

Benalla Rural City Council

Finance and Planning Committee

Agenda

Date: Wednesday 14 May 2025

Time: 6pm

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

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Agenda

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Chair | Councillor Peter Davis | |
| Councillors | Councillor Bernie Hearn (Mayor) | |
| | Councillor Justin King (Deputy Mayor) | |
| | Councillor David Blore | |
| | Councillor Puna Hewa Gunaratne | |
| | Councillor Jillian Merkel | |
| In attendance | Councillor Nathan Tolliday | |
| | Peter Keane | Chief Executive Officer |
| | Robert Barber | General Manager Corporate |
| | Jane Archbold | Manager Community |
| | Adrian Gasperoni | Manager Assets and Infrastructure |
| | Cathy Fitzpatrick | Manager Finance |
| | Janine McMaster | Manager People and Performance |
| | Courtney Naughton | Manager Economic Development and Sustainability |
| | Nilesh Singh | Manager Development |
| | Greg Robertson | Manager Facilities and Information Technology |
| | 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.

Governance Matters

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

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.

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

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.

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 9 April 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Business

1. Financial Report For The Quarter Ended 31 March 2025

Ref: 198090245 - 2600

Cathy Fitzpatrick – Manager Finance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the financial results compared to budget for the quarter ended 31 March 2025 and presents outcomes from the 2024/25 third quarter budget review.

BACKGROUND

Section 97 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires that at the end of each quarter of the financial year, the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a quarterly budget report is presented to the Council at a meeting that is open to the public.

The budget report must include a comparison of the actual and budgeted results to date and an explanation of any material variations. In addition, the second quarterly report of a financial year must include a statement by the Chief Executive Officer as to whether a revised budget is, or may be, required.

OPERATING RESULT

Year to date 31 March 2025 operating result compared to budget

The report contains the Standard Income Statement and Statement of Capital Projects. The operating result for the quarter ended 31 March 2025 was a surplus of \$13.299 million which was \$8.748 million more than the budgeted surplus of \$4.579 million as shown in Table 1 below.

Full Year (30 June 2025) Forecast Operating Result compared to budget

The forecast operating result for the year ending 30 June 2025 has been updated to reflect the third quarter budget review.

The forecast operating result for the year ending 30 June 2025 is a surplus of \$2.588 million which is a favorable variance of \$2.404 million compared to the budgeted surplus of \$184,000 as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Net Operating Result For the Period Ended 31 March 2025 and Third Quarter Forecast Compared To Budget As At 30 June 2025

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals \$'000 | 2024/25 YTD Budget \$'000 | 2024/25 YTD Variance \$'000 | 2024/25 Full Year Budget \$'000 | 2024/25 Q3 YE Forecast \$'000 | 2024/25 Budget Forecast Variance \$'000 |
|--|----------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Income / Revenue | | | | | | | |
| Rates and charges | 1 | 23,166 | 22,931 | 235 | 23,041 | 23,274 | 233 |
| Statutory fees and fines | 2 | 367 | 462 | -95 | 617 | 440 | -177 |
| User fees | 3 | 3,021 | 2,706 | 316 | 3,546 | 3,700 | 155 |
| Grants - operating | 4 | 7,624 | 6,245 | 1,379 | 6,588 | 7,679 | 1,091 |
| Grants - capital | 5 | 1,151 | 0 | 1,151 | 4,356 | 2,839 | -1,517 |
| Contributions -monetary and non-monetary | 6 | 3,625 | 94 | 3,531 | 205 | 3,705 | 3,500 |
| Other income | 7 | 797 | 602 | 195 | 602 | 812 | 210 |
| Total Revenue | | 39,751 | 33,040 | 6,712 | 38,956 | 42,449 | 3,493 |

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actual \$'000 | 2024/25 YTD Budget \$'000 | 2024/25 YTD Variance \$'000 | Full Year Budget \$'000 | Q3 YE Forecast \$'000 | EOY Budget Forecast Variance \$'000 |
|---|-------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Expenses | | | | | | | |
| Employee costs | 8 | 9,050 | 10,428 | 1,377 | 13,817 | 13,632 | 185 |
| Materials and services | 9 | 10,957 | 11,573 | 616 | 15,564 | 17,494 | -1,930 |
| Depreciation | 10 | 5,366 | 5,456 | 90 | 7,941 | 7,154 | 787 |
| Amortisation - intangible assets | | 295 | 295 | - | 394 | 394 | |
| Depreciation - right of use assets | | 226 | 241 | 15 | 322 | 328 | -6 |
| Allowance for impairment losses | | - | - | - | 14 | 14 | |
| Borrowing costs | | 71 | 87 | 15 | 116 | 116 | |
| Finance costs - leases | | (27) | 11 | 38 | 15 | 15 | |
| Other expenses | | 359 | 369 | 10 | 589 | 589 | |
| Net gain (or loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment | 11 | 125 | - | -125 | - | 125 | -125 |
| Total expenses | | 26,422 | 28,460 | 2,036 | 38,772 | 39,861 | 1,089 |
| Surplus/(deficit) for the period | | 13,329 | 4,580 | 8,748 | 184 | 2,588 | 2,404 |

Income Statement Notes:

1. Rates and charges: favourable variance at 31 March 2025 by \$234,906 due to supplementary rate revenue.
Year-end forecast favourable result \$232,771 as consideration of most valuation objections are near finalisation.
2. Statutory fees and fines: unfavourable variance \$95,285 as permit fees \$119,179 less than budgeted offset by favorable variances: Fines \$3,486 and Certificate charges \$20,941.
Year-end forecast unfavorable variance of \$177,319 mainly due to less than budgeted Permit fee revenue.
3. User fees favourable variance of \$315,601 year-to-date (YTD) due to timing in YTD budget lines.
Significant favourable variances:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Landfill operation fees | \$147,528 |
| Benalla Cinema operating income | \$102,816 |
| Art Gallery | \$41,339 |
| Benalla Airport and Facilities | \$26,937 |

Forecast results to 30 June favourable \$154,719 due to various small variances.
4. \$1.379 unbudgeted grant funding received. Significant favourable variances:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Natural Disaster Funding (will be adjusted throughout 24/25 by \$680,000) | \$561,907 |
| Financial Assistance Grants - General | \$318,371 |
| Financial Assistance Grants - Roads | \$188,758 |
| Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program | \$60,000 |
| Roadside Weeds and Pest Program 24/25 | \$41,251 |
| L2P Program | \$40,928 |
| TAC Safety Strategy and Action Plan & Pathways to the future project | \$40,000 |
| Regional Planning Hub Project | \$35,062 |
| Sustainability Victoria - Communications and Engagement Plan Income | \$34,440 |

Year-end forecast \$1.091 favourable due to the grants detailed above (many are paid quarterly) and confirmed additional grants that will be received later in year.
5. Capital Grants – favourable year to date variance of \$1.151 million due to recognition of grant funding assessed as earned earlier than budgeted.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Roads to Recovery | \$850,100 |
| Blackspot Funding | \$124,041 |
| Benalla Foreshore & Splash Park Building Works Package | \$176,899 |

Year-end forecast unfavourable variance \$1.517 million due to a delay in the Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment Project. 2024/25 forecast grant income reduced from \$2.712 million to \$510,000.

6. Contributions: favourable variance \$3.531 million includes additional monetary contribution funding received, timing variations and contributions non-monetary of \$3.2 million gifted assets from a subdivision.

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Contributed non-monetary subdivision – Developer contributions | \$3,269,688 |
| Visit Victoria - Street Art | \$125,000 |
| Victorias Container Deposit Scheme CDS | \$45,079 |
| Art Gallery Projects | \$38,909 |
| Public Open Space Contributions | \$24,298 |
| Street Art – Local Business Contributions | \$20,736 |
| Alliance CH Flexible Package funding | \$17,217 |

Forecast results to 30 June favourable \$3.5 million due to the above items.

7. Other Income: favourable variance of \$194,803 due to higher earning on investments.
End of year forecast \$210,000 favourable.
8. Employee Costs: favourable variance by \$1,377,248 due to various staffing vacancies and several staff accessing long service leave. During 23/24 financial year several grants were received and recognised, however, delivery of projects incurred salary costs throughout 2024/25. Emergency events also incurred additional salary expenses not budgeted for.

Forecast results to 30 June is expected to be favourable \$185,854 impacted by additional labour costs for emergency events, operational requirements and additional grant projects increasing employee costs, offset by savings due to vacant positions.

9. Materials and Services: favourable variance of \$615,907 due to timing variances in the YTD budget for costs associated with scoping of future capital projects \$263,147, Consultants expenditure \$194,154 and election costs \$96,767.

Results to 30 June expected to be unfavourable by \$1.930 million. Impacted by carry forward expenditure items from 2023/24 totalling \$1.358 million. Additional grants projects in 2024/25 resulting in additional materials and services costs:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Benalla Street Art Grant project | \$150,000 |
| Asset management services | \$90,000 |
| Corporate - Council Plan development | \$65,000 |
| Art Gallery projects funded by contributions | \$43,200 |
| Inland Rails Authority Project expenses | \$39,000 |
| Benalla Economic Diversification Plan | \$36,000 |

Appendix 1 details Materials and Services expenditure to 31 March 2025.

10. Year-end Depreciation is a favorable variance of \$787,000 due to 2023/24 delayed building and infrastructure assets capital expenditure and the resulting impact on deprecation expenses.
11. Net gain (or loss) on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment unfavorable variance of \$125,044 to 31 March 2025. Results to 30 June 2025 expected to be \$125,000 unfavorable.

CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAM

Capital works expenditure to 31 March 2025 was \$4.425 million against a year to date budgeted expenditure of \$8.088 million as detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Capital Program result for the period ending 31 March 2025 and Forecast to 30 June 2025

| Asset By Type | 2024/25 YTD Actuals \$'000 | 2024/25 YTD Budgets \$'000 | 2024/25 YTD Variance \$'000 | 2024/25 Full Year Budget \$'000 | 2024/25 Q3 Review Forecast \$'000 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| (A) Property | | | | | |
| Buildings - specialised | 518 | 2,306 | 1,788 | 3,662 | 1,506 |
| (B) Plant and equipment | | | | | |
| Computers and telecommunications | 179 | 180 | 1 | 180 | 309 |
| Fixture fittings and furniture | 17 | 115 | 98 | 120 | 128 |
| Library stock | 89 | 91 | 2 | 96 | 96 |
| Plant and equipment | 661 | 695 | 34 | 1,160 | 1,450 |
| (C) Infrastructure | | | | | |
| Bridge | 86 | 350 | 264 | 600 | 840 |
| Drainage | 118 | 582 | 464 | 972 | 672 |
| Footpath | 344 | 248 | -96 | 248 | 436 |
| Other Infrastructure | 0 | 0 | 0 | 367 | 0 |
| Parks open space and streetscapes | 297 | 75 | -222 | 75 | 700 |
| Recreational, leisure and community | 8 | 0 | -8 | 0 | 80 |
| Roads | 2,083 | 2,186 | 103 | 2,186 | 2,783 |
| Waste management | 25 | 1,260 | 1,235 | 1,350 | 78 |
| Total | 4,425 | 8,088 | 3,663 | 11,016 | 9,078 |

Variances in the Capital Works budget are discussed in Agenda Item 3: Capital Works Program Status Update as at 31 March 2025.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Leadership

- Good governance.
- High performance culture.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Significant additional carry forward items from 23/24 Budget for both operating statement items and capital works projects have been forecast to spend throughout 2024/25 year.

As a result, carry forward items from 2023/24 Budget \$1.401 million for materials and services expenditure is included in the 30 June 2025 forecast in employee costs and materials and services, this is partly funded from unspent grant revenue recognised in the prior year.

The forecast result is based on the Council's status as at 31 March 2025.

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 the used |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Inform | We will provide information | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Report presented to Council.▪ Report published on Council's website. |

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*.

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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Materials and services expenditure to 31 March 2025

Appendix 1

| Materials and services | 2024/25 YTD Actuals | 2024/25 YTD Budgets | 2024/25 YTD Variance | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 04: Vandalism | \$ 5,045 | \$ 6,723 | \$ 1,678 | \$ 8,492 |
| 05: Contract Staff | \$ 53,209 | \$ 143,154 | \$ 89,945 | \$ 64,101 |
| 06: Catering & Refreshments | \$ 54,242 | \$ 28,212 | -\$ 26,030 | \$ 45,296 |
| 07: Materials | \$ 544,994 | \$ 564,198 | \$ 19,204 | \$ 872,462 |
| 08: Contract Payments | \$ 3,912,053 | \$ 2,973,624 | -\$ 938,429 | \$ 4,142,355 |
| 09: Merchandise | \$ 58,491 | \$ 45,630 | -\$ 12,861 | \$ 60,845 |
| 10: Functions & Receptions | \$ 20,741 | \$ 21,471 | \$ 730 | \$ 28,683 |
| 11: Stores Issues | \$ 106,816 | \$ 141,549 | \$ 34,733 | \$ 189,755 |
| 12: Repairs & Maintenance | \$ 300,005 | \$ 309,003 | \$ 8,998 | \$ 437,994 |
| 18: Lease Payments | \$ 4,092 | \$ 29,706 | \$ 25,614 | \$ 47,611 |
| 20: Bank Charges | \$ 30,420 | \$ 39,621 | \$ 9,201 | \$ 52,841 |
| 21: Advertising & Promotion | \$ 71,654 | \$ 58,683 | -\$ 12,971 | \$ 87,884 |
| 23: Exhibitions | \$ 55,141 | \$ 60,684 | \$ 5,543 | \$ 80,916 |
| 24: Insurance | \$ 520,779 | \$ 604,672 | \$ 83,893 | \$ 643,898 |
| 25: Legal Expenses | \$ 99,476 | \$ 121,297 | \$ 21,821 | \$ 164,674 |
| 26: Consultants General | \$ 245,919 | \$ 956,493 | \$ 710,574 | \$ 1,453,186 |
| 27: Membership & Subscriptions | \$ 217,228 | \$ 187,467 | -\$ 29,761 | \$ 259,078 |
| 28: Security Expenses | \$ 31,259 | \$ 30,573 | -\$ 686 | \$ 40,815 |
| 29: Postage & Freight | \$ 63,982 | \$ 43,383 | -\$ 20,599 | \$ 57,848 |
| 30: Printing, Copying & Stationery | \$ 35,154 | \$ 76,539 | \$ 41,385 | \$ 109,316 |
| 31: Rent | \$ 43,387 | \$ 42,279 | -\$ 1,108 | \$ 56,379 |
| 32: Computer Support/Software | \$ 1,062,661 | \$ 969,438 | -\$ 93,223 | \$ 1,110,012 |
| 33: Internal Plant Hire Expense | -\$ 6,564 | \$ 55,779 | \$ 62,343 | \$ 76,233 |
| 35: Travel Expenses | \$ 10,315 | \$ 1,734 | -\$ 8,581 | \$ 4,256 |
| 36: Meeting Expenses | \$ 3,452 | \$ 4,701 | \$ 1,249 | \$ 7,279 |
| 37: Staff Training / Courses | \$ 92,578 | \$ 108,189 | \$ 15,611 | \$ 144,886 |
| 38: Vehicle Expenses | \$ 8,732 | \$ 150 | -\$ 8,582 | \$ 200 |
| 39: Electricity | \$ 288,458 | \$ 414,820 | \$ 126,362 | \$ 546,449 |
| 40: Water Consumption | \$ 36,296 | \$ 58,806 | \$ 22,510 | \$ 78,448 |
| 41: Gas | \$ 18,581 | \$ 26,049 | \$ 7,468 | \$ 34,739 |
| 42: Telephone | \$ 68,979 | \$ 115,884 | \$ 46,905 | \$ 154,527 |
| 43: Contributions & Reimbursements | \$ 11,575 | \$ 39,138 | \$ 27,563 | \$ 52,188 |

| Materials and services | 2024/25 YTD Actuals | 2024/25 YTD Budgets | 2024/25 YTD Variance | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 47: Green Waste Mulching | \$ 68,527 | \$ 56,250 | -\$ 12,277 | \$ 75,000 |
| 49: Machine Hire | \$ 19,276 | \$ 7,875 | -\$ 11,401 | \$ 10,500 |
| 51: E.P.A. Levy | \$ 753,082 | \$ 1,057,029 | \$ 303,947 | \$ 1,409,375 |
| 52: Domestic Animals Levy | \$ 12,071 | \$ 10,728 | -\$ 1,343 | \$ 14,306 |
| 53: Management Committees | \$ 55,443 | \$ 111,378 | \$ 55,935 | \$ 148,515 |
| 54: Cleaning Expenses | \$ 215,574 | \$ 182,301 | -\$ 33,273 | \$ 291,116 |
| 103: Vehicle Fuel | \$ 303,536 | \$ 294,777 | -\$ 8,759 | \$ 394,253 |
| 104: Vehicle Maintenance - Standard | \$ 23,453 | \$ 50,151 | \$ 26,698 | \$ 68,210 |
| 105: Vehicle Lease Payments | \$ 54,887 | \$ 10,203 | -\$ 44,684 | \$ 15,139 |
| 109: Canteen Trading Purchases | \$ 24,087 | \$ 7,092 | -\$ 16,995 | \$ 16,457 |
| 110: Distibuter Costs - movies | \$ 61,239 | \$ 49,171 | -\$ 12,068 | \$ 52,994 |
| 126: Landfill Daily Cover | \$ 3,423 | \$ 11,250 | \$ 7,827 | \$ 15,000 |
| 127: Landfill Rock Supplied | \$ 6,192 | \$ 26,250 | \$ 20,058 | \$ 35,000 |
| 128: Gas Monitoring - Landfill | \$ - | \$ 10,785 | \$ 10,785 | \$ 14,382 |
| 131: Diesel Rebate (Negative Expense) | -\$ 57,561 | -\$ 39,375 | \$ 18,186 | -\$ 52,500 |
| 138: Councillors Training | \$ 10,558 | \$ 11,328 | \$ 770 | \$ 15,104 |
| 139: Councillors' Other Reimbursements | \$ 27 | \$ - | -\$ 27 | \$ - |
| 140: Carry Forward Expenditure | \$ 5,373 | \$ 10,560 | \$ 5,188 | \$ 1,246,366 |
| 144: Vehicle Maintenance - Repairs | \$ 130,759 | \$ 108,837 | -\$ 21,922 | \$ 145,118 |
| 145: Tyres Purchased for Plant | \$ 26,306 | \$ 26,691 | \$ 385 | \$ 35,591 |
| 146: Registrations | \$ 33,305 | \$ 18,198 | -\$ 15,107 | \$ 24,268 |
| 16: Services (Non Contract) To Council | \$ 1,042,871 | \$ 1,179,745 | \$ 136,874 | \$ 2,179,431 |
| 160: Audit / Monitoring costs Landfill | \$ 37,766 | \$ 39,480 | \$ 1,714 | \$ 52,641 |
| 170: Museum Fees | \$ 5,944 | \$ 819 | -\$ 5,125 | \$ 1,095 |
| 171: Volunteer (Internal Charge) expenses | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 104,373 |
| 179: Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging | \$ 663 | \$ - | -\$ 663 | \$ - |
| 199: Internal Charge - Expense | \$ 37,950 | \$ 15,387 | -\$ 22,563 | \$ 22,354 |
| 34: Goods Delivered (Contractual) | \$ 12,818 | \$ 36,067 | \$ 23,249 | \$ 46,761 |
| Total | \$ 10,956,718 | \$ 11,572,625 | \$ 615,907 | \$ 17,494,494 |

2. Finance Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 March 2025

Ref: 198090245-2603
Cathy Fitzpatrick – Manager Finance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents an overview of the functions of the Finance Department for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

Finance

- Quarter three review of forecast result for 30 June 2025 considering impacts against budget phasing 2024/25.
- Released 2025/26 Budget Program and compiling 4-year budget documentation.
- External Audit Preparedness program commenced - introduction of associated software for Financial Statement 2025.
- Two Finance staff member attended the FinPro training day.
- Revenue Management Association conference attended by Revenue, Property and Valuations Coordinator – focus was on Emergency Services Volunteer Fund introduction.
- Pension Concession Audit (conducted biannually) throughout the quarter (February – April 2025).
- Ongoing participation in North Eastern Digital Transformation Partnership (CODI) system mapping of data for new computer system.
- Reviewed banking charges in line with council's transition to State Government Procurement Contract terms.

Sundry Debtors

An analysis of the unpaid sundry accounts as at that date with comparative data for the previous year is as follows excludes Natural Disaster events *:

Debtors balances:

| Date | 90 days | 60 days | 30 days | Current | Total |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|
| 31/03/25* | \$5,733,543 | \$7,601 | \$250,034 | \$484,545 | \$6,471,176 |
| 31/12/24 | \$100,090 | \$170,671 | \$232,105 | \$307,885 | \$810,752 |
| 30/09/24 | \$0 | \$40,510 | \$97,293 | \$145,170 | \$282,973 |
| 30/06/24 | \$38,726 | \$0 | \$391,383 | \$265,867 | \$695,977 |
| 31/03/24 | \$114,503 | \$141,413 | \$281,064 | \$500,271 | \$1,037,251 |

*Claims for Natural Disaster events are recorded separately: Debtor:Department of Justice and Community Safety - Emergency Recovery Victoria. Total owed \$5,547,582, comprising:

1. Victorian Floods (6 October 2022)
2. Benalla Tornado (14 January 2023)
3. Victorian floods and storms December 2023.

Investment Portfolio

In accordance with the Investment Policy, details of investments held at 31 March 2025 are provided in the following table.

Table 1. Investments held at 31 March 2025

| Bank | Short-term credit rating | Investment type | Amount invested '000 | Interest rate | Term (days) | Maturity date |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| NAB | A-1+ | TD | 3,295 | 5.12% | 182 | 07-May-25 |
| Westpac | A-1+ | TD | 2,206 | 4.95% | 182 | 30-Apr-25 |
| ANZ | A-1+ | TD | 4,060 | 4.88% | 182 | 24-May-25 |
| Westpac | A-1+ | TD | 2,203 | 5.00% | 147 | 28-Apr-25 |
| Westpac | A-1+ | TD | 3,000 | 4.85% | 152 | 30-Jun-25 |
| Westpac | A-1+ | TD | 4,000 | 4.90% | 182 | 04-Aug-25 |
| NAB | A-1+ | TD | 1,027 | 4.75% | 182 | 05-Aug-25 |
| NAB | A-1+ | TD | 4,000 | 4.75% | 152 | 20-Aug-25 |
| Subtotal | \$23,791 | | | | | |
| CBA | A-1+ | At call | \$4,290 | 0.25% | | |
| CBA | A-1+ | Operating | \$5,854 | 4.30% | | |
| Subtotal | | | \$10,144 | | | |
| Total | | | \$33,935 | | | |

*TD refers to general term deposits where the use of interest earned is not restricted.

These funds are required to meet the Council's short-term commitments, including capital and operating supplier payments, employee payroll costs and loan repayments.

Loan Portfolio

Details of existing loans held at 31 March 2025 are attached in **Appendix 1**.

Loan terms are:

| Loan Number | Type | Term |
|-------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| 16 to 17 | Variable | 10 years |
| 18 | Fixed – principal and interest | 10 years |
| 19 | Variable | 10 years |
| 20 | Fixed | 10 years |
| 21 | Fixed | 10 years |
| 22 | Variable | 10 Years |

Revenue, Property and Valuations

- Third instalment notices were issued to all ratepayers.
- Supplementary Valuation batches finalised in preparation for rate modelling (budget).
- Third instalment remittance return submitted to the State Revenue Office for the Fire Services Property Levy.
- E-notice stats:
 - EzyBill – 651 (+16) - allows access to rate notices from any device, making payment both easy and convenient.
 - BPAY View – 401 (-1) - an easy and secure way to pay and manage bills from your online banking.

Rates and Charges Revenue

Third instalment notices were issued on 23 January 2025 with payments due by 28 February 2025.

Valuation objections have now been finalised by Valuer-General Victoria. The 33 objections were accepted and resulted in a reduction of over \$17,000 in rate revenue.

The current year saw 355 supplementary valuations processed, resulting in an additional 105 ratable properties.

Appendix 2 details the overall rates and charges generated and collected and apportions the unpaid balance between arrears from previous years of roughly \$700,000 and unpaid charges levied in the current year amounting to roughly \$5,426,000 million.

Rate arrears collected in the current quarter amount to \$103,000. This figure is lower than the previous two quarters, and similar to the same quarter last year (-6 per cent). This change compared to quarter one and quarter two of this year is likely due to reminder notices not being issued after the third instalment.

Collections, as a proportion of overall debt, are down compared to quarter three last year (-0.65 per cent) and quarter three of 2022/23 (-2.55 per cent).

Increased debt collection activity is scheduled to occur over the coming months, which will likely see these figures improved upon in future financial quarters.

Appendix 3 provides a graph summary comparing the 2024/25 rate instalments due with the total instalments paid as at 1 April 2025.

Procurement

Contracts and Works Awarded Under Delegation

The purpose of this sections is to inform the Council and Community of publicly advertised tenders which have been awarded under delegation for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025.

Nine contracts were awarded for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025.

Details of contracts awarded are attached in confidential business **Appendix 4**.

Delegation of Procurement Authority to Chief Executive Officer

As per the *Procurement Policy*, instances where the Chief Executive Officer approved expenditure for statutory charges or other matters, generally consistent with the approved or revised budget, be reported quarterly.

The following table provides a summary of approvals by date of invoice.

| Invoice Date | Type | Details | Amount (GST inc.) |
|--------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------|
| 17/12/2024 | Mansfield Shire Council | North Eastern Digital Transformation Partnership (CODI Project) | \$361,450 |
| 31/12/2024 | EPA Victoria | Landfill Levy | \$440,981 |
| 18/03/2025 | State Revenue Office | Fire Services Property Levy | \$583,582 |

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Leadership

| Good Governance | | |
|--|--|---|
| Strategy | Action | September Quarter Update |
| Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy that maintain financial sustainability and deliver value for money and rating fairness. | Ongoing development of <i>Financial Plan</i> | Preparation of Council Financial Statements as at 30 June 2025. |

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 March 2025

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals \$000 | 2024/25 YTD Budget \$000 | 2024/25 YTD Variance \$000 | 2024/25 Full Year Budget \$000 | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast \$000 |
|--|-------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Accounting Services | 1 | (3,407) | (2,748) | 659 | (2,448) | (3,113) |
| Property and Valuations | 2 | (18,530) | (18,249) | 281 | (18,275) | (18,504) |
| Acquisition and Disposal of Council Assets | 3 | 125 | \$0 | -125 | 0 | -125 |
| Total | | (21,812) | (20,998) | 815 | (20,723) | (21,493) |

Notes:

1. Favourable variance \$318,371 from Federal Assistance Grant 2024/25. Interest received favourable variance of \$207,934.
2. Rate and charges revenue supplementary rates and charges and additional revenue in lieu of rates favourable overall by \$219,849 other favourable variances associated with interest charges and recovery of collection costs.
3. Disposal of Council assets unfavourable variance \$125,000, impact of replacement of plant and equipment at end of useful life. Road assets still to be finalised as part of the end of year fair value assessment.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

Loans held at 31 March 2025

Appendix 1

Interest to be paid:

| Loan Number | 2024/2025 Year | 2025/2026 Year | 2026/2027 Year | 2027/2028 Year | 2028/2029 Year | 2029/2030 Year | 2030/2031 Year | Totals |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 17 | \$3,729 | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$3,729 |
| 18 | \$3,561 | \$1,372 | - | - | - | - | - | \$4,933 |
| 19 | \$8,140 | \$5,059 | \$1,866 | - | - | - | - | \$15,066 |
| 20 | \$7,528 | \$5,395 | \$3,286 | \$1,062 | - | - | - | \$17,272 |
| 21 | \$7,291 | \$6,559 | \$4,847 | \$3,088 | \$1,254 | - | - | \$23,039 |
| 22 | \$68,502 | \$58,397 | \$48,016 | \$37,734 | \$27,254 | \$16,873 | \$6,492 | \$263,267 |
| Total Interest Payable | \$98,751 | \$76,781 | \$58,016 | \$41,884 | \$28,508 | \$16,873 | \$6,492 | \$327,305 |

Principal to be paid:

| Loan Number | 2024/2025 Year | 2025/2026 Year | 2026/2027 Year | 2027/2028 Year | 2028/2029 Year | 2029/2030 Year | 2030/2031 Year | Totals |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 17 | \$106,774 | - | - | - | - | - | - | \$106,774 |
| 18 | \$56,639 | \$58,819 | - | - | - | - | - | \$115,457 |
| 19 | \$53,770 | \$56,602 | \$55,565 | - | - | - | - | \$165,938 |
| 20 | \$53,625 | \$55,758 | \$57,867 | \$50,061 | - | - | - | \$217,312 |
| 21 | \$51,458 | \$52,190 | \$53,901 | \$55,661 | \$60,105 | - | - | \$273,315 |
| 22 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$1,330,000 |
| Total Principal Payable | \$512,266 | \$413,369 | \$357,333 | \$295,722 | \$250,105 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$2,208,795 |

Rates and Charges Collections Report

As at 31 December 2024

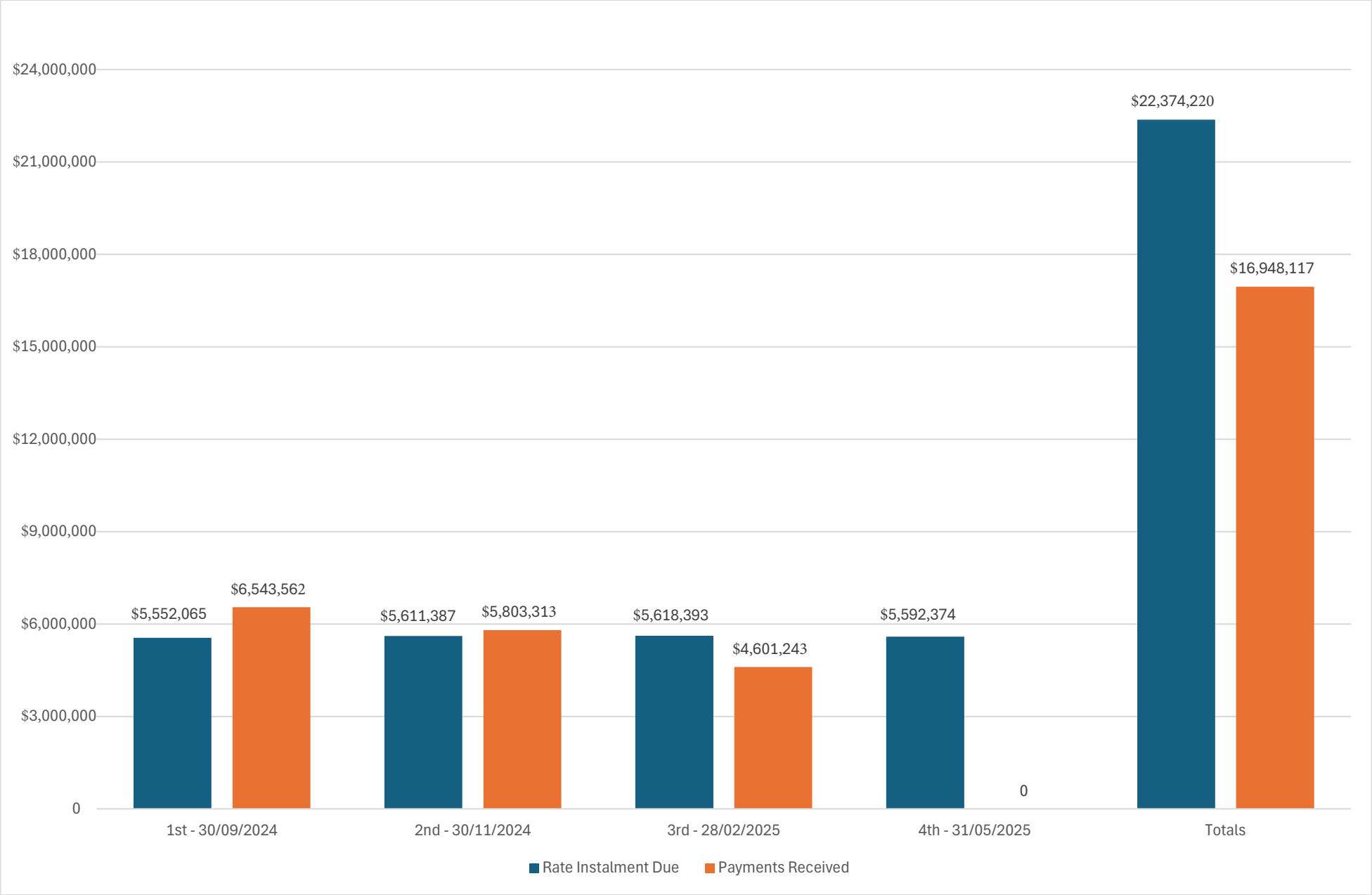
| | Rates | Interest | Legal | Total | Comments |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-------------|---|
| Arrears as at 31/12/2024 | \$1,227,057 | \$57,865 | \$14,882 | \$1,299,804 | Unpaid amounts up to and including the 2023/24 rating year. |
| Payments | | | | | |
| 30/09/2024 | -\$227,576 | -\$13,270 | -\$1,745 | -\$242,591 | |
| 31/12/2024 | -\$240,824 | -\$12,113 | -\$3,701 | -\$256,638 | |
| 31/03/2025 | -\$97,440 | -\$5,893 | \$0 | -\$103,333 | |
| 30/06/2025 | | | | | |
| Total | -\$565,840 | -\$31,276 | -\$5,446 | -\$602,562 | |
| Arrears Rates Balance | \$661,217 | \$26,589 | \$9,436 | \$697,242 | Arrears Unpaid as at 1/04/2024 |

| Current Rates/Charges | Rates | Interest | Legal | Total | Comments |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------|---------|--------------|--|
| Raised | | | | | 2024/25 Rates including Municipal and Waste Management Charges (includes additional rates levied on new houses and subdivided lands) |
| 30/09/2024 | \$22,647,456 | \$558 | \$916 | \$22,648,930 | |
| 31/12/2024 | \$92,327 | \$32,403 | \$701 | \$125,431 | |
| 31/03/2025 | \$31,037 | \$26,019 | \$0 | \$57,056 | |
| 30/06/2025 | | | | | |
| Total | \$22,770,820 | \$58,980 | \$1,617 | \$22,831,417 | |

| Pension Concessions | Rates | Interest | Legal | Total | Comments |
|---------------------|------------|----------|-------|------------|---------------------------------|
| | | | | | State Govt - reimbursed by DFFH |
| 30/09/2024 | -\$445,088 | \$0 | \$0 | -\$445,088 | |
| 31/12/2024 | -\$9,254 | \$0 | \$0 | -\$9,254 | |
| 31/03/2025 | -\$2,855 | \$0 | \$0 | -\$2,855 | |
| 30/06/2025 | | | | | |
| Total | -\$457,197 | \$0 | \$0 | -\$457,197 | |

| | Rates | Interest | Legal | Total | Comments |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------|----------|---------------|--|
| Net Rates for Collection | \$22,313,624 | \$58,980 | \$1,617 | \$22,374,221 | Payments received to date for current year rates |
| Payments | | | | | |
| 30/09/2024 | -\$6,542,524 | -\$122 | -\$916 | -\$6,543,562 | |
| 31/12/2024 | -\$5,790,711 | -\$11,901 | -\$701 | -\$5,803,313 | |
| 31/03/2025 | -\$4,592,501 | -\$8,741 | \$0 | -\$4,601,243 | |
| 30/06/2025 | | | | | |
| TOTAL | -\$16,925,736 | -\$20,764 | -\$1,617 | -\$16,948,118 | |

| | Rates | Interest | Legal | Total | Comments |
|-----------------------|-------------|----------|---------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Current Rates Balance | \$5,387,887 | \$38,216 | \$0 | \$5,426,103 | Current Unpaid as at 31/12/2024 |
| Balance Remaining | \$6,049,104 | \$64,805 | \$9,436 | \$6,123,345 | Balance as at 31/12/2024 |



3. Capital Works Program Update As At 31 March 2025

Ref: 1573044422-1056

Adrian Gasperoni – Manager Assets and Infrastructure

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents an update on the Capital Works Program as at 31 March 2025.

BACKGROUND

Capital projects are funded by general revenue and grant funding. An update on the status of key capital projects is discussed below.

DISCUSSION

Capital Projects

Highlights for the year to date include:

- Design and Planning nearing completion for the *Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment Project* with procurement expected to commence in April 2025.
- Planning and Design work continuing with the *Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment Project*.
- Upgrade and repairs works completed at both the Glenrowan Boweya Road, Taminick bridges.
- Design finalised for the Link Island Bridge replacement. Works to be tendered and constructed by 30 June 2025.
- Tender process commenced for culvert upgrade at Racecourse Road, Benalla.
- Tender process commenced for culvert upgrade at Gillies Street, Benalla.
- Construction commenced for culvert upgrade at Webb Road, Goomalibee.
- Kerb and Channel replacement program 80 per cent complete, to be completed during the fourth quarter.
- Gravel Road Re-sheeting program 80 per cent complete, to be completed by the end of April 2025.
- Tender awarded for the shoulder re-sheeting program. Works to be completed during May 2025.
- Road resealing program 80 per cent complete, to be completed during April 2025.
- Works tendered for the Midland Highway Footpath to Equestrian Precinct (North Benalla Shared Path).
- Quotation obtained for drainage upgrade to The Culdesac, Benalla. An alternate pump and Ausnet Power supply installation is required, tendering in late June 2025.
- Design process is ongoing for the *TAC Safe Local Roads Program* funding.
- Design process is ongoing for Victorian Safe System Pedestrian Infrastructure Program Funding (Bridge and Carrier Street Pedestrian Crossings). Works to commence during the next quarter.

A Capital Works Program Status Report is attached as **Appendix 1**.

EMERGENCY EVENTS

Benalla Rural City has been affected by several emergency events since January 2022.

A summary of each event update on the events is provided below.

January 2022 Storm Event

A storm event in January 2022 damaged community assets (roads), throughout the north and north-eastern areas of the municipality.

October 2022 Flood Event

A flood event in October 2022 affected more than 160 assets requiring some level of flood restoration.

January 2023 Storm Event

A storm event in January 2023 damaged trees as well as community and private structures. Council awaiting final determination from Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

October 2023 Flood Event

A flood event on the 5 October 2023 resulted in moderate flood event on the Broken River at Benalla. The event has been approved for (DRFA). The Council is in the process of scoping the damaged assets from the event. Damage costs to assets are unknown currently.

Council is continuing to liaise with DRFA representatives, in relation to all events From January 2022 through to October 2023, to ensure that asset recovery and restoration works are undertaken within the established guidelines and time frames.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

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.*

Environment

- *High quality efficient and sustainable waste management.*
- *Sustainable practices.*

Leadership

- *Good governance.*
- *High performance culture.*

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Capital Projects Program result for the quarter ended 31 March 2025 is (an expenditure of \$4.425 million which was \$3.663 million less than the budgeted expenditure of \$8.088 million) detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Capital Program result for the period ending 31 March 2025

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals \$'000 | 2024/25 YTD Budgets \$'000 | 2024/25 YTD Variance \$'000 | 2024/25 Full Year Budget \$'000 | 2024/25 Year-End Forecast \$'000 |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Buildings | 1 | 518 | 2,306 | 1,788 | 3,662 | 1,506 |
| Computers and telecommunications | | 179 | 180 | 1 | 180 | 309 |
| Fixture fittings and furniture | 2 | 17 | 115 | 98 | 120 | 128 |
| Library stock | | 89 | 91 | 2 | 96 | 96 |
| Plant and equipment | | 661 | 695 | 34 | 1,160 | 1,450 |
| Bridge | 3 | 86 | 350 | 264 | 600 | 840 |
| Drainage | 4 | 118 | 582 | 464 | 972 | 672 |
| Footpaths | 5 | 344 | 248 | -96 | 248 | 436 |
| Other Infrastructure | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 367 | 0 |
| Parks open space and streetscapes | 6 | 297 | 75 | -222 | 75 | 700 |
| Recreational, leisure and community | | 8 | 0 | -8 | 0 | 80 |
| Roads | | 2,083 | 2,186 | 103 | 2,186 | 2,783 |
| Waste management | 7 | 25 | 1,260 | 1,235 | 1,350 | 78 |
| Total | | 4,425 | 8,088 | 3,663 | 11,016 | 9,078 |

Notes:

1. Variance mainly due to delays in delivering the *Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment Project*.
2. Variance mainly due to the delay with the Benalla Art Gallery CCTV Upgrade (\$80,000) and delays with *Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment Project*.
3. Variance mainly due to Link Island Bridge repair expenditure (\$240,000) being lower than budgeted.
4. Variance due to drainage strategy works not commencing as budgeted.
5. Variance primarily due to unbudgeted expenditure on Bridge Street East footpath works.
6. Variance mainly due to the parks and open spaces and streetscape projects carried forward from 2023/24.
7. Variance due to the Cell 2A rehabilitation not being undertaken as budgeted. Project deferred to 2025/26.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Leadership

- Good governance.
- High performance culture.

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">▪ Report presented to Council.▪ Report published on Council's website. |

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*.

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.

Benalla Rural City Council
Project Status Report as at 6 May 2025

Appendix 1

| | Original Project Budget | Forecast Project Budget | 2024/25 Actual Spend | Previous Year/s Spend | Total Spend | Remaining Budget | Stage | Status | Notes |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------|--|
| Projects | \$ 11,568,000 | \$ 18,605,698 | \$ 4,067,560 | \$ 903,943 | \$ 4,971,503 | \$ 13,634,195 | | | |
| 31150.BRD081: Link Island Footbridge | \$ - | \$ 295,000 | \$ 58,442 | \$ - | \$ 58,442 | \$ 236,558 | Construction | Low | Construction works commenced Monday 14 April 2025. Expected to be completed late May 2025. |
| 31150.BRD082: Glenrowan Boweya Rd Bridge #199 | \$ 200,000 | \$ 60,000 | \$ 10,021 | \$ - | \$ 10,021 | \$ 49,979 | Handover | Low | Construction works completed. |
| 31150.BRD083: Glenrowan Boweya Rd Bridge #198 | \$ 150,000 | \$ 60,000 | \$ 10,232 | \$ - | \$ 10,232 | \$ 49,768 | Handover | Low | Construction works completed. |
| 31150.BRD084: Bridge Renewal Program | \$ 250,000 | \$ 250,000 | \$ 7,408 | \$ - | \$ 7,408 | \$ 242,592 | Construction | Low | Almost complete. |
| 3134A.BLKS24: Blackspot Funding - relocate splitter islands various Benalla locations | \$ - | \$ 232,560 | \$ 69,050 | \$ 116,079 | \$ 185,129 | \$ 47,431 | Construction | Low | Awaiting Street Light Upgrade. One site completed, two other sites still to be completed, awaiting SPAusnet. |
| 3134A.KCR001: Kerb and Channel Renewal Program | \$ 132,000 | \$ 132,000 | \$ 102,243 | \$ - | \$ 102,243 | \$ 29,757 | Construction | Low | Completed. |
| 3134A.REG002: Regulation Program - R2R | \$ 74,000 | \$ 74,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 74,000 | Completed | Low | |
| 3134A.RPR108: Crack Sealing - Council Funded Component | \$ 24,000 | \$ 24,000 | \$ 22,400 | | \$ 22,400 | \$ 1,600 | Completed | Low | |
| 3134A.RPR223: Sealed Roads Preparation for Resealing | \$ 100,000 | \$ 100,000 | \$ 76,558 | | \$ 76,558 | \$ 23,442 | Delivery | Low | Works to continue in preparation for 2025/2026 Reseal Program. |
| 3134A.RSH047: Shoulder Resheet Program | \$ 103,000 | \$ 324,897 | \$ 8,825 | | \$ 8,825 | \$ 316,072 | Delivery | Low | Works delayed and due to commence in early May 2025. |
| 3134A.RSR140: Reseal Program - RTR | \$ 901,000 | \$ 901,000 | \$ 833,936 | | \$ 833,936 | \$ 67,064 | Delivery | Low | Sealing works completed, Line marking outstanding and due to be completed in May 2025. |
| 3134A.RUR114: Gravel Resheet Program | \$ 852,000 | \$ 852,000 | \$ 518,467 | \$ - | \$ 518,467 | \$ 333,533 | Completed | Low | Works complete, awaiting invoicing. |
| 31360.FPA032: Footpath Renewal Strategy | \$ 100,000 | \$ 100,000 | \$ 100,675 | | \$ 100,675 | -\$ 675 | Handover | Low | Completed. |
| 31360.FPA040: Lakeside walk boardwalk renewal | \$ 200,000 | \$ 288,221 | \$ 89,813 | \$ 200,000 | \$ 289,813 | -\$ 1,592 | Handover | Low | Project was carried forward from 2023/24 with \$200,000 of grant funding. |
| 31360.FPA041: Footpaths LRCI 4 | \$ - | \$ 4,225 | \$ 3,800 | | \$ 3,800 | \$ 425 | Handover | Low | \$4,225 carried forward from 2023/24 |
| 31360.FPA042: Footpath Replacement - No.11 to No.17 Bridge Street East | \$ - | \$ 70,000 | \$ 86,893 | \$ - | \$ 86,893 | -\$ 16,893 | Handover | Low | Project was not in adopted Budget. Forecast approved by Council 11 September 2024. Work was required to remediate footpath and kerb and channel in Bridge Street. Balance of funding will be a budget overrun. All works completed. |
| 31360.FPA132: New footpath Midland Hwy to Equestrian Precinct | \$ 103,000 | \$ 382,500 | \$ 18,326 | \$ 24,415 | \$ 42,741 | \$ 339,760 | Construction | Medium | Report to be presented to Council in May for the northern section. Southern section works (Concrete) have commenced. |
| 31370.DRA044: Drainage Strategy | \$ 535,000 | \$ 535,000 | \$ 98,128 | \$ - | \$ 98,128 | \$ 436,872 | Delivery | Low | Culvert Extension at the Racecourse Road and Gillies Street Intersection due to commence in May 2025. Pipes for Racecourse Road and Gillies Street Intersection delivered. East Main drain works expected to commence in May 2025. Works alongside Deeca Land completed. |
| 31370.DRA045: The Cul-de-sac - Drainage | \$ 400,000 | \$ 400,000 | \$ 9,649 | \$ - | \$ 9,649 | \$ 390,351 | Planning and Design | Medium | Design being finalised with details on basin pump being determined. Procurement to commence in April 2025. |
| 31370.PAP001: Pits and pipes, CQ ID NA | \$ 38,000 | \$ 38,000 | \$ 8,765 | \$ - | \$ 8,765 | \$ 29,235 | Not Started | Low | Ongoing. |
| 31380.BUI051: Depot Office and Toilet Upgrade | \$ 100,000 | \$ 140,000 | \$ 115,610 | \$ - | \$ 115,610 | \$ 24,390 | Construction | Low | Works expected to be completed in May 2025. |
| 31380.BUI177: Emulsion Tank | \$ 100,000 | \$ 135,310 | \$ 106,969 | \$ 15,310 | \$ 122,279 | \$ 13,031 | Handover | Low | |
| 31380.BUI178: Benalla Art Gallery - Internal fit out and deck renewal | \$ - | \$ 18,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 18,000 | Not Started | Low | \$18,000 carried forward from 2023/24 |
| 31380.BUI185: Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Roof Renewal | \$ 450,000 | \$ 450,000 | \$ 145 | \$ - | \$ 145 | \$ 449,855 | Procurement | Low | Works due to commence in May 2025. Masterplan works being considered with potential savings from roof renewal project. |

| | Original Project Budget | Forecast Project Budget | 2024/25 Actual Spend | Previous Year/s Spend | Total Spend | Remaining Budget | Stage | Status | Notes |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|--------|--|
| Projects | \$ 11,568,000 | \$ 18,605,698 | \$ 4,067,560 | \$ 903,943 | \$ 4,971,503 | \$ 13,634,195 | | | |
| 31380.BUI186: Solar Panel Installation - Customer Service Centre (LRCI4) | \$ 80,000 | \$ 80,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 80,000 | Delivery | Low | Works expected to be completed in May 2025. |
| 31380.BUI187: Customer Service Centre: EV Charging Infrastructure | \$ 65,000 | \$ 65,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 65,000 | Procurement | Low | |
| 31380.BUI188: Benalla Aquatic Centre: Disabled Client Assist Alarm | \$ 5,000 | \$ 5,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 5,000 | Procurement | Low | |
| 31380.BUI189: Benalla Aquatic Centre: Chemical Storage Area | \$ 50,000 | \$ 50,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 50,000 | Procurement | Low | |
| 31380.BUI190: Customer Service Centre Lift Renewal | \$ 200,000 | \$ 10,235 | \$ 10,235 | \$ - | \$ 10,235 | \$ - | Completed | Low | |
| 31380.BUI191: Benalla Aquatic Centre: Boiler replacement and Installation | \$ - | \$ 66,627 | \$ 66,627 | \$ - | \$ 66,627 | \$ - | Handover | Low | Unbudgeted urgent project. Funding from savings on Customer Service Centre Lift Renewal. |
| 31380.BUI192: Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment | \$ 3,000,000 | \$ 6,515,000 | \$ 228,260 | \$ 376,139 | \$ 604,399 | \$ 5,910,601 | Planning and Design | Medium | Delayed project timeline. Additional \$2.965m from Australian Government for Stage 1B. Council contribution \$550,000 approved by Council 11 September 2024. Project awaiting Heritage Victoria Approval. EOI commenced in May 2025. |
| 31391.BPC013: Benalla Art Gallery CCTV Upgrade | \$ 80,000 | \$ 80,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 80,000 | Not Started | Low | Works awaiting Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment works to commence. |
| 31390.CPM192: Major Plant | \$ 930,000 | \$ 1,220,082 | \$ 661,279 | \$ - | \$ 661,279 | \$ 558,803 | Delivery | Low | All vehicles have been delivered except for the last truck, which is expected to arrive late June, early July 2025. |
| 31390.CPS192: Small Plant Upgrade | \$ 30,000 | \$ 30,000 | \$ 28,509 | \$ - | \$ 28,509 | \$ 1,491 | Completed | Low | Ongoing. |
| 31390.CPV001: Vehicle Replacement Strategy | \$ 200,000 | \$ 200,000 | \$ 86,151 | \$ - | \$ 86,151 | \$ 113,849 | Delivery | Low | Ongoing. |
| 31391.BPC010: Fixtures, IT, fittings & furniture, artworks | \$ 20,000 | \$ 20,000 | \$ 17,140 | \$ - | \$ 17,140 | \$ 2,860 | Delivery | Low | Ongoing. |
| 31391.BPC011: Air conditioner Renewal Program | \$ 20,000 | \$ 20,000 | \$ 9,259 | \$ - | \$ 9,259 | \$ 10,741 | Delivery | Low | Allocation for urgent work. |
| 31391.THL001: Town Hall HVAC Renewal, Fit out Internal, Sound and Lighting | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 8,161 | \$ - | \$ 8,161 | \$ -8,161 | Completed | Low | Unbudgeted project. Council funding to complete grant funded work from previous year. |
| 31393.CPE031: IT Projects - identified in service plan | \$ - | \$ 87,298 | \$ 50,580 | \$ - | \$ 50,580 | \$ 36,718 | Delivery | Low | \$87,298 carried forward from 2023/24 |
| 31393.CPE035: IT Projects - identified in service plan | \$ 180,000 | \$ 203,207 | \$ 109,514 | \$ - | \$ 109,514 | \$ 93,693 | Delivery | Low | Rollout of new IT equipment. \$23,207 carried forward from 2023/24. |
| 31393.CPE037: C/f Video Conference Solution | \$ - | \$ 18,536 | \$ 18,536 | \$ - | \$ 18,536 | \$ - | Completed | Low | |
| 31394.LIB100: Library Purchases - Hub | \$ 96,000 | \$ 96,000 | \$ 89,311 | \$ - | \$ 89,311 | \$ 6,689 | Completed | Low | Annual allocation for library collection renewal. |
| 31410.LFIL35: Waste Management - Rehabilitation Stage 1: Design and Construct | \$ 100,000 | \$ 100,000 | \$ 2,753 | \$ - | \$ 2,753 | \$ 97,247 | Planning and Design | Medium | Strategic design being considered as part of the Landfill Masterplan Review. May delay project. Review scheduled to be complete in May 2025. |
| 31410.LFIL36: Waste Management - Rehabilitation Stage 2A: Design and Construct | \$ 1,250,000 | \$ 1,250,000 | \$ 19,511 | \$ - | \$ 19,511 | \$ 1,230,489 | Planning and Design | Medium | Strategic design being considered as part of the Landfill Masterplan Review. May delay project. Review scheduled to be complete in May 2025. |
| 31420.BMX001: Pump Track (BMX) design / construction | \$ 100,000 | \$ 1,425,000 | \$ - | \$ 20,000 | \$ 20,000 | \$ 1,405,000 | Delivery | Low | \$1,000,000 funded from Victorian Government, \$425,000 Council contribution. Council approved additional \$320,000 11 September 2024. Currently under Procurement. |
| 31430.OSP137:Library / Skatepark Activation Flying Fox 22/23 (OSP934) | \$ - | \$ 105,000 | \$ 7,895 | \$ - | \$ 7,895 | \$ 97,105 | Delivery | Low | Delayed construction timeline. To be commence in May 2025. Project fully funded by Victorian Government. \$105,000 carried forward from 2023/24. Works Commenced. |
| Fawckner Drive Precinct - Multi-purpose Court | \$ - | \$ 355,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 355,000 | Not Started | Medium | \$300,000 funded from Victorian Government, \$55,000 Council contribution approved 11 September 2024. Funding agreement not signed at this stage. Delayed construction timeline. |
| 31430.ECN001: Electronic Community Notice Boards (LRCI4) | \$ - | \$ 140,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 140,000 | Procurement | Low | |
| 31430.ECS001: Electronic Community Signage (LRCI4) | \$ - | \$ 60,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 60,000 | Procurement | Low | |
| 31430.EMR001: Emergency Marker Road Signage (LRCI 4) | \$ - | \$ 22,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 22,000 | Completed | Low | |
| 31430.FLA001: Flagpoles (LRCI4) | \$ - | \$ 15,000 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 15,000 | Procurement | Low | Being Procured. |
| 31430.OSP049: All Ability Playground (LRCI4) | \$ - | \$ 100,000 | \$ 98,983 | \$ - | \$ 98,983 | \$ 1,017 | Completed | Low | \$100,000 carried forward from 2023/24. Completed. |
| 31430.SLU001: Street Light Upgrade (LRCI4) | \$ - | \$ 50,000 | \$ 500 | \$ - | \$ 500 | \$ 49,500 | Procurement | Low | In discussions with AUSNET on preferred solution |
| 31430.SSC001: Street scape Upgrade Bridge Street 21/22 (CQ 9038) | \$ 350,000 | \$ 350,000 | \$ 198,000 | \$ 152,000 | \$ 350,000 | \$ - | Completed | Low | \$325,000 funded from Victorian Government |

4. Assets and Infrastructure Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 March 2025

Ref: 1573044422-1047

Adrian Gasperoni – Manager Assets and Infrastructure

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activities of the Assets and Infrastructure department for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

Assets and Infrastructure

Assets and Infrastructure department continued to provide maintenance throughout the municipality, there was a focus on gravel road grading and nature strip tree maintenance.

Highlights for the quarter are detailed below.

Operations

- Completed grading of 191 kilometers of gravel roads.
- Completed grading of 16 kilometers of sealed road shoulders.
- Replaced 8.4 square metres of concrete footpath in Faithful Street, Benalla.
- Replaced 5.5 square metres of concrete footpath in Coish Avenue, Benalla.
- Replaced 34 square metres of concrete footpath in Moran Street, Benalla.
- Replaced 5.7 square metres of concrete footpath in Perth Street, Benalla.
- Replaced 3.3 square metres of concrete footpath in Ironbark Drive, Benalla.
- Replaced 3.8 square metres of concrete footpath in Moran Street, Benalla.
- Replaced 7 square metres of concrete footpath in Statesman Drive, Benalla.
- Replaced 3.6 square metres of concrete footpath in Green Court, Benalla.
- Carried out sealed road maintenance.
- Carried out routine carriageway clearance work on rural roads.
- Carried out sealed roads maintenance.
- Carried out road closures and traffic management for the Australia Day Ceremony.
- Two employees carried out Backhoe competency training.
- Carried out Urban kerb and channel cleaning with the street sweeper
- Carried out routine line marking works including stat cons and parking bays

Depot

- 13 Tonne of 14-millimeter crushed rock for stock at depot (for gravel road and shoulder maintenance).
- 92 Tonne of 20-millimetre crushed rock for stock at depot (for gravel road and shoulder maintenance).
- 254 Tonne of 40-millimetre crushed rock for stock at depot (for gravel road and shoulder maintenance).

- 40 Tonne of 75-millimetre crushed rock for stock at depot (for gravel road and shoulder maintenance).
- 128 Tonne of 7-millimetre premix for stock at depot (for sealed road maintenance).
- 81 Tonne of 7-millimetre pre-coat for stock at depot (for sealed road maintenance).
- 10,000 litres of bitumen emulsion for stock at depot (for sealed road maintenance).
- Truck Mounted Street Sweeper arrived in January 2025.
- Quote awarded for the supply of one Line Marker. Line Marker arrived in February 2025.
- One medium rigid truck arrived in March 2025. The second medium rigid truck delivery is expected in April 2025. A third heavy rigid truck is due for delivery after June 30 2025.
- Tender awarded for the supply and delivery of one woodchipper. Delivery expected in April 2025.
- Quote awarded for the supply and delivery of one pick-up mower. Delivery expected in April 2025.

Parks and Gardens and Open Spaces

- Four tree root barriers installations undertaken.
- Twelve tree removals were undertaken.
- Carried out routine tree pruning maintenance.
- Carried out routine nature strip topdressing and watering program
- Carried out routine irrigation maintenance.
- Carried out playground maintenance.
- Carried out routine estate entrance garden bed maintenance.
- Undertook the painting of street side furniture, including the dining pods in the CBD.
- Commenced pergola renovations in Bridge Street and Carrier Street, Benalla.
- Replaced the plastic seating in the CBD with timber.
- Received new Toro mower for the botanical gardens.
- Received new Bandit 12" woodchipper.

Waste

- Development of the draft *Benalla Rural City Landfill Masterplan* commenced.
- EPA Quarterly Levy Return Audit, with notice for EPA License Audit in April 2025.
- Leachate ground water, and landfill gas monitoring were completed.
- Commenced tender process for the purchase of a Telehandler for bulk haul loading of kerbside recyclables.
- Commenced tender process for the landfill compactor hire.
- Annual landfill site slashing undertaken.
- Half yearly local government reporting was completed.
- Sustainability Victoria grant milestone was completed.
- Waste App upgrades completed.
- Title re-establishment survey of Benalla Resource Recovery Centre undertaken.

Asset Management

The following table outlines requests for works received through the *Asset Edge - Reflect* program of inspection and *Customer Request Management System*.

| Task | June 2024 | September 2024 | December 2024 | March 2025 |
|---|-----------|----------------|---------------|------------|
| Defects overdue on roads and drains - safety only: | | | | |
| Link roads | 14 | 12 | 12 | 10 |
| Collector roads | 15 | 19 | 16 | 14 |
| Access roads | 12 | 10 | 8 | 9 |
| Defects overdue on footpaths - safety only | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Defects rectified - routine maintenance and safety – road, footpath and parks | 209 | 233 | 198 | 227 |
| Defects and maintenance - items outstanding - road, footpath and parks | 346 | 310 | 307 | 283 |
| Unsealed roads graded (km) | 188 | 154 | 191 | 90 |
| Sealed road shoulders graded (km) | 66 | 0 | 0 | 16 |

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025

Livability

| Vibrant public spaces and places | | |
|--|--|---|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Maintain and develop sport and recreation facilities and reserves, parks, gardens, playgrounds, and walking and cycling paths to increase passive and active community participation and social connection. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet agreed key milestones of the <i>Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment project</i>. Deliver <i>Benalla Art Gallery Redevelopment project</i>. Deliver <i>Benalla Ceramic Mural Precinct Upgrade project</i>. Progress the <i>Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment Project</i>. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment Project, currently meeting agreed milestones. Procurement to commence in April 2025. Mural Precinct upgrade Project, majority of path works completed. Project Options Report to be presented to Council in May 2025. |
| Ensure open spaces and public places in existing and developing communities are thoughtfully planned, connected, green, sustainable, accessible, engaging and inclusive and consider the needs of an ageing community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and adopt an Open Space strategy. Install all abilities playground equipment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultants appointed in November 2024 to develop the draft <i>Benalla Rural City Council Open Space Strategy 2026-2040</i>. Project Completed. |
| Beautify streetscapes, landscaping, signage and town entrances. | Deliver the Bridge Street Streetscape project. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently planning to redevelop Bridge Street, Benalla through landscape and streetscape improvements. Ongoing focus with maintaining and improving entrances to our townships through improved signage and streetscape work will continue. |

| Connected and accessible roads, footpaths, transport and parking | | |
|---|--|--|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Deliver and maintain accessible and safe footpaths and cycle paths in existing and new neighbourhoods. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update <i>Pathways to the Future – Shared Path Project strategy</i>. Deliver Kerb and Channel Replacement program. Deliver new footpath works | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remaining priorities from strategy have been identified and majority expected to be delivered in 2024/2025. Kerb and Channel Program completed. New footpath projects ongoing into 2024/2025 and beyond. |
| Maintain and improve drainage, bridges, parking and road networks to meet the needs of the current and future population. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Benalla Rural City Council Drainage Strategy. Finalise Devenish Drainage Upgrade project. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority projects from the strategy identified and works expected to commence in May 2025. Devenish Drain Upgrade Project completed. |

Environment

| High quality, efficient and sustainable waste management | | |
|--|--|--|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Provide efficient and sustainable waste management services. | Finalise disposal arrangements for environmentally sustainable disposal of kerbside-collected food organics and garden organics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Contract with Rural City of Wangaratta for the disposal of kerbside – collected food organics and garden organics has been executed. |

Leadership

| Good governance | | |
|--|---|---|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Deliver responsible budget outcomes linked to strategy that maintain financial sustainability and deliver value for money and rating fairness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a Project Management framework. Implement a best practice asset management approach. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of Project Management Officer to be undertaken. Recruitment of Asset Management Officer completed and is due to commence in early June 2025. |

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 March 2025.

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals | 2024/25 YTD Budgets | 2024/25 YTD Variance | 2024/25 Full Year Budget | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Capital Projects Operations | 1 | \$489,125 | \$840,988 | \$351,863 | \$1,399,115 | \$1,399,115 |
| Operations Support | 2 | (\$1,710,047) | (\$1,193,820) | \$516,227 | (\$1,057,705) | (\$1,220,129) |
| Plant Operations | 3 | \$62,096 | \$163,158 | \$101,062 | \$217,564 | \$217,564 |
| Operations & Capital Grant Income | 4 | (\$1,191,428) | \$0 | \$1,191,428 | (\$4,356,335) | (\$2,878,884) |
| Sealed Roads | | \$2,601,314 | \$2,618,224 | \$16,910 | \$3,489,459 | \$3,526,198 |
| Unsealed Roads | 5 | \$1,002,048 | \$1,141,297 | \$139,249 | \$1,519,275 | \$1,422,782 |
| Bridges | | \$662,997 | \$668,435 | \$5,438 | \$891,144 | \$1,017,585 |
| Drainage | 6 | \$717,163 | \$610,307 | -\$106,856 | \$812,473 | \$1,009,220 |
| Mechanics Workshop | | \$55,584 | \$64,828 | \$9,244 | \$86,137 | \$86,137 |
| Street Cleaning | 7 | \$27,594 | \$59,429 | \$31,835 | \$79,035 | \$79,035 |
| Roadsides | 8 | \$539,955 | \$413,343 | -\$126,612 | \$550,408 | \$628,113 |
| Parks & Gardens | | \$919,816 | \$890,213 | -\$29,603 | \$1,176,322 | \$1,176,321 |
| Other Capital | 9 | (\$3,125,660) | \$203,611 | \$3,329,271 | \$267,822 | (\$3,063,661) |
| Asset Management Services | 10 | \$66,105 | \$465,019 | \$398,914 | \$639,449 | \$485,804 |
| Landfill | 11 | (\$3,422,202) | (\$3,064,096) | \$358,106 | (\$2,574,679) | (\$2,687,539) |
| Kerbside Waste | 12 | \$101,421 | \$153,738 | \$52,317 | \$205,014 | \$215,263 |
| Recreation | 13 | \$489,125 | \$840,988 | \$351,863 | \$1,399,115 | \$1,399,115 |
| Total | | (\$2,204,119) | \$4,034,674 | \$6,238,794 | \$3,344,497 | \$1,412,924 |

Notes:

1. Favourable variance primarily due to an underspend on the *Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre Redevelopment Project* with planning and design being delayed.
2. Favourable variance due to Disaster Recovery Funding Agreement income (Accrual from 2023/24) and grant funding income of \$560,000.
3. Favourable variance primarily due to higher than forecast income from internal plant hire income.
4. Favourable variance due to unbudgeted \$850,000 income for *Roads to Recovery Program* and \$176,000 income for the *Benalla Splash Park Project*.
5. Favourable variance primarily due to higher than forecast expenditure in grading expenses.
6. Unfavourable variance primarily due higher expenditure than budgeted in drain cleaning.
7. Favourable variance due to lower than budgeted expenditure of \$32,000 in street cleaning, mainly due to seasonal works and machine breakdown.

8. Unfavourable variance primarily due a higher than expected expenditure on roadsides in general, however, a higher than budgeted expenditure of \$46,000 in footpath repairs also noted.
9. Favourable variance primarily due to higher than budgeted expenditure on parks, garden beds and median strips.
10. Favourable variance primarily due to unbudgeted gifted roads from Subdivisions income of \$3,270,000.
11. Favourable variance primarily due to less than budgeted expenditure associated with the Benalla Landfill of \$260,000 and higher than budgeted income at the Transfer Station and Benalla Landfill.
12. Favourable variance due to lower than expected expenditure than budgeted for our kerbside collection contract, relating to timely invoicing from contractor.
13. Favourable variance primarily to lower than budgeted funding allocations for Committees of Management associated with Churchill Recreation Reserve \$14,000 and Benalla Showgrounds \$16,000.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

5. Economic Development and Sustainability Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 March 2025

Ref: 1545273666-206

Courtney Naughton – Manager Economic Development and Sustainability

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activity of the Economic Development and Sustainability Department for the quarter ending 31 March 2025.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Future of Benalla and District Project

- The funding application for the \$500,000 for the project management of the next stage of delivering the community development fund has been successful and signed off by the Minister. Funding is for a dedicated project manager and a support officer for eighteen months.
- Grant applications for the two projects are currently being re-written and will be submitted as soon as possible.
- The Industry Working Group for the Arts, Culture and Heritage project have been meeting to work out their funding application.
- We have written a rationale for an Integrated Transport Study and why this needs to be included in the funding for the Future Economy Employment Precinct.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Business Expansion and Retention

- New business, 7Eleven opened its doors on 26 March 2025 at the corner of Goomalibee Street and Bridge Street West, Benalla. The business is open 24/7 for fuel plus a variety of food options and staples. Instore sales from 5am-11pm and night safe sales from 11pm-5am.
- The new Benalla Police Station was completed this quarter with the new entrance being in Martin Place, Benalla. The official opening is scheduled for early April 2025.
- Hospitality businesses Pavlos Catering and The BBQ Den Smokehouse also opened in this quarter in the CBD.
- The Goorambat East Solar Farm has commenced construction with Engie and Bouygues Construction Australia delivering the project. The BDC met with Procurement and Community Engagement coordinator to discuss progress and opportunities. It will be the largest solar farm in the Southern hemisphere once completed and is utilising innovative technologies, such as robotics in its construction.
- BDC assisted the 'Women on Farms Gathering', held on 14-16 March. 150 women attended workshops, panels and local tours across the weekend. The launch was held at the Visitor Information Centre on Friday night, and then the Benalla Bowls Club hosted Saturday and Sunday's workshops. Congratulations to the volunteer organising committee for a very successful weekend, led by Chair Louise Armstrong.

The *Benalla State of Play Business Survey* was conducted in January 2025. The survey received responses from accommodation, food services, education and training, and marketing sectors.

Key areas of concern included:

- Skills shortages, especially soft skills, customer service and industry specific gaps.
- Cost of living impact and the mental health repercussions on business owners.
- Reducing the number of vacant shops by offering business grants. (e.g. landlord incentives to assist new businesses to commercialize their idea in vacant main street premises, plus general new business and startup or relocation support).

When asked how the Council and community could best support local small businesses to survive and thrive, answers focused on the vacant shop situation and included:

- Bringing landlords together to discuss the law of supply and demand and the prices being asked for rents. Rent capping or subsidies based on turnover to prevent Benalla becoming a ghost town
- Ease up on the cost of doing business. (e.g. restrictions on parking, and the cost of permits for pavement signs).

Business Networking and Upskilling

Two *Coffee Connections* meetups were hosted by the Council this quarter at The Merchant and Benalla Art Gallery.

- In February nineteen attendees heard from Street Art Chair Raelene Stratton about ways Businesses could get involved in the Benalla Street Art Festival held in April 2025.
- The March Coffee Connections highlighted International Women's Day and the importance of employment options to bolster the financial independence of women and communities. Twenty-five people attended and helped launch the Benalla 'Fitted for Work' clothing drive plus heard from *Global Sisters* about its positive impact empowering women to be financially independent through starting their own business.

Global Sisters

- A successful series of business seminars for women was hosted by the Council at the Benalla Library in conjunction with innovative not for profit *Global Sisters*. *Global Sisters* exists to make business possible for women, enabling them to be financially resilient as micro business founders. It offers an inclusive employment alternative and is free for all women in Australia and New Zealand to participate. Global Sisters offers various business programs, tailored to every stage of the entrepreneurial journey, in a variety of digital formats.
- The trial hybrid model was run in Benalla and involved a centralised hub with a local host, while streaming into the online sessions run by *Global Sisters* experts. This encouraged collegiality, sharing of knowledge and support for others business ideas, along with networking and business advice.
- Six local women signed up for the Benalla 'My Big Idea' session held on Thursday 6 February 2025.
- Five women went on to participate in the weekly 'Sister School' intensive held over four Thursdays in February 2025 at the Benalla Library.

Business webinars

- Council continues to promote the Business Victoria, Innovation Melbourne and the ATO webinars via the monthly "In the Loop" business e-newsletter and social media events and posts.

Benalla Business Network (BBN)

- A successful Business After Hours event was held on Thursday 13 March 2025 at the Benalla Town Hall on the topic '*Future of Benalla*' by Raelene Stratton. Feedback from the session will also assist in the development of the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029*.
- The Benalla Dollars program has been digitised enabling all BBN members to accept Benalla dollars.
- Fourteen BBN member businesses currently accept the digitized Benalla dollars. Decal stickers promoting the program have been distributed to be displayed on those businesses' windows or doors. Participating businesses are:
 - Aggy's Furniture and Gifts
 - Benalla Newsagency
 - Benalla Bowls Club
 - Lavish Skin Therapy Clinic
 - Maltrim Upholstery
 - Miller's Benalla
 - Milner Watson Pharmacy
 - Munro & Sargeant Cafe
 - Piccadilly Laneway Vintage and Collectables
 - Purdey's Jewellers
 - Rambling Rose
 - Room at the Table
 - Stolz Furnishers
 - The Early bird Cafe

Jobs and Skills

The *North East Victoria Jobs Hub* websites future is uncertain after the developer has increased the annual membership fee to market rates from \$3,000 deal to \$9,000 per annum from 2025/26.

The membership fee has been shared with Wangaratta Rural City Council and Mansfield Shire Council since 2016. Initially NETracks LLEN also provided financial assistance, but this support has ended.

There is good support for the site, in particular from local businesses, job seekers, jobs agencies, careers teachers and Tafe Jobs and Skills Centres.

A meeting will be held with local jobs and skills providers in May 2025 to discuss options for the websites future.

VISITOR ECONOMY

Australia Day Celebration 2025

Benalla Rural City proudly came together on Sunday 26 January 2025 to celebrate Australia Day with a vibrant mix of tradition, community, and connection.

The morning kicked off with a free community breakfast and flag-raising ceremony in Benalla and across our rural villages, bringing locals together to honour our shared values.

This year, celebrations found a new home at the Benalla Town Hall, where the energy was high and the spirit even higher.

- Five new citizens were officially welcomed in a moving Citizenship Ceremony
- Nine outstanding locals were honoured with Australia Day Awards
- Ten district ceremonies celebrated achievements across the region.
- More than 120 attendees enjoyed live music and entertainment, rounding out a joyful day of celebration.

Major Event Funding

The following organisations were successful in receiving the Council's Major Event funding towards to support local events:

- Benalla Migrants Association were awarded \$2,000 to support their Chinese Lunar New Year event at the Benalla Town Hall which was held on Saturday 15 February 2025.
- Albert Heaney Oval Reserve Committee of Management were awarded \$2,000 for the Swanpool Motor Festival event held on Sunday 9 March 2025.
- Austin 7 Club were awarded \$2,000 for the 48th Historic Winton event held on Friday 23 to Sunday 25 May 2025.

BENALLA CINEMA

Bridget Jones Diary: Mad about the Boy - Special Cinema Screening

Wednesday 12 February 2025 marked a memorable evening at the cinema with the first-ever Ladies Night screening of *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*.

The event was a complete sell-out and drew a lively and enthusiastic crowd. Guests were welcomed with a glass of wine on arrival and their own individual cheese platter. Embracing the cosy charm of Bridget Jones, attendees were also encouraged to wear their pyjamas to the special screening.

Cinema Comparison 2024/25

| Month | Benalla Cinema | Patrons 2024 | Benalla Cinema | Patrons 2025 |
|----------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| January | 118 Sessions | 1760 | 158 sessions | 1915 |
| February | 69 Sessions | 603 | 117 Sessions | 914 |
| March | 100 Sessions | 765 | 96 Sessions | 489 |

Benalla Visitor Information Centre

Visitor numbers for the quarter:

| Month | Visitor numbers |
|--------------|-----------------|
| January | 1219 |
| February | 951 |
| March | 1389 |
| Total | 3559 |

Sales in the Visitor Information Centre continue to grow. This is due to a high yield of visitors.

TOURISM

35th Women on Farms Gathering

The *35th Women on Farms Gathering* was held in Benalla on Friday 14 March 2025 with the official launch and registrations held at the Visitor Information Centre. This was the first time in 20 years that this event was held in Benalla. More than 110 people attended the opening.

International Women's Day – Photographic exhibition from Waminda House

Waminda Community House hosted a special International Women's Day Portrait Exhibition launch at the Benalla Visitor Information Centre on Wednesday 12 March 2025. This event celebrated the strength, creativity, and resilience of women in the community.

The exhibition featured a series of portraits created by local women, capturing diverse stories and experiences. These artworks were displayed alongside a morning tea, fostering an atmosphere of connection and empowerment.

This initiative was part of Waminda's ongoing commitment to social inclusion and community engagement. The event not only showcased artistic talents but also highlighted the importance of supporting and uplifting women in the community.

Benalla Art Gallery

- For the quarter 1 January to 31 March 2025, Benalla Art Gallery welcomed 20,663 exhibition visitors and staged 30 public and education programs for 711 participants.
- Benalla Art Gallery launched three new major exhibitions in this quarter:
 - Some of our favourites: Benalla Art Gallery Collection
 - Simeon Ayres: A cartography of the Heart country...a courtship of belonging
 - SHOWCASE: 2024 Senior Visual Art and Design Student Exhibition
- Benalla Art Gallery Advisory Committee met on 18 March 2025 confirming the acquisition of four new works: a painting by John Borrack and three paintings by Trevor 'Turbo' Brown.
- Repairs to the Benalla Art Gallery ramp and deck were not able to be delivered during the defined available window of 17 to 28 February 2025. The project is continuing to be managed through the Facilities team.
- Benalla Art Gallery coordinated a whole-of-collection revaluation in February 2025 by accredited valuer Simon Storey, with the Collection revaluation amounting to \$33,854,730. Benalla Art Gallery also coordinated Collection documentation of recent acquisitions by Christian Capurro during the period.
- Benalla Art Gallery Director undertook a Gordon Darling Foundation funded trip to Sydney and Canberra in February 2025, participating in strategic meetings with the National Gallery of Australia, National Portrait Gallery, Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Creative Australia to explore future loan/collaboration opportunities available upon the completion of Stage 1 redevelopment.
- Benalla Art Gallery has now confirmed the availability of the *Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation* to progress repairs required to the Benalla Ceramic Mural. Specialist conservators Dr Holly Jones-Amin and Penny Byrne will be visiting the site in April 2025. Remediation of the mural involves engagement of several specialists including engineers, conservators, heritage tiles, stonemasons and ceramic fabricators. Work will include repairs and fabrication of new tiles, bricks and ceramic units to replace damage and loss. Works will be conducted both on and off-site. Works are intended to commence in April 2025 with a site visit and assessment. It is estimated that the project will be completed by the end of October 2025.

Sustainable Environment

- The *2024/25 Roadside Weed and Pest Program* has almost been completed for this season. Some final treatments on significant species such as Blackberries will be undertaken before 30 June 2025.
- The Council has been successful in securing grant funding for a battery storage installation at the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Learning Centre as part of round two of the Victorian Government's 100 Neighbourhood Battery Program. The funding will go towards the installation of an energy backup system comprised of a (60 kW / 170 kWh) battery to further support the existing Solar System.
- The Council has contracted Ironbark Sustainability to assist in managing the changeover of the Council's remaining mercury vapour streetlights to LED's. The physical changeover will likely be undertaken in June 2025 of this year.
- A feasibility study was completed by Indigo Power on a potential solar and battery system at the Visitor Information Centre. The study found a potential solar battery system would provide financial savings as well as providing energy backup during outages.
- The Environment and Sustainability team further developed the draft *Climate and Environment Strategy 2025-2030* following input from the Council.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Liveability

| Vibrant public spaces and places | | |
|---|--|---|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Beautify streetscapes, landscaping, signage and town entrances. | Upgrade town signage and entry gateways. | Branding strategy to be developed in the 25/26 financial year and put out for community consultation. |

Economy

| Thriving business and industry | | |
|---|--|--|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Work together with key stakeholders to engage, support, strengthen, enhance and diversify local business. | Develop the Economic Diversification plan. | Final Draft of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) completed. Second stage funding applied for to support the projects out of the LDS has been successful. |
| | Develop a Benalla Rural City Small Business Attraction and Assistance program. | This will be an outcome of the Economic Development Strategy to be delivered in 25/26 Financial Year. |
| Attract new investment, business and industry to the Benalla Rural City to facilitate business growth and job creation. | Develop an Economic Diversification plan. | This is an outcome of the Community Development Fund. |

| Flourishing tourism | | |
|---|--|--|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Strengthen the visitor economy through growth of events and promotion of unique assets and experiences and visitor attractions. | Review and update the Events and Tourism strategy. | The Destination Management Plan's final draft has been received. The draft will be placed out on public exhibition for 28 days following the next available Council meeting. |

Environment

| Healthy and protected natural environment | | |
|--|--|---|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Partner with agencies and the community to manage and enhance our natural environmental assets, water quality and river health across Benalla Rural City and support the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Regional Catchment Strategy and other regional environmental strategies. | Review and update the Environmental Strategy and the Climate Change Adaptation Plan. | Council officers continue to take part in the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Biodiversity Roundtable meetings. Council also continues to work with GeckoClan Landcare Network and the Goulburn Valley Food System Framework Governance Group. |

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 March 2025.

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals | 2024/25 YTD Budgets | 2024/25 YTD Variance | 2024/25 Full Year Budget | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast |
|--|----------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Economic Development and Sustainability | 1 | \$258,373 | \$233,532 | -\$24,841 | \$299,208 | \$277,900 |
| Art Gallery | | \$418,617 | \$406,581 | -\$12,036 | \$574,704 | \$590,594 |
| Benalla Cinema | 2 | \$124,284 | \$192,514 | \$68,230 | \$259,489 | \$217,584 |
| Events | | \$233,154 | \$244,049 | \$10,895 | \$281,231 | \$266,231 |
| Tourism | 3 | \$198,879 | \$232,870 | \$33,991 | \$284,456 | \$372,426 |
| Environmental Sustainability | 4 | \$81,413 | \$107,405 | \$25,992 | \$150,669 | \$119,164 |
| Business Development | 5 | \$100,086 | \$118,483 | \$18,397 | \$157,458 | \$157,458 |
| Total | | \$1,414,806 | \$1,535,434 | \$120,628 | 2,007,214 | \$2,001,357 |

Notes:

1. Unfavourable variance attributed to additional spend on the Future Diversification Project for contracted services.
2. Favourable variance for the Benalla Cinema due to a higher result than anticipated from kiosk and box office revenue.
3. Favourable variance in Tourism due to timing difference from the Benalla Street Art Festival project spend.
4. Favourable variance attributed to unspent budget for Feasibility for Benalla Civic Solar Project and a timing difference in the spend in Pests and Weed Grants.
5. Favourable variance in Business Development due to underspend in programs due to timing delays for projects.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

6. Facilities and Information Technology Department Activity Report for the Quarter Ended 31 March 2025

Ref: 1138149297-12828

Greg Robertson – Manager Facilities and Information Technology

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activities of the Facilities and Information Technology Department for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

Facilities Management

- Theft of metal plumbing fixtures remains an ongoing issue at public amenities. Council staff continue to report incidents to the police and provide Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) footage. Several offenders have been identified and are subject to ongoing formal investigations. The outcomes of these investigations are currently unknown.
- Vandal damaged door locks on various public toilet cubicles in the Benalla township were replaced twelve times during the quarter.
- The Ceramic Mural was the subject of recent vandalism with tiles deliberately broken off and glass bottles smashed against the mural. Assessment for repairs are being investigated by the Benalla Art Gallery team.
- The Denny Street, Benalla Carpark amenities were damaged when individuals jumped on a toilet, pulling it away from the wall and causing a major water leak. Toilets prone to regular incidents are locked overnight; however, damage is now occurring during the day, rendering overnight locking less effective.
- Works progressed at BARC Hut 65, with flooring replaced in the former presbytery section and parts of the former chapel. Due to white ant damage, much of the internal wall structure has been replaced. The electrical wiring was deemed non-compliant and is scheduled for replacement. The project is largely grant-funded by Heritage Victoria. Additional works are being identified as the project progresses, presenting a budget risk. The Council must undertake all identified works to comply with the building's Heritage Registration. The team is triaging works to align with the available grant budget where possible.
- Minor issues encountered with the decorative bud lighting installed in the trees outside the Visitor Information Centre and Benalla Cinema with cockatoos chewing the wiring. The wiring is outdoor rated, fit for purpose and the lights are low voltage which does not present an electrical hazard to wildlife. The damage has now ceased, and the lights are operational after minor repairs
- New blinds were installed in the Town Hall Auditorium to black out natural light for theatrical events.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

- The ICT team continue to work on the Collaborative Digital Innovation (CODI) project specifically liaising with data migration experts and internal staff to ensure migration of critical data between old and new software.
- The ICT team continue to assist with Benalla Art Gallery Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software project. This project will give the gallery a modern CRM to manage philanthropic fundraising initiatives, events and exhibition promotion, and membership opportunities.
- The network firewalls, a critical first line defence of council's computer network and data, have blocked more than 10,000 cyber-attacks on our IT systems during the quarter.
- A project to refresh corporate and public WiFi access points across all council sites is being scoped.

- We achieved a 98 per cent network data and systems backup success rate across all systems. This is a good result, and whilst 100 per cent backup success is the goal, 98 per cent is a very good result when compared to industry benchmarks. Anything under 98 per cent can indicate backup system problems. The IT team continue to monitor the health of backups and make system adjustments as we strive towards 100 per cent.
- ICT Helpdesk Support Statistics: There were 75 in-person IT support requests without tickets addressed. The team responded to 12 after-hours IT support calls and 273 helpdesk support requests were lodged. From the 273 requests just 11 tickets remain open.
- The IT team are working with the Human Resources (HR) team on a new HR software suite known as ELMO. This new program will modernise new staff onboarding, induction and training. The software will also allow better tracking of existing employee metrics such as ongoing performance and training.
- A project to replace the existing Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) system is underway. MFA adds an extra layer of security to network logins and is a critical requirement in any modern computer network setup to prevent unauthorised access to council's computer network.
- The team is reviewing the virtualisation of the council's on-premises server stack and assessing future server hardware refresh requirements. While the CODI project's cloud-first approach will reduce the need for on-premises servers, some local server infrastructure will remain due to the high metered costs of cloud-based server traffic. Metered costs for CODI project software are mitigated by the economies of scale achieved through the collaboration of four councils in the CODI project.

Benalla Aquatic Centre YMCA

- Aquatic Centre Swimming Lesson memberships stand at 695 enrolments, up on the 589 Swimming Lesson memberships reported last quarter. Swimming Lessons are now offered seven days a week to meet increasing demand. This is an excellent result for our community with many children and young people learning to swim in a safe and supported environment.
- Centre Membership stands at 419, a decrease on the 444 memberships reported last quarter. This number may further decrease over the winter months based on historical trends and pick back up later in 2025 as we emerge from winter.

Highlight

The IT team completed a critical upgrade of the core corporate firewalls, implementing next-generation security appliances. This project aligns our vendor and technology stacks with those of other Collaborative Digital Innovation (CODI) project member councils, ensuring we remain at the forefront of defence against cyberattacks, which pose an ever-increasing risk. The upgrade included updates to the remote Virtual Private Network (VPN), enabling staff to securely access the corporate network remotely. Enhancements to internet traffic filtering were also implemented as part of the firewall project.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Liveability

| Vibrant public spaces and places | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Enhance and maintain key places of significance. | Update Benalla Airport Master Plan | The master plan is nearing completion of the draft with several revisions required due to stakeholder input |

Leadership

| High performance culture | | |
|---|---|---|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Improve customer experience through responsive, timely, efficient, well planned, and accessible services. | Review, update and implement the <i>Benalla Rural City Council Information Technology and Communications strategy</i> . | Critical replacements of the firewall appliances have been completed. This is a key project for the IT strategy to ensure a secure network environment is maintained. |
| Improve customer experience through timely, efficient, well planned, and accessible services. | Participate in the Lower North Eastern Digital Transformation Partnership (CODI). | The CODI project is progressing with four software solutions now in place. |

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 March 2025.

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals | 2024/25 YTD Budget | 2024/25 YTD Variance | 2024/25 Full Year Budget | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast |
|-------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Facilities | 1 | \$1,619,860 | \$2,296,828 | \$676,967 | \$3,690,634 | \$2,678,852 |
| Information Technology | 2 | \$1,657,978 | \$1,914,091 | \$256,113 | \$2,519,026 | \$2,559,026 |
| Benalla Airport | 3 | \$223,533 | \$59,433 | -\$164,100 | \$79,258 | \$203,725 |
| Saleyards | 4 | \$1,249 | \$23,993 | \$22,744 | \$32,006 | \$32,006 |
| Aquatic Centre | 5 | \$591,655 | \$672,753 | \$81,098 | \$897,008 | \$897,008 |
| Total | | \$4,094,276 | \$4,967,098 | \$872,821 | \$7,217,932 | \$6,370,617 |

Notes:

1. Favourable variance of \$628,600, primarily due to lower-than-expected depreciation in the quarter, as capital works building projects are not yet finalised. Additional favourable variance from timing differences in streetlighting expense phasing.
2. Favourable variance of \$284,500, driven by a staffing vacancy and unspent costs for the CODI project, which will be incurred in the next quarter.
3. Unfavourable variance of \$73,550 due to the Benalla Airport Strategic Masterplan expense, budgeted in the prior year but invoiced this year. Now included in the full-year budget forecast. Additional unfavourable variance from the Living Heritage Grants Program (Former Benalla Migrant Camp Conservation Hut Project) incorrectly allocated to the airport, corrected in the budget ledger from April 2025.
4. Favourable variance due to \$8,572 phasing differences in utility and running expenses and \$9,664 from timing variances in truck wash income and expenses.
5. Favourable variance due to lower-than-anticipated contract payments in the year-to-date budget.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

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7. People and Performance Department Activity Report For The Quarter Ended 31 March 2025

Ref: 1138149297-12830

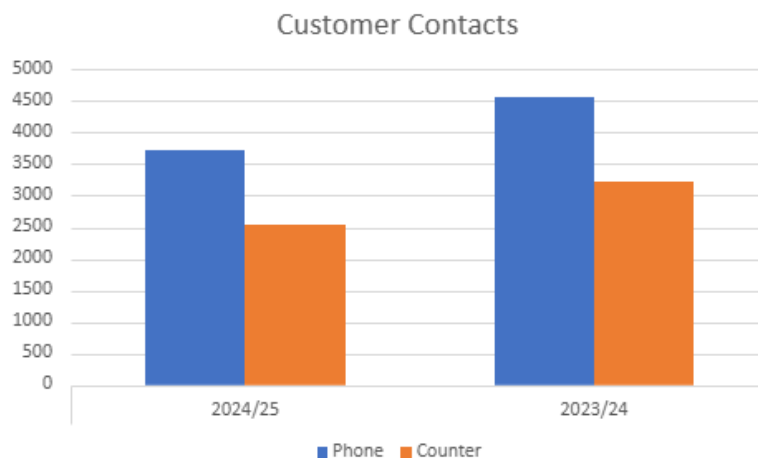
Janine McMaster – Manager People and Performance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

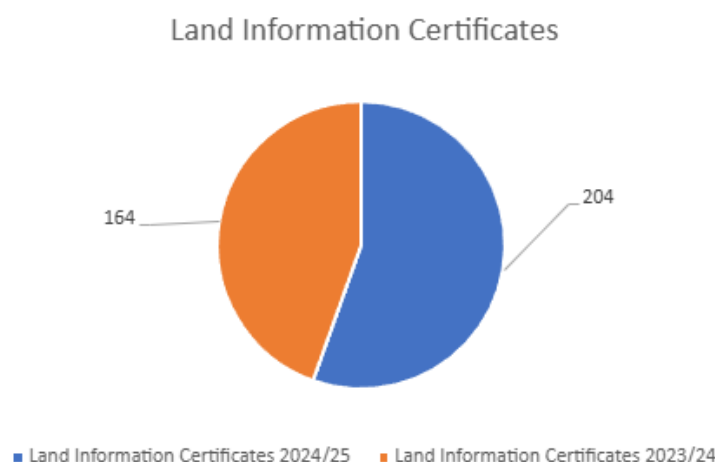
The report presents the activities of the People and Performance Department for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

Customer Relations

- The Customer Relations Team continue to actively coordinate the requests for missed bins and partially emptied bins. There was a 12 per cent increase in missed bin requests and an 18 per cent increase in partially emptied bins in comparison to the previous quarter.
- There has been a 14 per cent decrease in over-the-counter payments compared to the same quarter in 2023/24. This decline is primarily due to Building and Planning fees now being issued and processed through the Greenlight program.
- There has been an 18 per cent decrease in counter contacts and a 22 per cent decrease in phone contacts compared to the same quarter in 2023/24. The decline in customer contacts is primarily due to Building and Planning enquiries now being submitted through the Greenlight program, including those lodged by the Customer Relations Team on behalf of customers.



- There was a 24 per cent increase of Land Information Certificates compared to the same quarter in 2023/24.



Complaints Received for the period between 1 January to 31 March 2025

| Category | Description |
|------------------|---|
| Landfill | A resident has expressed dissatisfaction with the current cost of landfill fees and charges. |
| Waste Collection | A community member has expressed their dissatisfaction with the service provided by Waste contractors. The resident had their bin dropped on the ground causing difficulty lifting it back up. Their bin was only partially emptied on this occasion. |
| Waste Collection | A community member has expressed dissatisfaction with the waste driver who dropped their bin, causing glass to smash over two properties. The driver did not assist with cleanup. |
| Waste Collection | A resident has expressed dissatisfaction with the waste contractor's collection time as they are attending the resident before 7am and this causes a nuisance to their household. |
| Waste Collection | A resident has expressed dissatisfaction with the waste contractor's collection time as they are attending at 5am in an urban area causing lights and noise at an inappropriate time. |
| Waste | A community member has been experiencing partially emptied waste bins for six months in the rural zone. |
| Waste | Missed bins – 231 Partially emptied bins - 84 |

Human Resources

- Ongoing maintenance and administration of the Human Resources functions, including the following areas: recruitment, interview, induction, organisational wide training and monitoring the training budget.
- Commenced the implementation of a new Human Resources (HR) Software program ELMO. This new software will improve HR processes, including the E-Learning module and the onboarding of new staff to the organisation.

Human Resources Activity for the quarter

| Service | December 2024 | March 2025 |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------|
| Recruitment | 2 | 4 |
| Turnover | 1 | 5 |
| Training Applications | 78 | 10 |
| Workplace incidents | 4 | 2 |
| WorkCover claims | 2 | 0 |

Payroll

- Maintained Payforce database in response to changes in employee details and terms of employment.
- Responded to internal payroll enquiries.
- Continue working with Civica for the new payroll system being introduced as part of North Eastern Digital Transformation Partnership (CODI).
- Assisted with the Enterprise Agreement bargaining process.

Risk Management

Training and Upskilling

The Corporate Risk Coordinator attended the following training and upskilling:

- Insurance Renewal Webinar series.
- Insurance market updates and Global Risk Reports Review.
- Public Records Office Victoria (PROV) Record Keeping Essentials.
- Workplace Mental Health Webinar.
- Five day Health and Safety Representative Course.
- Respectful Workplace Training
- Gender Equity – Active Bystander Training.
- MAV Best Practice Insurance Forum

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

- scheduled OH&S workplace site inspections
- designated Workplace Group meetings.
- incident and hazard reporting and monitoring.
- incident and hazard action lists.
- reporting to the Leadership Team and OH&S Committee.
- Risk management meetings.

The Corporate Risk Coordinator inducted four new staff members during the quarter.

Information Management

- Ongoing processing of both electronic and hard copy information.
- Sharepoint (Records Hub), the joint Information Management solution as part of the Collaborative Digital Innovation (CODI) Project, went live on 8 January 2025.
- Training was initially rolled out to assist staff in navigating the new Records Hub. Following this, the Information Management Coordinator provided individual and group training sessions for staff to assist with more specific related queries. The training and information sessions are ongoing.

Volunteer Development

- New Volunteer Development Officer commenced in the role on Monday 17 February 2025.
- The Friends of the Gallery have now ceased operation to become a volunteer support group to the Benalla Art Gallery Foundation.
- Updating all documentation and Position Descriptions to the new Benalla Rural City Council style format as required.
- Continuing to assist volunteers with their OH&S induction/applications.
- Received five new L2P volunteer applications.

Volunteer activity for the quarter:

| Activity | Current 2025 | |
|---|-----------------|---------|
| | Registered | Active |
| Arts & Tourism <i>(includes Cinema)</i> | 54 | 36 |
| Events and Festivals <i>(Includes Benalla Street Art 2025)</i> | 44 | 34 |
| Youth Programs <i>(Live4Life only)</i> | 45 | 45 |
| L2P <i>(Mentors only)</i> | 39 | 35 |
| Gardens maintenance and Litter Reduction | 15 | 15 |
| Specialist Committees & Steering Groups <i>(includes Age Friendly and ARG)</i> | 38 | 30 |
| RedB4 Bookshop Benalla Library | 69 | 44 8 |

Note: Some Volunteers are in several groups.

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

During this quarter the Benalla Library welcomed 15,819 patrons through our doors and loaned a total of 16,197 items.

| Activity | January 2025 | February 2025 | March 2025 |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|------------|
| Total Visits | 5,168 | 5,510 | 5,141 |
| Total Loans | 5,734 | 5,208 | 5,255 |
| Total Members | 3,980 | 4,001 | 4,002 |
| New Members | 44 | 41 | 30 |

January 2025

- Benalla Library staff offered their engaging school holiday events which included Spintronics, Turing Tumbles, The Quiet Year Collaborative Game and Film Festival.

February 2025

- Programs from 2024 remained on the calendar for 2025 with the inclusion of more Mah-Jong sessions and the addition of Seniors/Open PS5 sessions.
- Resume support sessions were introduced to assist community members to review their resume skills and key selection criteria answers.
- Darry Fraser returned for her latest book tour, and had an highly praised discussion with the authors of *Sold Down The River* Scott Hamilton and Stuart Kells.



March 2025

- Benalla Library staff welcomed a work experience student who enjoyed their time at the library and proved fantastic support in the libraries' day-to-day functions.
- All staff attended fire extinguisher training. Additionally, two staff members attended mental health training focusing on ways to realistically support mental health within our community through programs.
- Benalla Library hosted two author talks. A very interesting talk from Stephen Whiteside about alpine huts and their history and author Jess McFarlane introduced Samantha L. Valentine to talk about their new books.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Community

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

Leadership

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 March 2025.

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals | 2024/25 YTD Budgets | 2024/25 YTD Variance | 2024/25 Full Year Budget | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast |
|-----------------------|-------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| People & Performance | 1 | 478,627 | 570,664 | 92,037 | 771,211 | 761,211 |
| Customer Relations | 2 | 299,051 | 375,019 | 75,968 | 512,835 | 478,928 |
| Records Management | 3 | 223,270 | 246,515 | 23,245 | 328,010 | 328,010 |
| Volunteer Development | | 34,368 | 35,598 | 1,230 | 60,884 | 60,884 |
| Risk Management | 4 | 652,569 | 695,262 | 42,693 | 785,739 | 785,739 |
| Library | 5 | 359,643 | 340,412 | -19,231 | 476,806 | 519,828 |
| Total | | \$2,047,528 | \$2,263,470 | \$215,942 | \$2,935,485 | \$2,934,600 |

Notes:

1. Favorable variance due to Family Violence Officer position still to be transferred to Community.
2. Favorable variance due to vacant trainee position yet to be filled in 2024/25.
3. Favorable variance due to a temporary reduction in weekly hours worked.
4. Favorable variance due to reduced insurance costs to date.
5. Unfavorable variance due to operational costs including utilities and depreciation.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

8. Community Department Activity Report for the Quarter Ended 31 March 2025

Ref: 1138149297-12829

Jane Archbold – Manager Community

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activities of the Community Department for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

Community Development

- The first meeting of the Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership for 2025 was held in February 2025 with over 20 organisations in attendance. The theme for the meeting was family violence with five organisations providing an overview of their services and programs including Council's Free from Violence Coordinator. The second meeting of the Partnership in March 2025 included a facilitated workshop focusing on health and wellbeing by seeking input from partners into the development of the *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* which will be incorporated into the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029*.
- Accessibility Reference Group meetings resumed for in January 2025. The first meeting focused on a presentation by Inland Rail on the Benalla train station redevelopment and an accessibility walk-through of Benalla Health.
- Staff attended a roundtable meeting at the Country Women's Association Hall in March 2025 focusing on the closure of the Community Services Hub in Carrier Street, Benalla. The closure has left a significant gap in services located in Benalla. The meeting provided an opportunity for people to come together as a community to discuss how to address the gaps and explore solutions for establishing a dedicated space that supports local groups and ensures services remain accessible and present in Benalla. Thirty community members attended including several Councillors.
- Preparations for the Community Grants Program were completed, including a review of guidelines and funding amounts. A report was presented to the Council in March 2025.
- One Quick Response Grant (QRG) was awarded over the quarter.
- Staff supported the Community Infrastructure Needs Assessment report for Benalla's Urban Growth Area.
- A facilitated workshop was held with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group to review membership and consider options going forward in sharing the resourcing of the group by several local organisations. Staff have attended several planning meetings in preparation for the 2025 NAIDOC week celebrations.
- Reconciliation Australia officially endorsed the Council's first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in early January 2025. Copies of the RAP distributed to key people and available to the community at the Customer Service Centre and the Benalla Library.
- Internal Bystander Training was offered to all staff in February 2025. The sessions provided participants with the skills and confidence to safely and appropriately challenge discrimination in the workplace and community. The training received positive feedback overall.
- Community Bystander Training was offered and attracted over 25 expressions of interest, with 18 community members attending. The session was very well received, with participants expressing strong interest in future training opportunities through the Free from Violence program.

- One of our Independence to Drive (I2D) learners achieved their license during the quarter, after driving with her mentor for over 50 hours. Two more I2D learners are currently driving with their mentors, getting the necessary experience and confidence to hopefully pass their driving test and secure their licenses.



Recreation

- A grant application was submitted in March 2025 to develop Masterplans for Churchill Reserve, Friendlies Football and Netball Grounds, Benalla Showgrounds and Gardens, supported by 15 letters from local user groups and Committees of Management.
- Consultation on the draft *Open Space Strategy 2026–2040* commenced, with Ross Planning conducting site audits and engagement activities. Public submissions are open on the Council's website until 2 May 2025.
- Ongoing engagement with local sports clubs and Committees of Management, including attendance at Churchill and Showgrounds meetings in March 2025.
- Continued collaboration with Valley Sport to support local club governance and strategy.
- The Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre (BIRC) Redevelopment Project progressed through regular meetings and design development.
- commenced procurement process for Pump Track project. Tender expected for release in April 2025.
- Meetings with AFL North East Border and Football Victoria to support strategic planning.

Communication and Community Engagement

- The Communications team delivered a detailed communications plan including media releases, full-page advertisements in the *Benalla Ensign*, and social media posts for this year's Australia Day celebrations. The team also prepared speech notes for the Mayor and Councillors for the 2025 Australia Day Awards, Citizenship Ceremony, and rural township celebrations.
- The new *Benalla.vic.gov.au* website was successfully launched on Monday 24 February 2025. The project has delivered a more user-friendly, customer-focused platform, making it easier for users to access information and reducing the volume of incoming enquiries.
- Fifteen community members were selected for the first Community Panel representing a broad selection of our Benalla Rural City community. Two community panel sessions were held in January and March 2025, with a third session scheduled for early May 2025.
- The HIVE engagement was instrumental in gaining community feedback on the Council Plan Community Survey. The survey was developed to assist community members to have their say on the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029*. A total of 226 surveys were received, including those submitted in the EOI process to select community panel members. The survey was promoted through the Council's website and social media, brochures, postcards, Benalla Ensign, Council's intranet, and to external working groups and advisory committees.
- Ninety Mile Consulting (NMC) hosted six themed workshops over February and March with just under 100 community members attending. NMC also conducted over 70 interviews including 21 Council staff members, and 50 key external stakeholders from local businesses, community organisations and interested community members.

- Council staff, Councillors and Ninety Mile Consulting (NMC) engaged with the community at a number of events including the Benalla and Devenish Markets, Creating Community Connections Expo, local community events at Swanpool, Molyullah and Lurg, at a U3A meeting, pop-ups outside Coles and Hides Bakery and a session with the Full Impact Squad.
- Staff conducted engagement sessions for students at Benalla P-12 College, St Joseph's Primary School, Australian Christian College, and FCJ Benalla College, helping to ensure young people were provided with the opportunity to voice their ideas about priorities for Council to address in the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2025-2029*.
- A comprehensive social media content plan was developed and implemented to promote this year's Benalla Street Art Festival. A \$10,000 social media campaign reached over 1.5 million views on Facebook and nearly 400,000 views on Instagram. The festival website was updated with new content, including EOLs for fringe events and volunteers. In-festival communications included real-time content creation such as reels and posts and a proposed live broadcast with Edge FM scheduled for Friday, 11 April, from the Festival Hub.
- A collaborative campaign with Tourism North East was launched on Monday, 3 March 2025 covering pre, during, and post-festival promotion.
- The new *Benalla Rural City Council* Facebook page continues to gain likes and followers. Two paid campaigns have been launched: Campaign 1: Ran for 7 days reaching 2,043 people and generating 161 new followers/likes. Campaign 2: Currently in progress, reached 1,062 people and generated 49 new followers/likes. These campaigns are significantly contributing to audience growth and engagement.
- An application has been submitted for blue tick verification for the *Benalla Rural City Council* Facebook page.



Youth Development

- Funding has been secured for both Engage! and FReeZA youth programs for the next three years.
- During this quarter, the FReeZA committee was actively engaged in planning the *Tunes, Tees & Treasures* event as part of the Benalla Street Art Festival. An open FReeZA meeting was also held to recruit new members, with nine potential new participants attending the session.
- To thank the Live4Life crew for their dedication and volunteer efforts throughout 2024, a celebration day was held at Fun Fields on Tuesday 7 January 2025. Over 25 crew members attended and enjoyed a fun-filled day.
- The 2025 Live4Life program welcomed 46 new crew members from Benalla P-12 College and FCJ Benalla College. The induction session provided both new and returning members with an introduction to the program and insights into how they can positively impact their community.

The crew has been actively preparing for the 2025 Live4Life Launch, scheduled for Wednesday 7 May 2025 at the Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre. Planning includes organising activities, securing a guest speaker, arranging catering, and finalising the event location.

- The Australian Christian College are joining Live4Life Benalla in 2025 with Teen Mental Health First Aid training beginning in May 2025. Live4Life Benalla is delighted that this broadens the reach of young people in our community receiving this vital training.
- Learner participation continues to remain strong in our L2P program. The department has begun prioritising high-need learners by weighing the actual numbers accordingly. Between January and March 2025, seven young people successfully obtained their driver's license through the program. An average of 20 volunteer mentors were actively involved each month, collectively providing over 250 hours of supervised driving to participants. In addition, 38 professional driving lessons were delivered during the quarter.
- There are currently 25 learners on the program's waiting list. On 21 March, four new mentors successfully completed their training and are now ready to support learner drivers.
- In February this year on a hot Friday afternoon the L2P team set up with 70 other exhibits at the Showgrounds to showcase our new Benalla L2P PowerPoint, this saw the program drum up some interest for new mentors and upcoming learners. From this event we gained one new mentor who has now completed their mentor training and, on their way, to being matched with a new learner.
- L2P Facebook engagement saw 13 posts over the quarter.



Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG)

- Bridget Moran has joined the SIAG team as our new SIAG Coordinator for the next two years. Bridget brings a wealth of experience in community development and initiative implementation from her previous roles. Bridget attended her first in-person *Community of Practice* in Melbourne, where she engaged in valuable discussions around SIAG implementation across the state.
- SIAG staff are currently conducting a new Expression of Interest (EOI) process to welcome fresh members to SIAG, as some current members have stepped down due to changing life circumstances. The aim is to keep SIAG dynamic, and rotating membership is a great way to bring new perspectives.
- After the successful inaugural Creating Community Connections Expo the team are refocusing on paused initiatives, such as the Resource Library. This valuable community asset allows groups to borrow items such as a data projector, wheelchair ramp, portable PA system, gazebos, trestle tables, and the full SIAG Chill Out Zone (including bean bags, colouring activities, sensory toys, and more). Community feedback will be sought to consider any additional items to include in the Resource Library.
- The 16 Social Connection Grants awarded in the last round are now being brought to life! Highlights include Scope's Community Colour Splash (in partnership with Benalla Police), the Benalla Street Art Festival's Kids Corner, and Tatong Autumn Vibes. A heartfelt thank you to the Councillors who have attended several SIAG-funded events, especially in rural communities.
- This quarter, Benalla SIAG has connected with several newly established SIAGs. It's been rewarding to share our experiences and explore ways to support their growth and implementation.
- SIAG is currently sourcing quotes from training facilitators to deliver community workshops in Benalla. Proposed topics include conflict management for volunteers, child safety training, and *Pass it to Me* (a program designed to help local sporting clubs become more inclusive for individuals with disabilities).

Maternal and Child Health (MCH)

- All the MCH team attended the MAV Maternal Child Health Nursing Conference with the theme - 'Supporting children and families to flourish' focusing on supporting families of children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- Twenty eight birth notices were received over the quarter and three additional enrollments. 100 per cent of birth notices were seen at four weeks. Twenty six of the birth notices were first time mums who were invited to attend the First Time Parents Group.
- Four hundred and thirty five children enrolled in our service at the end of March 2025 including 20 Aboriginal children.
- Thirty one families were enrolled in the Enhanced MCH Program at the beginning of January, since then the service has seen four new families and 11 families have exited the service, leaving 24 families in the program at the end of March 2025.
- The First Time Parents Group ran successfully again in Term one with up to nine parents present at each session.
- In late March 2025 the team attended a 'Child Information Sharing' Workshop as a refresher. There is frequent information sharing between MCH service and Child Protection.

Integrated Family Services (IFS)

- During the quarter Family Services reached 99.7 per cent of the targets for service hours. This was achieved through the team taking on six new referrals through *The Orange Door* and supporting 28 families in the Ovens Murray region (including 70 children pre-birth to 17 years). Family Liaison supported seven families in the Benalla LGA, inclusive of 28 children.
- Two families currently receiving support from our family services team have been approved for social housing in Wangaratta after being on the waiting list for up to two years.
- Benalla Family Services funded Benalla Health to facilitate a '*Confident Body Confident Child*' workshop open to the community over two evenings, a fortnight apart. Unfortunately, the sessions were not well attended. The poor attendance may be a result of lack of promotion and lack of awareness by practitioners that the program was funding this event. The practitioner who attended provided feedback to the facilitator and Benalla Health with suggestions including childminding, alternative times and offering the sessions to professionals.
- On 18 March 2025 staff attended a Family Services Team Review workshop facilitated by local consultant Lisa McCoy. The purpose of this review was to present findings from a staff survey and consider recommendations. The workshop provided the opportunity for staff to discuss improvements regarding operational matters and individual professional development. Topics of discussion included the importance of workers' physical and mental wellbeing, clinical supervision and the risk of vicarious trauma.
- Supported Playgroup (SPG) welcomed Elizabeth Dove to the facilitator role on 18 March 2025. Liz attended the first Community of Practice for 2025 for SPG facilitators on 25 March 2025 which provided networking opportunities to meet other facilitators and staff from Playgroup Victoria and the Parenting Research Centre.
- Elizabeth Dove has commenced a recruitment drive for new families in the Benalla LGA with promotional flyers and face-to-face contact with key external stakeholders. Playgroup for term two will be held on Tuesdays at Waminda and Thursdays at the Girl Guide Hall.

Age Friendly Benalla

- Fifteen members of the Age Friendly Benalla Reference Group (AFBRG) attended a facilitated workshop on 25 March 2025. The focus of the workshop was to review and update the Age Friendly Action Plan and the role of the AFBRG.
- The Ageing Well in Benalla Info Hub is no longer operating from the Benalla Seniors and Community Centre. The Reference Group decided to investigate alternative ways to disseminate information to older residents with a special focus on outreach to rural communities.
- The Ageing Well Officer has started to connect with new residents moving into Benalla, focusing on older residents. Referrals have been made through the Customer Service Centre and Coinda.
- The fourth *Benalla Treasures* was released in the Benalla Ensign in late February 2025. Benalla Treasures showcases older residents who have contributed significantly to our community over many years. Nominees are agreed to by members of the AFBRG.
- Chris Greentree retired from the Aged Friendly Officer role on 26 March 2025, and Megan Martin commenced in the role on 31 March 2025.
- Plans are already underway to secure funding and expand on the highly successful 2024 Seniors Festival Program.

Highlights

A highly successful Creating Community Connections event organised and funded by the Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG) was held at the Benalla Showgrounds on Friday 21 February, attracting more than 1000 people.

More than 70 stall holders representing local groups and organisations showcased their services and programs. The event received positive feedback from the community despite the hot weather, with many stallholders advising that the event helped them to attract new members to their groups and organisations.



COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Community

| A healthy, safe and resilient community | | |
|---|---|---|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| With our community and key stakeholders address the priorities of the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023: healthy eating and active living; mental wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health, reducing tobacco related harm and harmful alcohol and drug use and preventing violence and injury, drug-resistant infections and climate change and its impact on health. | Implement and monitor Benalla Rural City Municipal Health and Wellbeing Action Plan. | Facilitated workshop held with members of the Benalla Health and Wellbeing Partnership Group focusing on the theme of health and wellbeing, seeking input from members of the partnership into the development of the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan which is to be incorporated into the 2025-2029 Council Plan. The theme for the first meeting of the partnership in 2025 was family violence. The partnership continues to attract new service providers keen to link in with other providers servicing the Benalla area. |
| Work together with key health, welfare and community organisations and networks to support better learning, development and wellbeing outcomes for community members. | Work with the State Government to plan for future Benalla Rural City kindergarten infrastructure and workforce needs. | Attended meetings organised by the department in preparation for the Kindergarten on School Site to be built in Clarke Street in 2027. The final Workforce Plan for Early Childhood Education Centres was submitted in early May to the department. |
| Offer programs, services, activities and events that support, develop and connect community members of all abilities and lead the community in being age friendly and child and Covid safe. | Adopt and implement the Disability Action Plan. | The Accessibility Reference Group continues to meet and have input into various programs and initiatives. Plans are to have the draft Disability Action Plan endorsed by the ARG and be submitted to the graphic designer in Quarter 4. Child Safe Working Group continues to meet, with majority of staff having received training from Child Safe Strategies. Follow-up sessions were given to several teams across the organisation facilitated by members of the working group. |

| A connected, involved and inclusive community | | |
|---|--|--|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Continue to respectfully engage, include, celebrate and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and people. | Develop and implement Benalla Rural City Council Aboriginal Reconciliation Plan. | Facilitated workshop held with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group to review membership and consider options going forward in sharing the resourcing of the group by several local organisations. Staff have attended several planning meetings in preparation for the 2025 NAIDOC week celebrations. Reconciliation Australia officially endorsed the Council's first Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in early January 2025. Copies of the RAP distributed to key people and available to the community at Customer Service Centre and the Library. |
| Promote, support and actively engage with smaller rural communities. | Develop and implement Rural Township plans. | Attendance at several rural community events funded through grants including SIAG. |

Leadership

| A connected, involved and inclusive community | | |
|--|--|---|
| Strategy | Action | March Quarter Update |
| Promote, support and actively engage with smaller rural communities. | Continue to improve community engagement processes and new ways to engage. | Focus on smaller rural communities over the quarter continued with several rural community events funded through SIAG. Extensive engagement undertaken in the development of the 2025-2029 Council Plan over the quarter. |

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 March 2025

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals | 2024/25 YTD Budgets | 2024/25 YTD Variance | 2024/25 Full Year Budget | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Communication and Engagement | 1 | \$232,278 | \$259,402 | \$27,124 | 344,873 | 344,873 |
| Community Operations | | \$508,687 | \$508,531 | -\$156 | 791,759 | 1,004,593 |
| Community Development | 2 | \$34,021 | (\$22,303) | -\$56,324 | (0) | 132,387 |
| Youth Programs | 3 | \$47,766 | \$71,539 | \$23,773 | 104,618 | 144,295 |
| ADS Assessment | 4 | \$4,460 | \$34,521 | \$30,061 | 34,648 | 4,710 |
| FCS Maternal Child Health | 5 | \$62,318 | \$146,549 | \$84,231 | 193,386 | 480,261 |
| FCS Family & Children's Services | 6 | \$31,161 | \$72,679 | \$41,518 | 94,394 | 140,249 |
| ADS Aged & Disability Services | 7 | \$15,429 | (\$3) | -\$15,432 | 0 | 17,528 |
| Total | | \$936,120 | \$1,070,915 | 134,795 | 1,563,677 | 2,268,896 |

Notes:

1. Favourable variance due to underspend in program budget
2. Unfavourable variance due to timing of funding allocated
3. Favourable variance due to unexpected funds raised by Youth Mental Health Walk.
4. Finalised service, no further cost to Council.
5. Favourable variance due to underspend in MCH programs.
6. Received increased funding in Alliance flexible funding and underspend in Family Services funding.
7. Unfavourable variance due to Seniors Festival Funding allocated in the prior year, expenditure occurred in the current year.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

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9. 2024/2025 Quick Response Grants

Ref: 620098092-780

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 |
|---|--|------------------|---------------------|
| Goorambat Veterans' Retreat Incorporated | 2025 ANZAC Day Charity Golf Tournament A new and inclusive community event to be held at the Benalla Golf Club on 25 April 2025. The event will be bringing together veterans, families, and community members in a relaxed, supportive environment that honours the current and past service personnel. Designed to promote physical and mental well-being through low-impact sport and social connection, the event aims to become a meaningful annual tradition. Council funding will contribute to essential costs including refreshments (\$250), and event promotion (\$350) to ensure strong community participation and engagement. The anticipated cost of the event is \$2,800. In addition to the Quick Response Grant, costs will be covered by the Goorambat Veteran's Retreat Group. Sixty participants are expected with participation fees of \$30. | \$500 | \$500 |

| Applicant | Details | Amount Requested | Proposed Assistance |
|--|--|------------------|---------------------|
| Benalla Sustainable Future Group Inc. | <p>Swanpool Environmental Film Festival 2025 Event to be held on 14 June 2025.</p> <p>The festival, timed around World Environment Day, creates a networking space for individuals passionate about the environment, as well as those newly concerned about climate change. This event aims to foster continued community engagement with environmental issues and sustainable living.</p> <p>The event will showcase films and host guest speakers to educate and inform the regional community about pressing environmental issues, including planetary boundaries, ecological economics, regenerative agriculture, Tasmanian native forests, and ocean conservation.</p> <p>The event will be held at Swanpool Cinema, which offers disability access, and safety measures will be taken to ensure a welcoming environment for all attendees.</p> <p>The requested grant will help support event costs, including film licensing, promotional materials, catering and venue-related expenses, ensuring the festival remains accessible to all.</p> <p>The total cost is anticipated to be \$7180, in addition to the Quick Response Grant, sponsorship has been promised from Swanpool Landcare for \$1,980 and Winton Wetlands for \$500. Additional costs will be covered by tickets set at \$120.</p> | \$500 | \$500 |
| Cake Decorators Association of Victoria (Benalla) | <p>The Benalla Branch of the Cake Decorators Association of Victoria are seeking funding assistance to cover the cost of hiring a larger venue for their workshops.</p> <p>The association current meeting space only accommodates 14 people in cramped conditions, and with growing membership numbers, they have had to rent a larger facility at a cost of \$100 per session.</p> <p>This grant will help support ongoing venue hire so more members can participate in the groups inclusive, hands-on cake and sugar craft workshops.</p> <p>All necessary equipment and materials are provided. The next workshop is scheduled for 4 May 2025 at the Swanpool Albert Heaney Oval and Recreation Reserve. A \$500 grant will assist with covering the room hire cost for the next five workshops.</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, \$9,791.00 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 Goorambat Veterans' Retreat Group, Benalla Sustainable Future Group and Benalla branch of the Cake Decorators Association of Victoria.

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10. Building and Planning Approvals – March 2025

Ref: 2005329054-535

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

PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

Planning Permit Applications Determined under Officer Delegation

| Permit No | | Description | Property Address | Decision |
|-----------|----------|---|--|----------|
| 1 | P007-25 | Construction of a shed | 50 Smythe Street, Benalla | Approved |
| 2 | P0126-24 | Construction of a shed and greenhouse | 45 Benson Street, Benalla | Approved |
| 3 | P0115-23 | Use and Development of land for a childcare centre | 66 Inglis Road, Benalla | Refused |
| 4 | P020-25 | Construction of a pergola | 42-46 Carrier Street, Benalla | Approved |
| 5 | P004-25 | Subdivide the land into two lots (boundary realignment) | 77 Moore Street and 93 Hossack Road, Baddaginnie | Approved |
| 6 | P0120-24 | Two lot subdivision | 37-39 Cecil Street, Benalla | Approved |
| 7 | P018-25 | Construction of a shed | 26 Hall Drive, Benalla | Approved |

Planning Permit Amendments Determined Under Officer Delegation

There were no planning permit amendments determined under officer delegation during the month of March 2025.

Planning Permits Issued Under VicSmart

| Permit No | | Description | Property Address | Decision |
|-----------|----------|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | VS002-25 | Construction of a shed | 55 Lakeside Drive, Chesney Vale | Approved |

Planning Permit Applications Determined by the Council

| Permit No | | Description | Property Address | Decision |
|-----------|----------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | P0101-24 | Six lot subdivision | High Street, Baddaginnie | Approved – Notice of Decision |

Planning Permit Amendments Determined by the Council

There were no planning permit amendments determined by the Council during the month of March 2025.

Planning Permit Applications Withdrawn or Lapsed

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

Notices of Decision

| Permit No | | Description | Property Address |
|-----------|----------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | P0101-24 | Six lot subdivision | High Street, Baddaginnie |

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.

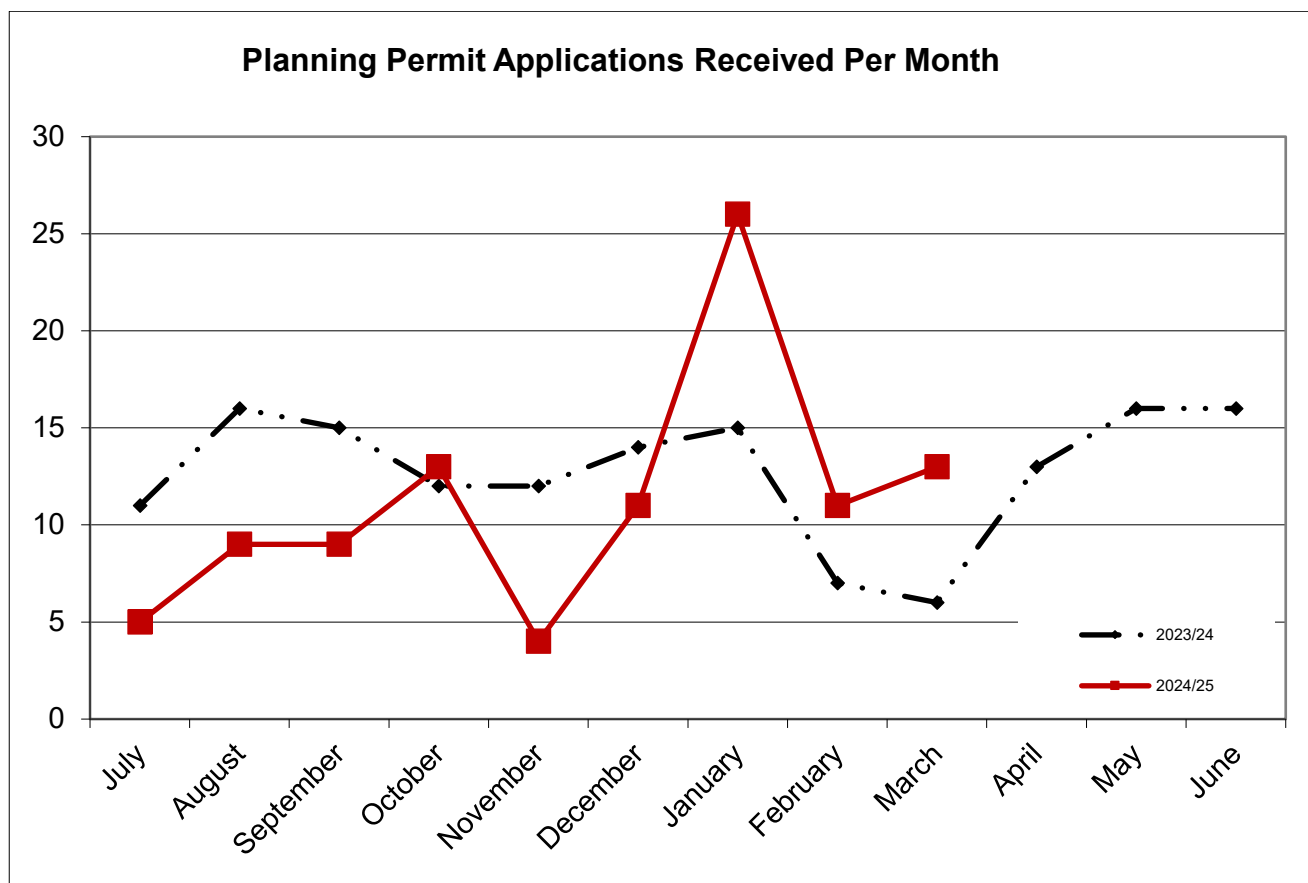
Planning Permit Applications Determined by VCAT

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

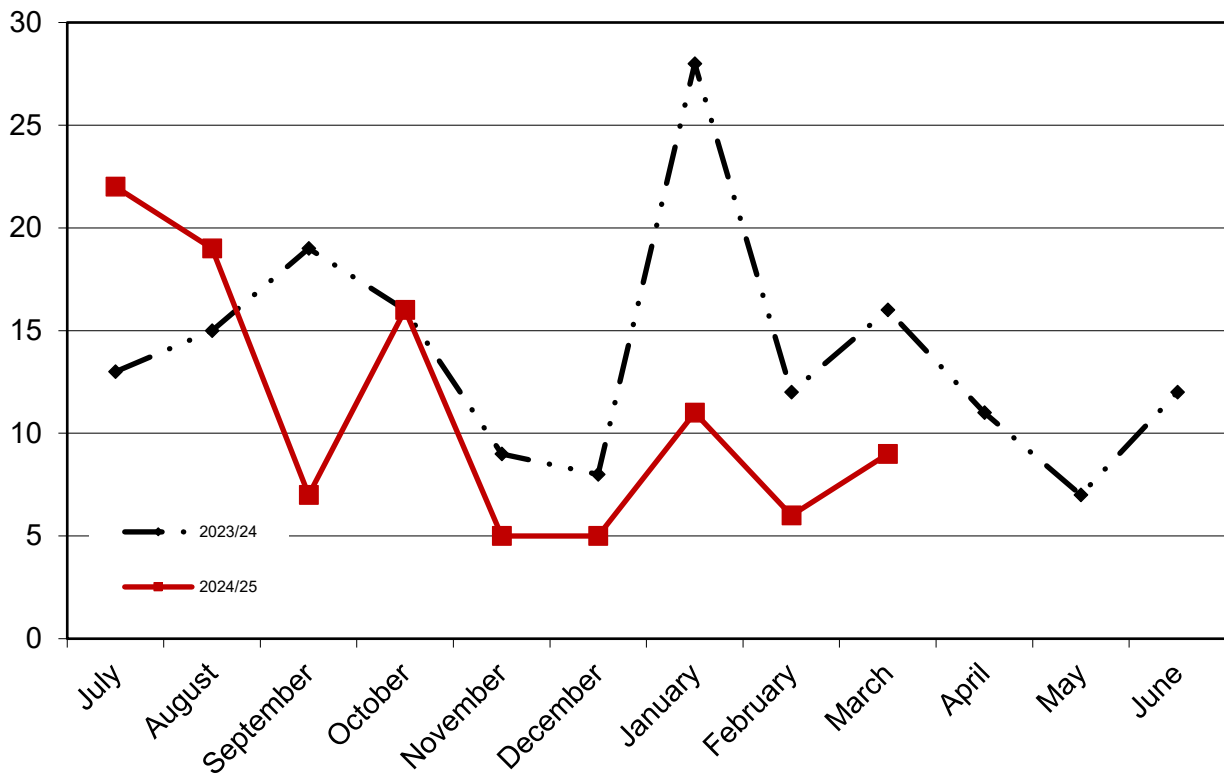
Matters Before VCAT

There are currently no planning matters before VCAT.

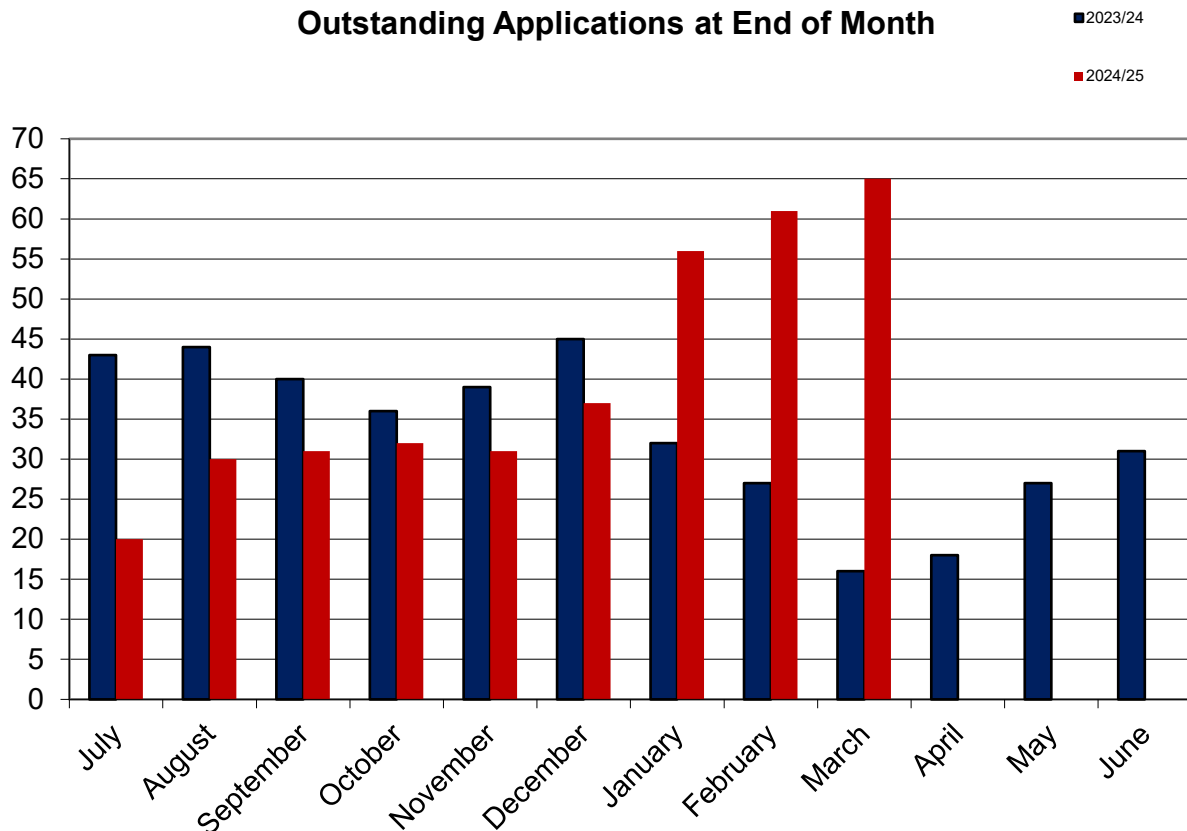
Planning Permit Applications



Planning Permit Applications Decided Per Month



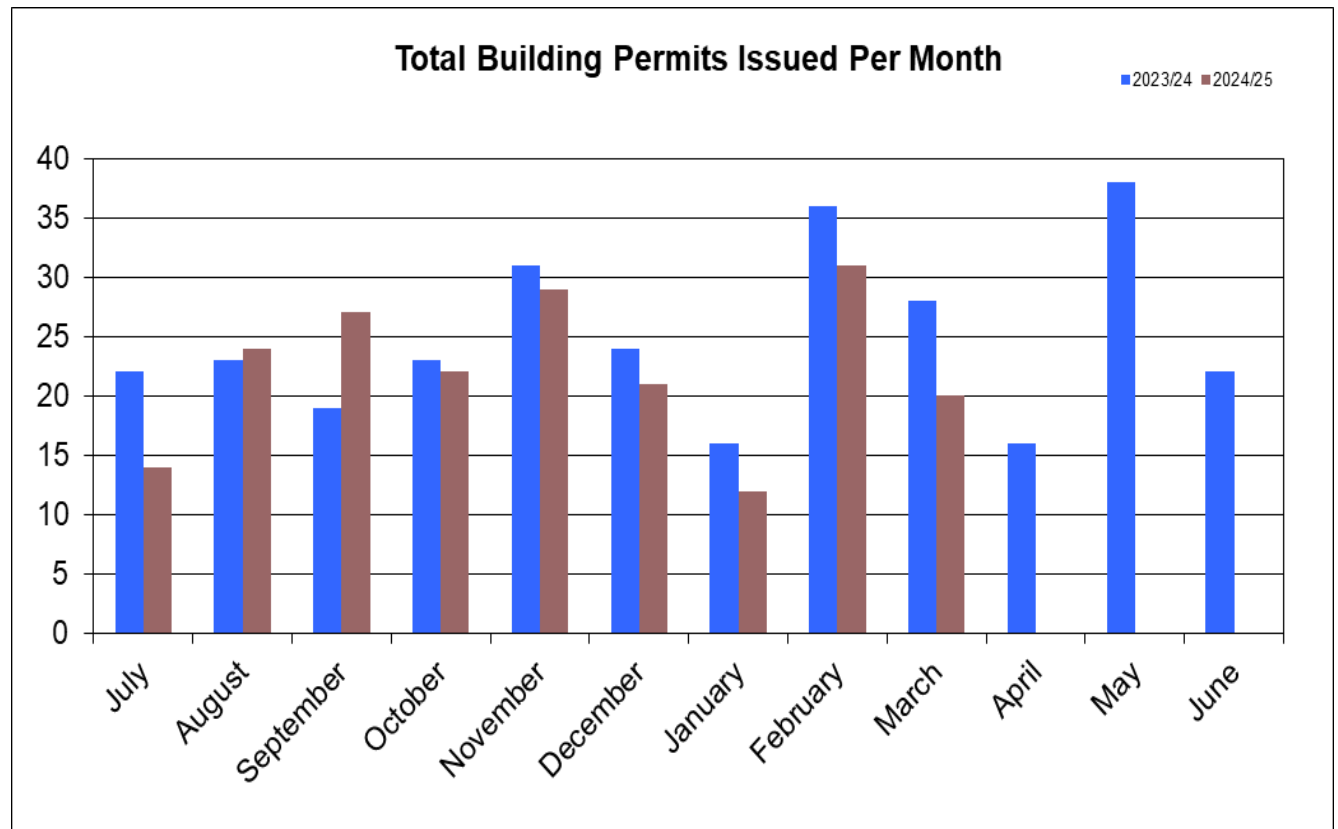
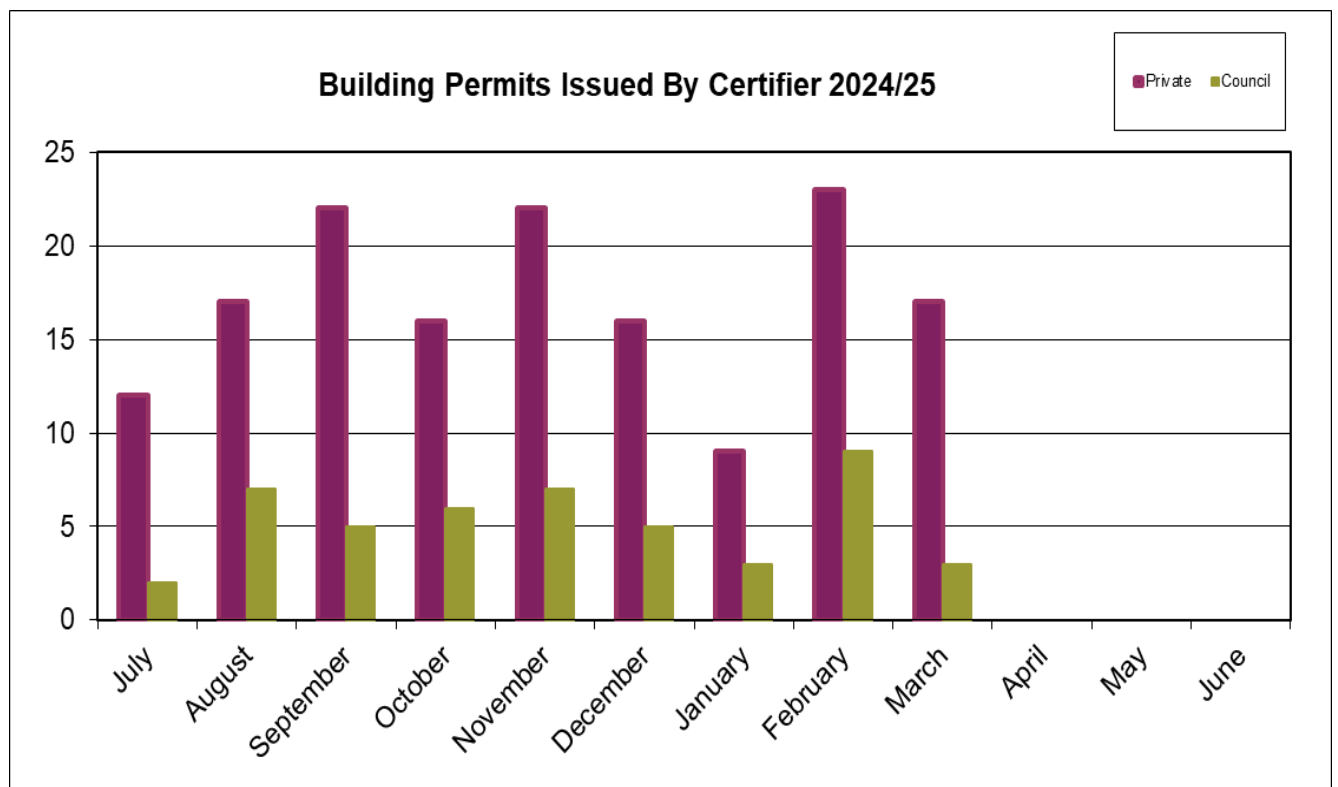
Outstanding Applications at End of Month

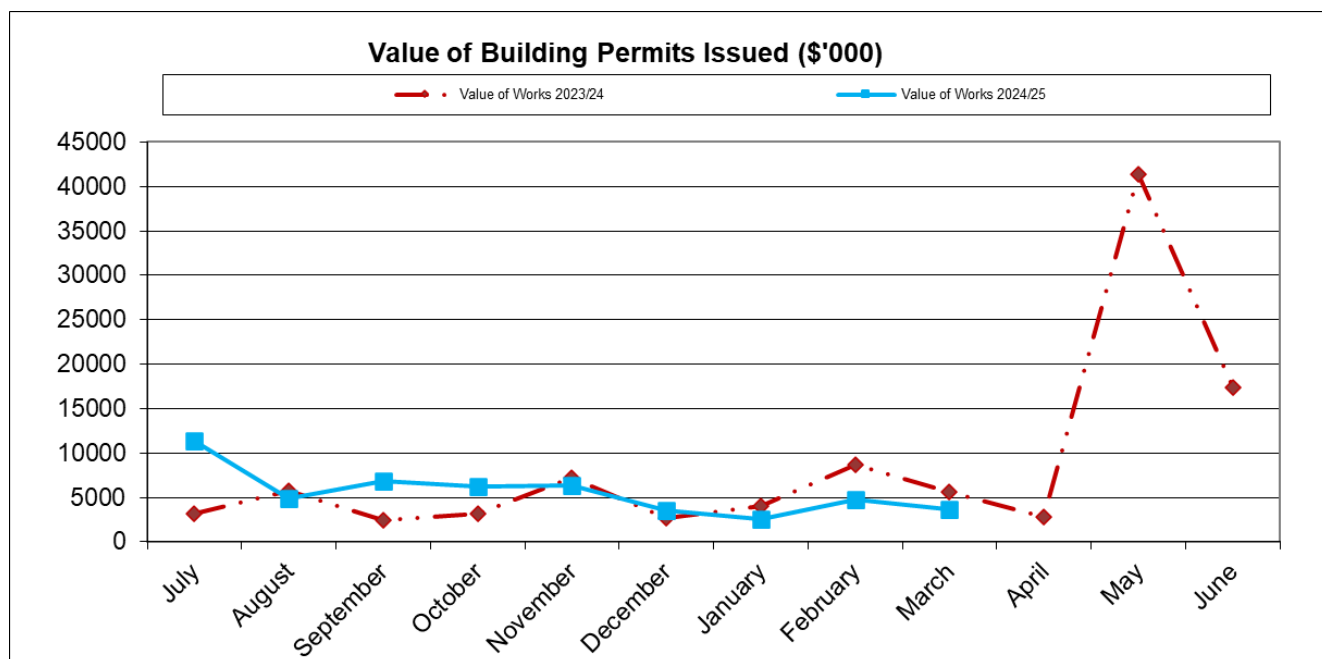


Building Approvals Issued by Council and Private Practitioners

| Permit No | | Description | Property Address | Value |
|--------------|---------------|--|---|--------------------|
| 1 | 2801015739686 | Construction of an industrial shed | Lot 1 Enterprise Drive, Benalla | \$179,827 |
| 2 | 2425841211781 | Construction of a spa and safety barrier | 13A Dunn Street, Benalla | \$10,000 |
| 3 | 7646819351912 | Construction of an open garage | 174 Winton-Glenrowan Road, Glenrowan | \$15,750 |
| 4 | 6831560619980 | Proposed demolition of existing signal hut building (existing concrete slab to remain) | 45 Mackellar Street, Benalla | \$275,000 |
| 5 | 3985341895111 | Construction of an attached garage. | 6 Neil Avenue, Benalla | \$9,130 |
| 6 | 2203944100295 | Construction of a swimming pool or spa barrier | 3 O'Loughlin Drive, Benalla | \$82,600 |
| 7 | 6159979204857 | Construction of a swimming pool or spa barrier | 70 Willis Little Drive, Benalla | \$65,520 |
| 8 | 1941981404186 | Construction of a new dwelling and garage | 16 Honeyeater Street, Benalla | \$390,300 |
| 9 | 1118721382224 | Construction of a new dwelling and garage | 1 Honeyeater Street, Benalla | \$383,450 |
| 10 | 6888541649543 | Construction of a new shed | 413 Baddaginnie-Warrenbayne Road, Baddaginnie | \$91,862 |
| 11 | 7715630664323 | Construction of a new dwelling and garage | 11 Croft Court, Benalla | \$361,792 |
| 12 | 5709165166138 | Construction of dwelling | 471 Greta Road, Glenrowan West | \$196,260 |
| 13 | 4567357571271 | Construction of control room and amenities building | 379 Goorambat-Chesney Road, Goorambat | \$200,000 |
| 14 | 5617617289178 | Alterations to an existing building. Underpinning | 79 Gillies Street, Benalla | \$55,713 |
| 15 | 7782056072894 | Construction of a single storey dwelling and garage | 22 Senator Drive, Benalla | \$344,990 |
| 16 | 6525794232705 | Extension to an existing dwelling | 9 Carlyle Street, Benalla | \$94,800 |
| 17 | 8999836576233 | Construction of a new dwelling and garage | 24 Bourke Drive, Benalla | \$384,800 |
| 18 | 9250085281669 | Alterations to an existing building | 16 Yellow Brick Road, Benalla | \$48,950 |
| 19 | 2376992965513 | Construction of a dwelling and garage | 15 Honeyeater Street, Benalla | \$387,350 |
| 20 | 8294710538954 | Construction of a shed | 32 Farrell Road, Benalla | \$59,237 |
| Total | | | | \$3,637,331 |

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.

11. Development Department Activity Report for the Quarter Ended 31 March 2025

Ref: 2005329054-534
Nilesh Singh – Manager Development

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the activities of the Development department for the quarter ended 31 March 2025.

Strategic Planning

- The draft *Heritage Study* is now complete and will be discussed at a meeting with the Heritage Working Group for comment prior to being advertised to all affected landowners in accordance with the community engagement plan.
- The Council was successful in obtaining \$150,000 in funding from the Regional Planning Hub (State Government). The funding will facilitate the procurement of all remaining technical reports required to inform the Benalla Urban Growth area including a Community Infrastructure Study and Open Space Study. Both studies are now progressing with consultation by the consultants being undertaken with relevant stakeholders.
- At a Finance and Planning Committee meeting on 9 April 2025 Council resolved to authorise and exhibit Amendment C45. Amendment C45 seeks to implement the findings of the Planning Scheme Review. This amendment has now been submitted to the Minister for Planning for authorisation.

Statutory Planning

- The planning team won a biennial award from Consulting Surveyors Victoria. This prestigious award recognises excellence in dealing with subdivision applications in the rural area category.
- 32 applications received during the quarter.
- 15 applications decided during the quarter.
- 78.43 per cent of applications were decided within statutory timeframes.
- 279 phone calls received.

Building Surveying

- 128 building inspections.
- 129 building certificates.
- 15 building permits issued.
- 49 private building permits issued.

Public Health

- The public health officer has found a way to have food and other samples couriered in secure areas on the trains and buses unaccompanied for prompt analysis. The discovery of the reinstatement of the Greenstar courier system for blood delivery, pathology and health parcels is welcomed and this positive news was shared with colleagues statewide.
- Arrangements were made to bring in Country Fire Authority and Fire Rescue Victoria expertise to review an assessment of a Council registered caravan park after issues with padlocks on fire fighter access gates were identified. A significant audit, signage review and re-education process for vulnerable park residents will be conducted in this high fire risk environment.
- A business that has been operating for seven years without the necessary planning, building or septic tank approvals was identified and brought to the attention of all the relevant departments. Appropriate support and advice was provided to the business owner to lodge the necessary approvals required. The planning permit is currently being assessed by Council Officers. This resulted from a food proposal to acquire a food vehicle for the premises.

Compliance

- The compliance team impounded 70 domestic animals.
- Responded to 75 domestic animal related requests.
- 18 dogs and cats were returned to their homes.

Emergency Management

Completed planning and reviews of:

- Neighbourhood Safer Places Plan.
- Relief and Recovery Plan.
- Pandemic Plan.
- Heatwave Plan.

All the above are Complementary Plans to the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP). The Fire Plan (a sub-plan to the MEMP) is currently under development.

Manager Development

Septic Tanks

- 24 Permit to Install issued.
- 20 Certificate to Use' issued.
- 72 septic inspections conducted.

Wastewater Referrals for Planning Permit

Thirty-two applications were referred for planning comments to Manager Development for wastewater comments for planning proposals.

Fee Dispensation

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

For the quarter ended 31 March 2025, 4 applications to the value of \$5,384.70 in fee dispensations were approved:

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

Applications Received:

| Applicant | Permit Type | Value |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Stephanie Brack (BRCC) | General | \$65.50 |
| Alexander Group Building Surveyors (Direction of Housing) | Private Building Permit | \$134.40 |
| Regent Honeyeater Project | Planning Permit | \$1,420.70 |
| Benalla Cemetery Trust | Planning Permit | \$3,764.10 |
| Total | | \$,5384.70 |

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 ACTION PLAN

Community

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

Liveability

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Operating Budget result for the period ending 31 March 2025.

| | Notes | 2024/25 YTD Actuals | 2024/25 YTD Budget | 2024/25 YTD Variance | 2024/25 Full Year Budget | 2024/25 Full Year Forecast |
|------------------------|-------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Development Operations | 1 | \$144,959 | \$237,902 | \$92,943 | \$313,643 | \$313,643 |
| Planning | 2 | \$179,592 | \$111,561 | -\$68,031 | \$151,671 | \$604,683 |
| Building | 3 | \$322,012 | \$190,294 | -\$131,718 | \$252,470 | \$266,470 |
| Compliance | 4 | \$500,617 | \$470,531 | -\$30,086 | \$696,603 | \$696,059 |
| Public Health | | \$36,581 | \$61,851 | \$25,270 | \$95,319 | \$95,319 |
| Emergency Management | | \$3,684 | \$16,197 | \$12,513 | \$21,598 | \$55,393 |
| Total | | \$1,187,445 | \$1,088,336 | -\$99,109 | \$1,531,303 | \$2,031,567 |

Notes:

1. Favourable variance due to reduced expenditure.
2. Unfavourable variance due to reduced income being higher than projected in the budget and consulting expenses.
3. Unfavourable variance due to reduced income and additional Building Services expenses.
4. Unfavourable variance due to additional out-of-hours call outs.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

12. Urgent Business

Closure of Meeting