# EES Executive Summary

## Warburton Mountain Bike Destination

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# Executive Summary

This document provides a summary of the content and key findings of the Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination (the project). It provides an overview of the project description, project rationale, project development, and approach to the EES. It provides the key findings of the assessments of potential impacts and details the next steps in the EES process.

## Overview

The Upper Yarra Valley is experiencing economic stagnation, coupled with high unemployment rates and poor health and wellbeing outcomes. These issues will continue to be exacerbated by impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on regional tourism and the decision of the Victorian government to cease native timber harvesting. Cycle tourism is one of the primary opportunities to fuel growth in the Yarra Valley.

Mountain biking in this locality started around 15 years ago and was concentrated in the Yarra State Forest in the vicinity of Mount Tugwell. A significant informal network of mountain bike trails currently exists within the region and there is evidence of increasing use of these trails by local and visiting riders. Yarra Ranges Council has identified mountain biking as an opportunity for tourism growth within the region which would be achieved by formalising the activity in the area.

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination is a proposed world-class mountain biking destination centred around Warburton, approximately 70 kilometres east of Melbourne. The project would create iconic trails eligible for International Mountain Bike Association Gold Level Ride Centre status which would position Warburton as an internationally significant mountain biking destination.

The project consists of up to 177 kilometres of mountain bike trails providing a range of mountain bike experiences to suit all levels of riding, including a new Visitor's Hub and main trail head at the Warburton Golf Course and other trail heads at Mount Tugwell, Mount Donna Buang and Wesburn Park. The trails offer a unique riding experience due to the well-suited local topography and environmental setting. A particular focus of the design has been the incorporation of trails and infrastructure that will support bringing new participants to the sport and encourage females and families to engage.

The project area consists mainly of foothill and montane forest within a heavily vegetated environment, situated within the Yarra Ranges National Park and Yarra State Forest. The project area traverses other small areas of private and public land, including small areas of cleared and modified land close to Warburton and along the Yarra River.

The project is currently funded at $11.3 million and has committed funding from the three levels of government and from locals in partnership with the Upper Yarra Community Enterprise. The delivery of the project and the repositioning of Warburton as an eco-tourism and outdoor recreation hub is expected to provide economic resilience and jobs growth while also supporting positive health and social outcomes for the community.

The project objectives are to:

- Facilitate tourism growth and associated positive economic and jobs growth in the Yarra Valley region
- Create iconic mountain bike trails eligible for International Mountain Bike Association Gold Ride Centre status
- Create spectacular riding experiences that have a competitive advantage over existing mountain bike destinations and leverage Warburton's beautiful township, rural valley and surrounding forested slopes
- Enhance the health and well-being of the community
- Maintain the significant biodiversity and heritage values within the project area and provide opportunities for the community to connect with and appreciate their importance.

## The EES Process

On 21 May 2020, The Victorian Minister for Planning issued a decision that the project is to be assessed through the preparation of an environment effects statement (EES) under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (EE Act).

For the purposes of the *Environment Protection Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act) assessment, the Victorian EES process is the accredited assessment process under a Bilateral Assessment Agreement between the Commonwealth and Victorian governments.

The EES presents an integrated assessment of the project, to allow stakeholders and decision-makers to understand the potential environmental effects of the design, construction and operation of the project. The EES outlines how the project design has been developed over several years and has been iterated to avoid and minimise impacts on the key sensitivities in the vicinity. Further details can be found in **Chapter 4: Project development and alternatives**

To ensure a consistent and transparent approach to the evaluation of potential impacts on the environment, an assessment framework was developed and adopted as provided in **Chapter 6: Assessment framework**.

The key components of the assessment framework are:

- **Evaluation framework** – the framework for evaluation of environmental effects is captured in the scoping requirements, which include the EES evaluation objectives that identify the desired environmental outcome and relevant policy and legislation.
- **Assessment approach** – the process for undertaking the technical specialist assessments including an assessment of existing conditions, risk assessment to screen for key aspects of assessment, impact assessment, refinement of design and development of mitigation measures.
- **Project development** – the iterative approach to the progression of the project design (including from the above assessment) as a result of the findings of the technical specialist assessments and community and stakeholder feedback.

**The *Environment Effects Act***

The *Environment Effects Act 1978* provides for the assessment of projects capable of having a significant effect on the environment through preparation of an EES. The EES process informs subsequent statutory decisions under Victorian legislation.

**The *Environment Protection Biodiversity Act***

*Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) provides the legal framework to protect and manage designated Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). Under the EPBC Act, if the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment decides that a project is likely to have a significant impact on MNES, the project becomes a 'controlled action' that must be assessed and approved by the Minister before it can proceed.

Through the EES process, Yarra Ranges Council has:

- Addressed the EES scoping requirements issued by the Minister for Planning
- Undertaken an integrated assessment of the potential environmental effects of the project through the preparation of six technical studies in accordance with the assessment approach
- Evaluated the project's risks, potential impacts and proposed measures to avoid, minimise or offset these predicted impacts using the evaluation framework
- Assessed the likely residual effects following the adoption of mitigation measures
- Considered the potential for cumulative impacts which could arise where other major projects are constructed within the same geographic area in a similar period
- Developed an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) and the associated Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) to outline a transparent framework with clear accountabilities for managing and monitoring environmental effects associated with construction and operation of the project to achieve acceptable environmental outcomes
- Consulted extensively with the public and stakeholders about the project, its potential environmental, social and economic effects and how these effects would be avoided, minimised or managed.

The EES process and how it relates to the primary approvals' decision is depicted in Figure 1 and described in **Chapter 5: Legislative framework**. Decisions on primary approvals required under Victorian legislation will be informed by the outcomes of the EES.

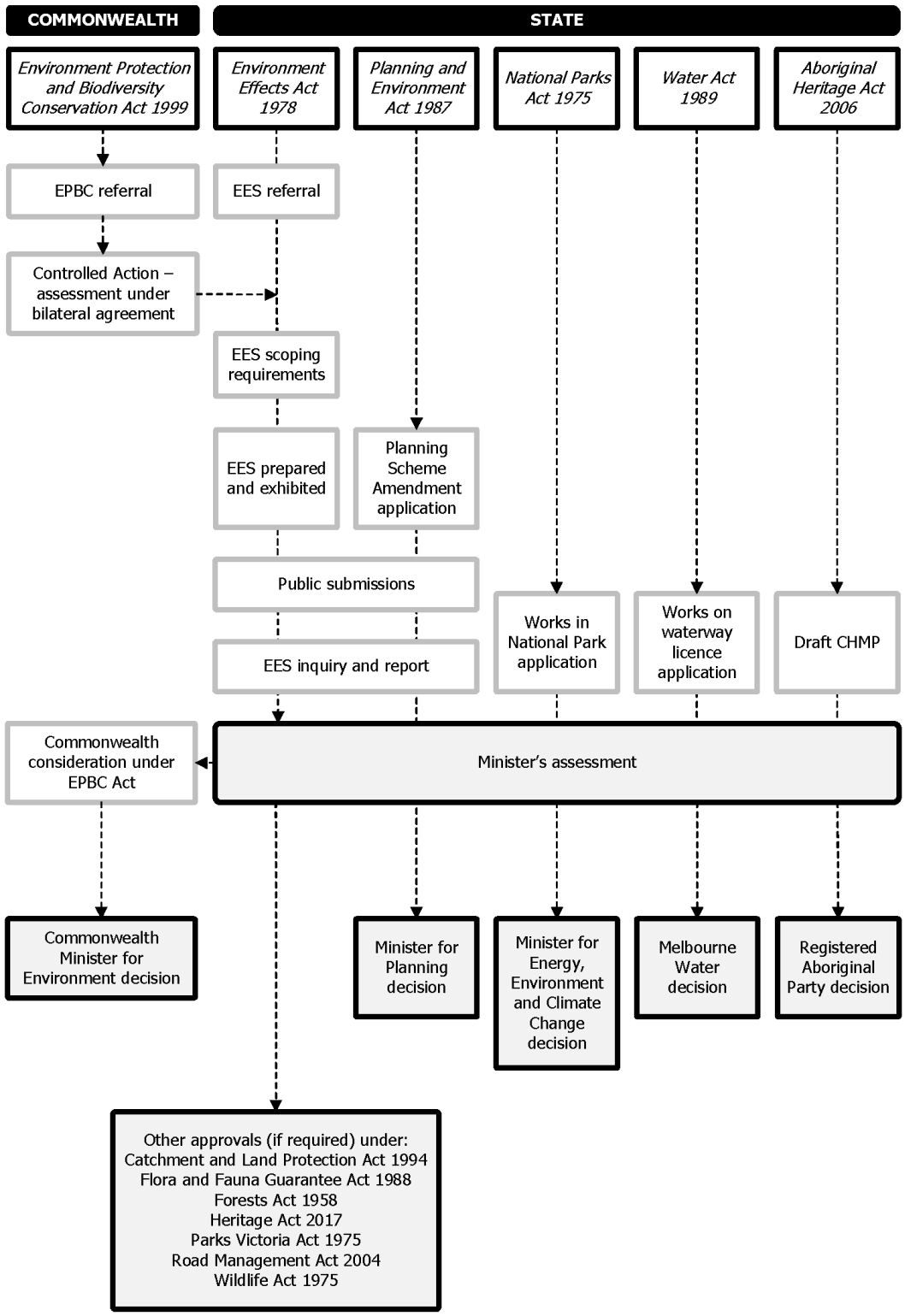


**Figure 1 EES process**

## Navigating the EES documents

The EES is structured by topics, as show in Figure 5 and consists of an EES main report, attachments and EES technical reports.

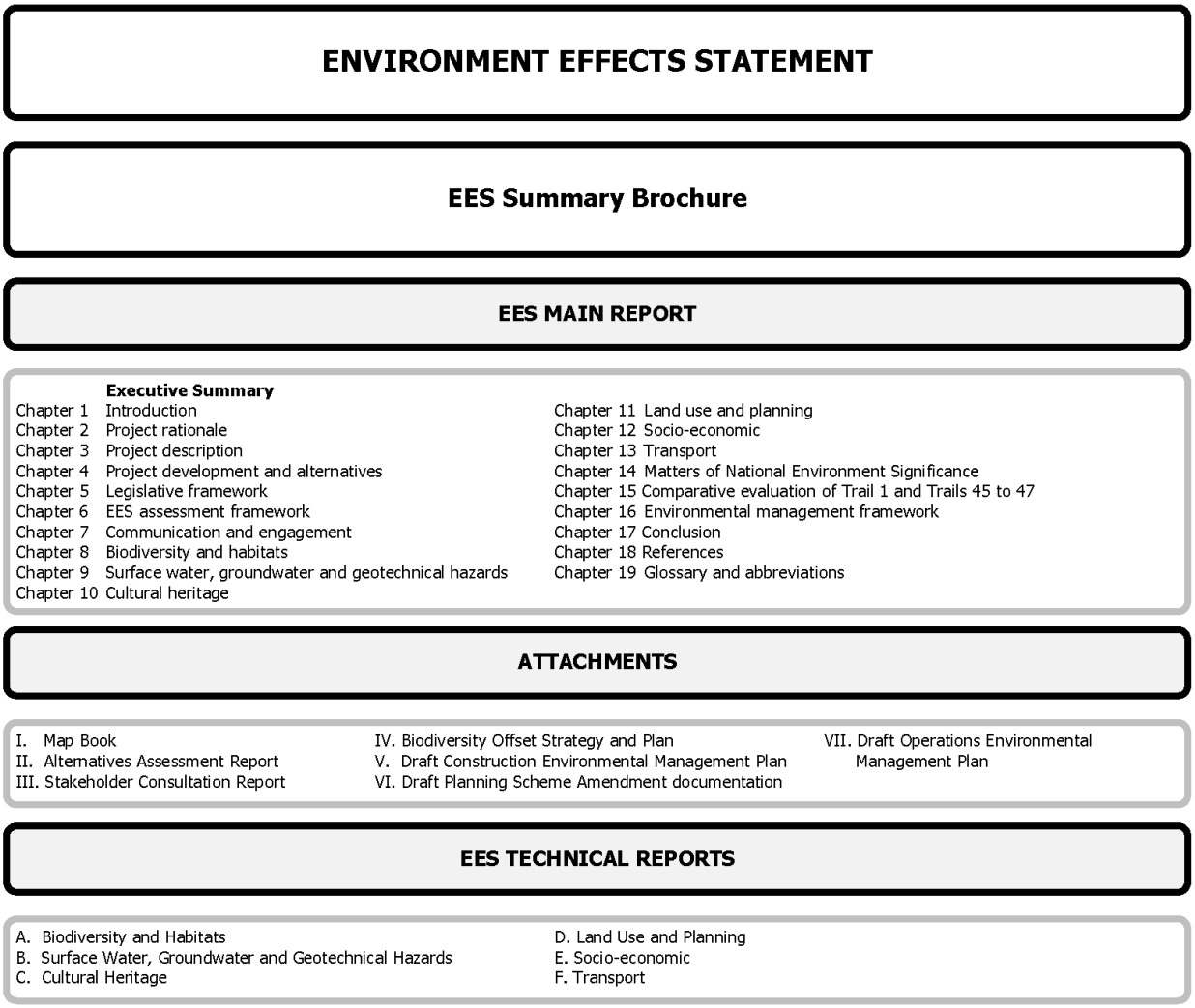


**Figure 2 Structure of the environmental effects statement**

## Project design development and components

Since 2016 the design of the network has resulted in a progressive development of concepts, designs and re-designs. The concept design development was informed by desktop assessments and consultation with relevant stakeholders on known environmental, social and heritage values in the region.

Since then, the detailed design has been developed and informed by extensive ground-truthing of the proposed alignments and in response to community feedback. Ground-truthing is a process that involves on-ground assessment of the proposed trail with teams of trail designers, ecologists, heritage consultants, land managers, council officers, Wurundjeri and species experts to confirm or validate data and to identify important values and plan for their protection.

The design development process is described in **Chapter 4: Project development and alternatives**.

The EES is based on the detailed design of the mountain bike trail network, which represents a 20-metre corridor within which the exact final trail alignment would be established. The 20-metre corridor allows for further refinement of the alignment at time of construction to avoid impacts to important values, in consultation with appropriate specialists.

**Chapter 3: Project description** describes the design, construction, and operation of the project.

The main project components proposed are shown in Figure 3 below.

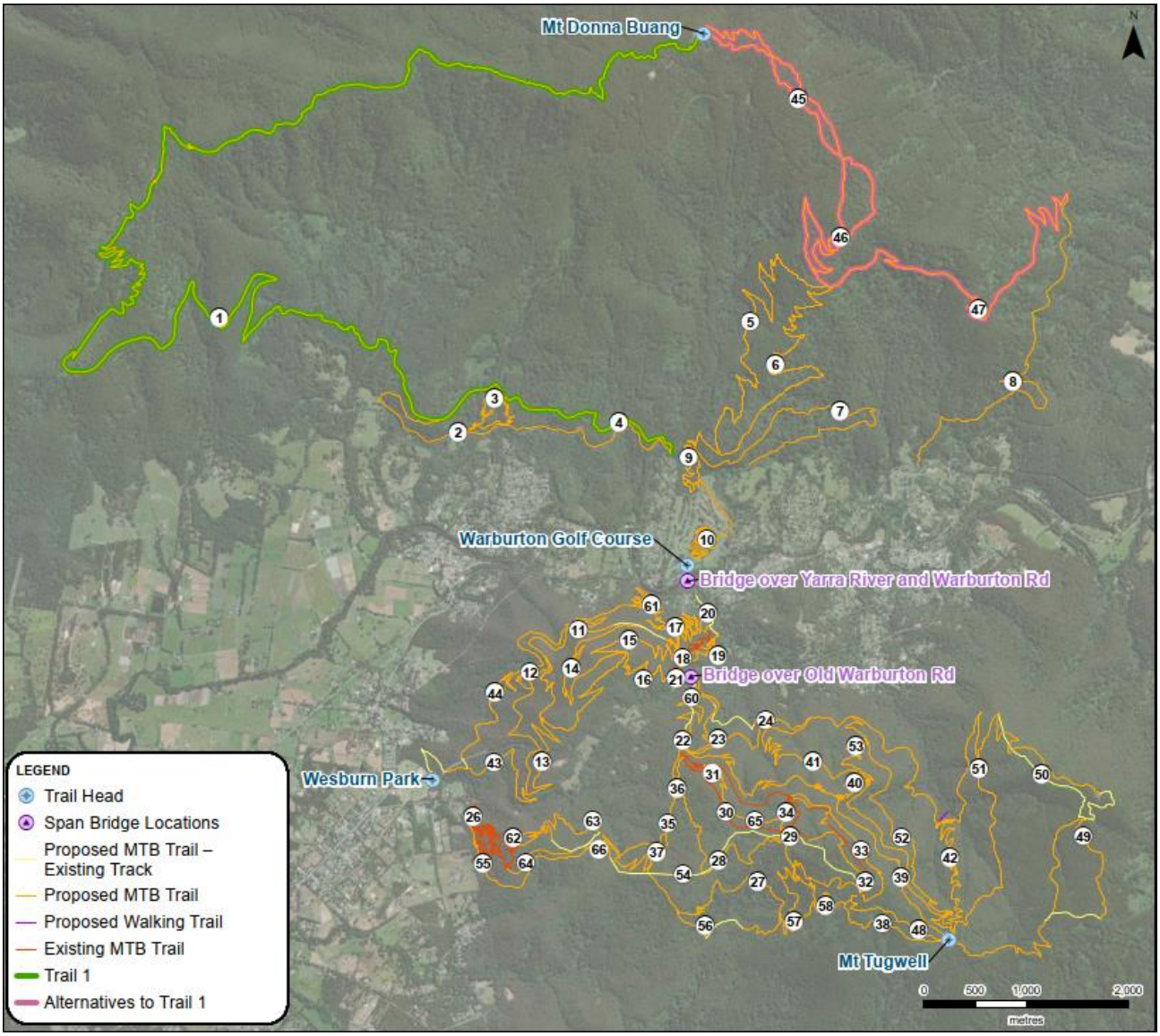


**Figure 3 Project overview**

Key components are as follows:

- The mountain bike trail network, consisting of:
  - Upgrade of existing mountain bike trails – approximately 12 kilometres (seven per cent of project length)
  - New mountain bike trails – up to 155 kilometres (87 per cent of project length)
  - Existing vehicle roads and tracks to be incorporated into the mountain bike trail network - approximately 10 kilometres (six per cent of project length).
- Two new significant bridges, as follows:
  - Yarra River Bridge (shared use), crossing over the Yarra River, Warburton Highway and Dammans Road
  - Old Warburton Road Bridge (mountain bike use only), crossing over Old Warburton Road.
- New Visitor's Hub and main trail head at the Warburton Golf Course, new trail head facilities at Mount Tugwell, Mount Donna Buang and Wesburn Park (which includes an additional 120 car parking spaces). An additional network access point to the network will be at Dee Road, which is an established access point for the O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail.

The trail network is made up of up to 61 trails, each ranging in difficulty from easy to extreme, as shown in Figure 4. Some of the trails are returning loops, while others are point-to-point trails. The trails have also been categorised into six different styles including, adventure, air flow, downhill, flow country, gravity and wilderness

The northern trail network (located on the north side of the valley) consists of around 36 per cent of the trails. The southern trail network (located on the south side of the valley) consists of around 64 per cent of the trails.

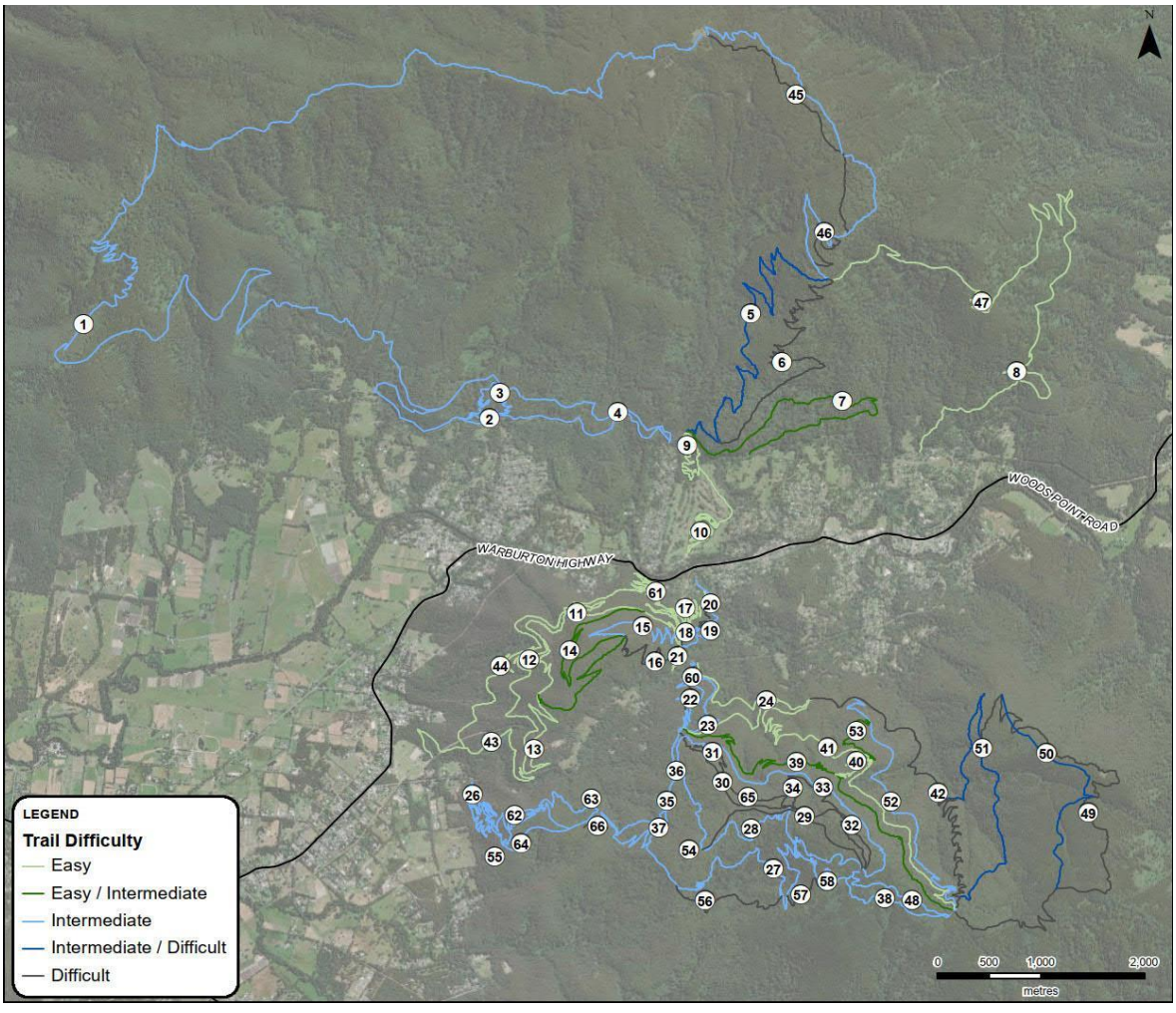


**Figure 4 Trail sections with difficulty rating**

## Building the trails and associated project infrastructure

### Mountain bike trails

Mountain bike trails are built using small construction equipment and make use of naturally occurring slopes and ground contours to weave their way through the landscape, avoiding sensitive environmental, social and heritage values.

Before construction begins, a detailed pre-construction walk of the approved trail alignment with trail builders and technical specialists will occur. This process, known as micro-siting, provides the opportunity to inspect conditions, confirm the trail alignment, identify, avoid and minimise impacts to sensitive values and agree on construction methods.

The construction disturbance width of trails will be 1.2 metres to 3.3 metres with wider areas of disturbance for berms and similar trail features, or in steeper terrain. During operation, the trails are likely to end up with an operational width of between 0.6 metres and 1.2 metres (the ride line/trail bench). Once the trails are established the temporarily disturbed construction areas along trail edges will be allowed to regenerate with native vegetation thus reinstating habitat elements.

**Figure 5 Examples of mountain bike trails (courtesy of World Trail)**

Due to the minor nature of trail construction, small, mobile construction crews would be used to build the trails. Crews would not require long-term construction areas and would follow the trail alignments. Construction impacts are expected to be generally short term in specific locations (sometimes only a number of days).

### Yarra River Bridge and Old Warburton Bridge

The construction of the Yarra River Bridge and Old Warburton Bridge is anticipated to take up to six months. To allow for safe construction of the bridges, it is anticipated that road closures of Old Warburton Road, Warburton Highway and Dammans Road may be required for a few hours at a time, on two to three occasions.

Existing clearings on either side of the proposed bridges would be used as laydown areas, avoiding the need for vegetation clearing. Pre-fabrication of bridge components is anticipated to occur primarily off-site at the council's existing Yarra Junction Depot. These would be trucked to the adjacent bridge laydown areas, and then assembled into position on the bridge using a crane.

### Trail heads

The construction activities for the car park at the new Visitor's Hub and main trail head to the south of Warburton Golf Course would consist of site establishment (compound/fencing), geotechnical investigations, earthworks (topsoil strip and levelling), installation of drainage, car park surfacing and marking, and landscaping. Other facilities installed would include a shuttle bus shelter, toilet and shower facilities, picnic tables, comprehensive visitor information that is related to the mountain bike trails and bike wash bays.

At the Mount Tugwell trail head a new car park, bus turn around bay, bike hygiene station, toilets and picnic area are proposed to be installed. The toilet block and picnic area shelter would be preassembled off-site, and delivered to site by truck, requiring minimal works on site.

At Mount Donna Buang, the existing facilities are expected to be utilised for shuttle bus drop off services. Installation of a bike hygiene station, minor upgrades to signage, car park surfacing and delineation, and upgrades to the public shelter and toilet are planned to ensure facilities are adequate for increased visitor numbers.

At the Wesburn Park trail head, a new car park with 120 spaces, bike wash down bay, signage, and shuttle bus area would be installed and there would be minor upgrades of existing facilities.

### Trail screening to identify priority trail sections

During the project development process, consideration was given to feasible trail alternatives for key trails where there is potential for significant environmental impact.

Through a screening process that focussed on ecological, heritage and socioeconomic factors, the need to investigate alternative trail alignments was identified in order to ensure a network design that minimises the potential for significant environmental impact. A framework was developed to rate each trail according to the priority for further examination of alternatives. The trails could be given a rating of low, moderate, high or very high. Under the framework, any trail assigned a very high or high priority would be subject to further consideration of alternatives.

#### Trail 1 and the alternative (Trails 45, 46 and 47)

The investigations identified Trail 1, with a length of 23 kilometres and vertical drop in elevation of over a kilometre, as very high, and consequently, as requiring consideration of alternative alignments. Subsequently, an alternative to this trail, being the combination of Trail 45, Trail 46 and Trail 47 with a combined length of 15 kilometres, was identified. Trails 45, 46 and 47 were determined to have lower ratings for biodiversity than Trail 1, however were still rated as a high priority.

Trails 1, 45, 46 and 47 are shown in Figure 1. A comparative analysis of Trail 1 and the alternative is presented in **Chapter 15 Comparative evaluation of Trail 1 and Trails 45 to 47**.

#### Trail 5 and Trail 50

Trail 5 and 50 were also identified as high priority in the assessment process. For Trail 5, the key driver of the rating is the trail length within the Yarra Ranges National Park.

Additionally, Trail 50 intersects 40 metres of cool temperate rainforest at the headwater of Calder Creek. Upstream and downstream alternatives were explored but these have denser strands of cool temperate rainforest. No options have been identified outside the National Park to achieve the aims of this trail and it is not possible to reduce the length of this trail because this would in turn make it steeper (changing the trail rating from intermediate to difficult) and increase erosion risk.

Trail 5 and 50 have been assessed in **Chapter 8: Biodiversity and habitats** to determine whether the potential biodiversity impacts can be effectively managed.

## Project benefits

As described in **Chapter 2: Project rationale**, the project has the potential to bring substantial economic and social benefits to the local and regional economy through direct and indirect expenditure from visitors and local residents and associated job and wealth creation and through the increasing health and wellbeing of those people that use the mountain bike trails. The project would also contribute to the reduction in environmental impacts associated with the building of informal trails within natural areas.

Warburton's local economy and small businesses thrive on the visitor economy and an investment in the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination will contribute to continued growth, both during construction and through ongoing operations. A significant number of jobs and an increase in regional income will be generated during the construction phase of the project. The benefits of the operational phase of the project would be driven by expenditure of users/visitors to towns adjacent to the trail network and in the broader region as well as spending associated with major state and national events that could be staged.

The construction and ongoing operation of the project is expected to generate the following economic benefits:

- In 2031 users would be injecting $48.609 million into the local economy
- Generation of 84 jobs during the construction period and 229 direct and indirect jobs when the project is fully operational in 2031
- Increase of around $143.272 million in regional income over 10 years
- Indirect health benefits for Victorian users estimated at $47.1 million over 10 years
- User value benefits estimated at $26.681 million over 10 years.

The project is expected to bring the following social benefits:

- Enhanced community access to infrastructure that encourages increased levels of physical activity as well as health and wellbeing outcomes
- Assist in addressing high levels of obesity, dementia and poor mental health that are significant issues for the community
- Revitalisation of the local communities
- Reduced levels of unemployment
- Support a transition from a mature native timber industry to a nature-based tourism industry
- Creation of a stronger community connection to the environment with the trail network showcasing some of the high-quality ecosystems in the region.

## Engagement and consultation

Yarra Ranges Council have consulted extensively for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination since project development commenced in 2013, and have sought feedback from stakeholders, including residents, businesses, community groups, government agencies and mountain bike riders, on an ongoing basis.

A formal consultation process began in mid-2020 as a requirement of the EES and four phases of consultation have been undertaken to date. The fifth phase, Exhibition and Inquiry and Advisory Committee submissions will be undertaken in late 2021.

**Phase 1**

- In September 2020 DEWLP sought community and stakeholder feedback on draft scoping requirements for the project.
- Yarra Ranges Council promoted the opportunity to make a submission by providing information on the Yarra Ranges Council and project websites, and through an update to the project's mailing list.

**Phase 2**

- In late 2020 Yarra Ranges Council asked communities and stakeholders to comment on the project and provide feedback on the proposed trail network, local features, and impacts.

**Phase 3**

- In early 2021, Yarra Ranges Council provided details of updates made to the project design in response to phase two feedback and addressed an issue identified in mapping, which meant that additional trails would be required.

**Phase 4**

- Council continued to communicate with community and project stakeholders by providing project updates, responding to commmunity questions and concerns and communicating the EES process.

**Phase 5**

- The community will have the opportunitty to comment on the EES throughout the formal exhibition, submissions and review process. The focus of this phase is to provide access to the EES, provide information on how to access, navigate and make a submission and provide information and updates about the panel hearings.

A range of communication channels were used to create awareness, inform stakeholders and the community, and engage or encourage participation in the consultation process. This included social media, advertisements in local papers, e-newsletters, community information sessions (online and in person drop-in sessions), briefings with stakeholders, consultation packs (including project overview factsheets and invitations to information sessions) and the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination webpage (accessible via Ride Yarra Ranges website).

Overall, the number of respondents that expressed positive sentiment about the project was higher than respondents that expressed negative sentiment.

The key themes that generated the most concern or where respondents expressed specific feedback included:

- Respondents expressed concern about the potential impacts that additional traffic may have, including on parking and local roads that may not be equipped to deal with additional traffic (i.e., narrow roads, increased chances of collision, impacts to emergency egress and congestion during fire evacuation)
- Concern was expressed for a range of endangered/protected species, aquatic life and rivers and the potential landslide and erosion risks and their associated implications.
- Respondents were concerned about the access, amenity, ambience and safety impacts to hikers/ walkers, equestrian activities, and pedestrians/cyclists.
- There were a broad range of places where respondents asked for the trails to be moved away from. Specific places were most commonly locations adjacent to private property or within the National Park.

Feedback has informed the development of the proposed Warburton Mountain Bike Destination and has been considered in the EES Technical Reports. For further information, refer to **Chapter 7: Communication and engagement**.

## Assessment of potential impacts

As part of the EES process, an integrated assessment of the potential environmental impacts of the project during construction and operation was undertaken. The existing conditions, construction and operation impact assessment, discussion of residual impacts and mitigation measures are described in detail in the following chapters:

- **Chapter 8: Biodiversity and habitats**
- **Chapter 9: Surface water, groundwater and geotechnical hazards**
- **Chapter 11: Land use and planning**
- **Chapter 12: Socio-economic**
- **Chapter 13: Transport**
- **Chapter 14: Matters of National Environmental Significance**

### Biodiversity, habitats and MNES

The trail network would be located within the Highland Southern Falls and Victorian Alps bioregions, supporting nine forest ecological vegetation classes (EVCs). Native vegetation within the project area is mostly of high quality with a very low cover of weeds observed. It was determined that 44 FFG Act-listed flora species are likely to occur, including two species that are also EPBC Act-listed. The project is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact on nationally significant flora species. Two EPBC Act-listed flora species were identified as having moderate or higher likelihood of occurrence: The Round-leaf Pomaderris *Pomaderris vacciniifolia* (critically endangered) and Tall Astelia *Astelia australiana* (vulnerable). No species have been detected within the assessment corridor during field surveys.

During construction, native vegetation removal would be limited to understorey impacts within a variable width trail construction and operational footprint. The vast majority (around 90%) of native vegetation impacts would occur in three EVCs that have a bioregional conservation status of Least Concern; Damp Forest, Wet Forest and Shrubby Foothill Forest. The trail network would avoid large trees and sensitive constructive measures are considered unlikely to result in tree decline.

For a trail network with Trail 1, the following native vegetation removal would be required:

- Up to 37.047 hectares of understorey vegetation removal
- 13 species (none of Commonwealth significance) would require offsets totalling 263.637 species habitat units
- Approximately 9.51 hectares of understorey vegetation removal would be required in the National Park

For a trail network including the alternative (Trails 45, 45 and 47), the following native vegetation removal would be required:

- Up to 35.754 hectares of understorey vegetation removal
- 13 species (none of Commonwealth significance) would require offsets totalling 240.087 species habitat units
- Approximately 9.15 hectares of understorey vegetation removal would be required in the National Park

Impacts to EVCs in the project area equate to less than 0.03% of bioregional extant distribution of these vegetation types.

The construction disturbance width of trails will be 1.2 metres to 3.3 metres with wider areas of disturbance for berms and similar trail features, or in steeper terrain. The operational trail corridor would be maintained to support the trail bench, typically 0.6 metres to 1.2 metres wide and an overhead height clearance of 2.5 metres. The remaining areas disturbed during construction would be rehabilitated and allowed to regenerate with native vegetation during the trail operational phase. There may be the occasional need to undertake one-off works such as hazardous tree treatment and these activities would be done in consultation with the relevant land manager.

Two *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act* (FFG Act) listed threatened communities, Cool Temperate Mixed Forest (CTMF) and Cool Temperate RainForest (CTR) occurring within the project area, predominantly in the Yarra Ranges National Park Between Mount Donna Buang, Mount Victoria and Ben Cairn (Figure 5).

Impacts to CTMF/CTR within the project area for a trail network with Trail 1 includes:

- Within the National Park, trail network would intersect approximately 6.442 kilometres of EVC31
- Trail 50 would intersect approximately 40 metres of CTMF in the Yarra State Forest
- Approximately 1.587 hectares of understory vegetation removal would be required

Impacts to CTMF/CTR within the project area for a trail network with the alternative includes:

- Within the National Park, trail network would intersect approximately 3.069 kilometres of EVC31
- Trail 50 would intersect approximately 40 metres of CTMF in the Yarra State Forest
- Approximately 0.504 hectares of understory vegetation removal would be required

At a bioregion scale, the proportional bioregional impact on the remaining mapped rainforest area would be 0.001% in the Highlands Southern Fall bioregion and 0.02% in the Victorian Alps for a trail network with Trail 1, and 0.003% in the Highlands Southern Fall bioregion and 0.007% in the Victorian Alps for a trail network with the alternative.

Impacts to Cool Temperate Mixed Forest and Cool Temperate Rainforest would be minimised by hand building of all trails that intersect these communities in order to reduce soil disturbance, reduce understorey vegetation removal and minimise the chance of pathogen infection and spread.

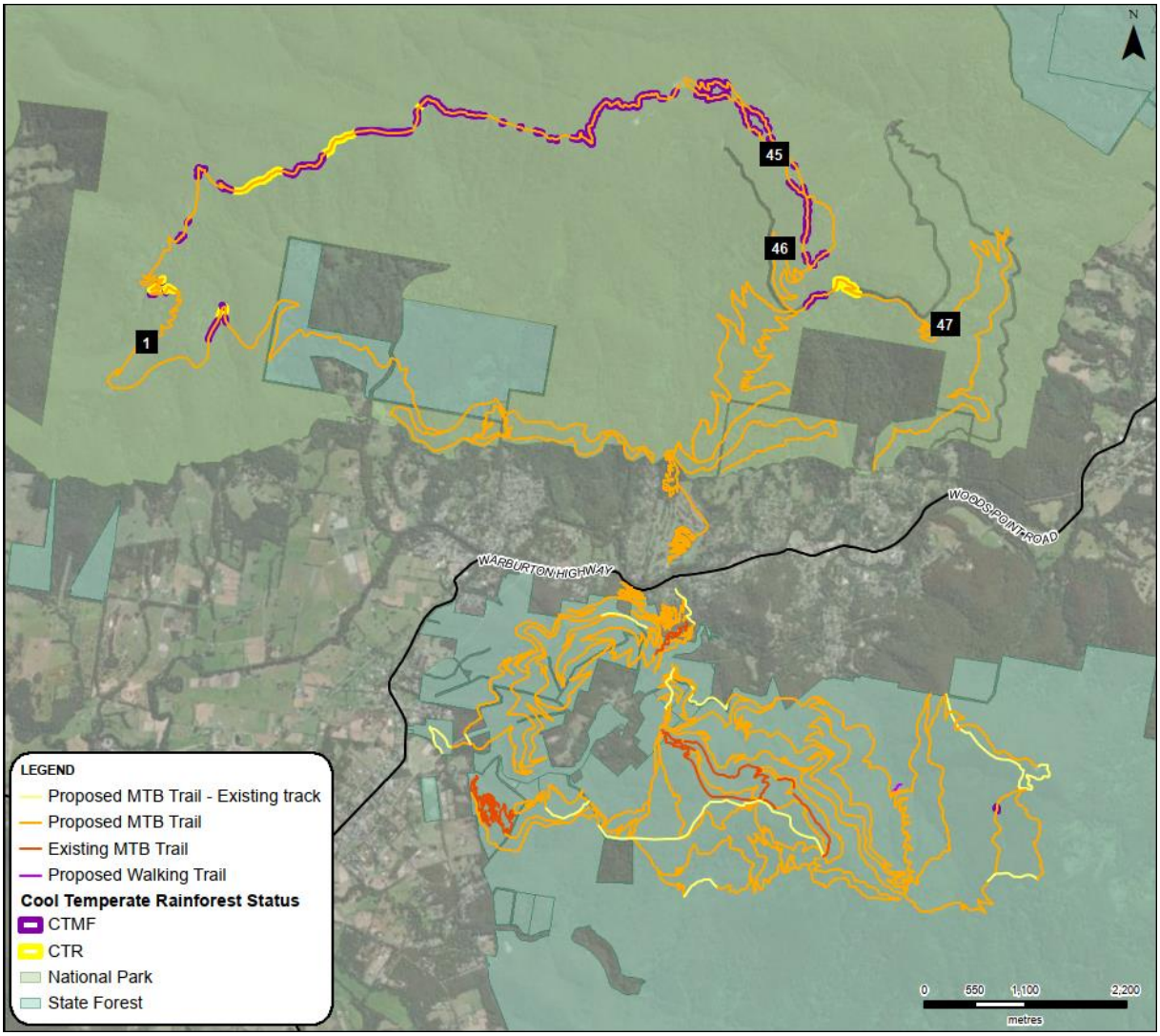


**Figure 6 CTMF and CTR distribution**

During field assessments, 61 terrestrial fauna species were recorded within the project area. It was determined that 26 FFG Act-listed fauna species are likely to occur including 11 species that are also EPBC Act-listed. The project is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact on nationally significant fauna species. Of the fauna species identified in the project area, Leadbeater's Possum and Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly were identified as key sensitive values.

The project area supports known colonies of Leadbeater's Possum, an EPBC Act critically endangered listed species (Figure 7). The draft National Recovery Plan and FFG Act Action Statement both identify the southern parts of the Yarra Ranges National Park, which encompasses part of the project area around Mount Donna Buang and Ben Cairn, as one of several strongholds for this species located in the southern Central Highlands. This is due to large areas of reserved tall wet forest and associated habitat and more recently as translocation recipient sites based on advice from species experts.

In order to avoid impacts to Leadbeater's Possum habitat, areas of dense montane thickets in the Yarra Ranges National Park have been avoided through trail realignment. The project would also avoid removal of hollow-bearing trees, artificial nest boxes and removal of dense stands of sub-canopy stems that provide movement opportunities for this species and these considerations have guided trail alignments. Trail 1 has been realigned to avoid direct impacts on key habitat and to provide a 100 to 300 metre buffer to known dense thicket habitat and nest box sites. Between Mount Donna Buang summit and Ben Cairn, where the trail intersects CTR/CTMF, the project is committed to hand building Trail 1 to reduce the construction footprint. Hand building would also reduce the noise profile during construction. With these important avoidance, impact minimisation and mitigation measures, noise, vibration and disturbance during construction is unlikely to result in significant impacts to the Leadbeater's Possum population in the project area.

During trail operation, noise, vibration and disturbance generated is unlikely to result in significant impacts to the Leadbeater's Possum population in the project area, predominantly due to the dispersed nature of trail use. Night riding would not be permitted in the National Park to minimise impacts to nocturnal fauna disturbance. Residual impacts to Leadbeater's Possum, following the implementation of measures would relate to disturbance of animals, disruption to research and translocation programs/locations, increased localised predation events, habitat modification through weed and pathogen invasion, accidental habitat damage during trail maintenance and ongoing management of hollowing-bearing trees adjacent to the trail network.

**Figure 7 High quality Leadbeater's Possum montane thicket habitat near Mount Donna Buang with high stem density and lateral stems to facilitate movements. Such areas are to be avoided.**

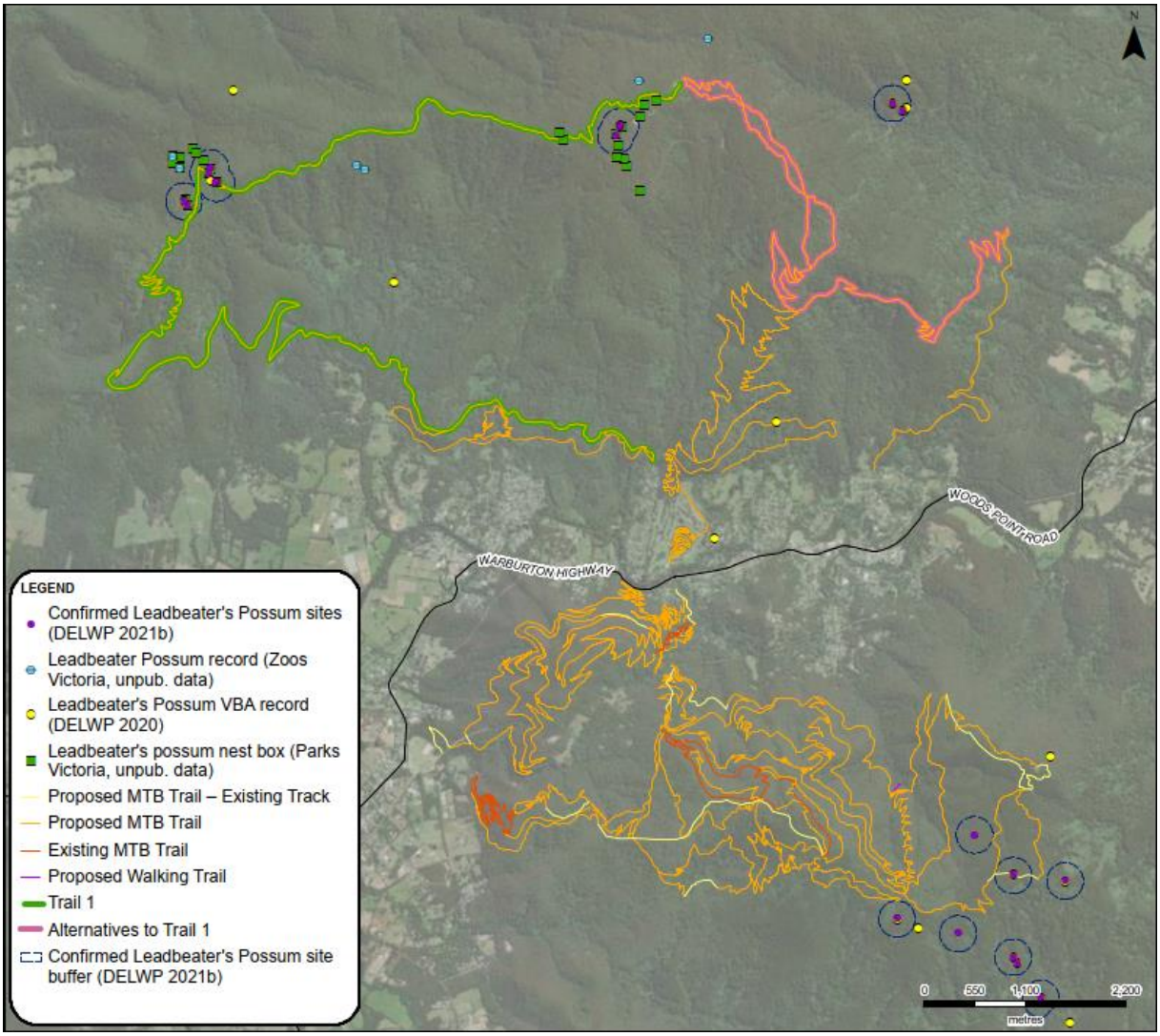


**Figure 8 Leadbeater's Possum habitat values within the project search area**

Additionally, Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly *Riekoperla darlingtoni* is known to occur near the summit of Mount Donna Buang (greater than 900 metres above sea level), in suitable habitat of slow-flowing ephemeral springs and trickles associated with forest and high water quality.

There is potential for residual construction and operational impacts to Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly and its habitat due the sensitivity of this species to soil and hydrological disturbance. Targeted surveys for this project have located new populations of Mount Donna Buang Wingless Stonefly between Mount Donna Buang and Mount Victoria. Micro-siting trail works between Mount Donna Buang, Mount Victoria and Ben Cairn and installing elevated structures in headwater habitats would minimise but not necessarily eliminate the potential residual impacts to this species. There is potential that this species is more widespread in the vicinity of Mount Donna Buang and the project and/or land managers could support ongoing eDNA-based monitoring and detection of more new populations in the Yarra Ranges National Park and Melbourne Water catchment.

For all other EPBC Act and FFG Act listed threatened flora and fauna species, it is considered unlikely that the project would result in a significant impact. However, impacts could still occur as a result of removal of native vegetation, potential for sedimentation during construction, disturbance of flora and fauna, introduction of weeds and pathogens as a result of poor hygiene practices and pollution of waterways as a result of litter or any chemicals used during trail construction. During construction, it is considered the majority of impacts can be avoided, minimised and mitigated through pre-construction trail micro-siting, sensitive construction techniques and monitoring.

During operation impacts could occur as a result of potential for sedimentation during trail use, disturbance of flora and fauna, introduction of weeds and pathogens as a result of poor hygiene practices and pollution of waterways as a result of litter. During operation, monitoring and maintenance would include regular trail inspections in accordance with the inspection program detailed in the OEMP. Whilst mountain bike trails have been located, designed and built to avoid and minimise

environmental impacts, monitoring through an effective inspection program enables unforeseen impacts to be detected and adaptive management to be adopted. Additionally, the project would work with relevant land managers to support existing pest animal, weed and pathogen management programs. Support would be provided for the entire life of the project (i.e. as long as the trails remain in use).

Residual construction and operational impacts on threatened fish species are considered low to negligible and can be readily managed through proven and effective soil erosion and sedimentation control measures in the catchment of the Yarra River and its tributaries. Similarly, impacts to GDEs are expected to be minimal in magnitude, highly localised and short in duration during construction.

Mitigation measures and monitoring during construction and operation are intended to reduce impact as far as reasonably practicable.

### Surface water, groundwater and geotechnical hazards

The project site covers a large area with varying elevation (from 150 to 1250 metres) within Melbourne Water's Yarra River Upper (Rural) sub-catchment, the Little Yarra Water Supply Protection Area and the Don River Water Supply Protection Area. Within the project area there are 42 points where the trail network requires a crossing to minimise impacts to waterways (Figure 8).

**What is a waterway?**

A waterway is generally defined as follows:

- They are located on a named river, creek or stream; or
- They are located on unnamed tributaries with an upstream catchment area of 60 hectares or more

Turbidity is the parameter most likely to be impacted by the proposed mountain bike trail construction and operation due to risk of erosion and consequential increased sediment load into waterways. Historic data indicates that turbidity complies with the new Environment Reference Standard (ERS) objective, that is, that the 75% percentile of the data must be below 15 Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU). However, occasionally turbidity is recorded above this threshold and there are instances where it has been recorded higher than 100 NTU at both sites. This is likely due to infrequent high flows arising from significant rainfall events resulting in a short-term increase of sediment load entering waterways.

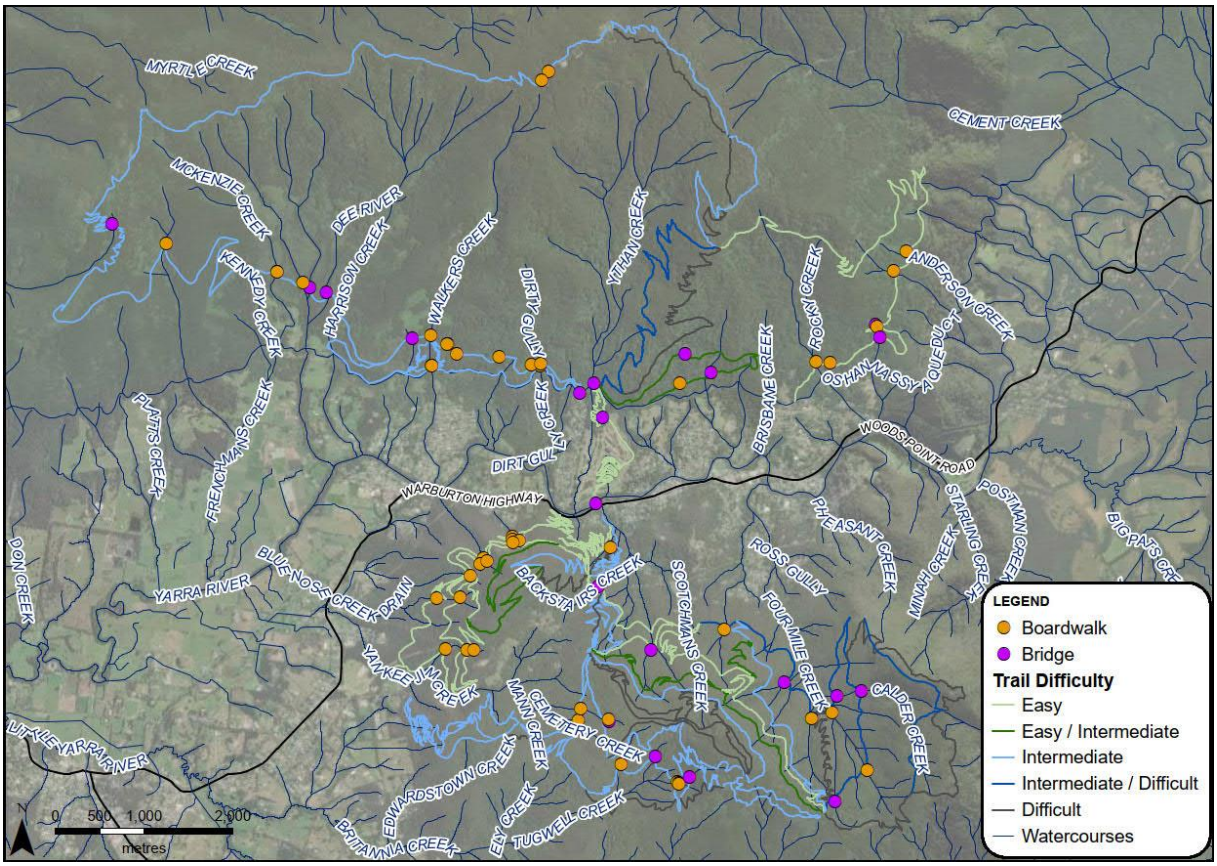


**Figure 9 Elevated water crossings (bridges and boardwalks)**

The EES has considered potential waterway and catchment impacts including any changes to water quality, water level, temperature or flow paths, and potential effects related to erosion, sedimentation and landform stability.

During construction, impacts are anticipated to surface water quality (from sedimentation and erosion) and surface water hydrology (through clearance of vegetation and compaction of trails). In the first instance, these impacts would be avoided by designing the project in such a way to avoid these impacts through the introduction of elevated water crossing design solutions. This includes bridges or boardwalks to be constructed over identified waterways and rock armour will be implemented for crossing over headwater channels and gullies that are not identified as a waterway. The trail network also includes additional bridges and boardwalks over points which are not mapped as waterways, for example, steep gullies or boggy ground, providing an additional level of protection at these points. To further avoid and minimise these impacts, construction mitigation measures would be implemented including a CEMP and regular monitoring programs for water quality and hydrology.

Operational impacts were assessed, the most material of which was an increase in sedimentation impacting waterways due to the use of the trails. The findings of the assessment concluded that through the application of design solutions to avoid and minimise sedimentation entering waterways and the implementation of water quality, erosion and flow monitoring programs would result in minimal residual impacts which would be localised and short term. Impacts to groundwater and geotechnical hazards during construction and operation were not considered extensive or material.

The presence of works crews and recreators in the catchment is unlikely to have a significant impact on drinking water quality with respect to pathogens and sediment. The project would provide adequate toilet facilities, handwashing stations and education (signage) to minimise impacts on water quality.

Where there are residual impacts to surface water quality and hydrology, these would be localised (for example, within the vicinity of a waterway crossing point) and short-term (for example, days in duration). Nevertheless, it is proposed to undertake monitoring during project construction and operation to detect any unforeseen impacts.

### Cultural heritage

Warburton has a significant cultural history and the area has historically been used for gold mining and timber harvesting and processing. The proposed trail network would be located in forested areas which are the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people. Assessments have been undertaken to understand the historic and cultural heritage values of the area to inform the EES. This has included a historic heritage survey and a complex assessment undertaken to prepare a Cultural Heritage Management Plan. The project area falls into the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) area of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWWCHAC). Consultation and engagement with WWWCHAC will continue to provide recommendations on future community engagement and to manage potential impacts to intangible Aboriginal cultural values.

The assessment considered potential impacts to cultural heritage during construction and operation of the project including on registered and unidentified Aboriginal cultural places, intangible cultural values, archaeologically sensitive landforms, and listed and unlisted historic heritage sites, finding that there are not anticipated to be significant impacts due to the project.

There are five Aboriginal places recorded within one kilometre of the proposed mountain bike trails, five listed historic heritage places of local significance (three historical archaeological sites listed on the VHI and two places listed in the HO under the Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme) that are intersected by trails, and 12 unlisted historic places of archaeological potential that are intersected by trails (Figure 9).

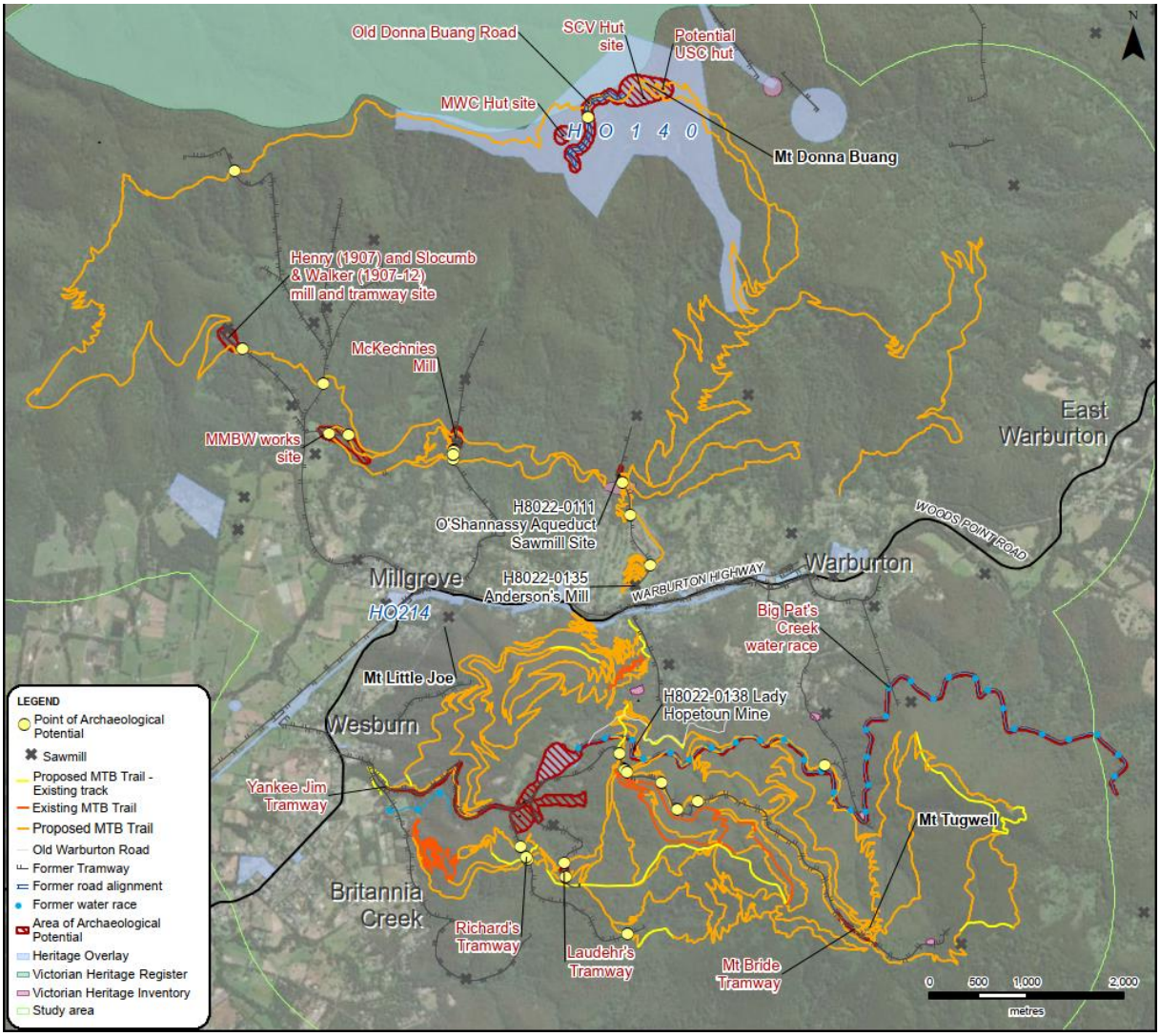


**Figure 10 Listed historical heritage places and points of archaeological potential**

To avoid and minimise impacts on cultural heritage, siting of the trails has avoided known Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and avoided the fabric of known VHI and heritage overlay sites where possible. Additionally, micro-siting of trails prior to construction would minimise potential impacts to unlisted heritage sites containing heritage values. No known Aboriginal places were identified that would be impacted by the construction of the project.

During construction, the extent of disturbance of the five listed historic heritage sites and 12 areas of archaeological potential would be confined and have limited impact on the fabric of these sites. Where impacts to listed and unlisted historic heritage sites do occur, it would result in permanent impacts to items of state and local heritage significance. Measures would be undertaken to avoid these sites through micro-siting and to minimise ground disturbance.

During operation, although additional visitors to the project area may increase the risk of damage or removal of heritage material, with adherence to guidance on use of the trail network, impacts on heritage values are not expected.

Potential impacts would not contribute to a material change to existing conditions and are able to be managed through mitigation measures. Interpretive signage installed as part of the project would present an opportunity for public interpretation and appreciation of the historic heritage of the Warburton area.

## Land use and planning

The assessment considered potential impacts to land use, landscape and visual, air quality and noise during both construction and operation of the project including on existing land uses and sensitive receptors, finding that there are not anticipated to be significant impacts due to the project.

The trail network traverses the Yarra Ranges National Park and the Yarra State Forest and intersects the Warburton Golf Course. Some existing vehicle access tracks, illegal mountain bike trails, four-

wheel driving tracks and walking tracks already exist within the project area. Pest, deer, duck and quail hunting is permitted in areas of the Yarra State Forest.

An assessment of the sensitive receptors (i.e. those that may be impacted by poor air quality or elevated noise conditions) in the project area was undertaken. The following residential properties and businesses where identified as sensitive receptors:

- Six residential properties on Dammans Road immediately southwest of the proposed trail head car park
- Eight residential properties to the south of the Golf Course trail head on Warburton Highway
- Birchwood Manor Hotel and a residential property to the east on Martyr Road
- Alpine Retreat Hotel on Warburton Highway to the southeast
- Warburton Golf Club.

Background air quality, climate and topography were reviewed to characterise the existing air quality conditions at the project area. Limited sources for air quality pollution or dust (such as large, unsealed roads, or concentrated industrial land uses) were identified in the project area. Background noise levels throughout the project area are low and the main source of noise in the township was observed to be Warburton Highway. Noise from the highway is dominant, but not significant.

For the landscape and visual environment, sensitive visual receptors were identified at eight locations. The viewpoints at these locations were representative of visitors to Mount Donna Buang Summit, walkers and cyclists using the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail, road users on Warburton and Mount Bride Road and Warburton Highway, surrounding residences, pedestrians and amenities.

Land occupancy for construction would be temporary and the intensity of construction activities would be minimised to an extent that significant residual impacts are not anticipated. Hunting may temporarily be impacted due to the potential disturbance to game (largely due to human presence), however would be managed by ensuring users are informed through the publication of suitable maps to be made available on the Victorian government websites.

Due to the limited and temporary nature of the construction activities, visual, air quality and noise associated residual impacts are not significant. During construction, noise-generating activities would be audible to sensitive receptors, however, noise levels are not considered intrusive.

The land would be used for leisure and recreational purposes which are consistent with established land uses or strategic directions. As such, no significant impacts to land use are anticipated. In addition, the project does not prohibit the use of the land for bushwalking. Both the road network and parking have the capacity to absorb visitors to the area. It is anticipated that potential upgrades to roads, pedestrian paths and cyclist routes would enhance network efficiency and safety for visitors.

The key landscape values and existing landscape character would be retained during operation. Changes to visual amenity would be permanent but localised, residual impacts would not be significant due to the minor nature of the proposed infrastructure. Vehicle emissions and dust-generating activities are short in duration and would not cause discernible changes to air quality at sensitive receptors. Impacts from noise would be audible and potentially intrusive at properties on Martyr Road. A noise barrier has been recommended in this location; however, further design work and consultation with immediate landowners would be required to define whether this approach is reasonable or feasible.

### Socio-economic

Warburton's natural environment and green space is at the heart of its appeal and character. This has been complemented by built features such as trails (including the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail), parks (including an off-leash dog park at Wesburn), playgrounds and leisure facilities. These facilities provide residents with a mix of green-space amenity, physical fitness opportunities and opportunities for social connection.

There is a range of community facilities and services in Warburton that meet the day-to- day needs of the community. Services are generally regarded as broadly adequate to meet existing needs, though more resources – particularly for housing and employment – are needed to better support vulnerable members of Warburton's community. The region within which Warburton is located is serviced by 24-hour hospitals at Healesville, Maroondah, Knox, and Ferntree Gully; 31, 45, 48 and 49 kilometres from Warburton respectively. A day hospital is also located in Lilydale, 35 kilometres away operated by Yarra Ranges Health.

**Figure 11 Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail**

It is estimated that there are 250 businesses operating in Warburton employing 744 people and generating $180 million annually. Key industry sectors are service industries such as 'Accommodation & Food Services' (144 jobs), 'Education & Training' (104 jobs) and 'Retail Trade' (87 jobs). However, Warburton is a town experiencing social disadvantage. This disadvantage is reflected in the labour force status of its residents who are more likely to be unemployed or not in the labour force at all, compared with the wider region and Victoria. Based on 2016 ABS census data, of the 2,499 Warburton residents aged over 15 years, 1,026 (41 per cent) were 'not in the labour force', while 1,267 were in the labour force.

In 2016, an estimated 60 Warburton households faced rental stress, where weekly rent was more than 30 per cent of weekly household income. This equates to five per cent of all households and 34 per cent of renters. The median rental price increased from $265 in 2016 to $365 in 2020. While rental prices may have dropped during COVID-19 it is likely that they would continue to rise in the future.

Estimated accommodation in Warburton includes a hotel (up to 80 guests), motel (up to 22 guests), and a holiday park (with several multi-occupancy cabins and over 100 camping/caravan sites). There are also several bed and breakfasts and 85 private properties are listed on the accommodation sites Airbnb and Vrbo. Based on available accommodation in Warburton and average occupancy rates of certain types of accommodation, it is estimated that there are 63,000 overnight visitors per year in Warburton.

To avoid and minimise impacts on socio-economic issues there would be minimisation of trails on private property and near residences, additional parking, small construction teams and equipment, restriction of construction to normal working hours and staged construction.

The most significant impact during construction would be the positive impact on Warburton's labour force due to the employment creation, which would provide employment for Warburton residents, particularly young residents.

Residual impacts that are likely to be minor or insignificant include:

- The impact of trail and trail-head construction on residents. Land occupancy for construction would be temporary and the intensity of construction activities would be minimised to an extent that material residual impacts are not anticipated.
- The impact of trail construction on the Warburton Golf Club, as with the impact on residents, this impact would be short-lived and relatively minor.

It is not possible to objectively compare the operational positive and negative socio-economic impacts of the project on Warburton. Each impact affects a different number of people, in a different way, and the experience of the impact will vary from person to person. Whether a person considers the positive or negative impacts more important will vary depending on who they are and what their values are.

There are positive impacts anticipated for:

- Property owners. Those who own a commercial or residential property would benefit from increased property prices
- Business owners (the majority of), who would experience higher revenue and profits from the project

- Many young people and low skilled workers who would benefit from increased employment opportunities
- Warburton residents who would enjoy the increased activity in the town
- Residents who enjoy mountain biking (the number of which would increase with the construction of the project) who would benefit from the increased recreational opportunities
- There would also be positive impacts for residents outside of the area of investigation, such as the recreational opportunities provided by the project, and employment opportunities for residents of nearby areas.

Negative impacts would be anticipated for:

- Renters, who would experience increased rents and decreased availability of rental properties, and may eventually leave Warburton
- Some residents would not appreciate the changes to the character of Warburton and social cohesion that the project brings
- Some Warburton residents who would not enjoy the increased traffic volumes created by the project.

The two most significant impacts are:

- The impact on the Warburton housing market and the consequent impact on vulnerable residents. It is likely to occur gradually over the development of the mountain bike trails. The exact extent of the residual impact is difficult to predict and highly dependent on the extent of the additional visitor accommodation and social housing that is developed in the town and surrounds. However, this impact has been widely experienced in other tourist towns and based on that experience seems likely to occur to some degree; significant intervention would be required to avoid this impact.
- The (positive) impact on Warburton's labour force due to the employment creation, which would provide employment for Warburton residents, particularly young residents.

Residual impacts that are likely to be of moderate significance are:

- The impact of the project on traffic would have a moderate residual impact on Warburton residents. While the roads are technically capable of handling the extra traffic, residents are already concerned about traffic levels in Warburton. Increasing commuting times and competition for parking (although minor) would have a moderate impact on residents' perception of the liveability in Warburton
- A residual impact on the social cohesion of the Warburton community.

Residual impacts that are likely to be minor or insignificant include:

- The (negative) impact of project operations on businesses. For most businesses the impact of the project would be positive, however it is anticipated that a small number of businesses would not adjust to the changing market and higher commercial rents and shut down.
- Amenity and privacy impacts to residents' properties that intersect the trail. Impacts from noise would be audible at properties on Martyr Road, therefore a noise barrier has been recommended in this location, subject to consultation with immediate landowners.
- The impact on other recreational users around the trails. The closure of Cemetery Track for four-wheel driving use would be permanent. Local hunters are likely to be impacted by the operation of trails within the State Forest and would need to seek alternative locations. Impacts to access, safety and enjoyment of other cyclists, walkers and horse riders is unlikely to be material due to points of intersection being minimised, the fact that walkers and horse riders on some paths are already accustomed to sharing paths with cyclists, and the application of mitigation actions.
- Operation of the project would result in the permanent reduction of the off-leash dog area at Wesburn Park. A Dog Park and Off-Leash Plan for the Yarra Ranges is currently being completed which may result in the creation of new off-leash areas elsewhere. Impacts to other community infrastructure (i.e., public toilets and recreation facilities) would not be material providing infrastructure works identified in the Project Masterplan are completed.

## Transport

The assessment considered potential impacts to transport in Warburton during construction and operation of the project including on safety, parking, congestion, the road network, end of trip facilities and emergency vehicle access, finding that there are not anticipated to be significant impacts due to the project.

The declared road network within the project area includes Warburton Highway, Donna Buang Road and Donna Buang Summit Road.

The local roads that will be used for the project include Mayer Bridge, Park Road, Old Warburton Road, Dammans Road, Mount Bridge Road, Cemetery Track, Edwardstown Road and Dee Road.

Warburton Highway is the primary traffic entry and exit point to Warburton. According to traffic counts, Saturday has the highest volume of traffic on the weekend and out of all the days of the week. Friday has the highest volume of traffic on weekdays. Saturday has a daily peak hour at 11:00 am and Friday has an AM peak at 9:00 am and a PM peak at 4:00 pm.

Parking surveys of Warburton Township undertaken between 25 October and 3 November 2018 (which included a long weekend). Surveys made the following observations:

**What is a declared road?**

Declared roads are classified as Freeways, Arterial Roads and Non-Arterial State Roads under the *Road Management Act 2004.* VicRoads is the responsible authority for the operation and management of the declared road network.

**What is a local road network?**

The local road network comprises non-declared roads that are the responsibility, in this context, of Yarra Ranges or DELWP. These roads are generally used to provide local access and connect abutting properties to the road network.

- 416 formalised public parking spaces are available.
- 300 parking spaces are located on-street with the remaining 116 spaces located in off-street car parks.
- Parking restrictions include time limited parking, loading zones, taxi zones, disabled parking, and no stopping restrictions.
- Parking in the area is typically unrestricted after 6:30 pm Monday to Saturday.
- Peak parking demand occurred at 12:00 pm on Saturday 27 October 2018. 207 vehicles were observed to be parked within the study area, representing a parking occupancy rate of 50 per cent. Generally, car parking occupancy is considered ‘at capacity’ when occupancy reaches 85 per cent during the peak period.

At the locations of the proposed trail heads there is existing parking at Mount Donna Buang and Wesburn Park only. Mount Donna Buang parking is gravelled and there are two areas which are mainly used for snow season car parking (and underutilised outside of this time). Parks Victoria advised that the secondary car parks each hold 120 car parks. The existing parking area at Wesburn Park is gravelled and there are approximately 100 spaces. Dee Road has approximately 20 gravelled car parking spaces.

Additional traffic during construction is anticipated. It is not expected to increase congestion on the public road network above the existing capacity. As the road network has ample capacity to absorb the small number of additional vehicles, there is not anticipated to be a substantial increase in congestion impacting road users due to construction. Residual impacts are not expected.

Road and lane closures are likely to be necessary to facilitate the safe and efficient construction of the project. Road and lane closures as a result of bridge construction would be limited to a few hours on a number of separate occasions, meaning that road users would only be impacted for a small period of time. In addition, the number of road users that are impacted would be minimised by ensuring that the closing of lanes and roads is only undertaken during off-peak periods. Road users would be notified prior to closures and would have access to alternate lanes or routes during these closures. As such, it is not anticipated that road closures would result in significant impacts to transport network users as they would be limited, infrequent and reduce safety risks associated with construction traffic.

Construction activities may lead to an increased risk of interactions between vehicles and cyclists. This would be minimised through conducting a road safety audits prior to the commencement of construction to identify improved safety and connectivity for both pedestrians and cyclists within the study area including along the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail, to be implemented prior to the

construction period. Careful consideration with regards to transport network safety through these measures would reduce the likelihood and severity of vehicle / cyclist interactions.

As a result of the project, during operation there would be a decrease in parking availability. To manage this, vehicles would be able to park in the overflow car park or informal parking at the trail heads or town centre which would avoid impacts associated with parking congestion. The project would provide better access and facilities to cycle to/from the town centre, reducing the amount of people driving and parking vehicles, and constant improvements to parking availability would be investigated as per the operational parking management plan to maintain parking availability in the town centre. Overall, impacts to parking would be minimal and would be managed on an ongoing basis.

Operation would generate additional vehicle and cycle traffic around Warburton, however, traffic volumes during operation would be sufficiently catered for by the existing road network. Locations identified to have geometric or safety issues would be improved to ensure safe bidirectional vehicular movements and improved emergency accessibility.

During local and regional events there is capacity for additional visitors with respect to both the road network and parking availability. Events would be short in duration and infrequent, however, to manage these impacts, each event would require a specific traffic management plan. State events would be held every two years and national events would be held every four years. Should state or national events be held, further assessment of impacts would be undertaken to determine and apply appropriate transport management measures. This would unlikely result in a significant impact overall as these events are infrequent and short in duration, and would be managed through specific TMPs.

Cumulative impacts as a result of the operation of WWW may result in exceedance of the acceptable parking occupancy benchmark during the anticipated busiest WWW days (days where temperatures exceed 35 degrees). During this time, it is not anticipated that many cyclists would be undertaking mountain bike activities in these weather conditions due to physical discomfort and safety risk. Therefore, exceedance of acceptable parking occupancy benchmarks during this time would likely result from visitors of WWW. This impact is managed by Yarra Ranges Council and no further mitigation measures are proposed to manage this impact.

## Comparative analysis of Trail 1 and Trails 45, 46 and 47

A comparison of Trail 1 with the alternative (Trails 45, 46 and 47) was undertaken as part of each of the technical assessments completed for the EES. The comparative analysis for each assessment was based on the residual impact of these options assuming effective implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. The comparative analysis is provided in **Chapter 15: Comparative evaluation of Trail 1 and Trails 45, 46 and 47**.

Trail 1 and the alternative (Trails 45, 46 and 47) are both located within the Yarra Ranges National Park within natural areas. These options both satisfy the project objectives of providing an iconic mountain biking experience within a wider trail network that provides a wide range of trails of different types.

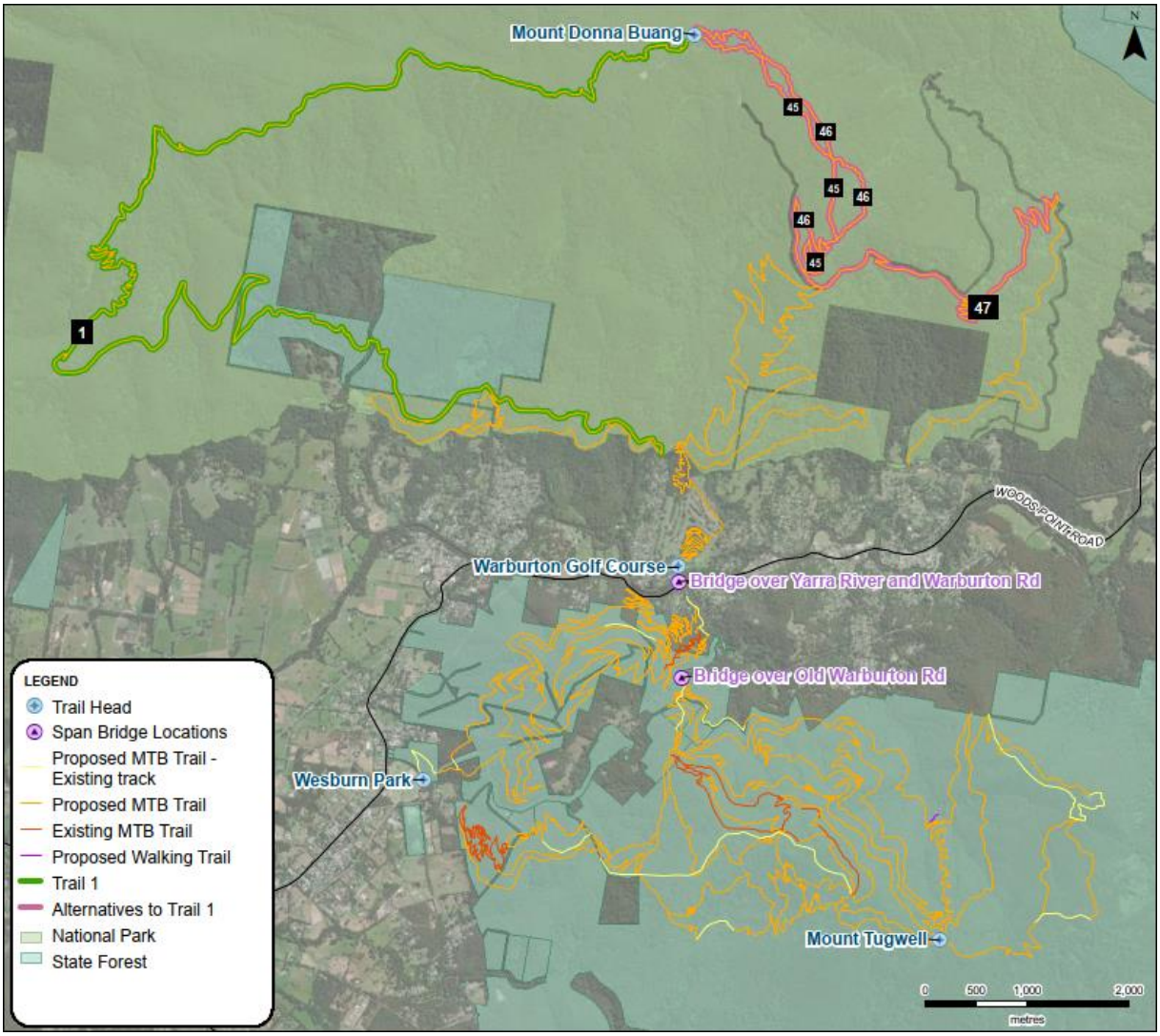


**Figure 12 Trail 1 and the alternatives to Trail 1**

Surveys of visitors to Derby, Tasmania indicate that spectacular scenery and natural values are key drivers for doing the Blue Tier and Bay of Fires mountain bike trails. For the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination, Trail 1 would be equivalent. Accordingly, because of its features including its length as a single trail with spectacular scenery, Trail 1 has potentially greater marketing potential than Trails 45, 46 and 47, although these trails also have unique characteristics.

The visitor numbers expected for a trail network containing Trail 1 are predicted to be significantly greater than for the alternative. Accordingly, the economic benefits reflected in the spend in the region and the number of jobs created are also envisaged to be greater.

The potential socio-economic and transport impacts related to the attraction of visitors were assessed to be similar. The residual impacts on traffic and parking and other recreational activities and community infrastructure would not be discernibly different, although there is a difference regarding the safety of the crossings of Donna Buang Road where Trail 1 was determined to be superior.

As both Trail 1 and the alternative are in natural environments remote from residential areas and other land uses, the land use and planning impacts were assessed to be minor and comparable.

In relation to Aboriginal heritage no discernible difference was identified between Trail 1 and the Alternative. However, in relation to historic heritage Trail 1 has a higher potential for impact due to the known presence of a number of registered heritage sites and other unregistered artefacts. Whilst these potential impacts can be mitigated, Trails 45, 46 and 47 are slightly preferred to Trail 1 from an historic heritage perspective.

In relation to surface water, groundwater and geotechnical hazards, the potential impacts of the options were assessed to be comparable. The assessment found that both options are located in forested catchments. The main difference is that the alternative (Trails 45, 46 and 47) traverse a lower number of waterways than Trail 1 (157 compared to 166).Whilst Trail 1 has more waterway crossings

than the alternative, with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures the difference in residual impacts between the options is considered to be very small. Additionally, Trail 1 is situated within the Coranderrk Creek catchment boundary for approximately 458 metres. It is anticipated that with mitigating factors including adequate provision of proper toilet facilities, buffer zones to the nearest tributary (200 m) and education during construction and operation, the impact to drinking water supply would be overall low. From a groundwater and geotechnical perspective, both alignments are located mostly on the same geology with similar water table depths anticipated. The construction and operation of Trail 1 and the alternative would therefore have similar residual impacts.

The most significant differences between Trail 1 and Trails 45, 46 and 47 relate to biodiversity and habitats. The length of trail within the Yarra Ranges National Park is 2.327 kilometres more for Trail 1 in comparison to the alternative. A greater extent of native vegetation removal would be required for Trail 1 in comparison to the alternative. The difference is estimated to be 1.288 hectares. Additionally, Trail 1 intersects cool temperate rainforest and the cool temperate mixed forest for a greater distance **(**approximately 6.442 kilometres for Trail 1 compared to 3.069 for the alternative). Trail 1 also comes closer to the Leadbeater's Possum translocation site between Donna Buang Summit and Ben Cairn. Noise impacts to Leadbeater's Possum translocation sites could occur during construction. The project is therefore committed to hand building the section of the trail in proximity to Leadbeater's Possum translocation sites to minimise potential noise effects.

## Managing impacts

The EES scoping requirements outline the requirement for an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) to be prepared for the project (**Chapter 16: Environmental Management Framework).** The EMF is a framework for addressing the environmental requirements for the project that sets out clear accountabilities for managing and monitoring environmental effects during construction and operation of the project.

The EMF incorporates the mitigation measures committed to by Yarra Ranges Council to avoid, mitigate and manage the environmental effects associated with the project. The mitigation measures would be given effect through the relevant statutory approvals including the Planning Scheme Amendment. These commitments have been included in management plans such as the Cultural Heritage Management Plan 15267, **Attachment V Draft Construction Environmental Management Plan** and **Attachment VII Draft Operations Environmental Management Plan**. The draft versions would be updated after primary approvals have been obtained to incorporate any modifications to mitigation measures and the relevant approval conditions. Additionally, Cultural Heritage Management Plan 15267 will be lodged for approval following the Minister's assessment of the EES.

An offset strategy for the project has also been developed and is detailed in **Attachment IV Biodiversity Offset Strategy and Plan.** This strategy has been developed in consultation with public land managers and project stakeholders and demonstrates how biodiversity offsets for the project are available and can be secured to achieve a no net loss for the project. An Offset Management Plan would be required for all offset sites prior to commencement of any vegetation clearance for the project. The Offset Management Plan would be developed after primary approvals.

Yarra Ranges Council would ensure environmental commitments are achieved by incorporating them into contractual agreements with contractors for the delivery of the project. This would include adhering to the CHMP, CEMP and OEMP and other subordinate management plans. Each of the project contracts would require contractors to comply with legislation, the conditions of key approvals and to obtain any other approvals, licences, permits or consents that may be required.

## Next steps in the EES process

The EES will be on public exhibition for 40 business days from Friday 26 November 2021 to Tuesday 25 January 2022. During this time, members of the public can view the EES documents and make written submissions about any matters described in the EES and Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA) documents.

### Consultation and engagement during exhibition

Throughout the formal exhibition, submission and review process, the community will have the opportunity to comment on the EES. The Yarra Ranges Council will continue community consultation and engagement during this time.

Copies of the EES, PSA and supporting material can be downloaded from the project website: https://www.rideyarraranges.com.au/

Free copies of the EES Summary brochure and USBs containing all the EES documentation are available at the public exhibition locations or directly from Yarra Ranges Council. Subject to COVID-19 restrictions on community facilities, during the public exhibition period, hard copies of the EES are available for inspection during office hours at:

- **Yarra Ranges Council Community Hub** 2415 Warburton Hwy, Yarra Junction VIC 3797
- **Arts Centre Warburton** 3409 Warburton Hwy, Warburton VIC 3799
- **Yarra Ranges Council Offices** Chapel St, Lilydale VIC 3140 (Medicare Bldg)
- **State Library of Victoria** 328 Swanston St, Melbourne VIC 3000

Please check the COVID restrictions for metropolitan Melbourne for viewing availability.

### How to make a submission

Submissions on the EES and Planning Scheme Amendment must be made in writing and received by 11.59 pm on 25 January 2022.

Each submission is a public document and will be treated as a submission on the EES and the PSA.

Online submissions are preferred and can be lodged via the Victorian Government's engagement website: https://en-gage.vic.gov.au/yarra-valley-trails-destination-inquiry

Where a submitter is unable to lodge a submission online, they must contact Planning Panels Victoria (PPV) through the DELWP Customer Call Centre on 136 186 (select option 6) and request a hard copy submission cover sheet issued by PPV. Each hard copy written submission must have a cover sheet issued by PPV.

All submissions must state the name and address of the person making the submission. Petitions will be treated as a single submission and only the first names from a petition submission will be registered and contacted.

All submissions will be treated as public documents in accordance with the PPV Privacy Collection Notice and will be published on the Victorian Government's engagement website. Do not include personal information in the body of your submission (such as your email address or phone number). Your name will be made public.

Anyone seeking to be heard at a public hearing is required to submit a written submission and indicate on the submission form that they would like to be heard at the hearing.

The submissions process is independently managed by PPV and any inquiries regarding the management of submissions and the hearing process should be directed to them.

For more information about the submission process, contact PPV on 136 186 (select option 6) or email planning.panels@delwp.vic.gov.au

### Next steps

Following the public exhibition of the EES and PSA an independent inquiry will be appointed by the Minister for planning to consider the EES and public submissions.

The inquiry will hold a directions hearing where the necessary arrangements and timetable for the public hearing will be established. Further information about the directions hearing arrangements (including whether it will be held in person or conducted online by video conference), will be published on the Engage Victoria website: www.engage.vic.gov.au.

The inquiry will follow the health advice from the Victoria government and the Chief Health Officer in making this decision.

The inquiry will conduct a formal public hearing at which Yarra Ranges Council and people who have made submissions can make presentations. The public hearing is open for anyone to watch."

The independent inquiry will prepare a report based on their findings of the EES and an assessment of the project will be made by the Minister for Planning.

The Minister's assessment makes recommendations about whether the environmental effects of the project are acceptable, along with any modifications or further management measures the Minister considers appropriate. In preparing this assessment, the Minister considers all relevant information, including the EES documents, public submissions and the inquiry report.

The relevant decision-makers for the approvals required by the project would then consider the Minister's assessment.