

MARTHUR FELLOWSHIP 2018

INVESTIGATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES OF GASTRONOMY IN ITALY



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Gastronomy promotes the art of good food and drink plus cultural heritage. It means healthy, sustainable, artful, innovatively produced, local, indigenous, nutritious, multicultural or simply delicious food. It includes ethical and sustainable values based on local products, culture, lifestyle and landscape. It is a tool for community engagement and social connection, bringing together different and diverse cultures to celebrate and appreciate food culture and acts as a boost to tourism opportunities, and hence local economic prosperity



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1. Project background

The City of Greater Bendigo decided in 2017 to apply for accreditation in 2019 to be designated a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. If successful, it would be the first in Australia.

In 2018 I was awarded the McArthur Fellowship, a Municipal Association of Victoria scholarship for Local Government Research. The project proposed was “Investigation of the development of UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy in Italy”.

In September 2018 I travelled to gastronomic regions of Italy. The trip included meetings with local government representatives in Bologna, Parma and Alba and a visit to the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenza, plus tourism activity related to gastronomy and food.

I also visited the Slow Food gastronomic festival in Turin - Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre, the now combined, biennial international Slow Food gastronomy event. It is one of the most important international fairs dedicated to artisanal, sustainable food and the small-scale producers that safeguard local traditions and high quality products.

The Slow Food movement was founded in 1989 to promote local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people’s dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us. It involves millions of people, in 160 countries. Its goals are taste education, defence of biodiversity and interaction between food producers, all underpinned by the concept of food being defined by interconnected principles of food being good, clean and fair.

I visited the home of the Slow Food movement in Alba and the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, founded in 2004 by Carlo Petrini, the founder of the Slow Food movement. In addition a stay at an agriturismo aimed to provide insight into styles of gastronomic tourism.

This scholarship provided a unique opportunity to add value to potential for the City of Greater Bendigo to be designated the first Australian UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Gastronomy promotes the art of good food and drink plus cultural heritage. It weaves together the threads of the region’s history, culture, urban and rural communities, health, environment, agriculture, viticulture, horticulture, economy, industry, tourism, creativity and long term sustainability.

The Creative Cities Network, started in 2004, totals 26 cities of gastronomy (one of seven creative fields) around the world (including: Shunde and Chengdu in China; Gaziantep in Turkey; Jeonju in South Korea; Östersund in Sweden; Popayan in Colombia; Rasht in Iran; Tsuruoka in Japan; Tucson in the USA; and, of course, Alba and Parma in Italy. These are part of 180 cities in 72 countries in seven Creative City categories.

Creative Cities enable inclusive participation, education, healthy food, tourism and sustainable economic growth, reducing food waste and increasing access to good food for everyone.

Applications in the category of Gastronomy, in contrast to the other six categories, are made on the basis of the city and the region, given that the region supports the city with food production. The City of Greater Bendigo is currently preparing an application for UNESCO.

2. Project key objectives

Travel to Bologna, Turin, Alba and Parma aimed to advance the understanding of gastronomy and what is involved in becoming a UNESCO Creative City. The city of Alba, some 50 kms from Turin, the birth place of the Slow Food movement in Italy, a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, was ideal to visit to further assess the process and benefits of this accreditation.

The city of Parma, in Tuscany, just 217 kms to the east of Alba, the second Creative City of Gastronomy in Italy, and recently appointed coordinator of the Network of Cities of Gastronomy world-wide, made another ideal study location.

This project has achieved the further development of the application of the City of Greater Bendigo's UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy application and it helps position the City to become a regional leader in food tourism. It has been instructive for the future promotion of this accreditation with multiple benefits and opportunities being explored with the local governments in Italy. In addition many lessons have been learned about gastronomic tourism and how it can benefit local governments.



Visiting Cities of Gastronomy in my then role of Deputy Mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo enabled deep discussions with their officials and gastronomy leaders from local government, academia and the Slow Food movement. These discussions were geared to understanding what it means to be appointed a UNESCO Creative City, plus how a City of Gastronomy can help to transform the profile and branding of a city region and increase gastronomic tourism.

3. Implications for councils and local government in Victoria

The impact of UNESCO City of Gastronomy designation for the City of Greater Bendigo on tourism and food and beverage cultural tourism for Bendigo and the surrounding region would be profound. It would provide a major boost to the tourist product, enhancing branding and identification of the region as one of Australia's major food destinations and product areas.

This project has highlighted the opportunities for local governments in other regions to promote the richness and value of townships and rural communities and all they have to offer, including their unique local food economy, introducing cities and regions to a new audience, increased food tourism and new and innovative businesses.

The Cities of Gastronomy in their application, profile and commitment refer to a regional setting, in some cases that region is very extensive, often up to a 100 km radius from the Gastronomy City. The prime example of this is the City of Östersund in Sweden, which is widely acknowledged as the lead UNESCO Gastronomy City in the world. Their application and their program going forward is a deep engagement with the region within which they are located, "The Region of Jämtland

Härjedalen” an extensive area on the border of Sweden and Norway. A region far larger than any of the administrative regions within which Victoria is grouped into.

The Bendigo application is based on the amalgam of three particular regional designations which virtually coincide with each other; the region of the Dja Dja Wurrung, the traditional owners of Bendigo and its wider region, the administrative region of Loddon-Campaspe which is extensively used by most government departments, and the North Central Catchment Management Authority region which embraces the catchments of the Loddon and Campaspe regions. These three regions generally coincide in their geographic coverage and embrace seven core local government areas (Greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Central Goldfields, Hepburn, Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander).

This is consistent with and supportive of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network creed “In this context, cooperation and the sharing of experience and knowledge is crucial for making creativity a lever for urban development and conceiving of new solutions to tackle common challenges”. In this regard, UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network offers unparalleled opportunities for cities to draw on peer learning processes and collaborative projects in order to fully capitalise on their creative assets and use this as a basis for building sustainable, inclusive and balanced development in economic, cultural, environmental and social terms.” <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/content/why-creativity-why-cities>

The development of the City’s application is leading other councils in embracing Indigenous cultural and food heritage with our Dja Dja Wurrung community. It will enhance the health, agriculture, sustainability, economy and tourist product of all Councils in the region. This regional focus is extremely important in shaping and contributing to gastronomic tourism, to develop a comprehensive Gastronomic Tourism Strategy and series of tourism trails based on the region’s food and beverages products and events.

Council representatives are keen to explore how this can be further developed in particular the Bendigo tourist region Councils of Greater Bendigo, Mount Alexander and Loddon Shires through their joint Tourist Destination Management Plan and the recently proposed Regional Gastronomic Tourism Strategy.

Discussions with representatives of the other six regional Councils along the themes of economic development, tourism and health with a focus on nutritious locally sourced food have led to further collaboration.



4. Importance to the City of Greater Bendigo and the Region



This research benefited from my long term professional interest and involvement in health, nutrition and food security impacts on our community.

The project further clarified initiatives that Italian local governments have pursued in accreditation and value adding their other municipal activities. A potential gastronomic narrative exists within a dozen current Council strategies, ranging from the Community Plan, Health and Wellbeing Plan, Cultural Inclusion and Diversity Plan to the Tourism and Economic Development Strategies.

The shorter term objective of success was in becoming a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy, and I was able to return with insights into gastronomic tourism with ideas for expanding the gastronomic tourism opportunity that would lead to an implementation plan regionally. The gastronomic tourism plan will potentially take advantage of the benefits, not only for local and regional growers and restaurateurs, but for the culture for which Bendigo and the region is known and would position our city and region nationally and internationally as a gastronomic destination.

The longer term objectives are the broad-reaching economic benefits of gastronomic tourism for branding the city via food tourism, economic development, jobs, health and wellbeing, sustainability and business and community development. Regional recognition for innovation in agriculture, manufacturing and sustainable development would position our city and region nationally and internationally as a gastronomic destination, creating connections and support and funding for changes and development.

A City of Gastronomy has significant marketing and promotional opportunities. Cities acknowledge their commitment to sharing best practices, developing partnerships that promote creativity and the cultural industries, strengthening participation in cultural life and integrating culture in urban development plans. The outcome desired would be the promotion of food tourism, creative industries, strengthening participation in cultural life, integration of culture into sustainable urban development policies and creation of an appealing travel destination. In addition it would bring attention to the global importance of food security and local food culture.



5. Value and benefits to Bendigo Council and community

Gastronomy fits with key aspects of Bendigo and the region's culture and economy including: Aboriginal history and relationship with Country, highlighting the cultural influence of the Dja Dja Wurrung throughout the region, the development of healthy food systems and the people who use food and beverages to create income, new products and improved lifestyles. One of the key actions of the objective in the Greater Bendigo Environment Strategy 2016-21, relating to support for local and sustainable food, is the support for and promotion of Traditional Owner food harvesting, increasing and promoting planting of naturally occurring bush foods. The opportunities for new food tourism enterprises and partnerships are significant.

Benefits

In addition, successful designation as a City of Gastronomy would mean benefits via:

- Celebrating and elevating the history and land management practices of the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples, and the important food and fibre plants indigenous to this area
- Showing how local food systems, food economy, and food culture can help find solutions to development challenges, climate change, sustainable use of resources, and the health and wellbeing of the region
- Health issues being addressed through a focus on healthy eating,
- Increasing interest in local food systems that reduce waste, increase access to fresh food and reduce inequality
- Emergency food relief such as Foodshare and food banks plus social enterprises addressing social disadvantage through food and training initiatives
- The linking of food production to local employment
- Innovation and creativity in agriculture, manufacturing and food production
- Describing how cultural and culinary assets have played an important role in the city and region's history and economic development
- Mapping the food-related festivals, conferences, and special events that are aimed at professionals, the public, and tourists
- Identifying programs, institutions, and organisations that support businesses and employment in the culinary industry
- Identifying incubator programs and spaces for culinary businesses
- Presenting examples of food-related programs and projects that support vulnerable social groups, and those that strengthen connections between the city, the private sector, and academia
- Growing importance of kitchen gardens, seasonal, local urban agriculture in Bendigo and the region.
- Listing the policies, initiatives, and international exchanges and partnerships implemented by the city over the last five years that support the local food system and culinary industry
- Developing programs that provide opportunities to connect with other cities in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network including the UNESCO recognised Cities of Melbourne (Literature) and Greater Geelong (Design). Initial discussions with both Cities have already identified a range of potential collaborations including the prospective concept of the three cities jointly working together and sponsoring the first occasion when the whole UNESCO Creative Cities Network would hold their annual meeting in the southern hemisphere.

The project adds to community interest in gastronomy, with potential to inspire the community and spark new collaborations and initiatives. Community pride in our produce, restaurants and cafes, farmers, food events, growers, makers, retailers, brewers and winemakers, as well as our history of indigenous food, agriculture and viticulture, community activism and sustainable food initiatives can all be brought together to brand the city and region as an international leader in healthy, creative, sustainable development and gastronomic tourism.

The project demonstrates how City of Gastronomy designation aligns with a more creative, productive, innovative, adaptive and engaged Greater Bendigo, being part of the Creative Cities Network, promoting innovation in food production, adapting to a changing food-producing environment and engaging with the community and visitors to the city and region to celebrate our food culture and creativity together.

Community

In examining the economic benefits to be derived from the local food sector and associated gastronomic tourism to the municipality, the State of Greater Bendigo's Local Food Economy report (2016) identified numerous opportunities across many sectors to build and increase the local food offering. This included the opportunity to boost food tourism. That report identified opportunities to expand the local food economy that include establishing a community food hub (in process), increasing local produce markets and food tourism, boosting education and training for producers and manufacturers, and creating new value adding potential to institutional procurement and food rescue sourcing. Eating local food has been found to have a 3:1 impact on a local economy.

Rural Development Victoria's Loddon Mallee region investment prospectus 2016 states 'Food and beverage production is already 45% of our manufacturing output. We are positioned well to attract new investment that value adds to our agricultural produce within the Region'. This includes food tourism initiatives.

Food and wine tourism is a strong fit for the region due to the strength of the Bendigo and Heathcote wine regions, and emerging dining scenes in Bendigo and Castlemaine. Market testing indicated that wine tourism is a popular activity which will motivate new visitors to the region, but there is currently a low awareness of the winery opportunities in the Bendigo Region (Bendigo Region Destination Management Plan, 2015).

Increasing local food production is being overseen by the focus on organisations such Bendigo Kangan TAFE's new Centre of Excellence in Food and Fibre and course activities to support organic horticulture. At the same time Food Policy development of the City of Greater Bendigo (in line with the Council Plan, the Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Greater Bendigo Environment Strategy) plus groups such as Food Fossickers and the Bendigo Regional Food Alliance all working in concert to support expansion of the Local Food Economy and food scene in Greater Bendigo. Work is underway in Greater Bendigo with funding for an agribusiness officer relating to the importance of land capability, food clusters and networks, food policy councils/alliances and sustainable local food policies that will reinforce the timeliness of this project.

Food Fossickers industry network development is a priority project for experiential product development in the Bendigo Regional Destination Management Plan plus opportunities being currently focussed on developing the Bendigo Wine Region for food and wine tourism. The impact of this project on the development of Bendigo's food scene in the long term is significant. It provides a strategic fit with the plan and will accelerate the attainment of that strategy's objectives.

Bendigo Tourism's Fossicking for Gold Food Fossicking Tour is extremely popular, and a more recent replacement of the From Market to Paddock to Plate tour with Leaving a Legacy - Seven Incredible Women (in food) of Central Victoria, hosted by leading local restaurateur Sonia Anthony, owner of award winning restaurant Mason's of Bendigo and president of Food Fossickers, is equally popular.

6. Future investments

Food is now a significant part in the decision making process when tourists are choosing a destination

The City of Greater Bendigo, as part of its due diligence in developing an application to UNESCO is undertaking economic modelling, impact assessments and business case developments.

Awareness of the potential for increased gastronomic tourism in the longer term for both the City of Greater Bendigo and the region acknowledges the fact that by 2020, Millennials will represent half of all global travel spending and their relationship to food is special, they want it to be authentic. They want to know how it was produced, and they want it to be a shared experience. Food is now a significant part in the decision making process when tourists are choosing a destination (77% of leisure travellers in the US are food tourists).

Tourists of all ages are looking for travel that embraces a more genuine, authentic experience. Over one-third of tourist spending worldwide is devoted to food. Local food produce adds authenticity, making gastronomy linked to specific regions a powerful marketing tool, advertising the identity and culture of the destination. It creates a great opportunity for local food producers to add value to their products by creating a special experience for tourists.

A UNESCO City of Gastronomy application is not about one restaurant, one café, one grower or producer; it is a sum of our region's parts and our collective plans for the future, with a strong focus on Indigenous culture, healthy, sustainability and food tourism. The longer term objective of gastronomic tourism will be enhanced by a collaborative regional approach. Importantly, becoming a UNESCO City of Gastronomy is about the region within which the city sits – from the Murray to the Macedon Ranges – and all the fantastic food tourism initiatives in between.

7. Activities and outcomes

Florence Has a pride in excellent local produce and regional specialities. Their responsible tourism waste initiative described as ‘A city taking care of urban waste’ focused on reducing food waste in restaurants, donating food to charity, increasing tap water consumption and sorting waste for collection plus the De Gustibus network of producers, doing farmstay tours and workshops.

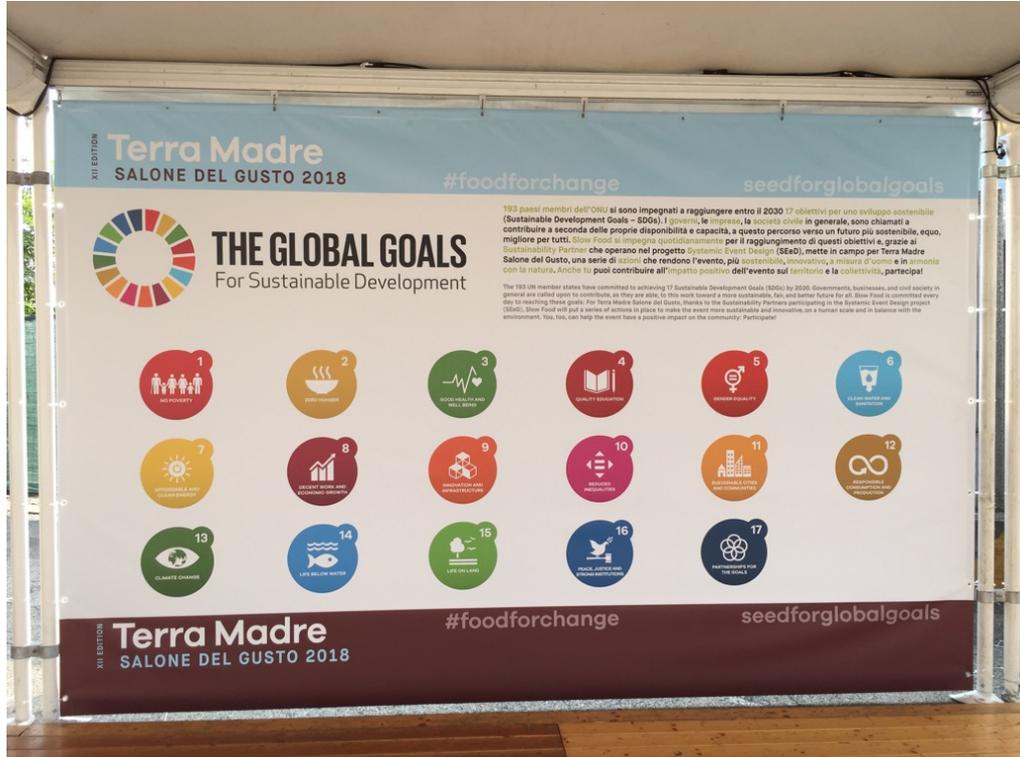


Bologna Is a Creative City of Music. I met with the head of UNESCO Creative Cities in Italy and the Deputy Mayor with the portfolio of international relations in their 800 year old City Hall, and discussed their application process and the connections they made with other cities and other designations such as Cities of Design and Gastronomy. As a City of Music they are currently creating a Music Office in their municipal office. A key connection also exists with the youth network project, Incredibol, working on small funded creative initiatives. The UNESCO designation provided Bologna a significant tourism stimulus, now presenting a Regional Tourism Destination.

Bologna has become known for opening up public spaces with adaptive reuse. This has had an impact on employment, economic activity and international attention. Their local government proudly claims “Administration has become creative problem solving”. The City Council has an Office of Civic Imagination to engage the public which has just won an Engaged Cities award and has entrepreneurs and educational institutions in a Co-cities project involving over 400 initiatives using design principles for the governance of the commons. It is home to Eataly World, a 22.5 hectare theme park for Italian food, plus a Food Futures institute, a Food Future Network and a Master of Food Entrepreneur course.



Turin At the Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre Slow Food festival I spoke with a Turin University representative re their EU 'Future of Food in Europe' project with 50 of Europe's leading food companies, research and educational institutions developing regional innovation hubs. I also spoke with representatives of the European Commission about their circular economy project with emphasis on recycling, including food waste.







Parma A City of Gastronomy, Parma now heads up the 26 Creative Cities of Gastronomy world wide. According to Carlotta Beghi, their Creative Cities coordinator, ‘Creativity means uniting existing elements with new and useful connections’. We also spoke about processes involved in their successful bid, including endorsements and support, their business planning, plus their value add of best practices and their increasing climate change awareness. She described Parma as ‘an integrated synergistic system of food, culture, art and music’. This provided useful inspiration for what could be achieved in Greater Bendigo and more broadly in our state of Victoria.



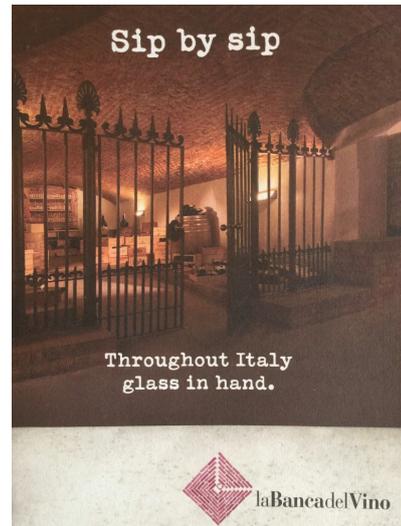
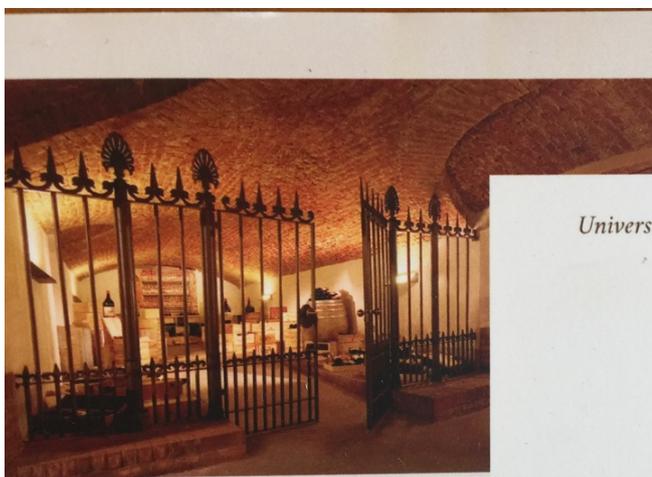
“This travel was essential to make personal connections and glean information critical to our gastronomy bid. The ongoing relationships will be invaluable”.

Alba Has been a City of Gastronomy for one year and is located in the City's Tourism department. The Langhe region has for 5 years had a UNESCO World Heritage listing for wine landscapes. Described as the 'Diamond of the area' it is famous for white truffles, Nutella and the Ferrero Rocher factory. According to their promotions and Communication manager from the Tourism department, Annalisa Ricciardi, who coordinates their City of Gastronomy activities, they are taking a regional approach, working with other clusters in Italy. We discussed their application priorities and reporting detail, including nutrition and education in schools and their communications strategy about Creative Cities. They found it important to enhance all current activities and to support practical network projects, also to promote the activities to those capable of providing financial support.





The University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenza. Franca Chiarle provided an extensive tour gave insights into the huge national and corporate support for their range of internationally popular courses. They have students from 88 countries and a wide range of courses in gastronomic sciences. They have significant corporate and national support. We also toured the national wine bank and the colocated hotel. The University has a Pollenza FoodLab and were keen to engage with Bendigo in future gastronomic research and educational activities.

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Visiting an Agriturismo working farm, Casa Scaparone <https://casascaparone.it> This led to meeting with Danielelle Manzone, the head of the wine makers network (over 200) for the Langhe region, one of the five wine growing regions comprising the UNESCO World Heritage Wine Landscape in Piedmont, where we discussed potential linkages. They were keen to engage with Bendigo on areas of mutual interest between Alba and Bendigo, with potential to share learning into adaptation to climate change, sustainability and gastronomic tourism between the two cities. This has led to a subsequent Skype meeting with Annalisa at the City of Alba and there is a proposal for international collaboration underway.



8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The ability to travel to Italy to investigate the development of UNESCO's Creative Cities of Gastronomy has enhanced understandings about what is involved in achieving the accreditation, what collaborations and activities it enables between local governments and how it translates into the effectiveness of future council strategies.

Discussions with local government in Italy highlighted the unique opportunities that participation in UNESCO Creative City Networks accreditation would provide for collaborations across areas of Literature, Design and Gastronomy in Victoria and strategic positioning for international tourism.

Cultivating Bendigo as a regional tourism destination, similar to the City of Bologna, and points of difference such as passion and pride in local produce, will further enhance gastronomic tourism in the state and nationally. The regional air services now available to and from Bendigo further enhance this prospect.

By celebrating our diverse and thriving food scene, our Aboriginal food heritage and culture, our healthy food initiatives and our innovation and creativity across Greater Bendigo and the region, we can progress many opportunities provided by gastronomic tourism to address some of our city's challenges around health and sustainability in particular as we plan for the future.

As the Victorian State Government plans a review of its Creative Industries Strategy and local governments increasingly become involved with the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, opportunities for growth of local government collaborations exist across the state that enable the government to reposition itself as a national leader in the Creative Industries.

Recommendations:

- 1. That the State Government recognise the economic, tourism and community wellbeing benefits that are generated by membership of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and allocate dedicated resources towards the Victorian UNESCO Creative Cities and their activities*
- 2. That the State Government support the proposal to host the Creative Cities Network international meeting in Victoria in 2022 or beyond*
- 3. That the State Government support collaborative international partnerships to advance action on issues of mutual interest and relevance, such as the proposed collaboration between Bendigo and the City of Alba in Italy on climate change and sustainability of agricultural industries such as the wine industry.*

The City of Greater Bendigo has been working hard on our application to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network that will be ready to submit in June 2019. By December 2019 we will hear the outcome of our application. At the very least we will have progressed all of the food related activities under the region's banner and enhanced local government partnerships. At best we will be designated as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. This will create fantastic opportunities for local government: our city, region and the state of Victoria. A further drawcard for food related activities, and with that, jobs and investment and multiple benefits for our city, region and the state.



