

Yarra
Ranges
Council

Warburton Mountain Bike Destination

Community Engagement Report
October 2019





KONA
WARRA VALLEY CYCLES

WARRA VALLEY CYCLES

SRAM

Harley Davidson

Executive Summary

Over the past 18 months, the Yarra Ranges Shire has consulted widely with the community regarding the development of the masterplan for the Warburton Mountain Biking Destination. Feedback has been sought from residents of Warburton and the Yarra Valley, businesses, community groups, government agencies and mountain bike riders alike.

People were able to have their say through a diverse range of activities. Drop-in sessions and displays were held in Warburton, as well as an online survey and questions through a dedicated website. The team also met, wrote to and called hundreds of interested parties, answering their individual questions.

Overall, the feedback about the proposed facility has been overwhelmingly positive. There has been strong interest from thousands of people, many offering their support, and even seeking to get involved early in the development of the facility. Many others also made suggestions regarding how to make the facility even better as a world class destination for mountain biking.

Understandably, there were a number of residents living closest to the proposed facility who have sought to resolve a number of issues and questions with the project team. These issues are related to traffic, maintaining the peace and quiet of the area and safety concerns.

Other stakeholders suggested ways to build prosperity for the town around the facility and expressed ways to make it more appealing for mountain bike riders while enhancing the natural environment of the area, recognising its value to those who live in and visit the area alike.

Now that funding has been announced for the next phase of the project, the team will take all feedback into account for the development of a more detailed design.

Introduction

Yarra Ranges Council has been working with the community, Parks Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, cycling groups and various state and commonwealth agencies to develop a world class mountain biking facility at Warburton.

As part of the process we asked the community for their views on a draft masterplan, so their feedback can be used to develop a more detailed design.

This report summarises what has been heard from community members, mountain bikers and a range of other groups, organisations and agencies with connections to Warburton.

The community feedback collected by the project team to date has been provided to an independent third party for review and analysis. The purpose of this is to ensure that all feedback is treated objectively and in context of all other feedback.



Engagement Process to date

Engagement with the community and a wide number of stakeholders has been ongoing over many years. A feasibility study was completed in 2013, paving the way for the current master-planning process.

In 2016, consultation was completed in order to inform the desktop study to produce the draft master plan.

This draft master plan was presented to the community in 2018 for feedback. Feedback collected at this stage of the development cycle is critical to ensure that all concerns and opportunities to improve the facility have been heard, understood and can be accounted for in the final master plan.

Once complete, the finalised master plan document will provide details of the project including trail alignments, infrastructure, operations and how it will be delivered.

Project Timeline / Progress



Who we spoke to...

Feedback from the master planning process has been collected between April 2018 and October 2019. What we have heard will help to inform the planning and detailed design of a world class mountain biking facility.

Groups and individuals with a close connection to Warburton

Over 350

Individuals and groups who live in Warburton and the surrounding area

Sports club

Schools

Environmental groups

Businesses

Government agencies

Emergency management groups

Historical Societies

Resident Groups

Over 400

Individuals who completed a survey. 98% from Victoria

Bushwalking groups

Landcare

CFA

Parks agencies

Arts and cultural organisations

Education providers

Tourism groups

16

stories in regional media

75,000

homes

Email broadcasts to **48,000+** people

42,000+

people reached on social media

250+ comments

150+ shares

13,500+

Unique visitors to the project website

5

Drop in sessions

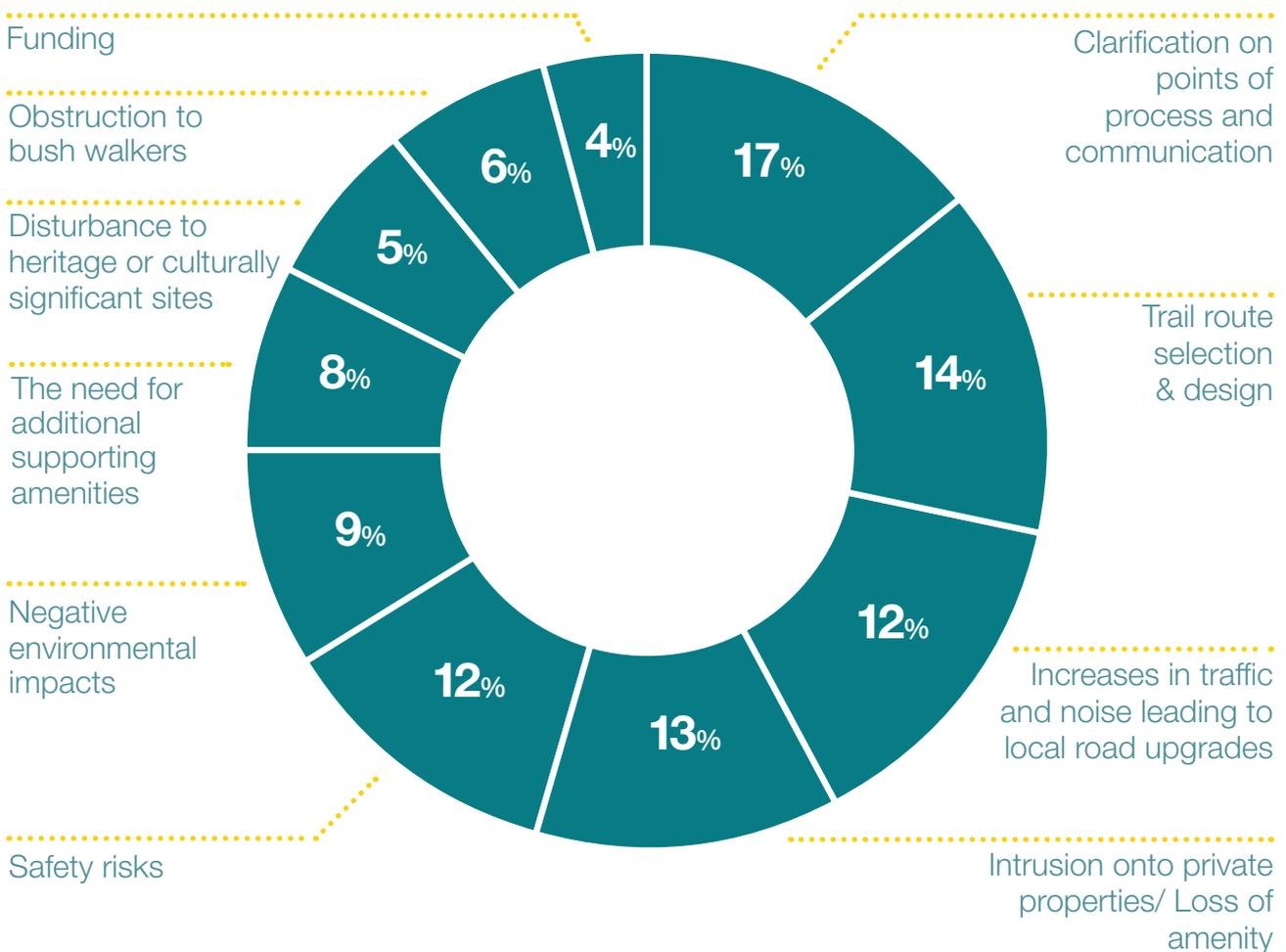
What we heard...

Yarra Ranges Council engaged with hundreds of interested individuals, community groups, government agencies and agencies with an interest in protecting our natural environment.

Support has been strong for the development of a world leading facility for mountain bike riders including the health, recreation, tourism and economic benefits for the region that come with it.

However, there has also been a lot of feedback about adjustments to the design that if incorporated could make the facility great for riders and visitors as well as those who live in Warburton.

There were two distinct groups that Yarra Ranges Council wanted to include in consultations about the proposed facility: The Warburton community and mountain bike riders. The following is what we heard from them:



70
Online questions and comments through the website

400+
Calls, letters + emails

100+
Group and individual meetings

1
Display in council foyer

4
Information and maps in Warburton locations

444
Responses/Feedback garnered through an online survey

18
Project updates via the website

Warburton residents

Yarra Ranges Council connected personally with over **300 individuals** and **57 groups** or organisations with strong connections with Warburton.

93 Locals also completed the online survey. Locals are from the 3799 and 3797 postcodes

Communication with these people, families and organised groups has been ongoing since April 2018, through to October 2019. They have expressed their concerns as well as their hopes and desires for a facility with transformational potential for their community.

There were:

- 5 public drop in sessions
- 105 face to face meetings since April 2018
- Hundreds of letters, calls and emails
- Social media contact
- Letterbox drop to 2,800 residents

There were a lot of contacts that led to questions for the project team. These have been summarised as following.

Major themes for questions and issues raised in no particular order:

Traffic and noise impacts

Significant upgrades to local roads required

Clarification on points of process and communication

Safety risks

Trail routes selection/ design

Negative environmental impacts

Disturbance to heritage or culturally significant sites

Intrusion onto private properties / Loss of amenity

The need for additional supporting amenities

Obstruction to bush walkers

Funding

Description

Residents near the proposed site would like to know how much additional traffic congestion and noise would be associated with it, particularly in regard to shuttling riders up and down the hill. Questions also referred to adequate provision for parking.

Questions have been raised about the ability of local roads, to and within Warburton, to cope with additional traffic that the facility will encourage. Questions have been asked about whether this will be accommodated as part of the planning of the facility's development.

Stakeholders raised questions seeking clarification on the consultation process. Including reasons behind changes to the design, methodology for consultation and feedback collection from the community.

There are concerns that the facility and the area around it may be unsafe due to the increased number of people using the tracks and roads. This is specifically an issue during times of heavy rain and bushfire risk.

Stakeholders sought more information on the precise routes of trails in the proposed facility. These questions were asked from a range of perspectives: interest from a mountain bike rider's perspective, environmental considerations and proximity to private property.

Questions were raised about how the construction and operation of the facility would be managed to protect existing flora and fauna.

Residents pointed out routes that could encroach on historically and culturally important sites and asked how this could be managed to minimise the impact.

Residents expressed concerns and sought further detail about how the design of the facility could be managed to ensure peace and quiet at existing private dwellings.

Residents indicated they believe there is a lack of amenities to support a new facility. They perceive a shortage of accommodation, hospitality and emergency services and would like further information about how this will be provided.

There have been questions focusing on whether the design of the facility can accommodate routes for bushwalkers where they will not clash with cyclists and create potentially dangerous situations.

There have been questions from the community regarding how construction of the facility could be funded and the ongoing cost to ratepayers.

Opportunities for involvement and input:

Providing feedback on the alignment and proposals for improvements

Some respondents were keen to provide further input into how the trails could be further improved for riders.

Involvement in development of a tourism and leisure attraction

Some respondents see the opportunity for Warburton to become an environmentally sensitive tourism destination and expressed interest in contribution to the development of a plan.

Economic development for the town, including new businesses and jobs

Opportunities have been enquired about as well as suggested for the development of new or expanded businesses in Warburton.

Improving the landscaping to accommodate the needs of residents and future users of the facility

Residents offered to participate in designing landscaping so that users of the biking facility and the residents of the area could co-exist peacefully.

See this as an opportunity to have more proactive management of the bushland

Residents with a strong interest in the natural environment around Warburton were interested in how the development of the biking facility might also foster greater resources and attention on local bush management.

See the project as a way to manage the access of 4WDers and motorbike riders through the bush in the area

At the moment riding and driving through the bush in the Warburton region is unregulated. Some residents see the development of the facility as an opportunity to appropriately manage the use of the natural environment for riding, walking and driving.

Improvements to roads (minor and major) and surrounding infrastructure to accommodate visitors to the area

Although many welcome the additional visitation to the area related to the new facility, there will be an opportunity to upgrade local road infrastructure to accommodate the additional visitors as well as local traffic.



93%

of all respondents to the survey support the development of the facility.

85%

of stakeholders with a connection to Warburton have been positive toward, or have not expressed any opposition to the development of the facility.

Project Update Examples...



Have your say on the Warburton MTB Destination project

Have your say on the Warburton MTB Destination project Warburton is set to become one of Australia's premier mountain bike destinations [...]

Warburton MTB Destination project update

Warburton MTB Destination project update Following on from community consultation and funding announcements for the project, the project team are progressing [...]



Warburton Mountain Bike Destination map updates with more community consultation coming soon

Warburton Mountain Bike Destination map updates with more community consultation coming soon Yarra Ranges Council has released new maps of the [...]

Environmental values checks update

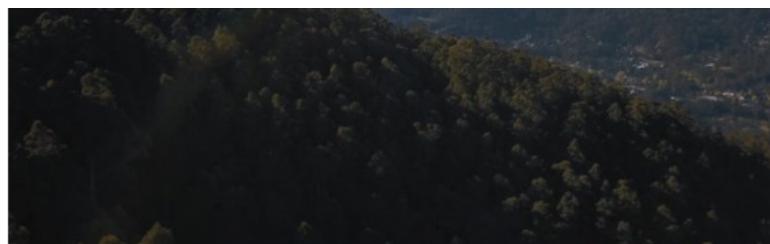


Trail builder announced for Warburton Mountain Bike Destination

Trail builder announced for Warburton Mountain Bike Destination The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination is one step closer to becoming a reality [...]

Community drop in session dates now available

Community drop in session dates now available Meet with the project team and find out more about the Warburton MTB Destination [...]



Marlino Avenue, Warburton – Trail alignment update

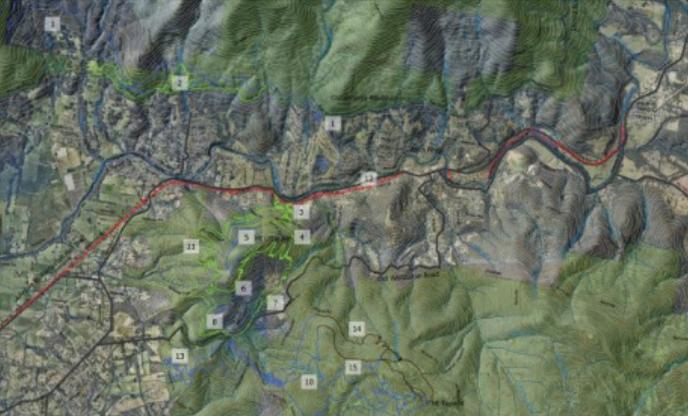
Boundary surveys underway in Old Warburton

Boundary surveys underway in Old Warburton Yarra Ranges Council has engaged a specialist consultant to make sure the proposed mountain bike [...]



Funding announcement gets Warburton's gears in motion

Funding announcement gets Warburton's gears in motion Yarra Ranges Council has welcomed a funding announcement from State Member for Monbulk, James [...]



Warburton MTB Destination master plan maps now available

Warburton MTB Destination master plan maps now available Yarra Ranges Council has released new maps for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination project [...]



Warburton MTB Destination project update – Master Plan nearing completion and environmental works in progress

Warburton MTB Destination project update - Master Plan nearing completion and



Warburton mountain bike trails to receive \$3m funding win

Warburton mountain bike trails to receive \$3m funding win The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination project is one step closer to becoming a reality [...]



Regional Growth Funding boost for Warburton MTB Destination and Yarra Valley Trail

Regional Growth Funding boost for Warburton MTB Destination and Yarra Valley Trail Yarra Ranges Council has welcomed the recent news of [...]



Ground truthing and environmental work continues

Ground truthing and environmental work continues Ground truthing Throughout the last month, the team have been busy braving the rain, hail [...]



Yarra Ranges Business and Investment Forum

Yarra Ranges Business and Investment Forum Join us at Warburton Golf Club on Wednesday 9 October from 5:15pm to hear first-hand [...]



Ground truthing underway for Drop A K

Ground Truthing Underway for Drop A K Drop A K is one of the many new mountain bike trails and connections [...]

Mountain biking community

A survey via Engage Victoria was open online for locals and potential visitors to the centre alike to complete. Around 20% of the respondents were from the local area, while mountain biking enthusiasts responded from across Australia.

Over 80% of all respondents, both from the local area and nationally, reported they are mountain bike riders.



342

Responses from
Victoria postcodes

Design for riders

The majority of respondents were interested in a more challenging mix of trails within the design:



There is a good mix of grades:



Too many green trails:



Not enough green trails:



Not enough blue trails:



Too many blue trails:



Not enough black trails:



Too many black trails:



Despite a desire for the design to be made more challenging for riders, most respondents (78%) did not report any issues with the alignment.

Q11. Do you have any issues associated with trail alignments?

No response/No:



Yes:



Celebrating Warburton

People were interested in using the facility to celebrate the heritage, culture and environment of Warburton including its indigenous past.

93

Responses from local postcodes

8

Responses from Interstate postcodes

Amenities

The most popular choice for a location of a central hub for the mountain biking facility was the centre of town. However, there were also some votes for a range of other locations to the east and west of town.

Central Hub

Around the Town Centre

110

Mt Tugwell/ Mt Little Joe

45

Near Wesburn

38

Not sure

30

Out of town

28

No response

8

Near East Warburton

7

Respondents also indicated that they would be interested in more than just a carpark at the central hub. Options including toilets, drinking water fountains, bike washing facilities and a café all received support.

Facilities

Carpark toilets, drinking water and bike clean and a cafe

197

Carpark, toilets and drinking water

112

Carpark toilets, drinking water and bike clean station

85

Carpark

2



Qualitative questions: issues raised

Question 4 Do you have any specific feedback on the proposed trail gradings and trail types?

Include a strong mix of blue/black trails

118

Include a broad mix of trail grades

61

Do not support the development of this facility

32

Include more downhill/gravity based trails

29

Need more green trails

5

As proposed

1

Question 7 Are there any specific stories that you think could be told?

Themes

Count

Historical stories on gold mining/forestry

41

Not sure

29

Stories about people, heritage & cultural importance of the area

27

Stories on local flora/fauna

15

Local indigenous history

14

History of local trails

5

MTB club history

5

Not needed

3

Grand total

139





Question 6
How do you think the trails could reflect the area’s heritage and tell local stories? What stories could be told as part of the trail development?

| Themes | Count |
|---|------------|
| Displays, markers and maps at the trail heads | 124 |
| Trails with indigenous & heritage names | 27 |
| Through art/pictorial representation | 14 |
| Through guided tours | 11 |
| Not sure | 11 |
| Involve local business in story telling | 5 |
| Mobile: through apps and social media | 5 |
| I do not support the proposal | 1 |
| Near rest areas | 1 |
| Grand total | 199 |

Question 11
Do you have any issues associated with trail alignments?

| Themes | Count |
|--|-----------|
| Safety/risk issues | 12 |
| Not sure | 10 |
| Environmental impacts | 9 |
| Lack of accessibility | 8 |
| Too close to residential areas | 8 |
| Lack of communication with local residents | 6 |
| No issues | 6 |
| Lack of amenities | 5 |
| Parking problem/congestion | 5 |
| Provide a more detailed plan/design | 4 |
| Impact on local residents | 2 |
| Need challenging trails | 2 |
| Not in support of the proposal | 1 |
| Grand total | 78 |



Question 12

What other features would you expect to find/see that could improve the experience for the local community and visitors to a mountain bike destination like this?

| Themes | Count |
|--|-------|
| Shuttle service | 42 |
| Visible sign boards with trail maps | 29 |
| Accommodation and food services | 24 |
| Need paragliding sites | 22 |
| Proper parking facilities | 22 |
| Advanced/world class trails | 20 |
| Pump tracks/skills park | 17 |
| Safety/medical assistance | 13 |
| Pathways for walkers/cyclist | 13 |
| Improve overall amenities | 11 |
| Educate the local communities on the benefits of the project | 10 |
| Not in favour | 10 |
| No issues | 8 |
| Better maintainance of the trails | 8 |
| Themes | Count |

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Proper traffic management | 7 |
| Similar to Blue Derby | 6 |
| Bike stands/bike repair shops | 6 |
| Bike rental facilities | 4 |
| Impact on the existing communities | 4 |
| Lack of community consultation | 3 |
| Community engagement | 2 |
| Proper planning | 2 |
| Different destination | 1 |
| Indigenous names for trails | 1 |
| Choose experienced trail builders | 1 |
| Not sure | 1 |
| Grand total | 287 |

What we have done with this feedback...

Yarra Ranges Council engaged with hundreds of interested locals, community groups, government agencies and those with an interest in this project.

Below are the key themes that we heard, along with how we are planning to respond.

The Road Network

Concerns were raised about the ability of local roads to cope with additional traffic.

A Local Movement and Transport Report was prepared which looked at the potential impact on local roads and parking. It identified that there would be sufficient capacity across the road network to accommodate the forecasted growth in additional traffic.

A traffic impact assessment was also undertaken to look at the road network immediately surrounding the proposed trailhead which has been deemed suitable to accommodate the extra traffic.

Traffic, Parking and Noise

We heard concerns about traffic congestion and the noise associated, particularly in relation to shuttling. Concerns also referred to adequate provision for parking.

A Local Movement and Transport Report has been completed. To accommodate the increase in demand for parking, budget has been set aside to create an additional 200 car parking spaces located at the main trailhead. The main trailhead will be located to the west of town, reducing the need for flow-through traffic.

We will investigate operational strategies to reduce the incidence of car parking near local residences and the occurrence of private shuttling. Commercial shuttle operators will require a permit that will define shuttle routes and times to minimise traffic and noise impacts.

A noise impact assessment has been completed which has confirmed noise impact will be negligible.



Environmental Management

Concerns were raised about how the construction and operation of the facility would be managed to protect existing flora and fauna.

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination is being developed in a significant natural and cultural environment in the Yarra Ranges. It is a high priority of the project partners' that the environmental integrity of the surrounding areas is protected and managed. To do this we:

- Have completed a detailed Environmental Risk Assessment;
- Are submitting an Environmental Effects Statement and Environmental Biodiversity Conservation and Protection Referral;
- Have undertaken a Biodiversity Impact Assessment and had this report peer-reviewed;
- Have completed a Surface Water, Hydrogeology, Geotechnical and Air Quality Impact Assessment;
- Have convened an expert panel to offer advice and direction to minimise impacts to threatened species and vulnerable and sensitive ecological areas;
- Are completing a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP);
- Have set aside budget for environmental enhancement works; and
- Will develop a comprehensive weed management and pest animal program following the trail construction.

Trail Route Selection/ Design

Concerns around the precise routes of trails were heard. These were from a range of perspectives: interest from a mountain bike rider's perspective, environmental considerations and proximity to private property.

Amendments to the trail alignments based on feedback received includes:

- Removal of the Marlino Avenue trail on the northern side of the network;
- Removal of trails through Old Warburton;
- Amendment of the trail alignment to avoid the Old Warburton cemetery; and
- Moving the Old Warburton Road crossing further east and moving trails away from residences.

Additional Trails

Concerns were expressed about the mix of trails with 49% of survey respondents indicating more difficult trails were needed.

As such, additional beginner and advanced trails have been added to the proposed network to provide a better balance of experiences.

Private Property

Concerns were expressed about disturbance to peace and quiet at existing private dwellings.

Property boundaries have been surveyed to ensure trails do not encroach on private property, unless agreed to by the landowner.

We have also undertaken a Landscape and Visual Impact and Noise Impact Assessment which has confirmed noise and visual impact will be negligible.



Bush Walking

There have been concerns about bushwalkers clashing with cyclists and creating potentially dangerous situations.

The master plan aims to ensure that both walking trails and proposed mountain bike trails co-exist respectfully.

No walking tracks are to be closed, and no existing walking tracks are to be converted for mountain bike use.

Funding

There were concerns regarding how the project is funded and the ongoing cost to ratepayers.

Funding for this \$11.3 million project is being provided through the following partners: Yarra Ranges Council (\$2.7 million), the State Government (\$3 million), the Federal Government (\$5.3 million) and the Upper Yarra Community Enterprise (\$300,000).

Models for an ongoing governance structure are currently being investigated.

Additional Supporting Amenities

Residents indicated that they believe there is a lack of amenities to support a new facility. There is a perception about a shortage of accommodation, hospitality and emergency services.

A Warburton Place Plan is currently being developed that will guide the direction for infrastructure improvements in the town.

As part of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination project budget, funds have been allocated to:

- The main trailhead, including car parking and end of trip facilities such as showers, changing rooms, bike repair stands and bike parking;
- Improvements to visitor services at Mt Donna Buang summit; and
- Improvements to the pedestrian connectivity within the town.

Other similar trail projects around Australia have resulted in the private sector meeting demand for accommodation and visitor services.

Safety Risks

There were concerns about safety due to the increased number of people using the trails and roads. This is specifically an issue around times of heavy rain and bushfire risk.

Council will work with emergency services, land managers and the community to develop an Emergency Management Plan to ensure appropriate strategies and resources are in place to reduce and respond to emergency incidents.

It is likely that access to all trails will be closed on Code Red Fire Risk days as is currently done in national park and state forest areas.

Protection of Heritage or Culturally Significant Sites

We heard that there was concern about trails impacting heritage sites.

We are completing a Historic Heritage Survey and Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the project. The management protocols outlined in these reports will be integrated into the planning and construction of the trails to ensure important values are protected.

We have also amended the trail alignment to ensure the trails are outside the Old Warburton Cemetery and removed the trail through the heritage site- HO342 Yarra Yarra Hydraulic Sluicing Company.

Clarification on Points of Process and Communication

This community engagement report has been prepared to share our consultation undertaken to date, including the process, what we heard and what we have done since receiving feedback on the draft master plan. Regular project updates are available on www.rideyarraranges.com.au.



What's Next?

Master Plan

The next step is to complete the master plan. The finalised master plan document will provide details of the project including trail alignments, infrastructure, operations and how it will be delivered.

Further Consultation

The final draft master plan will be provided to the community for feedback. The master plan will be available online, in hardcopy at Council's Community Links and maps will be displayed in various shopfront windows within Warburton. Community information sessions will also be held. It is expected this consultation will occur early in 2020.

Environmental Planning Approvals

The project is required to go through environmental approval processes. This involves submitting an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) Referral to the State Government and an Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC)

Referral to the Federal Government. These referrals will be independently assessed by State and Federal Government Regulators to ensure the protection of the environment is being managed appropriately.

The outcomes of the EES and EPBC Referral will determine the next steps required in finalising the planning for the project.

Planning Approvals

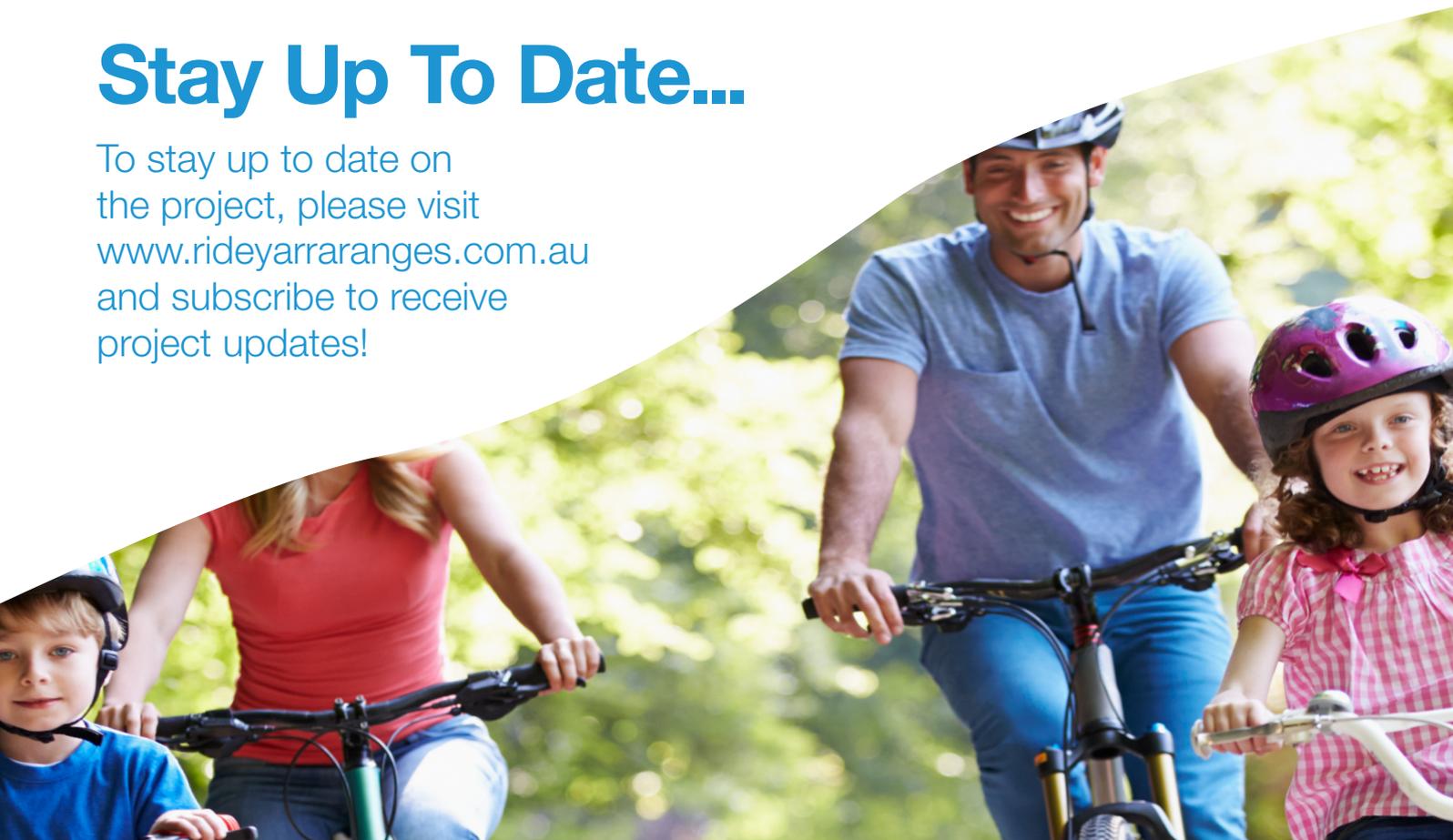
The planning approvals process will commence once Environmental approvals are gained. Various planning pathways the project may use to gain approval include; a planning permit, planning scheme amendment or Governor in General Order.

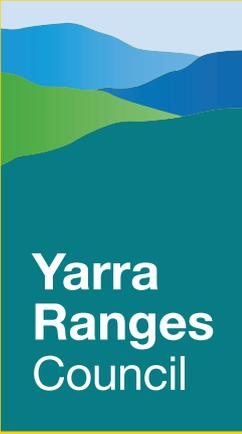
Construction

Construction will commence once environmental and planning approvals are obtained. It is anticipated construction of the trail network will take approximately one year.

Stay Up To Date...

To stay up to date on the project, please visit www.rideyarranges.com.au and subscribe to receive project updates!





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