





## OUR VISION

To provide a sustainable, thriving and cohesive community where lifestyle, culture, health and wellbeing are supported by strong leadership and community partnership.

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

We, the Benalla Rural City Council, acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to Elders from other communities who may be here today.

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# ABOUT THE COUNCIL PLAN

The Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2021-2025 is Council’s medium-term strategic planning document that guides decision making and sets key directions to work towards the community’s vision for the future.

The development of a Council Plan is a legislative requirement. Under the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020*, a Council Plan must be prepared every four years and submitted to the Minister for Local Government.

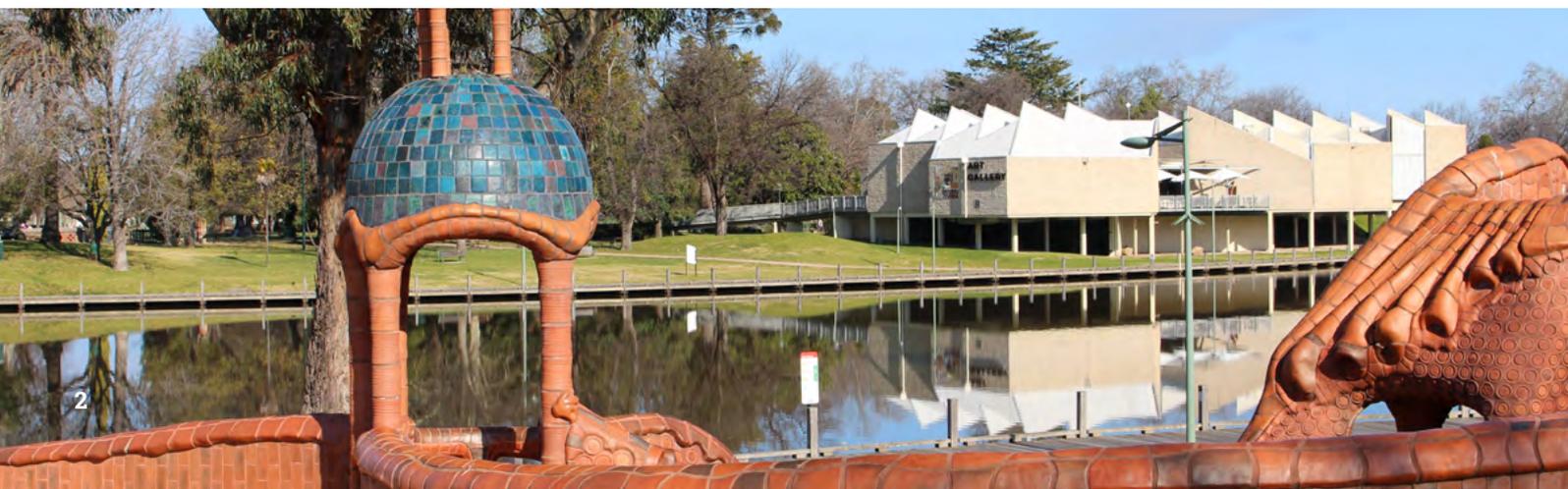
The Council Plan forms a key part of Council’s integrated business planning framework, which incorporates short, medium and long-term essential planning processes.

	VISION, STRATEGY AND POLICY	RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND MANAGEMENT
Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benalla Rural City</li> <li>• Community Vision 2036</li> <li>• Benalla Rural City Community Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asset Plan</li> <li>• Long-term Financial Plan</li> </ul>
Medium Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Plan</li> <li>• Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan</li> <li>• Other Key Strategies and Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Revenue and Rating Plan</li> </ul>
Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Plans</li> <li>• Service Plans</li> <li>• Programs, projects and initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgets</li> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Grant Funding</li> </ul>

The Council Plan will be supported by an action plan for each of the five themes. The action plan will be reported on annually with achievements and performance against key success measures communicated to the community.

Delivery of these actions is funded via our Financial Plan and annual budgets. As such, readers are encouraged to read the Council Plan in conjunction with our Financial Plan and current year budget.

This Council Plan also integrates our Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan to ensure a comprehensive, cross Council approach to delivering improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Benalla Rural City.



## Council's role

Council has a range of roles in delivering outputs of this Council Plan with these roles often dependant on community partnerships, networks, other service providers and the support of State and Federal Governments.

To assist with clarity we have included these roles alongside each strategy in the plan.

### Provider

Council is a leading provider of services which support this strategy.

### Funder

Council does not directly provide the services/ activities of this strategy but provides funding for its delivery.

### Facilitator

Council facilitates, partners and plans with others to achieve these strategies.

### Regulator

Council is responsible for enforcing legislative requirements to ensure compliance and delivery of services for this strategy.

### Asset Owner

Council owns (or is a custodian) and has responsibility for capital, operating and maintenance costs.

### Advocate

Council advocates on behalf of the community to other levels of government, service and business organisations.

### MPHWP

Refers to an objective that is aligned with the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan*.

The Council Plan has been informed by the long-term Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036 (drawn from recent engagement and the *Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016-2036*), extensive community consultation over a six-month period and key strategic documents, plans and policies.

A summary of engagement results can be found in the succeeding section of this document.

**Five themes provide the framework for the key objectives and strategies within the Council Plan:**

#### THEME 1

### COMMUNITY

#### THEME 2

### LIVEABILITY

#### THEME 3

### ECONOMY

#### THEME 4

### ENVIRONMENT

#### THEME 5

### LEADERSHIP

# MAYOR'S MESSAGE

In my message last year, I said 2020 would be known as the lockdown year, little did we think it would continue into 2021 and beyond.

In spite of these conditions Benalla Rural City has seen unprecedented growth. We understand our recovery from the economic, health and social impacts will take considerable time, and this has challenged our thinking.

This plan is strongly influenced by, and aligns with, the wishes expressed in the long-term vision 2036 and was developed following workshops with councillors and council staff and listening to the community through the many engagement opportunities.

Over the life of this plan Council in conjunction with the Victorian and Australian Governments will deliver many new projects and address many ageing infrastructure problems.

Major Projects:

1. Committing \$6.745m in the upgrading and renewal of our road and rural bridge infrastructure.
2. Investing \$1.041m in new and upgrading of footpaths and shared pathways.
3. A \$2m investment in the kerb and channel and drainage network.
4. A \$956,000 commitment to our parks, open space, streetscapes, and playgrounds.
5. Redevelopment of the Visitor Information Centre.
6. Redevelopment of the Benalla Art Gallery.
7. Progressing the redevelopment of the Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre.

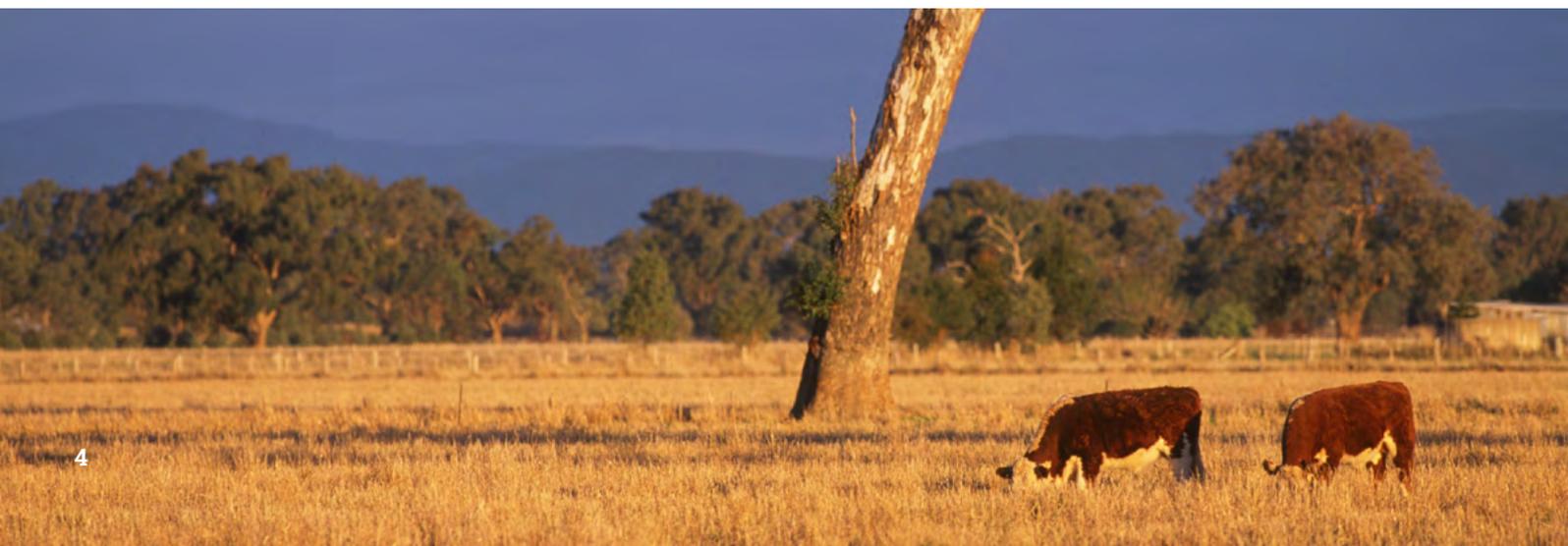
On behalf of Benalla Rural City, I am proud to present the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

The Council Plan establishes the actions we will take in partnership with the community over the coming four years.

As Councillors we strive to ensure that our community receives the best possible infrastructure programs and services we can afford.



**Cr Danny Claridge**  
Mayor



# YOUR COUNCILLORS



Mayor

Cr Danny Claridge



Deputy  
Mayor

Cr Bernie Hearn



Cr Peter Davis



Cr Don Firth



Cr Punarji Hewe  
Gunaratne

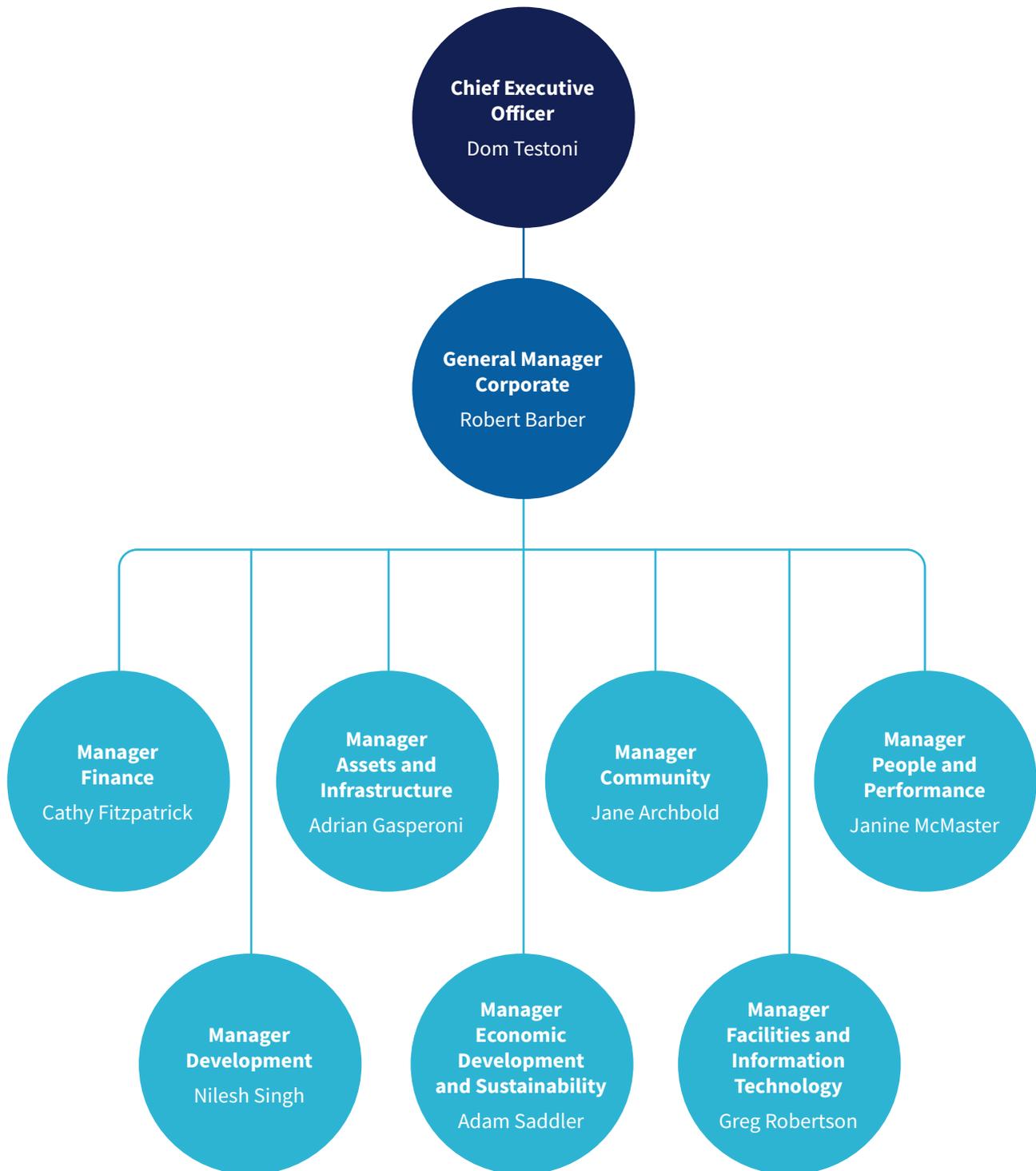


Cr Justin King



Cr Gail O'Brien

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE 2021



# COUNCIL'S VISION, PURPOSE AND VALUES

## Our Vision

To provide a sustainable, thriving and cohesive community where lifestyle, culture, health and wellbeing are supported by strong leadership and community partnership.

## Our Purpose

Through leadership and quality service we will meet our community's needs and aspirations with a focus on thoughtfully planned growth to maintain and enhance the high productivity of our collective community.

## Values

We will:

- Plan and guide the community of Benalla Rural City with unwavering **ACCOUNTABILITY**.
- Strive for **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**.
- Make decisions based on sound research and participate in decision making that meets the needs of the whole community in solid **EQUITY**.
- Act with transparency, truthfulness and **INTEGRITY**.
- Provide clear, innovative and strong **LEADERSHIP**.
- Serve our community, environment and council with **RESPECT**.



# COMMUNITY VISION 2036

The *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036* captures the community's vision for the next 15 years with a focus on liveability, sustainability, inclusivity and resilience.

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Council to develop, maintain and review a long-term Community Vision with its municipal community using deliberative engagement practices.

In 2015 Council undertook a deliberative engagement process to develop a long-term Community Plan with more than 700 community members and guided by eleven independent community representatives from across the Benalla Rural City.

This notable long-term Community Plan has been reviewed with community representatives and the long-term vision content has been adapted and updated to form the *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036*.

**Benalla Rural City**  
Creating our future together

## Our Vision

Benalla Rural City is welcoming and friendly, thriving and prosperous, environmentally responsible, innovative and industrious, caring and supportive and engaging for all residents and visitors – a place where people want to continue to live, move to and are proud to call home.

To achieve this vision, individuals, communities, organisations and businesses must continue to work together with the Council for the common good and prosperity of all people who live, visit, work and invest in Benalla Rural City.

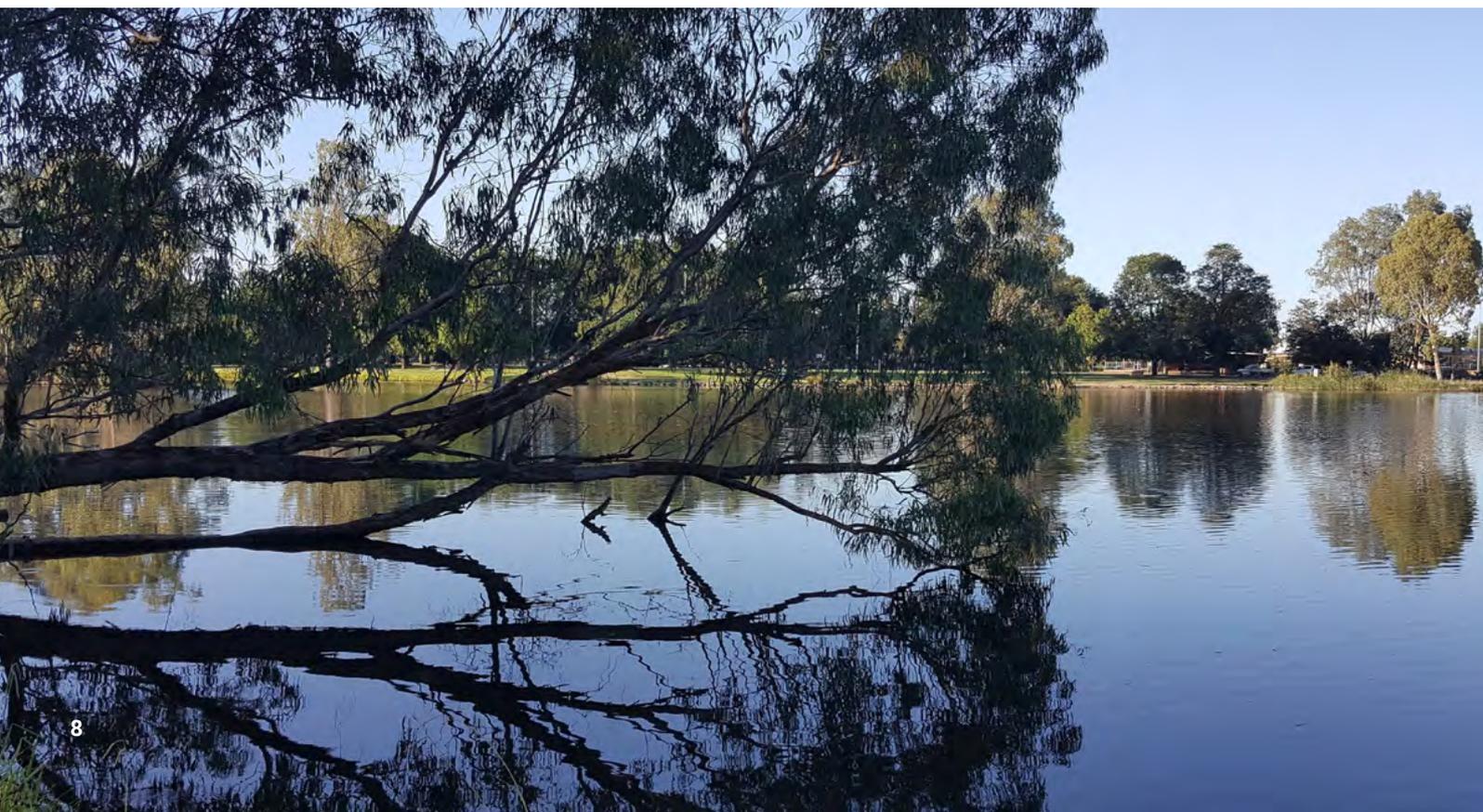




Image: Rosie Woods, Benalla Wall to Wall Festival 2018

The *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036* incorporates seven guiding themes:

### **Community wellbeing and sense of place**

In 2036 we will be a vibrant, activated, inclusive, cohesive rural city celebrating our valued and progressive lifestyle, diversity, and cultural heritage. All our communities will be supportive working together in partnership to strengthen our overall wellbeing and sense of place.

### **A well-planned, connected and accessible community**

In 2036 we will be a well-planned, connected and accessible community with quality, well-maintained and utilised infrastructure, including integrated transport and advanced telecommunications.

### **A vibrant, thriving and progressive economy**

In 2036 Benalla Rural City will have a diverse, robust and resilient economy for all attracting ongoing investment, offering a diverse range of tourism experiences and providing a destination of choice for new industries and job opportunities in a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

### **Planning for population growth**

In 2036 Benalla Rural City will have an increased population with ample job opportunities, exceptional services, facilities and infrastructure and a strong, skilled and innovative workforce. Diversity will be embraced and the welcoming community feel of Benalla Rural City will be maintained with sustainable and planned growth.

### **A sustainable environment**

In 2036 we will have enhanced our beautiful scenic landscapes, healthy waterways and excellent air quality. We will continue to responsibly manage our valued natural resources with innovative practices, sustainable planning and living and strengthened community education and partnerships.

### **A destination of choice**

In 2036 Benalla Rural City will be a destination of choice with a diverse range of tourism experiences, arts, sport, science, technology and cultural initiatives, programs and events. These will present a range of participation and employment opportunities for visitors, new arrivals and the local community.

### **Leadership and community spirit**

In 2036 Benalla Rural City will have a strong and distinctive spirit and character. Our community will be recognised for its strong leadership, collaborative partnerships, extensive networks, and high level of community engagement and participation.

The objectives, themes and future vision statements of the *Community Vision 2036* have informed the strategic framework for the *Council Plan 2021-2025* and ensure that Council's objectives and strategies are aligned to the long-term vision of the community.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Benalla Rural City Council recognises that the circumstances that people are born, grow, live, work, play and age all have an impact on their health and wellbeing and overall quality of life. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2014) shares these key social determinants of health and wellbeing as:

- income
- early childhood experiences
- gender stereotypes, norms and expectations
- education and employment
- social inclusion
- housing and geography
- living and working conditions
- quality of air, soil and water
- health systems.

This Council Plan integrates Council's *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* and details our role and commitment to improving health and wellbeing in the Benalla Rural City. It also highlights the key partnerships necessary to address the multifaceted and complex nature of many of our health and wellbeing challenges.

Our approach to supporting good health and wellbeing outcomes is strongly informed by the priorities within the *Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023* and aims to support all members of the community across various life stages. Our efforts over the next four years prioritise three of the four designated focus areas of the Victorian Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023:

1. Tackling the health impacts of climate change
2. Increasing healthy eating
3. Increasing active living.

An action plan will be developed in collaboration with the Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership Group identifying key local health and wellbeing priorities, including climate change, healthy eating, active living, prevention of family violence and improving mental health.

Local data informs our approaches, and we are committed to local partnership priorities to strengthen collective health and wellbeing action, as captured by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Benalla Health and the Central Hume Primary Care.



The *Central Hume Primary Care Partnership (CHPCP) 2021 Data Profile* highlights identified health strengths and challenges for the Benalla Rural City:

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of volunteerism.</li> <li>• Adult vegetable consumption higher than Victorian measure.</li> <li>• Estimated homeless persons is lower compared to Victoria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of highly disadvantaged SA1s is higher than Victorian measure.</li> <li>• Higher number of people with income less than \$500 per week compared to Victoria.</li> <li>• Higher rate of family violence incidences compared to Victoria.</li> <li>• Very high teenage fertility rate compared to Victorian measure.</li> <li>• High percentage of children developmentally vulnerable on two or more early childhood domains.</li> <li>• Higher rate of obesity and sugar sweetened beverage consumption compared to Victorian measure.</li> <li>• Higher rates of psychological distress and diagnosis for anxiety or depression than Victorian measures.</li> </ul>

**Key partners in ensuring our community’s health and wellbeing include, but is not limited to:**

- Aboriginal corporations
- Aged care providers
- Ambulance Victoria
- Australian Childhood Foundation
- Australian Government
- Benalla Family Research Group
- Benalla Health
- Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership Group
- Better Benalla Rail
- Cancer Council Victoria
- Central Hume Primary Care Partnership
- Centre Against Violence
- Churches
- Community Accessibility
- Community and sporting groups
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Early years providers
- Environmental Health Professionals Australia
- Gateway Health
- GOTAFE
- Headspace
- Junction Support Services
- La Trobe Health Services
- Medical practitioners
- Merri Health
- Mind Victoria
- Minus18
- Murray Primary Health Network
- National Disability Support Service
- National Health and Medical Research Council
- North East Health
- North East Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- North East Multicultural Association
- North East Support and Action for Youth
- North East Water
- NE Tracks LLEN
- Odyssey House
- Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- Scope
- State Emergency Service (SES)
- St Vincent De Paul
- Schools
- Service Clubs
- Support Groups and Networks
- The Centre
- Tomorrow Today Foundation
- Upper Murray Family Care
- Uniting
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
- State Government Departments
- VicHealth
- Victoria Police
- Waminda Community House
- Women’s Health Goulburn North East
- World Health Organisation
- YMCA
- Yooralla
- Youth Live4Life.

# THEME 1

# COMMUNITY



"We need more entertainment for young people."

"More entertainment and family friendly activities."

"Engage youth back into sporting clubs."



"More support for mental health and wellbeing."



"Continue to add to the vibrancy of the area through mural arts projects."



"Volunteering is an important part of our community."



"I would like to see more events at the art gallery/ library. We need to embrace these two fantastic resources."

**OBJECTIVE:**

**A healthy, safe and resilient community**

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
<p>1 Partner with key stakeholders, such as Victoria Police to promote and enhance community safety including for mobility scooter users, cyclists and pedestrians.</p>	<p>Facilitator MPHWP</p>
<p>2 Work closely with community and key stakeholders to plan for emergencies and build community resilience.</p>	<p>Facilitator Regulator MPHWP</p>
<p>3 With our community and key stakeholders to address some of the priorities of the <i>Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023</i>: healthy eating and active living; mental wellbeing, preventing violence and injury, and climate change and its impact on health.</p>	<p>Facilitator Advocate MPHWP</p>
<p>4 Act on the prevention of family violence through awareness raising, workplace policy and support for local and regional initiatives.</p>	<p>Facilitator Advocate MPHWP</p>
<p>5 Work together with key health, welfare and community organisations and networks to support better learning, development and wellbeing outcomes for community members.</p>	<p>Facilitator Advocate MPHWP</p>
<p>6 Offer programs, services, activities and events that support, develop and connect community members of all abilities and lead the community in being age friendly and child and Covid safe.</p>	<p>Provider Funder Facilitator Asset Owner MPHWP</p>



**What our community told us they wanted**

- Intergenerational activities
- COVID recovery-safety at events/ activities
- Child-friendly, safe walkable cities
- Stronger sport participation
- Mental health support
- Safety for isolated aged residents
- Early years development.

**OBJECTIVE:**

**A connected, involved and inclusive community**

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
<p>1 Support and promote opportunities for the community to participate in a range of social, recreational, and arts and cultural programs, activities and events.</p>	<p>Provider Funder Facilitator Asset Owner MPHWP</p>
<p>2 Build community capacity through supporting community groups to deliver local initiatives that build social connections and enhance health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Facilitator Funder MPHWP</p>
<p>3 Create and promote welcoming and inclusive practices and culture, so community members- whatever their age, gender, physical ability, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, sexuality or cultural background feel like they belong and are valued, respected and included.</p>	<p>Facilitator Asset Owner MPHWP</p>
<p>4 Encourage, support, value and celebrate volunteering in the community.</p>	<p>Provider Facilitator</p>
<p>5 Celebrate and promote history and cultural diversity.</p>	<p>Provider Facilitator</p>
<p>6 Continue to respectfully engage, include, celebrate and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people.</p>	<p>Facilitator Advocate</p>
<p>7 Promote, support and actively engage with smaller rural communities.</p>	<p>Provider Funder Facilitator</p>



**What our community told us they wanted**

- Welcoming new residents
- Council Community Grants
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Updated community directory
- Strengthen social connections/ volunteering following Covid disruptions
- Training to build the capacity of volunteers.

## Key supporting policies, strategies and plans

- *Benalla Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2017* (currently being updated)
- *Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Master Plan*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016-2036*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036*
- *Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy 2013-2017* (currently being updated)
- *Central Hume Prevention Strategic Plan 2017-2021*
- *Korin Korin Balit-Djak Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017-2027*
- *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023*.

## Key community partners

Please refer to the list of key community partners on page 11.

## Performance measures

- Community satisfaction with community development activities
- Community satisfaction with community and cultural activities
- Community satisfaction with support services for older people
- Community satisfaction with emergency and disaster management
- Community satisfaction with family support services
- Community satisfaction with libraries
- Community satisfaction with youth services and activities
- Community groups allocated support from the Community Support Program
- Family violence incidents per 1,000 population
- Immunisation rates
- Number of forums held in rural townships
- Number of local safety committee meetings
- Participation in maternal child and health service
- % of library users
- % of people reporting being obese (BMI greater than 30)
- % meeting vegetable consumption guidelines
- % of residents meeting physical activity guidelines
- % daily consumer of sweetened soft drinks
- % high or very high level of psychological distress
- % of people who help as a volunteer
- % of required food safety assessments undertaken
- Number of visits to the Benalla Aquatic Centre.

# THEME 2

# LIVEABILITY

"Sport and recreational development are essential for the region."



"I think Council could be more innovative in the use and upgrade of our public spaces."



"We need to find a way to rebuild our small rural townships and the sense of community."

"Continue to promote and develop Benalla as a place to live and as a destination."



"Better footpaths, roads, lake amenities and recreation would improve the image of Benalla liveability."

"Build a dog park. There are many dogs in Benalla, and it would be nice to have an off-leash place to take the dogs."



"Better footpaths, roads, lake amenities and recreation would improve the image of Benalla liveability."

**OBJECTIVE:**

# Vibrant public spaces and places

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Advocate and plan for street lighting, shade, seating and pedestrian crossings that support current growth and development and enhance safety and outdoor engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider</li> <li>Facilitator</li> <li>Asset Owner</li> <li>Advocate</li> <li>MPHWP</li> </ul>
2 Maintain and develop sport and recreation facilities and reserves, parks, gardens, playgrounds, and walking and cycling paths to increase passive and active community participation and social connection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitator</li> <li>Asset Owner</li> <li>Advocate</li> <li>MPHWP</li> </ul>
3 Maintain the amenity and cleanliness of townships, public spaces, roadsides and community facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider</li> <li>Asset Owner</li> <li>Funder</li> </ul>
4 Ensure open spaces and public places in existing and developing communities are thoughtfully planned, connected, green, sustainable, accessible, engaging and inclusive and consider the needs of an ageing community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider</li> <li>Facilitator</li> <li>Asset Owner</li> <li>Advocate</li> </ul>
5 Beautify streetscapes, landscaping, signage and town entrances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider</li> <li>Facilitator</li> </ul>
6 Enhance and maintain key places of significance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provider</li> <li>Facilitator</li> <li>Asset Owner</li> </ul>
7 Advocate for and act on opportunities to protect, maintain and preserve heritage assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitator</li> <li>Asset Owner</li> <li>Advocate</li> </ul>



## What our community told us they wanted

- Open space planning
- Sustainable subdivisions
- Tree planting/management
- Recreation planning
- Reduced speed zones for pedestrian safety
- Pedestrian crossings
- Further development of Lake Benalla
- Great playgrounds
- An off-leash dog park
- Squash courts
- Synthetic hockey pitch
- Toilets at splash park
- Shading at splash park
- A focus on the priorities in the *Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Plan*
- An improved Benalla Station precinct that is linked to the Benalla CBD.

**OBJECTIVE:**

# Connected and accessible roads, footpaths, transport and parking

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Deliver and maintain accessible and safe footpaths and cycle paths in existing and new neighbourhoods.	Provider Facilitator Asset Owner MPHWP
2 Maintain and improve drainage, bridges, parking and road networks to meet the needs of the current and future population.	Provider Facilitator Asset Owner Advocate
3 Plan for population growth and accessibility for all.	Provider Advocate
4 Advocate for improved public transportation to be linked to new housing developments and advocate for increased and better-connected public transport options.	Advocate



### What our community told us they wanted

- Improve bridge/CBD traffic congestion
- A walkable community
- Age friendly seating
- Linked precincts
- A focus on outlying/rural towns
- More disability parking.





Image: Devenish Silo Art. Artist Cam Scale

## Key supporting policies, strategies and plans

- *Asset Management Policy and Plan*
- *Benalla Airport Master Plan*
- *Benalla Indoor Recreation Master Plan*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016-2036*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036*
- *Benalla Tourism and Events Strategy*
- *Pathways to the Future Strategy*
- *Road Management Plan* (under review)
- *Ten Year Capital Management Plan*
- *The Former Migrant Camp Conservation Management Plan*
- *Urban Stormwater Management Plan* (under review)
- *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023.*

## Key community partners

- ARTC
- Benalla Historical Society
- Benalla Migrant Camp Inc.
- Better Benalla Rail
- Heritage Victoria
- North East Multicultural Association
- Sporting and recreation groups
- Vic Health
- Vic Roads
- Vic Tracks

## Performance measures

- Active library members
- Community satisfaction with appearance of public areas
- Community satisfaction with art centres
- Community satisfaction with providing libraries
- Community satisfaction with local roads and footpaths
- Community satisfaction with recreational facilities
- Community satisfaction with condition of sealed local roads
- Community satisfaction with slashing and weed control
- Community satisfaction with condition of unsealed roads
- Ratio of Capital Works Program delivered compared to budget.

# THEME 3

# ECONOMY

"More support for local business."

"Promote tourism and have more events."

"Promote the liveability of Benalla."



"Work to improve what visitors see when they first come to town."

"There is a lack of places for visitors to stay."

"Keep investing in economic development for the region".

"New industry to Benalla has provided more employment opportunities."



"We have a lot of empty shops in Benalla."

**OBJECTIVE:**  
**Thriving  
 business and  
 industry**

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Work together with key stakeholders to engage, support, strengthen, enhance and diversify local business.	Facilitator Advocate
2 Attract new investment, business and industry to the Benalla Rural City to facilitate business growth and job creation.	Facilitator Advocate
3 Support a circular economy to improve business productivity and reduce waste.	Provider Facilitator Asset Owner Advocate



**What our  
 community  
 told us they  
 wanted**

- An Economic Development Strategy
- Improved shop/buy local support
- Small business support
- COVID recovery focus for small business
- Social enterprise
- Recognition of local business achievements.

**OBJECTIVE:**  
**Flourishing  
 tourism**

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Strengthen the visitor economy through growth of events and promotion of unique assets and experiences and visitor attractions.	Facilitator Advocate
2 Grow, enhance and promote sports, arts and culture tourism opportunities.	Provider Facilitator Asset Owner Advocate
3 Improve accommodation offerings in the Benalla Rural City.	Facilitator Advocate



**What our  
 community  
 told us they  
 wanted**

- A Tourism Strategy
- Development of higher-level accommodation
- Develop/promote history tourism
- Develop sports tourism
- Promote street/silo art
- Improved rail links.

OBJECTIVE:

## Diverse education and employment

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Work with key stakeholders to improve local learning and employment pathway opportunities that address skills gaps, align with future needs and support lifelong learning.	Facilitator Advocate
2 Advocate for improved local access to post-secondary education opportunities.	Advocate



### What our community told us they wanted

- Skills sharing initiatives/ mentoring
- Strengthened business/ education links
- Improved local TAFE offerings.

OBJECTIVE:

## Population growth

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Broadly market Benalla Rural City's liveability.	Facilitator Advocate
2 Continue to support Rural Councils Victoria projects and initiatives.	Facilitator Advocate
3 Proactively plan for new residential development to support increased population and growth.	Facilitator Regulator Advocate



### What our community told us they wanted

- Sustainable planning
- Leverage off Melbourne residents' interest in rural living
- Housing diversity.

## Key supporting policies, strategies and plans

- *Benalla Airport Master Plan*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016-2036*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036*
- *Benalla Tourism and Events Strategy*
- *Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2013-2025*
- *Enterprise Park Strategy.*

## Key community partners

- Benalla Future Workforce Steering Group
- Buy from Benalla town team
- Buy from North East Vic
- ITAG Indi Telecommunications Group
- Local business and industry
- Ovens Murray Digital Futures Group
- Ovens Murray Regional Partnerships
- Regional Development Victoria
- Rural Councils Victoria
- Small Business Victoria
- Startup Shakeup
- Tourism North East
- Victorian Chamber of Commerce.

## Performance measures

- Community satisfaction with arts centres
- Community satisfaction with business development
- Community satisfaction with tourism development
- Population growth figures.



# THEME 4

# ENVIRONMENT

"Become more focussed on a sustainable future."

"Ensure our natural and built environment is protected and create opportunities to showcase these."

"We need a leafier city."



"The green bins are a fabulous addition to waste collection."

"There needs to be a recycling shop at the waste facility as too much reclaimable material is tipped."

"We could be doing so much more; climate change is already impacting us."



"Support environmental leadership".

OBJECTIVE:

# Healthy and protected natural environment

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
<p>1 Partner with agencies and the community to manage and enhance our natural environmental assets, water quality and river health across Benalla Rural City and support the <i>Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Regional Catchment Strategy</i> and other regional environmental strategies.</p>	<p>Facilitator Regulator Advocate MPHWP</p>
<p>2 Maintain and establish shading for public areas, including planning for shade trees in new residential developments.</p>	<p>Provider Facilitator Regulator</p>
<p>3 Enable a safe and thriving natural environment.</p>	<p>Provider Facilitator Regulator</p>



### What our community told us they wanted

- Tree planting
- Green spaces
- Roadside management.



OBJECTIVE:

## High quality, efficient and sustainable waste management

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Actively promote responsible behaviours to reduce waste.	Provider Facilitator Regulator Advocate
2 Provide efficient and sustainable waste management services.	Provider Facilitator Regulator Advocate



### What our community told us they wanted

- Tip shop/Repair Cafe
- Tip vouchers
- Hard waste disposal
- Waste education
- Audit farms/large business to understand waste/recycling needs
- Halt single use plastic.

OBJECTIVE:

## Sustainable practices

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Partner with business, industry and community to plan and implement local approaches and initiatives that respond to climate change.	Facilitator Asset Owner Advocate MPHWP
2 Advocate, promote, support and encourage the use of renewable and clean energy and technology.	Facilitator Advocate MPHWP
3 Improve Council’s sustainability performance through greater use of renewable energy and demonstrating sustainability leadership to the community.	Provider Asset Owner



### What our community told us they wanted

- Car charging stations
- Climate change education
- Solar hubs in communities.

## Key supporting policies, strategies and plans

- *Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016-2036*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036*
- *Central Hume Prevention Strategic Plan 2017-2021*
- *Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2013-2025*
- *Domestic Wastewater Management Plan*
- *Electric Line Management Plan 2021-2022*
- *Environment Strategy 2016-2020*
- *Korin Korin Balit-Djak Aboriginal Health, Wellbeing and Safety Strategic Plan 2017-2027*
- *Plastic Wise Policy 2021*
- *Roadside Weeds and Pest Plan 2017-2019*
- *Tree Asset and Maintenance Management Plan 2018-2021*
- *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023*
- *Waste Management and Minimisation Strategy 2014-2019.*

## Key community partners

- Benalla Sustainable Future Group
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
- Winton Wetlands.

## Performance measures

- Community satisfaction with our environmental sustainability
- Community satisfaction with waste management
- Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill.



# THEME 5

# LEADERSHIP

"Continue with consulting the community in the future."



"Understand and connect with the community you serve."

"Respect local knowledge and experience."



"Ensure sufficient staffing is in place to prioritise building planning and approvals."

"Would like to see more Councillors at community events."



"Keep re-evaluating efficiencies and effectiveness, and whether you have the right person in the job."



"Encourage employees to offer solutions and innovative ideas to normal processes."

OBJECTIVE:

## Good governance

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Ensure compliance with the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> and other relevant legislation and regulations.	Provider Facilitator Regulator
2 Ensure key community priorities captured in the long-term community vision are reflected in the Council Plan.	Provider Facilitator
3 Manage the procurement of goods and services to provide transparency and best value for money.	Provider
4 Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy that maintain financial sustainability and deliver value for money and rating fairness.	Provider



### What our community told us they wanted

- Capital works linked to demonstrated community need
- Capitalise on grant seeking
- Affordable rates
- Equitable resourcing of rural outlying communities.

OBJECTIVE:

## High performance culture

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Improve customer experience through responsive, timely, efficient, well planned, and accessible services.	Provider
2 Develop a skilled, efficient and high performing customer focussed workforce.	Provider
3 Pursue and lobby for appropriate and sustainable funding and service arrangements with Victorian and Australian Governments.	Provider Regulator Advocate
4 In collaboration with key community partners support an inclusive and safe workplace, aiming to increase awareness of and access to appropriate training for staff in the prevention of all forms of violence.	Provider Advocate MPHWP



### What our community told us they wanted

- Reduce red tape
- Upskill staff on community engagement and communication
- A well-informed Council.

OBJECTIVE:

## Engaged and informed community

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Work in partnership with community members, groups and organisations to achieve the aspirations captured within the Benalla Rural City long-term Community Vision.	<b>Provider</b> <b>Facilitator</b> <b>Advocate</b> <b>MPHWP</b>
2 Create opportunities for deliberative engagement prior to decision making and actively improve and enhance Council's community engagement practices.	<b>Facilitator</b> <b>MPHWP</b>
3 Provide timely and effective communications in plain language to the community about Council services, activities and decision making.	<b>Provider</b>
4 Plan, provide and promote direct Councillor engagement opportunities across the Benalla Rural City.	<b>Facilitator</b>



### What our community told us they wanted

- Regular Council Plan progress reporting
- Plain language focus
- Council presence at community events
- More opportunities for deliberative engagement.

OBJECTIVE:

## Effective and responsive advocacy

STRATEGIES	COUNCIL ROLE
1 Work in partnership with community, groups, local agencies, and all levels of government to advocate for improved services, infrastructure and social outcomes for the community and report on advocacy outcomes.	<b>Partner</b> <b>Advocate</b>
2 Participate in advocacy outcomes as part of Rural Councils Victoria.	<b>Advocate</b>



### What our community told us they wanted

- Network/join with North East networks
- COVID recovery focus

## Key supporting policies, strategies and plans

- *Annual Report and Budget*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016-2036*
- *Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036*
- *Benalla Rural City Council Community Engagement Policy*
- *Financial Plan*
- *Procurement Policy*
- *Rating and Revenue Plan 2021-2025.*

## Key community partners

- Community groups and organisations
- Rural Councils Victoria
- Victorian and Australian Governments.

## Performance measures

- Community satisfaction with advocacy
- Community satisfaction with community consultation
- Community satisfaction with customer service
- Community satisfaction with informing the community
- Community satisfaction with making community decisions
- Community satisfaction with overall direction of Council
- Loans and borrowings
- Lost time injuries frequency rate
- % of required food safety assessments undertaken
- Planning application decided within 60 days
- Workforce turnover
- Working capital
- 100% compliance with Governance and Management Checklist.



# OUR COMMUNITY

Benalla Rural City is located in north-east Victoria, 193km north east of Melbourne, and is centred in the Broken River valley. The current estimated resident population of Benalla Rural City is 14,137 with approximately 9,000 living in the Benalla urban area and the remainder living in and around our smaller towns. The population forecast for 2036 is 14,660.

Benalla Rural City was established as an agricultural and pastoral district in the 1840s, following long habitation by Aboriginal people. It was proclaimed a city in 1965 and Lake Benalla was artificially created in 1973.

The geography of Benalla Rural City is divided by the Hume Freeway with hills, valleys, grazing land and forests to the south. The communities include those of Acherton, Boho South, Glenrowan West, Lima, Lima South, Lurg, Molyullah, Moorngag, Samaria, Swanpool, Tatong, Upper Lurg, Upper Ryan's Creek, Warrenbayne and Winton.

The north side of the freeway is characterised by plains and rolling hills used as cropping and grazing land. The communities include those of Baddaginnie, Boweya, Boxwood, Broken Creek, Bungeet, Chesney Vale, Devenish, Goomalibee, Goorambat, Stewarton, Taminick, Tarnook and Thoona.

The Benalla Rural City economic sectors include the town's role as a regional centre, agricultural production, tourism and manufacturing. It is dominated by employment in the manufacturing, retail trade, health and community services sectors.

The proportion of people employed in agriculture is above the state average. Local agriculture is diverse and innovative including beef, sheep, cropping, forestry, viticulture and a range of new and growing areas such as aquaculture.

Some of the main tourism attractions include, but are not limited to, the Winton Motor Raceway, Winton Wetlands, State Gliding Centre (Benalla Airport), Benalla Street Art Wall to Wall Festival and the Benalla Art Gallery.

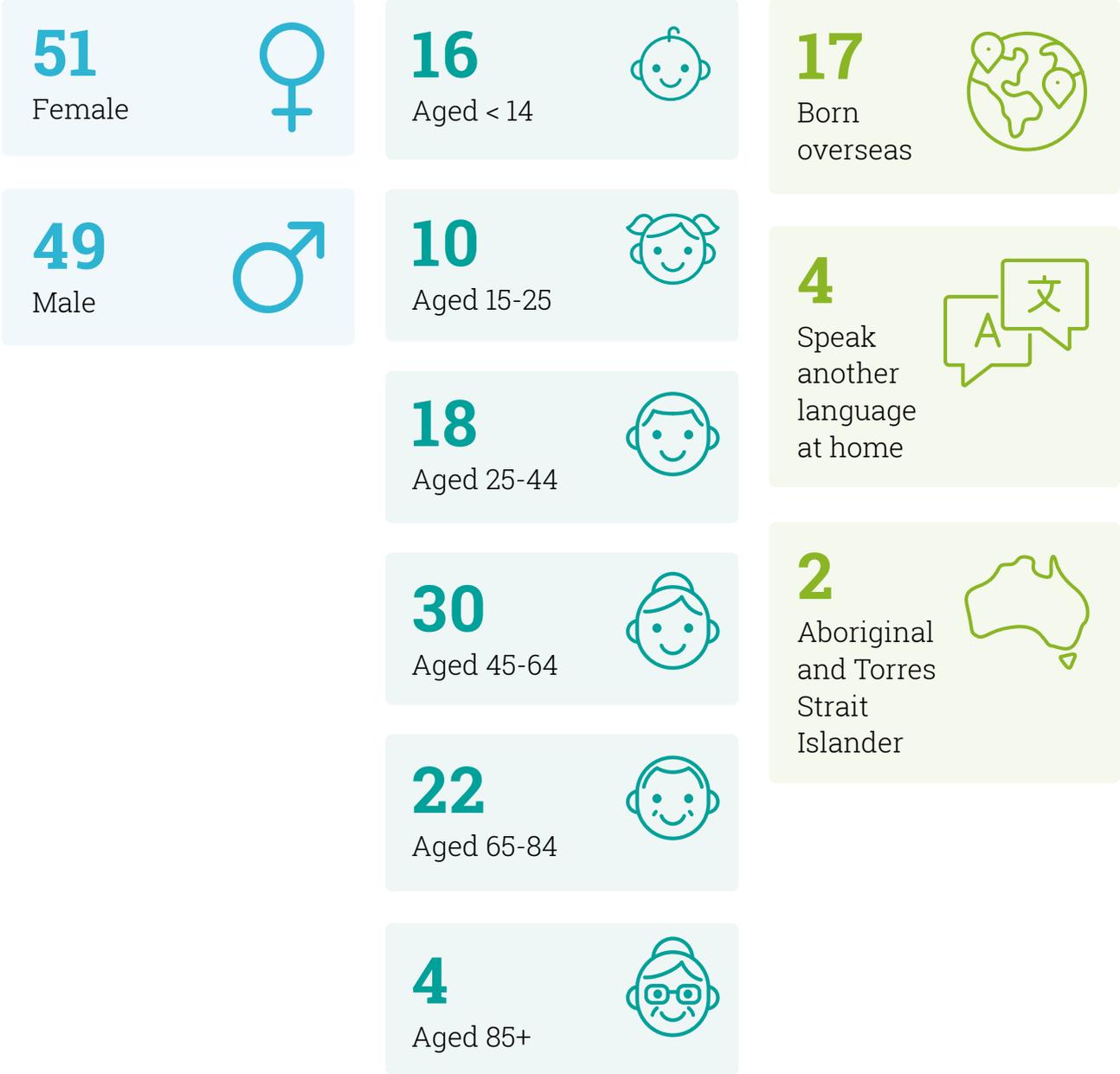
Benalla Rural City offers a lifestyle that has a choice of primary and secondary schools, a TAFE college, comprehensive health services and a wealth of participation opportunities including sport, music, wine and art. Lake Benalla, with the surrounding Botanical Gardens and walking track, is a key attraction located within the town. Benalla Rural City has well developed disability, aged care and childcare services.

There are many active community and service groups throughout Benalla Rural City.





# IF BENALLA RURAL CITY WAS 100 PEOPLE ...



Figures based on 2016 ABS Census.

**32**

Live by themselves



**20**

Completed higher education qualification



**71**

Own or mortgage a house



**50**

Couple without children



**33**

Did not complete year 12



**24**

Rent a house



**32**

Couple with children



**54**

Work full-time



**29**

Weekly household income < \$650



**17**

One-parent family



**34**

Work part-time



**6**

Live in a house without a car



**5**

Unemployed



**22**

Live in a house without internet access



**27**

Volunteer



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community consultation began in November 2020 and continued until the draft Council Plan was released for community consultation in August 2021. The Youth Strategy survey ensured the inclusion of young people's need and aspirations.

## Our engagement approach

Input into the new Council Plan was invited through a varied number of engagement methods:

**286**

people filled in an online Council Plan community survey.

**299+**

people attended a listening post or filled in a postcard.

**189**

people filled in a 'have your say' online survey.

**125**

people attended a focussed discussion group and rural open houses.

**18**

people attended a deliberative community stakeholder workshop.

**8**

people attended a workshop to review the Community Plan and draw on visionary content to form the Benalla Rural City Community Vision 2036.

**8**

people wrote a submission.

## Who we heard from

Council's engagement centred on hearing from a diverse mix of voices that represent the Benalla Rural City community. Demographic data was not collected for all engagement activities however, we heard from:

- a range of age groups
- a balanced gender mix
- residents living in both Benalla and rural areas
- residents with a culturally diverse background.

## Postcards/online have your say survey

**68%**

lived in the township of Benalla, 26% lived in a rural outlying community.

A wide range of age groups were engaged, with the top three age groups being:

1. 55-64-year-olds (20%)
2. 65-74-year-olds (19%)
3. 35-44-year-olds (17%)

## The Council Plan community survey

**70%**

lived in the township of Benalla,.

**25%**

lived in a rural outlying community.

**60%**

of respondents identified as female, 37% identified as male, 1% identified as non-binary and 2% preferred not to disclose their gender.

Age breakdown included:

- 7% under 18 years,
- 18% aged 18-34 years,
- 21% aged 35-54 years,
- 40% aged 55-74 years
- 14% aged 75 years and older.

The Benalla Youth Survey has captured the needs and aspirations of over 200 young people aged 12-25 years.

The Central Hume Primary Care Partnership (CHPCP) 2021 Data Profile highlights identified health strengths and challenges for the Benalla Rural City:

**COMMUNITY STRENGTHS**

**The top ten community strengths that community members shared were:**

1. Friendly/caring people
2. The Lake
3. Peaceful and quiet
4. Country living/relaxed lifestyle
5. Community facilities (e.g. Swanpool Theatre, BPACC, sporting facilities, seniors citizens, Winton, Art Gallery)
6. Parks/gardens/playgrounds (Splash Park, Rocket Park, Gardens)
7. Community activities (e.g. footy, golf, market, U3A, community garden)
8. Small town
9. Good location
10. Clean/tidy

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES**

**The key challenges that community consultation revealed were:**

- Ageing population
- Mental health
- Planning for population growth
- Climate change
- Sustainable living
- Small business support
- Vulnerable communities
- Affordable and diverse housing
- Retaining and engaging young people
- Volunteering
- Community engagement and communication
- Impact of COVID and COVID recovery.

The Council Plan community survey captured the **top ten services of importance** for Benalla Rural City residents.



Parks, gardens and playgrounds



Pool/aquatic centre



Library



Roads and drainage



Footpaths



Waste management



The arts



Sporting reserves



Walking and bike paths



Seniors centre and services

## FEEDBACK FROM OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

"Lovely pretty town; friendly, casual, no rushing around."

"As a long-term resident, I have a sense of belonging living in here and have the opportunity to be involved in many community activities."

"We have a direct train line into major centres."

"I love the community spirit, the friendly people and a lovely safe place to raise a family or as in my situation retire in."

"Love the friendly community and the rose gardens."

"Benalla, although growing still has a country feel about it."

"There should be more support for local business."

"Support community connection and wellbeing activities."

"Need something for youth; not enough night life; more creative in what we offer kids."

"There is not enough housing or rental stock in town."

"Volunteer organisations are under immense pressure and stress."

"We need to really focus on mental health- practical support and services."

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING DATA SNAPSHOT

*Our key sources for this information are the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 2016, the Victorian Population Health Survey, 2017 and the Central Hume PCP Benalla LGA Data Profile, 2021.*

## **Our top three health conditions in the Benalla Rural City (identified by number of hospital admissions):**

1. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (87 admissions)
2. Congestive cardiac failure (72 admissions)
3. Iron deficiency anaemia (66 admissions)
  - 17.8% of our residents are current smokers.
  - 31% of our residents were considered obese (Vic 19.3%).
  - 19.3% of our residents are estimated to have high or very high levels of psychological distress.
  - 37.15% of our residents shared that they had been diagnosed with depression or anxiety by a doctor (Vic 27.36%).
  - 27.9/1,000 population family violence incidents (Vic 9.3/1,000): We have three times more family violence incidents compared to Victoria.
  - 6.5% of people in our community are living with a severe or profound disability.

- Adults are eating more vegetables compared to the rest of Victoria.
- 47.2% of our children are fully breastfed at 3 months of age.
- At 2.4 per 1,000 people, our estimated rate of homeless persons is lower compared to Victoria (4.2).
- 82.73% of our residents could raise \$2000 within two days of an emergency.
- 29.5% of our residents reported that their health was either excellent or very good which is lower compared to Ovens Murray Region (40.8%) and Victoria (41.6%).
- 26.5% of us helped out as a volunteer.

## **Compared to Victoria, in the Benalla Rural City we rate ourselves higher for:**

- having an opportunity to have a say on important issues.
- feeling safe walking down their street after dark.
- having a friend or relative who would care for us or our children in an emergency.
- trusting people in our community.



# IMPACTS OF COVID-19

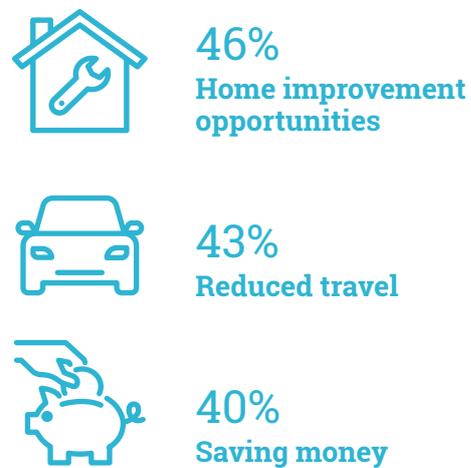
The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on the health and wellbeing and livelihoods of our residents with economic and social disruptions widely experienced. To better understand and plan for the impacts of COVID-19, our Council Plan Survey asked residents to share their experiences.

Benalla Rural City residents who completed an online survey (286) shared that COVID-19 had affected them in a number of ways, with the social impact being the greatest.



Additional COVID-19 impacts shared by community members were travel bans, physical/health issues due to service access issues, home schooling challenges, volunteer management and work/life balance issues.

Community members also shared the unexpected positive outcomes they had experienced during the COVID pandemic with the top three being:



The top three areas that community members wanted Council to focus on during COVID recovery were:





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