

# History & Heritage

Circulating throughout Bendigo, Eaglehawk, Heathcote, Castlemaine,  
Maldon, Kyneton, Elmore, Echuca, and Rochester areas

A publication of the National Trust Bendigo & District Branch

August 2025



**Vale Peter Cox OAM 1948 - 2025**

**We dedicate this issue to Peter Cox, our late President**

**Next Branch Meeting Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> August 5.30pm Bendigo Library** (enter via Hargreaves Street)

Members and supporters all welcome.

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Cover image: Peter Cox at *Hard Hill* 2024.

## Cover Story: Vale Peter Cox OAM Branch President 2018-2025 - Elaine Doling

Peter Cox achieved a great deal during his life, with the community always at the forefront of his actions.

He worked for the Melbourne YCW (Young Christian Workers) in the early 1970s and was the force behind the YCW campaign on Road Safety in Victoria following the many deaths of young people on Victorian roads. The campaign focussed on awareness of the failure to use seat belts and drink driving. This campaign was instrumental in bringing about compulsory wearing of seat belt legislation in Victoria. Many lives were saved as a result over the following years, with a reduction of 75% in road deaths.

Peter served as a Councillor in the Melbourne suburb of Hawthorn before moving to Bendigo with his family in 1985, where he founded a community at Kangaroo Flat based on YCW values of sustainability and co-operation. He established the Friends of the Forest Action Group, which became the Bendigo Environment Council. Moving to Eaglehawk 1989, he subsequently established Future Employment Opportunities, as well as the Eaglehawk Enterprise Park in 1990 and the Eaglehawk Recycle Shop in 1993. He was a founding member of Empowering Eaglehawk and a former president of the Rotary Club of Eaglehawk. He also established TradeStart to assist students at risk of leaving school by giving on the job training to keep them engaged. Peter was also heavily involved in the Eaglehawk Dahlia and Arts Festival. He was a Councillor for Eaglehawk Ward on the City of Greater Bendigo Council for eight years, serving as Mayor in 2014-15.



Peter when Bendigo Mayor 2014 Photo: Peter Weaving *Bendigo Times*



Peter in 2022 the year he received his OAM Photo: Peter Weaving *Bendigo Times*

At this time, he stood up for his principles when far-right protesters from Sydney and Melbourne caused violent disruption in the council chamber and the streets over Council's decision to issue a permit for the building of a mosque. As Peter said "we held strong values that everybody was welcome to Bendigo and everyone had the right to practice their religion." He was also involved in the Bendigo Maubisse Friendship Committee which supports community development programmes in East Timor.

During his time as Councillor, Peter was Chair of Council's Heritage Advisory Committee for eight years. The Heritage Advisory Committee was started in 1984 when the late Andrew Ward was the City's first Heritage Advisor. The committee during this time had dedicated positions for the National Trust and the Bendigo Historical Society, as well as Heritage Victoria, and others, and meetings were attended by the Heritage Advisor. Peter was a very capable Chair and advocate for heritage conservation. In recognition of his outstanding service to the community, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2022.



Peter purchased the historic 1874 mud brick cottage *Hardhill* in Green Street, California Gully in 1998 Where he regularly held Open Days to raise funds, initially for the Maubisse Friendship Committee, and then a number of times for the National Trust. Most recently *Hardhill* was opened in May this year during the National Trust Heritage Festival.



Above: Peter in the garden at *Hardhill* during the 2018 Heritage Festival, talking about the importance of miners' cottages with WIN Television. Photo: supplied.

Peter was passionate about the preservation of our heritage having been a National Trust member for around 10 years before he became president of the Bendigo Branch of the National Trust in 2018, and he remained in this position up until his death.

He was actively involved in advocacy for causes as varied as the Bendigo Creek walking trail, preservation of miners' cottages, the former Bendigo Court House, *Nanga Gnulle*, and the Bendigo Art Gallery extension, among many others. He was also actively involved in organising the annual Heritage Festival. Early this year he expressed an interest in finding and relocating a small miner's cottage in danger of demolition to his garden to set up a miner's cottage museum. He actively continued his advocacy right up until his death, still writing the newsletter a week before he was admitted to palliative care. His energy and commitment to the preservation of our heritage will be long remembered.

Peter has left a lasting legacy, and the Branch will miss him.

Our sincere condolences to his family.



Left and below: *Hardhill* when open for the Heritage Festival 2024 Photos: Bendigo Branch





I first met Peter Cox several years ago when I moved back to Eaglehawk after many years away. I was standing in my front yard when Peter came up to me, introduced himself as my local councillor and apologised for not having met me sooner! He asked if there was anything he could do for me, and I queried him about an odd shaped piece of ground in front of the house and was I allowed to plant anything there. The answer was that the land belonged to my house, but he would arrange something. The next day a gardener from council turned up and planted a crepe myrtle in said plot and the following day he came and planted a patch of agapanthus around the tree! I have never before or since come upon a councillor who worked so enthusiastically for his constituents.

- *Phil Howe*

[Click here](#) to read more.

 Comment

Most relevant ▾



Matthew Parkinson

He was a great thinker and social justice warrior!

5d

2  



Tracey Franze

Peter was a great community advocate, deep thinker and well ahead of his time with sustainability. A life well lived looking out for others - RIP Peter.

6d

3 

Bill Grant

I met him several times when working on environmental/waste projects. He was a good bloke - dedicated to sustainability and better waste management.

5d



Angela Lorrigan

A wonderful person to work with. Interesting, interested and inspiring. A great loss to our city but also a great legacy.

4d



## Statement on the passing of former Mayor and Councillor Peter Cox

City of Greater Bendigo August 5, 2025



Then-mayor Peter Cox in 2014. Photo: Brendan McCarthy *Bendigo Advertiser*

The City of Greater Bendigo is deeply saddened by the passing of former Mayor and Councillor Peter Cox OAM, who died peacefully at Bendigo Hospice on July 31, 2025, following a short battle with cancer. He was 76.

Peter served the Bendigo community with distinction, including as a Greater Bendigo Councillor from 2008 to 2016 and as Mayor from 2014 to 2015. His leadership was marked by a deep commitment to social justice, environmental sustainability, and grassroots community engagement.

A recipient of the Order of Australia Medal in 2022, Peter was widely respected for his tireless advocacy across a range of causes—from road safety and heritage preservation to employment and waste reduction. His legacy includes the development of the Eaglehawk Enterprise Park and Recycle Shop, and his role as President of the Bendigo branch of the National Trust, where he championed the protection of the region's rich history.

Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf acknowledged Peter's legacy and service to Bendigo.

"Peter was a visionary leader and a passionate advocate for Bendigo. His contributions have left a lasting impact on our city and its people. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones," Cr Metcalf said.

Councillors and staff extend their condolences to Peter's children, Raul, Joel and Zac, Peter's siblings Toni, Michael and Patrick as well as extended family and friends.

### Vale Peter Cox: 'we didn't always agree' but this MP will miss ex-mayor (*Bendigo Advertiser*) August 5, 2025



Bendigo West MP  
Maree Edwards

State MP Maree Edwards has remembered former mayor Peter Cox OAM for his passion and persistence in everything he did. It comes after the ex-Bendigo councillor's death aged 76.

"Over many years, Peter and I worked together on a wide range of policies, projects and community issues," Bendigo West MP Ms Edwards said. "While we didn't always agree, our work was marked by mutual respect, robust debate and we always found common ground in our shared commitment to delivering for the people of Bendigo."

Mr Cox was mayor at the height of at-times vitriolic debates over a mosque for Bendigo and Ms Edwards praised him for his principled support for the project in the face of pressure from anti-mosque campaigners. "Peter's legacy is etched into the fabric of this city - Bendigo Historical Society, National Trust, Eaglehawk Recycle Shop, Enterprise Park, the Dahlia and Arts Festival, and his principled support for the Bendigo Mosque," she said.



Peter Cox during his time on Bendigo's council. Photo: Jim Aldersey

## Mayor pays tribute to 'visionary leader'

(Bendigo Advertiser)

EARLIER, 10.05am: Civic leader Peter Cox served his city with distinction, Bendigo's current mayor says following his passing.

Peter Cox OAM died at Bendigo Hospice on July 31, 2025, after a short battle with cancer. He served as mayor from 2014 to 2015 and sat on the council for eight years.

Current mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf said his leadership was marked by a deep commitment to social justice, environmental sustainability, and grassroots community engagement.



Peter Cox in 2022 after receiving his OAM. Photo: Darren Howe

"Peter was a visionary leader and a passionate advocate for Bendigo. His contributions have left a lasting impact on our city and its people. We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones," she said.

A recipient of the Order of Australia Medal in 2022, Peter was widely respected for his tireless advocacy across a range of causes-from road safety and heritage preservation to employment and waste reduction.

His legacy includes the development of the Eaglehawk Enterprise Park and Recycle Shop, and his role as president of the Bendigo branch of the National Trust, where he championed the protection of the region's rich history.

Mr Cox's family described him as a social entrepreneur ahead of his time who championed causes like road safety and the environment, among other topics.

"A sincere thank-you to the wonderful staff who cared for him in his last month and all the people who enriched his well lived life," his loved ones said in a funeral notice.

## July Branch Meeting report

- The Branch decided that the exec would continue to run on Peter's behalf during his illness. The following were discussed briefly in the meeting time remaining:
- Old Bendigo Law Courts update
- Bendigo Art Gallery redevelopment - Ombudsman Office has advised that they have no power to enforce any changes to design or budget. Matter will not be pursued further.
- Demolition by Neglect - forum proposed for September postponed until further discussion at next Branch meeting
- Cast Iron Collection - discussion around what might become of it and where it can be best stored in the future
- Bendigo Historical Society "Making Ourselves Useful" seminar to be held in early September.

The Branch will continue work on the following:

- Demolition by Neglect
- Old Law Courts future tours and uses
- Rosalind Park Fernery
- Development Application for All Saints Church site corner Forest and Mackenzie Streets

## Join the National Trust

Advocate for Preservation! Support! Explore! Enjoy! A National Trust Membership is your ticket to the world, with over 1000 destinations to explore.

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is the state's largest community-based heritage advocacy organisation actively working towards conserving and protecting our heritage for future generations to enjoy, representing 40,000 members across Victoria. [Click here](#) to join.

You can keep up with the current advocacy issues at the Trust Advocate blog: [Click here](#)

## History & Heritage Branch newsletter - receive, contribute, read past issues

Everyone has a story that, when combined with others, provides a record of the social history of our region and draws attention to the significance of local built heritage. The Branch welcomes your ideas, contributions and photographs for the newsletter which is published monthly. The contribution deadline for *History & Heritage* is the first day of each month. For previous issues of *History & Heritage* [click here](#)

To help increase circulation send it to your friends and family or sign up your organisation to receive it. To join the editorial group, contact **Gary Hill - 0428 467 409**.

**Next Branch meeting, Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> August at Bendigo Library at 5.30pm**

**Next Branch Committee Meeting Thursday September 4<sup>th</sup> at Bendigo Library at 10am**

**Next Editorial Group meeting Thursday September 4<sup>th</sup> at Bendigo Library at 11am**

Email: National Trust of Australia (Vic) Bendigo & District Branch [click here](#)

**We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and recognize the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.**

