatures
- Carnival
- The Torchlight Procession and Fireworks
- Community Group activities (see below)

What will happen on Easter Sunday?

- Kidzone
- CFA Fire Truck rides
- Hidden Creatures
- Bendigo Advertiser Gala Parade
- Carnival
- Community Group activities (see below)

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What will happen on Easter Monday?

In 2011 there were 22 community group activities showcased throughout Bendigo during Easter - Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Many of these activities will be held again in 2012 and offers the public the opportunity to attend and support our many volunteer organisations.

All activity that occurs over the Easter period (Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Monday) will be marketed in the Easter Festival program and all other media channels that are used to promote the festival.

Activities from 2011 included:

- Rotary Easter Art Show
- Bendigo Easter Antique Fair
- Bendigo Harness Racing
- Bendigo Woodworking and Machinery Show
- Easter Book Fair
- Bendigo Bonsai Club Exhibition
- Parade of Quilts
- Bendigo Car Club Easter Saleyards Dash
- Bendigo Camera Club Exhibition
- Bendigo Showground's Market
- Bendigo Model Railroader Inc
- Bendigo Woodturners Easter Expo
- Downtown Bendigo Rock & Blues Festival
- Gold Rush Carnival
- Rotary Hole in One
- Rotary art and craft market
- Veteran, vintage and classic car display
- Historic farm machinery, military items, collectables display,
- Easter Labyrinth
- Discovery & Science Centre
- Australian Defence Force display
- Dragon Mile





Why have Friday, Saturday & Sunday been chosen as the 3 days?

There are a number of factors that were considered when arriving at this decision which included:

- The festival infrastructure is erected in the Wednesday & Thursday prior to the festival and does not incur penalty rates that would be applicable for Good Friday. These costs include erection of infrastructure including staging, marquees and toilets, road closures and contractor costs including plumbing, electricians, toilets, audio and security.
- If the 3 days were to be from Saturday to Monday the infrastructure would still have to be erected prior to Good Friday to avoid the payment of penalty rates (and getting organisations to work on this day). This would result in infrastructure not being utilised for Good Friday and would require the engagement of additional security from Thursday night to safeguard structure.
- Resourcing – we have increasing difficulty in attracting volunteers to assist with the operation of the festival over Easter in addition to staffing that is provided by the CoGB departments including Bencon, Parks, Major Events, Environmental Health & Risk, Parking and additional resources for the Visitor Information Centre. The fact that the Easter Festival activities ended on the Sunday allowed staff and some volunteers to have one day of leisure prior to returning to work.

Benefits of a 3 day Festival

- The 2011 Easter Festival changes that were in part driven by Anzac Day being on Easter Monday were embraced by patrons. To recap new initiatives included the centralisation of all activity into the centre of Bendigo (Rosalind Park, Dai Gun San, Tom Flood & Bull St) resulted in large crowds being comfortably accommodated and the flow of people through to all precincts worked well – **the public voted with their feet!** Participating groups including Rotary, Downtown Bendigo, Showman's Guild (carnival operators) and Food Vendors all reported a strong Easter result.
- The 3 day format allows us to deliver a quality program of entertainment that can be enjoyed by both locals and visitors. More importantly by providing quality entertainment that is continually enhanced to support iconic favourites such as the Gala and Torchlight parades, we are able to market the Easter Festival to attract visitors who bring new money into the region.



Benefits of a 3 day Festival

- The cost of structuring a 4 day Festival would not deviate from the budget allocated for the 3 day format in 2012 - \$270,803 of which \$104,300 is provided from sponsorship and vendor fees. The impact will be in the reduction, dilution and spread of quality of entertainment as the operational cost for the additional day (conservatively estimated at \$20k) to revert to a 4 day format would be absorbed out of the budget allocation. Additional volunteers would also be required to assist with the 4 day format and one would question if there is a wear out factor going into day 4. We estimate that over 600 volunteers are required for Easter activities to take place and this does not include the enormous contingent of volunteers that participate in the Chinese component of the festival.
- From an economic viewpoint there is no evidence to suggest that the 3 day format reduced visitation to the city – in fact it appears that based on the 2011 feedback that visitors appreciated the opportunity to attend the Festival and either travel home Sunday afternoon or Monday morning.
- From an accommodation operator perspective Easter Sunday night over the last few years has not been a strong booking night. Over this period visitation trends to Bendigo have seen a move to short term stays of 1 to 2 nights and this is certainly reflected over the Easter period. If we are to capitalize on this short break market and the economic benefit it generates we have to be mindful of consumer preferences that include length of stay, affordability and timing of events.
- Economically is it conservatively estimated that the Festival delivers \$4 million over the Easter period based on 10,000 visitors per day to the city. This is based on the premise that day trip visitors to the city expend an average of \$103 per day and overnight visitors slightly in excess of this figure. We do not believe a 4 day expanded format will deliver additional visitors to the city.
- Commencing the Festival on a Friday is also an inducement for locals to stay in the city rather than giving them the opportunity to take a short break in another location – dollars stay in the city.



Will there be changes to the parades?

- Torchlight Procession and Fireworks will move to Saturday night.
- Gala Parade will move to Easter Sunday.

These changes will be communicated to the public extensively in the lead up to the festival to ensure that the 3 day Easter Festival celebrations are patronized and enjoyed by attendees.

In 2011 it was noted that the Gala Parade entries remained the same but a significant increase in entries for the Torchlight Procession was achieved.

	2010	Consisted:	2011	Consisted:
Torchlight Procession	32 entries	15 Community groups 4 Bands 13 Fire brigades/ SES	47 entries	25 Community groups 5 Bands, 17 Fire brigades/ SES
Gala Parade	52 entries	40 Community groups 8 Bands 4 School groups	52 entries	41 Community groups 6 Bands 5 School groups

Will Festival activities remain the same as in previous years?

The location and timing of a number of favourite activities may change, but all the traditional colour and excitement of Bendigo’s Easter Festival will be on show. We continually endeavour to enhance and program activity that will appeal to all ages.

Have the Gala Parade or Torchlight Procession been held on days other than Easter Sunday and Monday?

The Gala Parade has always been held on Easter Monday. However, the torchlight parade started in 1893 and was held on Easter Saturday night, from 1940, for a period, it was held on a Tuesday night.

Has the Festival varied in duration in its 141 years?

According to the covers of programs the fair has run for up to 15 days. In 1987 it was held for 15 days from 11-26 April whereas it was held for four days in 1985 from 5-8 April.

BENDIGO EASTER FESTIVAL

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2012 Program Highlights

Hazeldene's Family Day



The excitement of the Bendigo Easter Festival starts on Good Friday. The family day usually attracts over 20,000 people. It's a day out for the family including a giant Easter egg hunt, stage performances, rides for the kids, farm yard animals, plus much more.

Bendigo Bank's Kidzone

Rosalind Park comes to life for over 20,000 people with an array of family and kids entertainment. Families can enjoy special guest entertainment, arts & craft hands-on activities, fire truck rides, Hidden Creatures and roving entertainment.



Awakening of the Dragon



The 'Awakening of the Dragon' is a special Chinese ceremony to wake Sun Loong from his year long slumber. This ceremony is unique to the Bendigo Easter Festival and always draws large crowds. Dai Gum San will be packed to capacity and is the perfect location for this significant cultural experience.

Torchlight Procession and Fireworks

A night-time parade that first appeared prior to 1900 is a salute to our emergency services and volunteers, featuring local fire brigade members marching with brass torches. The popularity of this parade continues to grow with the light, sound and noise - a favourite with the children! After the parade, magnificent fireworks round out an evening of spectacular light and sound.



Bendigo Advertiser Gala Parade



Sun Loong, the world's longest Imperial dragon is a major drawcard of the Gala Parade. The parade also features a large Chinese section of local teams, demonstrating lion and dragon dances. The parade features floats entered by local community groups, schools, emergency services and businesses. The 1.5km parade is viewed by more than 60,000 people who enthusiastically start queuing early in the morning for their favourite vantage spot.



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Visitor Information Centre Attendee Profile for 2011 | Bendigo Easter Festival

Week leading up to Easter

Mainly families and grey nomads
Coming away for school holidays and a lot of day trippers from Melbourne

Good Friday

A lot of families
A higher number of local people than usual they were at the Easter Egg hunt in Rosalind Park and then came in to look at the VIC
Groups of Asian families, three generations and one group of 17 people
Some Indian and Sri Lankan families but not as many as previous years

Easter Saturday

Consistently busy all day
High number of Asian groups/families
Some Indian and Sri Lankan families
Very few couples or grey nomads
High number of day trippers

Easter Sunday

The morning before the parade the centre was very busy but then very quiet during and after the parade
Strong Asian visitation

Retail Sales

The festival visitation generated sales of local merchandise and attraction ticketing.





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