

# Benalla VICTORIA

Victoria's 2006 Tidiest Town  
& National finalist

**Location:** Approximately 200kms north east of Melbourne

**Population:** Approximately 9 000



Situated in north eastern Victoria on the picturesque Lake Benalla, part of Benalla Rural City's vision statement refers to a diverse balanced economic base, environmentally responsible, socially just and sustainable. This vision is certainly demonstrated in the diverse range of community projects that make up Benalla's commitment to the Tidy Towns ethos and other related environmental and beautification initiatives.



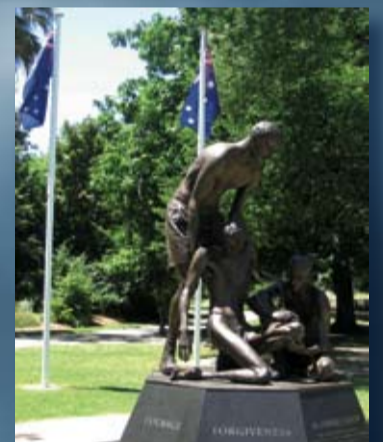
Numerous heritage restoration programs and the preservation of Benalla District's rich culture are managed by numerous groups throughout the community. From the commitment of the Tatong Heritage Group to the Town Hall restoration approach, blended with the modern architecture of the Performing Arts and Convention Centre, a feeling of community pride is certainly demonstrated in ensuring surroundings are well maintained and welcoming for visitors as well as residents.

Benalla's Ceramic Mural is a community art project that links the skills of ceramic artists, architects and broad areas within the community in a large scale piece of public art work. Described as one of Australia's largest community art works, the mural, a major tourist attraction, is situated on Lake Benalla foreshore and is a place to rest, reflect, to relax and for children to play and all enjoy. The Mural stands as a legacy to the years of dedicated commitment of numerous amateur and professional potters and benefactors that have financially contributed to the success of the project.

A memorial in the Botanical Gardens celebrates Benalla's favourite son, Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop. The sculpture celebrates his life which was filled with legendary war service achievements and welcomes visitors to stop and take time to reflect on his life and its message of integrity, friendship, humility, courage, leadership, compassion and forgiveness. A wonderful memorial that was made possible due to the tireless community fundraising and spirit which helped make it a reality.

The Regent Honeyeater is an endangered bird species, with numbers declining seriously over recent times. As a result, Regent Honeyeater coordinator and Landcarer, Ray Thomas and his helpers have made significant contributions to restoring its habitats together with other native fauna species, also mostly endangered. Enormous support has been gained from local landholders, school groups and a huge network of volunteers to plant and restore hundreds of hectares of habitat. Ray Thomas' dedication and commitment to the project for over 10 years is to be commended.

Benalla's new kerbside waste and recycling collection service has made a huge difference to reducing the community's impact on landfill. Combining resource recovery and waste management needs with adjacent communities provides an 'economy of scale' approach to an effective system with numerous environmental and economic outcomes. A unique weekly collection service to 21 rural deposit sites further enables a broad cross section of the community to be involved in reducing household waste as well as being able to recycle more materials.



## Further community action

Benalla's new Sustainable Land Management Directory is an essential community resource in providing information regarding environmental care, and what to do, why and who may assist.

Numerous Adopt-a-spot sites have been established within the community providing an ideal opportunity for local schools and service clubs to take 'ownership' in caring for their environment.

Benalla's Rakali project, coordinated by the Benalla District Environment Group, uses the character and Aboriginal name for the Australian Water Rat, Rakali to raise awareness of water quality and biodiversity issues, as well as the need for healthy habitats for native flora and fauna species.

Benalla's Youth Service Providers Network enables a monthly forum for individuals and organisations

working with young people as well as interested community members to discuss, plan and initiate projects aimed at improving the quality of youth service provision within Benalla.

