

2. Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre Use – Fees and Charges

Ref: 1964932628-395

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report proposes a fee structure for hiring the Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre (BPACC) under an interim self-service model.

BACKGROUND

BPACC is a performing arts venue with more than 280 seats.

BPACC was established in 2004 as a partnership between Northern Victoria Institute of TAFE (NVITAFE), formerly GOTAFE and Council. NVITAFE initially managed the facility and staffing operations, later transitioning full operations to Council from 2012.

BPACC was placed in hiatus from September 2023 after Council relocated Benalla Cinema to the Mair Street Visitor Information Centre. Since Council and NVITAFE ceased operating from the Samaria Road precinct, Council has been working with NVITAFE to establish a community access model. Negotiations remain ongoing because of the complex operating and site ownership arrangements.

Council's ability to manage the facility is further complicated because water and sewerage, gas, fire monitoring and security monitoring services are supplied through the adjacent private school campus. The school currently covers these costs, and the services are not separately metered. The school's costs must therefore be considered when setting fees and charges. NVITAFE has also leased the entire car park adjacent to the BPACC entry to the school, so hirers will need to arrange access to the carpark with the school.

DISCUSSION

It is proposed that the venue operate under an interim self-service hire model while Council negotiates a revised management agreement with NVITAFE.

Trial access to BPACC has been provided to the Australian Christian College Benalla, FCJ College Benalla and Benalla P-12 College under interim hire arrangements for bookings though to December 2026 on a self-service basis. Schools have agreed to reimburse costs of \$484 (inclusive of GST) per Performance Day under this trial.

The formalisation of a self-service hire model will provide controlled community access to BPACC. Under this model hirers will receive a venue induction from the Facilities and Information Technology team and be issued with keys. They must provide evidence of their own public liability insurance, indemnify and hold Council harmless, engage suitably qualified sound and lighting technicians at their own cost, and provide all required venue staff. Council staff will not attend or supervise events.

Benchmark venues shown in Table 1 generally require venue technicians, front-of-house staff, ticketing services and venue supervision. These requirements result in substantially higher hire costs than those expected under BPACC's self-service model; however, the venues remain useful comparators.

Table 1: Hire fee benchmarking summary

Venue	Seats	Performance Hire	Rehearsal Day	Layover / Dark Day
Capital Theatre, Bendigo	480	\$845 + venue staff costs	\$845 + venue staff costs	\$683
Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo	950	\$1,560	\$1,560	\$770
Drum Theatre, Dandenong	520	\$1,365	\$1,365	N/A
Wyndham Cultural Centre	492	\$1,594 - \$1,652	\$1,594-\$1,652	N/A
Riverlinks Westside	416	\$540 + venue staff costs	\$285 + venue staff costs	\$115

The benchmarking indicates that performance hire at the listed regional venues ranges from \$540 plus venue staffing costs to \$1,652, with additional staffing charges and a percentage of tickets sale income often applying.

BPACC will operate without Council staffing and technical support, and will take no profit share from ticket sales, therefore a lower fee structure is justified.

The proposed fees recognise the value of a fully equipped theatre and the opportunity for hirers to generate income through ticket sales.

Proposed Hire Fees and Costs

Table 2: Proposed fees and charges for BPACC

Hire Type	Commercial Hire	Community Hire	Hire Period	Description
Performance Day	\$1,000	\$500	Daily	Public performance day
Rehearsal Day	\$500	\$250	Daily	Rehearsals, technical runs and sound checks
Bump In/Out Day	\$200	\$100	Daily	Bump in/out of production equipment and sets
Layover / Dark Day	\$200	\$100	Daily	Sets/equipment remain in venue between performances
Additional Performance	\$500	\$250	Per instance	Additional performance/s on same day
Auditorium Hourly	N/A	\$31/hr	Hourly	Hourly use fee for Presentations, Ceremonies or Assemblies
Refundable Bond Deposit	\$500	\$150	Per Performance Day	Fully refundable bond deposit
Cleaning	At cost	At cost	As quoted at time of hire	Professional cleaning selected under the hire agreement, or if required after the hire due to being left in poor condition.
Deliberate damage to facility	At cost	At cost	As quoted	
Replacement of lost keys	At cost	At cost	As quoted	
Security attendance due to false alarm or failure to arm or lock building after use	At cost	At cost	As invoiced by security monitoring firm	
Trigger of Fire alarm caused by the venue hirer resulting in CFA attendance	At cost	At cost	As invoiced by CFA	If the hirer triggers the fire alarm and CFA attends, the hirer will be charged CFA's attendance fee (currently \$681) for each appliance that attends.

Financial and Strategic Considerations

The proposed fees are designed to recover a reasonable proportion of operating costs while remaining competitive within the regional Victorian market. The recommended structure reflects the significantly lower service level provided by Council compared with benchmark venues and aims to encourage utilisation by local arts organisations, schools and community groups.

Hirers may sell admission tickets, and this revenue opportunity has been considered in setting the proposed hire fees. Table 3 illustrates potential gross ticket revenue using ticket prices from recent actual events and BPACC's minimum seating capacity of 280.

Table 3: Illustrative gross ticket revenue per performance based on full attendance.

Ticket price	Seats	Total (per performance)	Benchmark ticket price source
\$5 Adult	280	\$1,400	School Production, BPACC, October 2026
\$10 Adult	280	\$2,800	School Production, BPACC, September 2026
\$20 Adult	280	\$5,600	School Production, BPACC, September 2026
\$30 Adult	280	\$8,400	Amateur Production, Benalla Town Hall, 2026

COUNCIL PLAN 2025-2029 IMPLICATIONS

Community

- *A healthy, safe and resilient community.*

Liveability

- *Vibrant public spaces and places.*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with the Council's *Community Engagement Policy*, it is proposed that community engagement be undertaken at the 'Consult' level under the International Association for Public Participation's IAP2 public participation spectrum as detailed in the table below:

Level of public participation	Promise to the community	Techniques to be used
Consult	We will provide information and consider feedback prior to formalising the fee structure.	Public report presented to Council. Public Notice of community consultation on the Council's website. Key potential users consulted directly. Written feedback invited via the Council's website and social media channels.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A modest operating budget will be developed for BPACC to fund the ongoing maintenance and operating costs required to support the self-service hire model.

OFFICER CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

It is noted that an officer declared a general conflict of interest. The declaration was assessed and considered not to be a conflict of interest.

CONCLUSION

The proposed fee structure provides a practical basis for reopening BPACC to community hirers under an interim self-service model and adds the ability to later extend access to commercial hirers, at the discretion of the CEO. It reflects the lower level of Council support available, the venue's operating circumstances and relevant regional benchmarks. Endorsing the fees will enable controlled community access while Council continues negotiations regarding the future management of the facility.

Submissions received on the proposed BPACC fees and costs will be reported to the Council at a meeting of the Finance and Planning Committee on Wednesday 4 November 2026.

Recommendation:

That the proposed Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre Hire Fees and Costs be endorsed for public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.

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