



warburton  
MOUNTAIN BIKE DESTINATION

# Environmental Effects Statement Consultation Report

October 2021



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# Introduction

## 1.1 About this report

This report describes how Yarra Ranges Council consulted with stakeholders and local communities about the proposed Warburton Mountain Bike Destination (WMBD) project. It captures feedback received and how this feedback has informed the project design and been considered in the preparation of the project's Environment Effects Statement (EES).

Engagement specific to the EES was undertaken in November – December 2020 and in March – April 2021 to:

- Inform the community and stakeholders about the project, the EES process and opportunities for participation
- Help communities and other interested stakeholders understand the project by providing useful and accessible information about project objectives, benefits, principles guiding design and development, and work done to identify, understand and address impacts
- Encourage participation and seek targeted input during the preparation of the EES to identify potential issues, gain local insight and seek feedback on measures that respond to stakeholder concerns
- Demonstrate how community and stakeholder feedback has been considered in the development of the project and the EES.



Participants were asked to provide feedback on the project's potential impacts, ideas for improvements and areas of importance, using tools including an online interactive map, online surveys, a hard copy feedback form, and online and local community sessions.

## 1.2 Project planning and approvals

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination ('the project') is a proposed world class mountain biking destination centred around Warburton, approximately 70 km east of Melbourne. It consists of up to approximately 177 kilometres of mountain bike trails providing a variety of mountain bike experience to suit all levels of riding.

WMBD has been in development since 2010 after local riders suggested the project in 2010 as part of a Parks Victoria Initiative. Since then the project has completed a feasibility study, done detailed planning assessments, investigated how the project might impact the community and environment and sought expert advice to develop the project's draft master plan.

Community consultation has run alongside, and a number of design changes have been made in response to assessments and community feedback. Including removing, redesigning and realigning sections of trails to reduce impacts and protect important local features.

In May 2020, the Minister for Planning determined an EES would be required under the Environment Effects Act (1978) to provide an integrated, robust and transparent process to assess the project's impacts, and evaluate the effectiveness of proposed mitigation measures.

A delegate for the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment determined that the project is a controlled action under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), requiring assessment for potential impacts on sensitive native vegetation and flora and fauna species and accredited the EES process for these assessments.

In 2020, Yarra Ranges Council commenced a comprehensive and transparent planning, consultation and approvals process for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination project through the preparation of the Environment Effects Statement.



### 1.3 Scoping requirements

The matters to be investigated and documented in the EES are set out in the scoping requirements published by the Minister for Planning. The scoping requirements were finalised following the consideration of submissions received during the public exhibition of the draft scoping requirements in September 2020.

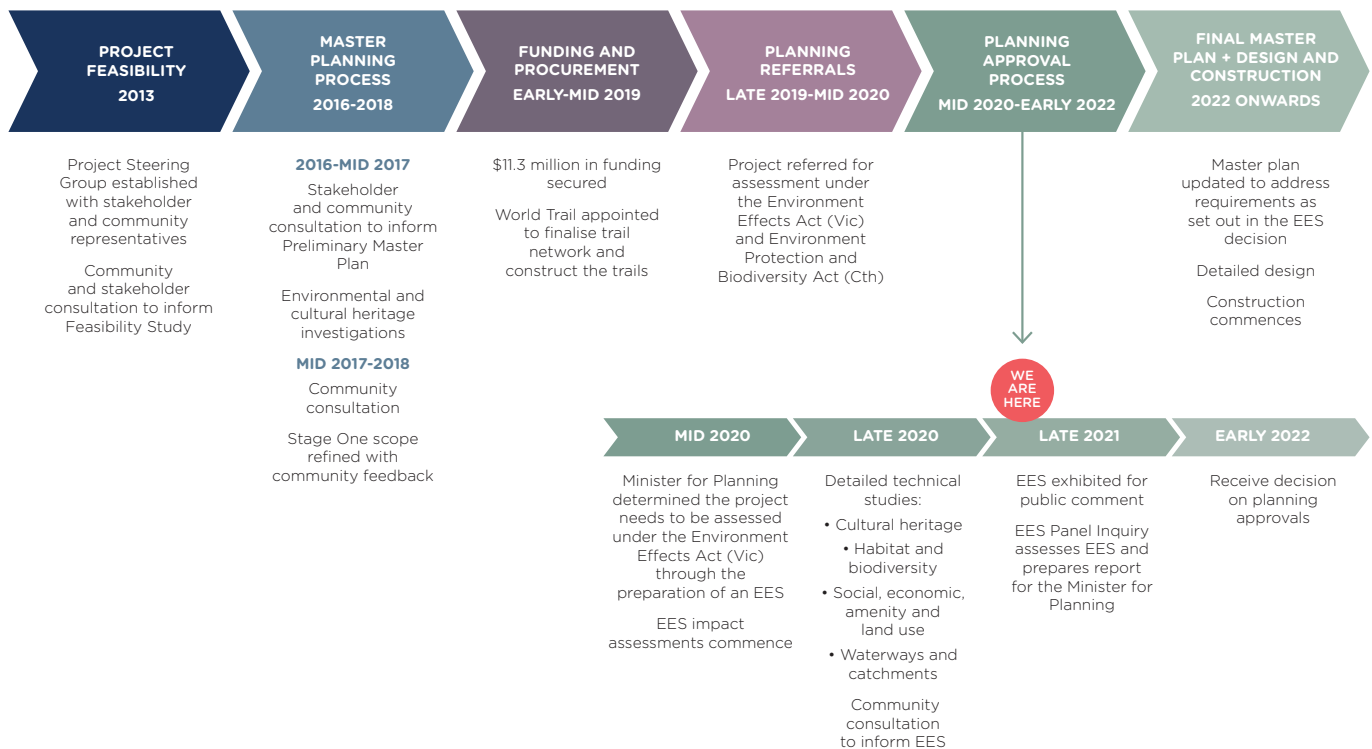
Section 2.2 of the scoping requirements require Yarra Ranges Council to undertake consultation to enable stakeholder and community knowledge and views to be considered in project planning and formal decision making.

This includes preparation and implementation of a consultation plan with the purpose of informing and engaging the public and stakeholders to identify and respond to their issues and keep them informed of the EES studies.

Section 3.2 of the scoping requirements require Yarra Ranges Council to ‘include an outline of a program for community consultation, stakeholder engagement and communications proposed for implementation during the construction and operation of the project, including opportunities for local stakeholders to engage with the project to seek responses to issues that might arise during project implementation’. The project must also ‘prepare a concise, graphical-based non-technical summary document for free distribution to interested parties.’

The EES must also provide documentation of the process and results of consultation undertaken by Yarra Ranges Council during the preparation of the EES. Including issues raised and responses from the project. This consultation report satisfies this requirement.

The EES scoping requirements for WMBD are available on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) website at: [planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/warburton-mountain-bike-destination](http://planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/warburton-mountain-bike-destination)





## 1.4 Technical Reference Group

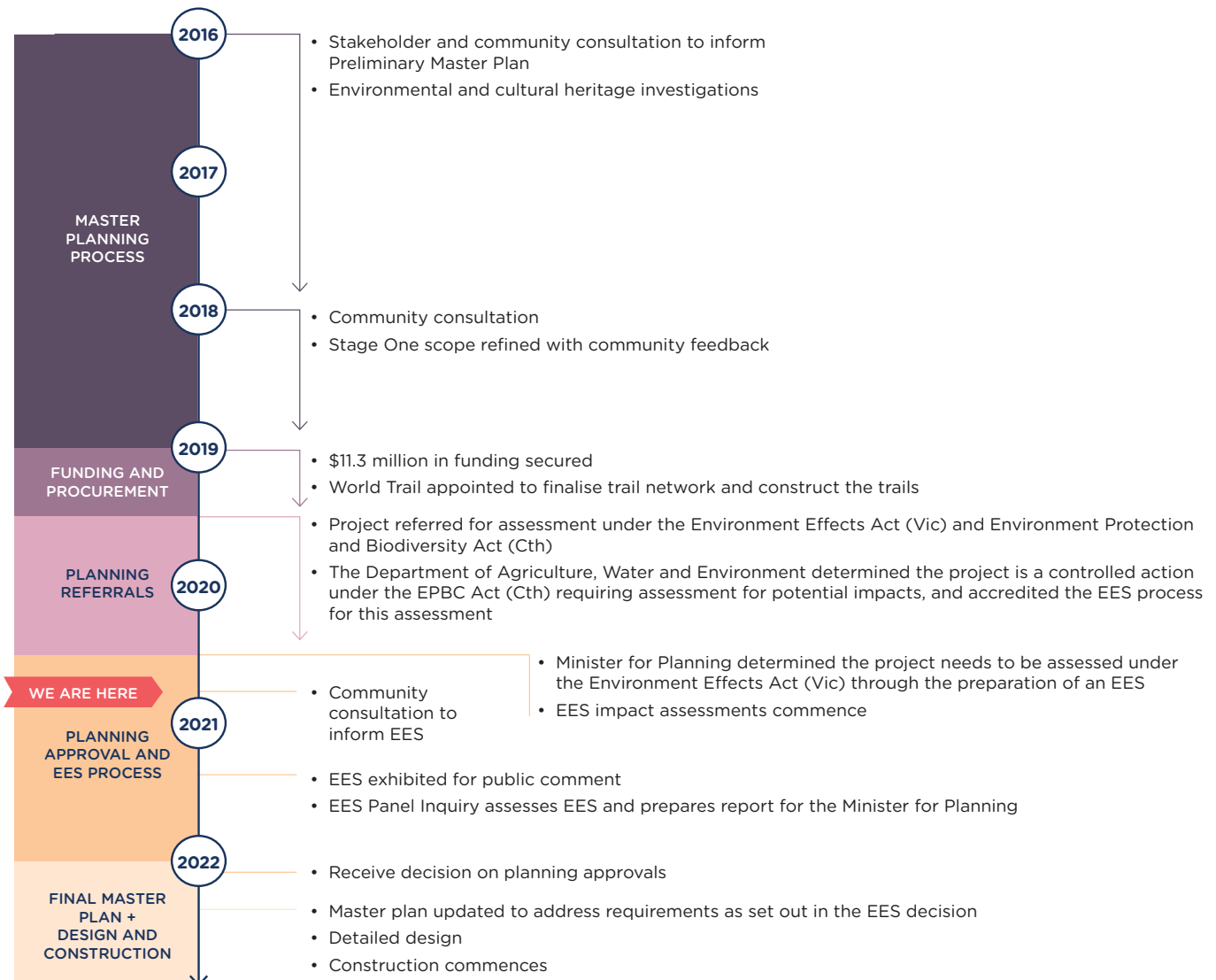
The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has established a Technical Reference Group (TRG) of state government agencies including: Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation; Heritage Victoria; First Peoples - State Relations; DELWP Planning and Biodiversity; EPA Victoria; Parks Victoria; Department of Transport; Melbourne Water; and Yarra Ranges Council. TRG meetings are held every 4 - 6 weeks and advise the project on environmental issues throughout the EES assessment. The project works collaboratively with the members of the TRG, seeking their advice and considering their input in preparation of the EES.

Offsite meetings are often organised outside of the scheduled TRG meetings. These meetings help the TRG become familiar with the project area and complete ground truthing activities and support technical investigations.

The TRG advises DELWP and the project on:

- applicable policies, strategies and statutory provisions;
- the scoping requirements of the EES;
- the design and adequacy of technical studies for the EES;
- the project's public information and stakeholder consultation program for the EES;
- responses to issues arising from the EES investigations;
- the technical adequacy and completeness of draft EES documentation; and
- coordination of statutory processes.

### Key steps in the project planning and EES process for Warburton Mountain Bike Destination





# About Warburton Mountain Bike Destination

## 2.1 Project overview

Warburton Mountain Bike Destination is a network of trails in the heart of the Yarra Ranges. The 177km network includes 61 trails and is designed to appeal to riders of all skill levels from beginner to advanced, across a range of differing terrains, outlooks and environments.

The network of trails nestled in the surrounding mountains will bring visitors from around the world to experience Warburton's natural beauty and relaxing village atmosphere. It will also create more jobs and help grow the local economy.

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would:

- Be a world-class mountain bike hub centred around Warburton, around 70km from Melbourne
- Feature 62 trails covering approximately 177km across Mt Donna Buang, Mt Little Joe and Mt Tugwell
- Connect with the popular Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail and O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail
- Have four "trail heads" with facilities for riders, including car parking, picnic, toilets and wash stations
- Have a main trail head at Warburton Gold Course, at the base of Mt Donna Buang and the signature 'Drop-a-K' trail - a 1000m vertical descent trail
- Have shuttle buses to take riders to the Mt Donna Buang summit and Mt Tugwell trail head.

The project has already secured \$11.3m in funding for Stage 1 of the project, which includes around 110km of trails and trail head facilities.

Once Stage 1 is finished, WMBD will seek further funding for Stage 2 of the project and will apply to the international Mountain Bike Association as a Gold-Level Ride Centre. This would make Warburton the only Gold-Level centre in Australia and one of only three outside the USA.

## 2.2 Project benefits

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination has the potential to revitalise Warburton, encourage new business, attract visitors and tourism activity.

Our aim is that the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination will deliver a range of opportunities for the region. Through the project we want to:

- Revitalise Warburton by encouraging new business, attracting new visitors and supporting the growth of local tourism, which in turn will help grow the economy and jobs in the Yarra Valley region.
- Create iconic mountain bike trails eligible for International Mountain Bike Association Gold-Level Ride Centre Status
- Create a spectacular riding experiences that have a competitive advantage over existing mountain bike trails and make the most of Warburton's beautiful town, valley and surrounding forested slopes
- Create new recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages and riding abilities and support young people in the community to learn new skills.
- Improve the health and wellbeing of the community by supporting a stronger connection with the environment, increase the number of volunteer and education opportunities and improving community pride.
- Preserve the wide variety of plants and animals in the area as well as the area's cultural heritage. We also want to create opportunities for the community to connect with these and appreciate how important they are.

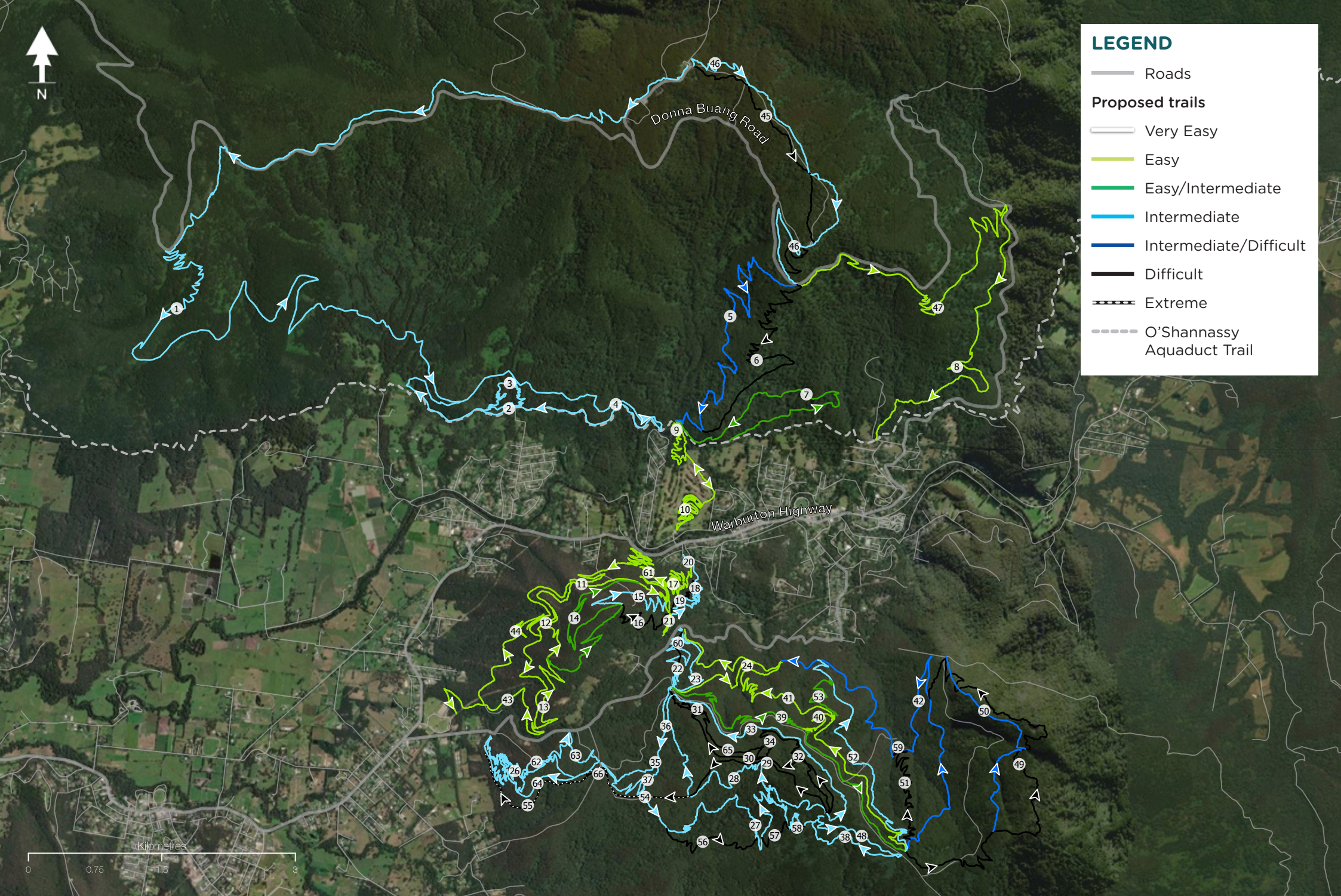
When all stages are completed in 2031, the project is projected to:

- Attract 221,454 Visitors to the region
- \$48.6 million in the local economy
- 84 construction jobs
- 228 operational jobs



### LEGEND

- Roads
- Proposed trails**
- Very Easy
- Easy
- Easy/Intermediate
- Intermediate
- Intermediate/Difficult
- Difficult
- Extreme
- O'Shannassy Aquaduct Trail





# Engaging with our stakeholders on Warburton Mountain Bike Destination

## 3.1 Engagement principles

Consultation on the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination has been guided by the following principles:

- **Transparency:** Sharing timely, transparent and effective communication that is consistent, frequent and clear.
- **Collaboration:** Ensuring communities and stakeholders have multiple opportunities to meaningfully contribute and participate in the planning and development of the project.
- **Responsiveness:** Acknowledging all feedback and responding to requests for information in a timely manner. Clearly demonstrate how feedback has contributed to the project and if not, why not.
- **Accountability:** Maximising project benefits and minimising project effects by involving the community and future users of the facility and incorporating their needs into project planning.
- **Inclusiveness:** Ensuring all communications and engagement activities are accessible to all members of the community.

## 3.2 Approach to engagement

Yarra Ranges Council built on the engagement activities, relationships and communications channels already established to help communities and stakeholders understand the EES process, the project and support them to provide feedback to inform preparation of the EES.

Communication and engagement for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination EES ranges from informing people about the project, to consulting and involving them in decisions about key aspects of project design and management of project impacts.

Yarra Ranges Council's commitment to communities and stakeholders is that relevant specialists will consider their comments, ideas, suggestions and issues raised and that the project team will demonstrate how feedback has been considered in the preparation of the EES.

This report is part of delivering on that commitment.

### ENGAGING WITH IMPACTED LANDOWNERS

Yarra Ranges Council have been engaging with impacted landowners and residential properties owners throughout the project.

This includes regular project updates and emails from the project team, phone calls and face to face meetings where possible.

Trails around Old Warburton have been moved in response to nearby landowner feedback. This includes removing some trails from the design and amending trail paths to avoid proximity to driveways and residences.

Technical specialists have been engaging with impacted landowners including business owners and local residents to develop social impact assessments as part of the projects technical assessments and EES documents.





### 3.3 Phases of engagement

Stakeholder and community engagement has played an important role in informing the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination project's design development, from early feasibility assessment to preparation of preliminary detailed alignments, development of a Master Plan and preparation of detailed impact assessments and investigations.

Yarra Ranges Council has consulted extensively since 2013 and has been sought feedback from residents of Warburton, Millgrove, Wesburn and the Yarra Valley, businesses, community groups, government agencies and mountain bike riders.

Engagement with these stakeholders is ongoing and has been used to input into project design at a number of stages. Feedback and ideas have been collected through formal consultation surveys, phone calls and emails and meetings with the project team.

The timelines in sections 1.3 and 1.4 of this report provide further detail about the phases of engagement on the project led by Council in the years prior to the EES consultation process.

#### DEVELOPING THE DRAFT MASTER PLAN

Feedback on the project draft Master Plan was collected between April 2018 and October 2019. Community and interested stakeholder groups were able to have their say through a 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.

The project team received questions and heard feedback about the proximity of trails to property, increase of traffic and noise from the project, safety of the trails and trail route design.

Feedback was used to develop the project Master Plan, including gathering ideas for the project and making changes to trail design.

A community engagement report was prepared in October 2019 to summarise the findings of the projects Master Planning Phase. A copy of the full consultation report is available on the project website here: <https://www.rideyarraranges.com.au/warburton-mtb-destination/>



**5**

Drop in sessions



**100+**

Group and individual meetings



**444**

Responses to online survey



**400+**

Calls, letters and emails



### 3.4 Method for capturing and analysing feedback

In total, more than 2500 individual comments were captured across the engagement activities and analysed. The most prominent themes were drawn from the comments and further categorised into subthemes.

This report presents these key themes and the detailed topics captured in each theme. It draws upon participant quotes from the engagement process to illustrate the range of sentiments expressed, alongside a thorough breakdown of numbers of comments and participants.



#### CONTINUING TO ENGAGE THROUGH COVID RESTRICTIONS

Phase 2 of engagement occurred during a period of lockdown and other significant restrictions related to COVID-19. Yarra Ranges Council undertook engagement in accordance with Victorian Government COVIDSafe guidance, which involved adapting to ensure engagement could continue while keeping communities safe.

COVIDSafe engagement included using online engagement methods like the interactive online map, online community sessions, and ensuring people with limited internet access had comparable access to information about the project and methods for providing feedback.

Once restrictions began to ease, the project team moved to holding COVIDSafe outdoor community events which provided a great opportunity to meet face-to-face and talk through the project.



# Engagement phases to inform EES preparation

## 4.1 Overview

Yarra Ranges Council has engaged with communities and stakeholders over several years to assist with planning and developing the project.

Consultation by DELWP on the EES Scoping Requirements was the first formal consultation phase on the preparation of the EES, undertaken in mid 2020.

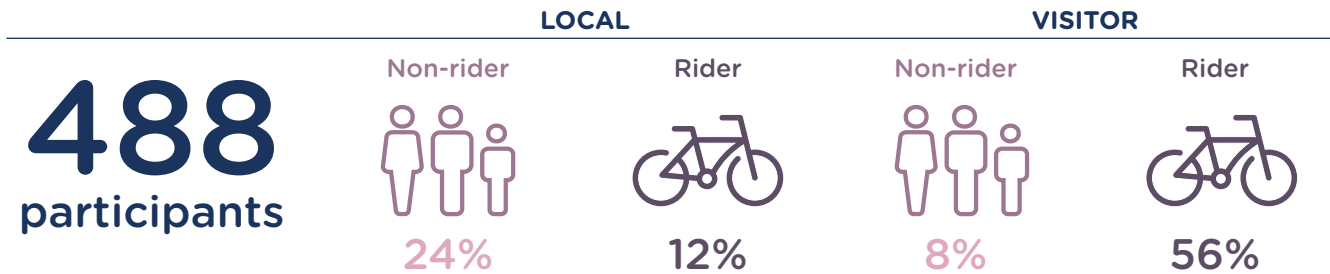
Yarra Ranges Council prepared an EES Consultation Plan in accordance with the requirement in the *Environment Effects Act 1978*. The Consultation Plan is available at [https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/491631/WMBD-EES-Consultation-Plan-v6-FINAL-updated-20201012.pdf](https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/491631/WMBD-EES-Consultation-Plan-v6-FINAL-updated-20201012.pdf)

Council invited feedback on the project and EES studies in November and December 2020 and again in March and April 2021. Input was encouraged, with a range of communication channels used to promote opportunities to be involved.






## 4.2 Engagement snapshot

The number of people who participated in engagement in late 2020 and early 2021 is shown below:



### Engagement channels and activities

		Phase 2	Phase 3
<b>Aware</b> 	People reached through social media	46,000+	10,000+
	Homes and businesses received project and consultation pack	13,000	2,200
	Ads in local papers	3	2
	E-newsletter subscribers received email updates	2500	2800
<b>Informed</b> 	Visits to Council's Ride Yarra Ranges website	4995 visits	7636 visits
	Access to WMBD project website	1981 visitors 2428 views	2802 visitors 3537 views
	Briefings with stakeholders	7	8
<b>Engaged</b> 	Pieces of feedback online	1,693	1,004
	Trail surveys completed	1,092	143
	Hard copy feedback forms completed	24	2
	Online information session participants	66	9
	Community information session participants	100	26
	Email enquiries and phone discussions with the project team	38	26



### Stakeholders engaged with

Victorian Government, including agencies and land managers

Federal Government

Local communities

Cultural groups and Traditional Owners

Private property owners

Environmental groups

Emergency services

Mountain bike riders

Sporting groups and educational institutions



### 4.3 Phase 1: Preparation of scoping requirements, mid 2020

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) developed the draft scoping requirements for the EES in mid 2020 and sought community and stakeholder submissions during September 2020.

The draft scoping requirements were published on the DELWP website and advertised in the Government Gazette and metropolitan newspapers. Yarra Ranges Council promoted the opportunity to make a submission on the draft scoping requirements, through information on both the Yarra Ranges Council and project websites, and through an update the project’s mailing list.

### 4.4 Phase 2: EES and design consultation, late 2020

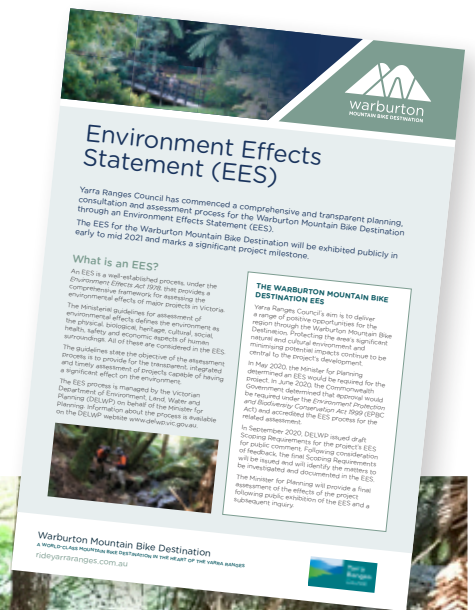
Communities and stakeholders were asked to comment on the project and provide feedback about the proposed trail network, local features and impacts, so this feedback could be considered in the preparation of the EES.

Engagement during this phase focused on two key areas:

- Seeking feedback on potential impacts from the trails and any ideas for improvements.
- Seeking mountain bike rider feedback on the trail design.

The following activities were used to provide information about the project and to promote consultation.

- Project updates were sent to project news subscribers
- Project overview factsheets and consultation invitations were sent to over 6000 households
- Information factsheets and technical discussion papers published on the project website
- Information packs and hard-copy surveys posted on request
- Three advertisements in the local newspapers the Upper Yarra Mail and the Mountain Mail
- Posters placed across the Shire at high-traffic areas
- Briefings with community, environmental and recreation groups
- Drop-in visits to local businesses in Warburton and Yarra Junction
- Phone calls to local residents and community groups
- Yarra Ranges Council Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter.





## Online community information sessions

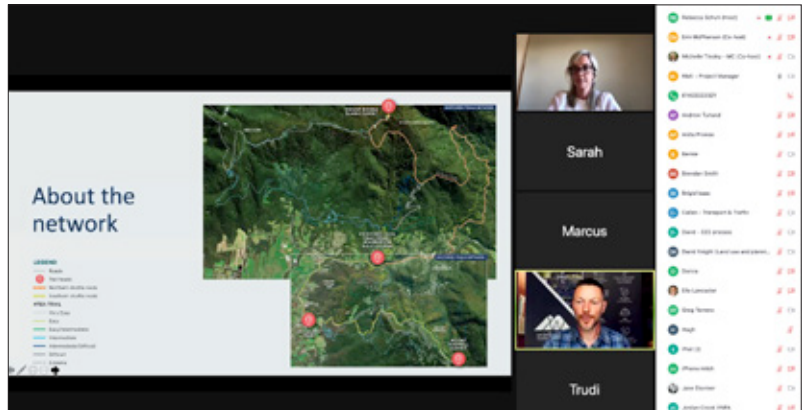
Two community information sessions were held online due to physical distancing requirements.

During the presentation attendees heard from the project director and technical specialists, including specialists in EES and planning process

- biodiversity and habitats
- traffic and transport
- cultural heritage
- socio economic
- land use and planning
- Waterways.

Each specialist discussed their area of study, how the technical study is prepared and preliminary findings.

Attendees were able to submit a question during the registration or send a question through the chat function during the presentation. All pre-submitted questions were responded to during the presentation, and if time allowed, some questions submitted in the chat function were responded to.



66 people registered and attended the online information sessions and 47 questions were submitted.

A Q&A document with all questions asked and responses was distributed after the event to everyone who attended, see appendix 1.

A recording of the information session was also made available on the project website for those who were unable to attend the online information session.

Date	Time	Number of attendees
Monday 30 November	5:00pm – 6:30pm	44
Saturday 5 December	11:30am – 1:00pm	22

## Local drop in session

More than 100 people attended the drop-in session at the Warburton Information centre (Waterwheel) on Sunday 6 December. These sessions featured project displays, maps and handouts, and provided local residents, visitors and other community members with an opportunity to talk with the project team, ask questions and share their feedback on the project.

Participants included local residents, interested community and local and visiting mountain bike riders, with project and Council representatives on hand to talk through the project.

### FEEDBACK ON THE CONSULTATION APPROACH

Participants in the online information sessions were asked to provide feedback on the consultation activities, and 20 responses were received. 75% of respondents said that the information provided was useful and relevant to them and 80% said the session was well structured and organised. 25% of respondents left comments to say the session was comprehensive and staff were helpful.

40% of respondents said they felt that they were able to have their questions heard and answered and 35% of respondents disagreed with this and were dissatisfied with the Sessions. 8 respondents said they felt the session did not employ an effective consultation approach, involved censoring or rephrasing questions or left some discussion incomplete.

Consultation has had an important role since the early days of the project's development, so Council appreciates all feedback on the engagement approach.

The project team considered this feedback in planning subsequent information sessions. Staff were asked to take the time needed to understand all perspectives being raised, and to answer questions thoroughly and to the best of their ability.



## Stakeholder engagement

In addition to ongoing engagement with the Technical Reference Group members, the project team has engaged directly with multiple stakeholders and groups with an interest in the project.

While some stakeholders have played a more active role, participating in multiple activities, the following organisations have been kept updated about the preparation of the EES and had the opportunity to participate in briefings:

- CEDA – Warburton Community Economic Development Association
- Victorian National Parks Association
- Mt Toolebewong Landcare Group
- SES
- Wesburn Pony Club
- Wesburn Adult Riders Club
- Dog User Group
- Wesburn Football Club
- Yarra Junction Cricket Club
- Yarra Ranges Landcare
- Friends of Leadbeater
- Field Naturalists of Victoria
- Yarra Valley ECOS Field Naturalist Club
- Field Naturalists of Victoria
- Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory Committee
- Healesville Environment Advisory Community
- Bushwalking Victoria
- U3A
- Gem Club
- Healesville Environmental Watch Inc
- Rethink WMBD
- Upper Yarra Sustainable Development Alliance
- CFA
- Yarra Ranges Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee

The project team also continues to engage directly with the owners of five private properties where trails are proposed.

Engagement has occurred through a range of channels, including via existing Council liaison officer relationships, briefings, proactive and responsive calls and emails, and through consultation on other council plans.

An area of specific focus for ongoing engagement with local stakeholders has been proposed infrastructure and upgrades at Wesburn Park, as part of both WMBD and the draft Wesburn Park Master Plan.

### COORDINATING WITH THE WESBURN PARK MASTER PLAN

Wesburn Park provides important open space, recreation and community facilities and is home to the Upper Yarra Adult Riders Club, Upper Yarra Pony Club, Wesburn Junior Football Club and Yarra Junction Cricket Club.

Council has been developing and seeking community feedback on a Master Plan for Wesburn Park, which maps out a 10 year program of improvement priorities to ensure Wesburn Park provides the right recreation facilities for communities in the area.

With a proposed trail head and new parking proposed for Wesburn Park, there is an important relationship between the development of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination and the Wesburn Park Master Plan.

The proposed trail head and parking will be included as part of the development of the Wesburn Park Master Plan and will also be considered in the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination EES. Ongoing consultation with all users of Wesburn Park will help shape the final Master Plan.



## Interactive online map

An interactive online map was used as the primary tool for detailing the proposed project design and gathering stakeholder and community feedback.

The interactive map was hosted on the Social Pinpoint platform which is used by project teams worldwide to involve communities in planning decisions and the development of projects.

The interactive map included:

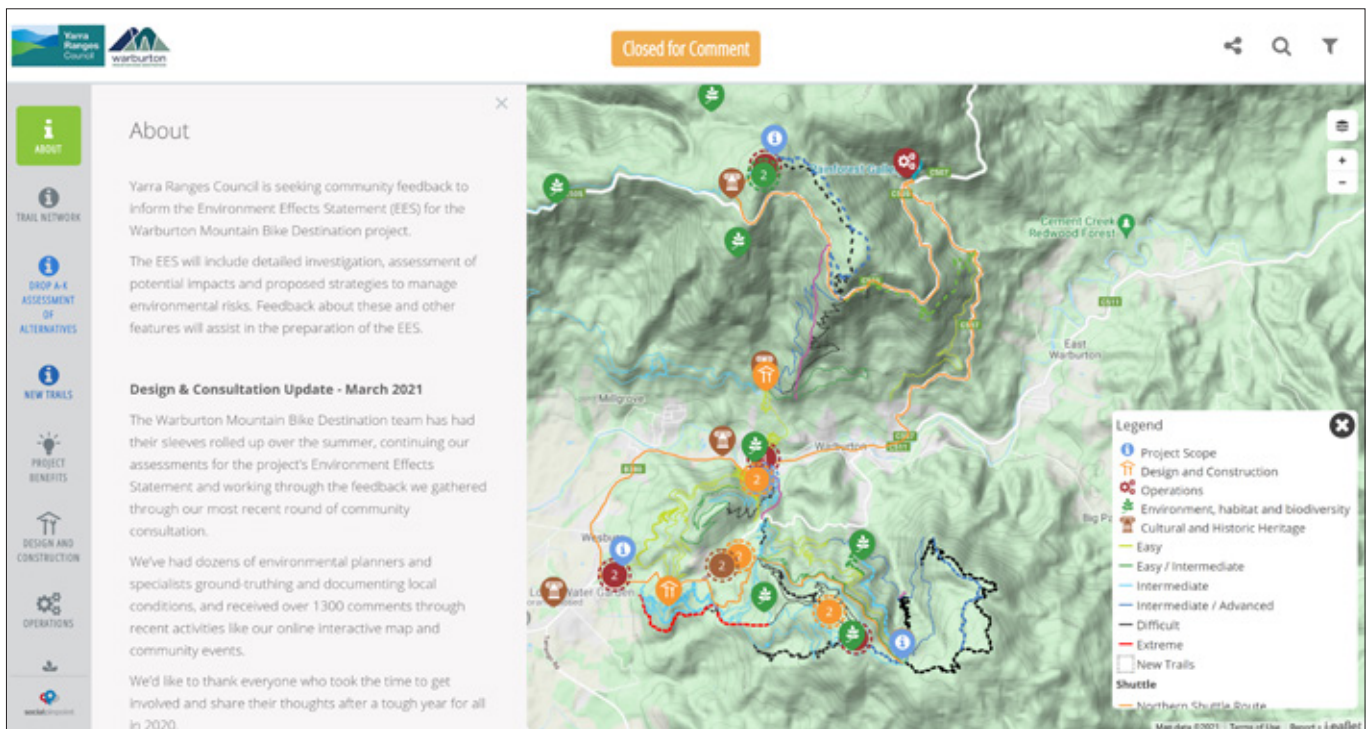
- The proposed trails
- 'Points of interest' – information about project features and known areas of local importance, with questions inviting comment on potential impacts and improvement ideas
- A free text comment option
- A summary describing each of the trails
- A survey on each trail



### Who we engaged with in November-December 2020

<b>Local</b> (3799, 3797, 3139 postcodes)	Non-rider: 53	Rider: 27
<b>Visitor</b>	Non-rider: 17	Rider: 124

Table provides summary of participation during phase 2 engagement.







# Hard copy feedback pack

A hard copy feedback pack was prepared and promoted as an option for people who prefer written feedback or have limited internet access.

The feedback pack included a poster replicating the interactive map layout (shown below), the fact sheet available online, and a survey using the same questions as the interactive map.

The 'offline' packs were a significant priority because the EES Consultation Plan identified that some people in the Warburton area may have limited or no internet access. The consultation was also promoted using highly visual information in local areas, to maximise awareness of both offline and online opportunities to participate.

30 people requested a hard copy pack. These were posted or hand delivered, and 24 hard copy surveys were received.



**263**  
comments on the  
interactive map



**1,093**  
trail survey  
responses



**24**  
hard copy  
feedback forms  
submitted



**38**  
emails/  
phone calls



**100**  
community  
session  
participants

### Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Guide to key features

**TRAIL NETWORK**

- Proposed Main Trail Head - Warburton Golf Course**  
Proposed to be located at the Warburton Golf Club, the Main Trail Head would provide direct access to the northern and southern trail networks. Under proposed plans, the current car park would be updated from the current 30 spaces to accommodate 180 cars as well as a pick-up point and shelter for shuttles services.
- MT Donna Buang Summit Trail Head**  
The existing visitor site at the Mount Donna Buang Summit would be integrated into the network, with improvements to visitor amenities, a bike wash station and modifications to allow shuttles bus drop-off and pick-up. No additional car parking spaces are proposed.
- MT Tugwell Summit Trail Head**  
A new trail head on Mount Tugwell off Mount Bricks Road would include drop-off bays, one accessible parking space, a turnaround bay for shuttles services, bike wash station, toilet and signage.
- Westburn Park Trail Head**  
Access to the trail network would be provided at Westburn Park. Minor car park improvements and visitor facility upgrades are proposed as part of the Westburn Park Master Plan.
- New Bridge: Frenchmans Creek**  
Designed to blend in with its surrounds, for minimal impact on views this bridge would provide a vista over forested gully towards Warburton.
- New Bridge: Old Warburton Road**  
A new truss-style bridge is proposed to connect trails on either side of Old Warburton Road and provide a safe road crossing. It has been positioned to avoid impacts to nearby trees.
- New bridge: Yarra River Bridge**  
A 120 metre bridge is proposed to be built over the Yarra River, Warburton Highway and Damman's Road to provide a safe crossing and connect the Lydiak to Warburton Rail Trail and Main Trail Head.

**DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION**

- Interaction with private property**  
Several trails intersect private property. Yarra Ranges Council is negotiating with private landholders to secure private access agreements with individual owners. Trail shows on private property are concept only and subject to agreement with owners.
- Proximity to Warburton**  
Warburton is at the heart of the network, providing access to services, amenities and a riders, ride-out experience. The town's main commercial centre is situated on the Warburton Highway. It caters well for visitors with many cafes, restaurants and accommodation.
- ESM upgraded existing trails**  
Some of existing mountain bike trails around Mount Tugwell are proposed to be upgraded and incorporated into the new network to improve rider experience and better manage stormwater flow off the trails.
- Mine shaft Hill track**  
This existing track would form part of the trail network and connect new sections of trail.
- Canterbury Fireline Track**  
A section of Canterbury Fireline Track is proposed to be closed to public access, upgraded and repositioned as mountain bike trail. The Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning would implement this closure in accordance with current policies, including additional community consultation.

**LEGEND**

- Trail numbers
- Shuttles
- Northern shuttle route
- Southern shuttle route
- MTBA TRAIL
- Very Easy
- Easy
- Easy/Intermediate
- Intermediate
- Intermediate/Difficult
- Difficult
- Extreme

**ENVIRONMENT**

- Leadbeater's Possum**  
There is known habitat for Leadbeater's Possum within the project area. Trail alignments have been designed to minimise impacts to large old trees which may provide critical habitat for the species.
- Yarra Ranges National Park**  
The mountains around Warburton are home to beautiful native forests with significant habitat and biodiversity values. Avoiding or minimising impacts has been a key principle guiding project development and design.
- Yarra River**  
A bridge is proposed to be built over the Yarra River. The EES will consider potential waterway and catchment impacts.
- Yarra State Forest**  
The mountains around Warburton are home to the Yarra State Forest. Avoiding or minimising impacts in these areas has been a key principle guiding project development and design.
- Upper Yarra Cemetery**  
Surveying has been undertaken to ensure the proposed trails do not fall within the cemetery boundaries.
- Old Warburton Cemetery**  
Surveying has been undertaken to ensure the proposed trails do not fall within the cemetery boundaries.
- Chonassay open-pit coal mine and railway site (H502-011)**  
Construction or ground works in this area would be of minimal impact with no knock-on effects on the system.
- Maconochie Water Supply System (H0214)**  
The mountains pass through Mount Donna Buang Bricks Tracks & Road. No impacts to the area which the trails pass through are anticipated.
- MT Donna Buang-Bricks tracks and road (H0140)**  
The alignment passes through Mount Donna Buang Bricks Tracks & Road. No impacts to the area which the trails pass through are anticipated.
- Lydiak-Warburton Railway (H0214)**  
The Lydiak-Warburton Railway heritage site is now the Lydiak-Warburton Rail Trail. No impacts to heritage values at this site are anticipated from the project.
- Yarra Yarra Hydraulic Gold Mining Company (H0141)**  
The trail in this area has been realigned to avoid impacting on this heritage site.



## 4.5 Phase 3: Design update, early 2021

In Phase 3, we provided detail on updates made to the project design in response to Phase 2 feedback, and to address an issue identified in the mapping which meant that additional trails would be needed.

Engagement during Phase 3 again focused on:

- Seeking feedback on potential impacts from the additional trails and any ideas for improvements.
- Seeking mountain bike rider feedback on trail design.

The following activities were used to provide information about the project and to promote consultation.

- A project update sent to project news subscribers
- A Design and Consultation update fact sheet was sent to 2200 households and published on the project website
- Two advertisements in the local newspapers the Upper Yarra Mail and the Mountain Mail
- Posters placed across the Shire at high-traffic areas
- Drop-in visits to local businesses in Warburton and Yarra Junction
- Phone calls to local residents and community groups
- Yarra Ranges Council Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter.

Community and stakeholders could get involved and provide feedback on the project including:



## Online community information session and local drop-in session

Two types of community sessions were held to provide an opportunity to discuss, ask questions and provide feedback about the design update.

One session was held online, and a second drop-in session was held in Warburton.

Date	Time	Number of participants
Wednesday 24 March	4.00 – 7.00pm	11
Friday 26 March	5.30 – 6.30pm	9
Saturday 27 March	10.00am – 1.00pm	6

## Stakeholder engagement

The project team met with the Warburton Golf Course Committee including their five new members. The meeting involved a presentation on the proposed design and operational details, and a Q&A session.





## Interactive online map

The interactive online map was again used as the primary tool for describing the updated project design and gathering stakeholder and community feedback.

The map showed the proposed trails, including highlighting the 22 new trails, and participants provided feedback using the free text comment option and responding to a survey on each trail.

### MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDER INPUTS TO TRAILS DESIGN

Input from potential trail users is important for ensuring the proposed design addresses their needs and ideas.

In addition to the interactive map showing the location and design of the proposed trails, the website provided detailed information on each proposed trail, such as length, gradient and other key features.

Respondents were invited to complete a survey for each trail, to indicate which of the proposed trails were most important to their riding experience.

## Hard copy feedback forms

Extra project updates were hand delivered to two Old Warburton residents and hard copy feedback forms were delivered to several Wesburn residents.



**861**

comments on the interactive map



**143**

trail surveys completed



**2**

hard copy feedback forms submitted



**26**

emails/ phone calls



**26**

community session participants

### GETTING ON-SITE TO ACTION COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

One of the primary objectives of the consultation process is to find ways to develop and refine the project so it can respond to the needs and ideas of stakeholders.

Nothing beats talking directly with people and getting on site to really understand the feedback they're providing, including any specific locations of concern.

At one of the community sessions in late March 2021, a resident raised a concern about the potential for a trail to impede access to homes in the Old Warburton area. After the session, the project team went straight out on site to inspect the area of the trail in question. This discussion and site review process resulted in the project team modifying a trail to move it away from Old Warburton Road and away from three resident driveways.

By consulting with a wide range of stakeholders - from local and visiting mountain bike riders, businesses in the region, and residents - we've been able to understand in detail the ideas and concerns they have about specific elements of the project.



## 4.6 Phase 4: Ongoing conversations with community and interest groups, mid-late 2021

In phase 4, Council continued to communicate with community and project stakeholders by:

- Providing project updates through project digital channels
- Website updates
- Responding to community phone and email correspondence
- Continuing conversations with landowners

Phone calls and face to face meetings have taken place where possible with community groups and property owners to discuss the EES process, their concerns and potential impacts of the project and how these have been addressed through the EES.

Communication during this phase focused on:

- Providing project updates to the community and interested stakeholders
- Responding to community questions and concerns
- Outlining the EES process

Council received queries about the potential for the project to have a strong bias towards predominantly male participation. Council is familiar with The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector and have begun work to develop a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) to ensure the project is a safe and inclusive environment for all users. The GIA is being developed outside of the EES process and is part of Council's commitment to promoting gender equality in the workplace and community. Working toward women, men and gender diverse people having equitable access to resources, power and opportunities. Yarra Ranges Council will engage an external consultant with gender equity and sport/recreation expertise to support this process.

Council also began work to develop the Emergency Management Plan (EMP) in consultation with key stakeholders, including Parks Victoria, DELWP, CFA, SES and Victoria Police. A workshop is being held in September 2021 to progress a draft EMP and collaborate with emergency services in preparing for the operational phase of the project.

## 4.7 Phase 5: Exhibition and Inquiry and Advisory Committee submissions, late 2021

Community and stakeholder feedback has played an important role in the project's planning and development, informing specialist studies and contributing to the preparation of the project's Environment Effects Statement (EES). These detailed planning and environmental documents are now available for further consultation. Throughout the formal exhibition, submission and review process, the community has the opportunity to comment on the EES.

The focus of Phase 4 is to support the public exhibition through:

- Providing copies of the EES at information displays, public libraries and council offices and online
- Providing information about how to access and navigate the EES
- Providing information about how to make a submission to the independent panel and deadlines for submissions
- Providing information and updates about the panel hearings and recommendations.



# What we heard and how we've considered feedback

## 5.1 Overview of feedback

Ideas, issues and concerns raised by locals and visitors have played an important role in shaping the planning of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination.

Comments relate to feedback received during community drop in sessions, online information sessions, email and phone interactions and through the interactive online map.

Comments made by locals and visitors have been recorded, coded and analysed, and the following high-level themes identified:

- Looking forward to seeing these world class trails
- Positive effect for local business and economy
- Traffic and parking implications
- Concerns and ideas about environmental impacts and protection
- Amazing project which fosters appreciation of nature
- Impacts and safety for horse riding and other recreation
- Doubts about the consultation process
- Don't support the project due to size and local impacts
- Loss of peaceful ambience of the area for locals
- Requests to keep trails away from specific areas
- Mountain bike riding provides both physical and mental benefits
- Need for a fire emergency plan
- Need to protect national park



## Understanding engagement participants and sentiment

There were **488** unique participants in Phases 2 and 3 of engagement. There were roughly the same number of individual participants through both phases, but 35 contributed to both phases.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of engagement participants including which phase they participated in, whether they were local or visitors and the overall sentiment expressed in their feedback.

**Table 1: Analysis of 488 unique participants by geography, phase and sentiment**

Local/Visitor	Sentiment	Phase 2 only	Phase 2 & 3	Phase 3 only	Total
<b>Not given</b>	Positive	9		5	14
	Neutral	21		6	27
	Negative	11	1	7	19
<b>Total</b>		<b>41</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Local</b>	Response*			2	2
	Positive	22	9	24	55
	None	15		2	17
	Neutral	12		2	14
	Negative	10	9	21	40
<b>Total</b>		<b>59</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Visitor</b>	Response*			6	6
	Positive	23	14	119	156
	None	94		18	112
	Neutral	5	2	3	10
	Negative	1		15	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>123</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>223</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>488</b>

Where possible participants were identified as either locals or visitors. Visitors are overwhelmingly positive in their comments about the project. There were fewer local participants, with 55 expressing positive sentiment and 40 expressing negative sentiment.

Overall, more unique participants expressed positive sentiment about the project than negative sentiment.

**Table 2: Sentiment of participants by percentage**

Sentiment	Count	%
Negative	75	15.37%
Neutral	51	10.45%
None	129	26.4%
Positive	225	46.11%
Response*	8	1.64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>488</b>	

\* Response refers to users using the engagement portal as a discussion board to respond to each other on matters not related to the WMBD consultation. These comments were not coded for sentiment.

Section 5.2 provides information on the number of comments raised and by how many respondents, provides a cross-section of verbatim quotes to illustrate the range of feedback received, and summarises the response to key issues raised for each theme.

Each of the EES impact assessment reports also includes key issues and concerns raised by communities and stakeholders and outlines how these have been considered in impact assessments.



## 5.2 Feedback and responses

### Looking forward to seeing these world class trails

The most common feedback theme was excitement about the project and anticipation for its delivery. 145 comments from 69 unique respondents across Phases 2 and 3 were identified. 100% of these comments were positive in sentiment.

This feedback was general in nature and included comments about individual trails that respondents were excited to ride on and also the trail network more broadly. A group of respondents raised the potential for world class trail status as being exciting and made reference to other networks constructed by World Trail.

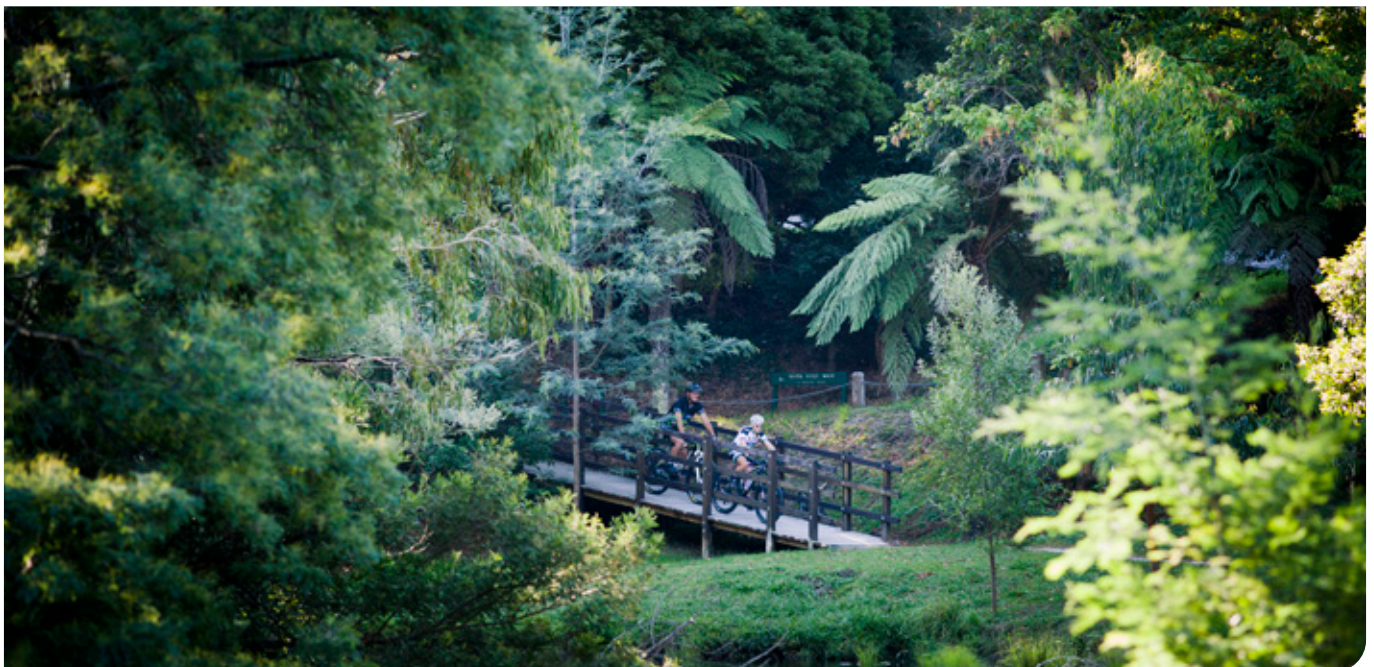
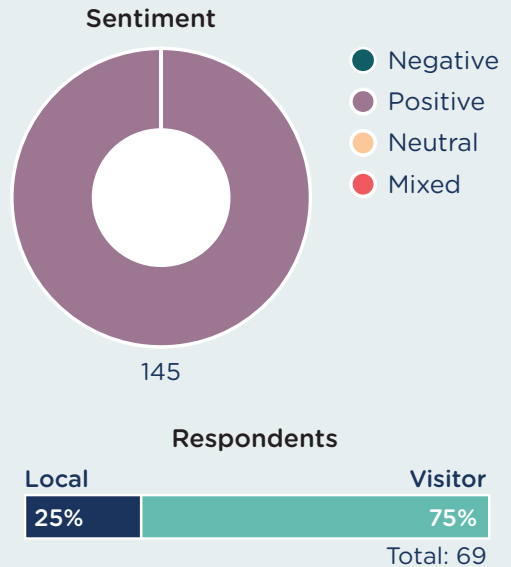
**145** comments made by **69** respondents

*“So glad world trail are building these trails. The job they did in derby is amazing. So respectful of natural features.”*

*“This looks like an excellent trail! I can’t wait to ride it with my pals!”*

*“Am loving all the missing link connections that are being added. This is going to be so great!!”*

*“With all the places around the world that world trail have built trails, I’m sure that this trail will be built to the highest of standards and be amazing for the network”*





## Positive effect for local business and economy

The second most common feedback theme related to the positive impact that the project would have for local businesses and the Yarra Ranges economy. 137 comments, from 105 unique respondents across Phases 2 & 3 were identified. The majority of comments indicated positive sentiment.

Respondents noted the positive effect the project would have on existing local businesses and the potential for new industry with the increase in tourism. Local shops, cafes and restaurants, the golf course, park facilities, shuttling services and accommodation were all named as local services that are likely to benefit from the project.

A small proportion of comments were made about the benefit this project would have on local youth, with increased economic activity providing an incentive to not move away for employment.

**137** comments made by **105** respondents

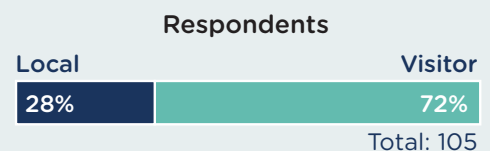
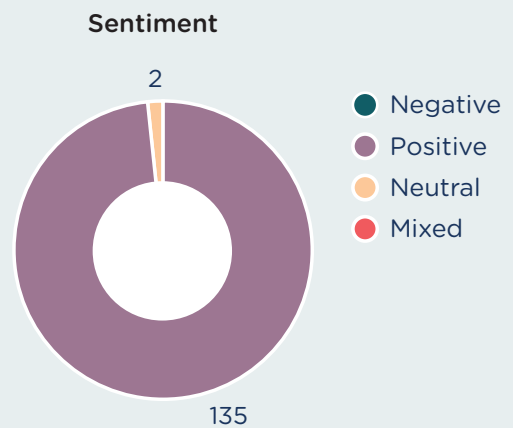
*“Having the trail head at the golf course is a great idea, central location that is close to town so you can still go to the local shops and support local businesses.”*

*“As an accommodation owner in Healesville, I’m already being asked when the track will open as people are very keen to come and support the area.”*

*“I’m looking forward to having the MTB community frequent our local shops and cafes bringing a positive energy and supporting our local community.”*

*“I have talked to friends in the UK about the Warburton mountain bike destination project they have said that they would travel specifically to Australia with this as their primary destination. Basically design their holiday around coming to Warburton.”*

*“Kids graduating from local schools need local interests and jobs.”*







## Traffic and parking implications

134 comments from 64 unique respondents were related to potential impacts that the project would have on traffic and parking in the local area. The majority of these comments were negative in sentiment.

77 comments raised these concerns in general terms, but the remainder mentioned specific locations or issues to were grouped into subthemes to better understand key areas of concern.

Traffic and parking implications covered a wide area, but there was a concentration of attention on the dog park at Wesburn Park.

### 134 comments made by 64 respondents

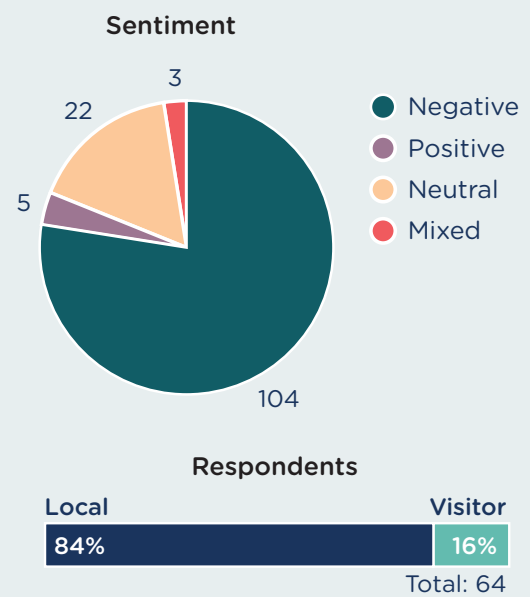
*“Increased noise and traffic on Surrey Road, people live in these areas for peace and quiet not to have more cars and congestion on their door step!”*

*“Parking at Donna Buang will disrupt community use of Donna Buang.”*

*“There is no way these roads can handle that level of traffic. Access into Warburton from here is already dangerous. Overflow parking on the local roads is chaos. This already happens at peak events, and this is without all the extra visitors this plans to bring in. This will completely wreck the ambiance of the area”*

*“The Warburton Golf Course is beautiful, & right next to the river. A big ugly carpark is totally inappropriate for here!! It would completely devalue the area”*

*“The current off lead dog park provides a safe and accessible location for a diverse range of dog owners in the community ... For this well loved space to continue to benefit our local community, it should remain as large of an area as possible and be fenced to avoid foreseeable accidents.”*



#### Topic raised

##### Off-lead dog park (Wesburn Park)

21 comments from 14 unique participants highlighted their interest in preserving the off-lead dog park in Wesburn Park, demonstrating concern that parts of it could be used for parking. Comments were raised that it is unfair that existing user groups are having facilities taken away to accommodate for new user groups.

#### Project response

Council has engaged directly with user groups as part of consultation on the Wesburn Park Master Plan, which gathered 800 submissions. The additional car parking proposed at Wesburn Park would affect less than 20% of the off-leash area, and dog walkers indicated that the area of impact was acceptable because this is a less used part of park for dog walkers. Protection for users of the off-leash area would be improved as part of the project, with fencing proposed on three sides to provide separation from the shared trail zones, the road and car park.

The consultation also found that dog walkers use many recreation and open space areas across the Shire. Council is investigating options for additional off-leash areas, with potential locations including the Old Wesburn train station site, Yarra Junction and other towns in Yarra Ranges. Council will continue its engagement with dog walkers and other recreation users as it works to identify suitable sites.



## Topic raised

### **Dammans Rd**

6 comments from 6 unique participants were received about Dammans Rd. These were all negative in sentiment and expressed concern that the road is not equipped to deal with an increase in traffic. They noted the narrow width of the road, increased chance of collision, emergency egress and congestion during fire evacuation.

### **Warburton Highway**

5 comments from 2 unique respondents noted the high volume in traffic along Warburton Highway, indicating locals accessing homes and local services should be prioritised over an increase in tourist traffic.

### **Narrow streets**

3 unique respondents expressed concern over potential impacts to narrow streets when there is limited parking.

### **Narrow bridge**

1 comment noted that the bridge is too narrow for an increase in larger vehicles.

### **Warburton Golf Course (WGC)**

6 comments from 5 unique respondents said they didn't think the WGC should be used for parking.

### **Main road**

1 comment noted that blocking off the main road to Warburton with tourist traffic would decrease emergency egress including for bushfire response.

### **Wesburn**

1 comment noted that if parking is in Wesburn, Warburton will not benefit economically.

### **Wandin**

1 comment noted that parking should be in Wandin to reduce traffic in Warburton and benefit the town economically.

## Project response

Understanding how the project would work and interact with the existing road network and traffic has been a key consideration, with a focus on ensuring accessibility, parking availability, safety and amenity are maintained.

The transport study prepared for the EES has involved assessment of proposed transport routes for both construction and operation, including their ability to accommodate traffic volumes generated by the project, any works required to address changes in traffic, and any potential project effects on the condition of public roads.

The assessment included specific consideration of the capacity of the road network immediately surrounding the proposed trail heads at Warburton Golf Course, Mt Tugwell and Mt Donna Buang summit.

The impact assessment identified that there is significant capacity across the road network including intersections to accommodate the forecast growth in traffic and parking demand, and to cater for peak periods and potential evacuation requirements.

The EES proposes several mitigation measures related to management of traffic and parking, including preparation of a traffic management plan, an independent road safety audit, signage design and potential for improvements to shared paths to enhance access and safety for all users.

EES Chapter 13: Transport and EES Technical Report F: Transport provide further detail on traffic and parking.



Topic raised	Project response
<p><b>Move parking to Wesburn</b> 3 comments from 3 unique respondents noted that they would like to see parking moved to Wesburn Park. 2 were concerned with emergency egress. 1 commenter raised the option of a shuttle service.</p>	<p>In response to feedback gathered in Phase 2 about traffic and parking concerns in Warburton, the project was refined to include 120 car parks as part of the Wesburn Park trailhead.</p> <p>This alternative parking and trail access option would better distribute the flow of traffic and help to reduce pressure on roads and parking in Warburton.</p> <p>The mitigation measures proposed in the EES include the use of Wesburn Park for overflow parking to help minimise congestion in Warburton, establishing a parking management plan for the operation of WMBD, and periodic monitoring of parking availability, especially during times of peak usage and during any regional, state or national events.</p> <p>Further information on the assessment of potential parking impacts can be found in EES Chapter 13: Transport and EES Technical Report F: Transport.</p>
<p><b>Bushwalkers</b> 2 neutral comments from the same participant would like to see parking for Bushwalkers and the Backstairs Track are retained.</p>	<p>Parking for bushwalkers will be retained at Backstairs Track.</p>
<p><b>Away from river</b> 2 neutral comments were received from unique respondents in Phase 2 that the parking should be kept away from the river to avoid impacting natural filtration processes. 1 comment raised that litter should be controlled to protect the waterways.</p>	<p>The new parking areas proposed at Wesburn Park are a considerable distance from the Yarra River and the drainage from these areas would be designed in accordance with Melbourne Water requirements to ensure that any pollutants are effectively managed. Litter would be managed by provision of rubbish bins in Wesburn Park and regular maintenance by Yarra Ranges Council.</p>
<p><b>Donna Buang</b> 2 comments from unique respondents noted concerns that parking at Donna Buang would disrupt community use.</p>	<p>The parking will be designed to ensure that safe access is maintained for other users.</p>
<p><b>Gembrook Road turning</b> 1 comment noted that the turn off at Gembrook will become very dangerous with increased traffic.</p>	<p>The transport assessment concluded that the existing road network has sufficient capacity to cater for the additional traffic generated by the project and no specific safety issues at Glenbrook Road were identified to arise as a consequence of the project.</p>
<p><b>Launching Place</b> 1 comment noted that they would like to see a speed decrease at Launching Place to make it safer for an increase in users.</p>	<p>This request falls outside the scope of the project, but Yarra Ranges Council will raise it with the Department of Transport as the responsible road manager.</p>



## Concerns and ideas about environmental impacts and protection

There were 103 comments from 25 unique respondents about potential environmental impacts. The majority of comments were negative in sentiment. Neutral comments were largely not critical of the project but suggesting alternatives, querying conservation practices and noting things that they would like to see the project consider.

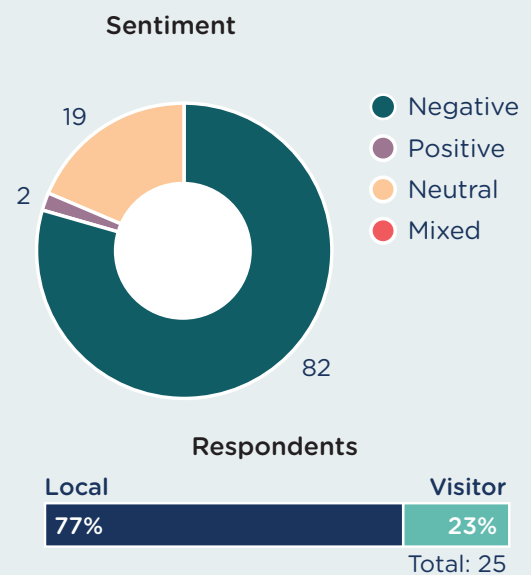
Most common were concerns about Myrtle Beech trees, a range of endangered/protected animals and the river and aquatic life. There were also some specific animals that were mentioned more than others, including the Leadbeater's Possum and lyrebirds.

### 103 comments made by 25 respondents

*“This is national park. There is no way that this number of tourists going through this area cannot have a major impact on it.”*

*“Damage to flora and fauna, erosion, people always impact areas open to public. They do as they choose. Maintenance will be expensive. Opening up becomes a bush fire threat.”*

*“The impact on the critically endangered Myrtle Beeches will be significant if the trail goes through them regardless of the chosen construction. The increased human activity and the need to maintain the trails will mean they will become vulnerable to Myrtle wilt and other diseases. These are ancient trees and habitat for wildlife such as the lead beaters possum. The National Park should be avoided for all trail planning.”*





## Topic raised

### Protect Forests/National Park

8 comments from 6 unique participants said the project is not doing enough to protect the National Park.

### Mt Donna Buang

3 comments made by 3 unique respondents about their opposition to trail development on Mt. Donna Buang. 1 comment opposed to development on the wet south facing slopes and suggested an alternate location in the north. 2 comments noted that the area is a National Trust significant area and should not be developed.

## Project response

Council has sought to avoid or minimise the impact on sensitive values as part of the design development.

The project is designed to avoid the Melbourne Water catchment at the summit of Mt Donna Buang, and to bring the trail as close as practicable to Mt Donna Buang Rd to leverage the existing impact area.

Measures were also taken to avoid a Mt Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly habitat and Leadbeater's Possum nesting and monitoring locations close to this trail.

Council identified three new trails that have enabled consideration of two alternates for the proposed Drop A-K trail.

This means that the two options are undergoing a thorough assessment of ecological, social and physical impacts. These assessments are available in the EES for review and feedback.

The EES included proposed mitigation measures related to potential environmental impacts, including:

- Designing trails to avoid the removal of large trees, and locating trail elements which need more space in existing clearings where possible.
- Making use of the natural landform to minimise the need for substantial earthworks and selecting materials which respond to the character of the local environment.
- Measures focused on waterways, including streamside buffers, retention of topsoil and regular water quality monitoring.
- Using indigenous planting identified in consultation with an ecologist.
- No-go zones to protect the habitat of the Wingless Stonefly.
- Sensitive design of the Visitor's Hub which is in keeping with the unique environmental setting and retains views of Mt. Donna Buang.

The draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) in the EES provides detailed proposed arrangements for managing each step of the project's construction, and can be found in Attachment V: Draft Construction Environment Management Plan.

Further information on the assessment of potential biodiversity impacts can be found in EES Chapter 8: Biodiversity and habitats and EES Technical report A: Biodiversity and habitats.



## Topic raised

### Protect endangered fauna

9 comments were made by 7 unique respondents raising concerns about the potential impact the trails and increased traffic would have on native fauna. Some commented that mountain bikers may scare away native animals and disrupt habitat.

### Vegetation

1 comment asked for the vegetation to be left alone.

### Myrtle Beeches

11 comments were made by 9 unique participants raising concerns about the impacts to the critically endangered Myrtle Beech trees.

### Native orchids

1 comment noted concerns over how the trails would impact the native orchids.

## Project response

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination is set in a unique and sensitive environment which is highly valued for its biodiversity and beauty. Protecting the area's natural and cultural environment and minimising potential impacts is central to the project's development.

This approach began in the design phase - by ensuring trails avoid critical environmental values and sites of cultural heritage significance wherever possible - and would continue in the construction phase through careful and sensible design refinements and construction practices.

Early in the design process the project team developed environmental risk controls, with advice from key species experts in Cool Temperate Rainforest, Leadbeater's Possum and the Wingless Stonefly.

The risk controls include standards to be met by the design and during construction, such as exclusion zones around nest boxes, hand construction only within 10m of a Myrtle Beech Tree and requirements for waterway crossings.

Some native vegetation would need to be removed to build the trails. Trail alignments have been designed to avoid older trees with hollows, which are likely to provide habitat for native animals including Leadbeater's Possum, Greater Glider and forest owls.

Based on the current design and studies to date, large trees are not expected to be removed during construction. Ground cover and small vegetation usually regrows quickly to the edge of trail boundaries following construction.

The biodiversity assessment includes a review of potential impacts on Myrtle Beech, including in relation to the fungal disease Myrtle Wilt. Specific construction techniques adopted near Myrtle Beech would minimise this risk, and monitoring and contingency measures are proposed to ensure any further actions needed can be put in place.



## Topic raised

## Project response

### Leadbeater's Possum

4 comments made by 3 unique respondents noted that the trails would negatively impact the Leadbeater's Possum habitat. 1 comment asked for a 10km exclusion buffer around all habitat.

Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*) is a critically endangered species under the EPBC Act and listed under the FFG Act.

There is known habitat for Leadbeater's Possum within the project area that may be impacted by the project.

The conservation and protection of Leadbeater's Possums is critical for this project and a fundamental consideration in the preparation of environmental protocols and evolution of the design.

There will be no removal of trees or sub-canopy species which may provide critical habitat for the species.

The current proposed trail alignment avoids all Australian National University Leadbeater's Possum monitoring plots.

In consultation with species experts the trail alignment has been revised to avoid proximity to nesting boxes and critical leadbeater habitat areas along sections of trail 1.

### Lyrebirds

2 comments made by 1 unique respondent noted that the trails would negatively impact lyrebird habitat.

The biodiversity assessment did not identify lyrebirds as a specific species facing a significant threat due to the project. Nevertheless, the biodiversity assessment examined the loss of native vegetation and habitat more generally and mitigation measures are proposed to minimise loss.

### Aqueduct

4 comments made by 2 unique respondents noted that the trails could be impacted by the Aqueduct as the area is slipping. Concerns raised over landslide and erosion risk.

The project has done extensive on-site inspections to understand the terrain, and micro-siting prior to construction will help to avoid these areas.

Areas susceptible to a landslip were identified during a geotechnical impact assessment.

The project will be required to comply with requirements under the Erosion Management Overlay. With mitigations in place, it is not expected there will be significant exposure to geotechnical hazards.



## Topic raised

## Project response

### River

4 comments made by 3 unique respondents were concerned about increased pollution from the carpark to the Yarra river. Concerns about littering.

Several assessments of the project's potential effects in relation to waterways have been prepared since 2013 to help guide the project's development and have been publicly available for consultation.

### Yarra River

1 comment noted that the Yarra river will be disturbed by bikers and erosion. Commenter felt that local and expert opinions of the river are not being considered.

A surface water and geotechnical impact assessment undertaken during project development found that the proposed design would require 164 crossings of waterways, including a bridge for bicycles to cross the Yarra River.

### Contamination of Port Philip Bay

1 comment noted concern over erosion impacting the Yarra river contributing to contamination of Port Philip bay.

The project team has been working closely with Melbourne Water to ensure waterway protection and have incorporated standards and controls to mitigate possible impacts on water catchments, including:

- Applying Melbourne Water guidelines for works on waterways
- Elevated structures, including boardwalks and low-level bridges, will be used to minimise impacts on waterways and boggy areas
- Avoiding changes to surface water flows
- Crossing waterways at the narrowest practical location
- Avoiding running trails parallel to waterways, within 20m.

The EES proposes a number of mitigation measures to protect waterways, including the Yarra River, from pollution, sedimentation, erosion and other risks. These include implementation of measures set out in the construction environmental management plan, adoption of streamside buffers and water quality monitoring.

Further information is available in EES Chapter 9: Surface water, groundwater and geotechnical hazards and EES Technical report B: Surface water, groundwater and geotechnical hazards.

### Illegal trails

1 comment raised a query over why other trails are being closed due to environmental impact, but the project is progressing.

WMBD provides the opportunity to consolidate the trail network and to close illegal trails which can cause significant environmental damage, particularly causing erosion with flow-on impacts to vegetation and waterway quality.

The proposed trails would be specifically designed and constructed to minimise these sorts of impacts, through approaches like carefully designed gradients, avoiding waterways or providing elevated structures to keep bikes out of the waterways, and using rock armouring and embankments where needed to avoid erosion.





## Amazing project which fosters appreciation of nature

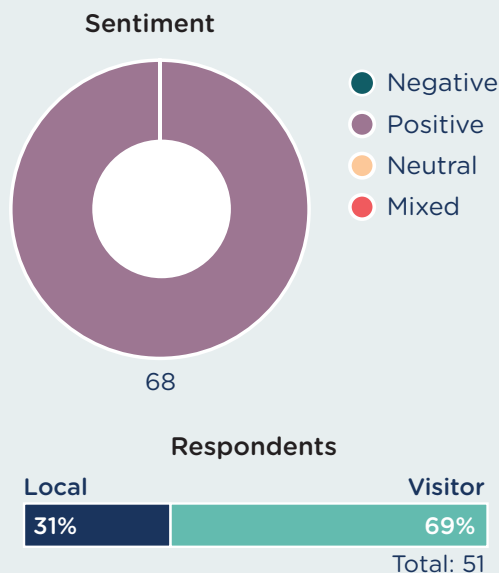
There were 68 comments from 51 unique participants that noted that the project would foster a greater appreciation of nature for locals and visitors to the area. All of these comments were positive in sentiment.

**68** comments made by **51** respondents

*“The best way to get people to appreciate the environment is to get them out in it, to experience it first-hand. The next generation particularly need to appreciate the beauty of the local environment and projects such as this will get riders, young and old, out into the beauty of the Yarra State Forest. MTB riders as a whole ride to get out of suburbia and enjoy and appreciate the natural environment. This project needs to go ahead ASAP to help inspire the next generation to protect these beautiful areas.”*

*“Getting out into nature and riding a bike in this amazing environment will be a huge benefit to the people of Victoria.”*

*“This will be a regular visiting destination for many I can only see positives coming to Warburton, I’m very pleased to see that the local environment has been looked into extensively and trails are being constructed to minimise damage and are routed around key vegetation and animal populations.”*



## Impacts and safety for horse riding and other recreation

There were 63 comments from 21 unique participants who raised issues regarding the impact of the riding tracks on other users. The majority of comments were negative in sentiment.

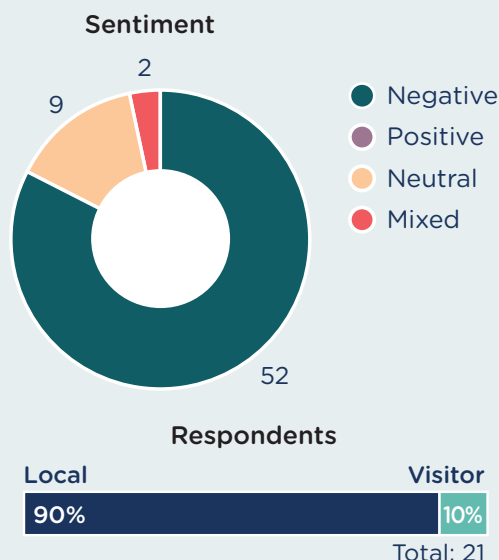
Hikers/walkers and horse riders were the main groups pointed out as possibly finding the tracks dangerous to use while mountain bike riders are also using them.

**63** comments made by **21** respondents

*“Walking is the most popular sport in Australia! Walking tracks and bike tracks don’t mix. Mountain Bike trails scare away walkers.”*

*“I am very concerned for the safety of equestrians at Wesburn Park. Horses are flight animals and often bike riders have no idea on how they should behave around horses.”*

*“So who will then ensure the bikes don’t go zooming down these streets”*





Topic raised	Project response
<p><b>Hikers/walkers</b></p> <p>26 comments were made by 7 respondents that related to hiker/walkers sharing the trails with bikers. Concerns were raised about impacts to visual amenity, ambience and safety.</p>	<p>We know that trails and surrounds need to be carefully managed to avoid interaction and incidents between all user groups.</p>
<p><b>Equestrians</b></p> <p>11 comments were left by 5 unique respondents about the impacts to horse riding and equestrian activities in the area. Concerns were raised about rider and horse safety and boundaries.</p>	<p>Equestrians want to ensure that Wesburn Park continues to operate well and that horses and young riders aren't impacted by mountain bike riders, sporting groups and other people using the area. Mountain bike riders, hikers, runners and recreation visitors all want to know they can safely use the area.</p>
<p><b>Pedestrians/cyclist</b></p> <p>6 comments made by 3 unique respondents expressed concern over pedestrians and cyclists will share the trails. Concerns over bike speed, collisions and cyclists using walker only trails.</p>	<p>The project team has embedded safety in the design and operation of the project. The trail network has been developed for mountain bikes exclusively and signage will advise other users they are not permitted to use the trails.</p>
<p><b>Kids</b></p> <p>2 comments by unique respondents expressed concern over the impacts to children from mountain biking; namely, collisions.</p>	<p>The project is also designed to separate trails from horse riding areas at Wesburn Park, eliminating the need for mountain bikers and horse riders to share paths in these areas</p>
<p><b>Bikers</b></p> <p>1 comment was made by a local bike rider that noted that local riders and visiting riders do not treat the trails and the local area the same, the latter being disrespectful to other users on the trails.</p>	<p>The socioeconomic study prepared as part of the EES considered likely volumes and interactions between different recreational users across the project area, including along high traffic areas, near roads and at Wesburn Park.</p> <p>The EES includes relevant proposed mitigation measures aimed at maintaining safety for all users, including and independent road safety audit, safety at shuttle drop-off points, use of choke points and offsetting of trail crossing points to minimise intersections between trails, and signage and wayfinding to help cyclists stay on designated paths.</p> <p>Further information is available in EES Chapter 12: Socio-economic and EES Technical report E: Socio-economic.</p>
<p><b>Golfers</b></p> <p>5 comments made by 5 unique respondents were concerned over how the trail use would impact golfers and which holes would be impacted by the trails.</p>	<p>The project team has been working with the Warburton Golf Club (WGC) Committee to ensure impacts to the golf course are minimal. Final trail alignments, construction designs and treatments will require approval of WGC as part of formal lease arrangements proposed.</p>
<p><b>Gliding club</b></p> <p>1 comment was made by a hang glider club member wanting to know if the trails will affect their access to the Healesville/Mt Donna Buang Rd ramp.</p>	<p>There will be no change of access to the Mt Donna Buang Hang Glider Ramp.</p>



## Doubts about the consultation process

There were 45 comments from 19 unique respondents during Phases 2 and 3 that expressed doubt about the project’s consultation approach. The majority of these comments were negative in sentiment. Legacy issues, secrecy and ineffective/incomplete consultation were raised as concerns by these respondents.

Yarra Ranges Council prepared the EES Consultation Plan in accordance with the requirements in the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and reviewed feedback from all members of the Technical Reference Group to improve the Plan.

Consultation has had an important role since the early days of the project’s development, so all feedback on the engagement approach is welcomed.

The project team has sought to work proactively, openly and directly with all stakeholders throughout several stages of consultation, and would continue this approach through the EES and construction of the project.

This Consultation Report provides a comprehensive record and response to feedback raised.

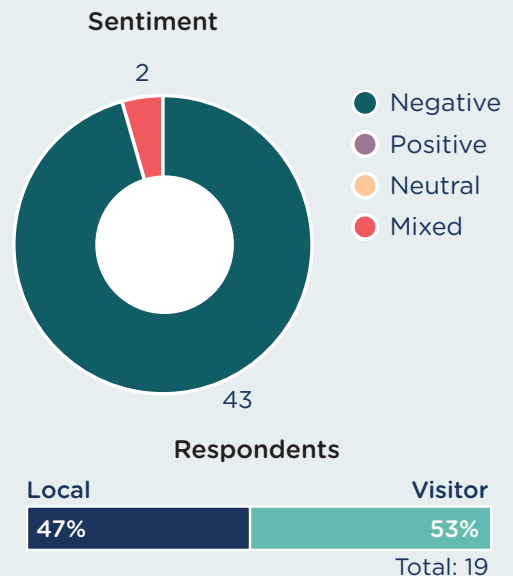
### 45 comments made by 19 respondents

*“How can this map represent the locals when the area is renowned for lack of internet and elderly socio economics”*

*“I do not trust the statistics of this map one bit. Ever since it’s been made, it’s been very complicated and altered by those who manage it. Its run by mountain biker stakeholders, not the shire or locals. They hide comments to suit themselves, they’ve rigged up/ downvotes from the start.”*

*“All the comments on this map read like paid commentary. NONE OF THEM reflect how the local residents feel.”*

*“So many comments here from people who are not local - how is this a true representation of local community feedback then. Clearly this is set to those outside the area that will not be affected in their daily lives. Bad form council, lowest form of consultation”*





## Don't support the project due to size and local impacts

There were 37 comments from 17 unique participants during Phases 2 and 3 that did not support the project due to its size and the impacts it would have on the local area, including residents, businesses and the environment. The majority of comments were negative in sentiment.

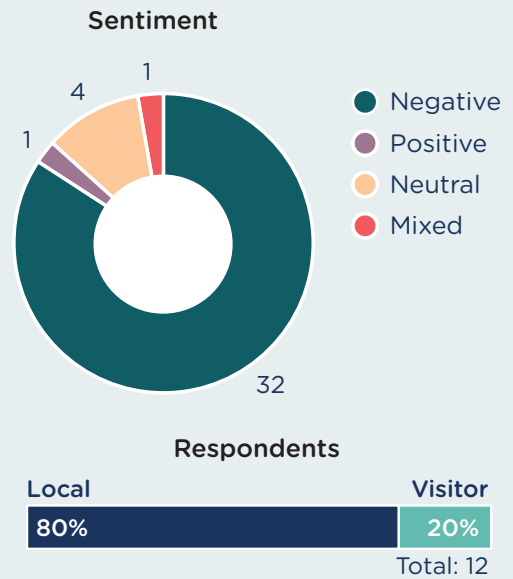
**37** comments made by **12** respondents

*“Please stop the monster of size of this project it is not relevant or necessary in this area at all will somebody please listen to the local people”*

*“Historic sites are fully abandoned by shire of Yarra ranges. Sites that are Victorian Heritage Database listed are under major impact and damage risks now”*

*“Directly intruding on local residents, with zero consideration or respect for their privacy and surroundings”*

*“Why is this project do big - start small and fix amenities, facilities and infrastructure- this project will be the death of such a beautiful town”*



### Topic raised

### Project response

#### Local property

8 comments made by 6 unique respondents highlighted that the project need stay out of private property.

The proposed trails intersect with four private properties. Council is negotiating directly with private landholders to seek appropriate access agreements.

#### Heritage structure

2 comments made by 2 unique respondents highlighted that the project would impact protected heritage structures. 1 commenter highlighted that historic sites are being abandoned by YRC.

Over several years and stages of investigations and design, Council has undertaken a feasibility study, detailed planning, technical investigations and community consultation to understand the heritage and environmental values of the area and inform the project's design and Master Plan.

These investigations have included a historic heritage survey and a Complex Assessment undertaken as part of preparing a Cultural Heritage Management Plan.

The EES proposes relevant mitigation measures, including the requirement to prepare an approved Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP), to obtain permits from the relevant heritage authorities for works near or at heritage sites, and to fence off sites during works and monitoring and recording of the works and heritage values.

Further information can be found in EES Chapter 10: Cultural heritage and EES Technical report C: Cultural heritage.



## Loss of peaceful ambience of the area for locals

There were 37 comments from 12 unique participants during Phases 2 and 3 that were concerned about the potential loss of amenity or peaceful ambience of the area for locals. 36 of these comments were negative in sentiment. The majority of comments were from 12 concerned locals who were worried about the impact increased tourism would have on their local area.

Regular consultation and discussion with stakeholders and residents has helped the project team better understand the local context and priorities, particularly regarding Warburton’s natural surroundings.

Noise, air quality and visual impacts have been raised as concerns during consultation. The project team initiated assessments of these impacts to inform the project’s development.

Other concerns included the proximity of trails to some properties in Old Warburton and Merlino Avenue, which led to a modifications to move trails further away from homes in these areas.

The EES includes proposed mitigation measures relevant to amenity and impacts for residents, including:

- Providing a buffer of at least 100m between the main trail head/visitor hub and bike wash stations and the nearest homes, or employing of noise shielding and orientation of the bike wash station design to minimise impacts.
- Locating major events points as far away from residents as possible.
- Ensuring that noise from any major events like competitions is assessed and managed for compliance with relevant environmental protection guidelines.

Further information about assessment of social and amenity impacts is available in EES Chapter 11: Land use and Planning, EES Chapter 12: Socio-economic and EES Technical Report E.

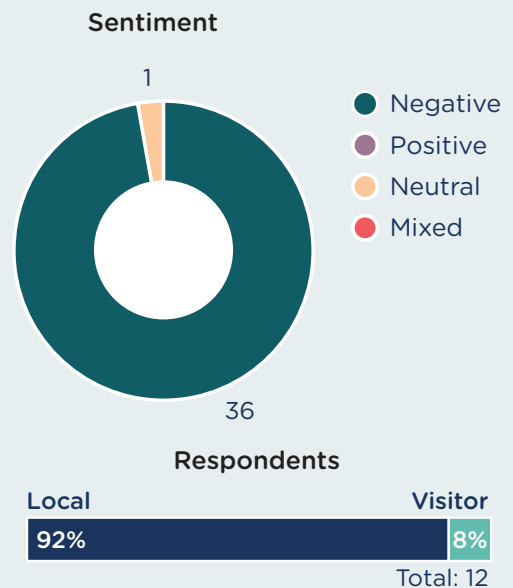
### 37 comments made by 12 respondents

*“Too much industrial-scale tourism/infrastructure will impact on this community.”*

*“I find it extremely upsetting the way mtbers and supporters of the project treat us locals who just want to keep our vibrant community of so many different interests alive instead of becoming a tourist Mecca for mtbers coming for short stays.”*

*“This is a residential area, people who live there will lose their peace and quiet they came to find.”*

*“As a local this project will be the death of its culture, its community and wellbeing for that live here”*





## Requests to keep the trails away from specific areas

There were 28 comments from 12 unique participants across Phases 2 and 3 that raised specific points of interest in the local area that should be protected and considered for the project to stay away from. Most comments were negative in sentiment.

All of these comments were coded further into sub-themes for the specific locations named, or the map point of interest that they related to was noted, to provide detailed commentary on the specific area. Most comments indicated the project should stay away from or may be unaware of the effect they would have on these locations.

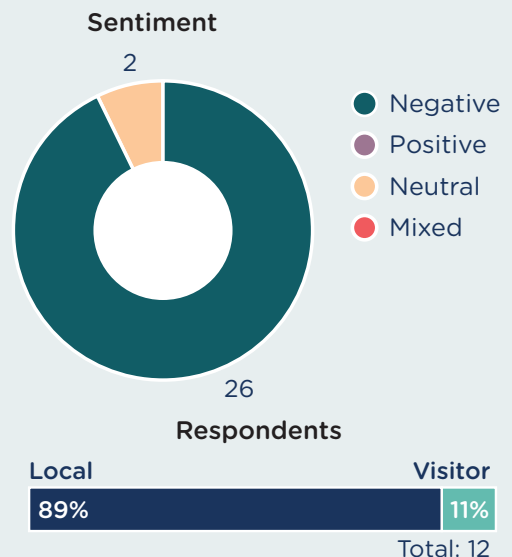
There were a broad range of places where people asked for the trails to be moved away from. Some of the most common specific places were places adjacent to private property, or just within the National Park. There were also mentions of abandoned mineshafts which could be dangerous to riders.

**28** comments made by **12** respondents

*“Ensure the trail does not go through any of the Mt Donna Buang national park area”*

*“Extremely unstable geology surrounds all the hills ... Sub terrain slipping from collapses will cause surface holes a major risk for anyone to be riding over the surface.”*

*“Don’t propose these trails. Don’t attempt to even consider putting them through peoples’ properties!”*



### Topic raised

### Project response

#### Yarra Ranges National Park

4 comments made by 4 unique respondents highlighted their concern for the impacts to the Yarra Ranges National Park Point of Interest. They all commented that the trails should not go through the Yarra Ranges National Park.

Council has sought to avoid or minimise the impact on sensitive values as part of the design development.

Despite significant revisions, the current Drop-a-K trail would pass through a 2.42km area of cool temperate rainforest, close to the summit of Mt Donna Buang.

#### Yarra State Forest

3 comments made by 2 unique respondents highlighted that the trail should not be built in the Yarra State Forest.

The trail was moved slightly to avoid more rainforest but is constricted due to requirements not to encroach into a crucial water catchment area.

#### Cool Temperate Rainforest

2 unique respondents commented on the Cool Temperate Rainforest POI, noting that the national park should be protected and left alone.

The project is designed to avoid the Melbourne Water catchment, other than a very small section at the summit of Mt Donna Buang, and to bring the trail as close as practicable to Mt Donna Buang Rd to leverage the existing impact area.

#### Rainforest

1 comment was made not to have the trails near this feature.

(continued...)



Topic raised	Project response
	<p>Measures were also taken to avoid a Mt Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly habitat and Leadbeater's Possum nesting and monitoring locations close to this trail.</p> <p>Council identified three new trails that have enabled consideration of two alternates for the proposed Drop a-K trail.</p> <p>This means that the two options are undergoing a thorough assessment of ecological, social and physical impacts, which are available in the EES for review and feedback.</p>
<p><b>Mineshaft</b> 4 comments made by 3 unique respondents highlighted that the area has unstable geology due to the existing undocumented mineshaft network. Respondents wanted to know what precautions will be taken to protect bikers and trail users from the risk of collapse.</p>	<p>The project has done extensive on-site inspections to understand the terrain, and micro-siting prior to construction will help to avoid these areas.</p> <p>Areas susceptible to a landslip were identified during a geotechnical impact assessment.</p> <p>The project will be required to comply with requirements under the Erosion Management Overlay. With mitigations in place, it is not expected there will be significant exposure to geotechnical hazards.</p>
<p><b>Intersection with private properties</b> 4 comments made by 3 unique respondents highlighted that the trails should stay away from private property.</p>	<p>The proposed trails intersect with five private properties. Council is negotiating directly with private landholders to seek appropriate access agreements.</p>
<p><b>Lala Falls</b> 1 unique respondent made 2 comments about the trail being near the existing Lala Falls track, exhibiting concern for collisions with walkers and bikers.</p>	<p>We know that trails and surrounds need to be carefully managed to avoid interaction and incidents between all user groups.</p> <p>The project team has embedded safety in the design and operation of the project. The trail network has been developed for mountain bikes exclusively and signage will advise other users they are not permitted to use the trails.</p> <p>The socio-economic study prepared as part of the EES considered likely volumes and interactions between different recreational users. Further information is available in EES Chapter 12 and Technical Report E.</p>
<p><b>Wesburn Park Trail Head</b> 1 comment was made not to have the trails near this feature.</p>	<p>By having trails on both the north and south of Warburton and several trail access points would provide a better overall experience for trail users and better distribute the flow of traffic, helping to reduce pressure on roads and parking in Warburton.</p>
<p><b>Mt. Tugwell</b> 1 comment was made not to have the trails near this feature.</p>	
<p><b>Upper Yarra Cemetery</b> 1 comment was made not to have the trails near this feature.</p>	<p>The project's proposed design has been developed through an iterative process of on-site investigations, technical work and gathering community feedback.</p> <p>Refinements to the design have been made at several points, including moving trails away from the Upper Yarra Cemetery.</p>



## Topic raised

### **Yarra Yarra Hydraulic Gold Sluicing Company**

1 comment was made not to have the trails near this feature.

### **O'Shannassy aqueduct sawmill and tramway site**

2 comments were made not to have the trails near this feature.

### **Leadbeater's Possum**

1 comment was made under the Leadbeater's Possum POI that no area of the national park should be developed.

## Project response

Over several years and stages of investigations and design, Council has undertaken a feasibility study, detailed planning, technical investigations and community consultation to understand the heritage and environmental values of the area and inform the project's design and Master Plan.

These investigations have included a historic heritage survey and a Complex Assessment undertaken as part of preparing a Cultural Heritage Management Plan.

Further information can be found in EES Chapter 10: Cultural heritage and EES Technical report C: Cultural heritage.

The conservation and protection of Leadbeater's Possums is critical for this project and a fundamental consideration in the preparation of environmental protocols and evolution of the design.

There will be no removal of the trees or sub-canopy species which may provide critical habitat for the species.

The current proposed trail alignment avoids all Australian National University Leadbeater's Possum monitoring plots.





## Mountain bike riding provides both physical and mental benefits

There were 24 comments from 19 unique participants across Phases 2 and 3 sharing a view that mountain bike riding promotes a healthy lifestyle that will improve the mental and physical wellbeing of locals and visitors to the area. All of these comments were positive in sentiment.

The majority of comments said that the project would encourage a healthy lifestyle for locals and visitors of all ages, promoting exercise and connection to nature with subsequent mental health benefits.

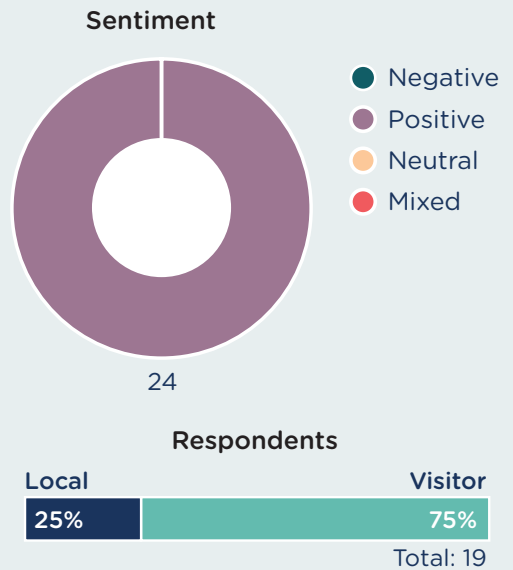
**24** comments made by **19** respondents

*“This is going to be an amazing way of keeping kids and parents focused on something healthy and fun that gets them out in nature.”*

*“Great for family days out, beginner riders through to advanced riders. Thanks for promoting a healthy lifestyle the state/nation/world needs.”*

*“Warburton trails will be a place for many locals and visitors [to] get away from the stress of everyday life and decompress, helping with the general mental wellbeing of everyone”*

*“Riding is one of the best things to help me with mental health.”*





## Need for a fire emergency plan

There were 18 comments from 14 unique participants across Phases 2 and 3 that related to the need for a fire emergency plan to protect the local area. 15 of these comments were negative in nature, while 3 were neutral.

These comments were concerned that the increase in local tourism would increase the fire risk with more people visiting the area. Several comments were concerned about possible challenges with evacuating people from the area.

By having trails on both the north and south of Warburton, in the event of a bushfire or other emergency, it is less likely the entire network will be impacted given the differing slope, aspect and vegetation.

The impact assessment identified that there is significant capacity across the road network to accommodate the forecast growth in traffic, and to cater for peak periods and potential evacuation requirements.

The project team has engaged with emergency services throughout the development of the project. A multi-agency Emergency Management Plan (EMP), detailing preparation for and response to emergencies, will be developed for the project and implemented prior to operation. A Bushfire Assessment has been prepared as part of the EES and would inform the EMP.

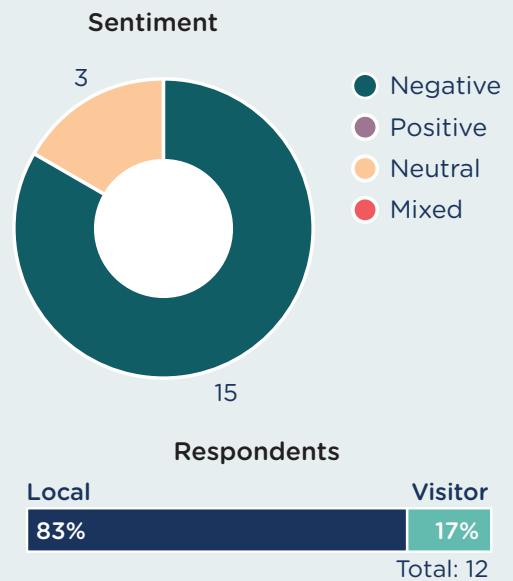
### 18 comments made by 14 respondents

*“One road in and out of the town with an extra 1000 people estimated on any given Saturday or Sunday - the Roads will not cope in a fire evacuation situation”*

*“What about the increased bushfire risk that this many tourists will bring to the area. This part of Mount Little Joe is a major and extremely well-known fire black spot. Who will take responsibility for the increased bushfire risk from this?”*

*“This is a major bushfire risk area and increasing the numbers of visitors to this area increases the fire risk. “*

*“Warburton is one of the highest fire danger zones in Australia. The evacuation of over 4000 people is unrealistic, and unfair.”*





## Need to protect national park

There were 13 comments from 9 unique participants across Phases 2 and 3 that related to the need to protect the national park. All of these comments were negative in sentiment

These comments said the project needed to consider the important and vulnerable ecosystems and habitat in the local area. Several respondents highlighted that the project area has never been affected by bushfires.

Council has sought to avoid or minimise the impact on sensitive values as part of the design development.

Despite significant revisions, the Drop-A-K trail would pass through a 2.42km area of Cool Temperate Rainforest, close to the summit of Mt Donna Buang. The trail was moved slightly to avoid more rainforest but is constricted due to requirements not to encroach into a crucial water catchment area.

The project recognises that national park areas have heightened sensitivity because of their status and because of the extent of the biodiversity values that exist with their boundary. The level of investigations and assessments have been targeted in accordance with this heightened status.

As an outcome of these assessments, draft mitigation measures developed to address the priority identified issues of Cool Temperate Rainforest, Leadbeater’s Possum and the Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly, as well as wider biodiversity are detailed and comprehensive .

Council identified three new trails that have enabled consideration of two alternates for the proposed Drop A-K trail. This means that the two options are have undergone a thorough assessment of ecological, social and physical impacts.

The draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) in the EES provides detailed proposed arrangements for managing each step of the project’s construction, and can be found in Attachment V: Draft Construction Environment Management Plan.

Further information on the assessment of potential biodiversity impacts can be found in EES Chapter 8: Biodiversity and habitats and EES Technical report A: Biodiversity and habitats.

### 13 comments made by 9 respondents

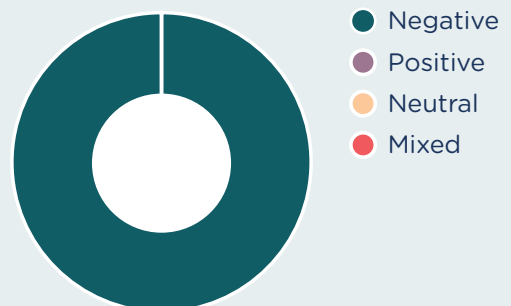
*“It’s a beautiful, historical site with many large special trees – LEAVE IT ALONE!”*

*“It’s historically significant and should be the main feature for tourists, not mountain biking”*

*“National Parks are especially precious due to loss of environment in fires. The area has never been burnt and thus is critical for wildlife including the Leadbeater’s Possum”*

*“It is a National Park ... that is reserved to protect native fauna and flora species ... I don’t oppose the trail [I] oppose it been near sensitive and vulnerable flora and fauna species.”*

Sentiment



13

Respondents

Local

78%

Visitor

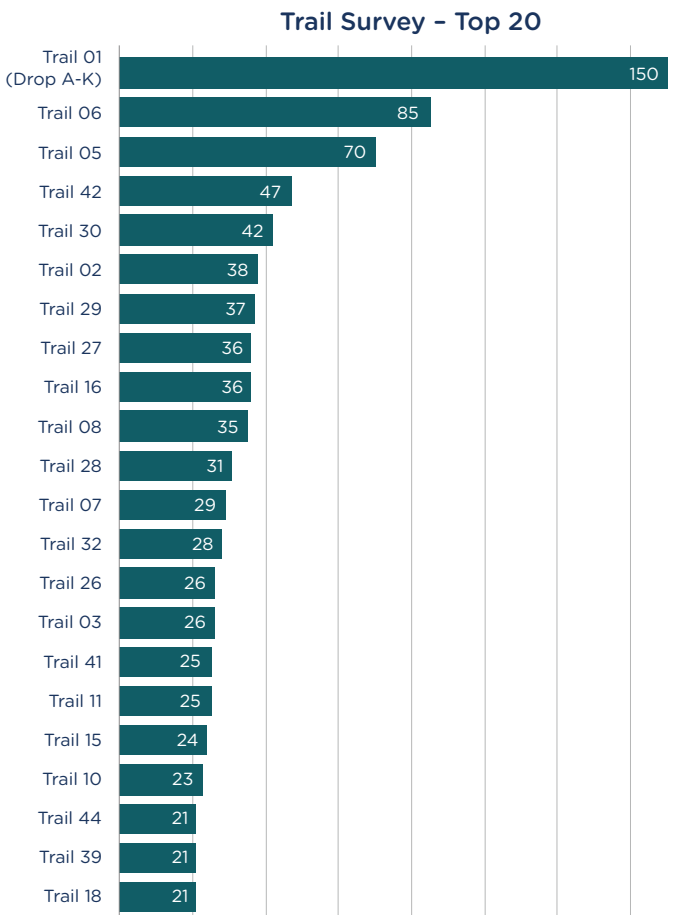
22%

Total: 9



## 5.3 Mountain bike rider feedback

1235 responses were received to the surveys on the 66 proposed trails. These responses showed that riders see many of the proposed trails as very important to their riding experience. Chart 1 captures the top 20 trails seen as critical or very important to riders.



### ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AS WE'VE DEVELOPED THE DESIGN

At several stages in the project's development, Council has made changes to the project's design in response to what we've learned from previous impact assessments and community feedback.

This has included removing, redesigning and realigning trails, to help avoid important environmental values and minimise impacts in residential areas, on waterways and near heritage features.

The assessment of alternatives is a critical component of the EES. The project team has invested significant effort in this area to ensure it is a rigorous and effective process that provides for the avoidance, minimisation and mitigation of impacts while meeting project objectives.

Council identified three new trails that have enabled consideration of two alternates for the proposed Drop A-K trail.

This means that the two options are undergoing a thorough assessment of ecological, social and physical impacts. These assessments are available in the EES for review and feedback.



# Conclusion

Yarra Ranges Council has carried out an extensive communications and engagement program to support the development of the proposed design and to help with preparing the EES.

The program included a range of activities such as online and written feedback, community and stakeholder workshops, targeted meetings and phone and email correspondence with the project team.

The purpose of these activities is to both inform interested stakeholders about the project's purpose and approach to addressing potential impacts, and to seek feedback to inform the design and impact assessments.

Feedback has covered a range of topics including: potential positive impacts for businesses and the local economy; questions about how the project's potential environmental impacts would be managed; concerns about amenity for local residents; how to manage pressures on traffic and parking; anticipation about the attraction of a significant new mountain bike network, and maintaining safety for other users like horse riders.

This feedback has informed development of the proposed project and preparation of this EES.

Communication and engagement would continue with the community and stakeholders over the next phase of the project. Systems and processes would be established to respond to new and emerging issues in accordance with the environmental management framework and Environmental Performance Requirements for the project.

A Communications and Community Engagement Plan would be prepared for the construction phase, outlining the approach to keep potentially affected stakeholders informed about the progress of the project during its construction and operation and to identify opportunities to work together to minimise construction impacts.



# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Online information session Q&A document



WMTB online information session – Monday 30 November 2020, Saturday 5 December 2020.

**Questions asked and answers from the project team**

Don't forget to share your feedback about the project on the online interactive map to help inform ongoing project development and preparation of the EES.

Visit [rideyarranges.com.au](http://rideyarranges.com.au) or request a hard copy information and feedback pack by calling 1300 368 333.

Question	Answer
If everything goes well from here what is the projected opening date?	Construction would only begin after the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process is complete and after all relevant planning approvals are obtained. We expect this to be in the second half of 2021. Trails would progressively open from within three months of construction starting.
Will there be improvement to the Dee Rd access to the trailhead? It is currently a single lane from McNamaras Rd to the carpark and with increased traffic either a dedicated bike path or a widening of the pavement will be needed for the safety of bikes and drivers.	We are not anticipating a large number of riders would access the trails from Dee Rd. Council would monitor road usage and respond as needed to address safety concerns.
Will there be a shuttle bus from the town(s) to take mountain bikers up the mountains as the only means of accessing the trails.	<p>The trail network has been designed as a ride-in, ride-out experience from Warburton and Wesburn. Shuttle bus operations are also proposed to deliver riders and their bikes to the trail heads at Mt Donna Buang Summit, and Mount Tugwell Summit. This helps make the trails more accessible for a wider range of users – from beginners to experienced riders.</p> <p>Shuttle buses with trailers for bikes would operate daily and could accommodate hundreds of riders per day. Proposed shuttle bus routes use Warburton Highway, Donna Buang Road, Old Warburton Road, Edwardstown Road and Mt Bride Road - connecting all four trail heads.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information view the Trail Heads and Shuttling factsheet.</a></p>
Will there be a cap on daily MTB users managed by a pre-booking only process?	No cap on daily shuttle bus users is proposed.
Will wildlife along Old Warburton Rd be protected from MBD traffic by mechanisms such as including the mountains on the north side of Warburton Hwy as part of the National Park?	<p>Extending National Park designated areas is outside of the scope of the project and the EES. The project will not be looking at extending the boundary of the existing National Park.</p> <p>For more information <a href="#">view the Biodiversity and Habitat discussion paper.</a></p>

<p>Will shuttles eventually be offered at this riding destination, similar to what is offered by Blue Dirt in the VIC High Country? This is a great way to re-invest the revenue back into trail maintenance and they're always extremely popular - just ask Blue Dirt.</p>	<p>Shuttle buses with trailers for bikes would operate daily and could accommodate hundreds of riders per day. Proposed shuttle bus routes use Warburton Highway, Donna Buang Road, Old Warburton Road, Edwardstown Road and Mt Bride Road - connecting all four trail heads.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information view the Trail Heads and Shuttling factsheet.</a></p>
<p>Why can't the more provocative National Park be separated from the less controversial State Park components for the EES, thus commencing those trails?</p>	<p>The EES process requires all aspects of the project to be considered under the same process at the same time. No works can start until the EES process is completed and all necessary approvals obtained.</p>
<p>Can the Council proceed with infrastructure upgrades that will benefit the town anyway, and reduce opposition to the MTB destination once residents see realistic upgrades that will make visitor numbers less impactful?</p>	<p>No works on the project, including local infrastructure upgrades proposed as part of the project, can begin until the EES process is completed and all necessary approvals obtained.</p>
<p>Why can't this issue be finally resolved with a simple plebiscite that allows only locals to vote on the park's future (ratepayers and permanent residents). It's their home and they are most affected by this initiative so let the locals decide whether or not it goes ahead.</p>	<p>There are well established, formal planning processes which the State and Commonwealth government have determined is appropriate for assessing the project, in line with relevant legislation.</p> <p>The Minister for Planning determined that an EES is required for the Project and the Commonwealth Government determined that approval would be required under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), and accredited the EES process for the related assessment.</p> <p>There will be the opportunity for locals to view the EES and make a formal submission when it is publicly exhibited around mid-2021. Formal feedback including written submissions will be considered by an independent Inquiry Panel and public hearing. In the meantime, we encourage local people to provide feedback now which can be considered in preparation of the EES.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information view the EES factsheet.</a></p>
<p>Will this be another ambitious attempt to bring life to a small country town, health and wellbeing to literally thousands upon thousands of people and generations to come, only to be shut down by uneducated Councillors interested in their own circle of life, rather than an open mind to what can potentially be a massive pickup for an otherwise sleepy region just waiting to be awoken.</p>	<p>Yarra Ranges Council is committed to the delivery of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Project.</p> <p>Stage 1 of the project is fully funded at \$11.3 million. Yarra Ranges Council has committed \$2.7 million and received \$300,000 from the Warburton and Yarra Junction Community Bank, with additional funding from the State and Federal Government.</p> <p>Once the trails are operating, the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination is forecast to inject \$31.2 million to the local economy.</p>
<p>What proportion of intermediate and advanced trails are planned? My preference is for natural, technical trails over groomed machine-made trails. Will there be a balance of natural and groomed trails?</p>	<p>The trail network has been designed to appeal to riders of all skill levels from beginner to advanced, across a range of differing terrains, outlooks and environments.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information view the Trails Design and Operation factsheet.</a></p>



<p>How will works minimise impacts on Cool Temperate Rainforest and avoid damaging roots and branches of Myrtle Beach trees? Not doing so will see areas impacted by Myrtle Wilt.</p> <p>How will biosecurity issues be addressed to stop the spread of dangerous plant pathogens and pest weed species?</p>	<p>Myrtle Wilt occurs when a fungus enters a beech tree through an exposed wound, naturally caused when tree limbs are broken off, for example during a storm.</p> <p>Although a naturally occurring process, the presence of Myrtle Wilt can be increased by human disturbance, for example logging.</p> <p>Strategies to minimise the introduction or spread of Myrtle Wilt will be identified in the EES and are expected to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Minimising the length of trail through Cool Temperate Rainforest</li> <li>● Limiting construction activity to hand tools only in sensitive areas</li> <li>● Conducting trail walks and mapping with ecologists before construction to clearly identify any signs of myrtle wilt</li> <li>● Provide, and encourage use of, wash down facilities for mountain bikes to prevent the spread of disease</li> </ul>
<p>The Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly is found nowhere else apart from a 3-4 square kilometre home range. Tracks have been removed from its habitat in the past due to the impact on this critically endangered species. How will this track not cause the decline in the MDBWS?</p> <p>Are you able to move the track from the home range of this critically endangered species?</p>	<p>Strategies to avoid or minimise impacts on the Stonefly will be identified in the EES and are expected to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Avoiding areas of known and potential habitat for Mt Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly</li> <li>● Aligning the trails as close as possible to the verge of Mt Donna Buang Road</li> <li>● Ensuring elevated trails are constructed to minimise ground disturbance.</li> </ul> <p>We are currently investigating potential alternative routes which would help reduce impacts on this important species.</p> <p>For more information <a href="#">view the Biodiversity and Habitat discussion paper.</a></p>
<p>What can nearby residents do to help support the EES process?</p>	<p>There will be the opportunity for locals to view the EES and make a formal submission when it is publicly exhibited around mid-2021. Formal feedback including written submissions will be considered by an independent Inquiry Panel and public hearing. In the meantime, we encourage local people to provide feedback now which can be considered in preparation of the EES.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information view the EES factsheet.</a></p>
<p>Do you have any details on proposed visitation levels, car parking, shuttle facilities, and directional indications on trail design?</p>	<p>When complete in 2031 we expect around 128,000 visits to the region per year.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information about visitation levels view the project benefits factsheet.</a></p> <p>You can find more information about car parking and shuttle facilities in the <a href="#">Trail Heads and Shuttling factsheet.</a></p>
<p>How do you expect to control the safety aspects of having mountain bikes so close to an equestrian park the only equestrian park that is free to use in the valley? Why should mountain bikes be given access</p>	<p>Yarra Ranges Council is continuing the development of the Wesburn Master Plan, which will consider all user groups.</p>

to land that was taken away from the pony club for environmental reasons?	Clear signage within the equestrian park and along the trails would help to reduce the likelihood of any safety risks between bike and horse riders.
When will the new final build date be completed?	Construction would only begin after the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process is complete and after all relevant planning approvals are obtained. We expect this to be in the second half of 2021. Trails would progressively open from within three months of construction starting.
Will there be MTB service stands in the trail?	Service stands and bike wash facilities would be available at Trail heads.  <a href="#">For more information view the Trail Heads and Shuttling factsheet.</a>
Is there a reason it cannot be built on the less sensitive north side of the mountain?	The project is being developed in partnership with Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning with input from the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Melbourne Water and the Upper Yarra Community Enterprise.  Since 2016, each of these organisations and other key stakeholders have provided direct input into the development of the project, identified sensitive areas through a step-by-step design process and advised on field studies and other technical investigations.  This process identified a sensitive water catchment located on the north of Mount Donna Buang.  The project team has been working closely with Melbourne Water to Ensure waterway protection and have incorporated standards and controls to mitigate possible impacts on water catchments.  <a href="#">For more information about sensitive design development view the Waterways and Catchments discussion paper.</a>
How many stages are there?	The project is proposed to be delivered in two stages. Stage 1 is funded to deliver approximately 110km of trails and supporting infrastructure.
What is the total length of tracks new/old/illegal?	The total length of the new trail network is 186km. Approximately 14.9km of this is existing trails which would be merged into the network.
How much has already been spent on preparing to date?	An EES is a well-established assessment process that provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the environmental effects of major projects in Victoria. We expect the EES process to cost approximately \$2 million in total. While it is an expensive process, it is important to ensure all the right checks and balances are in place to avoid or minimise adverse effects that could result from the project, before works go ahead.  Once the trails are operating, the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination is forecast to inject \$31.2 million to the local economy.
What happens if negotiations with the likes of the golf club fall through?	Yarra Ranges Council is negotiating with the Golf Club to secure space to develop the trail head and a trail passing through the golf course. Council is working with the club to

	<p>minimise impacts to golfers and reach an agreement that will benefit both parties.</p>
<p>We have been talking about these trails for years now, when will we be seeing a start to construction?</p>	<p>Construction would only begin after the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process is complete and after all relevant planning approvals are obtained. We expect this to be in the second half of 2021. Trails would progressively open from within three months of construction starting.</p>
<p>How do you plan to enhance our unique sense of identity which is based in restorative nature tourism beside the river or in the mountains while allowing for all this green blur tourism? How do we avoid over tourism with this project?</p>	<p>Now is a great time for people to raise concerns and ideas for addressing those concerns, so that this can be considered in preparation of the EES.</p>
<p>What is the capacity of car parking available at trail head locations?</p>	<p>Under proposed plans, the existing car park at the Warburton Golf Course would be updated from 30 spaces to accommodate 180 cars as well as a pickup point and shelter for shuttle services.</p> <p>There are currently xx parking spaces at the Mount Donna Buang Summit. Improvements are proposed within the current footprint of the existing visitor site. No additional car parking spaces are proposed.</p> <p>Minor upgrades to the Wesburn Park trail head car park are planned as part of the project. A Wesburn Park Master Plan is being developed by Yarra Ranges Council and will consider the needs of all users.</p> <p>Drop off bays are proposed at the Mount Tugwell summit.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information view the Trail Heads and Shuttling factsheet.</a></p>
<p>What is the fire plan?</p>	<p>The project will work closely with emergency services to develop an Emergency Management Plan that will investigate options to keep riders safe and respond to emergency incidents quickly.</p>
<p>Will there be any mitigation measures put in place for bike trail use on high fire dangers days? Will current fire refuges be upgraded to account for any additional tourists visiting the Warburton area?</p>	<p>The project will work closely with emergency services to develop an Emergency Management Plan that will investigate options to keep riders safe and respond to emergency incidents quickly.</p> <p>Trails will likely be closed on code red fire risk days as is currently done in other National Park and State Forest areas.</p>
<p>What will the council do to ensure residents can continue to use their town and its facilities when visitors increase further?</p>	<p>The EES will assess potential impacts of the project, including traffic, congestion and parking.</p> <p>Changes to the design may result from technical study findings or through the EES process. The project team is continuing to study potential impacts and consider ways to avoid or minimise them.</p> <p>A Wesburn Park Master Plan is also being developed by Yarra Ranges Council and will consider the needs of all users.</p>

	<p>Now is a great time for people to raise concerns and ideas for addressing those concerns, so that this can be considered in preparation of the EES.</p>
<p>When will there be formal meetings/ referendums (suggested many times) with council/ project managers and the local residents so they can attend? So far there have been meetings for stakeholders and hand-picked groups from council but nothing in the way of consultation with local residents according to the Act. The local residents will be affected everyday of their lives with this project.</p>	<p>Community engagement is an important part of developing the project.</p> <p>Since 2013 Council has engaged with the local community through a wide range of activities including online information and surveys, stakeholder and resident meetings, face to face information sessions, social media, email and phone calls.</p> <p>A range of changes have been made to the plans in response to this engagement. Consultation up to 2020 is detailed in a Community Engagement Report available on Ride Yarra Ranges.</p> <p>There will be the opportunity for locals to view the EES and make a formal submission when it is publicly exhibited around mid-2021. Formal feedback including written submissions will be considered by an independent Inquiry Panel and public hearing. In the meantime, we encourage local people to provide feedback now which can be considered in preparation of the EES.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information view the EES factsheet.</a></p>
<p>What is the expected timing for EES exhibition/panel?</p>	<p>The EES will be publicly exhibited around mid-2021.</p>
<p>Why is the process so delayed? There is so much to gain and the consultation process is exhausting. There is obvious benefit for the local community, so why not take the expert opinions, and stop listening to locals that will say anything to stop the project. Independent advice, Independent decision. Question is, what is the timeline to commencement, and what hurdles are yet to be covered?</p>	<p>Construction would only begin after the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process is complete and after all relevant planning approvals are obtained. We expect this to be in the second half of 2021.</p>
<p>What provisions are being made for emergency medical evacuations?</p>	<p>The project will work closely with emergency services to develop an Emergency Management Plan that will investigate options to keep riders safe and respond to emergency incidents quickly.</p>
<p>How will short stay accommodation be handled and also for the availability of housing stock for locals and would be residents?</p>	<p>As part of the project's EES documentation a Social Impact Assessment will be undertaken.</p> <p>The Assessment would address impacts to the housing market, including availability of rental properties within the project area.</p>
<p>What provisions are being made for parking?</p>	<p>Under proposed plans, the existing car park at the Warburton Golf Course would be updated from 30 spaces to accommodate 180 cars as well as a pickup point and shelter for shuttle services.</p> <p>Improvements at the Mt Donna Buang Summit are proposed within the current footprint of the existing visitor site. No additional car parking spaces are proposed.</p> <p>Minor upgrades to the Wesburn Park trail head car park are planned as part of the project. A Wesburn Park Master Plan is being developed by Yarra Ranges Council and will consider the needs of all users.</p>

	<p>Drop off bays are proposed at the Mount Tugwell summit.</p> <p><a href="#">For more information view the Trail Heads and Shuttling factsheet.</a></p>
Will there be an increased police presence for the problems of an increased population load?	We don't anticipate a significant increase in law and order issues but will continue to work with local police to monitor and respond to issues as they arise.
What provisions are being made to prevent the increased tourist load causing bushfires and what provisions are being made for evacuations in the event of a bush fire?	The project will work closely with emergency services to develop an Emergency Management Plan that will investigate options to keep riders safe and respond to emergency incidents quickly.
Details of the proposed management model post construction-Inc. where the \$ needed to manage and maintain the project will come from and what commitments Local Government-State agencies have made to meet ongoing running costs into the future. Thanks	<p>Council is currently assessing the best management model for the operation of the trail network.</p> <p>The operation of the trails would likely be a council led operation, working closely with state government agencies including DELWP, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water.</p> <p>The trails are likely to cost approximately \$200,000 per year to operate.</p> <p>The trail network also provides great opportunity to provide revenue, through licensing, merchandise and in particular partnerships and sponsorships.</p>
Why should local long-term rental residents be forced to move from their home for the benefit of this project?	The EES will include a social impact assessment, which will consider possible community impacts such as changes to the character and population of the town and to housing availability. Feedback from the community will be considered in this assessment.
As Warburton has only one road in and out - How can 900 extra vehicles not count as extra congestion especially in one of Australia's highest fire danger zones. Would this not be class as dangerous in an emergency?	The project will work closely with emergency services to develop an Emergency Management Plan that will investigate options to keep riders safe and respond to emergency incidents quickly.
Do the panellists think it's ethical for the council to force the 44 residents of Old Warburton to live in the middle of an MTB park without their consent?	<p>During the planning phases of the project, consultation with Old Warburton residents has led to a number of design changes to reduce the proximity of the trails to residents.</p> <p>The EES will include a social impact assessment, which will consider all impacts such as changes to the character and population of the town and to housing availability. Feedback from the community will be considered in this assessment.</p>
When are the negotiations with the likes of the golf club expected to be finalised?	Yarra Ranges Council is negotiating with the Golf Club to secure space to develop the trail head and a trail passing through the golf course. Council is working with the club to minimise impacts to golfers and reach an agreement that will benefit both parties
Will rates be affected?	No, we don't anticipate this project would have any impacts on rates for residents within the Yarra Ranges Council area.
What would the sponsorship opportunities from the mountain biking community be? Examples?	<p>Sponsorship opportunities will be looked at following construction of the network.</p> <p>The EES will include a social impact assessment, which will consider possible community impacts such as changes to</p>

	the character and population of the town and to housing availability. Feedback from the community will be considered in this assessment.
Will e-bikes be allowed on the planned network?	Yes, as long as the bikes meet the appropriate standard, then they would be allowed on the network.
Has the Minister approved a final EES scope doc yet? thanks	The final Scoping Requirements, which set out the scope of the EES have been released by the Minister for Planning and can be found on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) website:  <a href="https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/warburton-mountain-bike-destination">https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/warburton-mountain-bike-destination</a>
As far as housing goes & comparing Warburton to the likes of Derby, surely there needs to be an acknowledgement about the differences between the 2 towns & the availability of vacant housing. Are there measures that can be brought in to protect or restrict the number of Airbnb's in the area?	The EES will include a social impact assessment, which will consider possible community impacts such as changes to the character and population of the town and to housing availability. Feedback from the community will be considered in this assessment.