

4. 2022 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey

SF/2083

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents results from the *2022 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey*.

BACKGROUND

Each year, Local Government Victoria coordinates and auspices the Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey throughout Victoria. This coordinated approach allows for more cost-effective surveying than would be possible if councils commissioned surveys individually.

Participation in the survey, which is conducted by JWS Research, is optional and participating councils have a range of choices as to the content of the questionnaire and the sample size to be surveyed, depending on their individual strategic, financial and other considerations.

In 2022, 67 councils (66 in 2021) participated in the survey. Where relevant, Benalla Rural City Council's results have been compared against 18 other councils in the 'Small Rural' council grouping.

The Small Rural Council group comprises: Alpine, Ararat, Benalla, Buloke, Central Goldfields, Gannawarra, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Indigo, Loddon, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, Queenscliffe, Strathbogie, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack.

The main objectives of the survey were to assess the performance of the Council across a range of measures and to seek insight into ways to provide improved or more effective service delivery.

The survey also provides the Council with a means to fulfill some of its statutory reporting requirements as well as acting as a feedback mechanism to the State Government.

The survey was conducted between 27 January 2022 and 24 March 2022 by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing as a representative random probability survey of residents aged 18+ years across Benalla Rural City.

Survey sample matched to the Benalla Rural City Council was purchased from an accredited supplier of publicly available phone records, including up to 60 per cent of mobile phone numbers to cater to the diversity of residents, particularly younger people.

A total of 400 completed interviews were conducted.

Minimum quotas of gender within age groups were applied during the fieldwork phase. Post survey weighting was then conducted to ensure accurate representation of the age and gender profile in the Benalla Rural City.

Snapshots and extracts from the *2022 Local Community Satisfaction Survey Benalla Rural City Council* and the *Local Community Satisfaction Survey Benalla Rural City Council 2022 Tailored Questions* have been included in the report.

Key findings and recommendations from *the 2022 Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey* are attached as **Appendix 1**. The full report can be viewed in the Councillors' MS Teams group.

DISCUSSION

The survey includes a base set of questions designated as 'core' and therefore compulsory inclusions for all participating councils. A summary of the Council's core performance results can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Benalla Rural City Council core measures

Measure	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	Small Rural Shires 2022
Overall Performance	53	61	57	61	54	58
Community consultation and engagement	47	52	55	56	53	54
Advocacy – lobbying on behalf of the community	48	53	55	56	54	54
Making Community Decisions	48	57	54	56	51	54
Sealed Local Roads	45	53	49	54	49	53
Customer Service	66	70	71	75	66	67
Value for Money	45	55	NA	NA	NA	51
Overall Council Direction	46	54	51	58	54	51

Overall Performance

The overall performance index score of 53 for Benalla Rural City Council represents a significant eight-point decline on the 2021 result.

Overall performance ratings have returned to lower levels last seen in 2017 to 2018.

Benalla Rural City Council's overall performance is significantly lower than the Small Rural group and State-wide averages for councils (index scores of 58 and 59 respectively).

Almost all demographic and geographic cohorts recorded a significant decrease in overall performance ratings over the past year.

The largest declines in perceptions of overall performance are seen among residents aged 35 to 49 years (index score of 51, down 12 points), men (53, down 10), and Rural residents (52, down nine).

Ratings are highest among residents aged 18 to 34 years (index score of 56), and lowest among those aged 50 to 64 years (51).

A quarter of residents (25 per cent down from 40) rate value for money they receive from Council in infrastructure and services as 'very good' or 'good'. Over a third (36%, up from 22%) now rate Council as 'very poor' or 'poor'. A further 35% (unchanged) continue to rate Council as 'average' on providing value for money.

Individual Service Areas

In addition to the core questions above, a series of optional questions were available for selection. In the 2019 respondents were asked to rate the performance of Benalla Rural City Council over the past 12 months in the areas of responsibility set out in Table 2 below.

Please note: As a cost saving measure these questions were not asked in 2020.

Table 2: Summary of Benalla Rural City Council individual service areas

Responsibility Area	Index score 2022	Index score 2021	Index score 2019	Index score 2017	Index score 2016
Appearance of public areas	69	75	76	73	72
Elderly support services	65	71	74	69	68
Emergency and disaster management	66	70	74	71	69
Family support services	62	64	70	67	63
Parking facilities	66	69	69	70	65
Waste management	64	66	68	62	59
Recreational facilities	65	70	67	65	66
Tourism development	56	60	65	58	54
Environmental sustainability	55	62	58	59	56
Condition of local streets and footpaths	42	50	53	48	48
Population Growth	48	56	57	N/A	N/A
Slashing and weed control	45	51	57	48	51
Unsealed roads	36	48	47	40	42

Council performance compared to State-wide and group averages



Influences on perceptions of overall performance



The individual service area that has the strongest influence on the overall performance rating (based on regression analysis) is:

- Decisions made in the interest of the community.

Good communication and transparency with residents about decisions Council has made in the community’s interest provides the greatest opportunity to drive up overall opinion of Council’s performance. Currently, this is one of Council’s poorest performing areas (index score of 48).

Following on from that, other individual service areas with a moderate to strong influence on the overall performance rating are:

- Community consultation and engagement
- The appearance of public areas
- Waste management
- Environmental sustainability.

Looking at these key service areas, the appearance of public areas and waste management have a high performance index (69 and 64 respectively) and are strong influences on the overall performance rating.

Maintaining these positive results should remain a focus – but there is greater work to be done elsewhere.

Another service area that has a moderate influence on overall perceptions, but performs relatively less well, is environmental sustainability (performance index of 55).

A focus on Council’s sustainability programs can also help shore up positive overall opinion of Council.

However, in addition to its decision making processes, the area most in need of attention is Council’s community consultation and engagement, which is poorly rated (performance index of 47) and a strong influence on overall community opinion.

It is therefore important to focus on consulting and engaging with the community on key issues to help improve overall ratings of Council performance.

The recently adopted *2022/23 Budget* and work plans include several initiatives to address many of the issues raised in 2022 CCS, including:

Community Engagement:	An additional \$60,000 in community engagement operational expenditure (part-time communications and community engagement officer \$50,000 and a \$10,000 subscription to the Hive community engagement tool).
Waste Management:	\$2.5 million in 2022/23 and \$10 million across 10 years. Transfer station to be brought online in 2022/23.
Environmental Sustainability:	\$30,000 to develop a feasibility study for the Benalla Civic Solar project – a microgrid project to offset electricity use at Council facilities. Negotiations continue with electric vehicle charging station providers.
Reseal Program:	\$410,000 in 2022/23 and \$6.7 million across 10 years.
Gravel Resheet Program:	\$750,000 in 2022/23 and \$8.47 million across 10 years.
Drainage:	\$948,000 in 2022/23 and \$5.62 million across 10 years.
Rural Townships:	\$300,000 in 2022/23 under the Local Roads Community Infrastructure Program.

Other initiatives in the budget include:

- \$300,000 to scope and develop detailed technical drawings for the Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment project.
- \$100,000 to review and update the Benalla Airport Masterplan.
- \$50,000 to develop a concept plan to link the Benalla Station Precinct with the Benalla CBD.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Leadership

- *Good governance.*
- *High performance culture.*
- *Engaged and informed community.*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with the Council’s *Community Engagement Policy*, it is proposed that community engagement be undertaken at the ‘inform’ level under the International Association for Public Participation’s IAP2 public participation spectrum as detailed in the table below:

Level of Public Participation	Promise to the community	Techniques to be used
Inform	We will provide information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report to the Council. ▪ Survey available on the Council’s website. ▪ Results reported via Local Government Performance Reporting Framework and Annual Report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Every participating council contributes to the cost of the survey. Pricing is based on the number and type of questions asked. The cost to participate in the 2022 survey was \$11,318 (ex. GST).

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any general or material conflicts of interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION






The Community Satisfaction Survey offers a cost-effective mechanism for gaining insights into community perceptions of performance and ensures the Council’s compliance with the *Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020*.

Recommendation:
That the report be noted.

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Summary of Benalla Rural City Council performance

Services		Benalla 2022	Benalla 2021	Small Rural 2022	State-wide 2022	Highest score	Lowest score
	Overall performance	53	61	58	59	Aged 18-34 years	Aged 35-64 years
	Value for money	45	55	51	53	Aged 65+ years	Aged 35-49 years
	Overall council direction	46	54	51	50	Aged 35-49 years, Men	Aged 50-64 years
	Customer service	66	70	67	68	Women, Aged 65+ years	Aged 35-49 years
	Appearance of public areas	69	75	73	71	Aged 50-64 years	Aged 18-49 years, Men
	Emergency & disaster mngt	66	70	68	66	Aged 35-49 years	Men
	Parking facilities	66	69	60	57	Rural residents, Women	Men
	Recreational facilities	65	70	69	69	Aged 65+ years	Aged 35-49 years
	Elderly support services	65	71	70	67	Urban residents, Women, Aged 18-34 years	Rural residents
	COVID-19 response	65	70	69	69	Aged 18-34 years	Aged 35-49 years






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	Waste management	64	66	68	68	Aged 65+ years	Aged 50-64 years
	Family support services	62	64	64	65	Aged 65+ years	Aged 35-49 years
	Tourism development	56	60	62	60	Aged 35-49 years, Rural residents, Women	Men
	Environmental sustainability	55	62	59	61	Urban residents	Rural residents
	Lobbying	48	53	54	53	Aged 18-34 years	Aged 50-64 years
	Population growth	48	56	49	52	Aged 18-34 years	Aged 35-49 years
	Community decisions	48	57	54	54	Rural residents	Women, Urban residents
	Consultation & engagement	47	52	54	54	Aged 18-34 years	Aged 35-64 years, Men
	Sealed local roads	45	53	50	53	Urban residents, Aged 65+ years, Women	Rural residents



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Services		Benalla 2022	Benalla 2021	Small Rural 2022	State-wide 2022	Highest score	Lowest score
	Slashing & weed control	45	51	50	49	Aged 18-34 years	Rural residents
	Local streets & footpaths	42	50	55	57	Men	Women
	Unsealed roads	36	48	42	41	Urban residents, Aged 65+ years	Rural residents