

Finance and Planning Committee

Agenda

Date: Wednesday 5 February 2025

Time: 6pm

Venue: Civic Centre (Council Meeting Room)
13 Mair Street, Benalla

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Governance Matters

This Committee Meeting is conducted in accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020* and the Benalla Rural City Council *Governance Rules 2020*.

Recording of Council Meetings

In accordance with Rule 6.4 of the *Governance Rules 2020* the Committee Meeting will be livestreamed via the Council's website. An audio recording will be made of the proceedings and made available for public access, with the exception of matters identified as confidential items in the agenda.

Members of the public can watch the live broadcast of the meeting at www.benalla.vic.gov.au

Public Submissions

Any person wishing to participate in Public Submissions in accordance with 7.3 of the *Governance Rules 2020* should contact the Council by emailing council@benalla.vic.gov.au or telephoning the Governance Coordinator Jess Pendergast on (03) 5760 2600.

Behaviour at Meetings

Members of the public present at a meeting must remain silent during the proceedings other than when specifically invited to address the Committee.

The Chair may remove a person from a meeting for interjecting or gesticulating offensively after being asked to desist, and the chair may cause the removal of any object or material that is deemed by the Chair to be objectionable or disrespectful.

The Chair may call a break in a meeting for either a short time, or to resume another day if the behaviour at the Council table or in the gallery is significantly disrupting the Meeting.

Agenda

Chair Councillor Peter Davis

Councillors Councillor David Blore
Councillor Bernie Hearn (Mayor)
Councillor Puna Hewa Gunaratne
Councillor Justin King
Councillor Jillian Merkel
Councillor Nathan Tolliday

In attendance	Robert Barber	Acting Chief Executive Officer
	Nilesh Singh	Interim General Manager Corporate
	Jane Archbold	Manager Community
	Janine McMaster	Manager People and Performance
	Courtney Naughton	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability
	Greg Robertson	Manager Facilities and Information Technology
	Joel Ingham	Interim Manager Development
	Jess Pendergast	Governance Coordinator

Opening and Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair will open the meeting and recite the following Acknowledgement of Country.

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

Apologies

Recommendation:

That apology/ies be accepted.

Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, a Councillor must declare any Conflict of Interest pursuant to Section 130 of the Act in any items on this Agenda.

At the time indicated in the agenda, a Councillor with a conflict of interest in an item on that agenda must indicate they have a conflict of interest by clearly stating:

- the item for which they have a conflict of interest;
- whether their conflict of interest is general or material; and
- the circumstances that give rise to the conflict of interest.

Immediately prior to the consideration of the item in which they have a conflict of interest, a Councillor must indicate to the Meeting the existence of the conflict of interest and leave the Meeting.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes have been circulated to Councillors and posted on the Council website **www.benalla.vic.gov.au** pending confirmation at this meeting.

Recommendation:

That the Minutes of the Finance and Planning Committee meeting held on 4 December 2024 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

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Business

1. Economic Development and Sustainability Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2024

Ref: 1545273666-171

Courtney Naughton – Manager Economic Development and Sustainability

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activity of the Economic Development and Sustainability Department for the quarter ending 31 December 2024.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Future of Benalla and District Project

- The Local Development Strategy was delivered at the end of November 2024, which now completes the first phase of the Future of Benalla and District Project, and the funding associated with this phase.
- The delivery of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) will now support the second stage of the project. The second round of funding available has also been applied for, which includes further project management of the two chosen projects that formed out of the Context Analysis and then subsequently the LDS.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Business Networking and Upskilling

- **Coffee Connections** occurs every second Wednesday of the month at a different local cafe. Attendance figures average around 15 people per session with some new faces. Employees, business owners, Councillors and community are all welcome at these events, with the chance to celebrate successes, network and discuss pressing issues facing businesses. Based on feedback, in 2025 we plan to promote a different theme each month with a guest speaker.
- **Business webinars** are promoted on variety of topics run by Business Victoria, Innovation Melbourne and the ATO. These are listed in the monthly business e-newsletter and scheduled as events on Council's website and Supporting Benalla Business Facebook page.

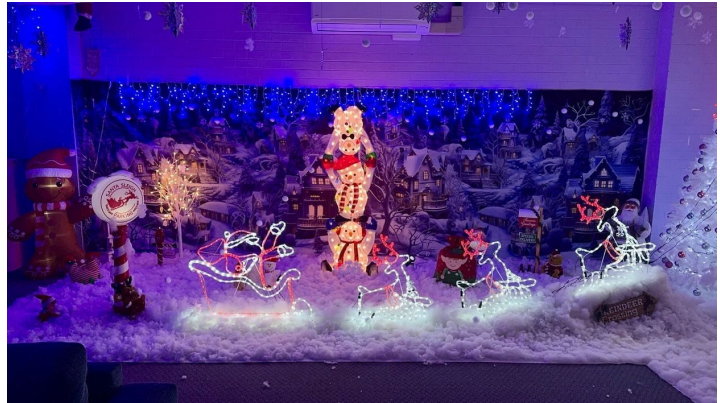
Christmas Promotions

A total of \$1000 was given away during December as part of this year's campaign, encouraging people to "Shop Benalla First and Share the Love."

- Snail Trail – 12 days of Christmas promotion involved local artist Mal Webster hand-painting illustrations on 12 Benalla Business Network member windows in the CBD as part of a scavenger hunt trail. Daily clues were posted on @SupportingBenallaBusiness Social Media pages and winners of the daily \$20 Benalla dollars prizes announced daily.



- Shop Benalla first competition – 65 businesses signed up to be involved in the 4 week campaign. Entry was free, with Benalla dollar prizes of \$25 and \$50 awarded weekly throughout December, thanks to BBN. A total of 218 entries received via QR code displayed in participating shops. Winners were drawn randomly via a digital wheel and promoted on @SupportingBenallaBusiness.
- Christmas window competition – 25 businesses entered this year with \$100 Benalla dollars on offer for: Best night-time, best day-time and most amusing. Winners were announced at the Community Christmas Party at the Splash Park. These included: Best night time and joint best daytime display– Inspired Abilities. Joint best day-time – Milner Watson Pharmacy and Rambling Rose. Most amusing – The Merchant Benalla (each received \$100). Highly commended Brick by Brick and The Earlybird Cafe (received \$50).
- Christmas decorations – project management of new decorations and locations. This year the range increased to include large 3D stars located on key Council buildings: pole decorations on town entry roundabouts and giant red baubles adjacent to the tiered gift stack on the Visitor Information centre veranda.
- Free Busking in December saw an increased number of people playing at the eight designated 'Busking Bases' along Bridge Street East. Thank you to all those who helped the CBD come alive to the sounds of music including budding and experienced musicians, school bands and local community groups.



Benalla Business Network (BBN)

- BBN's is focusing on recruiting members. They currently have 76 new members (up from 40), hosting Business After Hours events (NE Tracks LLEN in October and Benalla Golf Club in December 2024) and collaboration on key Shop Local campaigns.
- A particular focus is also on rolling out the new Benalla digital dollars program, which all BBN members are automatically able to receive once onboarded.
- BBN sponsored the Christmas campaign which Council ran, with \$1000 Benalla dollars given away in December through the Snail Trail (\$20 per day over 12 days), Shop Benalla First (\$150 per week) and Christmas Windows prizes (\$300).
- Independent Federal MP for Indi, Helen Haines visited Benalla in December 2024 to discuss the BBN's reinvigoration strategies visited some local businesses,

Jobs and Skills

The North East Victoria Jobs Hub continues to offer a free portal for businesses to post jobs and for those looking for jobs. If a job has been advertised digitally it is automatic added, however those in newspapers or shop windows need to be loaded manually. Benalla Rural City Council was instrumental in founding the site in 2016 with U-Workin'. The site is administered by Benalla Rural City Council's Business Development Coordinator in partnership with Wangaratta Rural City Council and Mansfield Shire Council Economic Development staff.

Benalla Future Work Group

Council Officers continued to support Benalla Future Work Group over the quarter. The Benalla Future Work Group is facilitated by Tomorrow Today Foundation. Council officers have been supporting the work group by participating in 'Hands on' Careers days, local businesses work experience, Connect 9 Program, recruitment of businesses for apprenticeships, paid part time work for students or school based assessments, University visits, robotic activities, Arts, Living Libraries, mental health programs, Full Impact Youth Squad, L2P mentor recruitment and lobbying for improved public transport options.

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Media Coverage

- Media coverage for the period 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024 focused on several significant topics, including the 2024 Benalla Festival, Christmas Community Party, ongoing Goorambat East Solar Farm project, and initiatives like the Social Connection Grants and Council election results. Other notable discussions revolved around the festive shopping campaigns, community well-being gatherings, and the impact of extreme weather events on local infrastructure.
- During the reporting period, there were 723 mentions of Council activities across newspapers, websites, radio, and television. These mentions had the potential to reach 848,042 people and were valued at AUD 1,244,698 in equivalent advertising space.
- Council's media activities received significant attention during this quarter, with wide coverage across multiple channels. Benalla Ensign played a leading role in both frequency and reach. This consistent media presence continues to amplify Council's initiatives and highlights the community's engagement with its projects and events.

Communications Activities

Further communications outputs for the reporting period include:

- Corporate Website Re-design Project has been a focus of the communications team for the quarter.
- Australia Day 2025 communications and event planning commenced during the quarter.
- Issues with Facebook security emerged in mid-December 2024 and were escalated to the Victorian Government Cyber Incident Response Service (CIRS) Cyber Security Data Digital Resilience Division. This incident has resulted in the Council Facebook page being deleted by unknown actors.

Community Engagement Activities

- The Annual Community Christmas Party 2024 was held at the Benalla Splash Park and Ceramic Mural Precinct on Friday 29 November 2024. The event was attended by more than 250 people. The event offered vibrant and inclusive activities for all ages and included live music by local bands, sustainable craft workshops, giant lawn games, face painting, Santa visit with professional photos and a barbecue provided by The Rotary Club of Benalla. Standout moments included the lighting of Benalla's Christmas tree and the launch of the festive precinct.
- The Annual Community Christmas Party 2024 was made possible with support from the Benalla and District Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG). Mayor Bernie Hearn praised the collaboration, emphasising the importance of community togetherness during the festive season.

- The Council announced a callout for a Community Panel, aiming to engage residents in the development of crucial strategic documents, including the Council Plan 2025-2029, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan, and Community Vision. These plans will guide Council's priorities and actions over the next four years. Interested community members are encouraged to participate, with panel members attending three meetings in 2025 to provide input on shaping the region's future.

VISITOR ECONOMY

Events

The Benalla Festival 2024 was held from 1 to 10 November 2024 and was a success community event, bringing together a wide range of cultural and community events that attracted attendees from Benalla and surrounding rural villages. The festival's diverse program of 34 events and six exhibitions that showcased the rich artistic, musical, and cultural talents of the region, drawing visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

Highlights from Benalla Festival 2024:

- A Day in the Garden Market – This much-anticipated event featured 135 stallholders, offering everything from local produce to handmade crafts. The market attracted approximately 3,000 visitors.
- Fireworks Display – As always, the fireworks were a crowd favourite, lighting up the sky and adding a magical touch to the closing events of the festival.
- Melbourne Ska Orchestra – The Melbourne Ska Orchestra delivered an energetic performance that had the crowd dancing and grooving, highlighting the festival's commitment to providing world-class musical performances.

Major Event Funding

Benalla Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club inc. was awarded a \$1,000 Major Event Funding grant to support their event on 3 –5 January 2025.

BENALLA CINEMA

Special Cinema Screenings

RunNation Film Festival – Friday 22 November 2024

RunNation is a touring short film festival that features films including all forms of running including trail running, road running, park running, track, marathons, ultra distance and more. The festival features approximately 100 minutes of short films curated into a 2-hour event. More than 20 patrons attended.

Benalla Shorts Film Festival – Sunday 10 November 2024

Benalla Shorts Film Festival 2024, held at the Benalla Cinema on Sunday, November 10, marked a significant shift in the festival's accessibility and community engagement. Traditionally, the festival has had just one screening, offering limited opportunities for the public to attend. However, in 2024, the festival expanded to two screenings, creating greater access and excitement for the local community and filmmakers alike. More than 50 patrons attended the second screening.

Cinema Comparison 2024/2025

Month	Benalla Cinema	Patrons 2023	Benalla Cinema	Patrons 2024
October	76 Sessions	499	104 Sessions	524
November	82 Sessions	457	100 Sessions	713
December	80 Sessions	828	96 Sessions	988

Benalla Visitor Information Centre

Visitor numbers for the quarter:

Month	Visitor numbers
October	1,376
November	1,118
December	975
Total	3,469

Although numbers were a little lower in December 2024 the sales in the Visitor Information Centre have increased meaning staff are engaging with higher yield visitors.

Tourism

Wheel to Wheel Exhibition

Benalla Visitor Information Centre was transformed 31 October – 3 November 2024 with the newest exhibition – Wheel to Wheel. Approximately 30 motor bikes from all eras were on display. The official launch was held at the Visitor Information Centre on Thursday 30 October 2024 for approximately 50 patrons. The Exhibition was an exciting event for motorcycle enthusiasts and was held as part of the Benalla Festival. Visitors attending the exhibition were from all over Victoria.

Trademarking

We are currently in the process of trademarking Benalla – See the Art in Everything. This is an important step in protecting our current tourism brand identity, preventing misuse, and ensuring that your unique brand name, logo, or slogan is legally recognised. By having our tourism brand trademarked we are not protecting our intellectual property but were establishing a strong, and unique presence and giving Benalla its own identity.

Benalla Art Gallery

- For the quarter 1 October to 31 December 2024, Benalla Art Gallery welcomed 21,409 exhibition visitors and staged 45 public and education programs for 1,148 participants.
- Benalla Art Gallery launched three new major exhibitions in this quarter:
 - *Benalla Camera Club - VISIONS: Photographing Benalla and Beyond*
 - *Juan Ford – A Survey*
 - *Ron Robertson-Swann: Illusion and Gravity*
- Benalla Art Gallery Advisory Committee met on 19 December, confirming the acquisition of five new works; a painting by Dale Frank, a painting by Gorodn Bennett, and three paintings by John Murphy.
- Recruitment was completed for the Creative Australia funded position of Temporary Full-Time Curator (2025-2028), with Brenda Wellman securing the role. Brenda has subsequently resigned from her substantive role of Curator, Education and Programs.

- Following a report by a concerned member of the public on 9 December 2024, the Munro and Sargeant café deck was closed until further notice. An engineering assessment was undertaken to establish remedial works required to reopen the area to the public. Interim support measures were established to safely reopen the ramped approach to the public from 13 December 2024. Repair works are required to the cafe deck for it to remain open.

Sustainable Environment

- Council's 2024/25 Roadside Weed and Pest Program* began with a significant number of treatments completed. Key weed species treated included: Blackberry, Chilean needle grass, St John's wort and Patterson's curse.
- Council submitted a joint application with 12 other Victorian Council, for funding through the 100 Neighbourhood Battery Program. The application was led by the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance (CVGA), with support from the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance (GMCA). The application is to secure funding to significantly upgrade the solar system at the Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Early Learning Centre, with addition of battery.
- The Sustainability and Facilities teams completed audit's on some of Council's Streetlights (predominantly the Mercury Vapour and Compact florescence lights). This is a lead into a small changeover of lights to more energy efficient LED lights.
- Assisting with ongoing roadside and drainage maintenance programs, including consultation with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Liveability

Vibrant public spaces and places		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Beautify streetscapes, landscaping, signage and town entrances.	Upgrade town signage and entry gateways.	Branding strategy to be developed in the 24/25 financial year and put out for community consultation.

Economy

Thriving business and industry		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Work together with key stakeholders to engage, support, strengthen, enhance and diversify local business.	Develop the Economic Diversification plan.	Final Draft of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) completed. Second stage funding applied for to support the projects out of the LDS.
	Develop a Benalla Rural City Small Business Attraction and Assistance program.	This will be an outcome of the Economic Development Strategy to be delivered in 24/25 Financial Year.
Attract new investment, business and industry to the Benalla Rural City to facilitate business growth and job creation.	Develop an Economic Diversification plan.	The development of the Local Development Strategy will support and assist and attracting growth to Benalla.

Flourishing tourism		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Strengthen the visitor economy through growth of events and promotion of unique assets and experiences and visitor attractions.	Review and update the Events and Tourism strategy.	The draft Destination Management Plan's has been completed. The draft Destination Management Plan will be placed on public exhibition in February 2025.

Environment

Healthy and protected natural environment		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
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 Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Regional Catchment Strategy and other regional environmental strategies.	Review and update the Environmental Strategy and the Climate Change Adaptation Plan.	Council officers continue to take part in the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Biodiversity Roundtable meetings. Council also continues to work with GeckoClan Landcare Network.

Sustainable practices		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Partner with business, industry and community to plan and implement local approaches and initiatives that respond to climate change.	Review, update and adopt Benalla Rural City Council Environment Strategy.	The draft <i>Benalla Rural City Climate and Environment Strategy</i> has been developed and will be presented to the Council in March 2025.
Advocate, promote, support and encourage the use of renewable and clean energy and technology.	Encourage and facilitate the installation of more electric vehicle chargers in and around the Benalla CBD.	Council is continuing to work with businesses to provide Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure within the municipality. Currently the Denny Street carpark has two charging stations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 December 2024.

	Notes	2024/25 YTD Actuals	2024/25 YTD Budgets	2024/25 YTD Variance	2024/25 Full Year Budget	2024/25 Full Year Forecast
Economic Development and Sustainability	1	\$189,813	\$164,190	-\$25,623	\$299,208	\$277,040
Art Gallery		\$229,624	\$238,450	\$8,826	\$574,704	\$590,594
Benalla Cinema	2	\$82,047	\$115,538	\$33,491	\$259,489	\$217,584
Communication and Engagement		\$168,694	\$173,925	\$5,231	\$344,873	\$344,873
Events		\$186,620	\$195,085	\$8,465	\$281,231	\$291,231
Tourism	3	\$194,150	\$175,897	-\$18,253	\$284,456	\$322,426
Environmental Sustainability	4	\$49,259	\$72,230	\$22,971	\$150,669	\$109,164
Business Development	5	\$59,278	\$75,515	\$16,237	\$157,458	\$157,458
Total		\$1,159,486	\$1,210,830	\$51,344	\$2,352,087	\$2,310,370

Notes:

1. Unfavourable variance primarily due to timing of Benalla Economic Diversification Plan final milestone payment.
2. Favourable variance primarily due to increased income from kiosk and membership sales.
3. Unfavourable variance includes more than budgeted salaries and oncosts.
4. Favourable variance primarily due to timing of Roadsides Weeds and Pest Management program (grant funded) expenditure.
5. Favourable variance primarily due to the timing of budgeted Business Development projects.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

2. Development Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2024

Ref: 2005329054-512
Nilesh Singh – Manager Development

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activities of the Development department for the quarter ended 31 December 2024.

Strategic Planning

- Initial community consultation was undertaken for the *Heritage Study* in accordance with the community engagement plan adopted at a Planning and Development Committee Meeting on 5 October 2022. The concept of the consultation was to allow the public to provide feedback regarding what they would like to see included in the Heritage Overlay. Nine submissions were received as a result of the consultation which will inform the completion of the draft Heritage Study document. The draft *Heritage Study* is now complete and will be discussed at a meeting with the Heritage Working Group for comment prior to being advertised to all affected landowners in accordance with the community engagement plan.
- The Council was successful in obtaining \$150,000 in funding from the Regional Planning Hub (State Government). The funding will facilitate the procurement of all remaining technical reports required to inform the Benalla Urban Growth area including a Community Infrastructure Study and Open Space Study. Procurement for both studies is now complete with initial work on the studies in progress. In addition, the funding will allow the Council to undertake a structure plan for the area and to proceed to a planning scheme amendment to appropriately rezone the land.
All technical reports for the Benalla Urban Growth Strategy which commenced previously have been completed with the exception of the Traffic report which should be completed within the first quarter of this year.

Statutory Planning

- 28 applications received during the quarter.
- 26 applications decided during the quarter.
- 250 phone calls received.

Building Surveying

- 128 building inspections.
- 211 building certificates.
- 21 building permits issued.
- 55 private building permits issued.

Public Health

- The required 19 statutory food samples were taken in the last quarter of 2024 to focus on new issues identified throughout the year, monitor previous issues and check new operators are safely delivering food. Other samples were taken earlier in the year as part of food complaint investigations and analysis.

- Eighty-one statutory food safety assessments were conducted throughout 2024. Another 44 additional inspections at various stages were documented and several more were absorbed into later statutory food safety assessments.

Compliance

- The compliance team impounded 80 domestic animals.
- Responded to 80 domestic animal related requests.
- 30 dogs and cats were returned to their homes.

Emergency Management

- *Benalla Rural City Pandemic Plan 2025-2028* was reviewed during the quarter.
- *Benalla Rural City Heatwave Plan 2024-2027* was updated to include Extreme Heat Events of 1-2 days and day heatwave declarations.
- Talks with CFA to provide training courses and tanker familiarisation opportunities to Council depot staff.
- Formalised a plan for Council managed 'Places of Last Resort'.

Manager Development

Septic Tanks

- 18 Permit to Install issued.
- 22 Certificate to Use' issued.
- 86 septic inspections conducted.

Wastewater Referrals for Planning Permit

Twenty-eight applications were referred for planning comments to Manager Development for wastewater comments for planning proposals.

Fee Dispensation

The Council supports community groups and not-for-profit organisations through fee dispensation or reduction and responding to other circumstances as warranted.

For the quarter ended 31 December 2024, 18 applications to the value of \$2,837.90 in fee dispensations were approved:

Fundraising	2
Burning Off	0
General	15
Food premises Late Registrations	0
Planning Matters	1
Building Matters	0
Other	0

Applications Received:

Applicant	Permit Type	Value
Benalla Lions Club	Fundraising	\$65.50
Rotary Club of Benalla	Fundraising	\$65.50
Richard Mohr	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Jessica Grant	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Jaimee Balfour	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Sasha Hill	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Elly Smith	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
John Barry	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Ashton Tanner	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Christopher Keast	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
David Roe	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Helen Jeffree	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Julie Anne Van Kerkwijk	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Benalla Baptist Church	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Cherryl Chisholm	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Caleb and Abigail Hein	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Melanie Schulz	General Permit (Busking)	\$65.50
Benalla Cemetery Trust	Planning Permit	\$1,724.40
Total		\$2,837.90

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Community

A healthy, safe and resilient community		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Work closely with community and key stakeholders to plan for emergencies and build community resilience.	Investigate Benalla Rural City's preparedness to respond to emergencies.	Working with partner agencies in preparing for emergencies.
A connected, involved and inclusive community		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Support and promote opportunities for the community to participate in a range of social, recreational, and arts and cultural programs, activities and events.	Investigate development of an Off-Leash Dog Park in the east of Benalla.	Locations investigated; however, parking is an issue for all the sites. The Barkly Street School site could house a dog park which is central and has the capability of on and off-site parking. To be considered as part of master plan. A grant funding application was made for a second dog park near the Saleyards. We are awaiting a decision of this funding application.

Liveability

Vibrant public spaces and places		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Advocate for and act on opportunities to protect, maintain and preserve heritage assets.	Adopt <i>Benalla Rural City Heritage Study</i> .	Consultant is working on the extension of the existing precinct's and creation of new areas

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 December 2024.

	Notes	2024/25 YTD Actuals	2024/25 YTD Budget	2024/25 YTD Variance	2024/25 Full Year Budget	2024/25 Full Year Forecast
Development Operations	1	\$116,031	\$154,204	\$38,173	\$313,643	\$313,643
Planning	2	\$131,894	\$68,439	-\$63,455	\$151,671	\$604,683
Building	3	\$227,754	\$128,088	-\$99,666	\$252,470	\$266,470
Compliance		\$360,968	\$350,754	-\$10,214	\$696,603	\$690,611
Public Health		\$22,598	\$28,374	\$5,776	\$95,319	\$95,319
Emergency Management	4	(\$13,497)	\$10,798	\$24,295	\$21,598	\$55,393
Total		\$845,748	\$740,657	-\$105,091	\$1,531,303	\$2,026,119

Notes:

1. Favourable variance primarily due to less than budgeted Consultants expenditure.
2. Unfavourable variance primarily due to less than budgeted Statutory Planning Services revenue offset by unbudgeted grant revenue and less than budgeted Statutory Planning Services expenditure.
3. Unfavourable variance primarily due to more than budgeted Statutory Building Services Contract Payments expenditure.
4. Favourable variance primarily due to receipt of unbudgeted grant funding offset by more than budgeted expenditure.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

3. Building and Planning Approvals – November and December 2024

Ref: 2005329054-513

Sarah Ford – Building Coordinator
Joel Ingham – Planning Coordinator
Nilesh Singh – Manager Development

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report details planning permit applications and building approvals for November and December 2024.

Planning Permit Applications Determined under Officer Delegation

November 2024

Permit No		Description	Property Address	Decision
1	P0119/24	Construction of an inground swimming pool, pool house and verandah	14 Mayfair Drive, Benalla	Approved
2	P0117/24	Development of a dwelling	1 Wattle Drive, Benalla	Approved
3	P0109/24	Construction of an inground swimming pool	6 Mayfair Drive, Benalla	Approved

December 2024

Permit No		Description	Property Address	Decision
1	P0121/24	Two lot subdivision	334 Warnock Road, Swanpool	Approved
2	P0118/24	Construction of a shed within 100m of a waterway	85 James Road, Bungeet	Approved
3	P0110/24	Construction of a dwelling	126 Racecourse Road, Benalla	Approved
4	P0103/24	Two lot subdivision	557 Upper Ryans Creek Road, Upper Ryans Creek	Approved

Planning Permit Amendments Determined Under Officer Delegation

November 2024

Permit No		Description	Property Address	Decision
1	P0157/17	Development of a precast concrete manufacturing facility, the removal of native vegetation and a reduction of car parking spaces	270 Murray Road, Benalla	Approved
2	P0156/22	Use and development of the land for a service station and food and drink premises, alteration of access to a road in a transport Zone 2 and signage	18-20 Bridge Street West, Benalla	Approved

December 2024

There were no planning permit amendments determined under officer delegation during the month of December 2024.

Planning Permits Issued Under VicSmart

There were no VicSmart planning permits issued during the months of November and December 2024.

Planning Permit Applications Determined by the Council

There were no planning permit applications determined by the Council during the month of November 2024.

December 2024

Permit No		Description	Property Address	Decision
1	P0009/24	To vary the existing feedlot use from 1400 to 1600 Standard Cattle Units and buildings and works associated with a Cattle Feedlot (Covered Pens) in accordance with the endorsed plans	492 Irvine Road, Thoona	Approved (Notice of Decision)

Planning Permit Amendments Determined by the Council

There were no planning permit applications determined by the Council during November and December 2024.

Planning Permit Applications Withdrawn or Lapsed

There were no planning permit applications withdrawn or lapsed during November and December 2024.

Notices of Decision

There were no Notice of Decisions issued in November 2024.

December 2024

Permit No		Description	Property Address
1	P0009/24	To vary the existing feedlot use from 1400 to 1600 Standard Cattle Units and buildings and works associated with a Cattle Feedlot (Covered Pens) in accordance with the endorsed plans	492 Irvine Road, Thoona

A Notice of Decision (NOD) is issued when Council has decided to grant a planning permit when objection(s) are received regarding the application.

An objector may appeal to Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) against the decision to grant the permit within 21 days of a Notice of Decision being issued. After 28 days if no appeal has been lodged Council will issue the Planning Permit.

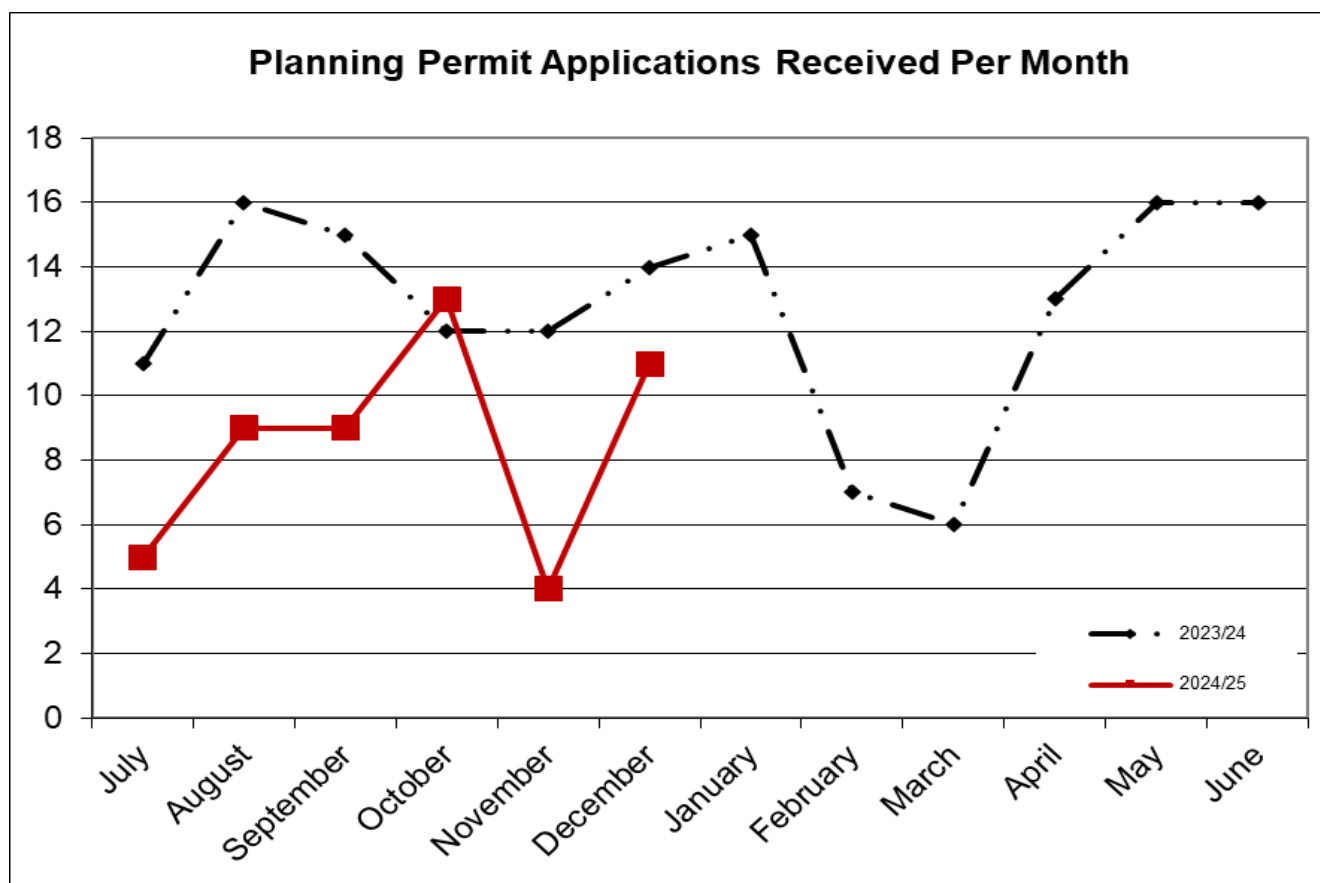
Planning Permit Applications Determined by VCAT

There were no planning permit applications determined by VCAT during the months of November and December 2024.

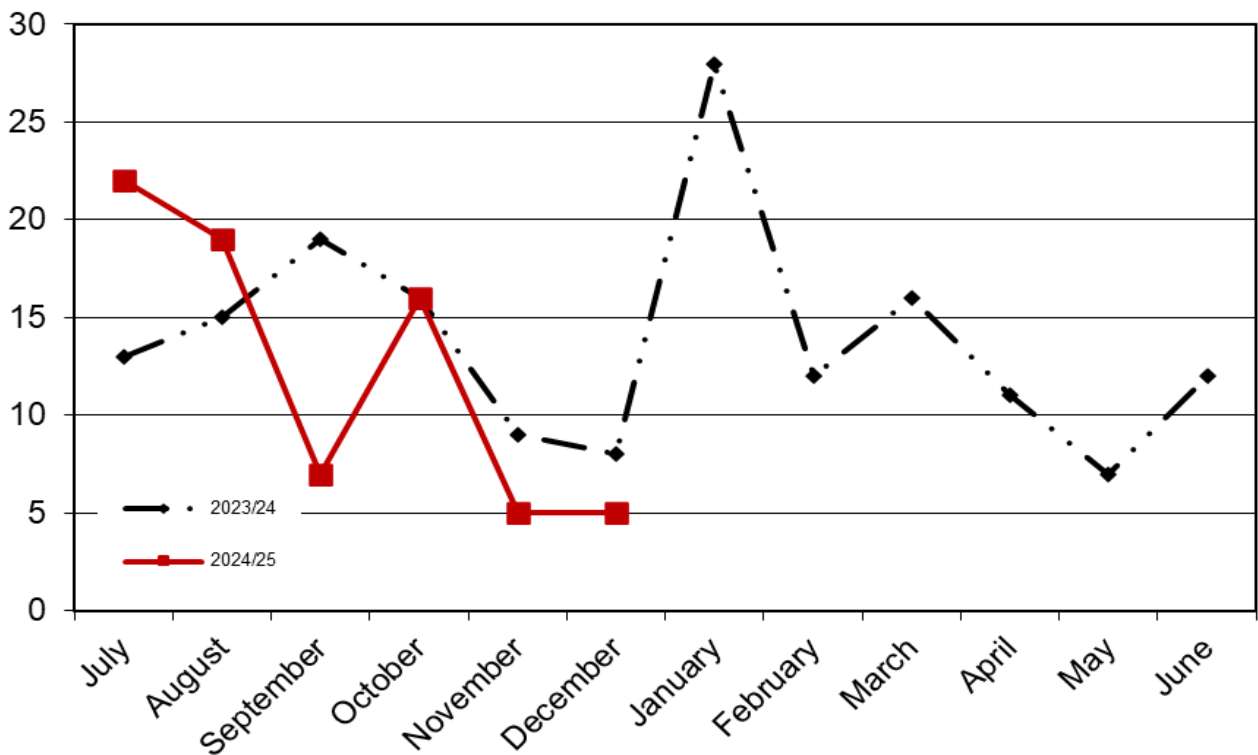
Matters Before VCAT

DA7679	Use and development of land for six dwellings at 3-5 Senator Drive, Benalla
Status	A Notice of Decision to Grant a Permit (NOD) was issued on 8 October 2024 for the construction of six dwellings at 3-5 Senator Drive, Benalla. Three objections were received to the proposal and one of the objectors has appealed the NOD to the Tribunal. A Tribunal order dated 4 December 2024 advises that a Compulsory Conference (mediation) will be heard on the 17 March 2025 with the main hearing date on the 23 June 2025.

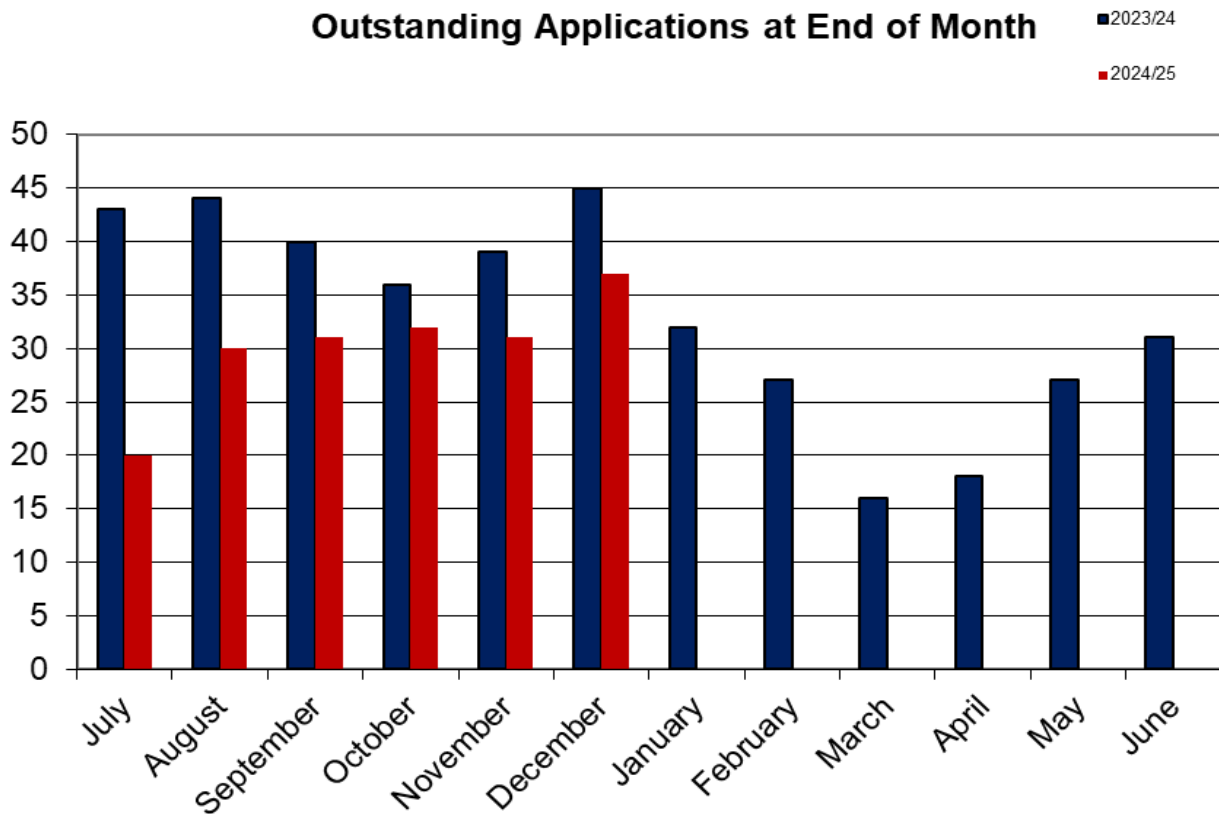
Planning Permit Applications



Planning Permit Applications Decided Per Month



Outstanding Applications at End of Month



Building Approvals Issued by Council and Private Practitioners
November 2024

File No		Description	Property Address	Value
1	2125909181715	Construction of a farm shed	490 Goomalibee Road, Benalla	\$50,000
2	4037456532531	Dwelling alterations	2582 Benalla-Tatong Road, Tatong	\$165,450
3	BLD2400007	Construction of a dwelling, garage, pergola and picket fence	1 Coster Street, Benalla	\$501,000
4	BLD2400026	Construction of a pool house	14 Mayfair Drive, Benalla	\$23,500
5	BLD2400027	Construction of a swimming pool	14 Mayfair Drive, Benalla	\$105,000
6	BLD2400028	Construction of a verandah	14 Mayfair Drive, Benalla	\$10,187
7	BLD2400037	Construction of a shed	83 Murray Road, Benalla	\$28,000
8	PBLD2400115	Construction of a dwelling and carport (final inspection only)	102 Hayes Road, Swanpool	\$45,669
9	PBLD2400121	Construction of a dwelling and garage	18 Ambidge Avenue, Benalla	\$337,610
10	PBLD2400122	Construction of a dwelling and garage	14 Ambridge Avenue, Benalla	\$336,730
11	PBLD2400130	Construction of a solar farm	116 Lee Road, Winton	\$281,360
12	PBLD2400136	Construction of a dwelling and garage	24 Mayfair Drive, Benalla	\$372,370
13	PBLD2400139	Construction of a dwelling and garage	5 Croft Court, Benalla	\$341,910
14	PBLD2400141	Construction of a dwelling and garage	10 Croft Court, Benalla	\$316,530
15	PBLD2400144	Construction of a dwelling and garage	1 Bramel Court, Benalla	\$299,350
16	PBLD2400146	Construction of a dwelling and garage	7 Bramel Court, Benalla	\$325,883
17	PBLD2400147	Construction of a barrier and deck	184 Booth Road, Taminick	\$13,000
18	PBLD2400149	Construction of a dwelling extension	149 Cowan Street, Benalla	\$236,954
19	PBLD2400151	Construction of a dwelling and garage	7 Croft Court, Benalla	\$315,250
20	PBLD2400153	Construction of a swimming pool and safety barrier	289 Goorambat-Thoona Road, Goorambat	\$58,990

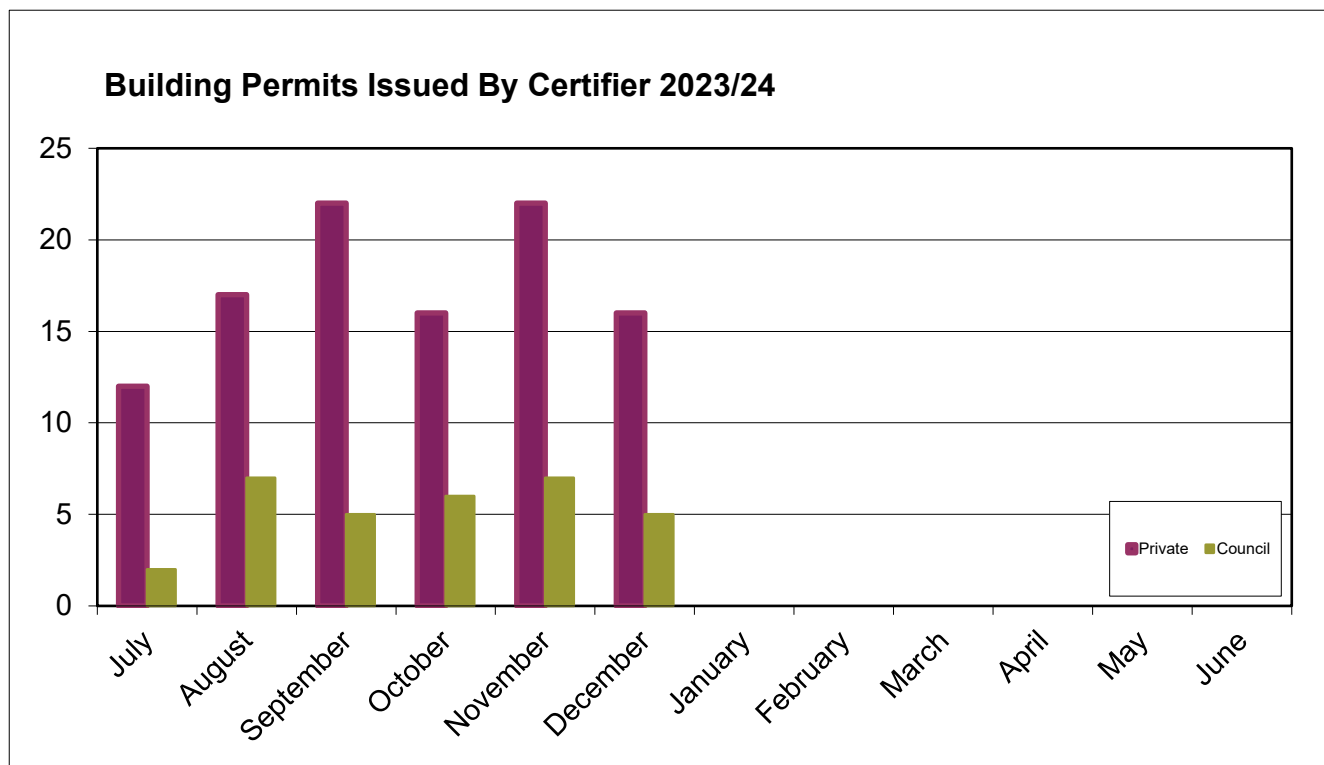
File No		Description	Property Address	Value
21	PBLD2400155	Construction of a swimming pool and safety barrier	136 Lakeside Drive, Chesney Vale	\$61,000
22	PBLD2400157	Construction of a dwelling and garage	3 Bramel Court, Benalla	\$292,800
23	PBLD2400159	Construction of a shed	18 Mayfair Drive, Benalla	\$30,000
24	PBLD2400160	Construction of a dwelling and garage	29 Moran Street, Benalla	\$451,687
25	PBLD2400161	Construction of a deck and spa safety barrier	39 Senator Drive, Benalla	\$14,500
26	PBLD2400162	Construction of a dwelling, garage, alfresco and fence	13 Crammond Street, Benalla	\$570,119
27	PBLD2400163	Construction of a dwelling and garage	15 Ambridge Avenue, Benalla	\$400,671
28	PBLD2400170	Construction of a dwelling and garage	3 Wattle Drive, Benalla	\$299,177
29	PBLD2400172	Demolition of a lunchroom and construction of a new lunchroom	42 Benalla-Yarrowonga Road, Benalla	\$130,000
Total				\$6,414,697

December 2024

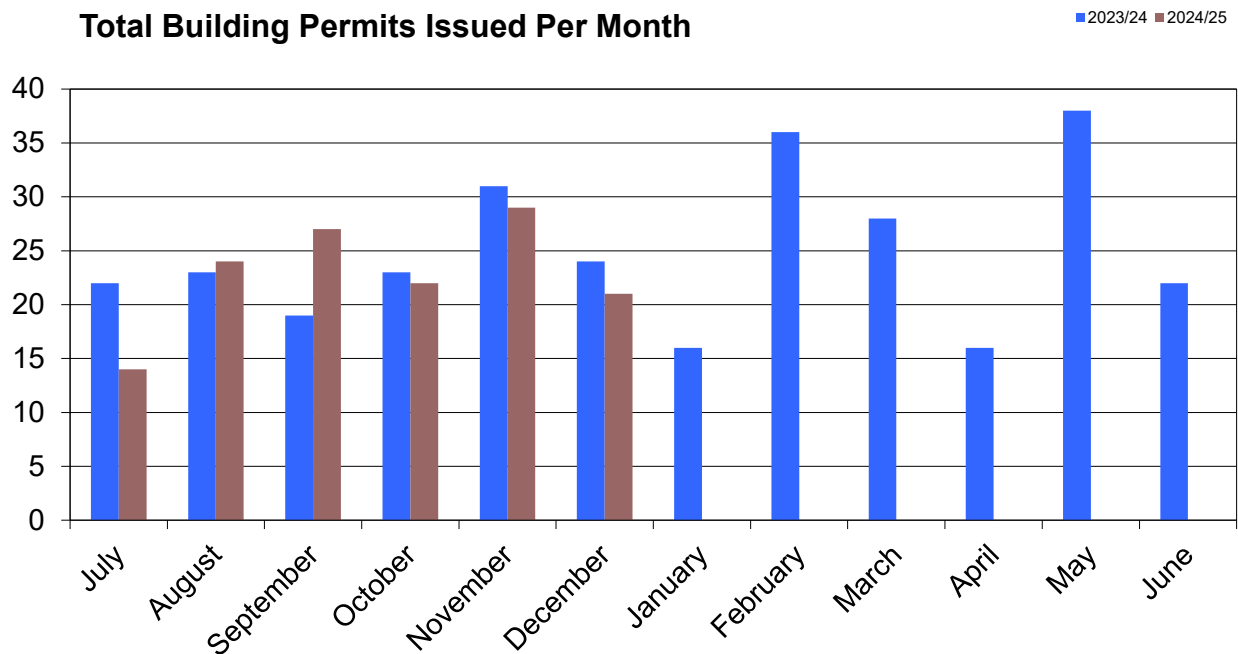
File No		Description	Property Address	Value
1	1296345966036	Construction of a shed	66 Faithfull Street, Benalla	\$24,864
2	4421604649860	Construction of a carport	70 Benson Street, Benalla	\$15,754
3	5121045290706	Construction of a farm shed	640 Benalla-Tatong Road, Benalla	\$102,764
4	5758754581827	Construction of a shed	151B Grant Drive, Benalla	\$76,634
5	9334435620360	Construction of a shade cover	25 Arundel Street, Benalla	\$12,000
6	BLD2400015	Construction of a dwelling and shed	315 Mt Samaria Road, Samaria	\$350,000
7	BLD2400039	Construction of a shed	213 Baddaginnie-Benalla Road, Benalla	\$21,924
8	BLD2400043	Construction of a garden shed	15 Market Street, Benalla	\$14,290
9	PBLD2400008	Construction of a shed	60 Upper-Taminick Road, Glenrowan	\$70,203
10	PBLD2400113	Restump of a dwelling	5 Arundel Street, Benalla	\$33,880
11	PBLD2400126	Construction of a classroom	36 Arundel Street, Benalla	\$552,758

File No		Description	Property Address	Value
12	PBLD2400169	Construction of a swimming pool and safety barrier	4 Noarana Drive, Benalla	\$500,000
13	PBLD2400171	Construction of a dwelling, garage and alfresco	1 Senator Drive, Benalla	\$446,525
14	BPLD2400175	Construction of a carport	14 Arundel Street, Benalla	\$7,000
15	PBLD2400176	Reblocking to an existing dwelling	10 Egmont Street, Benalla	\$26,000
16	PBLD2400178	Construction of a swimming pool	27 Egmont Street, Benalla	\$23,200
17	PBLD2400179	Construction of a dwelling and garage	2 Honeyeater Street, Benalla	\$400,550
18	PBLD2400183	Construction of a dwelling and garage	1 Wattle Drive Benalla,	\$332,476
19	PBLD2400185	Construction of a dwelling and garage	4 Honeyeater Street, Benalla	\$347,051
20	PBLD2400187	Construction of a farm shed	85 James Road, Bungeet	\$81,796
21	PBLD2400188	Construction of a swimming pool and safety barrier	6 Mayfair Drive, Benalla	\$47,895
Total				\$3,487,564

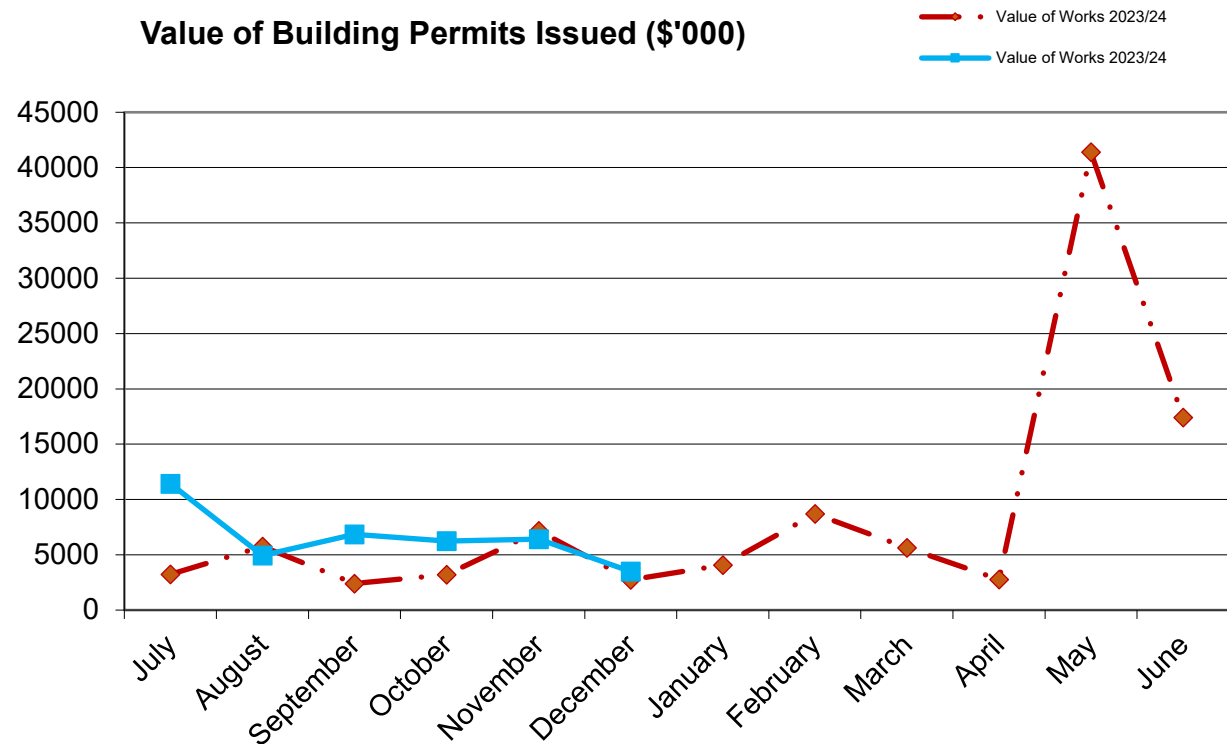
Building Permits Issued by Certifier by Month



Total Building Permits Issued Per Month



Value of Building Permits Issued (\$'000)



***COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025* IMPLICATIONS**

Community

- A healthy, Safe and resilient community.
- A connected, involved and inclusive community.

Livability

- Vibrant public spaces and places.
- Connected and accessible roads, footpaths, transport and parking.

Economy

- Population growth.

Environment

- Healthy and protected natural environment.

Leadership

- Good governance.

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.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

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4. People and Performance Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2024

Ref: 1751917845-516

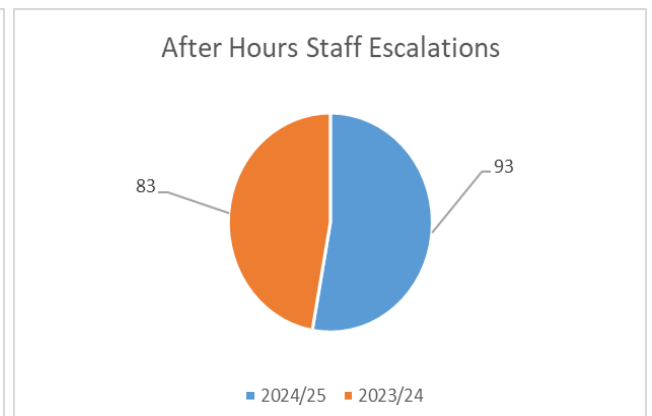
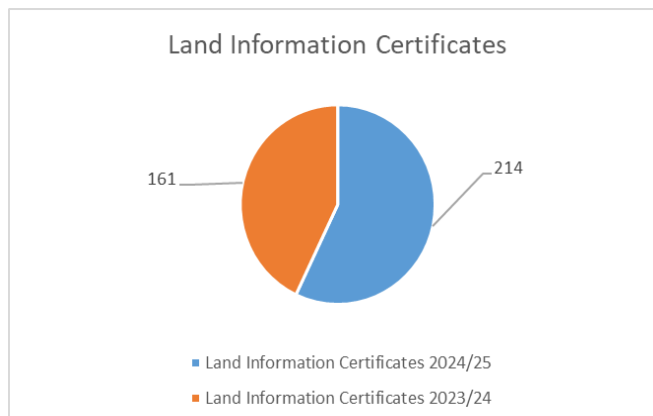
Janine McMaster – Manager People and Performance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activities of the People and Performance Department for the quarter ended 31 December 2024.

Customer Relations

- The Customer Relations Team continue to actively coordinate the requests for missed bins and partially emptied bins. There was a 50 per cent decrease in missed bin requests and a 73 per cent increase in partially emptied bins.
- There has been a 46 per cent decrease in counter contacts and a 13 per cent decrease in phone contacts compared to the same quarter in 2023/24. The decrease in customer contacts can be attributed to the fact that building team enquiries are now being submitted through the Greenlight program, including those received and lodged directly by the Customer Relations Team on behalf of customers.
- There was a 36 per cent increase in Land Information Certificates compared to the same quarter in 2023/24.



- There was a 68 per cent increase in after-hours phone calls received and a 38 per cent increase in calls being escalated to duty officers compared to the same quarter in 2023/24.

Complaints Received for the period between 1 October to 3 December 2024

Category	Description
Facilities	A community member has expressed dissatisfaction with their venue hire, citing disruptions caused by another area of the venue being used concurrently.
Facilities	A customer expressing dissatisfaction they have not received correspondence within the designated timeframe of their CRMS request.
Waste Collection	Multiple reports have been received from frustrated residents regarding the repeated failure of contractors to collect bins as scheduled.
Waste	Missed bins – 207 Partially emptied bins - 71

Human Resources

- Ongoing maintenance and administration of the Human Resources functions, including the following areas: recruitment, interview, induction, organisational wide training and monitoring the training budget.
- Commencement of the 2024 Enterprise Agreement negotiations.

Human Resources activity for the quarter:

Service	September 2024	December 2024
Recruitment	6	2
Turnover	3	1
Training Applications	24	78
Workplace incidents	1	4
WorkCover claims	0	2

Payroll

- Maintained Payforce database in response to changes in employee details and terms of employment.
- Responded to internal payroll enquiries.
- Process Leave Loading for all staff.
- Continue working with Civica for the new payroll system being introduced as part of Collaborative Digital Innovation project.

Risk Management

Occupational Health and Safety

- The Corporate Risk Coordinator met with the JLT Risk consultant to further discuss our Road Management Plan and liability risk and potential future training options.
- Skin checks were conducted for outdoor staff during November.
- Continuation of review and development of the Council's risk documents.
- Routine fire extinguisher inspections were completed in the required departments.
- Ongoing training in the use of the incident reporting system, Elumina and NECCI contractor/volunteer induction systems.
- Coordination of insurance claims.
- Follow up on site actions.
- The Corporate Risk Coordinator attended a WorkSafe webinar.
- Quotes obtained and planning commenced for Fire Extinguisher training, HSR training, Fire Warden training and upskilling and manual handling training.

OH&S continues to be monitored through the following regular:

- Workplace site inspections - all site inspections were completed in December 2024 with no outstanding actions.
- Designated Workplace Group meetings.
- Incident and hazard reporting and monitoring.
- Incident and hazard action lists.
- Reporting to the Leadership Team and OH&S Committee.
- Reporting at department team meetings.

Information Management

- Ongoing processing of both electronic and hard copy information.
- 16,867 electronic documents were saved into Content Manager this quarter.
- Continuing to work with other stakeholders on the implementation of the joint Information Management solution as part of the Collaborative Digital Innovation (CODI) Project.

Volunteer Development

Volunteer activity for the quarter:

Activity	Current 2024	
	Registered	Active
Arts & Tourism (<i>includes Cinema</i>)	54	33
Events and Festivals (<i>Includes Benalla Street Art 2024</i>)	32	22
Youth Programs (<i>Live4Life only</i>)	41	41
L2P (<i>Mentors only</i>)	35	33
Gardens maintenance and Litter Reduction	20	17
Specialist Committees & Steering Groups (<i>includes Age Friendly and ARG</i>)	32	24
RedB4 Bookshop Benalla Library	44	44

- Volunteer numbers continue to fluctuate due to retirement, holidays and changes of circumstances.
- The Friends of the Gallery are in the process of finalising a volunteer group. Some of these volunteers may become a volunteer support group to the Benalla Art Gallery Foundation.
- The Volunteer Coordinator has been reviewing and updating all volunteer documentation and position descriptions.
- Christmas Gatherings were arranged for the following groups: The L2P, Dead Headers and Litter Gatherers, Art Gallery and Aged Friendly volunteer groups.
- Christmas Cards and Cinema Vouchers were sent to all active volunteers. Feedback regarding the cinema vouchers has been very positive.

Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Learning Centre (Benalla Library)

During this quarter the Benalla Library welcomed 14,779 patrons through our doors and loaned a total of 14,801 items.

Activity	October 2024	November 2024	December 2024
Total Visits	5,603	4,757	4,419
Total Loans	5,787	5,116	3,948
Total Members	3,949	3,954	3,953
New Members	51	36	29

October 2024

- Library staff had a huge October, balancing many school holidays programs, the Seniors Month festivities, an Ambulance Victoria stroke awareness in-reach, an author talk with Mark Carr, a special story-time for Australian Christian College.
- The Sir Edward Weary Dunlop Learning Centre 10th anniversary celebrations were held which included, a soiree and special author talk with Lisa Ireland and Shannon Kelly-White.



November 2024

- During November, weekly Dungeons and Dragons games were held for Edspace teenagers who thoroughly enjoyed the imaginative and educational aspects of the program.
- Library staff hosted a presentation about Benalla Library's "Walking Talking-Book Club" to Public Libraries Victoria staff members.



December 2024

- The Library hosted a special visit for prep to grade six children and held a special story-time for 16 Days of Activism.
- Due to the popularity of the game 'Dungeons and Dragons' and adults' game was introduced.
- The Library was closed between 25 December 2024 to 2 January 2025.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Community

A Connected, Involved and Inclusive Community		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Encourage, support, value and celebrate volunteering in the community.	Develop and implement a Volunteer Engagement Strategy.	The Benalla Rural City Council Volunteer Development and Engagement Strategy 2023-2025 was adopted by the Leadership Team its May 2024 meeting.

Leadership

High Performance Culture		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Improve customer experience through responsive, timely, efficient, well planned, and accessible services.	Review and update the <i>Customer Relations Strategy</i> .	The <i>Benalla Rural City Council Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2025</i> was adopted by the Leadership Team at its May 2024 meeting.
Develop a skilled, efficient, and high performing customer focussed workforce.	Adopt and implement a <i>Benalla Rural City Council Workforce Plan</i> .	The Benalla Rural City Council Workforce Plan 2021-2025 is current. Workforce planning workshops have been held with the Leadership Team and all managers are now developing their department plans.

Financial Implications

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024/25 YTD Actuals	2024/25 YTD Budgets	2024/25 YTD Variance	2024/25 Full Year Budget	2024/25 Full Year Forecast
People & Performance	1	\$308,626	\$346,339	\$37,713	\$771,211	\$671,211
Customer Relations		\$216,099	\$237,169		\$512,835	\$522,835
Records Management	2	\$147,011	\$165,414	\$18,403	\$328,010	\$328,010
Volunteer Development	3	\$24,786	\$30,715	\$5,929	\$60,884	\$60,884
Risk Management		\$623,821	\$629,188	\$5,367	\$785,739	\$785,739
Library	4	\$227,276	\$202,998	-\$24,278	\$476,806	\$519,828
Total		\$1,547,620	\$1,611,823	\$64,203	\$2,935,485	\$2,888,507

Notes:

1. Favorable variance primarily due to Salaries and Oncosts being less than budgeted.
2. Favorable variance primarily due to Salaries and Oncosts being less than budgeted.
3. Favorable variance due to a variety of small expenses being less than budgeted.
4. Unfavorable variance due to several operational costs, particularly Electricity and Depreciation, being more than budgeted.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

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5. Community Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2024

Ref: 246820173-8

Jane Archbold – Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activities of the Community Department for the quarter ended 31 December 2024.

Community Development

- Ninety Mile Consulting was appointed in November 2024 to work with members of the Council Plan Steering Committee developing the *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029*, including developing an effective communication and engagement strategy. The consultants were initially in Benalla between 25 to 27 November and had individual meetings with 21 staff and a session with seven members of Tomorrow Today's Full Impact Squad.
- Expressions of interest were sought from community members to join Council's first Community Panel to assist in the development of the Council Plan, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and Community Vision. Applications closed on 6 December 2024 with over 30 applicants applying. Fifteen community members were selected to represent the diversity of our community.
- Completion of the procurement process to appoint consultants to deliver the draft *Open Space Strategy 2026–2040* and *Benalla Urban Growth Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment* were undertaken over the quarter.
- Staff met with Benalla Squash Club and Table Tennis representatives to discuss their facility upgrades and the *Benalla Indoor Recreational Centre Redevelopment Project*.
- Assisted the Benalla Woodworkers in preparing funding applications and provided general advice to prepare the group to successfully transition to a new location.
- Community Development staff and the Manager Facilities visited the Old Boweya School to meet with the Boweya Community Committee to discuss upgrades and future plans for the facility.
- Staff met with Moira Bowls Club, Benalla Gardens Tennis Club and Benalla Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club to discuss lease renewal, clubroom upgrades, potential recreation projects and diversification of sports offerings at the sites. Meetings were also held with Benalla All Blacks President to discuss netball court upgrades and funding avenues.
- Community Development and Recreation team conducted site visits to rural townships to review grant funded projects over the past 12 months.
- Staff met with Sports and Recreation Victoria representatives to discuss future pipeline projects for Benalla Rural City.
- Staff met with LS Precast representatives to discuss potential community partnerships.
- The Council has partnered with Valley Sport to host drop-in sessions for local sports groups to learn about grant opportunities and provide general support to committee members.

- Community Development and Recreation staff and Open Space Coordinator conducted site visits to pump tracks within the region and met with staff from other Councils to discuss their learnings.
- Continued work to support the design and delivery of Gender Impact Assessments within the Council.
- Ongoing *Benalla Indoor Recreational Center Redevelopment Project* meetings to discuss business case, design inclusions and incorporate feedback from the Steering Committee and user groups.
- Staff attended Hume Region Recreation Forum hosted by SRV, offering great discussion and information sharing. Tour of Indigo Council Pump Track was organised for November 2024.
- Manager Community attended Neighbourhood Policing Forum in Mansfield along with two representatives from the Aboriginal Advisory Group. Small number of community members in attendance and as a result VicPol are considering running a forum in Benalla in the future.
- Quick Response Grants resumed after the 2024 Councillor elections with nine applications funded over the quarter.
- The Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership held its October meeting at the Community Services Hub in Carrier St. The meeting focused on mental health services with five local providers giving an overview of their services.
- The last meeting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory committee for the year was held in October 2024.
- The Free from Violence (FFV) Project Officer partnered with Benalla Police to hold a Coffee with a Cop at The Merchant in Benalla as part of our 16 Days of Activism campaign. Over 30 community members stopped and engaged with the local Police and FFV Project Officer.
- Council staff acknowledged 16 Days of Activism with an internal morning tea. Over 30 staff members supported the session (Sausage Rolls Not Gender Roles) held on 4 December 2024 in the Town Hall Basement. Information and resources were provided to those in attendance.

Youth Development

- Benalla FReeZA supported the Wangaratta 'Push All Ages Tour' on 24 November 2024 with headliners Pacific Avenue and Teenage Joans. Transport to the event was supplied to 16 young people from Benalla to Wangaratta and back.
- North East Skate Park Series was held on Saturday 12 October 2024 with 73 competitors on the day which is double the engagement of last year, also an increase of female participation and roller skater entries for the first time ever. Lots of support and onlookers attended with the Full Impact Squad Youth Market being held in the same area.
- As a thank you for all their hard work in 2024, the FReeZA committee chose to have their end of year celebration in Beechworth on 12 December 2024 at the escape room, dinner and a ghost tour. The 2024 FReeZA Committee were an amazing group of young people who volunteered their time and efforts in creating events and activities for young people in the community and we thank them for their commitment in 2024.

- A Silent Disco was held in the basement during the Benalla Festival on Friday 8 November 2024. Over 50 tickets were registered with the event being popular with 12 to 15 years.
- Over 50 tickets were registered for the 'Dunners Single Launch' held in the Town Hall basement on 29 November 2024. The Youth team were supported the Manager Facilities and Information Technology with set up of the new sound and lighting equipment. Great feedback was received on the night. The Dunners were supported by Red Line and Meghan Guy.
- It is pleasing to announce the continuation of both FReeZA and Engage! funding for the next three years (2025 to 2027).
- As a part of the Live4Life program 24 staff members at FCJ completed their refresher for Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) in October, this was run by Merryn Howell from Benalla Health. To ensure delivery of Teen MHFA 10 per cent of staff at schools need to have their Youth MHFA training.
- A successful event for Year 8 students from Benalla P-12 College and FCJ College was held on 22 October 2024 at the Benalla Lakeside Community Centre. The Live4Life crew organised a great day of key mental health message reminders and fun activities for students including a mechanical bull ride and a hot sauce challenge.
- During the quarter five students from Benalla P-12 College attended the School for Student Leadership and came up with the 'Walk for Mental Health' for their community project. The Youth team was approached about the walk as they wanted to raise funds for Live4Life Benalla. The Youth team supported in the planning and delivery of this event held on 16 November 2024. Over \$10,000 was raised, the groups original target was \$1,500 and over 90 community members walked with them on the day. Well done to Erin, Andrew, Sophie, Alex and Mikayla.
- Large interest was received for the Youth MHFA Training Community Sessions with 39 EOI's received. 23 spots were available with 20 people completing the November 2024 course.
- The Australian Christian College has agreed to join Live4Life Benalla in 2025 with their Teen MHFA training beginning in May 2025. Live4Life Benalla is delighted that this broadens the reach of young people in our community receiving this vital training.
- L2P has had another great year, with 36 young people successfully getting their licence through the program. 10 of these were in the October to December 2024 quarter. The program has continued to meet departmental targets.
- An average of 21 volunteers actively drove over the quarter, providing over 245 driving hours to participants each month and 49 professional driving lessons were undertaken in the quarter.



- The Independence to Drive program is almost at the winding up stage. Of the 11 drivers, so far six have gotten their licence. Three are currently driving with volunteers. The team are reviewing how to evaluate the program as it has gone a bit longer than anticipated.
- The L2P program sponsored the Benalla Festival helping with the delivery of programs to rural areas as well as developing a graphic for the Ensign and the L2P Facebook page.



Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG)

- The Benalla SIAG proudly funded and launched the inaugural 'Chill-Out Zone' at the Benalla Festival's Fireworks Night in November 2024. This initiative was designed to make the event more accessible to individuals and families who may experience sensory sensitivities, anxiety in large crowds, or discomfort for various reasons.
The Chill-Out Zone (6x3 metre enclosed marquee) was equipped with fairy lights creating a calming environment. Inside, attendees found bean bags, cushions, trestle tables offering activities such as colouring, sudoku, and word searches, earplugs to reduce noise, and a variety of fidget toys. The Chill-Out Zone was available from 4pm to 9pm, throughout the duration of the event, and welcomed 30 entrants.
- The Benalla SIAG opened a round of Social Connection grant funding. Funding closes on 24 January 2025. The SIAG committee continues to meet regularly to assess grants and plan for the Creating Community Connections Expo being held on 21 February 2025.
- Benalla SIAG provided funding support for catering for the Benalla Community Christmas Party.

Maternal and Child Health (MCH)

- 24 Birth Notices were received and enrolled over the quarter, 91 per cent of enrolments were seen at four weeks, with the two remaining to be seen early 2025.
- 403 children were enrolled (21 Aboriginal children) in our service at the end of December 2024.
- 31 families were enrolled in our Enhanced Program with 170 Service hours delivered over the quarter.
- First Time Parents' Group and First Time Parent Group for Dad's were run in Term 4. Both programs received positive feedback.
- Sophie Thomas our Enhanced MCH Support Officer, completed her MCH clinical placement in October 2024 and will continue with her studies until mid-2025.
- MCH team updated their CRP in November 2024 and attended 'Non-fatal Strangulation' training at Wangaratta Police Station on 25 November 2024. This training was eye opening and was in response to changes in legislation and process on disclosures.
- MCH Service continued during the Christmas period, opening on 27 and 30 December 2024 seeing new babies and vulnerable families.
- INFANT sessions continued to be held at Community Care focusing on nutrition, activity and no screen time and sleep and settling.

Integrated Family Services (IFS)

- During the quarter Family Services reached 106.82 per cent of the targets for service hours. This was achieved through the team taking on 13 new referrals through The Orange Door and supporting 34 families in the Ovens Murray region (inclusive of 103 children pre birth to age 17). Family Liaison supported seven families in the Benalla LGA, inclusive of 19 children.
- In October 2024, staff from the Family Services team facilitated a Parenting Workshop for the broader community of Benalla, coordinated through Centre Against Violence (CAV). Participants enjoyed the workshop, seeking additional information and resources. Feedback was received from the CAV Team Leader prior to the end of the year, highlighting the positive and collaboratively work the Family Services team does.
- Supported Playgroup ran two groups per term, supporting 17 families across the quarter. Our Supported Playgroup Facilitator coordinated sessions during Children's Week in October 2024, collaborating with Benalla Health staff and the Councils Waste Management team to run sessions for families. Families attending were able to be referred to the Benalla Health 'Grow Your Own' program in relation to sustainable food systems. The groups were able to finish the year with a visit to the Traffic School in Wangaratta.
- The Benalla Early Years Network held a networking event held on 10 October 2024 with presenters from Gateway Health discussing strategies for managing anxiety in preschool and early primary school aged children.
- Kindergarten on school site (Benalla P-12 College Clarke Street campus) was announced in mid-October 2024.

Age Friendly Benalla

- The Age Friendly Benalla Info Hub continued to be open to the community during the quarter. Service providers such as Benalla Health, Goulburn Valley Health, Northeast Multicultural Association (NEMA) and The Centre for Continuing Education visited and discussed their programs and provided more pamphlets on their services. Consideration is being given to building on the number of volunteers that are able to visit older residents in our community either at an aged care facility or on a home package in their own home. Social isolation and loneliness have been identified amongst many older residents including those not connected to any services.
- Age Friendly Benalla Reference Group Meetings continue monthly with the group focusing on the future of the Age Well in Benalla info Hub and reviewing progress against Age Friendly Benalla Action Plan.

Highlights

- A very successful Seniors Festival was held over the month of October 2024 with 13 events attracting 571 people, an increase from 2023 which featured nine events and 396 attendees.

Events included subsidised movie screenings, Bollywood for Seniors Workshop, Magic Show for Morrie Evans residents, Sit and Sing at the Town Hall, World Flavours Morning Tea at the Town Hall, Fashion Parade at Benalla Bowls Club, Know your Scooter Workshop, U3A Benalla Meet and Mingle, Men's Shed Garage Sale and Open Day and Elders Tour of Aboriginal Gardens and luncheon. A Centenarian Exhibition was also held throughout October at the Visitor Information Centre.



COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Community

A healthy, safe and resilient community		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
With our community and key stakeholders address the priorities of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023: healthy eating and active living; mental wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health, reducing tobacco related harm and harmful alcohol and drug use and preventing violence and injury, drug-resistant infections and climate change and its impact on health.	Implement and monitor Benalla Rural City Municipal Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.	Resourced one meeting of the Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership Group focusing on the theme of mental health, with five services overviewing their programs. The partnership continues to attract new service providers keen to link in with other providers servicing the Benalla area. Manager Community attended a number of sessions offered by VicHealth's six-month Innovation Lab program. This initiative provides participants with insights, ideas, motivation and resources to boost Public Health and Wellbeing (PHW) across the council's core business. Also attending online sessions offered by GVPHU.
Work together with key health, welfare and community organisations and networks to support better learning, development and wellbeing outcomes for community members.	Work with the State Government to plan for future Benalla Rural City kindergarten infrastructure and workforce needs.	Attended a meeting in October 2024 to discuss the draft Kindergarten Infrastructure Services Plan (KISP). The final Workforce Plan for Early Childhood Education Centres was submitted in early May to the department.

A healthy, safe and resilient community		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
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.	Adopt and implement the Disability Action Plan.	<p>The Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) did not meet over this quarter. Plans are to have the draft Disability Action Plan endorsed by the ARG and be submitted to the graphic designer in 2025.</p> <p>Child Safe Working Group continues to meet, with majority of staff having received training from Child Safe Strategies. Follow-up sessions were given to several teams across Council facilitated by members of the working group.</p> <p>Age Well in Benalla Info Hub still operates promoting services and activities available in Benalla for older people, although this service to be reviewed in 2025.</p>

A connected, involved and inclusive community		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Continue to respectfully engage, include, celebrate and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people.	Develop and implement Benalla Rural City Council Aboriginal Reconciliation Plan.	Resourced one meeting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group over the quarter. With the support of the Aboriginal Advisory Group and SIAG funding held successful NAIDOC week event in July. Reconciliation Australia officially endorsed the Council's first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Plans underway to launch the RAP and have copies available early in 2025.
Promote, support and actively engage with smaller rural communities.	Develop and implement Rural Township plans.	Township Plans were shared at SIAG community events over the previous quarter seeking community feedback.

Leadership

A connected, involved and inclusive community		
Strategy	Action	June Quarter Update
Promote, support and actively engage with smaller rural communities.	Continue to improve community engagement processes and new ways to engage.	<p>Focus on smaller rural communities over the quarter continued with remaining rural community events funded through SIAG. In total over 700 people attended the 11 events.</p> <p>Preparation for extensive engagement to be undertaken in the development of the Council Plan 2025-2029 is underway.</p>

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024/25 YTD Actuals	2024/25 YTD Budgets	2024/25 YTD Variance	2024/25 Full Year Budget	2024/25 Full Year Forecast
Communication and Engagement		\$168,694	\$173,925	\$5,231	\$344,873	\$344,873
Community Operations		\$289,620	\$313,131		\$791,759	\$1,004,593
Community Development		(\$18,810)	(\$22,114)	-\$3,304	(\$0)	\$42,387
Youth Programs	1	\$58,879	\$68,484	\$9,605	\$104,618	\$144,295
ADS Assessment	2	\$4,460	\$34,399	\$29,939	\$34,648	\$4,710
FCS Maternal Child Health	3	\$52,070	\$99,693	\$47,623	\$193,386	\$480,261
FCS Family & Children's Services	4	\$57,211	\$50,966	-\$6,245	\$94,394	\$140,249
ADS Aged & Disability Services	5	\$11,692	(\$2)	-\$11,694	\$0	\$17,528
Total		\$623,818	\$718,482	\$94,664	\$1,563,677	\$2,178,897

Notes:

1. Favourable variance due to unbudgeted donation from the Youth Mental Health Walk.
2. Service finalised. Minor costs may be incurred over the balance of the year.
3. Favourable variance due to underspend in Maternal Child Health programs.
4. Unfavourable variance primarily due to more than budgeted Family Support Salaries and Oncosts offset by more than budgeted grant revenue.
5. Unfavourable variance due to Seniors Festival Funding received in 2023/24 but expended in 2024/25.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

6. Facilities and Information Technology Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 December 2024

Ref: 1138149297-12705

Greg Robertson – Manager Facilities and Information Technology

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activities of the Facilities and Information Technology Department for the quarter ended 31 December 2024.

Facilities Management

- Extensive termite damage was discovered in the Heritage Listed BARC Hut 65 during roof installation by contractors. The termite damage has been repaired with the approval of Heritage Victoria who are overseeing the conservation works on the building.
- Ceiling damage was sustained in the Customer Service Centre building due to heavy rain inundating the box gutter system during a storm event. Records room, Customer Relations and the John Brownstein meeting room sustained minor water damaged. Carpet was dried and cleaned, ceiling tiles and insulation replaced. Works are underway to further increase stormwater capacity.
- The Benalla Art Gallery deck and entry ramp were closed on the advice of a Structural Engineer engaged in late December due to rapid deterioration of support timbers. The ramp reopened once the timbers were reinforced to the satisfaction of the engineer. The deck remains closed due to the risks involved with the damaged support timbers. A specification is being developed under the supervision of an engineer to refurbish the support structures, to go to tender late February 2025.
- Further loose tiles were identified at the Ceramic Mural, the area has been isolated and restoration works are being supervised by the Benalla Art Gallery Director, utilising an appropriately skilled ceramic artist to produce new tiles where tiles have broken, and contractors are assisting as required. The mural is a public artwork, and conservation works will progress at a measured pace, with some tiles needing to be recreated by the ceramic artist.
- Ongoing issues with vandalism and theft at public amenities. Stainless steel, copper and brass fittings are being stolen with offenders cutting fittings from facilities. Police reports are made for each event.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

- New laptops and screens were rolled out across the organisation.
- Extensive work undertaken on the Microsoft 365 core software environment and Microsoft Active Directory configuration to support the implementation of Records Hub. Records Hub is part of the Collaborative Digital Innovation (CODI) project, and has replaced the current records system, Content Manager, which currently manages all council records and files.
- Council wide training program developed to support staff to migrate to Records Hub. Test groups of staff trained prior to the system going live on 6 January 2025.
- Planning and evaluations underway for replacement of Primary Firewalls. Firewalls are part of the first line security defence of Councils network. These are critical pieces of network hardware.

- Targeted tests of enhanced Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) underway. MFA will be enhanced across the entire organisation by end of Quarter 4. At present MFA is only required for external network log-ins. This will be extended to all log ins in Quarter 4. MFA is now a requirement of our Cyber Security insurance provider and is industry best practice.

Benalla Aquatic Centre YMCA

- Swimming Lesson memberships stand at 658 enrolments, up on the 589 Swimming Lesson memberships reported previous quarter. Numbers are expected to increase in the warmer months. Swimming lessons are now offered seven days a week due to the high demand.
- Centre membership stands at 398, a decrease on the 444 memberships reported previous quarter.

Highlight

- The strong growth in Swimming Lesson memberships at the Benalla Aquatic Centre. The YMCA has set a new target of 700 Swimming Lesson memberships by 4 July 2025.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Liveability

Vibrant public spaces and places		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Enhance and maintain key places of significance.	Update Benalla Airport Master Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive works underway to conserve BARC Hut 65 Draft Airport Masterplan Review, under final review prior to stakeholder engagement.

Leadership

High performance culture		
Strategy	Action	December Quarter Update
Improve customer experience through responsive, timely, efficient, well planned, and accessible services.	Review, update and implement the <i>Benalla Rural City Council Information Technology and Communications strategy</i> .	Finalisation of computing hardware replacement complete at all Council sites.
Improve customer experience through timely, efficient, well planned, and accessible services.	Participate in the Lower North Eastern Digital Transformation Partnership (CODI).	Preparation of training and computer network configuration to accommodate Records Hub, complete.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 December 2024.

	Notes	2024/25 YTD Actuals	2024/25 YTD Budget	2024/25 YTD Variance	2024/25 Full Year Budget	2024/25 Full Year Forecast
Facilities	1	\$1,233,247	\$1,343,860	\$110,613	\$3,690,634	\$2,678,852
Information Technology	2	\$1,031,003	\$1,185,745	\$154,742	\$2,519,026	\$2,559,026
Benalla Airport	3	\$113,303	\$39,622	-\$73,681	\$79,258	\$129,725
Saleyards		\$2,204	\$16,033	\$13,799	\$32,006	\$32,006
Aquatic Centre	4	\$369,646	\$448,502	\$78,856	\$897,008	\$897,008
Total		\$2,749,402	\$3,033,732	\$284,329	\$7,217,932	\$6,296,617

Notes:

1. Favourable variance primarily due to vacant CODI Project staff positions.
2. Favourable variance mainly due to software subscription costs not falling due during this reporting cycle.
3. Unfavourable variance primarily due to costs associated with asbestos removal during Heritage Conservation works at BARC Hut 65 coded to wrong account.
4. Favourable variance due to invoice timing.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

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7. Urgent Business

Closure of Meeting