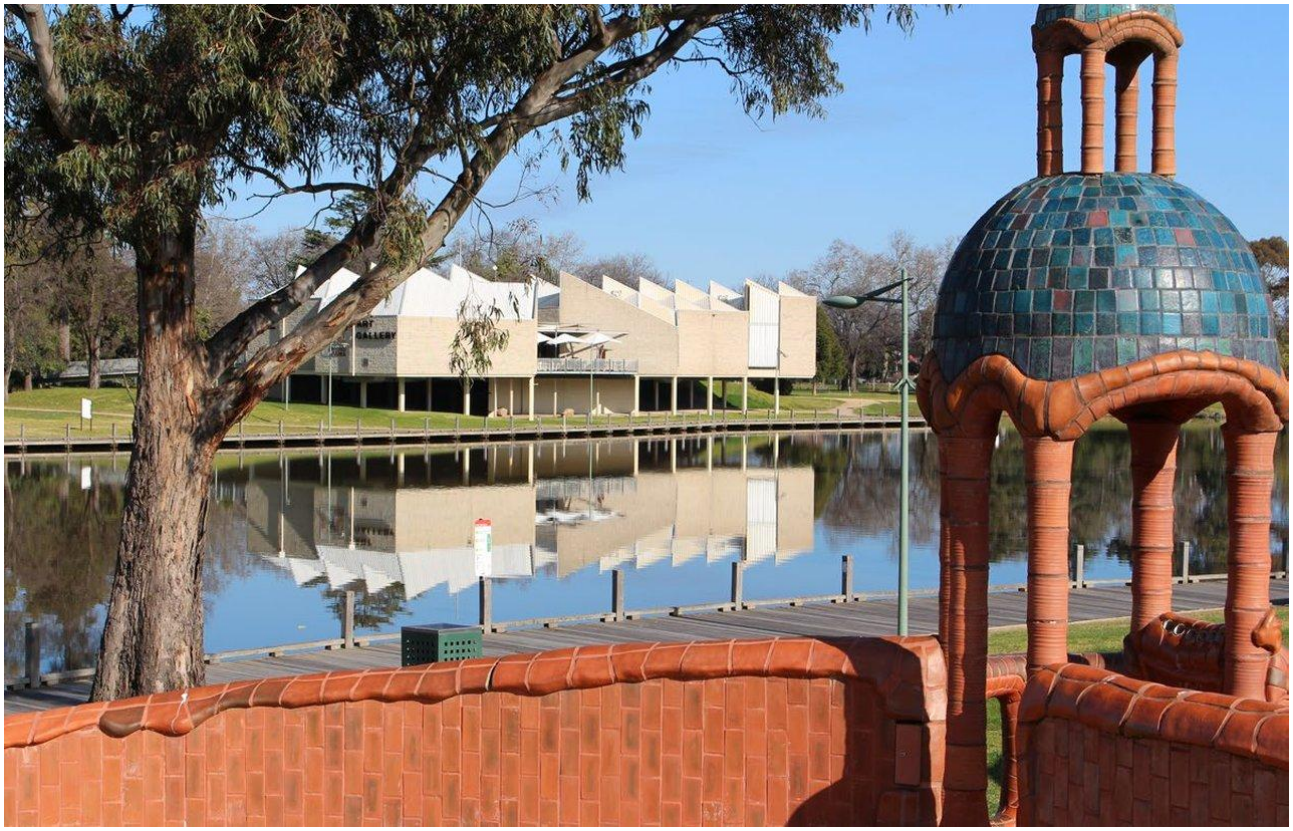


DIRECTOR

Infrastructure, Place and Development

Benalla Rural City Council

Candidate Information Pack | November 2026

GEM EXECUTIVE Executive search for local government and not-for-profit

Acknowledgement of Country

Benalla Rural City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

Benalla Rural City sits on the traditional lands of the Taungurung and Yorta Yorta peoples, whose enduring connection to Country continues to shape the region's identity. Council is committed to respectful collaboration, cultural preservation and reconciliation.

About Benalla Rural City



Benalla Rural City is a welcoming regional community in north-east Victoria, around two hours from Melbourne. It is home to more than 14,500 people, with over a third living in rural communities beyond the township of Benalla, which contributes to a strong rural lifestyle and a diverse local economy.

Benalla is renowned for its arts and cultural identity. More than 79,000 people visited the Benalla Art Gallery in 2023–24, and a growing collection of street and silo art in Benalla, Goorambat and Devenish continues to draw visitors. Council supports popular events including the Benalla Street Art Festival and the annual Benalla Festival in November. The Winton Motor Raceway, the Winton Wetlands, the Warby Ranges and Mount Samaria State Park add heritage, motorsport and outdoor adventure to the region's appeal.

The community is changing. Punjabi is now the second most common language spoken at home, reflecting a growing South Asian community and the region's evolving cultural diversity.

14,528	36%	51	$1.1b	1,300+ km
Population (2021)	Live outside Benalla township	Median age	Gross Regional Product	Roads maintained

Major industries

Health care and social assistance is the region's leading employer (15.1%), followed by construction (12.6%, up 4.2%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (9.7%), manufacturing (8.5%) and retail trade (8.2%). The region also has advanced manufacturing operations and a vocational training presence through GOTAFE. Access to skilled labour is shaped by housing availability and workforce retention.

Our Vision

> **Community Vision 2036**
>
> *Benalla Rural City is welcoming and friendly, thriving and prosperous, environmentally responsible, innovative and industrious, caring and supportive, and engaging for all residents and visitors — a place where people want to continue to live, move to and are proud to call home.*

The Community Vision 2036 was developed through a deliberative engagement process involving more than 700 community members and a panel of independent representatives. It is supported by seven guiding themes, including a well-planned, connected and accessible community, planning for population growth, and a sustainable environment, all of which sit squarely within this Director's remit.

Council's Vision	A sustainable, thriving and cohesive community where lifestyle, culture, health and wellbeing are supported by sound leadership and community partnership.
Council's Purpose	To work in partnership with the community to build a connected, future-focused municipality where people and place can thrive.
Council's Values	Accountability, Continuous improvement, Equity, Integrity, Leadership and Respect.

Our Council



Benalla Rural City Council is governed by seven councillors: Mayor Cr Bernie Hearn, Deputy Mayor Cr Justin King, and Crs Peter Davis, Puna Hewa Gunaratne, David Blore, Jillian Merkel and Vince Branigan.

The Council Plan 2025–2029 is Council's four-year strategic plan under the Local Government Act 2020. For the first time, Council worked with a Community Panel to help shape it, and it integrates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Disability Action Plan into a single document. It is built around five themes: Community, Economy, Environment, Liveability and Leadership.

Council services and assets

Council delivers the services that many people rely on every day, including family and youth programs, waste management, public health, emergency management, economic development and business support, and the maintenance of community facilities and open space. It also looks after the infrastructure that keeps the community running.

Sealed roads	**561 km**	Footpaths	**104 km**
Unsealed roads	**773 km**	Cycleways	**21 km**
Bridges	**75**	Buildings and structures	**104**
Major culverts	**230**	Recreation / sporting centres	**8**
Kerb and channel	**130 km**	Art gallery and aquatic centre	**1 each**

What Our Community Is Telling Us

Council's engagement for the 2025–2029 Plan included 71 individual consultations, five community workshops, four community panel sessions, 13 listening sessions and street pop-ups across the municipality, together with a community survey. Several priorities bear directly on this role:

- **Roads and footpaths come first.** Upgraded footpaths and roads were the top liveability priority in the community survey (58.7% of respondents), with drainage and footpaths in older areas singled out as needing attention.
- **Growth must be planned.** Residents told Council there is a lot of interest in moving to Benalla, and that housing, roads, parking and infrastructure need to keep pace.
- **Connectivity limits business.** Business owners cite unreliable internet and freight access as barriers to growth, and many residents in smaller towns depend on limited public transport.
- **Outer towns want to be seen.** People outside central Benalla want the same level of support, services and engagement.
- **Shade, trees and public spaces matter.** Increasing tree cover and improving shade, seating and lighting were strong themes.
- **Decisions should be visible.** The community wants feedback to shape decisions, and clear, timely communication about what is happening and why.

The Opportunity

The Director Infrastructure, Place and Development is a new executive role, created as part of the CEO's new executive team. It brings together the functions that shape how Benalla Rural City looks, grows and works: infrastructure and asset management, development services, facilities, information technology and project management.

Key challenges and opportunities

- **Growth and housing.** Housing affordability and availability affect Council's ability to attract and retain skilled workers. The Plan commits Council to proactively plan for sustainable residential development and to embed liveability principles in subdivision and precinct planning.
- **An ageing community.** With a median age of 51, the number of residents aged 75 and over is forecast to more than double by 2036, increasing demand for accessible footpaths, crossings, facilities and services.
- **A large and varied asset base.** More than 1,300 km of roads, 75 bridges and over 100 buildings must be maintained and renewed, with the Plan supported by a 10-Year Asset Plan and 10-Year Financial Plan.
- **Climate and resilience.** More frequent extreme weather events place pressure on infrastructure, natural assets and community wellbeing, and the Plan commits to improving the climate resilience and sustainability of Council assets.
- **External funding.** Rates alone cannot fund the initiatives in the Plan. Securing State and Federal Government funding, and the grants and partnerships behind it, is essential.
- **Digital and freight connectivity.** Advocacy for improved digital, freight and transport connectivity is a named strategy under the Economy theme.

> **What we are looking for**
> A senior executive who can turn the Council Plan into delivered projects and well-planned places, lead a multi-disciplinary directorate with confidence, and build the trust of Councillors, the community, developers and government alike.

The Position

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, the Director Infrastructure, Place and Development provides strategic and operational leadership across Council's infrastructure, asset management, development services, facilities, information technology and project management functions. As a key member of the Executive Leadership Team, the Director contributes to organisational strategy and the Council Plan, and acts as a trusted adviser to the CEO and Council. The position may be required to act as Chief Executive Officer in the CEO's absence.

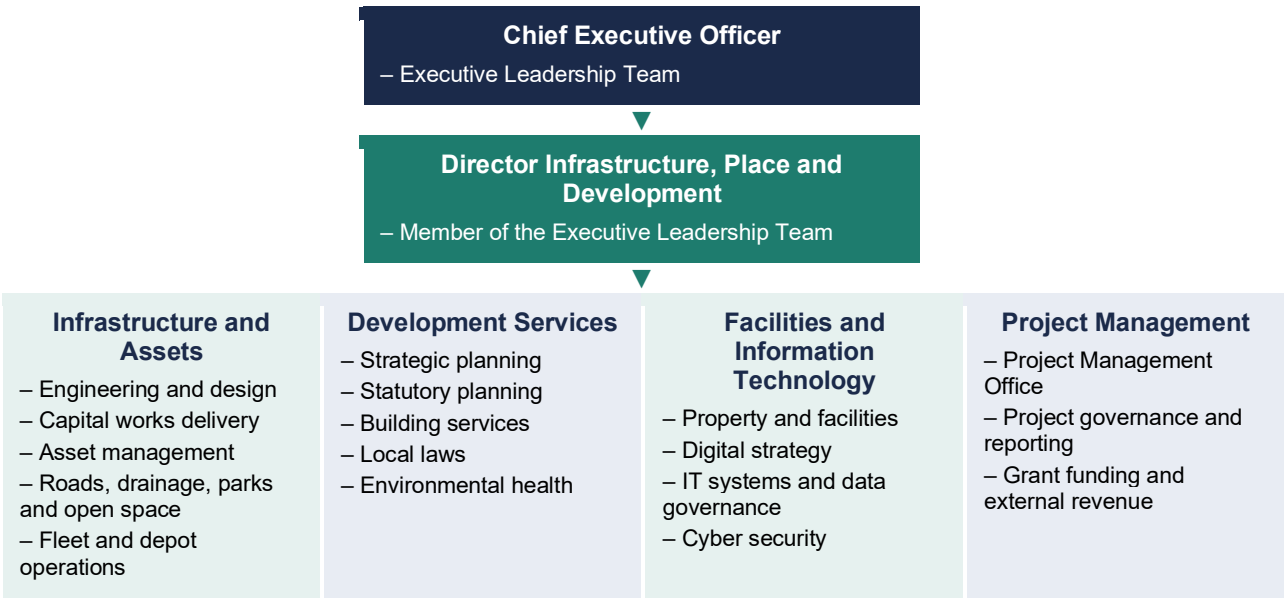
Classification	Senior Executive Officer
Division	Infrastructure, Place and Development
Reports to	Chief Executive Officer
Employment	Executive / Senior Officer contract under s.42 of the Local Government Act 2020

Key responsibilities

- **Leadership and strategy.** Contribute to organisational strategy, governance and decision-making as part of the Executive Leadership Team, and to the development and review of the Council Plan and associated strategic and asset management plans.
- **Infrastructure and assets.** Lead the planning, design, construction and maintenance of civil and built infrastructure, oversee the Capital Works program, and ensure robust Asset Management Plans. This includes roads, drainage, buildings, parks and open space, fleet and depot operations.
- **Development services.** Lead strategic planning (the Planning Scheme, structure plans and land use strategies), oversee statutory planning, building services, local laws and environmental health, and represent Council at planning panels and tribunals such as VCAT.
- **Facilities and information technology.** Oversee the property and facilities portfolio, and Council's IT, digital systems, data governance and cyber security, including the digital strategy and technology roadmap.
- **Project management.** Establish and lead a Project Management Office to drive consistent, disciplined project delivery, and pursue grant funding and external revenue.
- **Financial and risk management.** Develop and monitor Directorate budgets, apply sound long-term financial and asset planning, and foster a risk-aware culture including business continuity planning.
- **Stakeholders and community.** Build relationships with Councillors, the community, government agencies, contractors, developers and industry bodies, and lead community consultation on infrastructure, development and policy.
- **People and culture.** Lead, coach and develop the Directorate team, support succession planning, and champion a safe, inclusive and high-performing culture.
- **Governance and compliance.** Ensure compliance with the Local Government Act 2020, Planning and Environment Act 1987, Building Act 1993 and procurement requirements, and contribute to Council's emergency management responsibilities.

The Organisation

The Director leads a multi-disciplinary directorate and sits on the Executive Leadership Team under the CEO. The functions of the Directorate are shown below.



Our Ideal Candidate

We are looking for a senior leader who can translate Council's strategic priorities into well-planned places and well-delivered infrastructure, and who can do so with the community, Councillors and industry on side.

You will be a strategic and collaborative executive with a coaching, empowering leadership style and the maturity and judgement to navigate complex or politically sensitive situations. You will be a persuasive communicator who can present with confidence to Council, the community and external stakeholders, including at planning panels and tribunals. You will bring strong financial acumen, a sound grasp of asset management, risk and governance in local government, and a commitment to a safe, inclusive and high-performing culture.

Benalla Rural City is a place where a Director can make a visible difference. You will lead a varied directorate in a community that values its character and its future, and you will help shape both.

Candidate Skills Matrix

Technical skills and experience

In addition to local government experience, the following areas of technical expertise have been identified for focus in the selection of our ideal candidate.

1	**Local government and industry experience** Demonstrated understanding of local government and its distinct management requirements, with experience in a local government or comparable complex, community-focused environment. Experience in a regional or growth-area council is desirable.
2	**Infrastructure, asset management and capital works** Track record of delivering complex infrastructure programs, including capital works planning, procurement and delivery, and the development and implementation of Asset Management Plans for roads, drainage, buildings and open space.
3	**Strategic and statutory planning** Knowledge of strategic and statutory planning principles, urban design and environmentally sustainable development, and the ability to balance community, economic, environmental and heritage considerations. Experience before planning panels or VCAT is desirable.
4	**Governance, regulatory and compliance** Sound understanding of the Local Government Act 2020, Planning and Environment Act 1987, Building Act 1993 and procurement requirements, and experience overseeing consistent, risk-based regulatory functions.
5	**Financial acumen** Experience developing, managing and monitoring budgets, and managing complex, multi-year programs with sound long-term financial and asset planning.
6	**Project management and funding** Experience establishing disciplined project governance, reporting and risk frameworks, and a record of identifying and securing grant funding and external revenue.
7	**Facilities, IT and digital** Understanding of contemporary information technology, digital transformation and cyber security in a local government context. Experience overseeing these functions is desirable.
8	**Community and stakeholder engagement** Experience leading community consultation and engagement, including familiarity with IAP2 principles, and building strong relationships with Councillors, government, developers, contractors and industry bodies.
9	**People, culture and risk** Experience leading and developing a large, diverse and multi-disciplinary team, driving performance through change, supporting succession planning, and fostering a positive, risk-aware culture.

Behavioural skills

1	**Strategic leadership** Sees the big picture, links the Directorate's work to the Council Plan, and communicates direction in a way that engages and motivates others.

2	**Collaborative and relationship-focused** Builds constructive relationships up, down and across the organisation and with the community, finds common ground and drives consensus.
3	**Effective communicator** Adjusts style to the audience, whether one-to-one, in front of Council or at a public forum. Listens well and is clear, concise and persuasive.
4	**Sound judgement and decisiveness** Makes timely, well-reasoned decisions, including in complex or politically sensitive situations and when information is incomplete.
5	**Authentic and accountable** Follows through on commitments, takes responsibility for decisions, and gives direct, honest advice to the CEO and Council, even when it is difficult.
6	**Coaching and empowering** Develops capability in others, empowers managers and teams, and champions a safe, inclusive and high-performing culture.

About You



Mandatory

- Tertiary qualifications in Engineering, Construction, Asset Management, Town Planning or a related discipline.
- Substantial senior management experience leading a large, multi-disciplinary infrastructure, planning, environment or operations function.
- Demonstrated experience managing people, budgets, stakeholders and complex projects.
- Demonstrated experience within local government or a comparable complex, community-focused environment.
- Current driver's licence.
- Satisfactory National Police Check (and Working with Children Check where required by the position).

Desirable

- Postgraduate qualifications in management, business or a related field.
- Experience overseeing facilities, information technology or digital transformation functions.
- Experience presenting to Council, planning panels or tribunals such as VCAT.
- Experience in a growth-area or regional council context.

Our guiding principles

- **Fairness, equity and respect:** lead by example to build an inclusive workplace that recognises and encourages the value in everyone.
- **Leadership:** embracing, encouraging and recognising effective leadership at all levels.
- **Continuous improvement and innovation:** consistently finding better ways of delivering services and value.

Our Offering

Apart from the opportunity to live, work and lead in one of Victoria's most creative regional communities, the position is offered on an Executive / Senior Officer contract with a total remuneration package that includes base salary, superannuation and full private use vehicle.

Employment is subject to a satisfactory National Police Check, provision of evidence of qualifications and proof of eligibility to work in Australia. Working with Children Check and medical assessment may also apply, as relevant to the position. Council is an equal opportunity employer committed to a safe, harmonious and inclusive workplace.

Resourcing Timeline

1	**Initial conversation** Prior to submitting an application, a confidential discussion with Nick Kelly of GEM Executive regarding the role and your suitability. Prospective candidates must not contact Council. **Canvassing elected representatives directly or indirectly will disqualify applicants.** Applications close: Monday 23rd November
2	**Screening and selection for first-round interviews** GEM Executive will work closely with Council to develop a short-list of candidates for first-round interviews.
3	**First-round interviews** Facilitated by GEM Executive and conducted face-to-face or via video conference, followed by a group calibration to determine which candidates progress.
4	**Psychometric testing and employment checks** Candidates progressing will be required to complete psychometric testing and background checks.
5	**Second-round interviews** Second-round interviews will be held in Benalla, with further interview questions and a practical activity.
6	**Referee checks** GEM Executive will undertake reference checks for the preferred candidate(s).
7	**Negotiation and appointment** Facilitated by GEM Executive, with an offer of employment to follow.

Applying for the Role

Nick Kelly of GEM Executive is Council's recruitment partner for this process, and all enquiries are to be directed to GEM Executive on 0497 476 548.

To apply, please forward a detailed cover letter that outlines your qualifications, skills and experience as they relate to the desired technical and behavioural skills, along with your CV, to nick@gemexecutive.com.au.