

Benalla Rural City Council

Finance and Planning Committee

Agenda

Date: Wednesday 9 April 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
Courtney Naughton Manager Economic Development and Sustainability
Tom Arnold Community Development and Recreation Coordinator
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 5 March 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

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Business

1. Building and Planning Approvals – February 2025

Ref: 2005329054-533

Sarah Ford – Building Coordinator

Joel Ingham – Interim Manager Development

Nilesh Singh – Interim General Manager Corporate

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report details planning permit applications and building approvals for February 2025.

Planning Permit Applications Determined under Officer Delegation

Permit No		Description	Property Address	Decision
1	P128-24	Construction of a dwelling and outbuilding	176 Racecourse Road, Benalla	Approved
2	P001-25	Alterations and additions to the existing dwelling	33 Benalla Street, Benalla	Approved
3	P017-25	The construction of a carport	6 Neil Avenue, Benalla	Approved
4	P129-24	Construction of a verandah	1 Byrne Street, Benalla	Approved
5	P0041-24	Alterations and additions to existing building and additional Business Identification Signage	49-55 Smythe Street, Benalla	Approved

Planning Permit Amendments Determined Under Officer Delegation

Permit No		Description	Property Address	Decision
1	P0102-19	The use and development of land for a renewable energy facility (solar farm), the removal of native vegetation and the construction and display of Business Identification Signage	379 Goorambat-Chesney Road, Benalla-Tocumwal Road, 256 Peck Road, Spinks Lane and Sharp Road, Goorambat	Approved

Planning Permits Issued Under VicSmart

There were no VicSmart planning permits issued during the month of February 2025.

Planning Permit Applications Determined by the Council

There were no planning permit applications determined by the Council during the month of February 2025.

Planning Permit Amendments Determined by the Council

There were no planning permit applications determined by the Council during February 2025.

Planning Permit Applications Withdrawn or Lapsed

There were no planning permit applications withdrawn or lapsed during the month of February 2025.

Notices of Decision

There were no notice of decisions issued during the month of February 2025.

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.

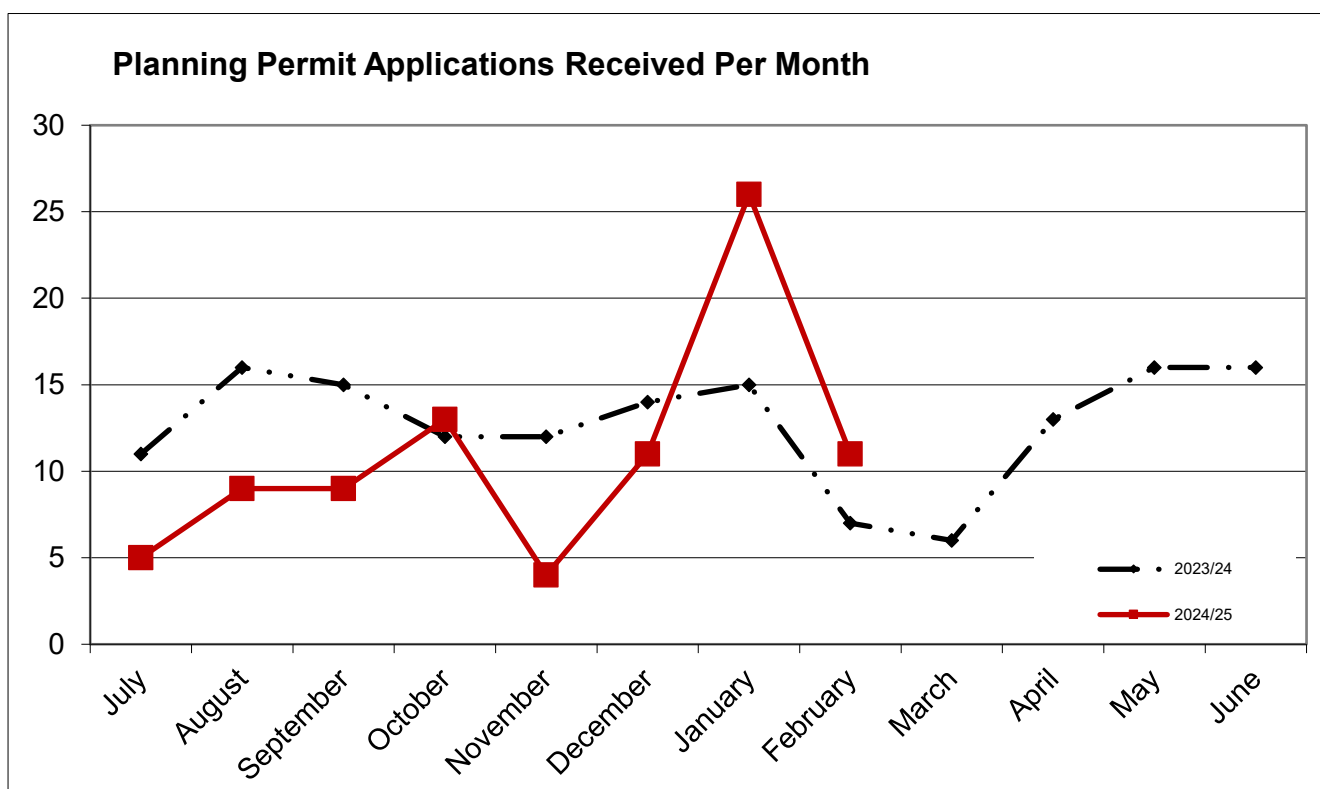
Planning Permit Applications Determined by VCAT

There were no planning permit applications determined by VCAT during the month of February 2025.

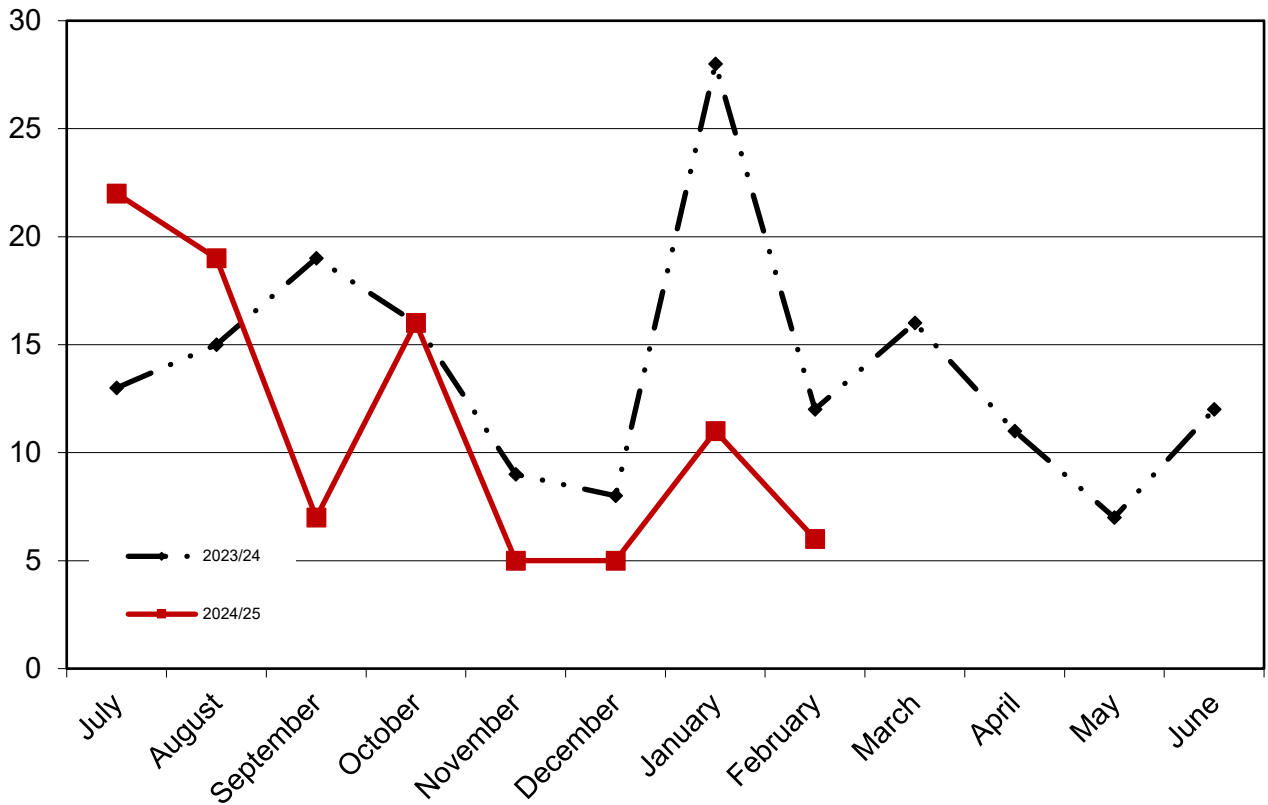
Matters Before VCAT

DA7679	Use and development of land for six dwellings at 3-5 Senator Drive, Benalla
Status	<p>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 objector has appealed the NOD. At a compulsory conference on 17 March 2025 all parties to the appeal consented to the approval of the permit subject to two extra conditions as follows:</p> <p>1 b) Enclosure of all carports with a roller door and side fencing to a height of 1.8 metres.</p> <p>1 c) A 450mm high colourbond trellis installed along the northern boundary on top of the existing 1.8 metre high colourbond fence.</p> <p>A planning permit has now been issued for the proposed development.</p>

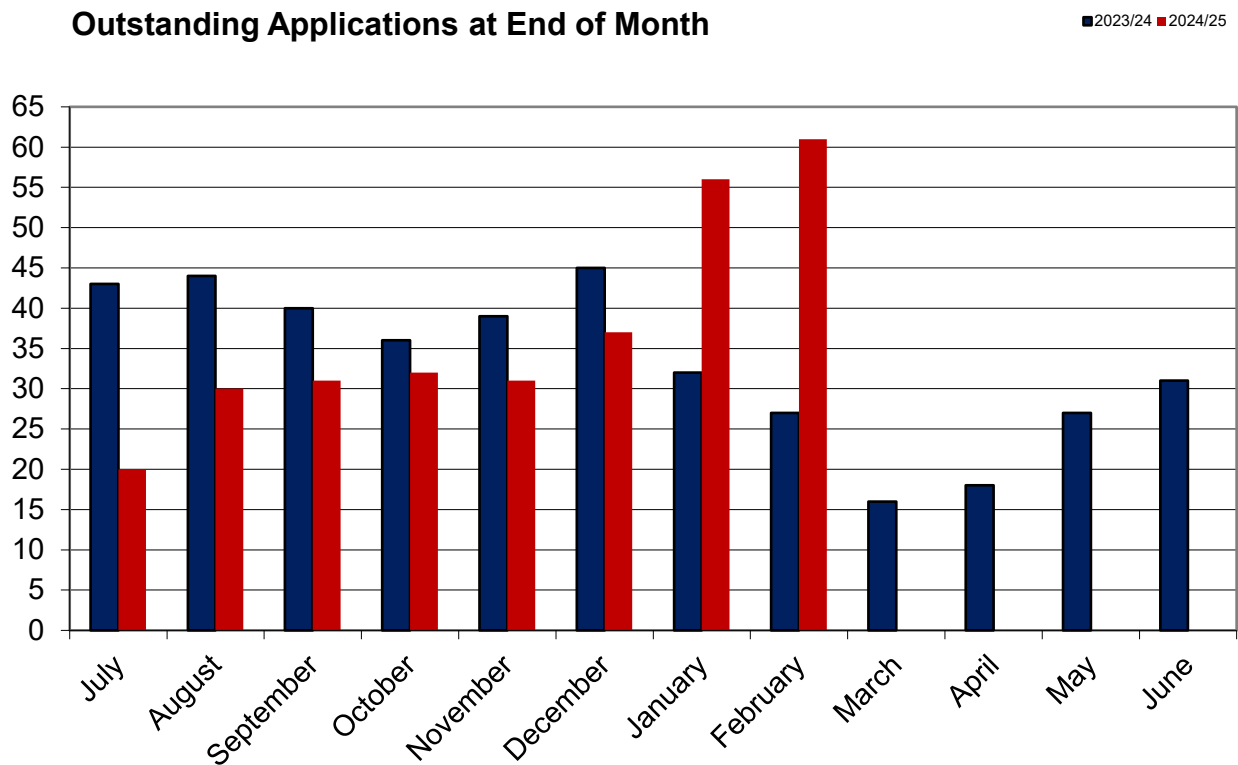
Planning Permit Applications



Planning Permit Applications Decided Per Month



Outstanding Applications at End of Month

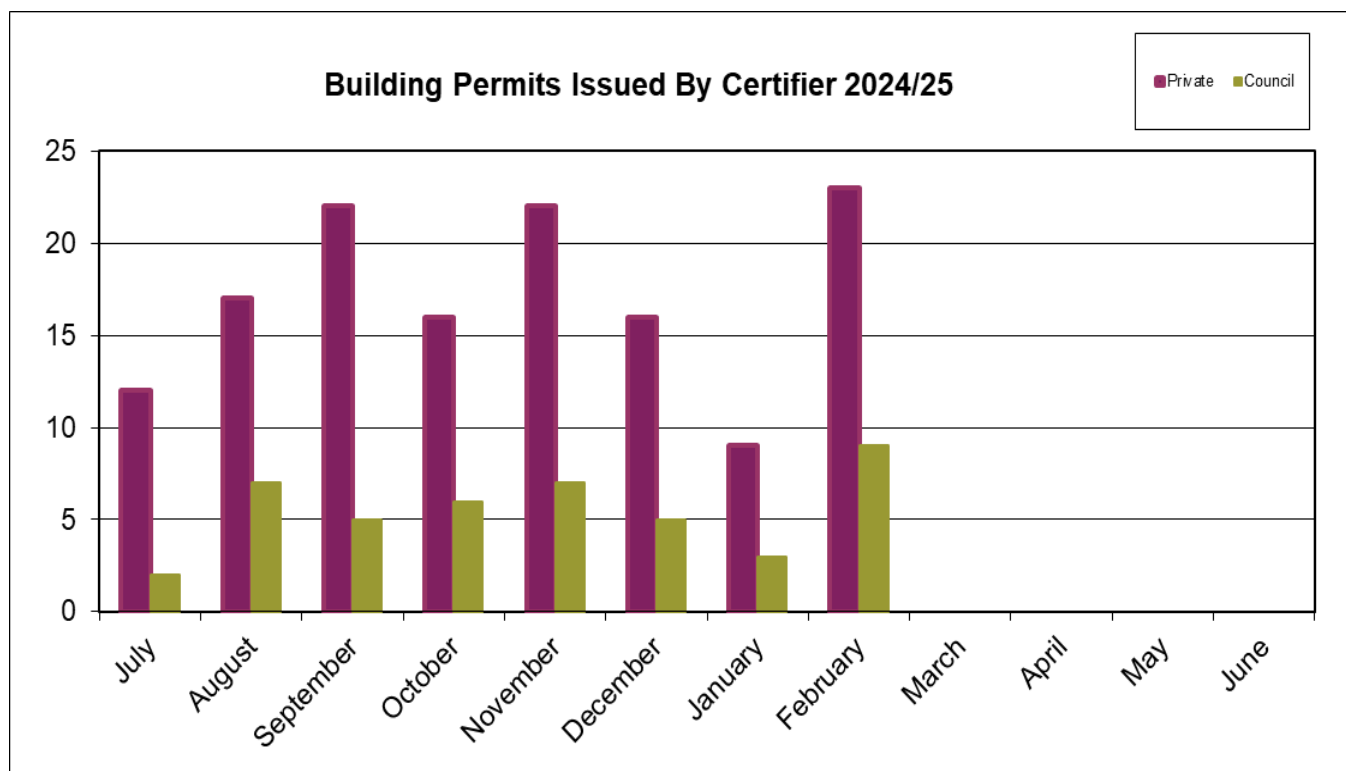


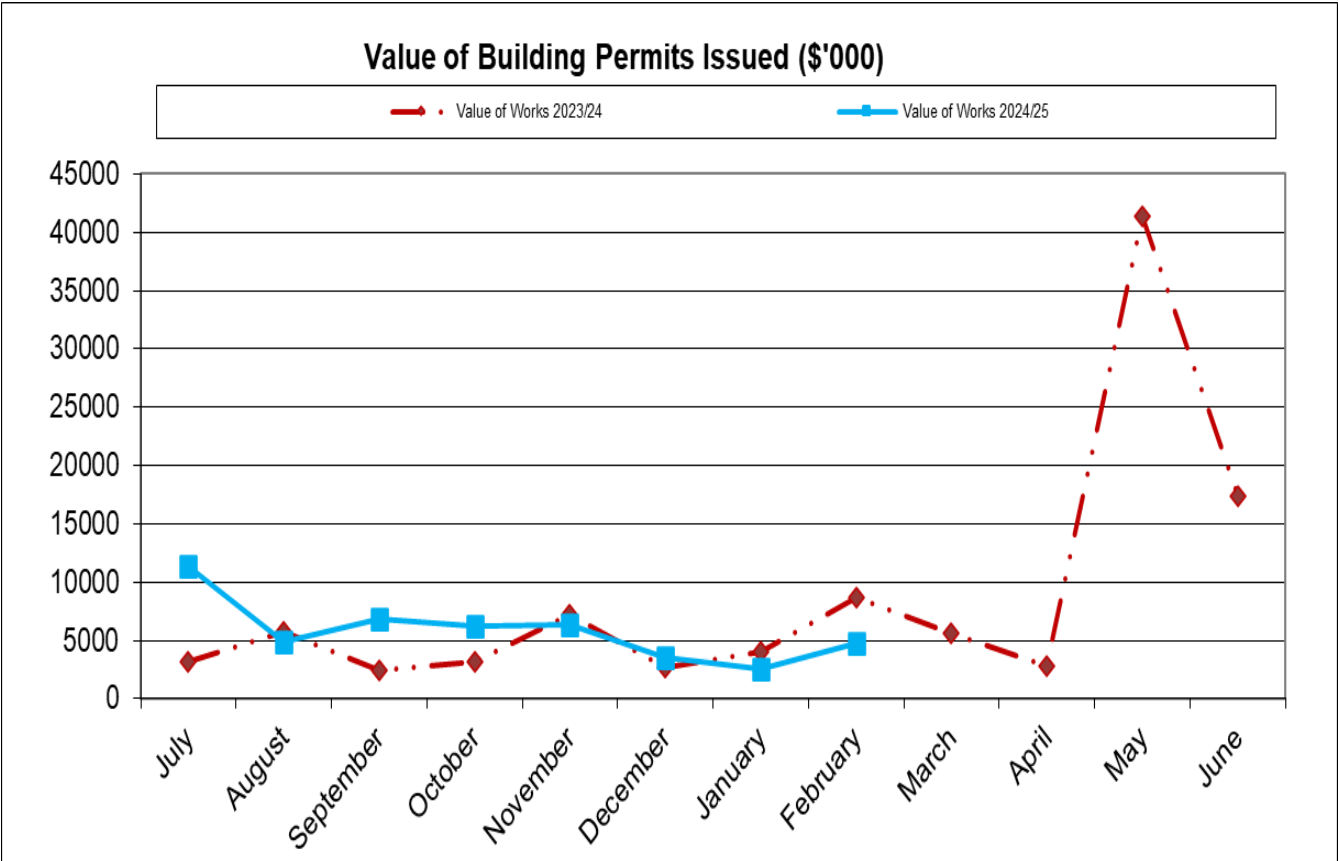
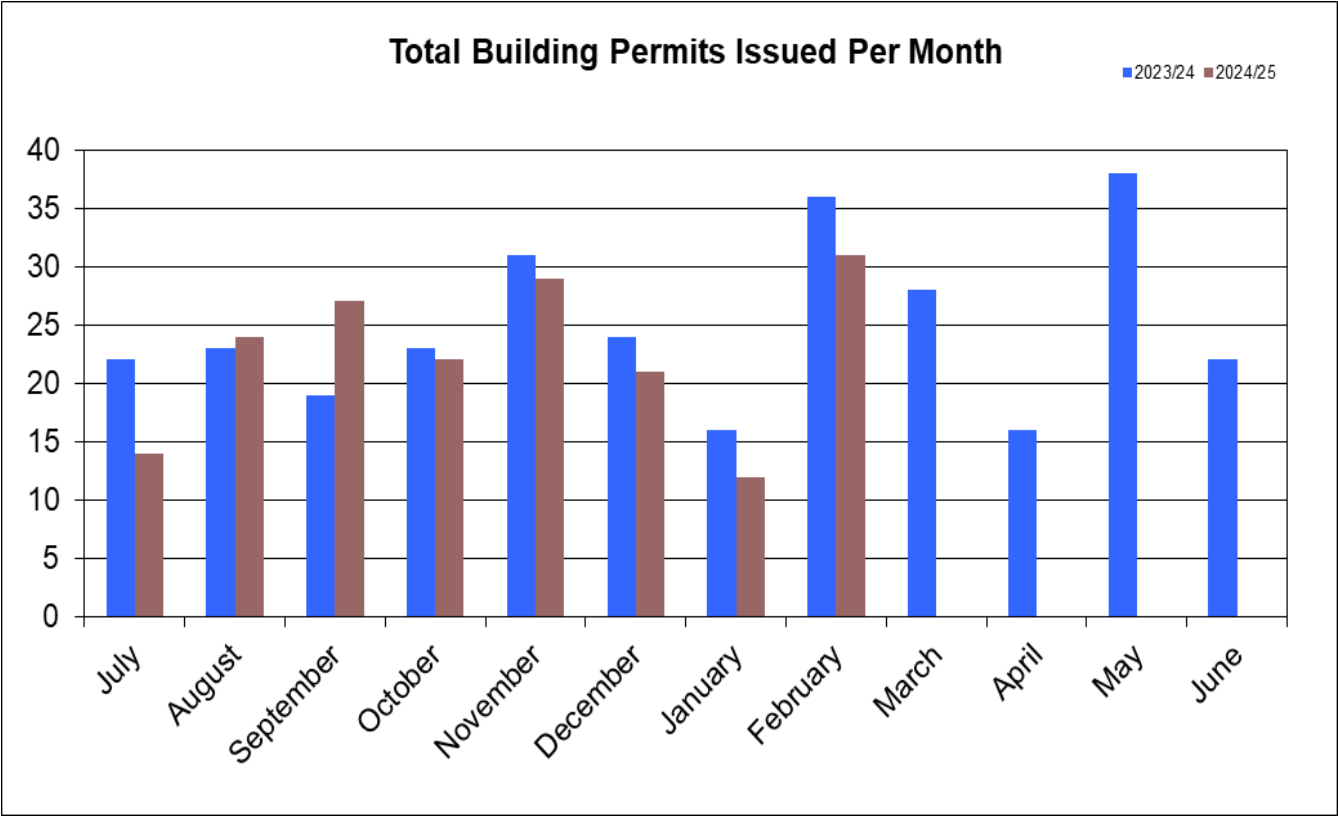
Building Approvals Issued by Council and Private Practitioners

Permit No		Description	Property Address	Value
1	3364363387754	Construction of two sheds	11 Bradley Court, Benalla	\$1,214,500
2	5890302938165	Construction of a carport and verandah	9 Reilly Avenue, Benalla	\$24,875
3	6452014214149	Construction of a shed	11 Crammond Street, Benalla	\$13,500
4	2925802961333	Restumping of existing dwelling	16 Kent Street, Benalla	\$11,800
5	9956990198549	Construction of a shed	37 Cemetery Road, Benalla	\$80,062
6	1739182881603	Construction of a shed	12 Bond Street, Benalla	\$33,000
7	7451877009580	Extension to an existing shed	63 Grant Drive, Benalla	\$14,611
8	4992955539927	Construction of a shed	10 Harrison Avenue, Benalla	\$18,000
9	3075441653559	Construction of a dwelling and garage	45 Benson Street, Benalla	\$458,014
10	7062119979454	Construction of a dwelling and garage	8 Thoroughbred Lane, Benalla	\$848,564
11	6245942159903	Construction of a garage	104 Thomas Street, Benalla	\$14,750
12	5057858735128	Construction of a pool	92 Lakeside Drive, Chesney Vale	\$54,500
13	4309144124338	Construction of a pergola and pool barrier	85 Centre Road, Molyullah	\$8,745
14	4261986790646	Construction of a verandah building	22 Glenfern Court, Benalla	\$56,398
15	2599662248057	Construction of a dwelling and garage	38 Roynic Parade, Benalla	\$348,058
16	7084356816017	Remedial Works	2/14 Oak Avenue, Benalla	\$39,570
17	9545613711885	Construction of a shed	254 River Road, Goomalibee	\$6,000
18	9784317673301	Construction of a shed	9 Winton-Lurg Road, Winton	\$39,804
19	4151936292786	Construction of a dwelling and garage	1B Meadows Avenue, Benalla	\$250,000
20	3886804760819	Construction of a dwelling and garage	20 Goodenia Drive, Benalla	\$406,698
21	7661768388163	Construction of a dwelling and garage	9 Honeyeater Street, Benalla	\$327,884
22	9736229182805	Construction of a dwelling and garage	2 Wattle Drive, Benalla	\$315,189
23	9229513173002	Construction of a shed	28 Roynic Parade, Benalla	\$37,952

Permit No		Description	Property Address	Value
24	1738877261526	Construction of a shed	5 Piccadilly Court, Benalla	\$36,000
25	4475615021856	Alterations to existing retail tenancy	132-134 Bridge Street, Benalla	\$210,000
26	4969469792698	Construction of a dwelling and garage	21 Ambridge Avenue, Benalla	\$380,500
27	6138336516948	Construction of a dwelling and garage	17 Ambridge Avenue, Benalla	\$373,250
28	6358349468065	Construction of a shed	1170 Lake Mokoan Road, Chesney Vale	\$44,887
29	1340368030722	Construction of a dwelling and garage	2 Bramel Court, Benalla	\$373,500
30	4746584783061	Creation of access to existing building	57 Samaria Road, Benalla	\$76,857
31	3330357860353	Rectification works to shed	28 Cecil Street, Benalla	\$52,000
Total				\$4,759,120

Building Permits Issued by Certifier by Month





***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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2. 2024/2025 Quick Response Grants

Ref: 1138149297-12786
Tom Arnold – Community Development and Recreation Coordinator
Jane Archbold – Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents funding applications for 2024/25 Quick Response Grants.

BACKGROUND

The Quick Response grant program enables local community groups, clubs and organisations to seek funding to increase their capacity to work in partnership with the Council and others to address local needs and enhance the local community.

The program distributes grants up to \$500 allowing local clubs, groups and organisations the opportunity to seek funds when the need arises.

DISCUSSION

Applications for consideration under the 2024/25 Quick Response Grant program are detailed in the table below.

Applicant	Details	Amount Requested	Proposed Assistance
Benalla Clydesdale and Heavy Horse Driving Day	Benalla Clydesdale and Heavy Horse Driving Day – 3 May 2025. Offers participants the chance to compete in driving horses through obstacle courses, with classes for both experienced drivers and novices. Held annually for 23 years, the event attracts competitors from across the state to showcase their skills, learn new techniques, and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow horse enthusiasts. With increasing participation and crowd attendance, the event is open to all ages and genders, and features active entertainment, food, and merchandise. The group will put the \$500 towards catering. Remaining catering costs will be covered by event entries.	\$500	\$500
Benalla Heritage Network	Unearthed National Heritage Festival – 2-4 May 2025 The Festival is a celebration of Benalla Rural City's local history and culture. The event will feature community groups sharing their traditions, skills, and stories. It's a chance for the public to learn about and engage with Benalla Rural City's heritage through displays and activities. The Benalla Heritage Network is seeking a grant to cover printing costs for promotional flyers. The flyers will be distributed locally and in surrounding regions, ensuring broad visibility and engagement for this celebration of Benalla Rural City's diverse heritage.	\$500	\$500

Applicant	Details	Amount Requested	Proposed Assistance
Room at the Table	<p>Benalla Boardgame Project – 2025 Benalla Street Art Festival</p> <p>The event is hosted by Room at the Table Inc. and invites participants to combine art and boardgame design. Led by artist and boardgame designer Alex Wynnter, the event will feature a talk on boardgame design followed by a hands-on workshop where participants will create a custom boardgame focused on exploring the sights and experiences of Benalla Rural City.</p> <p>Participants will design a game where players, armed with a set amount of holiday money, visit iconic local spots, collect points, and engage with the area's attractions. The game will be created using reskinned Monopoly boards, featuring photos of Benalla's landmarks and customised cards and pieces.</p> <p>The event is open to all, with children under 15 requiring an adult. The venue at Benalla's Gliding Club is an accessible space.</p> <p>Funding will go toward catering and other associated event expenses.</p>	\$500	\$500
Total		\$1,500	\$1,500

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Community

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

Leadership

- *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.

Level of Public Participation	Promise to the community	Techniques to be used
Inform	We will provide information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotion of program via media, website and social media. ▪ Program presented in public reports to the Council. ▪ Outcomes advised directly to applicants. ▪ Outcomes detailed in Annual Report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The *2024/25 Budget* allocates \$15,000 to the Quick Response Grant program. To date, \$8,291.00 in Quick Response Grant funding has been allocated.

Recipients of support throughout the financial year are detailed in the Annual Report.

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 \$500 grants from the *2024/2025 Quick Response Grant program* be awarded to the Benalla Clydesdale and Heavy Horse Driving Day, Benalla Heritage Network, and Room at the Table Inc.

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3. Annual Grants Program

Ref: 1536132109-871

Tom Arnold – Community Development and Recreation Coordinator
Jane Archbold – Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents proposed changes to the guidelines and funding allocations for the Quick Response Grant and Community Grant programs.

BACKGROUND

The Council has increased its annual funding allocation for the Annual Grants Program to \$110,000 in the 2024/25 budget period based on a report reviewing the grant program in 2024. The increase aligns with the higher costs associated with running events and purchasing goods.

Program	Description	Funding Allocation	
		2023/24	2024/25
Community Grants Program	Annual funding allocation designed to encourage not-for-profit, community-based organisations to seek funding up to \$2,500 for projects and activities.	\$66,666	\$95,000
Quick Response Grants	Quick Response Grants distribute grants up to \$500 throughout the financial year, allowing local clubs, groups and organisations the opportunity to seek funds when the need arises.	\$15,000	\$15,000

DISCUSSION

Quick Response Grants Guidelines and *Community Grant Guidelines* have been reviewed by the Community Development and Recreation team.

All sections within the guideline document were reviewed.

The review incorporated feedback from grant applicants, staff administering the grants and benchmarking against other councils.

Proposed Changes

The increased funding pool will enable the Council to award larger grants to Community projects.

Considering benchmarking against other similar sized councils and feedback received from community groups and internal stakeholders, it is proposed that the Council increase the funding amount awarded for Quick Response Grants and Community Grants.

It is also recommended that Community Grants are split into Major and Minor categories.

Increased funding allocations will enable the Council to better support larger-scale initiatives, allowing for the delivery of more ambitious community projects that can make a lasting impact on local infrastructure, social wellbeing, and community development.

The proposed funding changes are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Proposed funding changes

Grant Category	Amount Awarded	Funding Pool
Quick Response Grants (QRG)	Up to \$750	\$15,000
Minor Community Grants (CG)	Up to \$3,000	\$60,000
Major Community Grants (MCG)	Between \$3,001 -\$7,000	\$35,000
Total funding pool		\$110,000

Previously, Quick Response Grants and Community Grants have been administered under one guideline document. Many eligibility requirements for both programs remain the same.

No significant changes have been made to the acquittal process. Successful applicants must complete an acquittal with evidence that the grant funding has been used for the purpose described in the application.

Key Changes include:

Grant	Key Changes
Quick Response Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget and Acquittals – Applications will now need to include quotes or evidence of costs associated with their project. Acquittals will require additional detail on how the funding was used. The changes to the Quick Response Grant Program will take effect from the beginning of the 2025/26 financial year.
Community Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on equitable distribution of funds – When awarding both Major and Minor Community Grants assessors will take into account the amount of funding received through Council grants over the previous three years to applicants. Focussing on ensuring that a variety of applicants have access to funding each year. Detailed Budgets – Applicants will need to include detailed quotes and demonstrate value for money within applications.

Two guideline documents have been created to support the administration of the respective grant programs. The *Benalla Rural City Council Quick Response Grant Guidelines (Appendix 1)* and the *Benalla Rural City Council Community Grant Guidelines (Appendix 2)* are attached.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Community

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

Leadership

- 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.

Level of Public Participation	Promise to the community	Techniques to be used
Inform	We will provide information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Promotion of program via media, website and social media.▪ Program presented in public reports to the Council.▪ Outcomes advised directly to applicants.▪ Outcomes detailed in Annual Report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2024/25 Budget allocates \$110,000 to the Annual Grant Program.

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:

1. That allocations for Quick Response Grants and Community Grants be awarded as follows:
 - Quick Response Grants: up to \$750.
 - Minor Community Grants: up to \$3,000.
 - Major Community Grants: from \$3,001 to \$7,000.
2. That the *Benalla Rural City Council Quick Response Grant Guidelines* be adopted.
3. That the *Benalla Rural City Council Community Grant Guidelines* be adopted.

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Benalla Rural City Council

Quick Response Grant Guidelines

Background

Council values the significant contribution that community and not-for-profit groups deliver within our municipality.

Council's grant programs aim to support applicants to deliver positive health and wellbeing outcome, minor infrastructure projects, community events and projects that benefit our community.

Council provides the following grant giving programs:

Grant Category	Amount Awarded	Funding Pool
Quick Response Grants (QRG)	Up to \$750	\$15,000
Minor Community Grants (CG)	Up to \$3,000	\$60,000
Major Community Grants (MCG)	Between \$3,001 - \$7,000	\$35,000
Total funding pool		\$110,000

Council also awards grants through other programs including Major Event Funding and Social Connection Grants. Further information on funding amounts and when these grants are available can be found on Council's website.

Grant Objectives

Council's Annual Grant Program aims to fund applications that:

- Align with key Council strategic documents such as the Council Plan, Community Vision, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Events and Tourism Strategies.
- Support community projects that contribute toward creating a healthy, vibrant and sustainable community.
- Increase tourism and economic development within the municipality.

Process overview

Quick Response Grants have been designed to support community groups to facilitate smaller projects that are significantly less costly than the amount available in the Community Grants scheme

The Quick Response Grants are available year-round. These grants have a quicker assessment timeframe to facilitate adequately timed responses for the community. Quick Responses Grants will close when the funding allocation is exhausted.

Applications are assessed by two Council staff members to ensure the application meets the eligibility requirements. Funding recommendations are then tabled for approval at the next Council Meeting.

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible to apply for a Quick Response Grant applicants must:

- be incorporated community based and not-for-profit
- be auspiced by an incorporated organisation (if organisation is unincorporated)
- be based or deliver services within the Benalla Rural City municipality
- have satisfactorily accounted to Council for the expenditure of any previous Council grants
- hold relevant insurances to administer the event or project
- comply with all relevant Local Laws, Australian and Victorian legislation.

Eligible Applications

- Upgrades or maintenance to community facilities
- Purchase of equipment specifically for the purpose of supporting programs or community access
- Community developed projects or activities
- Community events and celebrations
- Venue Hire or subsidised use of Council facilities
- Printing, advertising, translations and promotional costs
- Transport costs.

Funding Exclusions

- Projects that do not involve the Benalla community
- Individuals or applications that only benefit individuals (for example scholarships, sponsorship, awards)
- Applicants whose primary activity is a 'fee for service' to the community
- Individual businesses, government agencies, political groups, religious groups and organisations
- Applicants who have not adequately acquitted previous funding provided by Council
- Applications from Primary or Secondary Schools (Council encourages partnerships between Schools and community organisations, whereby the community organisation is the applicant)

- Applications that are considered by Council to be the funding responsibility of other levels of Government (State or Federal government agencies)
- Committees of Council (Council encourages applications from user groups)
- Community organisations that:
 - are in debt to Council and are not meeting the agreed repayment arrangements.
 - receive funding from other areas of council; except where funding is proposed for a different purpose
- Projects that have already started or have been completed
- Operational expenses such as insurance, rent, utility expenses. **Council may consider funding 'one-off' requests for Public Liability Insurance*
- Funding of prizes, donations, gifts, grant giving programs, award ceremonies and fundraising events **Council may consider funding these in some instances – contact Council staff to discuss*
- Projects that will have a negative impact on the environment
- Staff wages and salaries
- Projects that could be funded from other sources e.g. fees, sponsorships.

Assessment Criteria

To determine which project applications will be recommended for funding, an assessment panel will consider each application against the following criteria:

- Is the organisation eligible to apply?
- Is the project sustainable? Will the project require additional / recurrent funding from the Council?
- Equitable distribution of funds
- Why is the project needed? How will it provide community benefit?
- How will your project support the funding program objectives?
- Is the budget realistic? Has the organisation provided evidence of project costs.
- Ability to deliver the project.

As part of their submission, applicants may be required to provide details including:

- How has the community need for the project been identified? (Letters of Support can be included to help substantiate the need).
- What planning has been undertaken leading up to the application?
- Does the organisation have appropriate insurance and a risk management strategy?
- Are there benefits to the broader community rather than just to the members of the applicant organisation?
- Quotes where the purchase of goods and services form part of the proposal
- Organisation's banking details.

Funding Terms and Conditions

- Applications must be submitted through [Benalla Rural City Council online grants portal](#).
- A member of the organisation's executive must sign the application.
- All grants must be used for the purposes outlined in the application.
- All activities associated with the project must be legal, include all required permits and comply with Child Safe Standards.
- Applicants must indicate all other sources of funding they have sought and/or received in relation to the project.
- Wherever possible goods and services should be purchased from Benalla-based providers.
- The financial support provided by Council must be acknowledged wherever possible.
- Successful applicants must complete an acquittal with evidence that the grant funding has been used for the purpose described in the application.
- Grant funds must be expended within 12 months of being awarded funds.
- Successful organisations agree to the Council using information from their project in its Annual Report and Council publications.
- All grants must be used for the purposes outlined in the application.
- Any variation to the use of the grant funding must be approved by Council.
- Further information on eligibility, assessment criteria and reporting requirements may be included within the online application process.

Online Application

We encourage anyone considering applying for a grant to discuss their application with the Community Development Team.

You can find the online application and more information about the grants program at <https://www.benalla.vic.gov.au/community/get-involved/community-grants-and-funding/>

To discuss your idea or application you can contact the team on (03) 5760 2600.

Acquittal

An online acquittal must be completed through SmartyGrants at the conclusion of the funded activity. [Grant Acquittal How and Why Guide – March 2025](#)

Benalla Rural City Council

Community Grant Guidelines

Background

Council values the significant contribution that community and not-for-profit groups deliver within our municipality.

Council's grant programs aim to support applicants to deliver positive health and wellbeing outcomes, minor infrastructure projects, community events and projects that benefit the community.

Council provides the following grant giving programs:

Grant Category	Amount Awarded	Funding Pool
Quick Response Grants (QRG)	Up to \$750	\$15,000
Minor Community Grants (CG)	Up to \$3,000	\$60,000
Major Community Grants (MCG)	Between \$3,001 - \$7,000	\$35,000
Total funding pool		\$110,000

Council also awards grants through other programs including Major Event Funding and Social Connection Grants. Further information on funding amounts and when these grants are available can be found on Council's website.

Community Grant Objectives

The Community Grant Program aims to fund applications that:

- Align with key Council strategic documents such as the Council Plan, Community Vision, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, Events and Tourism Strategies.
- Support community projects that contribute toward creating a healthy, vibrant and sustainable community.
- Increase tourism and economic development within the municipality.

Process overview

Both Major and Minor Community Grants are open once a year for a limited time frame.

Applications are assessed by an internal panel of three Council staff members. The panel's recommendations are then tabled for approval at a Council Meeting.

Eligibility

- Organisations may apply for both Major and Minor grants but can only receive funding from one program during the funding period.
- Organisations can only receive Major Event Funding once every three years.

Eligible Applicants

To be eligible to apply for a Community Grant applicants must:

- be incorporated community based and not-for-profit
- be auspiced by an incorporated organisation (if organisation is unincorporated)
- be based or deliver services within the Benalla Rural City municipality
- have satisfactorily accounted to Council for the expenditure of any previous Council grants
- hold relevant insurances to administer the event or project
- comply with all relevant Local Laws, Australian and Victorian legislation.

Eligible Applications

- Upgrades or maintenance to community facilities
- Purchase of equipment specifically for the purpose of supporting programs or community access
- Community developed projects or activities
- Community events and celebrations
- Venue Hire or subsidised use of Council facilities
- Printing, advertising, translations and promotional costs
- Transport costs.

Funding Exclusions

- Projects that do not involve the Benalla community
- Individuals or applications that only benefit individuals (for example scholarships, sponsorship, awards)
- Applicants whose primary activity is a 'fee for service' to the community
- Individual businesses, government agencies, political groups, religious groups and organisations
- Applicants who have received funding from the Major Community Grants category in the past three years (can still apply within the Minor Community Grant category).
- Applicants who have not adequately acquitted previous funding provided by Council
- Applications from Primary or Secondary Schools (Council encourages partnerships between Schools and community organisations, whereby the community organisation is the applicant)
- Applications that are considered by Council to be the funding responsibility of other levels of Government (State or Federal government agencies)

- Committees of Council (Council encourages applications from user groups)
- Community organisations that:
 - are in debt to Council and are not meeting the agreed repayment arrangements.
 - receive funding from other areas of council; except where funding is proposed for a different purpose
- Projects that have already started or have been completed
- Operational expenses such as insurance, rent, utility expenses. **Council may consider funding 'one-off' requests for Public Liability Insurance*
- Funding of prizes, donations, gifts, grant giving programs, award ceremonies and fundraising events **Council may consider funding these in some instances – contact Council staff to discuss*
- Projects that will have a negative impact on the environment
- Staff wages and salaries
- Projects that could be funded from other sources e.g. fees, sponsorships.

Assessment Criteria

To determine which project applications will be recommended for funding, an assessment panel will consider each application against the following criteria:

- Is the organisation eligible to apply?
- Is the project sustainable? Will the project require additional / recurrent funding from the Council?
- Why is the project needed? How will it provide community benefit?
- How will your project support the funding program objectives?
- Community support for the project
- Is the budget realistic? Demonstrate value for money and include a detailed quote.
- Ability to deliver the project
- Equitable distribution, assessors will take into account the amount of funding received through Council grants over the previous three years to applicants. Focussing on ensuring that a variety of applicants have access to funding each year.

As part of their submission, applicants may be required to provide details including:

- How has the community need for the project been identified? (Letters of Support can be included to help substantiate the need).
- What planning has been undertaken leading up to the application?
- Does the organisation have appropriate insurance and a risk management strategy?
- Are there benefits to the broader community rather than just to the members of the applicant organisation?
- Organisation's banking details

Funding Terms and Conditions

- Applications must be submitted through [Benalla Rural City Council online grants portal](#).
- A member of the organisation's executive must sign the application.
- All grants must be used for the purposes outlined in the application.
- All activities associated with the project must be legal, include all required permits and comply with Child Safe Standards.
- Applicants must indicate all other sources of funding they have sought and/or received in relation to the project.
- Wherever possible goods and services should be purchased from Benalla-based providers.
- The financial support provided by Council must be acknowledged wherever possible.
- Successful applicants must complete an acquittal with evidence that the grant funding has been used for the purpose described in the application.
- Grant funds must be expended within 12 months of being awarded funds.
- Successful organisations agree to the Council using information from their project in its Annual Report and Council publications.
- All grants must be used for the purposes outlined in the application.
- Any variation to the use of the grant funding must be approved by Council.
- Further information on eligibility, assessment criteria and reporting requirements may be included within the online application process.

Online Application

We encourage anyone considering applying for a grant to discuss their application with the Community Development Team on (03) 5760 2600.

You can find the online application and more information about the grants program at <https://www.benalla.vic.gov.au/community/get-involved/community-grants-and-funding/>

Acquittal

An online acquittal must be completed through SmartyGrants at the conclusion of the funded activity. [Grant Acquittal How and Why Guide – March 2025](#)

4. Draft Benalla Rural City Destination Management Plan 2025-2029

Ref: 154273666-172

Alison Angus – Visitor Economy Coordinator

Courtney Naughton – Manager Economic Development and Sustainability

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report discusses the draft *Benalla Rural City Destination Management Plan 2025-2029* and the *Benalla Rural City Destination Assessment Report*.

BACKGROUND

The draft *Benalla Rural City Destination Management Plan 2025-2029* (DMP) (refer **Appendix 1**) recognises the importance of a capable and empowered industry supported by an effective governance framework to provide connected and seamless experiences for visitors.

Tourism Recreation Conservation (TRC) were appointed as consultants to develop the draft DMP. The draft DMP is designed to guide the efforts of government, industry, and the community in making informed decisions regarding tourism development. It aligns with regional, state, and national strategies, including the *Tourism North East Destination Management Plan*, the *Victorian High Country Destination Management Plan 2023-2033*, *Experience Victoria 2033*, and *Thrive 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy*.

The draft DMP builds upon the insights from the *TRC Benalla Rural City Destination Assessment Report* (refer **Appendix 2**).

The *TRC Benalla Rural City Destination Assessment Report* provides a comprehensive analysis of the key aspects of tourism planning and development necessary to inform the draft. The report offers an overview of Benalla Rural City's tourism landscape, evaluates market opportunities, and aligns them with existing products and experiences in the city.

The report identifies the unique elements that distinguish Benalla Rural City, laying a solid foundation for future development. The assessment was informed by extensive desktop research and engagement with visitor economy stakeholders, ensuring that the draft DMP is grounded in the needs and aspirations of the local community.

DISCUSSION

The draft DMP will guide the visitor economy for Benalla Rural City from 2025 to 2029. It is designed to shape the future of tourism in Benalla Rural City, ensuring that the region can effectively leverage its strengths and opportunities to foster growth, increase investment, and deliver exceptional experiences for visitors while providing value to the local community.

The development of the draft DMP has been a collaborative effort. An internal working group has been actively engaged with consultants from TRC to develop the draft DMP.

A community workshop was held at the Benalla Cinema on 14 May 2024, which saw the participation of 40 attendees from both the community and tourism industry.

The workshop provided a platform for attendees to voice their opinions and contribute to the planning process.

Following the workshop, a community survey was listed on the Council's online community engagement platform '*Have Your Say*'. Fourteen responses were received and were influential in forming the draft DMP.

In conclusion, the draft DMP represents a strategic framework that will guide Benalla Rural City's tourism sector towards sustainable growth and prosperity. The draft DMP focuses on strategic investment in tourism to maximise its potential value.

Benalla Rural City's tourism initiatives align with the vision and values of the Benalla Rural City Council, as well as the plans from Victoria's High Country and Visit Victoria. By leveraging regional and state efforts, there's a significant opportunity to enhance visitor numbers and the overall value of tourism in the region.

Further community consultation will be sought on the draft DMP to ensure that the DMP is robust, inclusive, and reflective of the community's vision for the future of tourism in Benalla Rural City.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Community

- *A connected, involved and inclusive community.*

Livability

- *Vibrant public spaces and places.*

Economy

- *Flourishing tourism.*

Leadership

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has allocated \$50,000 to the development of a Destination Management Plan in the *2023/24 Budget*. As of the end of March 2025, \$44,770 had been expended.

LEGISLATIVE AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

It is considered that the report is consistent with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with the Council's *Community Engagement Policy*, it is proposed that community engagement be undertaken at the 'Consult' 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
Consult	We will provide information and consider feedback prior to making a decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Business and community workshop on the draft DMP.▪ Feedback invited via the Council's website and social media channels.▪ Public Notice in the <i>Benalla Ensign</i> and on Council website.▪ Draft DMP posted on Council's website.

A business and community workshop will be held at 11am on Thursday 1 May 2025 at the Benalla Visitor Information Centre. Businesses and individuals who have already provided input into the draft DMP will be invited to attend the session. The workshop will be advertised via the Council's website, social media channels and *Benalla Ensign*.

Community consultation on the draft DMP will open on Thursday 10 April and close 5pm Thursday 15 May 2025.

Community feedback will be invited via the Council's website and social media channels and through a formal public notice in the *Benalla Ensign*.

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

Submissions relating to the draft *Benalla Rural City Destination Management Plan 2025-2029* will be heard at the additional Finance and Planning Committee meeting on Wednesday 21 May 2025.

Recommendation:

That the Finance and Planning Committee, acting under its delegated authority of the Council, resolve:

That the draft *Benalla Rural City Destination Management Plan 2025-2029* be placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.

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Benalla

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

2025 - 2029

DRAFT



This Benalla Rural City Destination Management Plan report was prepared by TRC Tourism.

DISCLAIMER

Any representation, statement, opinion or advice expressed or implied in this document is made in good faith but on the basis that TRC Tourism Pty. Ltd., directors, employees and associated entities are not liable for any damage or loss whatsoever which has occurred or may occur in relation to taking or not taking action in respect of any representation, statement or advice referred to in this document.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work, and pay our respect to their Elders past and present.

IMAGE CREDIT

TRC Tourism, Allison Anderson

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ACRONYMS

TERM	DEFINITION
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DJSIR	Department of Jobs Skills Industry and Regions
DMP	Destination Management Plan
FTE	Full Time Equivalent jobs
IVS	International Visitor Survey
LGA	Local Government Authority
NVS	National Visitor Survey
PV	Parks Victoria
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
REDS	Regional Economic Development Strategy
TLaWC	Taungurung Land and Waters Council
TNE	Tourism North East
VEP	Visitor Economy Partnership
VIC	Visitor information centre
VV	Visit Victoria

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Welcome to Benalla

Welcome to Yorta Yorta, Taungurung and Bpangerang Country, where you can see the art in everything. Here, tourism isn't just about visiting, it's about transforming our community and economy for the better.

Through tourism, we're not just inviting people to enjoy our culture, nature and beauty, but also to foster a deeper connection with our region. Knowing our place means celebrating our unique identity and history and strengthening our sense of belonging. By attracting visitors and investments, we create jobs that empower our young people, build a sustainable future, and that benefits us all.

As tourism flourishes, so does our community. We're enhancing liveability with vibrant activities, upgraded facilities, and a diverse range of dining, shopping, and accommodation options. These mean more opportunities for everyone to enjoy Benalla's offerings, making it a destination where people want to live, work, and play.

With tourism, we're shaping Benalla into a dynamic hub of creativity, culture, and opportunity, where you can see the art in everything.



About this Plan

This is a plan for the development of tourism in Benalla for five years from 2025 - 2029. It is designed to direct the efforts of government, industry and community in their decisions regarding tourism. It also ensures that investment is effective in delivering exceptional experiences for visitors as well as value for the Benalla community.

This Destination Management Plan (DMP) succeeds the Benalla Rural City Tourism and Events Strategy 2018-2022. It is designed to complement and be complemented by the Victorian High Country Destination Management Plan 2023 – 2033 at the regional level, Experience Victoria 2033 at the state level, and Thrive 2030 at the national level.

Accompanying this document is the destination assessment, which provides the context for the strategic direction of the plan. The assessment includes a detailed analysis of the strategic context, the visitor market, products and experiences, and an evaluation of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

Building on the assessment, this plan draws on the aspirations of the Benalla community and tourism industry to support strong advocacy to government. The DMP aims to harness the strengths of the region to enable growth of the destination, increase investment, leadership and economic and social benefit through visitation.

Whilst tourism in Benalla employs only around 5.1 per cent of the workforce,¹ it is a valuable industry for the community as it provides entry-level jobs, opportunities for new businesses to start up, a platform to commercialise the significant creativity in the region, and increased liveability for the community. This plan recognises that for the region to be effective in providing connected and seamless experiences, it must

have a capable and empowered industry that is supported by an effective governance framework.

It is important to acknowledge that this plan has been developed at a time of cost-of-living pressures and budgetary restraint at a national and global level. Building the foundations for the region over the course of this plan and establishing the ability to be able to capture opportunities as they arise, as well as removing some barriers to growth, will provide the region with opportunities well into the future.

Consultation

This plan has been developed in conversation with communities, industry, Local Government, and other interested parties.

Consultation has included:

- One-on-one meetings with interested parties and identified stakeholders
- LGA meeting and briefings
- Industry and community workshop
- Online community survey
- Site visits across the region

A full description of the outcomes of the consultation is included in the Destination Assessment.

Plan review

It is recommended that this plan be reviewed in 2027 or at least once during its five-year period. This will ensure the projects and strategies are still relevant for building Benalla's tourism most effectively.

¹ [Benalla Economy Profile](#) | [Employment, Tourism](#) | [REMPLAN](#)

Destination management best practice

Tourism is a complex industry to manage because there are many touchpoints to the visitor experience. Public infrastructure and services need to be in harmony with private business to offer outstanding visitor experiences.

These need to be aligned with what visitors are seeking, what locals are wanting, and what is on offer in the broader visitor experience beyond the region. Understanding best practice in tourism management can help navigate some of these challenges and opportunities at a local scale. Below is a list of important elements of tourism management best practice that have informed the recommendations in this plan.

Governance

Tourism governance is the decision making framework that joins all of the moving pieces of the tourism industry. While governance in itself will not deliver outstanding experiences, lessons from reviews of many of the nation's leading tourism regions show that it plays an important role in providing a seamless visitor experience and ensuring value flows to the community from the visitor economy.

A regional focus

It is important to understand how a destination's offerings fit within the broader regional offering, and more importantly, to understand what makes a place special within it. Connecting and collaborating with nearby towns and experiences and being clear with regional and state tourism marketing agencies about what makes the place so unique, are central to effectively connecting with visitors. Tourism North East and Visit Victoria are vital in helping bring the broader region together.

Stewardship and sustainability

Increasingly, councils and destination management organisations are seeking to act as stewards of their places, rather than just managing them. The difference is about caring for, and nurturing, place and people. Being environmentally sustainable in business and destination practice is important not only for the community, but also increasingly important to visitors.

Indigenous ownership

Ensuring recognition of stories, land custodianship and Indigenous ownership of Indigenous tourism product and experiences is central to achieving long term sustainability as a community and a destination. Inviting Indigenous representation on boards of management and decision making is a key part of this process.

Market alignment

Understanding the people who could be motivated to visit the destination – who they are, what gets them excited, what they are looking for in life and their travels – helps develop successful tourism experiences. Identifying the gaps between what people are seeking and what is on offer in the region can provide investment opportunities and create points of difference.

Attracting investment

Working with regional and state agencies to attract investment into the tourism industry can provide opportunities to develop public and private infrastructure, products and experiences. If well designed, public infrastructure such as tracks and trails, major built infrastructure and experiences can encourage private investment in new products. Investment prospectuses can also be developed with the support of a business concierge service to assist potential investors in navigating complex approval and planning processes



Tourism in Benalla

Regional context

Benalla is on Taungurung, Bpangerang and Yorta Yorta Country. It is one of 7 LGAs and 4 Alpine resorts within the Tourism North East region, known as Victoria's High Country. Benalla is a strategic location in the region for several reasons:

- Located just off the Hume Freeway where most of the traffic heading between Melbourne, NSW and Queensland travel.
- At the midpoint between Melbourne and the Victorian Alpine area.
- Central to attractions in the region, within easy reach of the Murray, Rutherglen, Shepparton, Wangaratta, and the rest of Victoria's High Country.

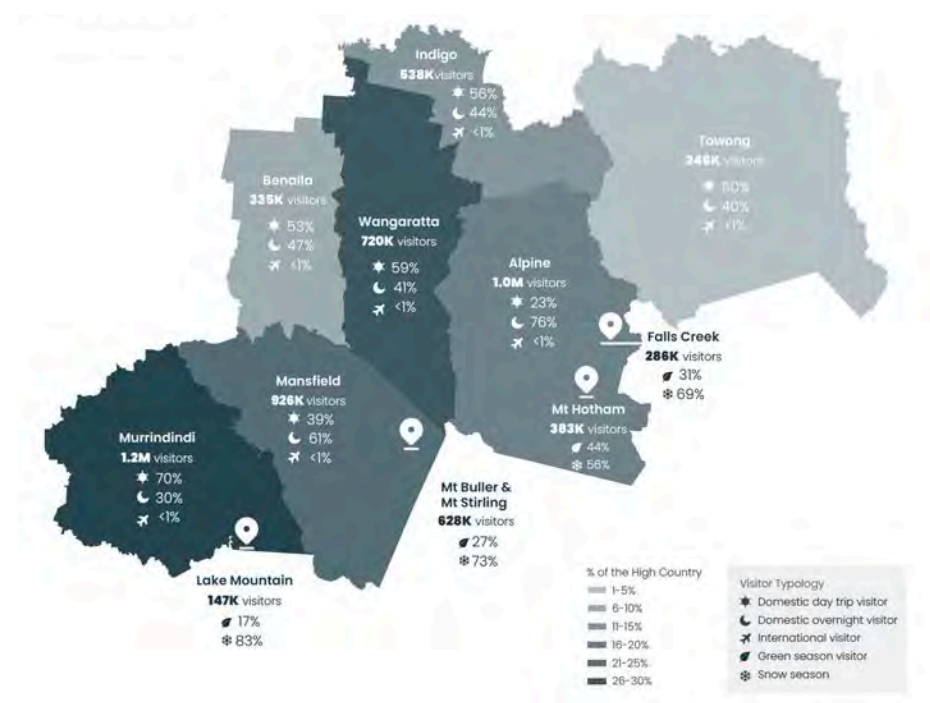
Benalla has significant opportunity to grow its tourism market share. In 2022, Victoria's High Country welcomed 5 million visitors, with approximately 2.5 million of these being overnight. In 2023, Benalla attracted around 335,000 visitors, of whom 160,000 stayed 379,000 nights. Spending an estimated \$131 per night and \$100 per day trip, this equates to an estimated annual tourism spend of \$71 million in Benalla each year.² Figure 1 shows the distribution of visitors across the region.

The size of the visitor market is projected to grow in Victoria over the life of this plan. Tourism Research Australia projects a growth in tourism spend in the state of 32 per cent to 2028, with projected increases of 67 per cent for domestic daytrip visitors and 29 per cent for domestic overnight visitors across the state.³ If tourism in Benalla can increase at these rates, this will equate to an increase to nearly 570,000 visitors per year, spending an estimated \$1.16 billion.⁴

This plan aims to ensure investment in tourism is targeted and effective in maximising this potential value. Tourism in Benalla is guided by the vision and values of Benalla Rural City Council. It also supports, and is supported by, the plans and brands of Victoria's High Country and Visit Victoria. Benalla's tourism offerings are

aligned with these, and as such, there is significant opportunity to leverage the work being done at regional and state level to increase the number of people and the value of visit to the region.

Figure 1. Share of visitors in Victoria's High Country Region⁵



² Tourism Research Australia Local Government Area Profiles – Benalla 2023

³ Tourism Research Australia - Victoria's Tourism Forecasts 2023-2028

⁴ Note figures are estimated based on 2023 domestic overnight and 2019 daytrip figures as more recent figures are not available.

⁵ Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2023 - 2033

Our distinctiveness

While there are many facets to the Benalla experience, the region's strengths are firmly based in arts, culture and heritage. This is cleverly positioned, as it is an area that is not otherwise 'owned' within the High Country region but is deeply aligned with the broader Victorian brand.

Benalla's brand "See the art in everything" is well substantiated through the region's product offering with longstanding investments in arts, culture and heritage. This brand underpins the other product offerings in the region, adding a richness and depth to the overall regional experience.

This investment also makes economic sense. Arts and culture visitors have been shown to spend significantly more in regions they visit than other types of visitor, so there is a clear imperative to further consolidate and invest in this well-considered brand.

Tourism experiences are best when they are multi-layered, and that is what arts, culture and heritage can do best. Adding depth to experiences such as cycling or walking trails with stories of the past, art installations and cultural interpretation can elevate them from being 'just another trail' to something extraordinary. This can be as much the case for motorsports, golf or team sports. Overlaying stories, arts and culture, adds dimension and distinctiveness to experiences that could be otherwise had in other parts of the state, or country.

Benalla's core experiences span three areas of art, culture and heritage, nature and outdoors, and sport. A full analysis of Benalla's tourism product is in the Destination Assessment.

BENALLA
See the art in everything





Art, culture and heritage

Art, culture and heritage are at the heart of Benalla's experience offering, playing a strong role in the profile of the community and in attracting visitors. Arts and culture are locally recognised as being an important economic driver in the region, and the Benalla Art Gallery is renowned as one of Australia's best and most striking regional galleries. This is supported by street art installations and the Benalla Street Art Festival, silo and water tank art and installations in the Winton Wetlands.

Main products and experiences:

- Benalla Art Gallery
- Home to the Benalla Street Art Festival
- North East Victoria Silo Art trail
- Lotjpatj Natjan Danak Sculpture Walk
- Benalla Aviation Museum
- Ned Kelly history, including the Benalla Costume and Kelly Museum
- Benalla Heritage Festival
- Benalla Migrant Camp
- Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Memorial
- Heart of Art Benalla
- Taunguarung, Yorta Yorta and Bpangerang stories and Aboriginal Community Garden
- Siva Singh Memorial.



Nature and outdoors

Benalla has a beautiful rural and urban landscape, and there are a number of opportunities to enjoy it. The Botanical Gardens, known for its rose garden, along with the Winton Wetlands and trails throughout the region offer visitors the choice of walking, riding or drive touring.

Main products and experiences:

- Benalla Botanic Gardens and Roses
- Winton Wetlands: Citizen science, birdlife, visitor centre, art and stargazing
- Cycling: Road riding – local roads, wetlands, lake
- Mountain Biking - Mount Samaria State Park and Reef Hills State Park
- Aboriginal Community Garden
- Walking tracks - Lake Benalla 4.25km and nearby State Parks and Reserves, Warby and Strathbogie Ranges.
- Rural towns and landscapes: Baddaginie, Devenish, Goorambat, Swanpool, Tatong, Thoona and Winton
- Lake Nillahcootie – fishing, boating and swimming.



Sport

Victoria is a sporting state, and many people travel extensively for sporting competitions and events. Benalla is well set up to receive golfing, bowls, football, horse racing, indoor sports such as basketball, and also hosts Australia's largest gliding club, which attracts visitors from around the world.

The jewel in the sporting crown for Benalla is the Winton Motor Raceway. Described as Australia's action track, the Raceway attracts around 100,000 visitors per year who generally stay overnight in the region, many camping. Although motor racing is not a pillar of the regional or state tourism strategies, it does attract more people than any other attraction in the region, is actively growing, with plans to expand if funding is secured.

Main products and experiences:

- Winton Motor Raceway – venue hire and corporate events, camping
- Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre
- Benalla Golf Club
- Benalla Bowls Club
- Goldrush Hot Air Ballooning
- Victorian Ballooning Federation
- Benalla Gliding Club.

Our visitors

Benalla mostly attracts domestic day and overnight visitors from Melbourne and neighbouring regions.

Regional Victoria has the benefit of a growing and thriving source market in metropolitan Melbourne, as well as several growing regional centres nearby. Visitors from the High Country and neighbouring regions currently spend more than those from Melbourne, identifying an opportunity to better engage this high value market.⁶

Benalla enjoys direct connectivity with Melbourne not only through the Hume Freeway, but also through the Express Passenger Train (XPT) and VLine rail services, and light aircraft to Benalla airport, both within walking distance to the centre of town. Benalla is also at about the halfway point between Melbourne and the alpine resorts of Hotham and Falls Creek, and is on a main route for caravanners and others travelling north on long trips.

With this level of connectivity, Benalla has the opportunity to engage with a high number of visitors, many of whom are already predisposed to the product and experiences on offer.

High Country target markets

Victoria's High Country visitors fall into two primarily self-drive markets:⁷

Lifestyle Leaders are progressive, educated and professional individuals who actively seek out new experiences. They enjoy an active social life and have extensive social networks in which they are viewed as trusted advisors and influencers. They are higher in affluence and discretionary expenditure than the average Australian, so travel frequently and spend more when travelling. They account for 40 per cent of the market.

The Habituals are travellers who come to the High Country each year (sometimes many times a year) and tend to return to a consistent location and often travel with the same group. They are heavily influenced by the recommendations of friends and family members, prioritise value for money, and are often motivated by familiarity with a destination. They account for 28 per cent of the market.

Victoria's High Country focuses on Lifestyle Leaders because of their propensity to travel, experience new things and consider multiple destinations when they travel. This means there is a strong ability to influence them with focused and motivating marketing communication and effective product development.

The Lifestyle Leader market is also a focus for Visit Victoria and strongly aligns to Tourism Australia's High Value Traveler (HVT) audience. As such, Victoria's High Country is well placed to collaborate with both Visit Victoria and Tourism Australia on statewide and national demand driving tourism strategies.

Benalla target markets

As part of the High Country region, Benalla stands to gain from the targeted marketing and market development activities being undertaken through the visitor economy partnership.

The Lifestyle Leaders clearly align with Benalla's product - in particular, they like to stay active, and the majority likes to experience local culture and nature. They plan for their own trips and are less likely to prefer their trips organised for them.

Within and outside of the Lifestyle Leaders, there are four potential sub-markets that could specifically be drawn to Benalla. These sub-markets present significant opportunities to Benalla to target with key marketing messages, product and experience development and visitor services. These are listed on the following page.

⁶ CommIQ credit card insight data – Benalla Jan – Oct 2023.

⁷ Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2023 - 2033



PASSING TRAFFIC

Passing Traffic drive to the High Country, ski fields, or Murray Region for a week or weekend holiday from Melbourne. These could be couples or families looking to break their journey with a stop, something to eat, a look in a special shop and a walk around/play. If this market can be engaged to stop for a great experience, they may stay longer and spend more, or think about returning as a weekend chaser. This market are the window shoppers who could be converted to customers.

Potential: With Alpine Resorts Victoria reporting over 800,000 visitors to their resorts in 2023,⁸ and 5 million visitors annually to Victoria's High Country, there is a significant opportunity to connect with this market as they make the journey to the region.



BIG TRIPPERS

Big Trippers look to travel slowly and experience the 'real' Australia. Interested in spending two or three days enjoying heritage, easy nature based experiences and cultural attractions. There are many competitors for the Big Trippers, because they are not afraid to go off the beaten track, and they love to find hidden gems. They also like to enjoy free activities and a reasonably priced coffee, but will spend for the right experiences, and can support services and retail in the towns.

Potential: With more than 800,000 registered RVs, caravans and campervans in Australia embarking on 15.5 million trips over 62.3 million nights per year, there is significant scope for Benalla to connect with more of this market.⁹



WEEKEND CHASERS

Weekend Chasers seek some inspiration and new experiences that enrich their view on the world, connect them to a new place and provide them with good food and drink. The Weekend Chasers are hotly contested in Victoria. While Melbourne receives many Weekend Chasers from the regions, the regions also receive them from Melbourne and other regions.

Potential: More than 40 per cent of Victorians as planning to take a road trip within Australia in the next six months, and more than 83 per cent of those intend to take the trip within Victoria.



GROUPS AND NICHE

Groups and Niche travel for conference, sports or education either to Benalla or nearby, looking for opportunities to learn, share experiences, train, or engage in team building. This market is diverse, with travel often initiated to attend events such as sporting meets, conferences or cultural events. Groups and Niche may also travel in commercially or privately organised tour trips, including for schools, friend groups or university field trips.

Potential: There is inconsistent and outdated research available on the potential of this market. In 2019, Sports Events were estimated to bring 1.5 million visitors and 2.5 million visitor nights to Regional Victoria,¹⁰ indicating that in sport alone, there is market opportunity to attract group travel. Business events and education, as well as private niche tour groups also have potential for the region.

⁸ Alpine Resorts Victoria Visitation Statistics Winter 2023 End of Season Report

⁹ Caravan Industry Association of Australia 30 June 2023

¹⁰ Event Visitors to Victoria – Sporting Events, Cultural Events and Festivals. August 2019.

A large mural of a woman's face with mechanical details, set against a background of a park and a lake. The mural features a woman with brown hair, blue eyes, and a pink mouth, surrounded by blue and orange mechanical components. The background shows a green lawn, a body of water, and a bridge under a blue sky with clouds.

Opportunities

PAINTING CREDIT: Sofles

Starting point

The Benalla Region is starting from a solid asset base on which to build a flourishing tourism industry. Ongoing investment in infrastructure such as the Benalla Art Gallery, Winton Wetlands Precinct, Silo Art, Benalla Street Art Festival, Winton Motor Raceway, tracks and trails, airport and the Benalla brand, provides many opportunities for visitors to engage in the region, however there are some intrinsic weaknesses that need to be accounted for, and if possible, addressed.

Maximising strengths and managing weaknesses is critical to ensuring the robust development of the visitor economy. Listed below are some of Benalla's key tourism strengths and weaknesses for consideration within this plan.

Tourism strengths

- **Strong existing arts, culture and heritage assets** - including Benalla Art Gallery as one of the best regional art galleries in Victoria, the established and successful Benalla Street Art Festival, Benalla Migrant Camp, Ned Kelly's Sash, and the Aboriginal Community Garden.
- **Winton Wetlands** - assets including the Mokoan Hub, sculpture and art trails, Lotjpatj Natjan Danak sculpture walk, stargazing, Mokoan Discovery Trail connecting to Benalla, walking tracks.
- **Winton Motor Raceway** - regular events and drive school. Plans for expansion into larger events and festivals, potential hosting of V8 Supercars, motorsport museum and convention centre.
- **Aviation Precinct** - within close proximity of town, with existing assets including the migrant camp, ballooning & gliding (seasonal), flying, and aviation museum.
- **Local produce** – as part of the food bowl of Victoria, there is plenty of nearby local produce to tap in to, including beverages.
- **Beautiful natural, rural and urban landscapes** – changing year-round.
- **Infrastructure and visitor servicing** – new VIC, tracks and trails network.

- **Growing and strengthening economy** outside of tourism.
- **Gateway** and/or connector to the wider region.
- **Connectivity** to road, rail and flying.
- **Strong and relevant brand** that is versatile and able to be rolled out across products and experiences in the region.
- **Weather** – mild climate with sunny days and good flying conditions.

Tourism weaknesses

- **Food, beverage and dining** opportunities for visitors – particularly in the evenings.
- **Quality accommodation** at a range of levels and price points.
- **Signage, wayfinding and visitor servicing** – no indication of the arts presence from the highway, lack of wayfinding for cycling and walking trails.
- **Connection within the industry** – operators understanding where they 'fit' into tourism.
- **Bookable tourism product** – very little paid tourism product in the area, most attractions are free and provided by Council.
- **Brand infrastructure** - Whilst the "See the art in everything" brand is well positioned, there is currently a lack of infrastructure behind it that can be used by operators to get on board with the brand.
- **Marketing resources and infrastructure** – A lack of resource dedicated to strategic marketing for Benalla to maximise marketing impact.
- **Retail options** – limited unique retail options within the Bridge Street East Precinct.

Realising our potential

There is room for Benalla to better maximise its assets for the benefit and growth of the visitor economy. While the region's natural and cultural assets, leisure and lifestyle options make it one of Victoria's most liveable regions, these are yet to be harnessed to their full potential for tourism and economic benefit. Underpinning this is the need to generate and stimulate investment and private enterprise that meets the needs of visitors and builds a vibrant visitor economy.

Opportunities and challenges often go hand in hand in the development of a thriving industry and region. Understanding what is holding the region back and exploring the opportunities to address them helps target investment and resources. The following opportunities and challenges have been identified for the region for the life of this plan.

THEME	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
INVESTMENT		
Public investment	Limited financial capacity of Council to deliver services and the major projects needed to elevate the visitor economy.	Advocate to state and federal government for investment in projects that will generate growth in the visitor economy and leverage private investment. Create a government funding prospectus with priority projects for the region.
Private investment	Lack of private investment in products, services and experiences that support the visitor economy.	Enterprise investment prospectuses, communicating a 'red carpet, not red tape' approach with business concierge and planning assistance for key areas that require development, such as food and beverage, accommodation, experiences (eg. bike and e-bike hire, tours), brand aligned experiences.
CONNECTING WITH THE MARKET		
Marketing strategy	Lack of resource and direction in connecting with the market. Lack of voice in TNE means little marketing is undertaken for the Benalla region.	Develop a simple, clear and prioritised tourism marketing strategy that leverages small investment to maximum impact – such as engaging strategically with influencers, media, famils, advocacy and programs with TNE and Visit Victoria. Work to develop a product proposition to experience Benalla such as a ride/rail/art weekend experience, and package as a core offering.
Online presence	Duplication and lack of coordination across websites and socials for Benalla.	Negotiate the rationalisation of VisitBenalla.com.au to support Enjoybenalla.com.au, align with brand and build consistent message.

THEME	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
		<p>Ensure seamless connection with social media and harness the power of influencers to organically build audience, especially through events.</p> <p>Further develop the events calendar on EnjoyBenalla.com.au with regular social posts and updates, as well as profiles on operators and products coming online.</p>
Freeway signage	No signage indicating what Benalla has to offer on the Hume Freeway. No indication of the creative credentials in the region to draw interest or visitation.	<p>Significant through traffic passing the region on the Hume Freeway.</p> <p>Harness Benalla's art credentials to build a highway installation (potentially as part of the Benalla Street Art Festival) to draw people in to Benalla and show what it has to offer.</p> <p>Brand aligned signage on the Freeway to indicate the brand and start the journey of brand recognition.</p>
Directional signage	<p>Lack of directional signage for visitors around the city – in vehicles and walking.</p> <p>Lack of interpretive signage around the city.</p>	<p>Extend the connective brand aligned signage from the Hume Freeway into the town and into key experience areas. Develop a storytelling theme to support the Benalla brand to connect the attractions together.</p> <p>Signage audit and strategy to develop coordinated visitor experience and engage more people from the Hume Freeway and into major attractions.</p>
MAJOR ATTRACTION DEVELOPMENT		
Benalla Art Gallery	<p>Lack of secure funding for the Benalla Art Gallery ongoing. Staff occupied with seeking and building funding streams rather than product and opportunity development.</p> <p>Lack of reliable and up to date climate control system means an inability to attract blockbuster exhibitions.</p>	<p>Inclusion in priority project advocacy document seeking funding for Benalla Art Gallery redevelopment full funding and climate control system update so it can attract blockbuster touring exhibitions.</p> <p>Exploration of events and marketing opportunities around blockbuster exhibitions to build reputation of the Gallery and collection. Collaborate with others such as quality local food and beverage producers or Indigenous storytellers to provide full cultural experience.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to build on existing relationships with peer regional galleries in the expanded region (such as SAM, Wangaratta Art Gallery, HYPHEN Wodonga, and MAMA Albury) to collaborate, cross promote, possibly present an expanded event across all galleries, and generate more 'cultural road trip' visitors to hop from one to the other. Art galleries can also be creative in their delivery – like having pop up installations in unexpected places, offering wine and art, growing masterpiece collections and offering online shops for creative pieces.</p>
Aviation Precinct	Uncoordinated and poorly signed access to the precinct, lack of space for the Migrant	Inclusion in priority project advocacy document seeking funding for masterplan to maximise the value from these significant assets for community and visitor experience. Important to maximise the opportunity from

THEME	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
	<p>Camp to develop, need for infrastructure to meet the needs of all users.</p> <p>Conflict between users with a lack of strategic management of the precinct.</p> <p>Lack of clarity on where and how visitors can connect with the experiences available in the precinct, and little visible signage that connects to the overall Benalla story.</p>	<p>the Migrant Camp, Aviation Museum, Gliding Club of Victoria, Airport and Ballooning, as well as access from the town.</p> <p>The Benalla Migrant Camp and Aviation Museum in particular present significant opportunities to attract people seeking to connect with WWII history and their personal heritage. These need significant investment and resourcing to be able to develop and as such any plans need to include revenue streams such as ticket sales, experiences and café/dining options.</p> <p>Extend the town's creative credentials and connected storytelling into the precinct through murals, installations and signage.</p>
Winton Motor Raceway	Lack of funding for further development.	<p>Further engaging with the existing market attending the raceway through collaborations with local providers and accommodation packages.</p> <p>Inclusion in priority project advocacy document seeking funding for the current proposal for the motor racing museum, corporate function centre, expanding outdoor events and camping facilities, and more.</p> <p>Engage in the arts scene through participation in the Street Art Festival and other connections.</p>
Winton Wetlands	Wayfinding and signage is high quality but unclear for navigation for new visitors. No clear pathway of connectivity to Benalla.	Masterplan that maps and builds the visitor experience right to the heart of Benalla rather than being a finite experience. Improve signage and wayfinding to encourage more engagement from visitors, with storytelling and connective pathways with water stations and stops from Benalla.
Bpangerang, Yorta Yorta and Taungurung operated tours	No Indigenous product offering in the region.	Mount Buffalo is one of the Taungurung Peoples' important story places, as are places around Benalla, where there is an old greenstone axe quarry. Exploring opportunities for Taungurung, Yorta Yorta and Bpangerang-operated tours, cultural events and knowledge seminars which promote and interpret natural and cultural features of Country.
Town centre	Declining retail area with limited opening hours. Limited on street dining options. Limited active transport options.	Focused planning to encourage centres of activity in Benalla and main villages, connected where possible by all ability and active transport. Cityscape landscape and maintenance, and provision of strategic outdoor dining areas/food truck parking areas. .
Fawckner Drive and Commercial Hotel precinct development	Commercial Hotel is disused and vacant in the middle of town. Fawckner Drive is a low traffic area that could be made available for other uses.	Fawckner Drive and the Commercial Hotel precinct present a major event delivery opportunity for the centre of Benalla. Pedestrianising Fawckner drive and developing event infrastructure adjacent to the Commercial Hotel with a view to either purchasing the hotel or facilitating investment in its development will provide a well-designed space for events to be held year-round.

THEME	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
		The Commercial Hotel is a major asset in the centre of Benalla. It could be developed to facilitate a number of small operators providing a range of eating/drinking/brewing/distilling products, with set opening hours as part of the rental conditions. This could double as a small tourism and food/drink business incubator.
Events	Staffing and resourcing to attract and develop new events in the region. Limited fit for purpose event spaces.	<p>Benalla Street Art Festival is a major asset that can continue to be capitalised on, especially if event infrastructure is developed. Consider supporting events leading up to and after the main event such as street art workshops, creative kids weekends/weeks (in holidays), local Indigenous art exhibitions, car art (to align with the Winton Motor Raceway), rural landscape art prizes, and others that align with the existing product and brand. As these evolve, they may become splinter events that can be held at different times to spread the value across the year.</p> <p>Developing an events space and providing planning assistance and council resourcing could open up new opportunities for events in the centre of Benalla and at the Winton Motor Raceway, including music and cultural festivals.</p> <p>The Rose Garden and Benalla's historical Rose City status could be the basis of the development of a 'Rose Floriade' type of event in Benalla.</p> <p>Identifying niche and business events that align with the pillars of arts and culture, nature and outdoors and sports, and are the right size for the available accommodation and facilities can open up new event markets.</p>
Sport	Need for further investment in current facilities. Lack of appropriate supporting accommodation.	<p>Inclusion in priority project advocacy document seeking funding for planned \$15m indoor sports centre redevelopment, which presents the opportunity to attract sporting camps, training and competitions. Work to attract accommodation offering that will support this development.</p> <p>Gliding and hot air ballooning are significant opportunities for Benalla to develop, with potential for packaging experiences designed for the high end market. A state of the art mini golf development at the Benalla Golf Course can add to the suite of attractions and activities in the region.</p>

VISITOR SERVICING		
Food and beverage	Not enough Sunday and night time dining options for visitors, not enough aligned to what the travelling market is seeking.	<p>Build on the proximity and connection to primary producers, including vineyards and local bakers to build a strong food and beverage culture. Work to develop local markets and meet the maker experiences.</p> <p>Develop a needs assessment for food and beverage, with identified opportunities for develop. Provide access to data for potential investors, and develop an investment prospectus.</p> <p>Develop pop-up initiatives with local charity groups for fundraising at strategic times to attract passing traffic – such as Friday afternoon woodfired pizzas delivered by the local Rotary club and advertise directly to traffic passing to go skiing in winter, or to coincide with major Winton Motor Raceway or other events.</p>
Opening hours	Limited options for visitors on weekends/public holidays and in the evenings.	Attract visitors through activations, popups and events to engender confidence in existing businesses to open longer or more visitor-friendly hours. Through the tourism association, build business cases and educating operators on the benefits of hours that suit visitors.
Connectivity and accessibility	<p>Limited riding and walking connectivity throughout the town, including wayfinding, signage and interpretation.</p> <p>East-West public bus offers services throughout Benalla, although limited at night and with limited information available for visitors on how to engage with the service.</p> <p>No Uber service or Uber Eats, and taxi services are limited, acknowledging the existing taxi providers are important.</p> <p>Only one EV charging station, not always reliable.</p>	<p>Develop path and track networks to connect the region with bike paths from the centre to key points of interest – including the Winton Wetlands and Silo Art. Integrate coordinated signage with interpretation and a storytelling theme throughout the network for legibility.</p> <p>Build out a rail/ride/art/eat product for people to have a full experience from Melbourne where they can catch the train and hire an e-bike to visit key areas of interest. Fully packaged, could also include accommodation. Attract investment in/development of e-bike, e-scooter and bike hire business.</p> <p>Enhance the visibility and accessibility of bus and taxi services to improve the visitor experience in Benalla.</p> <p>Capitalise on the significant accessible tourism market by building out accessibility in all new products and feature it in marketing.</p> <p>Work to attract an EV supercharging station. Work with Winton Motor Raceway to develop EV racing events to build out EV and sustainability credentials.</p>
Accommodation	Limited range of accommodation in the region, specifically a 4.5 star accommodation to support workers and raceway participants, and glamping/cabin/tiny home options that are aligned with what the market is seeking.	<p>Negotiate to attract a 4.5 star hotel, such as Quest or Mantra to Benalla. Work to provide a business case and planning advice to engender confidence in the investment.</p> <p>Develop an investment prospectus to attract investment in unique accommodation in the region.</p> <p>Facilitate opportunities for collaboration of existing accommodation and experiences to be packaged in rail/ride or weekend getaway packages. Champion these and market them.</p>

Visitor Information Centre (VIC)	New building needing to create more compelling reasons for visitors to engage.	<p>Attract a food and beverage tenant to the new VIC with strict guidelines on opening hours, food quality and fit out that aligns with market preferences (such as local produce, daily specials, fresh options, Sunday and holiday hours). Offer marketing support to ensure business success, including collaborating with film screenings and events.</p> <p>As tours or bike/e-bike/scooter hire are developed for the area, work to establish the VIC as a central booking area and hub for visitor activity. Ensure that during the Benalla Street Art Festival and other events, the VIC has a key role to play in the events through acting as a hub or event space.</p> <p>Partner with the Benalla Art Gallery, Benalla Migrant Camp and local Indigenous groups to build the arts and culture credentials of the VIC. This could potentially be done through expanding local art collections, displaying some artworks and/or extending the local art shop from the gallery into the VIC.</p> <p>Consider inviting in local pop-up stalls into the VIC to expand the local creative offering.</p> <p>Maximise new theatre space through special screenings and film festivals, potentially creating a new film festival for gliding and ballooning, or something similar.</p>
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT		
Tourism association	No tourism association or chamber of commerce.	<p>Develop and facilitate a local tourism industry association with regular industry catchups, including guest speakers from the RTO and state government, providing insight and information on the Benalla and High Country brand, the nature of visitors, trends, and opportunities, as well as showcasing new and developing product in the region.</p> <p>Through the association, build out partnerships within and across the regions for marketing and packaging.</p>
Brand toolkit	Limited use of the Benalla “See the art in everything” brand across the region.	Harness the power of the Benalla brand by ensuring it is fully rolled out across the region through developing a simple brand use toolkit and guideline. Continually educate and communicate on the brand through the tourism association.
Workforce	Limited availability of hospitality and tourism workforce and accommodation to support them.	Facilitate innovative education and training for workers to gain qualifications in hospitality and tourism management could attract workforce or retain young people. Work with broader programs across Victoria being rolled out to address housing shortages.

Product development opportunities

Core to realising Benalla's potential is the stimulation of market interest and opportunities for the market to actively commercially participate in tourism. While visitors enjoy the benefits of free experiences such as trails and public art, they also enjoy spending money on experiences that matter to them.

There is a growing appetite for experiences that are unique – first of, best of, only of. Understanding where Benalla's distinctiveness lies within the region, the state and the world – what is special about the experiences and then building product around it – is central to connecting with and attracting both investment and visitors.

Sometimes the stimulation of investment and innovation requires inspiration. While the opportunities identified above can build a solid visitor economy that enables entrepreneurial investment, attracting that investment requires work.

Throughout the consultation and research process, several tourism product development opportunities arose for Benalla. Although there are a lot of attractions in Benalla Rural City, the lack of bookable or commercial product in places a burden on the local government and makes it harder to attract further private investment. The following products were some of the major opportunities identified through this process:

Benalla Art Gallery redevelopment. A key major attractor of high value visitors for the region, need to fully fund the redevelopment, as well as ongoing management, maintenance and marketing.

Commercial Hotel redevelopment. At the heart of the town and a major element of the urban landscape, this hotel offering lunches and dinners that are locally

connected and aligned to the market's preferences, could present a major opportunity for the city.

Winton Motorsport Museum and Events Precinct. Already housing many vehicles at the Winton Motor Raceway, the Motorsport Museum would offer a further attraction in the region, supplemented by the planned events space and major outdoor event facility.

Brewery/distillery development. Although there are many of these, offering locally brewed or distilled product to be sold at a venue in the city would meet market needs. This could be developed in partnership with the local brewery and wineries open in the Glenrowan region.

Benalla Migrant Camp. As such a significant historical site, the Benalla Migrant Camp needs to be developed as a product and also form an integrated part of the broader aviation precinct.

Winton Wetlands. Building on what is already a major attraction, develop the Winton Wetlands with track and trail infrastructure and interpretation. Examine potential for standing camps or other unique accommodation opportunities.

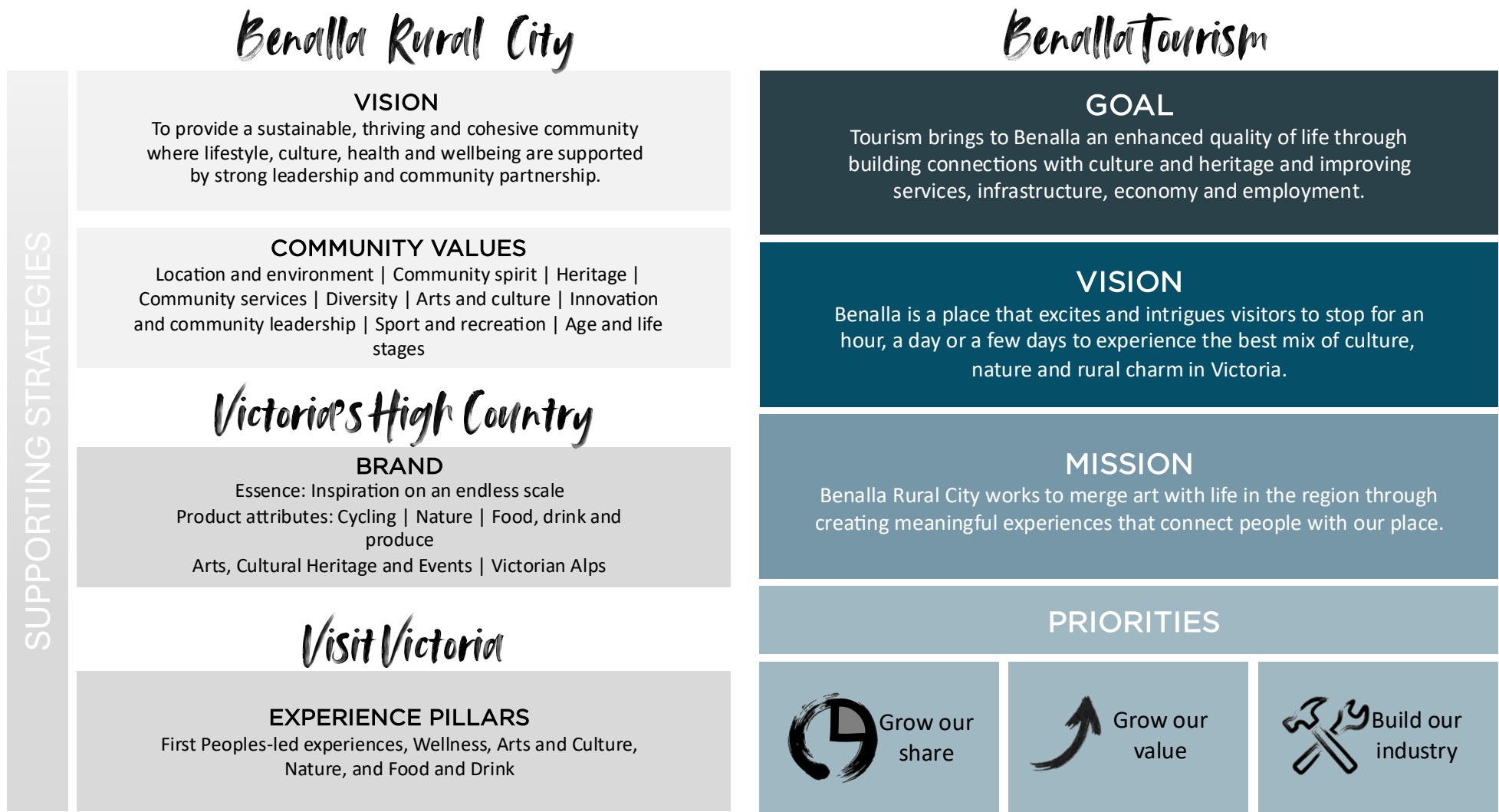
Bike and e-bike hire. Supporting the development of track and trail infrastructure, a bike and e-bike hire business could activate these and the businesses around them, such as cafes and museums.

Creative hub. Leverage the theme of a Creative City – or to aspire to be a UNESCO Creative City. Becoming a UNESCO Creative City like Ballarat means that the city places creativity and cultural industries at the heart of its development plan at the local level. This would also promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.

Yorta Yorta, Taungurung & Bpangerang Tours. Surrounded by important places on Country, there are many opportunities to develop storytelling experiences.

A photograph of a long, straight dirt road stretching into the distance. The road is flanked by numerous dead, bleached trees with intricate, skeletal branches. The ground is covered in dry, scrubby vegetation. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue. The word "Strategy" is written in a large, white, cursive script across the lower half of the image, centered over the road.

Strategy



Strategic priorities

Successful tourism growth can play a leading role in contributing to the Rural City's objectives of being a sustainable, thriving and cohesive community. This plan has identified many opportunities to develop tourism in Benalla, but ensuring that resources and efforts are efficiently and effectively deployed is critical.

The **goal** of the priorities in this plan is that:

Tourism brings to Benalla an enhanced quality of life through building connections with culture and heritage and improving services, infrastructure, economy and employment.

The **vision** we are seeking to achieve is that:

Benalla is a place that excites and intrigues visitors to stop for an hour, a day or a few days to experience the best mix of culture, nature and rural charm in Victoria.

And the **mission** for Benalla Rural City is:

Benalla Rural City works to merge art with life in the region through creating meaningful experiences that connect people with our place.

To achieve these, this plan has identified three main strategic priorities to develop tourism in Benalla: Grow our share, grow our value and build our industry. The following describes the key actions and metrics in delivering these.





Grow our share

The 5 million visitors travelling to Victoria's High Country each year are within striking distance for Benalla's tourism industry to grow. The Benalla region currently attracts less than 7 per cent of these visitors. Additionally, many more are passing by on the Hume Freeway with no plans to stop.

Many of these potential visitors are unaware of the depth of experiences available in the Benalla region. To be able to attract them, Benalla needs to ensure that these potential visitors are aware of the experiences available, and that the experiences are compelling enough to draw them in. Some will only want to stay for an hour, some for a day or more, but none will stay if they don't first know about what is on offer.

Aim: Getting people in the door.

Metric: Increasing the number of visitors coming to Benalla.

Actions: Growing Benalla's share of the visitors to the region can be done through:

- Developing a strategic marketing strategy
- Improving signage from the Hume
- Improving online presence
- Partnering with operators who service the region.



Grow our value

Currently Benalla attracts an average overnight spend of \$131 per night and \$100 per day trip, compared with \$264 per night and \$154 per day trip in Victoria's High Country region. This indicates a major opportunity for the Benalla region to grow the value of the visitor economy through increasing spend.

Getting visitors in the door is just the first step in building value for the visitor economy. Once visitors arrive, Benalla needs to capture them with compelling experiences with stories that connect them to the place and specifically the art. Essential to this is the availability of quality local food and beverages, and accommodation that is not just a hotel room but an experience they aspire to.

Aim: Getting people to stay longer and spend more once they arrive.

Metrics: Increasing the visitor dwell time and spend in Benalla.

Actions: Providing opportunities to spend through product and experiences by:

- Improving signage within town for all experiences
- Improving the quality of experiences
- Improving the number of experiences
- Improving visitor servicing, including food and beverage and retail offerings
- Increasing length of stay by increasing the quality and range of accommodation options.



Build our industry

Attracting and retaining visitors is a team sport, and team building in Benalla's tourism industry is critical. With no tourism association or chamber of commerce, the businesses operating within Benalla's visitor economy have little advocacy, access to insights, or platform to develop a strategic approach to tourism.

Not everyone is aware that they are operating within the visitor economy. Establishing and building a tourism industry association will require an initial resource and commitment from council, but with a core objective of ultimately achieving a standalone association in years to come.

Aim: Building and equipping the tourism industry to collaborate, develop and strategically plan to grow and build value from the visitor economy.

Metric: Increasing the number of paid tourism products and experiences in the Benalla region.

Actions: Building and supporting the industry through:

- Attracting public and private investment
- Delivering and maintaining infrastructure
- Creating a tourism association
- Developing resources to support the industry, including access to visitor insights, strategic planning and collaboration workshops, brand toolkit, regular events and newsletters.

A photograph of two hot air balloons at dusk. The balloon on the left is illuminated from within, showing a pattern of yellow, orange, and red panels. The balloon on the right is dark blue and purple. Both have their burners lit, creating a bright glow. The text 'Action Plan' is written in a large, white, cursive font across the center of the image. In the background, a crowd of people and some buildings are visible under a twilight sky.


Action Plan



Prioritised action plan

The limited human and financial resources of Benalla Rural City requires a strategic approach to be able to achieve the goals and priorities of this plan. Within each of the strategic priorities there are key actions that can deliver immediate outcomes, and others that require longer term commitment.

1. What we can do now



The below table identifies key actions from the opportunities identified that can be delivered **in the short term**.


STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTION	DETAILS
 Build our industry	1.1. Develop and deliver a Priority Projects Prospectus to attract government funding	<p>Create a government funding prospectus with priority projects for the region that is supported and endorsed by key visitor economy partners, such as Tourism North East. This needs to be collaboratively developed across business and operators in the region and stretches well beyond the visitor economy. Ownership of this document across industry and partners is critical.</p> <p>Key inclusions in the priority projects should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benalla Art Gallery redevelopment full funding and climate control system update so it can attract major touring exhibitions - Aviation Precinct Masterplan including Benalla Migrant Camp - Winton Motor Raceway proposal for the motor racing museum, corporate function centre, expanding outdoor events and camping facilities, etc. - Winton Wetlands next stage of master planning, including riding/walking connectivity - CBD precinct development - Planned \$15m indoor sports redevelopment, which presents the opportunity to attract sporting camps, training and competitions.
	1.2. Develop and deliver private investment prospectuses for targeted areas of development	<p>Create a series of simple enterprise investment prospectuses, communicating a red carpet, not red tape approach with business concierge and planning assistance for key areas that require development, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food and beverage, specifically a brew pub/distillery experience in Benalla open during the evenings, pop-up food vans and/or trucks, dining experiences with connections to local produce.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTION	DETAILS
 Grow our share  Grow our value		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accommodation, specifically 4.5 star and unique accommodation including glamping/cabin/tiny home options, destination caravan park. - Tours and experiences, specifically bike and e-bike hire, tours, indigenous storytelling and experiences. <p>Work with clubs and operators to develop an understanding of the needs of special interest and sports visitors, such as Motor Raceway participants, golf visitors, gliding club, racing club and others to inform the investment prospectuses.</p>
	1.3. Establish a tourism association	Develop and facilitate a local tourism industry association with regular industry catchups, including guest speakers from the RTO and state government, providing insight and information on the Benalla and High Country brand, the nature of visitors, trends, and opportunities, as well as showcasing new and developing product in the region. Establish a governance framework as an incorporated association with a board consisting of local operators, council representatives and Tourism North East representative as a start. This could be part of the Benalla Business Network.
	1.4. Write a simple, actionable tourism marketing strategy	Develop a simple, clear and prioritised tourism marketing strategy that leverages small investment to maximum impact – such as engaging strategically with influencers, media, famils, advocacy and programs with Tourism North East and Visit Victoria.
	1.5. Build Hume Freeway presence	Harness Benalla's art credentials to build a highway installation (potentially as part of the Benalla Street Art Festival) to draw people in to Benalla and show what it has to offer. Brand aligned signage on the Hume Freeway to indicate the brand and start the journey of brand recognition.
	1.6. Conduct a signage and wayfinding audit and develop strategy	Conduct a signage audit and develop a strategy to coordinate the visitor experience and engage more people from the Hume Highway and into major attractions. Key objectives should be to extend the connective brand aligned signage from the Hume Freeway into the town and into main experience areas with a storytelling theme to support the Benalla brand to connect the attractions together.
	1.7. Maximise the investment in the Visitor Information Centre (VIC)	<p>Prioritise attracting a food and beverage tenant to the VIC with strict conditions on opening hours, using local produce and brand alignment.</p> <p>Expand the Benalla VIC Business Plan to include connecting with Benalla Art Gallery retail, curating art displays/murals, shopfitting to a high standard, maximising the theatre space, tours and events hub and bike/e-bike hire.</p>

2. What we can do next




The below table identifies key actions from the opportunities identified that can be delivered **once the initial actions have been delivered**.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTION	DETAILS
 Build our industry	2.1. Support the tourism association with regular events and workshops	<p>Develop and facilitate a local tourism industry association with regular industry catchups, including guest speakers from the RTO and state government, providing insight and information on the Benalla and High Country brand, the nature of visitors, trends, and opportunities, as well as showcasing new and developing product in the region. Build business cases and educating operators on the benefits of hours that suit visitors.</p> <p>Harness the power of the Benalla brand by ensuring it is fully rolled out across the region through developing a simple brand use toolkit and guideline. Continually educate and communicate on the brand through the tourism association.</p>
	2.2. Build the core Benalla visitor experience	Build out a rail/ride/art/eat product for people to have a full experience from Melbourne where they can catch the train and hire an e-bike to visit key areas of interest. Fully packaged, could also include accommodation. Attract investment in/development of e-bike, e-scooter and bike hire business.
 Grow our share	2.3. Clean up online presence	<p>Negotiate the rationalisation of VisitBenalla.com.au to support Enjoybenalla.com.au, align with brand and build consistent message.</p> <p>Further develop the events calendar on EnjoyBenalla.com.au with regular social posts and updates, as well as profiles on operators and products coming online.</p>
	2.4. Attract events	Create an events prospectus/web page extension for Benalla that highlights the existing events spaces (capacity, flexibility, facilities, etc), catering opportunities, group activities, access and accommodation options with an arts and culture overlay. Once complete, work with Business Events and Events Victoria, professional conference and events organisers to identify key information required for decision making, and assist with on-ground planning.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTION	DETAILS
 Grow our value	2.5. Ensure Benalla's arts and culture credentials are underpinned by adequate funding	Allocate dedicated and secure funding streams for ongoing operation, marketing and promotion of the Benalla Art Gallery and Benalla Street Art Festival.
	2.6. Attract targeted accommodation investment	<p>Negotiate to attract a 4.5 star hotel, such as Quest or Mantra to Benalla. Work to provide a business case and planning advice to engender confidence in the investment. Develop an investment prospectus to attract investment in unique accommodation in the region.</p> <p>Facilitate opportunities for collaboration of existing accommodation and experiences to be packaged in rail/ride or weekend getaway packages. Champion these and market them.</p>
	2.7. Pop-up food and drink park development	<p>Work to attract food trucks and vans to support times of high traffic and low servicing.</p> <p>Develop pop-up initiatives with local charity groups for fundraising at strategic times to attract passing traffic – such as Friday afternoon woodfired pizzas delivered by the local Rotary club and advertise directly to traffic passing to go skilling in winter, or to coincide with major Winton Motor Raceway or other events.</p>
	2.8. Support business investment for future development of the Commercial Hotel and CBD	<p>The CBD, Fawckner Drive and the Commercial Hotel precinct present a major event delivery opportunity for the centre of Benalla. Pedestrianising Fawckner drive and developing event infrastructure adjacent to the Commercial Hotel.</p> <p>The CBD is a major asset for Benalla. If the CBD Masterplan is realised, it could develop and facilitate a number of small operators providing a range of eating/drinking/brewing/distilling products.</p>
	2.9. Winton Wetlands Visitor experience plan	Masterplan that maps and builds the visitor experience right to the heart of Benalla rather than being a finite experience. Improve signage and wayfinding to encourage more engagement from visitors, with storytelling and connective pathways with water stations and stops from Benalla.
	2.10. Cycling and e-bike connectivity plan connecting Benalla to Winton Wetlands	Develop path and track networks to connect the region with bike paths from the centre to key points of interest – including the Winton Wetlands and Silo Art. Integrate coordinated signage with interpretation and a storytelling theme throughout the network for legibility.

3. What we can do in the longer term

The below table identifies key actions from the opportunities identified that can be delivered once the initial actions have been delivered, **with an aim to deliver by the end of the life of this plan.**

STRATEGIC PRIORITY	ACTION	DETAILS
 Build our industry	3.1. Build collaborative tourism products and packages aimed at Benalla's target markets	Through the tourism association, build out partnerships within and across the regions for marketing and packaging.
	3.2. Support the industry by attracting innovative workforce training delivery	Facilitate innovative education and training for workers to gain qualifications in hospitality and tourism management could attract workforce or retain young people.
 Grow our share	3.3. Build social media presence	Ensure seamless connection with social media and harness the power of influencers to organically build audience, especially through events.
 Grow our value	3.4. Maximise commercial opportunities from Benalla Art Gallery visitors	<p>After upgrades are completed, work to attract blockbuster exhibitions to build the reputation of Benalla Art Gallery and collection. Build relationships with local quality local food and beverage producers and Indigenous storytellers to provide full cultural experience.</p> <p>In collaboration with peer regional galleries in the region, build a 'cultural road trip' product and collaboratively market it.</p> <p>Explore new commercial opportunities for Benalla Art Gallery and Benalla Street Art Festival, such as pop up installations connecting with other key attractions such as Winton Wetland & Winton Motor Racing Precinct, growing masterpiece collections and offering online shops for creative pieces.</p>
	3.5. Maximise commercial opportunities from special interest sports and niche visitors	Building on insights gained from developing the investment prospectuses, develop a targeted niche tourism development strategy to develop collaborations with local providers and accommodation packages to maximise benefit of sports and niche visitors.
	3.6. Scope new event opportunities that align with Benalla's offering	Explore new event opportunities, including local markets and food events. Also consider whether the Rose Garden and Benalla's historical Rose City status could be the basis of the development of a 'Rose Floriade' type of event in Benalla.



3 June 2024



Benalla Rural City Destination Assessment

For the Benalla Destination Management Plan



This Destination Assessment report was prepared by TRC Tourism as the first stage in the development of the Benalla Destination Management Plan.

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Taungurung and Yorta Yorta Peoples of the lands, waters and communities we work together with. We pay our respects to their cultures; and to their Elders – past and present.

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Introduction

This destination assessment is an analysis of the key aspects of tourism planning and development needed to inform the development of a Destination Management Plan (DMP) for the Benalla Region.

It provides an overview of Benalla and the role tourism plays in the economy, considers the strategic context within which the DMP will sit at all scales of government, evaluates the market opportunities and how these align with the products and experiences already in the City, and then through a SWOT analysis, considers the elements of distinctiveness that belong uniquely to Benalla for development in the future.

This foundation of insight and analysis will enable the DMP to be effective in growing the visitor economy of the City. The plan will replace, and build on, the expired Benalla Tourism and Events Strategy 2018-2022 with a 5-year (to 2028) strategy to guide investment in priority supply and demand initiatives, to best position and leverage the collective efforts of the region to deliver positive outcomes for the Benalla visitor economy.

This assessment has been informed by in-depth desktop research and comprehensive engagement with visitor economy stakeholders to ensure the DMP being developed is grounded in place-based needs and aspirations. Table 1 shows the stages of development of the Benalla Region DMP.

Table 1. Steps in DMP development

Plan development	
RESEARCH	Background documents reviewed, including local, regional, state and national planning strategies Analysis of visitor economy and global trends
ENGAGEMENT	Internal meetings between Benalla Council staff and TRC Tourism Tourism industry and stakeholder meetings online and in person Workshop held in Benalla Community and stakeholder online survey
FRAMEWORK	Establish a framework for the DMP Establish overarching principles, strategies and actions
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN	Preparation of a draft and subsequent final plan



Tourism in Benalla

Benalla Rural City local government area (Benalla region) is situated to the north-west of the Great Dividing Range and two hours (180km) from Melbourne along the Hume Freeway. It is one of the gateways to North East Victoria's High Country and alpine areas. Figure 1 shows a map of the Benalla region area.

Benalla is renowned for its picturesque landscape and welcoming rural towns, including Baddaginnie, Devenish, Goorambat, Tatong, Thoona, Swanpool and Winton. The central lake, botanical gardens and riverine parklands, walking paths, and an attractive and vibrant town centre are key features of Benalla's lifestyle and amenity.

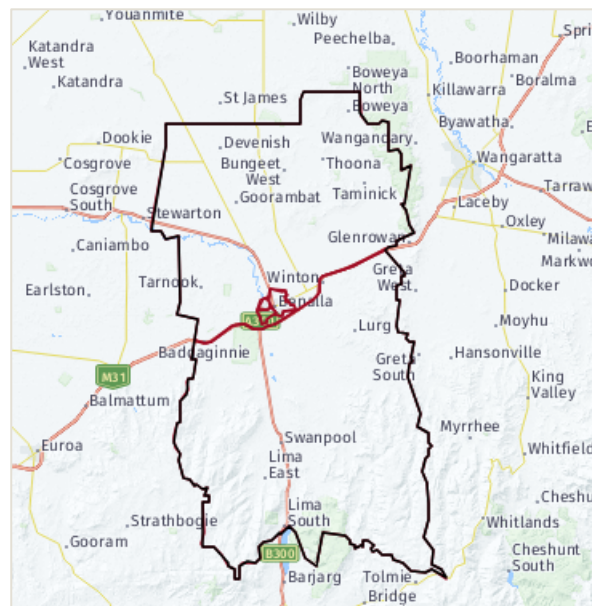
Benalla has a population of over 14,500,¹ with 9,000 people living in the Benalla urban areas.² 95% of businesses in Benalla are small businesses with fewer than 20 staff. Approximately 1,500 businesses are based in Benalla. Construction, manufacturing, health and agriculture comprise the largest employers, followed by retail, education, accommodation and food services. As a sector comprising some of these industries, tourism is currently estimated to employ about 5.1% of the workforce in Benalla.³

Benalla Rural City Council currently manages tourism development in the area, working in partnership with the Regional Tourism Organisation, Tourism North East. The Council has a small, but dedicated workforce, supported by a tranche of volunteers working in the Visitor Centre, Costume Museum, and Regional Art Gallery. Other key attractions such as the Aviation Museum and Migrant Camp are also fully reliant on volunteers.

There is room for Benalla to better maximise its significant assets for the benefit and growth of the visitor economy. Whilst the region's natural and cultural assets, leisure and lifestyle options make it one of Victoria's most liveable regions, these are yet to be harnessed to their full potential for tourism and economic benefit.

Successful tourism growth can play a leading role in contributing to the city's community objectives of a sustainable, thriving and cohesive community.

Figure 1. Map of Benalla Region⁴



¹ <https://profile.id.com.au/benalla/> (2023 figures)

² Benalla Fawckner Drive, Masterplan Report Feb 2024

³ [Benalla Economy Profile | Employment, Tourism | REMPLAN](#)

⁴ <https://profile.id.com.au/benalla/>

Strategic Context

As an industry of many sectors, tourism needs coordination and a collective marketing effort. To effectively develop product and leverage marketing opportunities, the Benalla tourism industry will need to work within the broader context of regional, state and national strategic plans and partnerships.

This section examines the key regional and state tourism strategies the Benalla DMP needs to align with, and lists the broad suite of other key strategic and planning documents it will connect to.

The Regional Tourism Context

Benalla is one of 7 LGAs and 4 Alpine resorts within the Tourism North East (TNE) region, known as the Victorian High Country. The High Country region sits adjacent to the Murray and Goulburn Valley Regions.

TNE has the role of regional marketing, product development, industry development, facilitating tourism investment, research, advocacy and strategic planning. Benalla Council has representation on the TNE Board; however, there is limited focus on the

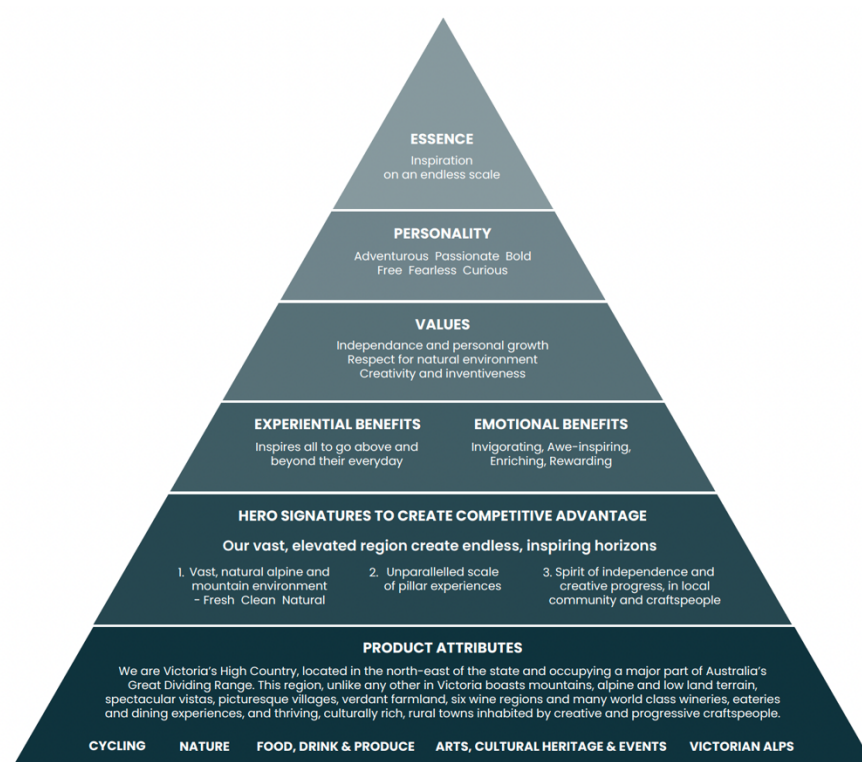
area, acknowledged more as a gateway to the region than as an attraction in its own right within the TNE suite of attractions, with only the Benalla Art Gallery and Street Art Festival mentioned in the TNE DMP. As such, the area does not enjoy a focus in the High Country's regional marketing and promotion, but there are many opportunities for Benalla to lift into this space.

Connecting with the strength of the Victorian High Country brand and the products in the surrounding regions is critical to the success of Benalla's tourism development. Figure 2 shows the hierarchy of the TNE Master Brand.

The Master Brand of TNE articulates five key product pillars, three hero signature experiences, and the brand benefits, values, personality and essence of the region. Benalla has a number of key assets that are well placed to elevate the brand and build depth into the High Country visitor experience, which will be examined in this assessment.

A challenge for Benalla is to work with the regional brand to elevate the products and experiences for the area in a distinctive way. In particular, Benalla has the building blocks to own the arts, cultural heritage and events space within Victoria's High Country Brand, as well as support the nature, cycling and food, drink and produce pillars.

Figure 2. Victoria's High Country Master Brand hierarchy



The State Tourism Context

From 2023, regional tourism boards in Victoria started transitioning to form a network of Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPs), which are becoming independent destination management organisations that represent their region as official voices to government. Tourism North East is one of these VEPs, and provides Benalla with connectivity to the marketing, insights and planning power of the state government.

The Victorian state government's leading tourism strategy is Experience Victoria 2033. This strategy focuses on supporting and growing experiences in five key pillars – First Peoples-led experiences, Wellness, Arts and Culture, Nature, and Food and Drink. There is alignment between these pillars and the Tourism

North East DMP. Within this, many of Benalla's product strengths and opportunities align to both sets of pillars, placing it in a strong position to attract funding and marketing support as these are developed.

Strategic and Planning Context

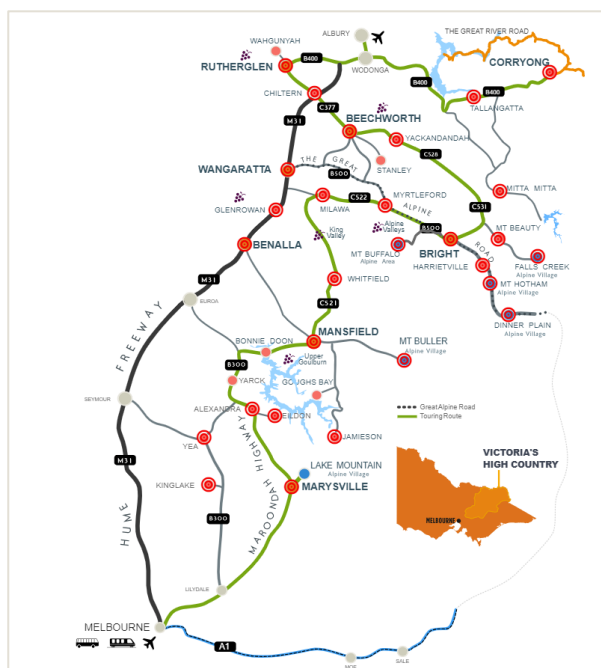
A full analysis of the strategic and planning documents applicable to the visitor economy in the region are outlined below, with any visitor economy related initiatives highlighted. These initiatives and strategies may guide actions within the new DMP.

Table 2. Key strategic and planning documents applicable to the region's visitor economy

Plan	Application to the visitor economy
LOCAL COUNCIL PLANNING	
Council Plan 2021-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vision is to provide a sustainable, thriving and cohesive community where lifestyle, culture, health and wellbeing are supported by strong leadership and community partnership. One guiding principle of the plan (there are 7 in total) is to be a destination of choice. The plan also aims to: Strengthen the visitor economy through growth of events and promotion of unique assets and experiences and visitor attractions, and to grow, enhance and promote sports, arts and culture tourism opportunities.
Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016 - 2036	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An objective (6.6) includes - in 2036 Benalla Rural City will be a destination of choice. Benalla Rural City will host a diverse range of arts, sport and cultural initiatives, programs and events. These will present a range of participation and employment opportunities for visitors and the local community. Action 36 includes to continue to advocate for the North East Rail Trail Strategy to connect and enhance significant tracks and trails and enhance cycle tourism growth in Benalla Rural City and the region Action 41 includes to develop a strategy to increase the variety of visitor accommodation options throughout Benalla Rural City
Benalla Rural City Tourism and Events Strategy 2018-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism is an important part of Benalla Rural City's economy, attracting more than 335,000 visitors and generating \$42 million in visitor expenditure for the year ending September 2017 (represents 8% of the High Country's total) Important regional centre for culture and arts Vision: by 2022, the Benalla region will be recognised as the High Country's cultural centre. We will be known for our thriving arts and culture scene, driven by quirky events and artisan products and connection to nature

Plan	Application to the visitor economy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brand story: “to see the art in everything” Goals were to: increase visitor spend, consolidate current offering and create iconic experiences, enhance positioning as a cultural centre, to build industry culture and protect the region’s cultural, natural and heritage assets
Benalla Fawckner Drive Masterplan Report – Feb 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelopment of the Fawckner Drive Precinct to accommodate large festivals (or concerts) and community events
Future of Benalla and District – Regional Context Analysis Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported by a grant from the Dept of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Benalla was selected to receive assistance (due to closure of native timber industries) to diversify its economy by building on local strengths and assets The report states that there is a significant arts and culture scene that is yet to be fully embraced by locals and visitors Potential innovation opportunities relating to tourism identified include: Arts and Culture, Benalla Migrant Camp and Winton Wetlands
Benalla Rural City Council, Pathways to the Future– Shared Path Strategy 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter six advises that Council should endeavour to increase its advertising and promotion of specific cycling events and other cycling related information
Benalla Future Workforce Planning Report 2021-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth industries in the Benalla LGA include allied health, tourism, concrete manufacturing, renewable energy, agribusiness, construction, and logistics The main barriers to employment are difficulties finding appropriate staff, insufficient accommodation for workers, inadequate internet, and lack of public transport
Events Placement Program Capacity and Capabilities Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies that the region is well positioned to host sporting, arts and cultural events due to its location (2hrs from Melbourne on the Hume Highway) and that the region has the required infrastructure to support regional and national standard events eg. gliding, motorsports and equestrian In addition to attracting participants for events, the region has a strong historical and arts significance, offering competitors incentive to extend their stay to experience the rich culture and history of the region Includes details on each key sporting facility
REGIONAL PLANNING	
Victoria’s High Country Destination Management Plan (DMP) 2023-2033	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism North East (TNE) is the Visitor Economy Partnership for Victoria’s High Country - which encompasses the Shires of Alpine, Benalla, Indigo, Mansfield, Murrindindi, Towong and the Rural City of Wangaratta, and the four major alpine resorts of Falls Creek, Mt Hotham, Mt Buller and Mt Stirling DMP efforts are focused on five recognised product strengths: cycle, the Victorian Alps, nature-based tourism; food, drink and produce and; arts, cultural heritage and events This is a place far away from the everyday Go above and beyond Refer to figure for location map in context to the broader tourism region

Plan	Application to the visitor economy
Ovens Murray Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benalla's populations makes up approximately 10% of this region. One of its strategic pillars includes: strengthening and diversifying the visitor economy through leveraging the region's nature and epicurean tourism industries
Ned Kelly Alive – Concept Development and Business Case 2018 – Regional Development Victoria / Tourism North East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Victoria's High Country is home to some of Ned Kelly's most memorable moments, the current tourism experiences associated with this story are failing to connect with the region's primary visitor markets and meet current consumer expectations for contemporary and immersive cultural tourism experiences Solutions are broken down into LGA areas, for Benalla, the focus is on the Benalla Art Gallery expansion and installations (3 sculptures). Followed by a regional marketing and promotion Outcomes include 25,000 visitors, generating over \$38million over 10 years and 494 jobs
Taungurung buk dadbagi Taungurung Country Plan	<p>Country Plan is to establish strong partnerships and investment to care for Taungurung Country. Particularly concerned about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring Taungurung connection to Country is formally recognised Being engaged in a timely and respectful manner in decision-making about activities on Country – from the beginning of decision-making discussions – and with regard to all aspects of Country <i>Mount Buffalo is one of our important story places, as are places around Benalla, where there is an old greenstone axe quarry. The high plains are a very important part of our Country, as a source of food but also where some of our important story places are located</i>
YORTA YORTA Whole-of-Country PLAN 2021 – 2030	<p>The plan identifies parts of Country that have special importance or are under threat, including rivers, forests and wetlands. Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage Country we must continue to build and extend our capability, skills and prosperity, which includes, <i>building economic opportunities based on managing and using the resources of Country and presenting Country to visitors</i> Specific to Winton Wetlands, the plan describes Yorta Yorta access and influence as 'fair' and cultural values as 'high'. Focus of action is to protect cultural sites and have interpretation of Yorta Yorta culture Economic opportunities identified includes: exploring opportunities for Yorta Yorta-operated tours, cultural events and knowledge seminars which promote and interpret natural and cultural features of Country <i>Most of Yorta Yorta Country has been cleared for agriculture and settlements. That has brought great damage. Much of our Country remains unhealthy and the threat of climate change is increasing everywhere.</i>

Figure 3. Being part of the Victorian High Country⁵

STATE PLANNING	
Experience Victoria 2033	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting and growing experiences in five key pillars – First Peoples-led experiences, Wellness, Arts and Culture, Nature, and Food and Drink – will be central to the 10-year plan. Building a highly skilled local workforce is also a major focus of the plan, which builds on the Victorian Government’s Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan.
Creative State 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative State 2025, sets out a path for the recovery, reactivation and growth of the state’s creative industries, to ensure Victoria’s reputation as a global cultural destination and bold creative leader. Action 18 of the plan includes: Enhance regional Victoria’s creative infrastructure by delivering projects including upgrades to Benalla Art Gallery
Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022–2026)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive Victoria is Victoria’s plan to make the state’s services, spaces, and communities more inclusive and accessible. Accessible parks and tourism is identified as a priority area in the plan, which includes a commitment to support and promote accessible tourism to businesses across Victoria
First Peoples Tourism Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Peoples-led experiences is one of the key pillars under the Experience Victoria 2033 strategic plan. Currently under development across the state, the primary objectives include: coordinating and advancing First Peoples tourism, leveraging and enhancing their participation for economic development, and empowering First Peoples within the tourism industry

⁵ www.victoriashighcountry.com.au/destinations/

NATIONAL PLANNING	
THRIVE 2030 revised: The Re-imagined Visitor Economy Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• THRIVE 2030 envisions a visitor economy that: delivers quality experiences for visitors; includes businesses that: are globally competitive, are profitable and grow sustainably; and provides jobs, growth and infrastructure that benefit Australian communities• Three themes guide these priorities include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Diversifying markets, experiences and destinations. For example, respectful inclusion of First Nations peoples and cultures– Modernising the visitor economy workforce, infrastructure and business practices– Collaborating between industry and government at every level, including by using high quality data and insights
Creative Australia Corporate Plan 2021-25, Australia Council for the Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Creativity Connects Us</i> strategy and framework - commitment to enabling artists and cultural organisations to expand their reach to audiences while realising their creative potential, and our commitment to First Nations arts and cultures• Five strategic objectives:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Australians are transformed by arts and creativity– Our arts reflect us– First Nations arts and culture are cherished– Arts and creativity are thriving– Arts and creativity are valued

Consultation

The priorities in this assessment and the DMP it supports have evolved from the aspirations and values articulated by the community, government and industry during April – June 2024.

Consultation included:

- One on one meetings with interested parties and identified stakeholders
- LGA meeting and briefings
- Industry and community workshop
- Online community survey
- Site visits across the region

A list of consultations can be found in Appendix 1. A summary of the findings from these discussions, surveys and workshops is below.

Aspirations

As a rural and regional centre with the major industries of construction, manufacturing, health and agriculture, tourism is not core business for Benalla, but it is recognised as being important. Although tourism employs around 5% of the workforce, investment in tourism is an investment in quality of life for the community. Building a thriving tourism industry is recognised as being valuable for attracting workforce, improving liveability and diversifying the economy.

With so many natural and cultural assets in the region, Benalla has significant opportunity to capitalise on these and grow the visitor economy. A robust economy is one with a diverse base, and robust visitor economy provides many benefits for industry and the community beyond just tourism.

Being clear about what a DMP is trying to achieve can focus effort and investment for maximum benefit. Ensuring that this aligns with what the community values is critical to the success of the plan.

Throughout the consultation, Benalla's community and industry said that they wanted tourism to:

- **Diversify the economy** and help it thrive
- **Provide jobs for our young people**
- **Provide a platform for investment in Benalla**
- **Help Benalla grow our identity** through knowing our place in the region
- **Improve liveability in Benalla**, through increased activities, better facilities, eating and drinking options, retail options, opening hours, and accommodation options.

Underpinning these aspirations is a need for investment in the people, culture and infrastructure of Benalla. Ensuring the DMP is strategic about attracting targeted investment in projects that will benefit the economy and the community as well as visitors is core to the success of tourism in the future.

What people value about Benalla

Understanding what the locals value about Benalla is central to delivering an effective DMP. Throughout the consultation process, Benalla's industry and community named many product and experience assets that make up the Benalla tourism offering. These are explored in the Product and experience section in more detail, but focused on maximising the Lake and gardens, the natural and rural setting, outdoor activities, murals and art, and wineries.

Natural and rural settings
 Beauty **Lake** Outdoor activities
 Wineries Murals and art
 Access to nearby places **Gardens**
Weather

The word cloud above gives a sense of the Benalla experience that the local residents value. Central to this is the Lake, the gardens and the natural/rural setting. Engaging in outdoor activities, particularly bike riding and walking within these settings is important, and it is regularly noted that the mild and sunny climate is conducive to enjoying the outdoors, including for ballooning, flying and gliding. Arts, murals and culture are also identified as important aspects of the Benalla experience.

First Peoples perspective

The Benalla Region sits within two Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) areas – represented by the Taungurung Land and Waters Council and the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation. Partnering with the RAPs will ensure that First Peoples are able to self-determine their role in tourism in the region. As part of the consultation for this plan, the BMCC Manager Economic Development and Sustainability met with the Aboriginal Advisory Group. Members of this group identified the need to develop and connect more with the Aboriginal Gardens, to engage further with the stories at Winton Wetlands, and to further develop the arts culture in Benalla, including providing meeting places.

The Yorta Yorta Whole of Country Plan specifically names Winton Wetlands as an area for potential development of opportunities for Yorta Yorta-operated tours, cultural events and knowledge seminars which promote and interpret natural and cultural features of Country. These market-aligned opportunities could provide a platform to develop income generating attractions in the region, and will be included in the project recommendations.

The Taungurung Country Plan identifies the high plains as a very important part of Country, as a source of food but also where important story places are located. Mount Buffalo and places around Benalla are specifically named, including an old greenstone axe quarry. Providing space and opportunity for the telling of these stories if the Taungurung People wish to develop them further will be included in the DMP.

This plan recognises the traditional owners of the land and water and seeks to respect their interests, aspirations, Culture, and connections to the land.

Challenges

The challenges identified through consultation are addressed in the SWOT analysis later in this assessment. In summary, consultation revealed the following themes:

- Lack of tourism leadership/planning/strategic direction
- Lack of activities in the region
- Limited Opening hours
- Limited accommodation options
- Lack of marketing/ establishing a point of difference for Benalla
- Limited eating options
- Lack of facilities
- Lack of business/town support
- Limited retail options
- No breweries & distilleries
- Not enough interpretation and signage
- Reliance on Volunteers

Opportunities

As with the challenges, the opportunities identified through consultation are addressed in the SWOT analysis later in this document. In summary, the opportunities identified through consultation focused on:

- Building on the existing arts and culture
- Product and experience development
- Town infrastructure development
- Bike riding and walking opportunities
- Becoming a base to explore the region
- Businesses working together
- Developing the Lake precinct
- Investing in good marketing and promotion

The aspirations, values, challenges and opportunities identified through the consultation showed some clear priorities from the community around the types of tourism development they would like to see. These underpin the recommendations and priorities for the DMP.

Market Analysis

A key aspect of developing good tourism product is to understand the needs, behaviours and trends in the market. Connecting to these people efficiently and effectively is central to the success of any destination – where the ‘magic’ of destination development really happens.

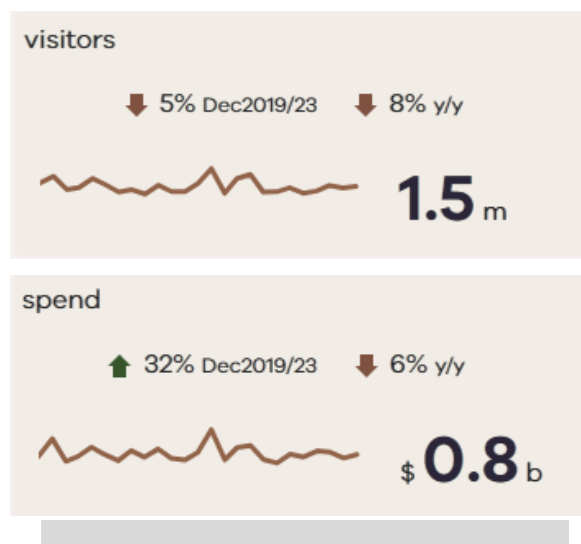
Benalla Visitor Economy

Trends in visitation

Across regional Victoria, visitor numbers have decreased since 2019 (-5%), though visitors to Benalla and Victoria’s High Country have both increased, shown in Figures 5 and 6.

CPI and the increasing cost of living means that visitor spending has increased since 2019 (+32%). This is also tapering off, with the last reporting period indicating a decreased visitor spend year on year off the back of such significant increases.

Figure 4. Regional Victoria visitor and spend trendlines⁶



⁶ <https://tourism.vic.gov.au/research-and-insights/domestic-research>

⁷ https://tourism.vic.gov.au/research-and-insights/regional-research#interactive_regional_data_map

⁸ https://tourism.vic.gov.au/research-and-insights/regional-research#interactive_regional_data_map

⁹ <https://www.tra.gov.au/en/regional/local-government-area-profiles>

High Country trends

As of year ending Dec 2023:⁷

Visitors

5.35 million visitors

2.1% increase since Dec 2019

7.4% increase year on year growth

Nights

7.6 million visitors

18% increase since Dec 2019

6.5% increase year on year growth

Spend

\$2.11 billion total expenditure

52.3% increase since Dec 2019

6.9% decrease year on year decline

Figure 5. High Country Nights, Visitors and Expenditure Trendline⁸

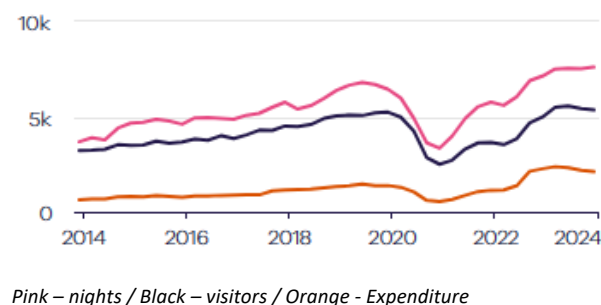
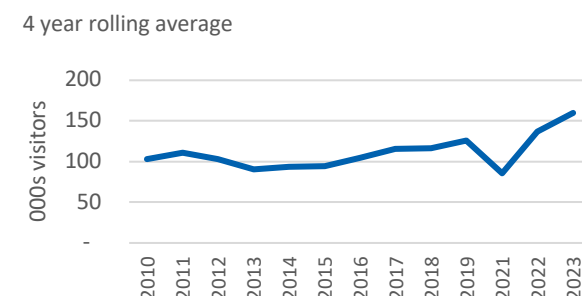


Figure 6. Benalla domestic overnight visitors⁹



Visitor spend

Data in regional local government areas since Covid-19 has been largely missing due to the sample sizes achieved through the national and international visitor surveys. As such, there is a limited suite available from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) through the International and National Visitor Surveys.

This data indicates that in the year ending December 2023 on a 4 year rolling average, Benalla welcomed 160,000 domestic overnight visitors, up from 126,000 in 2019. These visitors:¹⁰

- Had an average length of stay of 2.37 nights, about the same as 2019, and just under the average length of stay for the High Country.
- Were almost all from Victoria
- Spent around \$309 per trip, up from \$227 in 2019
- Spent around \$131 per night, up from \$93 in 2019, but well below the High Country average of \$249 per night.

In the year ending December 2022, Benalla welcomed:¹¹

- 335,000 total visitors. 53% were day visitors, and 47% were overnight visitors
- Fewer than 1% international visitors

In year ending December 2019, day visitors spent an average of \$77.

Benalla Rural City has purchased CommlQ credit card insight data to help better understand their visitors and their spending habits. Figures 1 and 2 show where the visitors are coming from according to this data, and how much they are spending, based on the regions they are from, from January – October 2023.

This insight shows that whilst the majority of visitors come from the Melbourne metropolitan area, the spend is weighed in favour of the High Country and Regional Victorian regions. Of the regional VIC/NSW spend, more than half came from the neighbouring Goulburn Valley shires. The nature of this data means that the purpose of visits remains unknown. It could be that many of the 'visits' from nearby regions are not necessarily for tourism purposes, but potentially for shopping or visiting friends and relatives.

Figure 1. Visits by LGA Region

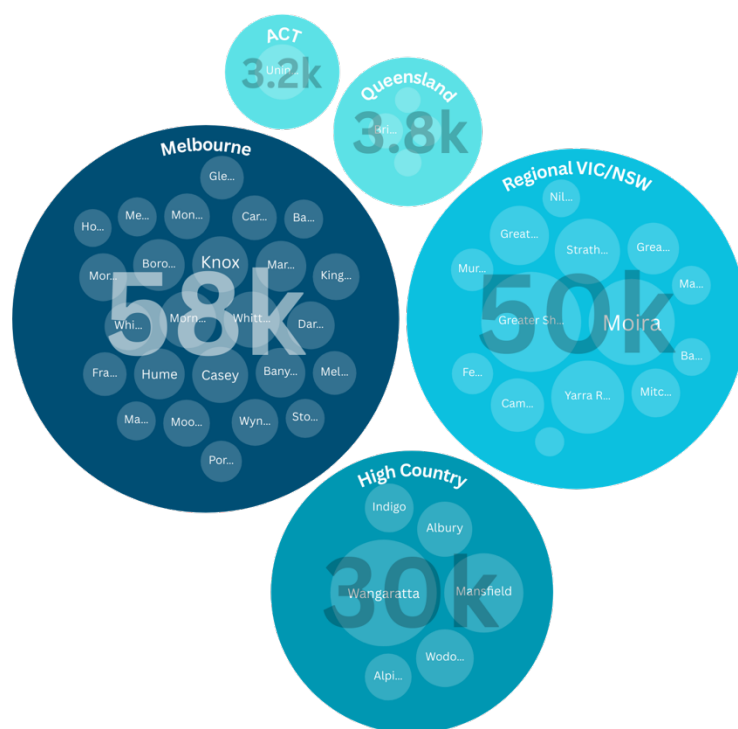
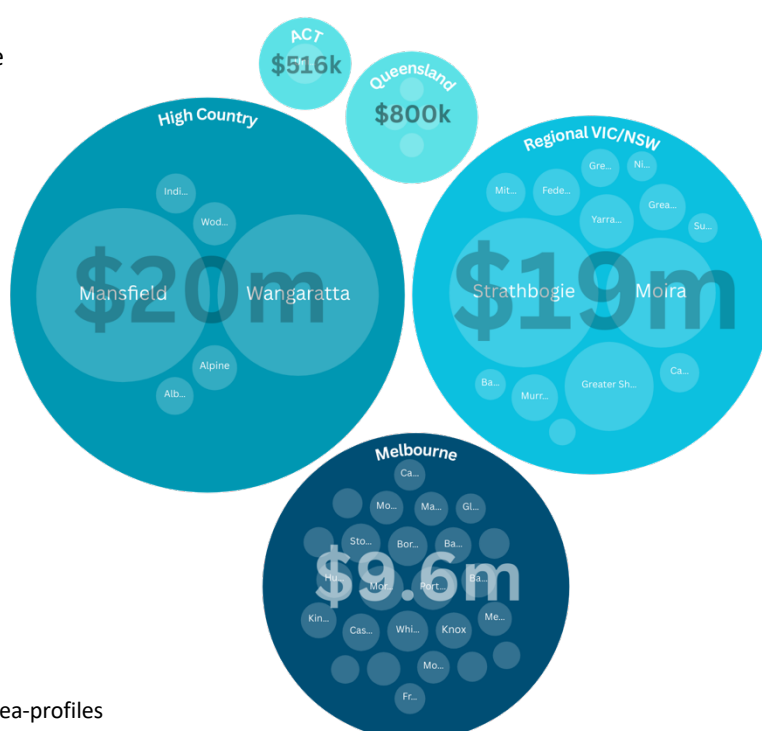


Figure 2. Spend by LGA Region



¹⁰ <https://www.tra.gov.au/en/regional/local-government-area-profiles>

¹¹ Victoria's High Country Destination Management Plan 2023–2033

High Country visitor profile

The visitor figures indicate that there are some key differences between the Benalla visitor and those to the High Country, however there is very little up to date data available at the local government level. As such, we have drawn on a visitor profile of Victoria's High Country visitors detailed in their Destination Management Plan 2023–2033.¹²

VISITOR ORIGIN

Victoria is the largest source market for the High Country visitor economy, making up 80% and 89% of day trip and overnight visitation respectively. Visitors from Victoria primarily originate from Metropolitan Melbourne. A small proportion of visitors are from interstate, primarily NSW (11% of day trip visitors and 13% of overnight visitors).

PURPOSE OF VISIT

Domestic visitors are primarily travelling to the High Country for holiday and leisure purposes (66%).

A high proportion of visitors to the region are visiting friends and relatives (VFR) (24%). This presents an opportunity to engage locals to act as ambassadors for their local area and promote local products, attractions and experiences to their visiting friends and relatives.

ACTIVITIES

Social activities are among the most popular activities engaged in by visitors to the High Country (78%). This includes activities such as dining out, visiting friends and relatives, general sightseeing and visiting pubs and clubs.

Engagement in nature-based experiences and active outdoor activities makes up 37% and 34% of activity consumption. There is an opportunity to increase engagement with the natural landscape of the High Country through increased activation of waterways and the development of new tourism products and experiences.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Visitors to the High Country are diverse. Older couples (24%) and families with children under 14 years of age (23%) make up the greatest proportion of domestic

visitors to the High Country. The age profile of visitors to the High Country is generally evenly spread, with those 50 years or above making up the greatest proportion (44%).

OVERNIGHT VISITOR PROFILE

The average length of stay for an overnight visitor to the High Country is 2.9 nights. During their overnight stay, a large portion of visitors will stay with their friends and family (22%). This is reflective of the large VFR market and the lack of commercial accommodation available throughout the High Country.

Overnight visitors to the High Country are primarily travelling as couples (28%), with their friends and family, but no children (23%) and solo (21%).

¹² <https://www.tourismnortheast.com.au/industry-resources/destination-management-plan/>

Target markets

Regional Victoria has the major asset of a growing and thriving population centre and source market in metropolitan Melbourne as well as a number of growing regional centres. Benalla enjoys direct connectivity with Melbourne not only through the Hume Freeway, but also through the Express Passenger Train (XPT) and VLine to Benalla station, and light aircraft to the Benalla airport, both within walking distance to the centre of town. Benalla is also at about the halfway point between Melbourne and the alpine resorts of Mt Hotham and Falls Creek, and is on a key route for caravanners and others travelling north on long trips.

With this level of connectivity, Benalla has the opportunity to engage with a high number of visitors, many of whom are already predisposed to the product and experiences on offer.

High Country Target Markets

In the TNE DMP, High Country visitors have been characterised by two key segments – Lifestyle Leaders, who account for 40% of the region’s visitors, and Habituals who make up 28% of visitor numbers.¹³

Lifestyle Leaders are progressive, educated and professional individuals who actively seek out new experiences. They enjoy an active social life and have extensive social networks in which they are viewed as trusted advisors and influencers. They are higher in affluence and discretionary expenditure than the average Australian, so travel frequently and spend more when travelling.

The Habituals are travellers who come to the High Country each year (sometimes many times a year) and tend to return to a consistent location and often travel with the same group. They are heavily influenced by the recommendations of friends and family members, prioritise value for money, and are often motivated by familiarity with a destination. Both Habituals and Lifestyle Leaders are primarily self-drive markets.

The High Country focuses on Lifestyle Leaders because their propensity to travel, experience new things and consider multiple destinations when they travel means that there is a strong ability to influence them with focused and motivating marketing communication and effective product development. Furthermore, the size of the segment and the yield it can drive within region by way of its higher natural spend also defines it as the

most valuable market with the potential to drive greatest return on investment for the High Country.

The Lifestyle Leader market is also a focus for Visit Victoria and strongly aligns to Tourism Australia’s High Value Traveler (HVT) audience. As such, TNE is well placed to collaborate with both Visit Victoria and Tourism Australia on statewide and national demand driving tourism strategies.

Benalla Target Markets

As part of the TNE region, Benalla stands to gain from the targeted marketing and market development activities being undertaken through the visitor economy partnership.

The Lifestyle Leaders clearly align with Benalla’s product - in particular, they like to stay active, and the majority likes to experience the local culture and see nature. They plan for their own trips and are less likely to prefer their trips organised for them.

Within and outside of the Lifestyle leaders, there are a number of potential sub-markets that could specifically be drawn to Benalla. These are:

1. **Passing traffic** driving to the High Country or ski fields for a week or weekend. These could be couples or families looking to break their journey with a stop and walk around/play. Could lead to further visitation.
2. **Big trippers** looking to travel slowly and experience the ‘real’ Australia. Interested in spending two days enjoying heritage, easy nature based experiences and cultural attractions.
3. **Weekend chasers** seeking some inspiration and new experiences that enrich their view on the world, connect them to a new place and provide them with good food and drink.
4. **Groups & Niche** travelling for conference, sports or education either to Benalla or nearby, looking for opportunities to learn, share experiences, train, or engage in team building.

These sub-markets present significant opportunities to Benalla to target with key marketing messages, product and experience development and visitor services.

¹³ <https://www.tourismnortheast.com.au/industry-resources/destination-management-plan/>

Global and national trends

The Covid-19 era has fundamentally changed the way people globally look at work, leisure, and travel. These global travel trends could indicate opportunities for Benalla.

Changing demographics of travel

A quarter of the world's population are now Millennials with growing spending power, and nearly a third are Gen Z. Their children, Gen Alpha, will number about 2 billion. Travel is changing to meet the needs of these burgeoning Millennial, Gen Z and Gen Alpha generations. Important influences include:

- Experience over things. More likely to spend money on experiences than on consumer goods, focus on mental health and relaxation, prioritizing personal wellness.
- Travel is a right rather than a privilege. Travel experiences are a part of their identity rather than a check on a bucket list.

Whilst the major changes in these demographic groups are occurring in emerging economies, there is still a prevailing change in cities in Australia. The global culture of influencing and sharing means that these trends are highly mobile and are impacting the travel preferences of some of our major source market in Melbourne.

Appetite for new and distinctive destinations

It's a well-established trend that millennials prefer experience over things. But a less well-understood corollary is that not just any experience will do. In a world where travel is more commonplace than ever, millennials want to be seen as trailblazing unique experiences. In China, 90 percent of Millennials seek out travel experiences their friends and family may not have thought of. 81% of Indian, 70% of US and 67% of UK Millennials do the same thing.¹⁴

According to TripAdvisor, the top three most important considerations in future travel plans to visit a destination was to get immersive by:

- Seeing new places

- Having new experiences
- Learning about history and culture¹⁵

Additionally, the Adventure Travel and Trade Association (ATTA) identify that the most popular consumer motivations for traveling are new experiences, to go off the beaten track, and to travel like a local.¹⁶

Whilst Benalla does not currently attract a large international market, a growing proportion of Melbourne as its largest source market form part of the Chinese and Indian diaspora. Influences from these cultures will influence these markets, who are growing in affluence and engagement in regional Victoria.

Seeking safety, wellness and wide-open spaces

Tourism Australia identifies that safety is the number one factor in travel decisions for our source markets, and that naturally wide-open and remote destinations are deemed to be safer.

An increased focus on family, health and wellbeing in markets and destinations is playing out in a number of ways through visitor choices and preferences. The rise and rise of 'forest bathing' and connecting to nature and culture through adventure and experiential travel is impacting destinations and product development globally.

Sustainable travel and travel as a force for good

Building on recent conversations around going beyond sustainability toward tourism as a force for good, the market is starting to show changes in preference for destinations to reflect this. Products and experiences that contribute to the place, people and culture of the destination are experiencing growing popularity. Across all sectors, sustainable travel is predicted to grow at a CAGR of 9.54% between 2022 and 2027, with about 81% of people willing to change their travel

¹⁴ The Anywhere traveller puts new destinations on the map, 2023. Located at: <https://skift.com/2023/01/10/the-anywhere-traveler-puts-new-destinations-on-the-map/>

¹⁵ TripAdvisor (2022). Travel Trends Report January 2022. Located at: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/TravelTrendsReportJan2022>

¹⁶ Adventure Travel and Trade Association (2023). Adventure Travel Industry Snapshot June 2023. Located at: <https://cdn-research.adventuretravel.biz/research/64b9e42a905226.17033554/ATTA-Snapshot-Trends-2023-Report.pdf>

behaviour to reduce their environmental impact.¹⁷ Likewise, the term ‘sustainable travel’ has grown by 61% in global searches over the past two years.¹⁸

First Peoples-led Experiences

Year on year, more and more travellers actively seek out First Peoples experiences that allow them to connect with and learn more about First Peoples and Culture. According to the International Visitor Survey, in 2019, approximately 1.35 million international visitors took part in a First-Nations experience on their holiday—a figure that has grown by 5% each year over the past six years.

Whilst Benalla has no current indigenous experience offerings, it is good to be aware of these trends and of the importance of cultivating first-peoples led experiences in market development.

Food and Beverage Provenance

A strong and evolving trend in source markets and globally, is an increasing interest in the provenance of food and drink. Consuming produce at or near the source, identifying the terroir, not just of wine, but of produce, seafood and drink, and the craft of production are all highly marketable trends that are becoming expected experiences in high value markets.

Opportunities exist across the broader region to connect with the making element of the produce, overlaying culture to produce unique connections with place and people that can become leading visitor experiences and marketable products.

Accessible Tourism

A 2021 study by Tourism Research Australia revealed travel groups including people with disability or a long-term health condition in Australia accounted for:

- \$13.5 billion (17% of total) of domestic day and overnight trip spend
- 1 million domestic trips (19% of total).

Around 18% of Australians (or 4.4 million people) have a disability. An additional 22% (or 5.5 million) have a long-term health condition (Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, ‘People with Disability in Australia’ web report, last updated 5 July 2022).

Internationally, the World Health Organisation has estimated that around 1 billion people globally live with some form of disability. Research conducted by Visit Britain has identified that people with health conditions and impairments and their travelling companions spend around £15.3 billion on trips in the UK each year. Research in Europe has estimated that by the end of 2025, demand will have reached around 160 million people. In the US, the Open Doors Organisation estimates that adults with disabilities spend over \$58.7 billion per year on travel.

Benalla and the surrounding region can become a destination of choice for visitors with accessibility restrictions, with good infrastructure and an abundance of product choice with ease of accessibility.

As an inclusive destination, we want to remove as many barriers as possible to enable people with access needs to experience the best of the region and feel welcome and accommodated to return with their families.

¹⁷ Booking.com (2023). New Research reveals the trends driving sustainable travel in 2023. Located at: <https://partner.booking.com/en-us/click-magazine/trends-insights/new-research-reveals-trends-driving-sustainable-travel-2023>

¹⁸ Passport photo online (2023). 64+ Sustainable Travel Statistics, Facts and Trends. Located at: <https://passport-photo.online/blog/sustainable-travel-statistics/#gref>

Product and Experience Analysis

Brand distinctiveness and positioning

Benalla's brand is firmly based in its arts, culture and heritage assets. This is cleverly positioned, as it is an area that is not otherwise 'owned' within the High Country region, but is deeply aligned with the broader Victorian brand and positioning. It is a brand that is well substantiated through the product offering with longstanding investments in arts, culture and heritage across the region, and also supports the other product offerings in the region, adding a richness and depth to the overall regional experience.

Further to this, arts, culture and heritage visitors have been shown to spend significantly more in regions they visit than other types of visitor, so there is a clear economic imperative to further consolidate and invest in this well-considered brand.

BENALLA
See the art in everything

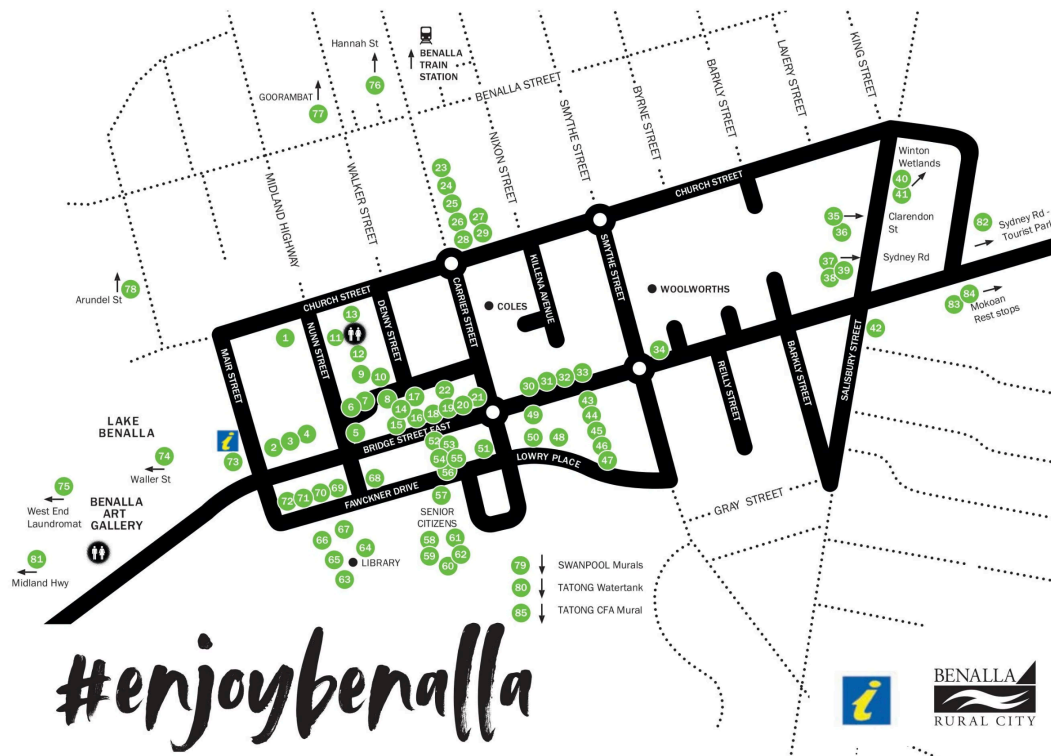
Whilst the "see the art in everything" brand is well positioned, there is currently a lack of infrastructure behind it that can be used by operators to get on board with the brand. This could be something like a brand toolkit that describes the tone of voice and style of imagery that is used, as well as the rules around how, and when, to use the logo, colours and fonts.

Current products and experiences

Underpinning Benalla's brand are the products and experiences available for visitors to enjoy. A key challenge for Benalla is that whilst there are a number of landmark experiences, there is little bookable or commercial product around these for the town to fully realise the benefit of the visitor economy. Currently, booking.com rates the top experiences in Benalla as the Devenish Silo Art, Winton Wetlands and Botanic Gardens – all of which are free attractions with few opportunities around them to realise economic benefit.

A core strategy of the Destination Management Plan will be to effect an economic benefit from the existing infrastructure and investment in the City to build the visitor economy more sustainably.

This analysis considers each key product and experience in the City in terms of its current status, opportunities for development and alignment to the target markets.

Figure 7. Benalla's street art attractions

ADNATE
Adnate is a large-scale portrait artist who works with spray paint and acrylic. His murals can be found worldwide. Benalla is home to several Adnate portraits. Notably, Adnate's Burmese Girl has been ranked number 8 in the best 100 murals in the world (pictured). Adnate's work also features on the Benalla Art Gallery and a portrait of Sophia, the female aspect of the human spirit, can be found inside the Goorambat Uniting Church. / 19 & 77

43 – Adnate Burmese Girl
Ranked number 8 in the 100 best murals around the world.

JULIAN CLAVIJO
Julian Clavijo is an urban space transformation artist, with internationally renowned works that range from large public installations to intimate portraits. Columbian born, he has lived and worked in Melbourne since 2008. / 23 & 46

TIM BOWTELL
Benalla artist Tim Bowtell is renowned for large scale murals that can be found across the North East. His works feature highly in the North East Silo Art Trail and can also be found at Winton Wetlands and at the Mokoan rest stop, southbound on the Hume Highway. / 8, 26, 33, 57, 78 & 79

GUIDO VAN HELTEN
Guido van Helten's work explores the themes of community and identity through large-scale mural installations. His tribute to firefighting volunteers features local CFA members and can be found at Winton Wetlands. Australia Post has used the image as a stamp to celebrate regional water tower artwork. / 40

DVATE
Jimmy Dvate is a renowned Australian contemporary artist, specialising in large scale public murals. His work features in the North East Silo Art Trail. / 8, 48 & 72

ANDREW J BOURKE (SIRUM)
Andrew J Bourke, also known as Sirum, creates vivid portraits with a vibrant colour palette. As well as in Benalla, you will find his works at the Mokoan Hub, Winton Wetlands and the Mokoan rest stop, northbound on the Hume Highway. / 41, 42 & 51

Benalla

SEE THE ART IN EVERYTHING

1. Finlan Magee	16. Ellie Street Art	32. SIRHC (Chris Henderson)	48. Dvate	64. Rudy Kistler	78. Tim Bowtell
2. Cristen Brunner	17. Tom Gerrard	33. Tim Bowtell	49. Lisa King	65. Paint by numbers / Community art	79. Michael Larkin and Tim Bowtell
3. Leans	18. Loretta Lizzio	34. 23rd Key	50. Kaff-eine	66. Robyn Grove	80. Michael Larkin
4. SIRHC (Chris Henderson)	19. Adnate	35. Askew	51. Sirum	67. Justine McAllister	81. Welcome to Benalla - Community group sign
5. Tarsha Davies and P-12 College Benalla	20. Edie Black	36. Skinny	52. Jagung	68. Justine McAllister	82. Davidson Lopes and Sophie Wilson
6. Rone	21. Skinny	37. Pulos	53. Clinton Levy	69. Squid Licker	83. Tim Bowtell
7. Rone	22. Cristen Brunner	38. Choq	54. Zenisis	70. Mayomaise and Callum Preston	84. Andrew J Bourke and Resat
8. Dvate	23. Julian Clavijo	39. Solles	55. Kate Thaus	71. Artist unknown	85. Michael Larkin - CFA Mural
9. Clinton Levy	24. Anton Pulicenti	40. Guido Van Helten	56. Matt Davis	72. Dvate	
10. Caratoes	25. Cristen Brunner	41. Andrew J Bourke	57. Tim Bowtell	73. Alex Lehours	
11. Kaff-eine and Friends	26. Kitt Bennett	42. Sirum	58. Ellie Street Art	74. Skinny and Trog	
12. Leonard Siaw	27. Tim Bowtell	43. Claire Foxton	59. Choq	75. Callum Preston	
13. George Rosa	28. Rone	44. Adnate	60. Danielle Webber	76. Kaff-eine	
14. Rosie Woods	29. Jenny McCracken	45. Insane 51	61. Mayonnaise	77. Adnate - Sophia	
15. Goodie	30. Ears	46. Julian Clavijo	62. Kitt Bennett		
	31. Ears	47. Akid One	63. Kaff-eine		

Information is correct at the time of printing. Street art is temporary in its nature and is subject to change.



Art, culture and heritage

Art, culture and heritage are at the heart of Benalla's experience offering, playing a strong role in the profile of the community and in attracting visitors. Arts and Culture are locally recognised as being an important economic driver in the region.¹⁹ The Benalla Art Gallery is renowned as one of Australia's best and most striking regional galleries. This is supported by street art installations and the festival, silo art and installations in the Winton Wetlands. This will be a highlight for further tourism planning including partnering with other regional galleries for joint exhibitions.

Discovering the legend of Ned Kelly, and future regional story telling is an opportunity.

Investigating First Peoples tourism opportunities for a broader product offering could include storytelling, interpretation and tours.

Product	Status	Market alignment
Street Art – home to 65 street art murals	Annual festival to celebrate and grow the offering. Guide to murals, but no bookable tours. Not signposted from the Hume Hwy, some signage.	Passing traffic Big trippers Weekend chasers Groups
Benalla Art Gallery	Current redevelopment plan that is not fully funded. End of life climate control means blockbuster shows are not an option. Major opportunity for development. Not signposted from the Hume Hwy, some signage.	Passing traffic Big trippers Weekend chasers Groups
Silo and Water Tank Art Trail linking together the towns of Goorambat, Devenish, Tungamah and St James.	Well-loved and well visited. No local tours or other bookable product around this. Opportunity for the country pub trail to further develop to realise economic benefit.	Big trippers Weekend chasers Groups
Winton Wetlands Sculpture Trail	Part of the broader Winton Wetlands precinct, this has plenty of potential, but there is little signage or interpretation evident at the site, or effective directional signage for visitors to find it.	Passing traffic Big trippers Weekend chasers
Benalla Aviation Museum	Run by volunteers, open Wednesday and Saturday. Not well signposted from the city. Has connections to local and WWII heritage as well as the Migrant Camp, key part of the region's storytelling.	Big trippers Weekend chasers
Ned Kelly history, including the Benalla Costume and Kelly Sash Museum	Run by volunteers, still in development. Further interpretation and signage development needed. Connection with nearby Glenrowan Ned Kelly interpretation centre could be further developed – partnership opportunities.	Big trippers Weekend chasers
Benalla Migrant Camp	There are very few remnants of Australia's Post World War 2 migrant history, especially one	Big trippers Weekend chasers

¹⁹ Future of Benalla and District – Regional Context Analysis Report

	<p>with original buildings, and a site that was mainly dedicated to women and children.</p> <p>Run by volunteers, currently not open, needs support. Located in the aviation precinct, with story links to the aviation museum. Interpretive signage about the precinct but no directional signage or clear way in. Has significant potential as it can connect to other attractions and has many descendants who are interested in the history from it.</p>	
Weary Dunlop Memorial	Statue and plaques commemorating and telling the story of Weary Dunlop – part of the art gallery, botanical gardens and rose garden precinct. No commercial considerations, part of the broader WWII story of the region.	Big trippers
Heart of Art Benalla	Volunteer run arts and craft space in Benalla	Big trippers
First People's stories	Some story telling at Winton Wetlands – don't know until you get there. Many opportunities for the local Yorta Yorta and Taungarung people to tell their stories.	Big trippers Weekend chasers
Siva Singh Memorial	Memorial commemorating the first Akhand Path, which is a continuous cover to cover reading the Sikh holy book, the Siri Guru Granth Sahib.	Niche Groups



Nature and outdoors

Benalla has a beautiful rural and urban landscape, and there are a number of opportunities to enjoy it. The Botanical Gardens, known for its rose garden, along with the Winton Wetlands and trails throughout the region offer visitors the choice of walking, riding or drive touring.

Further development of trails (all types) and bookable product supporting them (such as e-bike hire or tours) needs consideration – how they are maintained, signage and linkages within the region and to neighbouring regions. Investigate opportunities to link to neighbouring rail trails – Beechworth/bright, or Goulburn trails (Great Vic Rail trail, Murray to Mtns)

Product	Status	Market alignment
Benalla Botanic Gardens and roses	Part of the broader town attraction. Opportunities for events and other engagements to activate.	Passing traffic Big trippers Weekend chasers
Winton Wetlands – citizen science, birdlife, visitor centre, art and stargazing	The largest wetlands restoration project in the southern hemisphere brings advantages due to scale and the potential for a multitude of sustainability and scientific projects. Well developed attraction but needs more activation and signage, connectivity and interpretation.	Passing traffic Big trippers Weekend chasers Groups

Cycling: Road riding – local roads, wetlands, lake Mountain Biking - Mount Samaria State Park and Reef Hills State Park	Part of the broader TNE product, still needs development of trails, connectivity, interpretation. Gravel Grinding a particular opportunity.	Big trippers Weekend chasers
Aboriginal Community Garden	Part of the broader town attraction. Opportunities for events and other engagements to activate.	Passing traffic Big trippers Weekend chasers
Walking tracks: Lake Benalla 4.25km and nearby State Parks and Reserves, Warby and Strathbogie Ranges.	Part of the broader town attraction. Opportunities for events and other engagements to activate.	Passing traffic Big trippers Weekend chasers
Rural towns and landscapes: Baddaginnie, Devenish, Goorambat, Swanpool, Tatong, Thoona and Winton	Part of the broader regional attraction. Opportunities for events and other engagements to activate.	Big trippers Weekend chasers
Lake Nillahcootie – fishing, boating and swimming	Mostly outside of Benalla RC, but still part of the potential range of attractions. Part of the broader regional attraction. Opportunities for events and other engagements to activate.	Big trippers Weekend chasers
Brookfield Maze	Not actually within the LGA boundary, but one of the only commercial attractions in the area, this could be championed more as part of the tourism offering.	Passing traffic Big trippers Weekend chasers Groups



Sporting

Victoria is a sporting state, and many people travel extensively for sporting competitions and events. Benalla is well set up to receive golfing, bowls, football, indoor sports such as basketball, and also hosts Australia's largest gliding club.

The jewel in the sporting crown for Benalla is the Winton Motor Raceway. Described as Australia's action track, the Raceway attracts around 100,000 visitors per year who generally stay overnight in the region, many camping. Although motor racing is not a pillar of the regional or state tourism strategies, it does attract more people than any other attraction in the region, is actively growing, with plans to expand if funding is secured. Encouraging these visitors to stay longer to experience other attractions in Benalla should be a focus.

Product	Status	Market alignment
Winton Motor Raceway – venue hire and corporate events, camping	Currently hosting 145+ events per year. Seeking funding to develop a motor racing museum, corporate function centre, expanding outdoor events and camping facilities, and more. Also interested in engaging in the arts scene through murals and other connections.	Niche Groups
Indoor Sports Centre	Planned \$15m redevelopment, opportunity to attract sporting camps, training and competitions. Could require supporting accommodation to fully develop.	Groups

Benalla Golf Course	Currently developing a state of the art mini golf development that may add to the visitor attraction. Main course is 18 holes and driving range. Also has evening meals at club standard. Opportunities to attract groups with the right accommodation. Efforts being made to become more financially independent (eg mini golf offering) so they can lose the poker machines.	Groups Big trippers
Benalla Bowls Club	Currently working on delivering a Country Music Festival in the hope of engaging in a broader circuit of events. Offers lunch and dinner at club standard. Subsidised by poker machines, which not all markets like. Opportunities to attract groups with the right accommodation.	Groups Big trippers
Goldrush Hot Air Ballooning	Offering in Benalla currently only during the Canola Season – the majority of the product is in other parts of the High Country. Opportunities to develop if demand grows.	Big trippers Weekend chasers
Benalla Gliding Club	Gliding experiences available for visitors through the Gliding Club, which is walkable from town. Major opportunity to develop as part of a broader high-end experience offering in the region.	Big trippers Weekend chasers

Events

Benalla hosts many events. Its location, excellent infrastructure and ease of access make it an ideal location. The street art festival is the major event for the region, building out the arts and culture offering every year as new works of art are added to the landscape. Developing more intimate events, with live music that is linked to street art and activating spaces through the city could be an opportunity.

CommIQ data indicates that during the week the Benalla Street Art Festival ran (March 21-28, 2024), total spend in the City was over \$5 million, with an average uplift of 176% on the same time last year when the event was not held. These results indicate the impact of successful events, and should provide evidence for future investment in festivals and events. Other events include:

- Glenrowan Wine Region – trails, tastings and tales - June
- Benalla Festival - Nov
- Various Winton Raceway events – Festival of Speed – July/Aug
- Community markets (various dates for craft and farmers markets)
- Flamefest - Aug
- Benalla Races/Gold Cup - Sept

Food and Beverage

As the gateway to North East Victoria, Benalla is on the doorstep of many renowned wineries and gourmet food producers – partnerships with these producers will be essential, along with developing more local offerings eg ‘Meet the baker / maker’ experiences. Capitalising on the local creative art scene, the food and beverage offering needs to match this creative flair.

Whilst there are a number of places open during the day for visitors to enjoy in Benalla, currently there are very few options to eat out in the evenings. Other than some take away places, the Benalla Golf Club and Benalla Bowls Club cater to the club-style of eating, which will appeal mostly to big trippers and groups. The Royal Hotel provides standard pub fare and the North Eastern Hotel provides more locally sourced and high end options, aligning with the preferences of the high value creative arts and culture visitors.

Other offerings include:

- Glenrowan Wine Region cellar doors (Baileys of Glenrowan cellar door, Morrisons Winery and Taminick Cellars), Tallis Wine cellar door at Dookie Hills
- Mokoan Hub and Café (at the Winton Wetlands)
- Bakeries (local and Glenrowan), Lake side dining and café at the Art Gallery
- Little Cedar Farmhouse Goat Cheese
- Beyond the township – pubs and taverns

The significant gaps in food and beverage options has been identified by the locals and industry as a key issue for developing tourism in Benalla.

Accommodation

The accommodation offering in Benalla is limited largely to motels, holiday parks, cottages and Airbnbs. The attraction of more unique offerings is essential to compete with neighbouring regions and current visitor standards.

Unique accommodation is clearly aligned with the arts and cultural tourism market. Current unique accommodation offerings in Benalla include Camping at the Wetlands and the Little Farm of Calm wellness retreat. 6 cottages, 5 farmstays, 4 bed and breakfasts and 4 holiday houses are listed on enjoybenalla.com.au. Airbnb also lists 60 accommodation places within the township and surrounding areas, of which the majority are entire homes, and likely capture some of those listed on enjoybenalla. AirDNA lists \$231 as the average daily rate for accommodation.

Enjoybenalla.com.au also lists:

- 8 caravan, camping and holiday parks
- 3 retreats and lodges
- 1 apartment, 1 motel, 1 resort

Quality, market aligned accommodation availability at all levels has been listed as a key constraining factor in Benalla’s tourism growth opportunities, and should form a key aspect of the DMP development.

Visitor information & servicing

Visitor information is found mostly through online channels or through the Benalla Visitor Information Centre, which is a new centre still under development situated on the lake foreshore at the heart of the city. The printed Benalla visitor guide is comprehensive,

well designed and useful, also reflected in the enjoybenalla.com.au website. This is also supported by other collateral such as from the Winton Wetlands, with another well designed website for visitor information.

Key websites

Enjoybenalla.com.au

(Site Author: Visitor Information Centre)

2,046 followers on Instagram

Wintonwetlands.org.au/visit

Visitbenalla.com.au

(Site Author: unsure)

Note – there is no mention of any cycling, walking, trail adventures on visitbenalla.com.au, also no mention of products under Benalla Escapes tab. (There is an image of a cycling event and a walk in Pine Gully Falls, but no links for information).

717 followers on Instagram

benallaartgallery.com.au

4,311 followers on Instagram

www.benallastreetart.com

Benalla Street Art Trail, 214 followers on Instagram

www.benallastreetartfestival.com.au

914 followers on Instagram

www.victoriashighcountry.com.au/destinations/benalla

Great location map using pinpoint with descriptions.

Does not mention the Street Art murals as a lead product (does link to Benalla Gallery). Benalla very lost on site, lead heading for town is “At first glance, Benalla is a sleepy city.”

64.3k followers on Instagram

Signage

Signage presents a major opportunity for Benalla to further attract the passing market. With no indication of what is on offer in the city from the Hume Hwy, there is little to entice people into the town, despite the range of experiences on offer. Navigating around the town between the key experiences is also very difficult for a newcomer, and Google Maps is not always accurate.

Access and public transport

As most people visiting Benalla will arrive in a private vehicle, there is the opportunity to connect with these people via the Hume Hwy, which takes millions of people past the doorstep of the city per year. Opportunities to engage with this market include improving signage on the Hume, and providing e-vehicle chargers, in particular a supercharging station would encourage e-vehicle drivers to stop in the town. This market is more likely to be engaged in the arts, culture and heritage offering of Benalla and offering more than one charging station could present a key opportunity to engage with them.

Benalla’s location on the Albury rail line, with the station within walking distance of the city presents a major opportunity to access a brand-aligned market in a new and different way. This and the airport within walking distance provides two unique ways to access the major source market of Melbourne, presenting a key opportunity for the city’s product development.

In terms of transport within the region, the East-West public bus is reasonably comprehensive in timetable and where it travels throughout Benalla, however there is no evidence of how to engage with this service available for the visitor. There is no Uber service, no Uber Eats and limited taxi servicing in the city, limiting the opportunities for visitors to enjoy a meal and a drink in the evenings and be able to return home without driving their own vehicle.

There is also no e-bike or e-scooter hire in the city, which could alleviate some of these challenges and provide many opportunities for visitors to better enjoy the city as a whole, including the connection to Winton Wetlands.

Walking, riding and recreational infrastructure

Within Benalla city itself, there is a well connected network of riding, walking and recreational infrastructure, particularly around the Lake. There are many opportunities for this to better develop through improved interpretive and directional signage, and viewing platforms.

With the urban landscape and street art, there is enormous potential to develop a well connected and well-signed network of paths throughout the city that tell the story of the region and connect the key attractions together. Connecting through pathways can slow people down and encourage them to engage more with the town, presenting many more commercial opportunities.

Trails

Trails are a great way to connect visitors with a range of attractions they are interested in, and also provides a platform for businesses to work together to connect more closely with visitors. There are a number of trails promoting collections of tourism product in the region. Some of the key trails in the region are:

- North East Victoria Silo Art trail
- Country Pub Trail
- Ned Kelly Touring Route
- Cheese, Wine and Wetlands
- aMAzing Roses and Wine
- Silos, Pubs and Country
- Benalla Heritage and Military Trail

Industry development

Currently, Benalla has no local tourism association or chamber of commerce. This lack of platform for the industry limits the ability to grow and roll out the brand, improve industry capability and capacity, attract new investment and advocate to (and through) government.

Partnerships and collaboration could also be developed through closer industry development and engagement – both within Benalla and across the region.

Close Neighbours

One of the key opportunities for Benalla to develop is to collaborate with neighbouring regions. Nearly all of Benalla's visitors arrive by private vehicle, meaning that Benalla currently exists within a series of other experiences and opportunities for visitors. Benalla's unique arts, culture and heritage connections can provide further depth to the market offering, and as such presents opportunity for collaboration and cooperation across the region.

Key neighbours include:

- King Valley Wine Region and Milawa Gourmet Region
- Mansfield 'Man from Snowy River' country
- Strathbogie Ranges and National Parks
- Victoria's High Country and skiing destinations
- Yarrawonga/Mulwala Gateway to Murray River

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges

This destination assessment has detailed the strategic context, market opportunities, global and national trends, and the products and experiences in the Benalla region. This analysis summarises these and identifies key opportunities and challenges for the Destination Management Plan to address.

Strengths

The Benalla region has a significant number of existing assets that can be used to further develop the city's visitor economy. Clever investment in the past has left Benalla with a strong offering particularly in arts and culture that provide a strategic advantage for the city to distinguish itself from the many other beautiful towns in the region. Strong connectivity with Melbourne as a key market and centrally located within the region, Benalla has a significant number of opportunities to capitalise on to fully develop the visitor economy.

Strong existing arts, culture and heritage assets:

- Benalla Art Gallery
- Established Street Art Festival
- Silo Art Trail
- Migrant Camp

Winton Wetlands:

- Visitor centre
- Sculpture & art trails
- Star gazing pad
- Cycleway connecting to Benalla
- Walking tracks

Aviation precinct within close proximity of town, with existing assets:

- Migrant Camp
- Ballooning
- Gliding
- Flying
- Aviation Museum

Winton Motor Raceway

- Regular events throughout the year

- Growing event schedule outside of Motor Racing
- Supercar hosting

Local produce assets:

- Glenrowan Wine Region
- Local agricultural produce

Beautiful natural and urban landscape

- Beautiful urban streetscape
- Lake and surrounding recreation infrastructure, including splash park
- Botanical gardens
- Wildflowers & canola fields blooming
- Dark skies

Infrastructure & visitor servicing

- Cinema & retail
- Visitor centre, Ned Kelly Sash & costume museum
- Strong branding on signage throughout the area with the Benalla font and branding
- Golfing, basketball, bowls, football, netball, archery, hockey, little athletics, soccer, baseball, taekwondo.
- Benalla Sports and Equestrian Centre - a range of horse events use this facility as some is undercover.
- Some high quality Airbnbs on offer

Growing and strengthening economy outside of tourism

- Solar farms
- Manufacturing

Gateway and/or connector to the wider region:

- High Country winter resorts
- Highlands - Wangaratta, Bright, Beechworth
- Glenrowan – Ned Kelly interest point
- Goulburn Valley - Nagambie & Shepparton
- Murray Region

Connectivity

- Just off Hume Fwy
- Train station walking distance to town
- Scheduled XPT and VLine services
- Fly in to town and walk about

Weaknesses

The weaknesses in Benalla's product centre mostly on resourcing and investment. Building on the considerable amount of public investment to improve investor confidence will be a key way to address many of these weaknesses.

Limited financial capacity of council to deliver services and the major projects needed to elevate the visitor economy

- Lack of investment in tourism product from private enterprise and the government
- Key attractions heavily dependent on volunteers
- Resourcing – aging infrastructure eg Art Gallery, and maintenance and upkeep of art and sculpture installations eg. The Trail to Winton (bike and walk) not maintained.

Food and dining opportunities for visitors – particularly in the evenings:

- Currently quality, brand aligned and locally sourced restaurant options are limited.
- Very little connection of provenance to food in the region.
- Commercial Hotel and surrounding area standing vacant in key part of the town that needs activation

Quality accommodation at a range of levels:

- Caravanning & camping and dump spots
- Quality mid-range accommodation
- 4.5 star accommodation

Signage & wayfinding, visitor servicing

- Only one Electric Vehicle charging station
- Limited signage and wayfinding around the city and region
- No real presence on the Hume Highway to communicate the range and depth of activity available
- Lack of recognition of offering by TNE and Visit Victoria for supporting marketing activity
- Public transport – lack of transport options and connections
- Getting people off the Hume Highway – usually heading to Bright, or High Country to ski

Connected industry - Operators understanding where they 'fit' into tourism – need for industry development.

Bookable tourism product

- Very little bookable tourism product in the area.
- Most attractions are free, provided by the council, without business plans developed to gain economic benefit from them.

Product development opportunities

Throughout the consultation and research process, a number of tourism product development opportunities arose for Benalla. Although there are a lot of attractions in the city, the lack of bookable or commercial product in places a burden on the local government and makes it harder to attract further private investment. The following products were some of the major opportunities identified through this process:

Benalla Art Gallery redevelopment. A key major attractor of high value visitors for the region, need to fully fund the redevelopment, as well as ongoing management, maintenance and marketing.

Commercial Hotel redevelopment. At the heart of the town and a major element of the urban landscape, this hotel offering lunches and dinners that are locally connected and aligned to the market's preferences, could present a major opportunity for the city.

Winton Motorsport Museum and Events Precinct. Already housing many vehicles at the Winton Motor Raceway, the Motorsport Museum would offer a further attraction in the region, supplemented by the planned events space and major outdoor event facility.

Brewery/distillery development. Although there are many of these, offering locally brewed or distilled product to be sold at a venue in the city would meet market needs. This could be developed in partnership with the local brewery and wineries open in the Glenrowan region.

Migrant Camp. As such a significant historical site, the Migrant Camp needs to be developed as a product and also form an integrated part of the broader aviation precinct.

Winton Wetlands. Building on what is already a major attraction, develop the Winton Wetlands with track and trail infrastructure and interpretation. Examine potential for standing camps or other unique accommodation opportunities.

Bike and e-bike hire. Supporting the development of track and trail infrastructure, a bike and e-bike hire business could activate these and the businesses around them, such as cafes and museums.

Opportunities & Challenges

Aside from the above listed product opportunities, there are many opportunities for Benalla to develop the tourism industry further. Opportunities and challenges often go hand in hand – opportunities are usually found when a challenge arises that needs to be met. This analysis identifies key areas of opportunity and challenge that were identified through the research and consultation and will form the basis of the Benalla DMP, to be developed with further opportunities as the plan is developed.

THEME	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
Investment	Benalla Art Gallery unable to attract blockbuster touring exhibitions. Limited financial resources	Funding attraction for public investment – critically the Benalla Art Gallery. Investment prospectuses, including red carpet, not red tape, business concierge, planning assistance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Food and beverage- Accommodation- Tourism businesses (eg. bike and e-bike hire)- Brand aligned experiences
Signage – attracting visitors and keeping them	No signage indicating what Benalla has to offer on the Hume Fwy. Lack of directional signage for visitors around the city – in vehicles and walking. Lack of interpretive signage around the city.	Signage audit and strategy to develop coordinated visitor experience and engage more people from the Hume Fwy and into major attractions.
Marketing	Lack of resources and voice in TNE means little marketing is undertaken for the town. Need for further marketing development.	Harnessing the power of social media and influencers.
Aviation Precinct	Uncoordinated and poorly signed access to the precinct, lack of space for the Migrant Camp to develop, need for infrastructure to meet the needs of all users.	Aviation precinct masterplan developed taking into account the visitor and user experiences. Maximising the opportunity from the Migrant Camp, Aviation Museum, Gliding Club, airport and Ballooning, as well as access from the town.
Food and beverage	Not enough dining options for visitors, not enough aligned to the high value market.	Develop a needs assessment for food and beverage, with identified opportunities for develop. Provide access to data for potential investors. Anchor restaurant Meet the maker Proximity and connection to primary producers, including vineyards eg Glenrowan, and local bakers
Industry development	No tourism association or chamber of commerce.	Develop a tourism industry association

		<p>Building out partnerships within and across the regions.</p> <p>Connections with other regions</p> <p>Brand toolkit development</p>
Access	<p>Only one EV charging station, not always reliable.</p> <p>Lack of Uber/Taxi transport in the evenings.</p>	<p>EV Supercharging station</p>
Accommodation	<p>Lack of range of accommodation in the city.</p>	<p>Attracting a 4.5star hotel</p> <p>Developing unique accommodation opportunities</p>
Events	<p>Need for more events</p>	<p>Attracting more live music events</p> <p>Benalla Fawckner Drive redevelopment to accommodate large festivals and community events</p> <p>Botanic Gardens – Rose city / Floriade</p>
Creative development		<p>Creative hub</p> <p>Opportunities to leverage the theme of a Creative City – or to aspire to be a UNESCO Creative City is a real possibility. Becoming a UNESCO Creative City, like Ballarat, means that the city places creativity and cultural industries at the heart of its development plan at the local level. This would also promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.</p> <p>Opportunities to work with and build on partnerships with other successful regional galleries exist - to hold joint travelling exhibitions and learn from their strategies. Art galleries can also be creative in their delivery – like having pop up installations in unexpected places, offering wine and art, growing masterpiece collections and offering online shops for creative pieces.</p>
Nature connection		<p>Lake precinct development</p> <p>Connection to surrounding nature – mountains, national parks, Wetlands</p> <p>Nature play for kids</p>

Case studies – opportunities

The DMP will identify some key case studies to build opportunities from. Some possibilities for these are detailed below.

Case Study – Bicheno Beams: Activating the Night Time Economy



A sleepy, small town on Tasmania's East Coast has activated their night-time economy at their quietest time in the middle of winter through the delivery of Bicheno Beams.²⁰

Led by the local community, funds were raised to purchase the equipment and each year an artist is commissioned to design a light show with a theme. Run by volunteers and supported by the local RSL club who raises funds with a sausage sizzle, an area was set aside in the centre of town to put on the show every night for approximately three weeks.

This initiative activated local businesses to open in the evenings and began to develop a night time economy for the town, attracting visitors from across the state to visit at a time they would not normally.

²⁰ [Bicheno Beams](#)

Case Study – Heritage Highway: Bringing art to the Highway



The road between Hobart and Launceston is a major highway travelled by many visitors, bypassing many towns on the way through. The rich history and heritage of the villages and hamlets throughout the region was not evident from the highway and it was difficult for visitors to connect with the stories that lie within the villages.

To counter this, funding was received to develop the Heritage Highway, a story telling platform for the bushranger and pioneer heritage of the region. Silhouette sculptures in fields along the highway were installed to give people an indication of the stories and to provoke a curiosity of what lies in the towns just off the highway.²¹

An initiative such as this that focuses on the Hume Hwy around Benalla could build a creative presence and encourage more visitation from this major potential market driving past.

Case Study – Bendigo Art Gallery

The Bendigo Art Gallery is currently planning expansions to deliver a world-class learning centre for students, second-level blockbuster exhibition space, Traditional Owner Place of Keeping for artefacts, expanded access to free and collection-based exhibitions, redeveloped restaurant with a City of Gastronomy offering, expanded commercial opportunities including pop-up blockbuster exhibition shop, accessible amenities and expanded public spaces.²²

While the neighbouring gallery is closed for renovations, Benalla Art Gallery could partner and host works to encourage Bendigo residents and visitors to travel a little further field.

²¹ [Discover the Heritage Highway Silhouette Trail - Hobart and Beyond](#)

²² <https://www.bendigoregion.com.au/bendigo-art-gallery/redevelopment-project>

Case Study - Creative State of Mind campaign for Creative Cities VIC

A new marketing initiative for the Victorian Creative Cities Network aims to elevate Victoria's profile as a hub for artists, makers and creators to thrive. (April 2024)²³

Creative State of Mind heroes Victoria's four UNESCO Creative Cities: Melbourne (Literature), Geelong (Design), Ballarat (Craft & Folk Art) Bendigo and regions (Gastronomy). As the only state in the world to boast four UNESCO Creative City designations, Victoria is a global creative leader.

Victoria's creative industries contribute more than \$38 billion to the state's economy. Creative workers make up almost 9% of Victoria's total workforce. The state's creative industries play a hugely significant role in Victoria's social and cultural reputation.

The Creative State of Mind campaign captures Victoria's creative spirit and encourages Victorians, Australians and global visitors alike to explore and experience the Creative Cities Network.

Vision of the City of Ballarat's 'Creative City Strategy' is *Ballarat is an iconic city which inspires creativity, demands discovery and rewards the inquisitive.*²⁴

Investment prospectus examples - public and private:

Rockhampton Region Investment Prospectus: Investment Prospectus Advance Rockhampton

Northern Tasmania Development Corporation Priority Projects: REGIONAL PRIORITY PROJECTS — NTDC

West Coast Tasmania Adventure Tourism Prospectus: 1.-AdventureTourism-Prospectus.pdf
(westcoast.tas.gov.au)

²³ <https://artsreview.com.au/creative-state-of-mind-to-celebrate-victorias-four-unesco-creative-cities/#:~:text=At%20its%20core%2C%20Creative%20State,is%20a%20global%20creative%20leader.>

²⁴ <https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Ballarat%20Creative%20City%20Strategy.pdf>

Acronyms

Benalla	Benalla Rural City Local Government Authority
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DMP	Destination Management Plan
IVS	International Visitor Survey
LGA	Local Government Area
NVS	National Visitor Survey
RDV	Regional Development Victoria
RMB	Resort Management Board
RTB	Regional Tourism Board
TNE	Tourism North East
TRA	Tourism Research Australia
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
VIC	Visitor Information Centre
VEP	Visitor Economy Partnership

Definitions

Day Trip Visitor - Those who travel for a round trip distance of at least 50 kilometres, are away from home for at least 4 hours, and who do not spend a night away from home as part of their travel. Same day travel as part of overnight travel is excluded.

Overnight Visitor - People aged 15 years and over who undertake an overnight trip of one night or more and at least 40 kilometres away from home are referred to as overnight visitors. Only those trips where the respondent is away from home for less than 12 months are in scope of the NVS.

International visitor – visitors who are currently a resident overseas, have been in Australia less than one year and are aged 15 years or over.

Appendix 1. Consultation Summary

Consultation occurred across May – June 2024.

Consultation was through the following channels:

- Steering Committee Meetings
- Industry and community workshop 13 May 2024
- One on one meetings with interested parties and identified stakeholders
- LGA meeting and briefings
- Site visits across the region
- Online community survey

Steering Committee:

BRCC - Manager Economic Development and Sustainability
BRCC - Visitor Economy Coordinator
BRCC - Communications and Engagement Coordinator
BRCC – Events Coordinator
BRCC - Business Development Coordinator
BRCC - CEO
Director - Benalla Art Gallery

Benalla Rural City representation in consultation:

Mayor	Councillors x3
CEO	Manager Economic Development and Sustainability
Visitor Economy Coordinator	Business Development Coordinator
Communications and Engagement Coordinator	Events Coordinator
Project Coordinator Economic Diversification Plan	

Organisations consulted with through the process:

Tourism North East	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
Winton Wetlands	Benalla Historical Society
Benalla Art Gallery	Benalla Auto Club
Winton Motor Raceway	Munroe and Sergeant Café
The Dairy - Marangan	Friends of Benalla Art Gallery
Benalla Aviation Museum	Goldrush Ballooning

Owner – Gold Rush Ballooning	Little Cedar Goats Cheese
Benalla Migrant Camp	Odonata
Gliding Club of Victoria	Benalla Bowls Club
Benalla Golf Club	Benalla Racing Club
Rushton Cottage	

Community Survey:

A survey was sent to the Benalla community through the BRCC email database. The survey was open from the 8 May – 6 June 2024 and received 13 responses.

Survey content:

1. Are you...Please tick all that apply.
 - A local resident
 - A local business operator (not specifically tourism)
 - A tourism operator
 - Working in Government (local, state, federal, RDC)
 - None of the above
2. In just a few words, what do you think are the four most significant challenges for tourism in the Benalla area? Please keep this brief. Only a few words per challenge.
3. What do you think are the top three priorities the develop tourism in the Benalla area?
4. In a few words, what do you value most about the Benalla area?
5. Please share anything else you would like to add about tourism that we haven't captured in this survey.



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5. Urgent Business

Closure of Meeting