

21.01 BENALLA RURAL CITY

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21.01-1 Municipal Profile

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Benalla Rural City was created in October 2002 following the de-amalgamation of the Delatite Shire and covers an area of 2,354 square kilometres. It has a population of 13, 647 people (2011) and is situated in Victoria's north east approximately 180 kilometres from Melbourne. The municipality shares boundaries with the municipalities of Wangaratta, Mansfield, Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie and Moira. Benalla is the major urban centre and supports a network of smaller towns including Baddaginnie, Goorambat, Devenish, Swanpool, Tatong, Thoona and Winton.

Benalla Rural City is a diverse rural municipality based on the Broken River valley commencing immediately downstream of Lake Nillahcootie (south) at the foot of Mount Samaria and extending north, with Benalla located on the banks of the Broken River and Lake Benalla in the geographic centre of the municipality. It also includes highly fertile agricultural land along the Hollands Creek which is a major tributary to the Broken River.

The municipality is strategically located on the Hume and Midland Highways and railway (Melbourne to Sydney) of state and national significance. The convergence of both road and rail transport routes has led to the emergence of Benalla as a significant transport hub which is a major benefit to local industry, especially those needing to either transport product interstate or through the Port of Melbourne.

The Benalla Rural City economy is focussed on Benalla's regional centre role, agricultural production, tourism and manufacturing. It is dominated by employment in the manufacturing (13.3%), retail trade (12.2%) and health and community services sectors (9.9%). Employment in agriculture is above the State average (11.6%).

The Benalla Central Business District (CBD) provides a wide range of higher order community services and facilities but faces strong competition from Shepparton and Wangaratta for the retail dollar. Benalla serves a large rural hinterland extending part way to Mansfield in the south east, part way to Shepparton in the west, as well as Euroa to the south and Wangaratta to the north.

The municipality has a strong industrial base located to the north and east of the Benalla urban area. The extensive range of industries is generally based on specialist manufacturing, processing of timber products, value adding to agricultural produce and also providing a solid service industrial base for the broader region.

The rural areas of the municipality are acknowledged for their good soils and access to irrigation water in parts. The major agricultural industries are prime lamb and beef production and broad acre cropping, with wheat and fodder crops being the dominant grains. There is some irrigation and dairying. More recently diversification has resulted in viticulture, more intensive forms of horticulture and forestry.

The major water features are the Broken River, Hollands Creek, Winton Wetlands, Lake Nillahcootie and Lake Benalla. The wetlands, river corridors and Mount Samaria State Park, Reef Hills State Park and parts of the Warby Ranges State Park form the major environmental features of the municipality and, along with roadsides, support most of the remaining native vegetation.

21.01-2 Key Planning Issues

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The key planning issues are:

- Population retention and growth;
- Improved infrastructure to small towns to promote sustainability and development;
- Strengthening the regional role of Benalla;

- Identifying opportunities to respond to climate change;
- Protecting and enhancing the environment and biodiversity;
- Providing a diverse housing mix;
- Improved transport and infrastructure;
- Maximising tourism opportunities;
- Protecting valuable and productive farming land;
- Protecting heritage and maintaining urban character;
- Effective management of incompatible uses.

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Vision

The Council Plan 2013-2017 provides the following vision:

A sustainable, thriving and cohesive community where lifestyle, culture, health and wellbeing are important.

This vision is an important expression of the direction the Council wishes to take and underpins the strategic planning direction for the municipality.

The Council Plan 2013-2017 commits Council to complete a Housing Strategy, development of Enterprise Park, a new master plan for the future development of the Benalla CBD and reviewing and finalising the Roadside Vegetation Management Plan.

Strategic Framework Plan

Council's key strategic directions for future land-use planning and development are illustrated by the municipal framework plan and town structure plans. The purpose of these plans is to identify locations where specific land use outcomes will be supported and promoted. The plan also identifies potential development opportunity areas where significant land use change may be expected, as well as areas where land use constraints may restrict future development.

The Benalla municipal strategic framework plan is to be read in conjunction with the objectives and strategies outlined in Clauses 21.02 to 21.08.

Clauses 21.02 – 21.08 identify the following seven key themes that cover the key land use planning considerations for the municipality:

- Settlement, Housing and Character;
- Environmental, Landscape and Heritage Values;
- Environmental Risks;
- Natural Resource Management;
- Economic Development;
- Transport and Infrastructure; and
- Local Areas.

