



Annual Report  
Summary  
**13-14**

Benalla Rural City Council  
*enjoy the lifestyle*

# Message from the Mayor

The last year has been a very busy one for Benalla Rural City Council with our major projects either being completed or very near completion. We have had a complex array of items of business set before us and have been able to make our decisions based on our individual experiences and our collective view of what is best for Benalla Rural City. We have a strong team approach and we are a very stable Council which enables us to focus on our vision for the future and better outcomes for all residents and ratepayers.

This year we reviewed our Council Plan and noted our achievements against the Plan's outcomes, some of which included:

- The completion of the Customer Service Centre and the near completion of the Civic Centre in Mair Street.
- Engaging with our outlying communities and bringing them together to discuss projects they may be interested in pursuing, especially the Winton community and the projects they have highlighted.
- As part of the fourth initiative under the Advancing Country Towns project, local business people, government representatives and others who have an interest in economic development and tourism provided their expertise and contributed to robust discussion to develop our Economic Development and Tourism Strategy.
- Our Benalla Regional Art Gallery had two wonderful exhibitions – the Fred Williams' Exhibition and the Benalla Nude competition, which resulted in approximately 15,000 visits to the art gallery and a noticeable increase in traffic in the retail sector.
- We have had more than 100 business enquiries throughout the year and had several businesses start up in Benalla Rural City.
- We have set up our project control groups to enable Benalla Rural City Council to have plans shovel ready for the next Council to adopt if it wishes, which include the Benalla Airport Master Plan, the Benalla Aquatic Centre Redevelopment Plan, the Visitor Information Centre Development Plan and the Enterprise Park Business Growth Project. We have also included the Benalla Art Gallery Master Plan.



We have had many other achievements that have contributed to the vibrancy of our rural city. This all would not happen unless we had our eye on the ball, dedicating our time and effort to provide for our community now and into the future. I thank my Council colleagues, CEO and the Council staff who all work together tirelessly to provide good service, outstanding facilities and a sense of cohesion for Benalla Rural City.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Alexander".

**Cr Barbara Alexander AO  
Mayor**

# Message from the CEO

The 2013-14 year will go down in the history of Benalla Rural City as one of significant achievement in enriching conditions and lifestyle in Benalla and placing the Rural City at the leading edge in presenting a very attractive alternative in Regional Victoria.

## 10-Year Forward Financial Plan

I am pleased to provide an overview of the 2013/14 financial year, the final year in the Council's first 10-Year Forward Financial Plan. Partnership projects totaling \$24.290m have been completed in the ten-year period and attracted \$18.994m of funding from external sources. This means that for every Council \$1 spent, \$3.60 has been received from other sources. In the same period \$44.195m has been directed to road maintenance and construction (refer to appendix partnership projects).

The Council's revenue target from rates and charges fell short by 5.7% over the ten-year period, which in today's terms is \$804,156. This is primarily due to the Council decision to pull back in the 2007-08 financial year due to difficult drought conditions in the region. This means the Council continues to carry an underlying deficit, which is budgeted to be \$1.165m in the 2014-15 financial year.

## Building a better Benalla

In the last three years Benalla Rural City has achieved unprecedented success on a state-wide basis in attracting Federal and State Government capital projects funding. The Civic Precinct Revitalisation Project portrays a three-way partnership of all levels of government in Australia through a range of funding commitments as detailed below.

The addition of a new Learning Centre, Customer Service Centre and a refurbished Civic Centre to a wonderful range of community facilities places Benalla at a competitive advantage in regional Victoria in terms of future population growth.



The Customer Service Centre at 1 Bridge Street, Benalla, opened in February 2014 with the refurbished Civic Centre in Mair Street, Benalla, anticipated to be completed in August 2014, and the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Learning Centre expected to open in October 2014.

What is most satisfying to the Council is that these projects will be achieved without borrowing funds or increasing rate revenue beyond the Council's 10-Year Forward Financial Plan target levels.

In summary the project has received the following injection of funds which includes the Council's acquisition of property 1 Bridge Street, Benalla, from Australia Post (\$1.3m).

Federal Government	\$1.314m
State Government	\$2.244m
Benalla Rural City Council	\$2.492m
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6.050m</b>

Partnership projects totaling **\$24.29m** have been completed in the last ten-year period.



## Civic Precinct Revitalisation Project

Funding source	Contribution
State Government (Living Libraries Program)	\$500,000
Federal Government (Regional Local Community Infrastructure Program)	\$155,000
Benalla Rural City 2010/11 – cash on term deposit	\$620,000
Federal Government (Regional Development Australia Fund)	\$1,158,500
State Government (Heritage Victoria)	\$144,000
Benalla Rural City 2011/12 – cash on term deposit	\$406,000
State Government (Local Government Infrastructure Program)	\$1,600,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,583,500*</b>

\*Excludes acquisition of 1 Bridge Street.

The landscape and lifestyle characteristics of Benalla and its surrounding district together with an aquatic centre, indoor recreation centre, community care centre, regional art gallery and performing arts and convention centre and our urban and business growth potential, present a most comprehensive package to people and business considering relocation.

## Community satisfaction

The 2014 state-wide Community Satisfaction Survey conducted independently on behalf of the State Government resulted in Benalla Rural City recording an overall performance rating of 55 against a statewide average of 61. This signifies room for improvement, however compared to the 2013 survey, we improved in 17 of the 20 key performance areas with ratings of 60 or better in the following areas:



In response to the question: "What does Benalla Rural City Council **most** need to do to improve its performance?", business development and sealed road maintenance rated the highest.

## **Financial management**

The Council continues to enjoy a low-risk sustainability rating by the Auditor General Victoria and we will record an operating deficit of \$467,000 for the year ended 30 June 2014. For the full details of the financial report refer to page 62 of the full report.

## **Council governance**

This annual report reviews the second year of the current Council term and the elected Council can be proud of its achievements over the term so far. The Council has provided strategic direction in a stable environment.

The year under review will be singled out as one of great vision in the history of Benalla Rural City Council with three major projects under construction through the Civic Precinct Revitalisation Project.

## **Advancing Country Towns Program**

Established in July 2011, the Advancing Country Towns Program is a Victorian Government-funded initiative to improve the quality of life for regional Victorians and reduce disadvantage. The project has delivered four project initiatives:

- Education readiness – families and early years (Fair Start)
- Service integration and accessibility (Super Services)
- Job readiness and aspirations (Job Readiness)
- Business and employment diversity (Benalla Business and Tourism Growth)

See the “our community” section on pages 29 to 30 of the full report for further information on this initiative.

## **Project planning**

The 2013-2017 Council Plan provides that project planning be undertaken in respect of the following projects in anticipation of the next Council coming into office in October 2016 being in a position to strategically and financially consider the project priorities:

- Benalla Aquatic Centre redevelopment
- Business growth (Enterprise Park) subdivision
- Benalla Airport redevelopment
- Benalla Visitor Information Centre Redevelopment
- Benalla Regional Art Gallery Master Plan development



I am pleased to report that project steering committees for each project were established in the first half of the financial year and significant progress is being made towards the October 2016 ‘shovel-ready’ deadline.

I commend the Council for its vision and thank it for its ongoing confidence, and the support of the leadership team.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony McIlroy".

**Tony McIlroy**  
**CEO**

# Building a better Benalla

Highlights from the Capital Projects Program  
for 2013-14

**Civic Centre, Customer Service Centre, Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Learning Centre**



## Other capital projects

- Completion of Urban Growth Project - \$4.42 million.
- Installation of commercial kitchen at the town hall and back-of-house improvements - \$440,000.
- Significant progress on the Swanpool Community Project - \$377,000.
- Commencement of the Tatong Community Hub - \$384,000.
- Commencement of the refurbishment of the Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre.





**1,433** – the number of defects identified through inspections of roads, footpaths and bridges rectified during the year.

## Roads and bridges

Work on roads and bridges for 2013-14 includes:

- Completed condition survey of 535km of sealed roads and detailed inspections for 32 bridges.
- Preparation and reseal of 36km of the sealed road network - \$268,262.
- 1,433 defects identified and rectified through inspections of roads, footpaths and bridges.
- Graded 521km out of 777km of unsealed roads - \$155,779.
- Graded 106km out of 535km of sealed road shoulders - \$22,733.
- Completion of 1.5km of pavement rehabilitation and sealing on North Road - \$406,000.
- Replacement of 88 lineal metres of kerb and channel to improve drainage in various locations throughout Benalla, including Quantril Avenue and Carrier Street - \$17,600.
- Installation of a raised pedestrian crossing in Wedge Street to improve the safety of school children by slowing vehicles moving through the school precinct - \$18,750.
- Replacement and reconstruction of bridges on Four Mile Road (\$141,000) and Baines Lane (\$153,000).
- Works on reshaping, re-sheeting and asphalting on Tiger Hill Road, Tatong, Knight Road, Whitegate, Devenish/Wangaratta Road, Samaria Road - \$16,600.
- Treatment of 557km of road shoulders for weeds together with all urban drains and east and west main drains - \$14,743.



**521km** – the distance of unsealed roads which were graded, out of 777km in the municipality.



### Capital grants received in 2013-14

	2014 \$'000	2013 \$'000
Airport Masterplan	99	-
Benalla Performing Arts Centre refurbishment	213	-
Blackspot project	-	75
Country roads and bridges initiative	1,000	1,000
Enterprise Park	135	-
Project feasibility planning	300	-
Former Shire offices refurbishment	43	-
Flood restoration projects	-	13
Natural disaster relief	502	645
Roads to Recovery	874	539
Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Learning Centre and Customer Service Centre project	439	682
Skate Park redevelopment	-	200
Tatong revitalisation	113	-
Town hall restoration project	30	270
Swanpool revitalisation	243	-
Other	37	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,028</b>	<b>3,461</b>

### Other projects

- Completed upgrade of the roof access systems at the Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre and Benalla Aquatic Centre.
- Update of gable and runway markers at the airport.
- Community public safety lighting installed at a range of sites throughout the municipality and a further grant received.
- Installation of 500 metres of chain mesh fence around the old Taminick Gap quarry to keep the public out for safety reasons.
- Update of depot security with the installation of security gates.

# A year of highlights

## July

- Benalla Rural City celebrates NAIDOC Week from 7–14 July 2013.



## August

- Annual Budget adopted.
- Meals on Wheels celebrates 60th birthday in Australia, and 45 years in Benalla.
- Council urges residents to Get It Right on Bin Night.
- Who What Where Benalla website gives residents free and easy access to information about local services, groups and clubs.

## September

- Funding of \$237,000 from Victorian Government is announced for BPACC refurbishment.
- Entry forms are made available for Benalla Nude art prize.



## October

- Information session held on eradicating Indian Myna birds.
- The Civic Centre car-park is turned into a chalk gallery of indigenous-inspired art for Children's Week.
- The businesses of Benalla participated in the Tourism North East Cycle Salute with brightly themed window displays.
- Benalla Rural City considers land use with a review of the draft Planning Scheme.
- Rare trees and the refurbishment of the children's playground feature in the Benalla Botanical Gardens review.
- Cr Alexander is elected Mayor for another year.

## November

- Creating Community Connections Expo engages volunteers and strengthens community engagement.
- Fred Williams' The Pilbara exhibition opens at the Benalla Art Gallery.
- The Governor of Victoria, His Excellency the Honourable Alex Chernov AC QC, visits the Rural City of Benalla for a two day tour.
- Benalla Rural City representatives participate in White Ribbon Day.
- Benalla Rural City Council's planning process is reported as ahead of rural average again.
- BPACC launches its 2014 theatre season and its tenth year of artistic programming.
- Benalla's Taskforce for the future impresses Indi MP.

## December

- Benalla residents are urged to close the gate on pool drowning.
- Council reminds community to tidy gardens to be fire safe through summer.



## January

- Victorian Government funding announced for Tatong Community Hub and Swanpool Memorial Hall and Cinema redevelopment.
- BPACC hosts free movie sessions to help locals cope with the heatwave.
- The Essendon AFL team hit Benalla for an AFL training camp.
- Feasibility study announced for the Aquatic Centre redevelopment.

## February

- Benalla Rural City Council opens its new Customer Service Centre in Bridge Street.
- Benalla farmers get on the front foot to determine the future in farming at a special forum.

## March

- The Council announces a bike and walking path to connect Benalla to Winton Wetlands.
- The Benalla Nude 2014 short list is announced.
- Juan Davila wins the Benalla Nude 2014 \$50,000 art prize.

## April

- V8 Supercar Drivers make an appearance ahead of the Winton Motor Raceway Supercars event.
- Benalla amazes tree-changers at the Victorian Regional Living Expo.
- Crowds flock to Benalla Nude 2014 opening.
- Benalla Rural City Council Plan review shows good progress.
- \$100,000 funding is received for the Benalla Airport masterplan.

## May

- The Benalla CBA Car Parking Precinct Plan and Amendment C10 is adopted.
- The draft Annual Budget 2014-15 released for public comment.
- The revamped Benalla Art Gallery Shop opens and supports local artists.
- Classic, veteran and vintage vehicles hit the road for Historic Winton.
- Council says thank you to volunteers with a movie and afternoon tea at BPACC.
- Benalla hosts Regional Open Day visitors
- Landfill Cell construction commences.
- Council awards more than \$60,000 in community grants.

## June

- The Council begins distributing free domestic asbestos removal kits to promote safe renovation.
- New Civic Centre almost completed.

# Financial summary

The Council has an obligation to manage spending within budgetary guidelines. The Council budget is set at the beginning of each financial year. For a full set of financial reports, performance report and standard statements please see page 62 of the Annual Report.

The Underlying Operating Result for the year ended 30 June 2014 was on budget after excluding non-recurring items.

## Finances

Financial snapshot	2013/14 \$'000	2012/13 \$'000	2011/12 \$'000
Total Revenue	\$26,074	\$26,499	\$31,809
Total Expenses	\$26,541	\$24,568	\$25,955
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$467)*	\$1,931	\$5,854
Net Current Assets	122%	165%	175%
Total Assets	\$219,702	\$210,798	\$207,524
Total Liabilities	\$14,793	\$14,295	\$12,973
Net Assets	\$204,909	\$196,503	\$194,551
Rates	\$14,113	\$13,449	\$13,307
Rates/Total Revenue	54%	51%	42%
Indebtedness (Non Current Liabilities/ Own sourced revenue)	47%	50%	45%
Capital Projects	\$6,474	\$6,526	\$8,033

\*The deficit is largely due to the change in the accounting treatment relating to the Landfill rehabilitation provision, and the Swanpool and Tatong Community Projects.



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