



**RMCG**

SEPTEMBER 2021

# Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Technical Report E: Socio-Economic

Final Report

Yarra Ranges Council

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
OVERVIEW	1
EXISTING CONDITIONS	1
MANAGEMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS	4
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 Scoping requirements</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 EES EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	8
2.2 EES SCOPING REQUIREMENTS	8
<b>3 Project description</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW	10
3.2 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	13
3.3 MAIN PROJECT COMPONENTS	13
3.4 ALTERNATIVE TO TRAIL 1	14
3.5 PROJECT TIMING	15
<b>4 Legislation, policy and guidelines</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5 Consultation</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6 Method</b>	<b>19</b>
6.1 OVERVIEW OF METHOD	19
6.2 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS	20
6.3 AVOIDANCE AND DESIGN	21
6.4 RISK ASSESSMENT	21
6.5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHOD	24
6.6 ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVE TO TRAIL 1	24
6.7 LIMITATIONS, UNCERTAINTIES, ASSUMPTIONS	24
6.8 INPUTS FROM OTHER EES TECHNICAL REPORTS	25
<b>7 Existing conditions</b>	<b>26</b>
7.1 PRIVATE LAND USE ADJACENT AND NEAR PROPOSED TRAILS	26
7.2 BUSINESS AND ECONOMY IN WARBURTON	27
7.3 CURRENT USES OF THE PROPOSED AREA	28
7.4 TRAFFIC IN WARBURTON	28
7.5 HOUSING IN WARBURTON	30
7.6 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE IN WARBURTON	32

7.7	WARBURTON LABOUR FORCE	33
7.8	SOCIAL COHESION	35
7.9	TRAIL 1 AND THE ALTERNATIVE TO TRAIL 1	37
<b>8</b>	<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Construction impact assessment</b>	<b>40</b>
9.1	SUMMARY	40
9.2	A: IMPACT OF PROJECT WORKS ON BUSINESS (INCLUDING TOURISM) OPERATIONS OR OTHER EXISTING OR APPROVED LAND USES, INCLUDING PRIVATE LAND USE	40
<b>10</b>	<b>Operation impact assessment</b>	<b>46</b>
10.1	SUMMARY	46
10.2	B: IMPACT OF PROJECT OPERATIONS ON BUSINESS (INCLUDING TOURISM) OPERATIONS	46
10.3	C: IMPACT OF PROJECT OPERATIONS ON PRIVATE LAND USE	47
10.4	D: IMPACT OF PROJECT OPERATIONS ON OTHER EXISTING OR APPROVED LAND USES	49
10.5	E: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS: INCREASED TRAFFIC	50
10.6	F: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS: EXISTING HOUSING	51
10.7	G: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS: COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE	53
10.8	IMPACT H: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS: EMPLOYMENT	54
10.9	I: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS (OTHER): SOCIAL COHESION	56
<b>11</b>	<b>Assessment of alternative to trail 1</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>66</b>
13.1	EXISTING CONDITIONS	66
13.2	IMPACT ASSESSMENT FINDINGS	67
13.3	MITIGATION AND CONTINGENCY MEASURES	69
13.4	RESIDUAL IMPACTS	70
	<b>References</b>	<b>73</b>
	<b>Appendix 1: Risk register</b>	<b>75</b>

# Executive Summary

## OVERVIEW

Warburton Mountain Bike Destination ('the project') is a proposed world class mountain biking destination centred around Warburton, approximately 70 kilometres east of Melbourne. The proponent for the project is Yarra Ranges Council.

In accordance with the Environment Effects Act 1978 (EE Act), the project requires an Environment Effects Statement (EES) to be prepared to allow stakeholders to understand the likely environmental impacts of the project and how they are proposed to be managed.

RMCG was commissioned to undertake a socioeconomic impact assessment to inform the EES. This technical report presents the findings of the assessment and is an attachment to the EES. The geographic scope of the assessment is Warburton, East Warburton, Wesburn and Millgrove.

The project will generate socioeconomic benefits, as well as adverse impacts. With the implementation of the mitigation measures recommended throughout this assessment, potential adverse social and economic impacts at local and regional scales would be minimised.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The assessment of existing socioeconomic conditions is based on reviewing reports and assessments, as well as interviews and consultation with council representatives, affected landholders, community representatives, and state government agencies as well as contacts in locations with comparable mountain bike developments.

The proposed trails currently intersect five private landholdings, runs within 25m of four properties and within 100m of a further 29 private residences. None of these landholders are opposed to the development, however, some feel Council has not provided sufficient planning details and they have privacy, remuneration and safety issues still to be resolved.

The proposed trails intersect with a range of existing recreational uses. This includes bushwalking, horse riding, trail bike riding and 4WDing on tracks and trails in the same general area. The most heavily used is the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail which, at its peak, has as many as 7,000 cyclists, walkers and horse riders per day.

Warburton is already an emerging tourism destination within the Yarra Valley, with high visitor numbers during weekend and school holiday peak times. Some interviewees we spoke with believe that there are signs that the proposed development is already driving increased investment in retail businesses, particularly food, beverage and accommodation.

Warburton Highway is the primary connector between Wesburn, Warburton and East Warburton, and further on to Yarra Junction, Lilydale and the broader Melbourne metropolitan area. As the Warburton Highway is the primary thoroughfare for the town, residents have indicated traffic congestion in town is increasingly a challenge.

Parking in Warburton is a challenge for residents and businesses, particularly along the Warburton Highway within the township. However, a 2018 parking survey indicated parking was generally available during peak periods, albeit located away from (but within walking distance of) Main Street.

There is a low number of rental houses on the market in Warburton and the weekly rental price has increased significantly over time. As much as 34 per cent of rental households (60 households) are experiencing rental stress, making them vulnerable to any further increases in prices.

Most households within Warburton and surrounds live in purchased homes. Median house prices in Warburton have increased by over 59 per cent since 2015.

Existing accommodation in Warburton includes a hotel (up to 80 guests), motel (up to 22 guests), holiday park (with several multi-occupancy cabins and over 100 camping/caravan sites) and several bed-and-breakfasts. There are approximately 85 private properties listed on on-line sites.

Services (such as education, community, housing and employment) in Warburton, Wesburn, Millgrove and East Warburton are regarded as broadly adequate, though more resources – particularly for housing and employment – are needed to better support vulnerable members of the community.

Warburton's natural environment and green space are at the heart of its appeal and character. Current facilities provide residents with a mix of green-space amenity, physical fitness opportunities and opportunities for social connection.

Based on 2016 ABS census data, the unemployment rate in Warburton was 7 per cent, which is higher than that of the Yarra Ranges Council region as a whole (5 per cent). The rate of young people who are not employed, seeking work or studying was particularly high at 14 per cent, compared with 8 per cent for the Yarra Ranges.

Social cohesion measures a community's connectedness, focusing on the sense of belonging and relationships among community members. For this assessment, indicators of social cohesion are social mobility, social capital and social exclusion. Available data indicates that residents in Warburton and surrounding townships are currently experiencing upward social mobility. Based on levels of volunteerism, sense of belonging and community trust, social capital in the Warburton community is high. In contrast, social exclusion rates are also high based on the area's score against the index of socio-economic disadvantage.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT FINDINGS**

An iterative assessment was undertaken to evaluate potential impacts associated with the project, considering the existing conditions within the study area and associated construction and operational activities.

Potential impacts and key findings are presented here:

- **IMPACT A: Impact of project works on business (including tourism) operations or other existing or approved land uses, including private land use:**
  - Five private residences directly impacted by trail construction are likely to experience noise disturbance and may experience inconvenience in property access for two to seven days
  - The about 29 private residences indirectly impacted by trail construction may experience various degrees of low-level construction noise
  - Residents are likely to see increased traffic and construction noise associated with the upgrade works for proposed trail heads at Wesburn Park (Old Warburton Rd) and Warburton Golf Club (Dammans Rd)
  - It is unlikely works relating to the construction of trails or trail heads would significantly impact local business in the township
  - Construction of proposed Golf Course Bridge and Old Warburton Road bridge may take six months to complete and would cause minor delays during that time for local residents, commuters and visitors

- IMPACT B: Impact of project operations on business operations (including tourism):
  - The project would have a direct and positive impact on local businesses
  - By 2022, the project is expected to bring 131,000 visitors to the area and generate up to \$10 million in regional income (business profits and salaries). The impact of the project is expected to increase over time, and in 2031 would attract 221,000 visitors and generate \$18 million in regional income.
  - Some existing businesses may close (and be replaced by new businesses) due to higher rents and labour costs as a result of the project
- IMPACT C: Impact of project operations on private land use:
  - Impact of riders using trails alongside residential properties is minimal. For other comparable developments, no landholders there have reported noise, trespassing or privacy concerns relating to MTB operations.
  - Establishment of a trail head at Wesburn Park (including overflow parking) would have a moderate impact on nearby residents
  - Creating and operating the trail head at the Warburton Golf Club would likely have a moderate impact on members, since the proposed route would mean golfers would have minimal encounters with riders on two holes and high levels of interaction at the clubhouse and surrounding parking
- IMPACT D: Impact of project operations on other existing or approved land uses:
  - Operations would have a moderate impact on recreation users in and around Warburton township
  - There is some increased risk to the safety of other individuals where trails intersect with established tracks used for bushwalking. Experience from comparable MTB projects indicate that conflict between walkers and riders is rare.
  - Cemetery Track would need to be closed to 4WD use, for the safety of bike riders and preservation of the local ecosystem
  - Local hunters are likely to be moderately impacted by the operation of new trails in State Forests and may need to seek alternative locations
- IMPACT E: Socioeconomic impacts: increased traffic:
  - Increases in traffic would have a moderate impact on local residents, including some increased commuter time and some increased competition for parking
- IMPACT F: Socioeconomic impacts: existing housing:
  - An increase in visitor numbers can lead to increases in the numbers of private properties listed for short-term accommodation
  - An increase in tourism-based demand for short term accommodation could displace long-term renters
  - Increased rental costs mean that some renters would need to relocate from Warburton
- IMPACT G: Socioeconomic impacts: community infrastructure:
  - Community services are unlikely to be adversely affected by increased visitor numbers
  - Trail and shuttle services have been designed to protect the visual amenity of the townships
  - Demands on emergency management services – such as the CFA – may increase with increased use of the State Forest and National Parks
- IMPACT H: Socioeconomic impacts: employment:
  - The trails are expected to generate a total of 133 FTE jobs in 2022, increasing to 229 FTE jobs in 2031
  - The project would generate regional income (business profits and salaries) of up to \$10 million in 2022 and \$18 million in 2031
  - The positive employment impacts of the project would create a social benefit for Warburton residents

- **IMPACT I: Socioeconomic impacts (other): social cohesion:**
  - Operation of the project is likely to have a moderate negative impact on the social cohesion of the community
  - Over the next 15-25 years, the project would almost certainly increase the social mobility of those that live in Warburton
  - The most vulnerable in the community are likely to leave the area as cost-of-living increases drive people to locations with more affordable housing
  - The project would contribute to changes in the character of Warburton over time.

## **MANAGEMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS**

Potential socioeconomic impacts due to the project would be avoided, mitigated or managed to required standards through the following recommended mitigation measures.

- **IMPACT A: Impact of project works on business (including tourism) operations or other existing or approved land uses, including private land use:**
  - Construction schedules for all works would be developed in partnership with affected residents, through phone or face-to-face discussions wherever possible
  - Where construction bisects a property, temporary measures (which may include fencing or barriers as appropriate) would be placed along trail construction sites to clearly demarcate safe areas for residents
  - Ensure daily communication between residents and construction teams and that residents have a clear mechanism to raise complaints or concerns, ideally through a single contact at Council.
- **IMPACT B: Impact of project operations on business (including tourism) operations:**
  - Council to advocate for and facilitate access to business adaptation programs and government grants to help businesses adapt to the changing market.
- **IMPACT C: Impact of project operations on private land use, Council should:**
  - Engage with each affected landholder to understand their concerns and collaboratively develop appropriate responses
  - Provide appropriate screening and protection of trails.
  - Continue negotiations with club representatives to identify mutually beneficial outcomes for the proposed MTB trail head.
- **IMPACT D: Impact of project operations on other existing or approved land uses:**
  - Appropriate signage is established at trail heads and popular trails to advise riders of the MTBA code of conduct (always give way) and to ride on marked trails only
  - Choke points/slowing techniques are used before intersection with another track/trail
  - Intersection points are clearly marked on trail maps and marketing collateral including details of other likely users
  - An extensive education campaign is conducted, and all user groups (such as Bushwalking Victoria and local horse-riding groups) are regularly updated to ensure they are aware of intersections between trail types and to minimise users mistakenly accessing MTB trails
  - Yarra Ranges Council works with land managers to install appropriate signage and barriers to prevent bike riding on intersecting walking trails and monitor compliance.
  - 4WD organisation representatives are engaged to discuss the implications of closing Cemetery Trail
  - Increased monitoring of trail bike riding activity, ensuring appropriate MTB trails are only used by MTB riders.
- **IMPACT E: Socioeconomic impacts: increased traffic:**

- Develop and implement a Traffic Management Plan to minimise disruption during all stages of construction.
- Develop and implement a stakeholder communication plan to ensure that appropriate consultation and advanced notice is provided prior to and during construction.
- Undertake a Road Safety Audit to ensure that roads, intersections and the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail are designed and constructed to provide safe vehicle movements during both construction and operation.
- Undertake improvement works where necessary based on the pavement conditions survey.
- Implement mitigation measures to ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist movements during the operational phase of the project.
- Establish a parking management plan to implement appropriate measures for the operation of the Mountain Bike Project to ensure that parking congestion does not exceed acceptable limits for visitors or residents.
- Establish an emergency access plan.
- IMPACT F: Socioeconomic impacts: existing housing:
  - Investigate potential to increase social housing in or near Warburton through applying affordable housing provisions as part of both rezoning, and permit applications for major developments
  - Encourage the development of visitor accommodation
- IMPACT G: Socioeconomic impacts: community infrastructure:
  - An assessment of bushfire risk and CFA capacity in the local area would be prioritised to identify what mitigation measures would be taken to maintain essential emergency management services
- IMPACT H: Socioeconomic impacts: employment:
  - Include a training and work placement component as part of the contracts to construct the mountain bike trails.
  - Through a partnership model coordinate employment and education opportunities with appropriate wrap around services to facilitate employment opportunities for local unemployed people.
- IMPACT I: Socioeconomic impacts (other): social cohesion:
  - Adopt housing mitigation measures identified for impact F
  - Supporting and promoting local social enterprises
  - Supporting community events and initiatives separate from mountain biking to sustain community diversity and engagement
  - Promoting the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination to families, with a particular focus on diversity of riders (women, children, ages).

## **COMPARISON OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS**

It is not possible to objectively compare the positive and negative 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.

The following analysis has been written to clarify the positive and negative impacts and who is affected to help the community and decision makers reach a decision regarding the socioeconomic impact of the project. It focuses on 'moderate' and 'significant' impacts only.

There will be positive impacts for:



- Property owners. Those who own a commercial or residential property will benefit from increased property prices.
- Business owners (the majority of), who will experience higher revenue and profits from the project.
- Many young people and low skilled workers who will benefit from increased employment opportunities.
- Warburton residents who will enjoy the increased activity in the town.
- Residents who enjoy mountain biking (the number of which will increase with the construction of the project) who will benefit from the increased recreational opportunities
- There will 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 will be experienced by

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

# 1 Introduction

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination ('the project') is a proposed world class mountain biking destination centred around Warburton, approximately 70 km northeast of Melbourne. It consists of approximately 192 km of mountain bike trails providing a variety of mountain bike experiences to suit all levels of riding.

Yarra Ranges Council has identified mountain biking as an opportunity for tourism growth within this region which would also support the economy of the township and the health and well-being of its residents. It seeks to create iconic trails eligible for International Mountain Bike Association Gold Ride Centre status which would position Warburton as an internationally significant mountain bike destination.

On 21 May 2020, The Victorian Minister for Planning issued his decision that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required under the Environment Effects Act 1978 (Vic) ('EE' Act). On 16 June 2020 the Commonwealth Department for Agriculture, Water and Environment issued a decision that the project is a controlled action under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act) and that the project will be assessed under the assessment bilateral agreement with the State of Victoria.

The purpose of this report is to assess the potential socioeconomic impacts associated with the project to inform the preparation of the EES required for the project.

## 2 Scoping requirements

### 2.1 EES EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The Working Draft Scoping Requirements for Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Environment Effects Statement ('scoping requirements') by the Minister for Planning sets out the specific environmental matters need to be addressed by Yarra Ranges Council in order to satisfy the Commonwealth and Victorian assessment and approval requirements.

The scoping requirements include a set of evaluation objectives. These objectives identify the desired outcomes to be achieved in managing the potential impacts of constructing and operating the project in accordance with the Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the EE Act.

The following evaluation objective is relevant to the socioeconomic study:

- To minimise potential adverse social, economic, amenity and land use effects at local and regional scales.

The assessment covers the areas of Warburton, East Warburton, Wesburn and Millgrove.

### 2.2 EES SCOPING REQUIREMENTS

The aspects from the scoping requirements relevant to the evaluation objective are shown in Table 2-1, as well as the location where these items have been addressed in this report.

**Table 2-1: Socioeconomic scoping requirements**

ASPECT	SCOPING REQUIREMENT	SECTION ADDRESSED
Key issues	Potential for project works and operations to affect business (including tourism) operations or other existing or approved land uses, including private land use.	Sections 9 and 10
	Potential for socioeconomic impacts on the township of Warburton, including increased traffic and pressures on existing housing and community infrastructure.	Section 10
	Potential for socioeconomic impacts on the township of Warburton relating to social cohesion.	Section 10
Priorities for characterising the existing environment	Describe the demographic and social character of residential communities and businesses near the project.	Section 7
	Describe existing and reasonably foreseeable land uses within and adjacent to the proposed project area.	Sections 7
	Identify dwellings and any other potentially sensitive receptors (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial, recreational areas etc.) that could be affected by the project's potential effects on air quality, noise or vibration levels, especially vulnerable receptors including children and the elderly.	Sections 7
	Identify existing and reasonably foreseeable land uses and businesses occupying land to be traversed by, adjacent to, or otherwise affected by impacts from the project.	Section 7

ASPECT	SCOPING REQUIREMENT	SECTION ADDRESSED
Design and mitigation measures	Identify options for mitigating impacts from project construction or operation on any potentially affected private land, businesses and community facilities.	Section 12
	Describe and evaluate the proposed traffic management and safety principles to address changed traffic conditions during construction and operation of the project.	Section 12
	Outline the required transport infrastructure works or upgrades required to address adverse impacts of the project construction and operation, including impacts on accessibility (e.g., access road construction and upgrades).	Section 12
	Options for mitigating socioeconomic impacts on housing and social cohesion.	Section 12
Assessment of likely effects	Identify implications for communities, current land uses and businesses and immediately foreseeable changes in land use.	Sections 9 and 10
	Assess the expected positive and adverse socioeconomic effects, at the local and regional scales, potentially generated by the project, including impacts on the capacity of local community infrastructure.	Section 10
	Describe the likely extent and duration of any temporary disruption to existing land uses arising from project construction.	Section 9
	Assess the potential for cumulative impacts on social, economic, amenity and land use values in relation to any other existing or planned projects, land uses or tourism developments in the area.	Section 10
Approach to manage performance	Outline measures to monitor the success of commitments to mitigate or manage effects on social, economic, amenity and land use values during all phases of the project.	Section 12
	Describe the approach to monitor effects and develop contingency measures to be implemented in the event of adverse residual effects on social, economic, amenity and land use values requiring further management.	Section 12
	Describe any further measures that are proposed to enhance social outcomes, and either manage risks to landscape and recreational values, or enhance visual amenity outcomes both for residents living near the project and for visitors to the locality, to form part of the EMF.	Section 12

# 3 Project description

## 3.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project is a proposed world class mountain biking destination centred around Warburton, approximately 70 kilometres northeast of Melbourne as shown in Figure 1 (overleaf). A significant informal network of mountain bike trails exists within the region and there is evidence of increasing use of these trails by local and visiting riders. Mountain biking in this locality started around 15 years ago and was concentrated in the Yarra State Forest in the vicinity of Mount Tugwell.

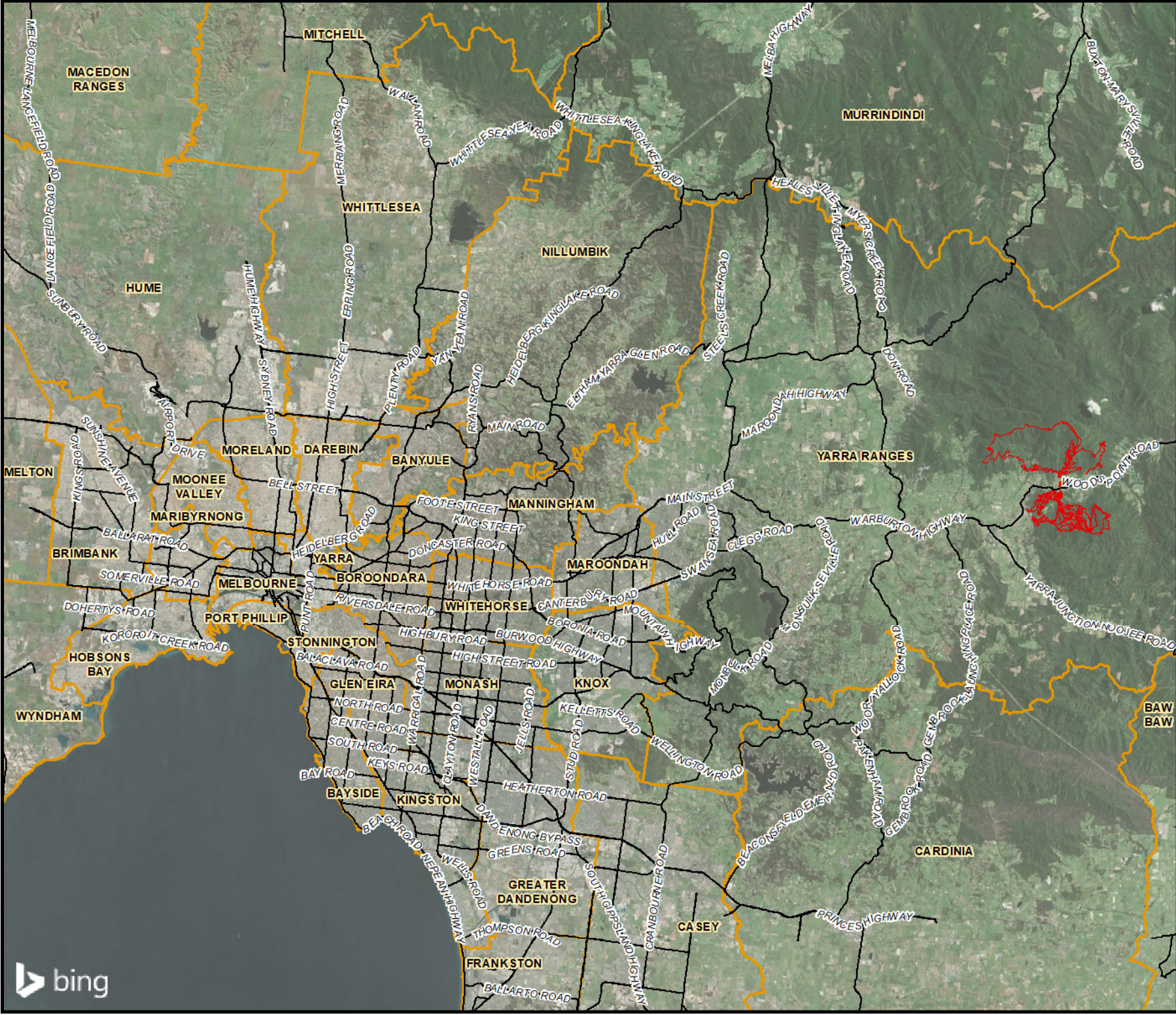
Yarra Ranges Council has identified mountain biking as an opportunity for tourism growth within the region which would also support the region and the health and well-being of its residents. The project would create iconic trails eligible for International Mountain Bike Association Gold Level Ride Centre status which would position Warburton as an internationally significant mountain biking destination.

The project 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 project consists of approximately 177 kilometres of mountain bike trails providing a range of mountain bike experiences to suit all levels of riding as shown in Figure 2 (overleaf). The project also includes 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. Separate to this project, a Master Plan is being prepared for Wesburn Park and this may lead to redevelopment works occurring at this location.

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**LEGEND**

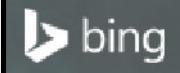
- Project Tracks and Trails
- LGA Boundaries



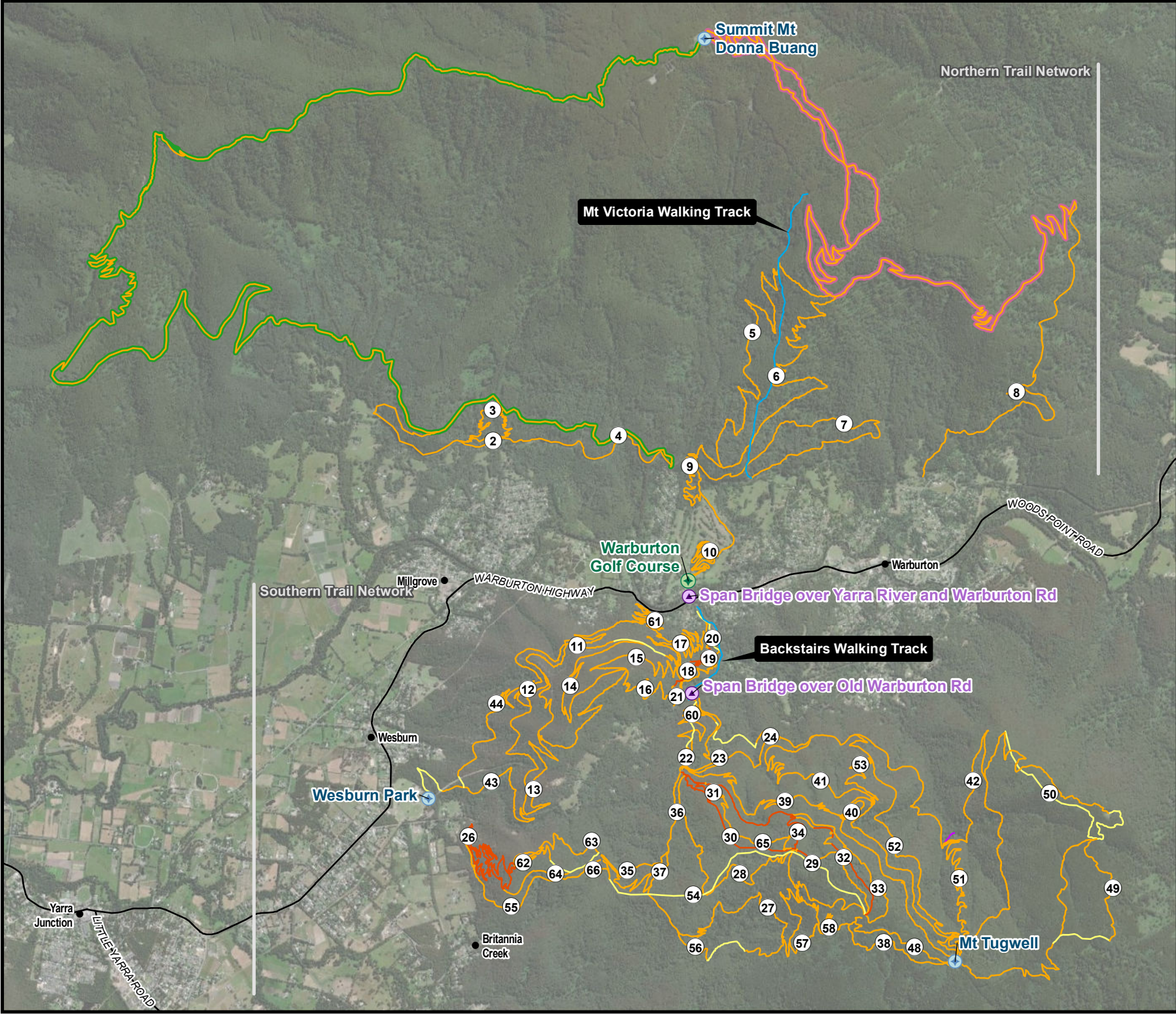
**Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Project in relation to Melbourne**

Yarra Ranges Council  
 Warburton Mountain Bike Destination  
 Warburton, Victoria

**Figure F1**



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**LEGEND**

- Localities
- ⊕ Trail head and Visitor's Hub
- ⊕ Trail Head
- ⊕ Span Bridge Locations
- Ⓢ Trail Number
- Access Track
- Proposed MTB Trail
- Proposed Walking Trail
- Existing MTB Trail
- Existing Walking Trail
- Trail 1
- Alternatives to Trail 1



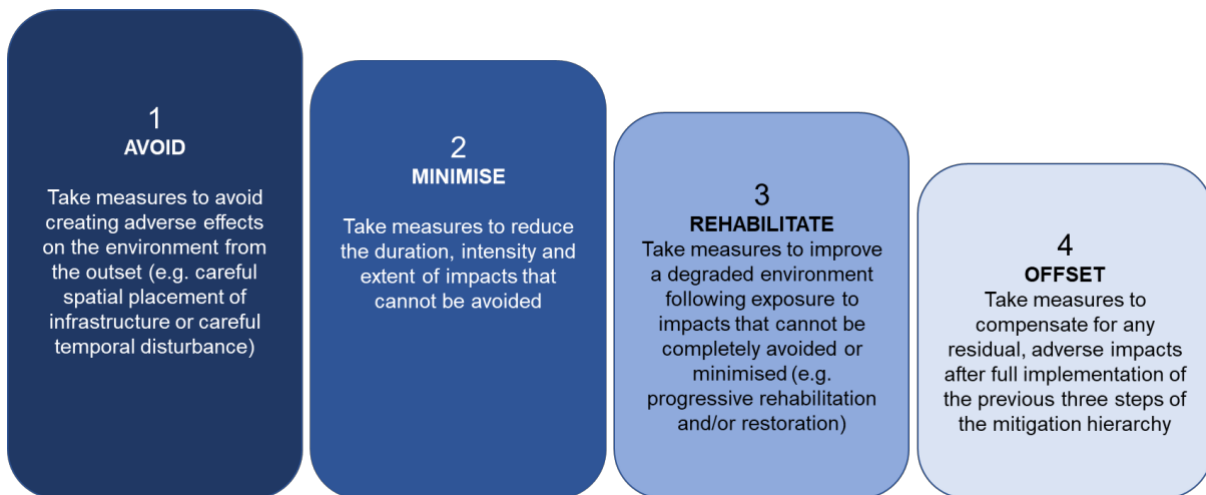
**Project Overview**

Yarra Ranges Council  
 Warburton Mountain Bike Destination  
 Warburton, Victoria

**Figure F2**

## 3.2 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

It is recognised that there are opportunities to avoid and minimise environmental impacts during the many stages of project development. During project inception and early design development stages of the project, decisions on the location of the project, its design and construction techniques have enabled impacts to be significantly avoided and minimised in accordance with the hierarchy presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Mitigation hierarchy**

Avoidance of impact has been a key focus of the development of the trail network and has culminated in the preparation of a project description which is found at Chapter 3 of this EES. A description of how avoidance of impact has informed the design in relation to the socioeconomic impact can be found at 6.3.

Examples of this include the decision to design waterway crossings without directly impacting waterways, creating trails on previously disturbed areas wherever possible and adoption of a construction technique that avoids impacts to large trees.

After opportunities to avoid impact were exhausted, minimisation and rehabilitation measures were developed. These are described in the construction and operation impact assessment sections below.

## 3.3 MAIN PROJECT COMPONENTS

The main project components proposed are as follows:

- Upgrade of existing mountain bike trails – approximately 12 kilometres (eight per cent of project length)
- New mountain bike trails – approximately 155 kilometres (87 percent of project length)
- Upgrade of existing vehicle tracks - upgrade approximately four kilometres (two per cent of project length)
- New Visitor's hub and main trail head at the Warburton Golf Course and new trail head facilities at Mt Tugwell, Mt Donna Buang and Wesburn Park. An additional network access point to the network would be provided at Dee Road.

The network would comprise of 61 trails, each with a length of between 100 metres and 22 kilometres. Each trail has a trail difficulty rating assigned, ranging from easy over intermediate, to difficult and extreme. Some of the trails are returning loops, while others are point-to-point trails. All trails have also been categorised into six different styles including, adventure, air flow, downhill, flow country, gravity and wilderness, as described in the project description chapter of the EES.



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.

The trails would have a bench width of approximately 1.2 metres with a ride line of approximately 400-1200 millimetres except for the trail on Cemetery Track. The development footprint to be assessed is based on a maximum width of two metres (one metre for the trail corridor with a trail buffer of 0.5 metres on each side). A head-height clearance of 2.5 metres has been assumed.

The trail network would include built form elements such as bridges, platforms, culverts, rock armour, jumps and berms. Minimal signage is proposed to be associated with the trail and trail heads and this would consist of small maps at strategic intersections and along with safety and name signage. Some trail sections would include elevated structures and drainage works to avoid and minimise impacts to waterways and associated biodiversity values.

The grade of individual trail sections would vary according to the local topography. Typically, the maximum trail grade would be less than 15 per cent, with most of the trails having a grade under 10 per cent.

The new Visitor's Hub and main trail head is proposed to be developed at the south of Warburton Golf Course, where the existing carpark is to be upgraded and extended to accommodate around 165 cars with room for future expansion if required. A new shelter and a bike wash down station would be established for the use of mountain bike riders. Run-off from the wash bays would be captured by a sump and recirculated where practicable. Excess silt and soil would be captured by a silt retention system which would also serve the car park. This system would be designed to meet Melbourne Water requirements. The Visitor's Hub would be the main trail head and would allow direct access to the north and south trail zones.

Three other trail heads are proposed as follows:

- A new trail head would be established on top of Mt Tugwell, off Mt Bride Road and would include a carpark, a bus turnaround bay, a bike wash down station, toilets and picnic area
- The existing trail head at Mt Donna Buang would be upgraded with improvements to the car park, toilets and picnic area and installation of a bike wash down station
- An additional 120 car parks would be established at Wesburn Park to facilitate access to connecting trails.

Drainage would be upgraded at the other trail head locations to meet current Melbourne Water requirements.

### **3.4 ALTERNATIVE TO TRAIL 1**

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.

Further information on this work is provided in the EES Chapter 4 – Project development and alternatives.

The investigations identified trail 1, nicknamed Drop-a-K as a candidate for consideration of alternative alignments.

Trail 1 is approximately 23 kilometres in length and traverses the Yarra Ranges National Park from the summit of Mount Donna Buang travelling in a westerly direction through forested land alongside Road 2 before meandering generally southeast through forested land towards the Warburton township, also intersecting Woiwurrung State Forest.

The project identified an alternative to this trail, being the combination of trail 45, 46 and trail 47 which are shown in Figure 2.

Trails 45 and 46 are within the Yarra Ranges National Park and commence at the summit of Mount Donna Buang, following a south easterly direction through forested land towards the Warburton township, before tying into trails 5 and 6. Trail 47 commences at Mount Donna Buang Road and travels east to tie into trail 8. The trails are respectively of length 4 kilometres (trail 45), 5.5 kilometres (trail 46) and 5.6 kilometres (trail 47).

### **3.5 PROJECT TIMING**

The timing of the key project phases is proposed as follows:

- Project development and approval: mid 2022
- Project construction, Stage 1 (approximately 110km): progressively from mid 2022
- Project operations and maintenance: staged opening during 2022 and beyond.

## 4 Legislation, policy and guidelines

The legislation, policy and guidelines relevant to this assessment and are summarised in Table 4-1.

**Table 4-1: Legislation, policy and guidelines relevant to the assessment**

DOCUMENT TITLE	SUMMARY	RELEVANCE TO PROJECT
<b>Commonwealth Government</b>		
<b>Victorian Government</b>		
Homes for Victorians (2017)	Aims to ensure that every Victorian enjoys the safety and security of a home. Aims to increase the stock of social housing	The project may make housing unaffordable for some residents.
Yarra Ranges National Park Management Plan	Establishes the long-term management framework to protect the outstanding conservation, water resource and recreation values of the park and provide appropriate opportunities for visitors to enjoy its special features.	Recreational use of the park will change as a result of the project.
<b>Local Government</b>		
Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme 31/07/2018 VC148	<p>The Planning Scheme aims to:</p> <p>(a) To provide a clear and consistent framework within which decisions about the use and development of land can be made.</p> <p>(b) To express state, regional, local and community expectations for areas and land uses.</p> <p>(c) To provide for the implementation of State, regional and local policies affecting land use and development.</p>	<p>17 – Economic Development</p> <p>Planning is to provide for a strong and innovative economy, where all sectors are critical to economic prosperity</p> <p>21.04-1 - Residential</p> <p>Objective 2 – Housing Diversity</p> <p>To encourage a diversity of dwelling types to meet the needs of the population.</p> <p>Objective 4 – Green Wedge Residential</p> <p>Provide for residential use that reinforces the rural and landscape character of the rural areas and does not lead to the loss of productive agricultural land.</p>
General Provisions Local Law 2012- (No 1 of 2012)	<p>General Provisions aim to:</p> <p>(a) provide for the peace, order and good government of the municipal district</p> <p>(b) prohibit, regulate and control activities, events, practices or behaviour in public places so that no detriment is caused to the amenity of the neighbourhood, nor nuisance to a Person nor detrimental effect to a Person's Property</p> <p>(c) protect Council's assets and land and to regulate their use</p> <p>(d) promote a physical and social environment free from hazards to health in which the residents of the municipal district can enjoy a quality of life that</p>	<p>Noise impact on local amenity:</p> <p>11.2 A Person must not make, cause or permit to be made any sound or noise which is objectionable or annoying or which constitutes a nuisance to any other Person on any adjoining Road or any other Premises.</p> <p>Part 13 provides for regulations to minimise the impact of works on Roads on the amenity of the municipality and its residents by ensuring that obstructions do not interfere with the public's reasonable use of Roads.</p> <p>Part 16 provides for regulations to:</p> <p>(a) ensure that Building Works do not damage or encroach onto a Road, Council Land or other asset or make it unsafe</p>

DOCUMENT TITLE	SUMMARY	RELEVANCE TO PROJECT
	<p>meets the general expectations of the community</p> <p>(e) provide for those matters which require a Local Law under the Act and any other Act</p> <p>(f) provide for the administration of Council powers and functions</p>	<p>(b) protect the amenity of the area and to prevent damage or detriment to nearby properties and residents</p> <p>(c) protect drains and watercourses from the entry of building materials, dirt, mud, rubbish or litter</p> <p>(d) require an owner of land to deliver to Council a guarantee or bond against damage to Roads, Council Land and assets in the vicinity of land on which the Building Works are proposed to be commenced.</p> <p>Part 17 provides for regulations to:</p> <p>(a) provide for the fair and equitable use of available parking space on a Road or on Land under the control of Council</p> <p>(b) provide parking schemes to encourage a turnover of Vehicle parking in business areas for the benefit of customers and businesses</p> <p>(c) protect the safety of Persons.</p>
Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy	Key strategic document that guides transport planning and decision-making over the next two decades.	Strategic direction and actions to make access to and within Warburton easier, safer and more sustainable.

In addition to the policies described above, this assessment also reviewed and considered:

- Vision 2020 Community Plan
- Council Plan 2017 – 2021
- Yarra Ranges Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2021
- Yarra Ranges Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023
- Yarra Ranges Environment Strategy 2015-2025
- Economic Development Strategy
- Recreation and Open Space Strategy
- Local Government Act 1989
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- The August 2015 Ministerial Statement on Local Government (Ministerial Statement)

# 5 Consultation

Development of the project and preparation of the EES have been informed by consultation with stakeholders and the community (more details of the consultation is at Section 6.2). Table 5-1 lists specific community and stakeholder feedback and how this feedback has been considered in the socioeconomic impact assessment.

**Table 5-1: Stakeholder engagement undertaken for socioeconomic assessment**

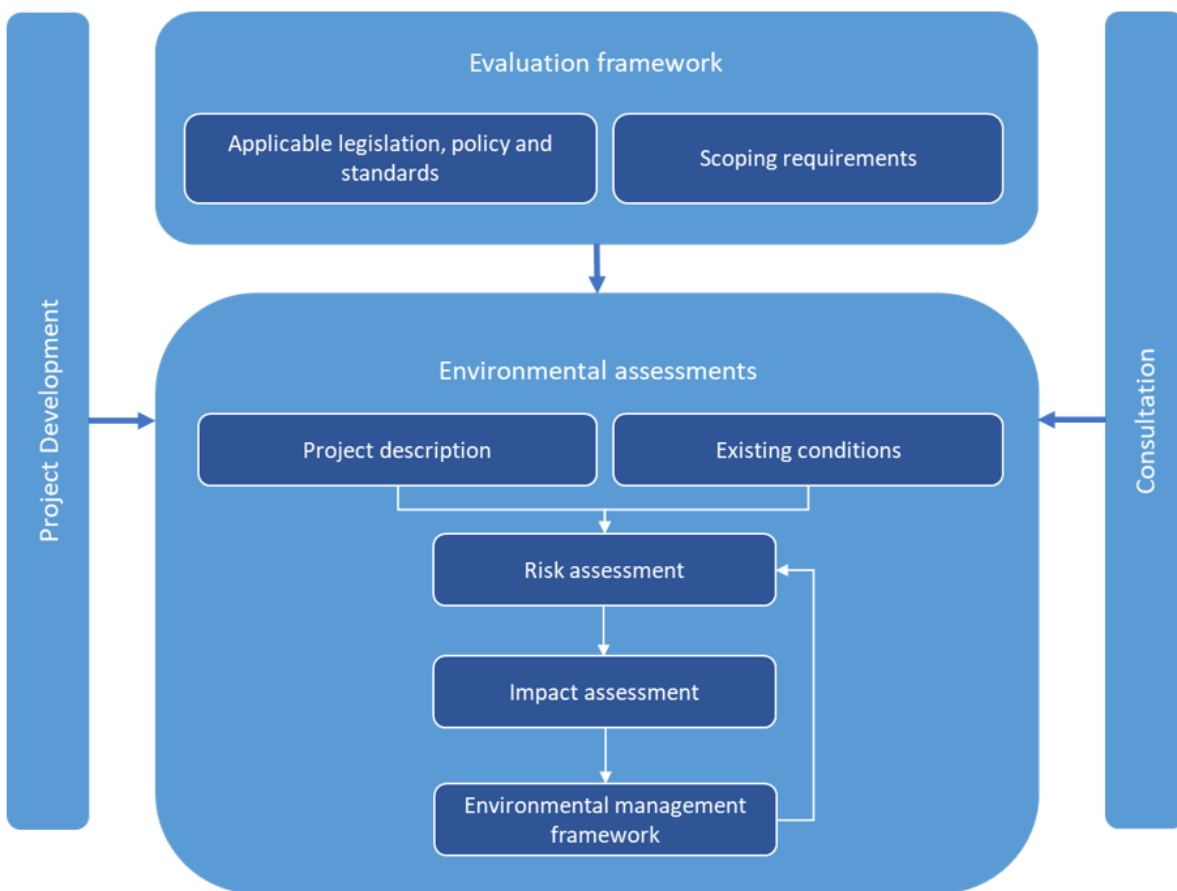
COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK	CONSIDERATION IN PROJECT DESIGN OR IMPACT ASSESSMENT
Stakeholders and some residents expressed concern that increasing tourism reduce housing stock available for renters. Stakeholders highlighted the likelihood that more houses are likely to be used as holiday rentals (continuing and magnifying the current trend) increasing strain on renters, particularly lower income residents.	The project's impact on housing has been assessed in Impact F with appropriate mitigation actions set out in Section 12.
Residents are concerned how increased traffic and demand for parking would affect the community, including safety of commuters, pedestrians and bike riders.	Traffic impacts have been assessed in Section 10 (assessed in Impact E), drawing on Traffic Impact Assessment and how this would specifically affect residents' lifestyle and amenity.
Three landholders whose properties would be directly impacted by the construction and operation of trails have not been adequately consulted on the project's progression.	Residents' concerns and queries have been reviewed, flagged with Council with further engagement proposed in mitigation strategies for Impact C (Section 10).
Many residents have expressed reservations for how the project would impact the character and amenity of the town – potentially undermining the very drawcards that residents sought in moving to Warburton and surrounding townships.	The impact of tourism on the townships' communities has been considered in the context of the social cohesion of Warburton. This drew on research from tourism impacts in Queensland and relevant experience in Hepburn and Macedon Ranges Shire Councils. These findings are included in Impact I (Section 10).
A number of residents and groups highlighted risks to walkers, bushwalkers, horse riders and other recreation users resulting from shared-use trails or intersecting MTB trails.	A trail-by-trail review of impact with other recreation users was considered with user data provided by representatives from DELWP and Parks Victoria. Points of intersection have been identified and impacts assessed in Impact D (Section 10).
Some residents expressed concerns that locals had not been properly consulted in the project design.	This assessment found that additional consultation with community members and individuals should be prioritised. Select individuals and stakeholder groups were contacted to undertake this assessment, with a comprehensive consultation process of these issues to be undertaken during the formal window for public comment.
The construction and operation of trails and a trail head at Warburton Golf Club requires additional consultation and negotiation. Members have yet to approve this proposal.	The impact of proposed trails and trail head at Warburton Golf Club on members and the Club at large has been considered in Impact C (Section 10). However, more details are required – particularly around remuneration for the potential leasing of part of the Clubhouse – to the to fully consider impacts.
Community and stakeholder feedback.	Consideration in project design or impact assessment.

# 6 Method

## 6.1 OVERVIEW OF METHOD

This section describes the method that was used to assess the potential impacts of the project. Figure 4 shows an overview of the assessment method. A risk-based approach was applied to prioritise the key issues for assessment and inform measures to avoid, minimise and offset potential effects.

The approach used in the assessment has been guided by the evaluation framework that applies to the project (that is, the existing regulatory framework of relevant legislation and policy) as well as the scoping requirements, set by the Victorian Minister for Planning, incorporating input from the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment in relation to matters of national environmental significance (MNES).



**Figure 4: Overview of EES method**

The environmental assessment undertaken encompasses consideration of physical systems, ecological systems, human communities, land use effects and economic effects as relevant to the Project. It has been undertaken using a precautionary approach according to the following steps:

- Review of the Project design and the proposed construction and operation activities in the context of the existing conditions to determine the location, type, timing, intensity, duration and spatial distribution of project components and activities in relation to sensitive receptors

- An initial risk assessment to evaluate the likelihood and consequence of proposed project activities in the context of initial mitigation measures to determine the relative importance of environmental risks associated with the project
- Assessment of potential direct and indirect environmental impacts to analyse the spatial and temporal extent, magnitude and nature of the potential impacts considering the sensitivity and significance of affected receptors.
- Evaluation of the predicted outcomes against applicable legislation, policy and standards
- Evaluation of the potential for cumulative impacts caused by impacts of the project in combination with impacts of other projects that are taking place or are proposed nearby
- Identify mitigation measures where necessary, to address potentially significant environmental effects
- Identification and evaluation of the residual environmental effects including magnitude, duration and extent, considering the proposed mitigation measures and their likely effectiveness.

Based on the findings of the environmental assessments, an environmental management framework has been established to monitor and evaluate environmental management and contingency measures in relation to the residual environmental effects. The environmental management framework specifies the committed mitigation and management measures and describes the roles and responsibilities for implementation throughout project construction and operation. The environmental management framework is described fully in Chapter 15: Environmental management framework.

The specific methods adopted during the key steps are described in the sections below.

## **6.2 ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The assessment of existing socioeconomic conditions included:

- Desktop assessment:
  - All consultation transcripts and correspondence with community members, groups and stakeholders from 2018-2020
  - Council planning documents and strategies, including the Warburton Place Plan, Let's Talk About Warby and Integrated Transport Strategy
  - Relevant literature on the impact of tourism on social cohesion, including measuring tourism development through secondary data analysis: A guide for tourism impact studies, and the findings of the Parliament of Victoria's 2008 Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism.
  - Impact assessments of the project to date, including Socio-Economic and Traffic, Parking and Movement
  - The intersection of the trails with properties through GIS mapping. intersection with existing tracks, trails and land uses
  - ABS 2016 Census of Population and Housing.
- Interviews and correspondence with:
  - Project managers from comparable MTB developments in Derby, St Helens (Bay of Fires) and Bright
  - Nine council representatives to discuss community impacts, economic impacts, waste management and community infrastructure
  - Five landholders whose properties would be directly affected by planned trails
  - A representative of the Warburton Golf Club to discuss impacts and opportunities arising from the proposed Trail Head at the Club
  - A representative from local business organisation CEDA

- Representatives of DELWP and Park Victoria were consulted on the current recreational use of the project area. This informed our assessment of the impact on other recreation users, including bushwalkers and horse riders
- A representative of the Millgrove Resident Action Group to consider local impacts and community development.

The contribution of interview responses to the report is detailed in the relevant sections.

## **6.3 AVOIDANCE AND DESIGN**

The following measures have been adopted in relation to the design, construction and operation of the project to avoid and minimise socioeconomic impacts:

- Minimisation of trails on private property (including modifications to avoid Merlino Avenue and Old Warburton properties)
- Minimisation of trails near residences by focusing trails in natural areas
- Provision of additional parking at Warburton Golf Course and Wesburn Park to cater for peak parking demand
- Use of small construction teams and small plant and equipment for construction of trails
- Restriction of construction works to normal working hours
- Staged construction of the project over several years to enable adjustment of businesses and communities.

## **6.4 RISK ASSESSMENT**

### **6.4.1 RISK OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE**

A risk assessment has been completed to identify risks associated with construction and operation of the project. The risk-based approach is integral to the EES as required by Section 3.1 of the Scoping Requirements and the Ministerial guidelines for assessment of the environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978.

Specifically, the EES risk assessment aimed to:

- Provide a consistent evaluation tool that is used for all assessments to systematically rate the key issues associated with the project
- Identify key risks associated with the project that may require further examination through the detailed impact assessments
- Inform project development and/or development of measures to avoid, mitigate and manage environmental impacts.
- The full risk register can be found in Appendix 1.

### **6.4.2 RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

The risk assessment process adopted is consistent with AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management Process. The following tasks were undertaken to identify, analyse and evaluate risks:

- Use existing socioeconomic conditions and identify applicable legislation and policy to establish the context for the risk assessment
- Develop likelihood and consequence criteria and a risk matrix
- Consider construction and operational activities in the context of existing conditions to determine risk pathways



- Identify standard controls and requirements to mitigate identified risks
- Assign likelihood and consequence ratings for each risk to determine risk ratings considering design, proposed activities and standard mitigation.

The assessment of risk combines the consequences of a threat and the likelihood of that consequence occurring, resulting in an overall risk rating. Any risk with an overall rating of medium or above requires further analysis in line with the avoid, minimise or manage hierarchy.

Risk can be defined as a combination of:

- The magnitude of potential consequences of an event occurring
- The likelihood of the consequence event occurring.

### 6.4.3 ASSIGNING A CONSEQUENCE LEVEL

Consequence refers to the outcome of an event affecting an asset, value or use. Table 6-1 presents the consequence framework describing the consequence levels from 'insignificant' to 'severe'. The consequence criteria have been developed in the form of project-wide criteria rather than discipline-specific, to enable a consistent assessment of consequences across a range of potential environmental effects.

Consequence criteria are assigned based on the maximum credible consequence of the risk pathway occurring. Where uncertainty regarding consequences existed, a conservative approach to assessing risk has been adopted.

Consequence criteria considered the following characteristics:

- Spatial extent of impact
- Duration and reversibility of potential impacts
- Sensitivity and significance of the receiving environment
- Magnitude, or severity of potential impact.

Each risk pathway has been assigned a level of consequence taking into account the guidance in Table 6-1.

**Table 6-1: Guide to consequence levels**

LEVEL	CRITERIA
Insignificant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No detectable changes or very short-term and localised</li> <li>▪ Readily reversible (insignificant) impact (&lt;1 year for recovery)</li> <li>▪ Resilient or highly disturbed receiving environment or population</li> <li>▪ Social: No measurable impact to local character, amenity and access to public space/facilities. General community support, no impact on the economy</li> </ul>
Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Short-term localised detectable changes</li> <li>▪ Impact likely to be readily reversible (within five years for recovery)</li> <li>▪ Resilient or disturbed receiving environment or population</li> <li>▪ Social: Low degree of impact to local character, amenity and access to public space/facilities. Individual opposition to the project, short term isolated economic issues</li> </ul>
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Short or medium-term detectable changes at a number of locations within the study area</li> <li>▪ Impact likely to be medium-term and reversible (5-10 years for recovery)</li> <li>▪ Undisturbed receiving environment or population</li> <li>▪ Social: Limited degree of impact to local character, amenity and access to public space/facilities, some community resistance, economic pressure on community</li> </ul>
Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Long-term changes that are significant regionally</li> </ul>

LEVEL	CRITERIA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impact likely to be medium to long-term and potentially irreversible (&gt; 10 years to recover).</li> <li>▪ Sensitive receiving environment or population</li> <li>▪ Social: High degree of impact to local character, amenity and access to public space/facilities. Vocal community conflict, declining economic stability</li> </ul>
Severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Permanent changes that are significant at a State or Commonwealth level</li> <li>▪ Impact likely to be long-term and irreversible</li> <li>▪ Highly sensitive receiving environment or population</li> <li>▪ Heritage: Very high degree of heritage destruction or loss of heritage values</li> <li>▪ Social: Very high degree of impact to local character, amenity and access to public space/facilities. Public backlash, economic distress</li> </ul>

#### 6.4.4 ASSIGNING A LIKELIHOOD LEVEL

‘Likelihood’ is the combination of the chance of an event and the chance of the identified consequence occurring. The likelihood criteria range from ‘rare’ where the event and consequence may occur only in exceptional circumstances to ‘almost certain’ where the event and consequence is expected to occur in most circumstances. Likelihoods are assigned for the maximum credible consequence according to the levels presented in Table 6-2.

**Table 6-2: Guide to likelihood levels**

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Rare	The event could occur but only in exceptional circumstances
Unlikely	The event could occur but is not expected in the course of normal circumstances
Possible	The event may occur in the course of normal circumstances
Likely	The event will probably occur in the course of most normal circumstances
Almost Certain	The event is expected to occur in the course of most normal circumstances

#### 6.4.5 ASSIGNING A LEVEL OF RISK

Risk is defined as the combination of the likelihood of an event occurring and the consequence of that event occurring. A risk rating was determined by these factors using the risk matrix, presented in Table 6-3.

**Table 6-3: Risk matrix**

		CONSEQUENCE RATING				
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
LIKELIHOOD RATING	Rare	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Medium	Medium
	Unlikely	Very Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Possible	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	High
	Likely	Low	Medium	High	High	Very High
	Almost certain	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Very High

When risks are rated as medium or above, the impacts associated with the risk pathway are assessed in an increasing level of detail and will prompt further exploration of potential mitigation and management actions to reduce the overall impact.

## 6.5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHOD

This study has assessed the socioeconomic impacts of construction and operation of the project. The methods used to assess the impacts were a combination of desktop review and interviews as outlined above in Section 6.2.

## 6.6 ASSESSMENT OF ALTERNATIVE TO TRAIL 1

The alternative trails to Trail 1 are not near houses or businesses. The only potential impact is on other recreational users. To assess this impact, we relied on information provided by Yarra Ranges Council. Yarra Ranges Council had discussed the potential impact with Nigel Brennan, Yarra District Manager, DEWLP, as well as conducting stakeholder consultation on the alternative trails.

## 6.7 LIMITATIONS, UNCERTAINTIES, ASSUMPTIONS

### 6.7.1 LIMITATIONS

The following limitations may impact the findings and conclusions of this assessment:

- The assessment was predominantly conducted during the period of Stage 4 Covid-restrictions in the project area. This meant the project team was unable to travel to Warburton in this assessment phase, and instead relied on remote engagement with key stakeholders, previous engagement reporting from Council, and insights from the project team’s previous work in Warburton in 2018. Additional consultation – particularly with a cross-section of residents would have helped validate key impact assessments and strengthen mitigation options.
- The project team was unable to discuss the interests, issues and concerns of all key contacts and community groups. Messages were left with all contacts highlighted by Council; however, several contacts were unable to be reached within the timeframe for this assessment.
- Assessing the impact of increased tourism and traffic on social cohesion and local amenity is subjective. The project team has drawn on leading Australian research in considering these dynamics. Encouraging community members to continue to provide their own insights to help validate assessments.

- The impact of state- and national-level events was not considered as part of this assessment (regional and local events were considered).

### 6.7.2 ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions have been factored into the findings and conclusions of this assessment:

**Table 6-4: Assumptions**

ASSUMPTION	REFERENCE
<b>General</b>	
Further consultations with community groups and residents would help alleviate some concerns and misunderstandings in the community.	-
Further consultations with residents directly impacted by proposed trails would be conducted in good faith.	-
<b>Design</b>	
A trail head would be established at Warburton Golf Club.	YRC Masterplan
An additional masterplan and approvals process would be undertaken for any significant upgrade of Wesburn Park	Correspondence – Yarra Ranges Council
<b>Operation</b>	
Visitor numbers and associated economic activity.	TRC Tourism (2021) <i>Economic Assessment</i> .
New parking spaces would be provided as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Golf course trail head to have 165 spaces</li> <li>• Mount Tugwell to have seven spaces for drop off/pick up only</li> <li>• Wesburn Park to have an additional 120 car parks (340 total)</li> </ul> Car parking space numbers remain the same as existing at Mount Donna Buang (240).	YRC Masterplan

## 6.8 INPUTS FROM OTHER EES TECHNICAL REPORTS

To assess the socioeconomic impacts, RMCG drew on the traffic and transport technical report, to evaluate the socioeconomic impact of traffic on Warburton residents

# 7 Existing conditions

The existing conditions of the socioeconomic environment being considered throughout this assessment are described in this section.

## 7.1 PRIVATE LAND USE ADJACENT AND NEAR PROPOSED TRAILS

The proposed trails currently intersect five residential properties and run within approximately 100m of a further 29 private residences (see Table 7-1).

**Table 7-1: Properties adjacent and near proposed trails**

TRAIL #	# PROPERTIES INTERSECTED BY TRAIL	# PROPERTIES WITHIN APPROX. 100M OF TRAIL
1	-	4
2	-	4
9		9
10	1	10
11		2
17	1	
18	1	
19	1	
20	1	
43	2	
44	1	
55		2
61		2
<b>Total individual properties</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>29</b>

Yarra Ranges Council has been in discussion with all five owners whose properties are intersected by trails and has approached adjacent landholders. Of those directly impacted, one landholder is satisfied with the status of negotiations with Council (although further discussions would be required to formalise and finalise agreements). Further discussions are also required with the three other residents. None of these landholders are explicitly opposed to the development, however, each require further planning details from Yarra Ranges Council, and they have privacy, remuneration and safety issues still to be resolved. Specifically, these issues include:

- Residents are unclear of specific trail details and are unable to consider impacts without understanding the scope of proposed construction/operations.
- Residents are concerned with potential liveability and property value impacts of proposed upgrades to Wesburn Park trail head.
- Residents believe fencing, screening and planting of vegetation would be required to support privacy and cause minimal impact to their property.
- The trail would bisect one property at the top of the block, meaning riders would potentially be able to look down to the residential dwelling
- Some residents use properties for moto-cross and hunting meaning safety issues must be resolved
- Residents are concerned about trail users accessing properties (as bushwalkers currently do); primary risk relates to safety for resident children.

## 7.2 BUSINESS AND ECONOMY IN WARBURTON

Warburton was formed as a gold mining town during the gold rush. In the past, the town has relied economically on gold mining, forestry, and manufacturing. The importance of these industries has declined, and the importance of the forestry industry will decline further in Warburton in the future following the Victorian Government's decision to close native timber harvesting by 2030.

According to the Draft Warburton Place Plan, it is estimated that there are 250 businesses that operate in Warburton ('main street' Warburton, excluding Wesburn and Millgrove) employing 744 people and generating \$180 million. Key industry sectors in employment terms are service industries such as 'Accommodation & Food Services' (144 jobs), 'Education & Training' (104 jobs) and 'Retail Trade' (87 jobs)<sup>1</sup>.

Warburton is an emerging tourism destination within the Yarra Valley, with high visitor numbers during the peak times of weekends and school holidays. The town supports a range of shops, cafes and other businesses that service the town.

There has been a shift in the type of businesses operating in Warburton over the last five years, as tourist numbers and population have increased. For example, there are several new cafés and some specialty stores, such as a wine bar, that have opened during this period. While some businesses open seven days a week, the majority operate for reduced hours during the quieter periods on weekdays, and a small number of restaurants are only open three or four evenings per week<sup>2</sup>.

Anecdotally, some entrepreneurs have already started investing in Warburton based on the number of tourists already visiting the town and the proposed Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. These businesses include bicycle focussed retailers, an adventure tours business and accommodation set up to provide for mountain bikers. Further to that, there are investors in the planning phase of establishing new businesses in Warburton, most likely influenced by the establishment of the mountain bike park.

There are no direct estimates of visitor numbers to Warburton. However, we have estimated overnight visitors from the available accommodation in Warburton. 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

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<sup>1</sup> Yarra Ranges Council (2020) *Draft Warburton Place Plan* (unpublished document)

<sup>2</sup> RMCG (2018) *Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Project: Social Impacts Assessment*.

accommodation sites Airbnb and Vrbo<sup>3</sup>. Based on the above capacity, we have estimated that there are 63,000 visitor nights per year in Warburton<sup>4</sup>.

### 7.3 CURRENT USES OF THE PROPOSED AREA

Traversing Mt Donna Buang, Mt Little Joe, Mt Tugwell and the O’Shannassy Aqueduct, the proposed trails intersect with a range of existing recreational uses. Some of the area is within the Yarra Ranges National Park, the management plan for which states that a significant management direction for the park is to provide “a range of nature-based visitor settings and activities, with a primary focus on day visitors”<sup>5</sup>.

A summary of tracks and trails used for bushwalking, horse riding, trail bike riding and 4WDing that may be affected by the project is provided in Table 7-2. Peak usage times are weekends and school holidays<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 7-2: Current uses of the proposed area**

TRACK/TRAIL	PRIMARY EXISTING USERS	PEAK ESTIMATED USAGE (PER DAY, EXCLUDING ONE-OFF EVENTS)
Mt Donna Buang Walking Track	Bushwalkers	50 <sup>7</sup>
O’Shannassy Aqueduct Trail	Walkers, cyclists, horse riders	500 <sup>8</sup>
Mt Little Joe Backstairs Loop	Bushwalkers, trail bike riding	30 <sup>9</sup>
Highway Walking Track	Bushwalkers, trail runners	<10 <sup>10</sup>
Cemetery Track	4WDers	<5
Crusher Creek Track	Walkers, horse riders	<10
Lilydale – Warburton Rail Trail (Warburton-Millgrove)	Walkers, cyclists, horse riders	7,000 (184 users per km) <sup>11</sup>

### 7.4 TRAFFIC IN WARBURTON

#### 7.4.1 DRIVING

The road network within the study area provides a good level of accessibility from all directions to and from Wesburn, Warburton and East Warburton<sup>12</sup>. Warburton Highway acts as the primary connector between the three townships, as well as providing access from Yarra Junction, Lilydale and the broader Melbourne metropolitan area. The highway also provides the main connection to other tourist destinations within the Yarra

<sup>3</sup> Airdna Market Minder (2020) *Warburton*, <https://www.airdna.co/vacation-rental-data/app/au/victoria/melbourne/warburton/overview>

<sup>4</sup> Based on occupancy rates of 65% for hotels and motels, 54% for holiday park cabins (str (2020) *Australian Accommodation Monitor – Summary: For the year of July 2018–June 2019* (<https://str.com/aam>); 25% for camping and caravans (RMCG estimate) and 25% for Airbnb and Vrbo (Krause, A. & Aschwanden, G. (c.2017) *A Census of Melbourne’s Airbnb Market* (<https://cpb-ap-se2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.unimelb.edu.au/dist/b/193/files/2017/03/censusAnalysis-2hd2q7t.pdf>)).

<sup>5</sup> Parks Victoria (2002) Yarra Ranges National Park Management Plan (accessed via <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/yarra-ranges-national-park>)

<sup>6</sup> Pers comm. Yarra Ranges Council.

<sup>7</sup> Interview. 22 Oct 2020. Parks Victoria.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Interview. 22 Oct 2020. DELWP.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Yarra Ranges Council. 10 November 2020. Correspondence ‘Recent trail usage data–Week Ending 8th Nov 2020’.

<sup>12</sup> Salt3 (2019) *Local Movement and Transport Report*.

Valley such as Healesville and Marysville. Donna Buang Road and Woods Point Road provide further connections to the north and east respectively.

The traffic volumes for the local roads have been adopted from the SALT 2018 tube counts undertaken between Tuesday 23 October 2018 to Monday 29 October 2018 and DELWP counts undertaken between Wednesday 23 November 2016 to Tuesday 13 December 2016. Note the VicRoads Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) was used for Warburton Highway (Wesburn) and Donna Buang Summit Road as these were higher than the SALT 2018 tube counts. These are summarised in Table 7-3<sup>13</sup>.

**Table 7-3: Traffic estimates**

LOCATION	AVERAGE WEEKDAY TRAFFIC VOLUMES	PEAK WEEKEND TRAFFIC VOLUMES
	Vehicles per day (vpd)	Vehicles per day (vpd)
Mayer Bridge, Warburton	1,100 vpd	1,100 vpd (Sat)
Warburton Highway, Warburton	6,600 vpd	7,000 vpd (Sat)
Warburton Highway, Wesburn	7,100 vpd	7,100 vpd
Donna Buang Road		
(Near Warburton Highway)	900 vpd	1,300 vpd (Sun)
Donna Buang Summit Road	4,200 vpd	4,200 vpd
Old Warburton Highway (east of Warburton Highway)	340 vpd	390 vpd (Sat)
Old Warburton Highway (south of Prospect Avenue)	460 vpd	500 vpd (Sat)
Old Warburton Highway (north of Mt Bridge Road)	130 vpd	170(Sat)

With one primary thoroughfare (Warburton Highway), Warburton residents have indicated traffic congestion in town is increasingly a challenge. Through traffic moves through the core of the Warburton, Wesburn and East Warburton townships, increasing total vehicle volumes and reducing pedestrian amenity.

Key findings from the consultation of Warburton's Place Plan identified that:

- Warburton's single main road access point is constraining especially in relation to emergencies
- Only 3 per cent of residents take public transport to work, compared to a 6 per cent average for the Yarra Ranges Shire
- Footpaths linking the different sides of the town, public transport, lighting around town, walkability, car tourism, transport management, connectivity and disability access all need improvement
- Pedestrian routes connecting to destinations outside the core are indirect and discontinuous, including towards the golf club and accommodation areas to the north and west of the Warburton township
- Some sections of footpath are too narrow to allow wheelchairs or prams to pass one another, including along Warburton Highway between the two commercial areas of Warburton.

<sup>13</sup> Traffic estimates produced by Salt3 (2019) *Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Project Proposed Trail Heads: Traffic impact assessment*. p. 7.



While below capacity limits, Old Warburton Road is a narrow and winding access road for residents and a transit route for visitors to popular attractions such as La La Falls. Similarly, concerns have been raised by residents regarding the existing capacity and safety of Donna Buang Road. Since 2014<sup>14</sup> there have been 14 recorded casualty crashes on Donna Buang Road on the sections between Warburton Highway and the Donna Buang summit.

#### **7.4.2 PARKING**

Warburton residents have indicated that parking in Warburton is a challenge for residents and businesses, particularly along Warburton Highway within the township. There are 416 formal public parking spaces available within the study area. Of these spaces, 300 are located on-street with the remaining 116 spaces located in off-street carparks. Similarly, the Local Movement and Transport Report highlighted the limited on-street parking and the challenge of providing enough car parking to satisfy demand for all users. This report also noted that the width along some streets is insufficient to accommodate traffic flow as well as provide parking space.

A 2018 parking survey however indicated parking was generally available during peak periods (albeit located away from the Main Street and is not well known and therefore underutilised). The Thomas Avenue precinct was found to have the highest peak utilisation during the observation period (76 per cent at 12 noon on a Saturday). This means that despite concerns, parking supply is probably sufficient to meet existing demand and not significantly affect local businesses – although residents' report holiday traffic means parking is in short supply already.

Trail head parking (Mt Donna Buang, Mt Tugwell, Wesburn and Warburton Golf Club) would require significant upgrades, as identified in the Traffic Assessment.

### **7.5 HOUSING IN WARBURTON**

#### **7.5.1 RENTERS**

In 2016, 18 per cent of homes in Warburton were rented<sup>15</sup>. Local real estate agents report comparatively low numbers of rental properties available compared to other parts of the region. For example, at the time of writing only two domestic properties were listed for rent across the entire 3799 postcode area<sup>16</sup>.

More broadly, the whole Yarra Ranges Shire has very little social housing. Data reported in 2016 showed that the vast majority of rented properties in the Yarra Ranges were rented privately (95 per cent of rental properties, or 15 per cent of all homes). Only 2 per cent of rental properties (0.4 per cent of all homes) in the region were social housing.

In Warburton, based on ABS 2016 statistics, of the 185 homes that are rented, 95 housed families on a low income (<\$800, based on the lowest income quartile across Victoria). 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 5 per cent of all households and 34 per cent of renters. This is broadly similar to the results for the Yarra Ranges as a whole.

It is likely that rental prices have been increasing over the past five years in line with house prices. Available data shows that the median rental price increased \$100 from \$265 in 2016 to \$365 in 2020<sup>17</sup>. This is lower

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> ABS (2016) Census of Population and Housing. Proportions provided exclude households for which data does not exist ('not stated').

<sup>16</sup> Properties listed on RealEstate.Com on 27/10/20.

<sup>17</sup> Current median rental price was sourced from realestate.com.au, the 2016 median rental price was sourced from microburbs.com.au.

than the average across Melbourne, which was reported to be \$485 in October 2020<sup>18</sup>. While rental prices may have dropped during COVID19 it is likely that they will continue to rise in the future.

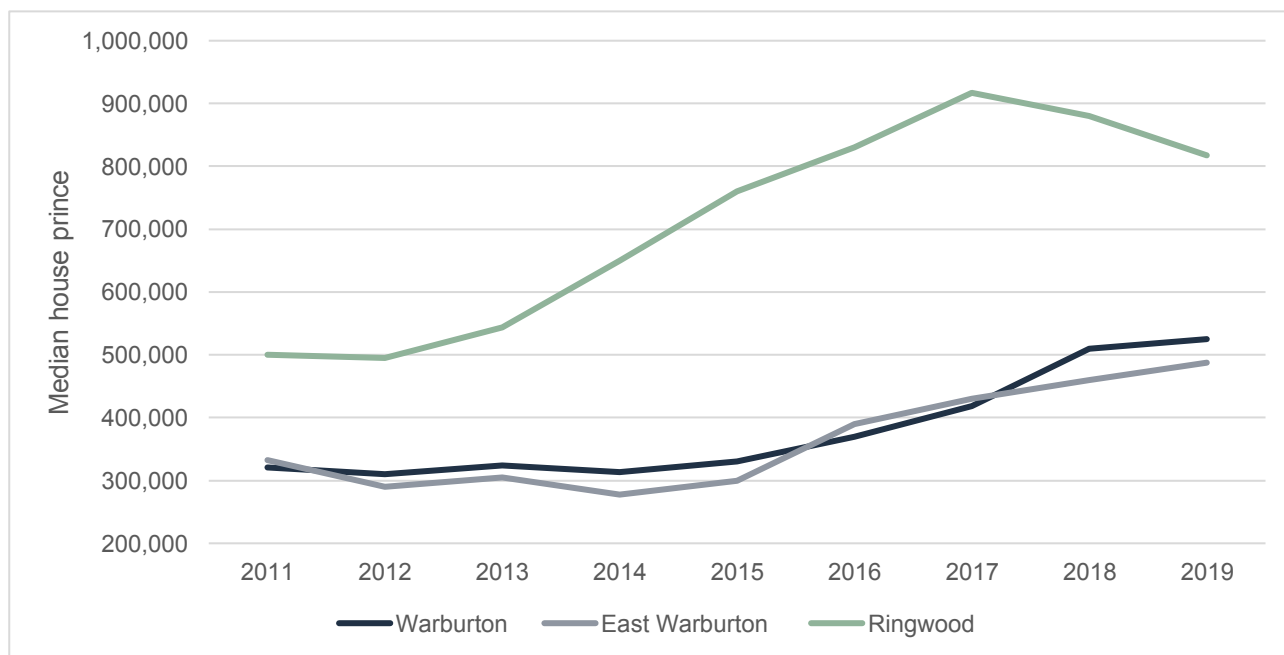
Whilst average household incomes have increased broadly in line with increasing rental costs, social support payments have not risen at the same pace, increasing the level of rental stress on households relying on such payments. The level of rentals in the Yarra Ranges that are affordable to people accessing social support payments fell from 28 per cent of rental dwellings (in March 2007) to 8 per cent (December 2016)<sup>19</sup>, and in 2017 was lower in the Yarra Ranges than across the Melbourne Metropolitan area, regional Victoria and Victoria as a whole.

In summary, there is a low number of rented houses on the market in Warburton and the weekly rental price has increased significantly over time. There are a number of households experiencing rental stress, where the cost of rent accounts for more than 30 per cent of household income, making them vulnerable to any increases in rental prices. Social support payments have not increased at the same rate as rental prices have, which may be putting more families under rental stress.

### 7.5.2 HOMEOWNERS

Most households within Warburton and surrounds live in purchased homes – 40 per cent are owned outright, and 41 per cent are owned with a mortgage<sup>20</sup>.

Over the period 2011 to 2019, median house prices in Warburton and East Warburton have increased by 6% and 5% per year, respectively. This is in line with increases in the Melbourne suburb of Ringwood. Median house prices in Warburton have increased by over 59 per cent since 2015, from \$330,000 to \$525,000 and 63 per cent in East Warburton, from \$300,000 to \$487,500 (Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Median house price in Warburton and East Warburton from 2015-2019<sup>21</sup>**

<sup>18</sup> REIV (2020) *Residential Rental* (<https://reiv.com.au/property-data/residential-rental>)

<sup>19</sup> Yarra Ranges Council (2017) *Yarra Ranges Health and Wellbeing Profile*.

<sup>20</sup> ABS (2016) Census of Population and Housing. Proportions provided exclude households for which data does not exist ('not stated').

<sup>21</sup> Based on property price trend from realestate.com.au.

## 7.6 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE IN WARBURTON

There is a range of community facilities and services in Warburton that meet the day-to-day needs of the community. These include a kindergarten, primary school, not-for-profit community service and recreational facilities. For more specialist services residents need to travel to Yarra Junction, Lilydale and beyond. The town offers a range of hospitality and entertainment services/businesses. The Upper Yarra Arts Centre is an important arts and culture hub. The Centre offers a range of films, theatre productions and workshops<sup>22</sup>.

### 7.6.1 SERVICES

Warburton, Wesburn, Millgrove and East Warburton are supported by a range of services, summarised in Table 7-4. 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 nearest hospital is a day hospital in Lilydale operated by Yarra Ranges Health.

**Table 7-4: Warburton services**

	EDUCATIONAL AMENITY	COMMUNITY AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AMENITY
Within community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wesburn Primary School</li> <li>▪ Warburton Primary School</li> <li>▪ Millwarra Primary School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Yarra Ranges Enterprise Centre (YREC)</li> <li>▪ MISFIT Theatre</li> <li>▪ Warburton Valley CEDA (Community Economic Development Association) Inc</li> <li>▪ Redwood Community Centre</li> <li>▪ Warburton Seventh-Day Adventist Church</li> </ul>
Within broader catchment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Little Yarra Primary School</li> <li>▪ St Joseph’s School</li> <li>▪ Caulfield Grammar (Yarra Junction)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cire Community Hub</li> <li>▪ Upper Yarra Partnership</li> </ul>

### 7.6.2 RECREATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Warburton’s natural environment and green space are at the heart of its appeal and character. This has been complemented by built features such as trails, parks, playgrounds and leisure facilities (listed below). (These are in addition to the State Forest and National Parks surrounding the township, whose values are considered in other sections:)

- Recreation feature
- Warburton Main Street Playground
- Warburton Water World
- Wesburn Park Playground
- Wesburn Park (including an off-leash dog park)
- Wesburn Recreation Camp/Bushland Reserve
- Dolly Grey Park
- Warburton Recreation Reserve
- Warburton Recreation Reserve
- O’Shannassy Aqueduct Trail
- Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail
- McKenzie King Drive Reserve
- Millgrove Recreation Reserve
- Warburton Golf Club.

<sup>22</sup> Yarra Ranges Council (2018) *Let’s Talk About Warby*.

These facilities provide residents with a mix of green-space amenity, physical fitness opportunities and opportunities for social connection. Key recreational-space issues identified in the Warburton Place Plan Engagement and Directions Paper currently include:

- The community is seeking more vibrant public places
- New performance spaces, events, and initiatives for young people
- More public amenities needed including public toilets, playgrounds, rubbish bins and drinking water access
- Safety is an issue for some, particularly public lighting
- Wi-Fi access and places to 'hang out' (at night).

Warburton has high rates of bins per resident and frequent collection of those bins. An overview of rubbish bins is included in Figure 6 and a list of public toilets in the area is included below.

- 3457 Warburton Highway
- 3381 Warburton Highway
- 2442 Warburton Highway
- 29 Thomas Ave
- Mt Donna Buang (Donna Buang Rd)
- Cement Creek (Acheron Way).



**Figure 6: Rubbish bins in Warburton**

### 7.6.3 HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Warburton once had its own hospital, but this was closed in 2000. Warburton is now serviced by 24-hour emergency at Healesville, Maroondah, Knox, and Ferntree Gully, which are 31, 45, 48 and 49 kilometres from Warburton respectively.

## 7.7 WARBURTON LABOUR FORCE

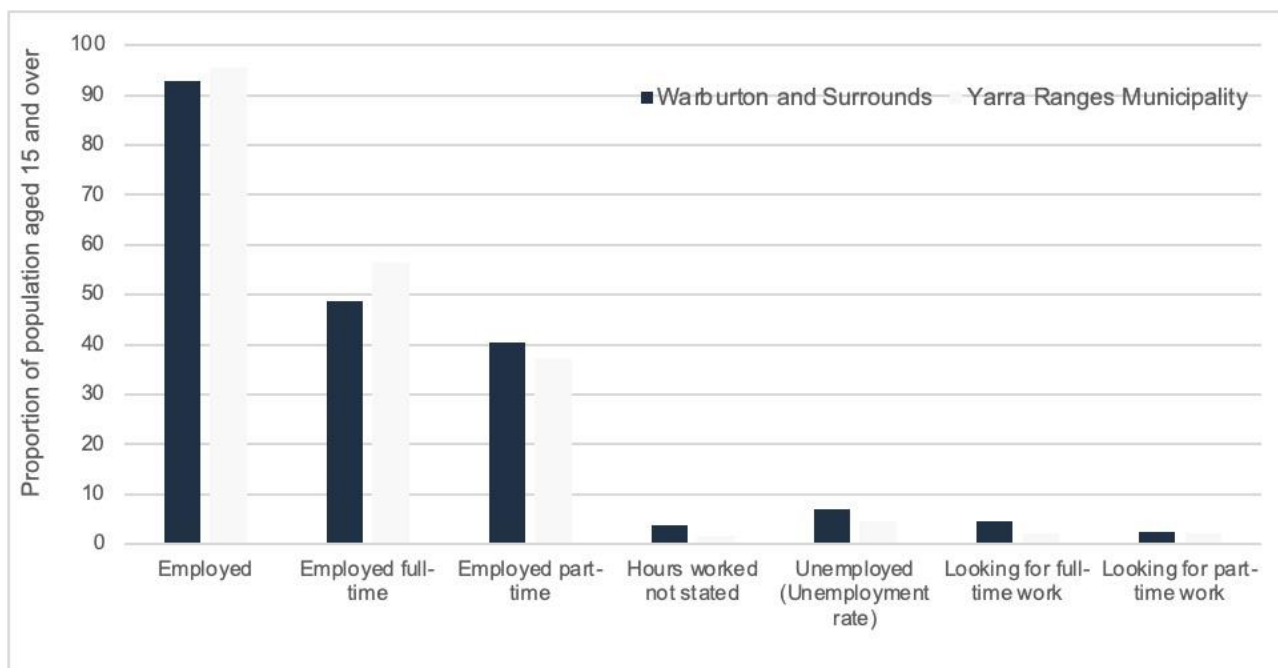
### 7.7.1 LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Warburton is a town experiencing social disadvantage. The SEIFA index for the area is 937, indicating disadvantage across a number of areas. 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. The population not in the labour force includes people that are not working or are unavailable to start work for a variety of reasons including full-time caregivers, those in education, retired people, and those that are temporarily or permanently unable to work.

Of the 1,267 people in the labour force, 1,177 (93 per cent) were employed. A total of 89 people (7 per cent) were unemployed. This unemployment rate was higher than that of the YRC region as a whole (5 per cent).



**Figure 7: Labour force statistics for Warburton and Surrounds and Yarra Ranges Municipality (ABS, 2016)**

Among the 296 young people aged between 15 and 24, 40 (14 per cent) were 'fully disengaged' from the labour force – meaning they were not employed, seeking work or in any form of education. This represents a measure of youth disengagement from the labour force which is significantly higher than that for the wider Yarra Ranges as a whole (8 per cent).

### 7.7.2 EMPLOYMENT

In 2016, the top five industries for employment for residents of Warburton and Surrounds accounted 53 per cent of all residents' employment:

- Health Care and Social Assistance (161 people, 14 per cent of employment)
- Education and Training (130 people, 11 per cent)
- Retail Trade (116 people, 10 per cent)
- Construction (107 people, 9 per cent)
- Accommodation and Food Services (99 people, 9 per cent).

Amongst these top five industries, only construction has seen a fall in the number of employed persons in the decade from 2006-2016 (-11 people). The other four major sectors have all seen growth in that time, including an additional 29 people employed in Accommodation and Food Services – potentially linked to a growth in tourism in the region over that time period.

### 7.7.3 DISTANCE TO WORK

In both Warburton and East Warburton, 12 per cent of residents travelled between 2.5 and 10km for work – a range which includes some of the nearby towns within the Yarra Valley. However, a majority of people in both suburbs travel outside the local area for work, with 66 per cent (in Warburton) and 76 per cent (in East Warburton) of employed persons travelling more than 10km for work. The number of people who work locally is low; in Warburton, 93 people (13 per cent of all employed persons) travelled up to 2.5km to work, with the number in East Warburton being less than 1 per cent.

## 7.8 SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion is a complex measurement of a community’s connectedness, focusing on the sense of belonging to a community and relationships among community members<sup>23</sup>. For the purposes of this assessment, following the OECD definition, indicators of social cohesion are social mobility, social capital and social exclusion<sup>24</sup>.

### 7.8.1 SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility is the association between parents’ and adult children’s socioeconomic standing, where higher association means less mobility. A comparison of ABS census data from 2001 to 2016 is provided in Table 7-5.

**Table 7-5: Indicators of social mobility<sup>25</sup>**

SOCIAL MOBILITY MEASURE	2001		2016	
	Warburton	Australia	Warburton	Australia
Unemployment rate	10.5%	7.4%	7.0%	6.8%
Has need for financial assistance	-	-	11.0%	5.8%
Did not complete Year 12	58.0%	50.2%	41.0%	37.4%
Bachelor/post graduate degree	8.4%	11.5%	15.1%	33.2%

This data indicates residents in the Warburton and surrounding townships are currently experiencing upward social mobility. This is broadly consistent with national trends, notwithstanding that Warburton residents on average still experience higher rates of unemployment, lower levels of educational attainment and higher rates of financial assistance.

<sup>23</sup> Scalon Foundation (2019) *Social Cohesion*.

<sup>24</sup> OECD (2011), *Perspectives on Global Development 2012: Social Cohesion in a Shifting World*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [https://doi.org/10.1787/persp\\_glob\\_dev-2012-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/persp_glob_dev-2012-en).

<sup>25</sup> ABS Census 2001 & 2016.

## 7.8.2 SOCIAL CAPITAL

For the purposes of this assessment, social capital relates to the local networks that facilitate co-operation within or among groups<sup>26</sup>. It refers to the bonds, bridges and linkages that connect people and groups that support communities socially and economically.

In the absence of social capital-specific survey data, three measures have been used to consider current social capital in Warburton: volunteerism, sense of belonging and community trust.

### Volunteerism

According to 2016 Census results, volunteerism rates in Yarra Shire Council was 21.3 per cent, higher than both the State (19.3 per cent) and national average (19.3 per cent). Anecdotally, volunteerism in the Warburton, Wesburn and East Warburton townships is believed to be high; illustrated in the activity of local action groups. These groups include the Millgrove Action Group, Old Warburton Residents Association, Warburton Advancement League, community centres such as the Redwood Centre and social enterprises such as Koha Café.

### Sense of belonging

Anecdotally, there is a strong sense of belonging across Wesburn, Millgrove, Old Warburton and East Warburton. Each has its own identity, character and clear sense of belonging among residents. High participation in local working bees, community markets and community planning indicate a sense of collective responsibility and commitment to local causes and action.

### Community trust

Warburton, and surrounding townships, has a high proportion of long-term residents, promoting familiarity, connection and trust. Many residents chose to relocate to Warburton based on an alignment of values and interests – particularly in community pockets such as Old Warburton. Some value fissures do exist within and between communities, including between some lifestyle residents and residents born locally. Rates of community participation however indicate a general commitment to local protection and advancement, strengthening opportunities for trust-building and resilience.

## 7.8.3 SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Social exclusion describes a community in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a community<sup>27</sup>. To measure this in the study area, three indicators have been considered: income equality, housing affordability and relative socio-economic disadvantage.

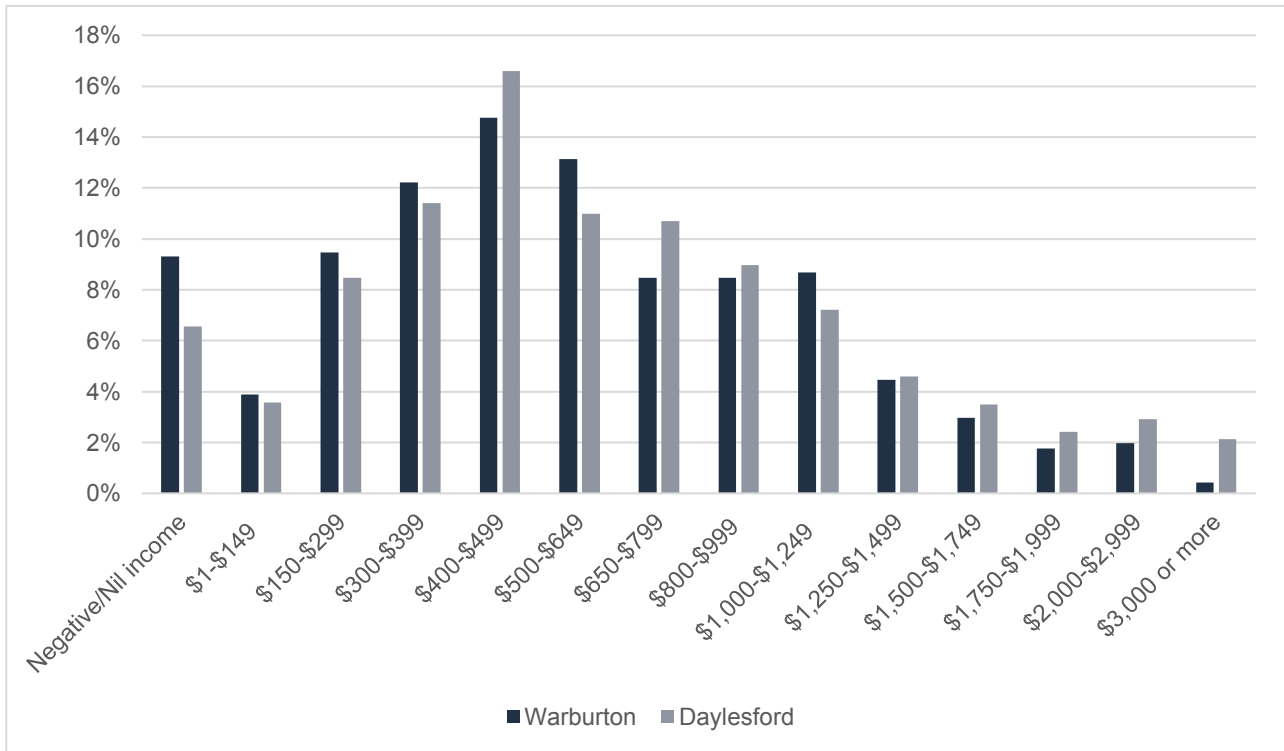
### Income equality

To analyse income inequality in Warburton, the income distribution in Warburton and Daylesford are compared. Daylesford has a similar population to Warburton, and also has a well-developed tourist economy. Income distributions for Warburton and Daylesford for 2016 are shown in Figure 8. It appears that the income distribution in Warburton is broadly similar to that in Daylesford, although incomes are generally lower in Warburton than in Daylesford.

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<sup>26</sup> OECD (2010) *Human Capital/Social Capital*.

<sup>27</sup> UN (2012) *Identifying social inclusion and exclusion*.



**Figure 8: Weekly income distribution, Warburton and Daylesford, 2016**

**Housing affordability**

As noted earlier, 60 households are experiencing rental stress in Warburton. Average house prices were \$525,000 in 2019 and have increased significantly over the five years before that.

**Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage**

Based on data from the 2016 Census, Warburton township recorded an index rating of 937, falling into the second decile for the state. This means that socio-economic disadvantage in the local area was assessed to be very high<sup>28</sup>.

**7.9 TRAIL 1 AND THE ALTERNATIVE TO TRAIL 1**

The end of Trail 1 is within 30-50m of three landholders on Sussex St. The alternatives to Trail 1 are not in the vicinity of houses, businesses, or recreational users.

<sup>28</sup> See ABS (2016) SEIFA.



## 8 Risk Assessment

A risk assessment of project activities was performed in accordance with the methodology described in Section 6.4. The risk assessment has been used as a screening tool to prioritise the focus of the impact assessments and development of mitigation measures. The risk pathways link project activities (causes) to their potential effects on the environmental assets, values or uses that are considered in more detail in the impact assessment. Risks were assessed for the construction and operation phases of the project.

The identified risks and associated residual risk ratings are listed in Table 8-1. The likelihood and consequence ratings determined during the risk assessment process and the mitigation measures to be achieved are presented in Appendix A.

**Table 8-1: Risk level (after mitigation)**

RISK ID	RISK PATHWAY	LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCE	FINAL RISK RATING
<b>Construction</b>				
Risk A: Impact of project works on business (including tourism) operations or other existing or approved land uses, including private land use.	A1: Project work teams for trail construction disrupt local residents.	Almost certain	Minor	Medium
	A2: Project works teams for construction of trail heads disrupt local residents.	Almost certain	Minor	Medium
	A3: Project works adversely impacts local business/recreation operators.	Unlikely	Minor	Low
	A4: Traffic delays resulting from bridge construction adversely impacts local amenity, convenience and business.	Almost certain	Insignificant	Low
<b>Operation</b>				
Risk B: impact of project operations on business (including tourism) operations.	B1: Existing local business are replaced by new businesses.	Possible	Minor	Low
Risk C: Impact of project operations on private land use.	C1: Project operations in Wesburn impact residents' privacy and amenity.	Possible	Minor	Low
	C2: Project operations reduces appeal and	Possible	Moderate	Medium

	sustainability of the Warburton golf club.			
	C3: Project operations in Warburton impact residents' privacy and amenity.	Possible	Minor	Low
Risk D: Impact of project operations on other existing or approved land uses.	D1: Project operations impacts access, safety and enjoyment of other recreation users.	Almost certain	Minor	Medium
Risk E: Socioeconomic impacts: increased traffic.	E1: Increased traffic impacts liveability for residents.	Almost certain	Moderate	High
Risk F: Socioeconomic impacts: existing housing.	F1: Reduction in affordable housing stock displaces vulnerable residents.	Likely	Major	High
Risk G: Socioeconomic impacts: community infrastructure.	G1: Increased demand disrupts residents' capacity to access appropriate community infrastructure.	Unlikely	Minor	Low
Risk H: Socioeconomic impacts: employment.	H1: Disadvantaged residents do not benefit from increased employment.	Possible	Moderate	Medium
Risk I: Socioeconomic impacts (other): social cohesion.	I1: Project operations reduce trust, connections and overall cohesion of local communities.	Possible	Moderate	Medium

# 9 Construction impact assessment

## 9.1 SUMMARY

This section discusses the potential impacts of the project as a result of construction activities and the associated mitigation measures that aim to reduce those impacts to as low a level as possible. Each risk identified in Section 8 correlates to a respective impact as outlined below. Mitigation measures referred to are defined in Section 11. The assessment of the potential impacts associated with these items is presented in the subsequent report sections. The likelihood and consequence ratings are assessed according to the guides previously outlined in Section 6.

## 9.2 A: IMPACT OF PROJECT WORKS ON BUSINESS (INCLUDING TOURISM) OPERATIONS OR OTHER EXISTING OR APPROVED LAND USES, INCLUDING PRIVATE LAND USE

### 9.2.1 A1: PROJECT WORK TEAMS FOR TRAIL CONSTRUCTION DISRUPT LOCAL RESIDENTS

#### **Description of impact**

The construction of trails would mean construction teams would be working on land bisecting or adjacent to some local resident's properties. Trail construction may have up to eight teams of four workers at separate trail locations. A review of impacted properties found that five private residences would be directly impacted by trail construction (bisecting property or directly adjacent). A further four properties are within 25m of the trails, while a further 25 properties are within 100m of the trails.

Further potential management and mitigation measures for these five properties are provided in EES Chapter 11: Land use and planning, as well as EES Technical Appendix D: Land use and planning technical report. The residences are listed in Table 9-1.

**Table 9-1: Properties bisected by or adjacent to trail**

PROPERTY	PROPERTY
<b>Properties bisected or directly adjacent to trail</b>	
3310 Warburton Highway, Warburton	670A Old Warburton Road, Wesburn
660 Old Warburton Road, Wesburn	42 Edward Street, Wesburn
40 Martyr Road, Warburton	
<b>Properties within ~25m of trail</b>	
13 Martyr Road, Warburton	17 Martyr Road, Warburton
15 Martyr Road, Warburton	44 Wellington Road, Warburton
<b>Properties within ~100m of trail</b>	
6 Sussex Street, Warburton	3 Kent Street, Warburton
8 Sussex Street, Warburton	5 Kent Street, Warburton
9 Sussex Street, Warburton	11 Martyr Road, Warburton
10 Sussex Street, Warburton	32 Wellington Road, Warburton
11 Sussex Street, Warburton	40 Wellington Road, Warburton
15 Sussex Street, Warburton	42 Wellington Road, Warburton
17 Sussex Street, Warburton	1 Waterloo Avenue, Warburton
21 Sussex Street, Warburton	3 Waterloo Avenue, Warburton
23 Sussex Street, Warburton	10-12 Hooks Road, Warburton
25 Sussex Street, Warburton	6 Station Road, Warburton
3280 Warburton Highway, Warburton	661 Old Warburton Road, Wesburn
3290 Warburton Highway, Warburton	60 Madeley Drive, Wesburn
1 Kent Street, Warburton	

For residents directly impacted by trail construction, it is likely a construction team (of up to four members) would be present with a mechanical digger for between two and seven days on or adjacent to their properties. This may result in noise disturbance and inconvenience in property access. Safety of residents, particularly children, living on properties must be considered as paramount in planning.

For residents indirectly impacted, it is possible that some may experience low-level construction noise (for up to three days, depending on terrain), though are unlikely to encounter privacy or safety issues.

### **Mitigation**

In order to mitigate these impacts it is proposed that construction schedules are developed in partnership with affected residents, firstly through phone or face-to-face discussions, then with letter-drops confirming plans.

Where construction bisects a property, it is recommended that temporary fencing or barriers are placed along trail construction sites to clearly demarcate safe areas for residents. It should be ensured that daily communication between residents and construction teams occurs and that residents have a clear mechanism to raise complaints or concerns, ideally through a single contact at Council.

**Residual impact**

It is expected that trail construction will create minor and short-lived residual impacts on residents in the form of noise disturbance and access inconvenience.

**9.2.2 A2: PROJECT WORK TEAMS FOR TRAIL HEAD CONSTRUCTION DISRUPT LOCAL RESIDENTS**

**Description of impact**

Additional residents are likely to be affected by upgrade works for proposed trail heads at Wesburn Park (Old Warburton Road) and Warburton Golf Club (Dammans Road). This may include increased traffic (and associated noise) and construction noise. Increases in traffic due to these works has been estimated in Table 9-2.

**Table 9-2: Activity associated with upgrades works for trail heads at Wesburn Park (Old Warburton Road) and Warburton Golf Course (Dammans Rd)**

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY	WORKERS REQUIRED PER DAY	WORKERS DAILY TRAFFIC GENERATION	PLANT AND EQUIPMENT REQUIRED (ONE-WAY)	PLANT AND EQUIPMENT DAILY MOVEMENTS
Golf Course trail head (includes detention pond construction)	8	16	13	26
Wesburn Park trail head	4	8	2	4

**Mitigation**

In order to mitigate the impacts, it is proposed that construction works for trail heads are negotiated with local residents during face-to-face meetings. Residents’ concerns should be noted and, wherever possible, addressed. Construction must comply with guidance from the EPA in relation to management of major construction projects.

**Residual impact**

The residual impacts of trail head construction on residents will be minor. The impacts will be in the form of construction and the noise generated by increased traffic.

### 9.2.3 A3: PROJECT WORKS ADVERSELY IMPACTS LOCAL BUSINESS/RECREATION OPERATORS

#### Description of impact

It is unlikely works relating to the construction of trails or trail heads would impact local business in the township.

Warburton Golf Club would be directly impacted by the construction of one trail through the course, and the construction of the proposed trail head. This may limit play on portions of the course for several days while trails are completed. Options for a parking upgrade and possible clubhouse refurbishment are being negotiated (and yet to be agreed by Club members) but may mean members have limited or constrained access to the course at times during the construction period.

Club members must approve (via voting) any proposed trails or development on the course and clubhouse (see more details in Section 9.3.2). Members have not formally met to discuss the proposal in its current form.

**Table 9-3: Activity associated with upgrades works for trail heads at the Warburton Golf Club**

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY	WORKERS REQUIRED PER DAY	WORKERS DAILY TRAFFIC GENERATION	PLANT AND EQUIPMENT REQUIRED (ONE-WAY)	PLANT AND EQUIPMENT DAILY MOVEMENTS
Golf Course trail head (includes detention pond construction)	8	16	13	26

#### Mitigation

Mitigation of trail construction will be similar to mitigation measures for trail construction adjacent residential properties: communication and temporary fencing or barriers. The mitigation of impacts of trail head construction will depend on the nature of the development and should be determined in consultation with the Warburton Golf Club at the same time as the proposed development is agreed.

#### Residual impacts

The residual impacts on the Warburton Golf Club of construction activities will depend on the nature of the development, which is not

### 9.2.4 A4: TRAFFIC DELAYS RESULTING FROM BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION ADVERSELY IMPACTS LOCAL AMENITY, CONVENIENCE AND BUSINESS

Several lane and road closures would take place during construction. These closures are due to the construction of pedestrian/cyclist crossing bridges which are anticipated to be located over Warburton Highway, Yarra River and Dammans Road and on Old Warburton Road.

#### Description of impact

The golf course bridge connects the northern and southern zones of the trail network by crossing over Dammans Road, the Yarra River and Warburton Highway. Dammans Road provides a route for areas located north of the Yarra River to gain access to and from Warburton Highway. According to the traffic assessment, Mayer Bridge, which feeds into Dammans Road, currently carries a maximum of 1,092 vehicles per day (two-

way) (October 2018). Given some traffic will turn left into Dammans Road and some will turn right, it can be inferred that the maximum volume of traffic at any one point on Dammans Road is significantly less than 1,092 vehicles per day. Warburton Highway is classified as a Primary State Arterial Road under the care and management of VicRoads and is the main arterial road through Warburton, with peak usage recorded as 6,914 vehicles per day (October 2018).

**Table 9-4: Traffic delays resulting from the construction of the golf course bridge**

	ROAD	DAILY TRAFFIC (WEEKDAY)	DURATION	CONSEQUENCE
<b>Lane closure</b>	Warburton Highway	6,600	2 hours on 3 occasions	Moderate delays during off-peak closures
	Dammans Road	1,100		Moderate delays during off-peak closures
<b>Road closure</b>	Warburton Highway	6,600	2 hours on 3 occasions	Alternative access available via Old Warburton Road with motorists experiencing major detour/delays (approximately 10 kilometres)
	Dammans Road	1,100	3 hours on 2 occasions	Alternative access available via Brett Road with motorists experiencing minor detour/delays (approximately 2 kilometres)

It is likely that a majority of Warburton’s residents would be affected by construction delays at some stage of the bridge construction period. This would inconvenience residents and visitors alike – to a greater extent during road closures of Warburton Highway. The duration of these impacts would however be limited – 6 hours of complete road closures for both Warburton Highway and Dammans Road. The delays are unlikely to significantly impact local businesses (including tourism businesses), visitors or recreational users.

In addition to the golf course bridge, it is anticipated that Old Warburton Road would need to be closed for a maximum of approximately half a day during the pylon and cable stringing operation required for the placement of the bridge. While Old Warburton Highway is a collector road for the area, it has low traffic volumes and minimal development along its length. As such, this road closure is anticipated to only impact a small number of people. Alternative access via Warburton Highway would be available to road users. This may lead to increased travel time and reduced travel time reliability due to longer travel distances on alternative routes, but this would only be for a limited duration.

### **Mitigation**

To mitigate the impact of traffic, we refer to the recommendations set out in the EES Transport Technical Report:

1. Develop and implement a Traffic Management Plan to minimise disruption during all stages of construction.
2. Develop and implement a stakeholder communication plan to ensure that appropriate consultation and advanced notice is provided prior and during construction.
3. Undertake a Road Safety Audit to ensure that roads, intersections and the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail are designed and constructed to provide safe vehicle movements during construction.

**Residual impact**

The residual impact of traffic delays from bridge construction is likely to be minor.



# 10 Operation impact assessment

## 10.1 SUMMARY

This section discusses the potential impacts of the project as a result of operation of the project and the associated mitigation measures that aim to reduce impacts to as low a level as possible. Each risk identified in Section 8 correlates to a respective impact as outlined below. Mitigation measures referred to are defined in Section 11. The likelihood and consequence ratings are assessed according to the guides previously outlined in Section 6.4. The assessment of the potential impacts associated with these items is presented in the subsequent report sections.

## 10.2 B: IMPACT OF PROJECT OPERATIONS ON BUSINESS (INCLUDING TOURISM) OPERATIONS

### 10.2.1 B1: EXISTING LOCAL BUSINESS ARE REPLACED BY NEW BUSINESSES

#### Description of impact

The impact of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination will mostly have a positive impact on business operations in Warburton.

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would have a direct and positive impact on the local economy. Warburton is already an emerging tourism destination within the Yarra Valley, with high visitor numbers during peak times (weekends and school holidays)<sup>29</sup>. According to estimates by TRC Tourism<sup>30</sup>, in 2022, the project is expected to bring 131,217 visitors to the area and generate \$10 million in regional income (business profits and salaries). The impact of the project is expected to increase over time, and in 2031 would attract 221,454 visitors and generate up to \$17.7 million in regional income. The estimates of regional income do not include any substitution effects (where the project 'crowds out' other economic activity) and thus represent an upper bound of the impact of the project; substitution effects are likely to be relatively small for such a project.

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination presents a significant opportunity for existing businesses in Warburton. The project would allow businesses to access a greater number of customers and increase their turnover. It would support existing businesses that are not open seven days a week to extend their opening hours. It would also support the establishment of new businesses in Warburton, increased trade from trail users (particularly overnight visitors) could support increased opening hours (and therefore employment) for a number of existing businesses.

There have already been changes in the types of businesses operating in Warburton as a result of increasing tourist numbers and the news of the mountain bike development. Anecdotal evidence suggests there are new business already emerging in Warburton, such as an adventure tours company, cycling retail outlets, and accommodation places. For example, there is interest among investors to re-develop the old hospital site for accommodation or a day spa. These buildings are currently unoccupied so have the potential to be converted into tourist facilities, bringing more employment opportunities into town.

Given the nature of the businesses operating in Warburton, it is likely that many of the new jobs would be relatively low-paid, part-time and potentially seasonal. With the continuing trend of increasing costs of housing, the difference in wages and house prices (including rental) may negatively impact service sector workers'

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<sup>29</sup> RMCG (2018) *Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Project: Social Impact Assessment*.

<sup>30</sup> TRC Tourism (2021) Economic Assessment. Estimates accounted for the impact of COVID-19.

ability to live and work in the town. This pattern has been reported in other tourist destinations such as Daylesford and Lorne<sup>31</sup>.

With more business opportunities it is likely that commercial rents would increase in Warburton, benefiting the owners of those properties.

Growing tourism and the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would bring a new group of consumers with new preferences and tastes to Warburton. Profitable businesses that can cater to the new group of consumers would be able to finance these increasing rents. However, some business may not be able to adapt and would close, to be replaced by a business that is able to service the market. In Forrest for example, a mountain bike destination in the Otways, many of the businesses that cater to mountain bike riders were established by business owners who had moved from Melbourne who understand these tastes and trends.

While the impact on business of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would be overwhelmingly positive, there may be some negative impacts for a small number of business that are not able to adapt to changing markets and higher input costs. Some of these businesses may have owners who are ready to retire regardless of changing markets.

### **Mitigation**

Yarra Ranges Council should advocate for and facilitate access to business adaptation programs and government grants to help businesses adapt to the changing market and benefit from the opportunities provided by the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination.

### **Residual impact**

The majority of the impact on businesses will be positive, by bringing new customers and expenditure to Warburton and increasing business turnover. However, some businesses will not be able to capitalise on new markets and will close due to increased rents. This impact is thought to be minor, as it will occur gradually and to a small number of business owners, some of whom will be ready to retire anyway.

## **10.3 C: IMPACT OF PROJECT OPERATIONS ON PRIVATE LAND USE**

### **10.3.1 C1: PROJECT OPERATIONS IMPACT RESIDENTS' PRIVACY AND AMENITY**

#### **Description of impact**

Residents of five properties would have a trail either bisect a portion of their property along an existing road reserve (at the back of their blocks, away from residences) or, if land is purchased by Council, run directly adjacent to their land. While there is a risk of loss of amenity and privacy resulting from these trails, comparable trail operations in St Helens (Bay of Fires) indicate that the impact of riders using trails alongside residential properties is minimal, particularly with appropriate mitigation strategies in place. No landholders there have reported noise, trespassing or privacy concerns relating to MTB operations.

The establishment of a trail head at Wesburn Park (including over-flow parking) would also impact residents, with one residential property immediately adjacent. Increased traffic and changed visual amenity would affect neighbouring residents.

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<sup>31</sup> Parliament of Victoria (2008) *Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism*, Chapter 11.

Noise due to bike pass-bys would be clearly audible to residents at properties on Martyr Road in Warburton within 25 metres of Trail 10 without mitigation strategies in place.

### **Mitigation**

In order to mitigate impacts on residents directly affected by proposed trails, Council should engage with each landholder to understand their concerns and collaboratively develop appropriate responses. All three Wesburn resident families have expressed the need for more information and more consistent engagement with Council. Council should do more to engage in good faith and build trust with residents. Council should investigate options to mitigate amenity and privacy concerns include appropriate screening and noise reduction measures. Impacts from operation 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. Details of this mitigation measure provided in EES Chapter 11: Land use and planning.

### **Residual impact**

Project operations would be a minor residual impact on five residents' privacy and amenity.

## **10.3.2 C2: PROJECT OPERATIONS REDUCES APPEAL AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE WARBURTON GOLF CLUB**

### **Description of impact**

Warburton Golf Club currently has around 200 members, many of whom are older men who use the club to maintain physical health and social connection. Operation of the proposed trail would likely have a minor impact on members, with the proposed route meaning riders coming within 10m of one hole and potentially requiring the realignment of another.

The establishment of a trail head at the Golf Club would have a more significant impact on members. The Traffic Assessment considers the number of cyclists to this trail head is likely to be approximately 575 on a Saturday or Sunday within ten years after the opening of the project. Options for this trail head include increasing parking (150-200 for cyclists), using shuttle services and leasing the clubhouse to use as a base for riders (showers, toilets, food and beverage). All proposals – particularly the leasing of the clubhouse – would require approval of members (via a vote). Members are likely to benefit from increased parking, exposure of course to potential new members, and potentially financial stability from an appropriate leasing agreement. However, some members may resent sharing a space they have used exclusively for an extended period of time.

### **Mitigation**

To mitigate the impact of the trail on the appeal and sustainability of the Warburton Golf Club, Yarra Ranges Council should:

- Provide appropriate screening and protection of trails running through the course (pending discussions with club representatives).
- Continue negotiations with club representatives to identify mutually beneficial outcomes for the proposed MTB trail head.

### **Residual impacts**

The residual impact of the trail itself will be minor.

The residual impact of changes to the clubhouse are uncertain, given that negotiations with the club are yet to be finalised.

### **10.3.3 C3: PROJECT OPERATIONS IN WARBURTON IMPACT RESIDENTS' PRIVACY AND AMENITY**

Trails would run directly through land on the site of the historic former Warburton Chalet. Situated on approximately 16.5 hectares, the current landowner does not anticipate any significant impact from the proposed trails. The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination development could be a catalyst for the redevelopment of the Warburton Chalet site, providing an opportunity for business growth and support for local tourism.

## **10.4 D: IMPACT OF PROJECT OPERATIONS ON OTHER EXISTING OR APPROVED LAND USES**

### **10.4.1 D1: PROJECT OPERATIONS IMPACTS ACCESS, SAFETY AND ENJOYMENT OF OTHER RECREATION USERS**

#### **Description of impact**

There is some increased risk to the safety of other individuals where trails intersect with established tracks used for bushwalking and horse riding. For bushwalkers this would be particularly along the Mt Victoria (also known as Mt Donna Buang Track), which hosts up to 50 walkers a day at its peak, and Mt Little Joe Backstairs Loop (up to 30 walkers a day at its peak). Bushwalkers have expressed their concerns of increased noise, congestion and safety risks from the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. In responding to this, trails have been moved away from existing tracks, with points of intersection minimised. Experience from comparable MTB projects in Tasmania (Derby and St Helens (Bay of Fires)) and in Bright (Vic) indicate that incidents of conflict between walkers and riders have been minimal.

Shared-space interactions on the O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail and Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail would increase. More cyclists alongside walkers and horse riders would increase congestion on parts of these trails – particularly parts of the Aqueduct Trail. Interactions would also occur around Wesburn Park, which has a range of existing recreation uses including formal sport, equestrian, dog walking and community group use. However, given these are already shared paths, expectations of mixed-use are established, which reduces the safety risk.

It is likely the Cemetery Track would need to be closed to 4WD use, for the safety of bike riders and preservation of the local ecosystem. This would disenfranchise some in the 4WD community (mostly based in Melbourne) who use the trail periodically. Any closure of Cemetery Track would be managed by the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning in line with current policies and would include additional community consultation.

Trail bike riding is increasingly popular in the areas surrounding Warburton township, both for locals and visitors, including tracks around Mt Little Joe and Mt Tugwell. Motorbike riding is only allowed on legal roads by registered vehicles.

Local hunters are likely to be moderately impacted by the operation of new trails in State Forests and may need to seek alternative locations when trails become operational.

There is the potential that visitation to Warburton by bushwalkers, 4WD drivers will reduce due to the impact on their activity by mountain bikers. This would be the opposite of the intended effect of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination, which is to increase visitation to Warburton. Given that the impact on other users by the project will be low, it is unlikely that this unintended consequence will be significant, or occur at all.

For Wesburn Park, Yarra Ranges Council is undertaking planning to ensure the safety and operations of existing uses is not compromised, through the development of a master plan for the park. The Wesburn

Park Draft Master Plan (Yarra Ranges Council, 2021) identifies opportunities to manage safety and operations of current and future uses, including zoning and separation of activities; signage and wayfinding; fencing, screening and barriers. The master plan development has included community and stakeholder engagement and additional engagement will be undertaken to refine the plan prior to approval by Council. Development of the Wesburn Park Trail Head would be undertaken in accordance with the approved master plan once complete.

There will be no conflict with snow play as the trails will be closed during the snow season.

## **Mitigation**

In order to mitigate the impacts described above, it is proposed that:

1. Appropriate signage is established at trail heads and popular trails to advise riders of the MTBA code of conduct (always give way) and to ride on marked trails only
2. Choke points/slowing techniques are used before intersection with another track/trail
3. Intersection points are clearly marked on trail maps and marketing collateral including details of other likely users
4. An extensive education campaign is conducted, and all user groups (such as Bushwalking Victoria and local horse-riding groups) are regularly updated, to ensure they are aware of intersections between trail types and to minimise users mistakenly accessing MTB trails
5. Yarra Ranges Council works with land managers to install appropriate signage and barriers to prevent bike riding on intersecting walking trails and monitor compliance.
6. 4WD organisation representatives are engaged to discuss the implications of closing Cemetery Trail
7. Increased monitoring of trail bike riding activity, ensuring appropriate MTB trails are only used by MTB riders.

## **Residual impacts**

The residual impacts of the project on recreational users are anticipated to be minor.

## **10.5 E: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS: INCREASED TRAFFIC**

### **10.5.1 E1: INCREASED TRAFFIC IMPACTS LIVEABILITY FOR RESIDENTS**

#### **Description of impact**

The Traffic Assessment has assessed the residual risk as low for:

1. Additional traffic during operation may result in increased congestion exceeding level of service
2. Parking is congested at the Warburton town centre and at capacity.

Thus, in a technical sense, there is spare capacity on the local roads to handle the increased traffic created by the project. The contribution to road degradation from additional traffic created by the project would be very low. However, from our conversations with residents, we believe that the subjective experience of residents would differ from the technical assessment.

In consultations on the proposed project, traffic is the concern raised most frequently. Residents are concerned that increased congestion would mean more commuting time is required, there would be increased competition for parking and more degradation of local roads. While increased traffic is certain in particular locations (notably Warburton Highway), the use of shuttle services and general inclination of MTB visitors to ride – and not drive – wherever possible, means the impact of increased traffic would be geographically concentrated, which makes it easier to mitigate.

Residents' experiences of traffic and congestion pre-project would inform their view of the liveability and amenity from increased traffic in Warburton post-project. This impact is assessed as moderate for residents' day-to-day experiences and expectations.

## **Mitigation**

To mitigate the impact of traffic, we refer to the recommendations set out in the EES Transport Technical Report:

1. Undertake a Road Safety Audit to ensure that roads, intersections and the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail are designed and constructed to provide safe vehicle movements during operation.
2. Undertake Improvement works where necessary based on the pavement conditions survey.
3. Implement mitigation measures to ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist movements during the operational phase of the project.
4. Establish a parking management plan to implement appropriate measures for the operation of the Mountain Bike Project to ensure that parking congestion does not exceed acceptable limits for visitors or residents.
5. Establish an Emergency Management Plan that considers emergency access.

## **Residual impact**

The impact of the project on traffic will 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) will have a moderate impact on residents' perception of the liveability in Warburton.

## **10.6 F: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS: EXISTING HOUSING**

### **10.6.1 F1: REDUCTION IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK DISPLACES VULNERABLE RESIDENTS**

#### **Description of impact**

A recent economic assessment of the impact of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination estimated that the number of additional visitor nights generated would be 43,906 in 2022, increasing to 76,661 in 2031 (assuming rooms are twin-share)<sup>32</sup>. This represents a 69 per cent to 121 per cent increase on the current estimated current visitor nights in Warburton of 63,000 per year. It is estimated that 240 to 400 additional rooms would be required for the new overnight visitors<sup>33</sup>.

Some of this demand would be met through the creation of additional tourist accommodation. There are plans to convert existing unused buildings and vacant sites around Warburton into accommodation; examples include the planned 'EcoLodge', Warburton Chalet, the old Warburton Hospital and the old Sanitarium Factory, which would collectively add 400 rooms to the available accommodation in Warburton if they went ahead.

Despite the growth in commercial accommodation, evidence from the literature and from other towns that have experienced an increase in tourism, such as Bright, Forrest and Derby, suggests that an increase in visitor numbers can lead to increases in the numbers of private properties listed for short-term accommodation<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> TRC Tourism (2021) *Economic Assessment*.

<sup>33</sup> Assumes that a peak day is twice the average visitation, or an occupancy rate of 50%.

<sup>34</sup> Gurran & Phibbs (2017) *When tourists move in: how should urban planners respond to Airbnb?* Available: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01944363.2016.1249011>.

There were 222 unoccupied homes in Warburton in 2016, representing 19 per cent of the housing stock. This is higher than the Yarra Ranges average of 8 per cent<sup>35</sup>, and is likely due to the prevalence of holiday houses in Warburton. However, it is lower than towns with a stronger tourism economy such as Lorne, where more than 65 per cent of dwellings are unoccupied<sup>36</sup>. Based on the evidence presented above, the number of unoccupied dwellings is likely to increase as visitor numbers increase.

Warburton properties currently listed on Airbnb range in price from \$125 to over \$680 per night, with an average price of \$308 per night (weekend rates)<sup>37</sup>. Given a median weekly rental price of \$365<sup>38</sup> for long-term rental properties, it is quite likely that some property owners would convert a long-term rental property into holiday accommodation. It is also possible that some short-term rentals would be made available by people with holiday homes, who have not leased their house long-term before, thereby having no direct impact on the supply of rental housing.

Increases in demand for housing would drive up house prices. This is a benefit to those who own their house, which is 81% of Warburton households<sup>39</sup>. It would also drive up rental prices as long-term rental properties and residential houses are converted into short-term accommodation properties, thereby decreasing the supply of rental properties.

As previously discussed, rental prices have increased substantially over the last 5 years and the proportion of affordable housing for people dependent on social support is very low and declining further. In 2016, approximately 60 households in Warburton were experiencing rental stress and are the most vulnerable to rental rate increases.

Evidence from other towns that have seen an increase in tourism driving demand for short term accommodation highlights the risk of displacing long-term renters. For example, long-term renters in Lorne and Apollo Bay on the Great Ocean Road have experienced both increases in rental prices and a significant decrease in the availability of long-term rental properties<sup>40,41</sup>. This effect is likely to be most pronounced within Warburton itself (as the tourism and commercial centre of the area) but may have knock-on effects for surrounding areas including East Warburton.

It is likely that the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would mean some renters would need to relocate from Warburton. The impact of this would depend on individual circumstances: particularly the extent of their links with Warburton and where they are able to find a new rental property. Anecdotally, nearby suburbs do not offer cheaper rental options, and those who move from Warburton in search of cheaper rents may be able to afford outer suburban locations such as Lilydale (average rent of \$415), Croydon (\$450) or Bayswater (\$420). While the average rental price in these locations is higher than the average rent of \$365 in Warburton, there will be less expensive properties (below the average) within these locations.

Through recent changes to the Planning and Environment Act, there may some scope for Yarra Ranges Council to encourage the development of new social and affordable housing. Section 173 agreements allow Councils and landowners to voluntarily enter into an agreement to deliver affordable housing as part of a development.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Yarra Ranges Council (2019) *Warburton Place Plan: Engagement and Directions Paper*.

<sup>36</sup> Parliament of Victoria (2008) *Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism*, Chapter 11.

<sup>37</sup> Airbnb rates November 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Current median rental price was sourced from realestate.com.au, the 2016 median rental price was sourced from microburbs.com.au.

<sup>39</sup> ABS (2016) *Census Community Profile: Warburton*

<sup>40</sup> See news media articles including: <https://www.theage.com.au/national/forlorn-lorne-seeks-answers-to-low-season-blues-20071116-ge6bhx.html>; and <https://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/news/geelong/coastal-renters-struggling-to-find-year-round-homes-as-landlords-cash-in-on-the-summertrade/news-story/e36f8e4b88527d99afb2cfffdbcd61851>;

<sup>41</sup> Parliament of Victoria (2008) *Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism*, Chapter 11.

<sup>42</sup> Yarra Ranges Council (2019) *Warburton Place Plan: Engagement and Directions Paper*

## Mitigation

Options to mitigate the impact of this change include:

- Investigate potential to increase social housing in or near Warburton through applying affordable housing provisions as part of both rezoning, and permit applications for major developments.
- Encouraging the development of visitor accommodation. This would absorb some of the impact of the additional visitors in Warburton.

## Residual impact

The impact on the Warburton housing market and vulnerable residents is considered to be the most significant negative impact of the project. 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 will be required to avoid this impact.

## 10.7 G: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS: COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

### 10.7.1 G1: INCREASED DEMAND DISRUPTS RESIDENTS' CAPACITY TO ACCESS APPROPRIATE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

#### Description of impact

Ancillary infrastructure proposed as part of the project is important to ensure community infrastructure such as public toilets and recreation facilities (BBQ, bins) matches increasing demand. There is a minor risk that increased rubbish dumping in Warburton may occur as visitors return to the township to dispose of waste; though riders generally pack light during trips and ample bins are currently available and are monitored seven days a week<sup>43</sup>.

The trail and shuttle services have been designed to protect the visual amenity of the townships. Increasing traffic would impact local amenity – particularly along Warburton Highway.

Community services (housing and employment support) are unlikely to be adversely affected by increased visitor numbers. Building on the Koha Café, there is also an opportunity for more social enterprises to capitalise on increased visitation.

The project will affect the Wesburn Park off-leash dog area, as part of the park will be converted to parking for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. The park is the only off-leash area in the Upper Yarra Ranges and is used by 100-150 people. Yarra Ranges Council has consulted the users of the park and reduced the size and changed the location of the car park in response to their concerns. The carpark will now occupy 15%-20% of the off-leash dog area. Yarra Ranges Council is currently completing a Dog Park and Off-Leash Plan for the Yarra Ranges, which aims to create new off-lease areas elsewhere.

Some interviewees spoke of a concern that the project would increase waiting times for ambulances for Warburton residents. This is because of riders sustaining injuries and adding to the demand for emergency medical treatment. Additionally, increased traffic could slow down ambulances on the roads.

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<sup>43</sup> YSC (2020) Interview.



There is some potential for mountain bike riders to be injured through falls and crashes on the mountain bike network. There are some concerns that injuries sustained at the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination will stretch the resources of the region's hospital system. RMCG has not been able to uncover direct evidence about hospitalisation rates from mountain biking injuries. However, it can be inferred from other mountain bike parks that this concern will not eventuate. Other mountain bike parks (Bright, Derby, Forrest) are located in much smaller hospital systems than that in which the project is located. RMCG has not encountered any evidence of hospital systems from these areas being stretched by mountain biking injuries.

Demands on emergency management services – such as the CFA – may increase. Several residents raised concerns over the potential for more visitors in State Forest and National Parks to increase the bushfire risk in and around Warburton. As a volunteer service, the CFA would be most impacted by any increased risk. In other towns with a high tourist population, such as Lorne, it is difficult to find sufficient volunteers for the CFA<sup>44</sup>. As Warburton's permanent population may decrease as a result of housing stock being converted to holiday homes, the pool of local volunteers could shrink over the next 10-20 years. The CFA may require additional support to continue to adequately service the local area in the years ahead.

## **Mitigation**

In order to mitigate the impact on community infrastructure, it is proposed that:

- Proposed community infrastructure works, including toilet upgrades at Mt Donna Buang and construction of toilets at the Mt Tugwell and Golf Club Trail Heads, would be completed as priorities.
- Yarra Ranges Council monitor the impact of the project on dog walkers at Wesburn Park and provide additional areas elsewhere if necessary.
- Yarra Ranges Council work with relevant authorities to ensure that CFA capacity and medical emergency capacity are assessed to ensure that essential emergency management services are maintained.
- An emergency management plan would be prepared and approved before use of the land for the project commences to ensure that risks to life are reduced and managed appropriately. The emergency management plan would include specific bushfire response measures developed in consultation with the Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, Department of Environment Land Water and Planning and Parks Victoria.

## **Residual impact**

The residual impact on community infrastructure is considered to be minor.

## **10.8 IMPACT H: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS: EMPLOYMENT**

### **10.8.1 H1: DISADVANTAGED RESIDENTS DO NOT BENEFIT FROM INCREASED EMPLOYMENT**

#### **Description of impact**

The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would create jobs in construction and operation, providing employment opportunities for residents of Warburton and surrounding areas. During the construction phase, it is estimated that 84 jobs would be created (70 in construction and equipment/materials supply and 14 through flow on effects).

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<sup>44</sup> Parliament of Victoria (2008) *Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism*.

Once the project is operational, the operation of the trails would generate a total of 133 direct and indirect jobs in 2022 (FTE), increasing to 229 jobs in 2031<sup>45</sup>. The jobs would largely be in accommodation, food and beverage, services, retail and transportation sectors<sup>46</sup>.

**Table 10-1: Project employment by sector, direct and indirect (FTE)**

	2022	2031	% OF TOTAL FTE
Accommodation	35	61	27%
Food & beverage	38	66	29%
Recreation Services/Other services	33	56	24%
Other retail	11	18	8%
Transportation	13	22	10%
Other	3	6	3%
Total	133	229	100%

This level of job creation represents a significant increase on jobs located in Warburton: there are currently 744 jobs located in the town.

Given the nature of these sectors, it is likely that many of these roles would be relatively low paid. Average weekly earnings in the 'Accommodation and Food Services' and 'Retail Trade' sectors are lower paid than across all industries, as shown in Table 9-3.

**Table 10-2: Average weekly earnings<sup>47</sup>**

INDUSTRY	AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS
Accommodation & Food Services	\$1,191
Retail Trade	\$1,307
All industries	\$1,812

The positive employment impacts of the Warburton MTB Destination would create a social benefit for Warburton residents. There would be employment opportunities for the broader community, but particularly for young people. This outcome is consistent with community aspirations, as reported by Yarra Ranges Council through the *Warburton Place Plan: Engagement and Directions Paper*:<sup>48</sup>

*Community want to develop the local economy with potential for different industries to establish in Warburton, and training for residents to learn new skills and gain employment is important to them.*

<sup>45</sup> TRC Tourism (2021) *Economic Assessment*.

<sup>46</sup> Numbers do not add to totals due to rounding.

<sup>47</sup> ABS (2020) *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia* (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-work-hours/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release>).

<sup>48</sup> Yarra Ranges Council (2019) *Warburton Place Plan: Engagement and Directions Paper*

The proximity of Warburton to a number of significant (and growing) population centres could also mean that competition for new jobs is high. This means that residents of surrounding areas would also benefit from the employment opportunities.

The ability of workers from other areas to travel into Warburton may limit the opportunities for people that are currently disengaged from the labour force (including young people and the long-term unemployed) to benefit from this job creation. The jobs would go to those judged to have the most skills, experience, not necessarily Warburton residents.

### **Mitigation (maximising the benefits of employment creation)**

The employment impacts from the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination would provide positive social change for Warburton. Rather than mitigating the negative impacts, Yarra Ranges Council should work to maximise the benefits for Warburton youth and disadvantaged. Measures could include:

- Targeting employment opportunities to local unemployed people. Whilst there is little opportunity to influence recruitment within private businesses, the development and maintenance of the MTB trails would largely be funded through council contracts. There is a potential opportunity to include a training and work placement component as part of those contracts to help unemployed people to join the labour force. This may be particularly valuable to disengaged young people for whom a lack of experience can be a major barrier for accessing even entry-level jobs.
- Through a partnership model, coordinate employment and education opportunities with appropriate wrap around services to facilitate employment opportunities for local unemployed people.

### **Residual impact**

The employment generated by the project will benefit Warburton. With appropriate interventions, the benefit of this impact can be maximised, particularly for disadvantaged and young Warburton residents.

## **10.9 I: SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS (OTHER): SOCIAL COHESION**

### **10.9.1 I1: PROJECT OPERATIONS REDUCE TRUST, CONNECTIONS AND OVERALL COHESION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

#### **Description of impact**

The operation of the project is likely to have a moderate impact on the social cohesion of communities in the township. The project would almost certainly increase the social mobility of those that live in Warburton over the next 15-25 years. Increased employment, funding of services and access to opportunities are all likely to support the upward mobility of future generations in Warburton. Indicators of Warburton's social exclusion are likely to improve over the coming decades as resident landowners benefit from increased house prices and boosts to local business. However, this indicator is somewhat misleading. The most vulnerable in the community are likely to leave the area as cost-of-living increases drive people to more affordable housing in other areas on the outskirts of Melbourne. This means that indicators of exclusion might improve but this is because the most vulnerable have moved out of the area so will no longer be counted in social exclusion measures for the area.

The impact of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination on the social capital of communities – the linkages between people and groups – would be both positive and negative. More recreational opportunities and visitors would mean more events, more opportunities to connect and more forging of collective identity. This pattern is evident in mountain bike projects in Derby and Bright.

However, it would also further embed Warburton and its surrounds as a tourism hotspot meaning more holiday homes, more transient residents, more events and more seasonal variations that will affect the feel of the township. In submissions made to the 2008 Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism, Daylesford and Lorne were both cited as examples where tourism growth had diminished social capital. There is a tension in some communities between individuals choosing to move to areas for lifestyle reasons (such as peace and tranquillity, to be closer to the natural environment) and the influx of tourists. “When tourists arrive in increasing numbers, local residents see community facilities and infrastructure being stretched and their lifestyle amenity impacted.”

Another possible effect of the project is the is the perceived impact of the proposed trails on the area’s biodiversity. The area’s residents have a strong interest in environmental conservation, as evidenced by the Yarra Ranges’ large number of environmental groups.

This project would undoubtedly change the character of Warburton over time. Research has indicated that the scale of this change and its impact on the social cohesion within the community hinges on four variables, discussed below<sup>49</sup>.

1. Staging of tourism development. In Warburton, the first phase of the project would be developed over 18 months from mid-2022 to the end of 2023, with a staged opening from the end of 2022. The full potential of the project will be realised over several years. Thus, the changes would be moderately rapid, compared with the organic growth in tourism that has been occurring in Warburton.
2. Types of visitors. According to research commissioned for this project, most mountain bike riders travel with their partner and children (except for advanced competition riders who ride equally with one other person or in a group of 3-5 people). A higher percentage are men, aged 35 to 44, and have high disposable income. Generally, mountain bike riding is a half-day experience with riders then incorporating other activities that a destination offers into their day. Increasingly, riders are travelling with their families and there are a growing number of women and young people riding. Most riders and their families would be passionate about nature and the environment – consistent with values promoted by many within the Warburton township.
3. Visitor-resident contact (visitor density). Based on conservative estimates of visitor numbers, there would be approximately 88 additional daily visitors per 1,000 residents in Warburton: equivalent to approximately a 9 per cent increase in the daily year-round population (in addition to current visitation numbers)<sup>50</sup>. This compares with approximately 218 daily visitors per 1,000 residents in Hepburn and Macedon Ranges Shires. This is a moderate increase relative to the population size and means visitor-resident contact would be consistent if not overbearing.
4. Seasonality. Mountain bike visitors are likely to peak in spring and summer, but not to the extremes of tourism peaks experienced in Victoria’s coastal townships. There will be some visitor peaks around MTB events. Overall, the flow of visitors will be more consistent than in coastal towns and this flow of visitors would mean there is more predictability and stability within communities.

## Mitigation

Considering the four variables listed above, the impacts of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination on the social cohesion of communities in the area, can be mitigated by:

1. Adopting housing recommendations as per Impact F (Section 9.6)
2. Supporting and promoting local social enterprises
3. Supporting community events and initiatives separate from mountain biking to sustain community diversity and engagement

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<sup>49</sup> Elena Konovalov. 2020. Measuring tourism development through secondary data analysis: A guide for tourism impact studies.

<sup>50</sup>  $(\text{Overnight Visitors} \times \text{Stay} + \text{Day Visitors}) / (\text{Population} \times 365) \times 1000$ .

4. Promoting the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination to families, with a particular focus on diversity of riders, particularly women and children.

### **Residual impact**

The Project will have a moderate impact on social cohesion in Warburton. While the mitigation measures will have some ameliorating effect, it is likely that there will still be a residual impact. The experience of this impact is subjective and will vary between individuals in the community.

# 11 Assessment of alternative to trail 1

The assessment and comparison of trail 1 and the alternative to trail 1 is based on the existing conditions information provided in Section 7.9.

The comparison is based on the residual impact of these options assuming effective implementation of the proposed mitigation and contingency measures outlined in Section 12.

For this comparison, it is necessary to distinguish between direct and indirect impacts. Direct impacts are those caused by mountain bike riders using the trails themselves, experienced by adjacent residents or other recreational users. Indirect impacts are those impacts on the town of Warburton that result from a higher volume of visitors in the town, such as traffic, house prices, community infrastructure, labour force and social cohesion. Our understanding is that the alternative trails will not result in a large change in visitor numbers related to the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination, meaning that there is no difference in indirect impacts between Trail 1 and the alternative trails. Thus, the comparison of Trail 1 and the alternative trails focusses on direct impacts only. This comparison is shown in Table 11-1.

Trail 1 has some minor impacts on residents and bushwalkers. The alternative trails have no direct socioeconomic impacts. Given that the impacts of Trail 1 are minor, our conclusion is that there is not a strong preference for the alternative trails from a socioeconomic perspective.

**Table 11-1: Comparison of impacts between trail 1 and the alternative to trail 1**

IMPACT	TRAIL 1	ALTERNATIVE	CONCLUSION
Access, safety and enjoyment of bushwalkers	There are possibly up to 50 walkers a day at its peak on Mt Donna Buang. Local bushwalkers have expressed their concerns of increased noise, congestion and safety risks from the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. In responding to this, trails have been moved away from existing tracks, with points of intersection minimised. Experience from comparable MTB projects in Tasmania (Derby and St Helens (Bay of Fires)) and in Bright (Vic) indicate that incidents of conflict between walkers and riders have been minimal.	No known bushwalking in the vicinity of the alternative trails	Both trails will have minimal direct socioeconomic impact.
Residents' privacy and amenity	The end of Trail 1 is within 30-50m of three landholders on Sussex St. The trail is however unlikely to be in line-of-sight of properties and usage is highly unlikely to cause any significant noise/dust/inconvenience to residents.  Trail 10	No residential properties are nearby the alternative trails.	

# 12 Mitigation

The measures that have been recommended to avoid, mitigate or manage socioeconomic impacts associated with the project are defined in Table 12-1. Table 12-1: Mitigation and contingency measures relevant to potential socioeconomic impacts. The 'mitigation type' column shows whether the nature of the mitigation is avoidance, minimisation, rehabilitation/restoration or offsets.

**Table 12-1: Mitigation and contingency measures relevant to potential socioeconomic impacts**

ID	POTENTIAL IMPACT	STAGE	MITIGATION OR CONTINGENCY MEASURE	MITIGATION TYPE
MM-SM1	A1: Project work teams for trail construction disrupt local residents. A2: Project works teams for construction of trail heads disrupt local residents.	Construction	<p><b>Minimise disruption of construction on residents</b></p> <p>To minimise the impact of the construction of trails and trail heads on residents, Yarra Ranges Council would</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop construction schedules in partnership with residents whose properties are bisected by, or within 100m of a trail, through phone or face-to-face discussions in the first instance and subsequent letter-drops confirming plans.</li> <li>▪ Place temporary fencing along trail construction sites to clearly demarcate safe areas for residents where construction bisects a property</li> <li>▪ Ensure daily communication is conducted between residents and construction teams for residents where construction bisects a property</li> <li>▪ Create a clear mechanism for residents to raise complaints or concerns, ideally through a single point of contact at Council.</li> </ul>	Minimisation
MM-SM2	B1: Existing local business are replaced by new businesses.	Operation	<p><b>Assist local businesses to adapt to changing market</b></p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council should advocate for and facilitate access to business adaptation programs and government grants to help businesses adapt to the changing market and benefit from the opportunities provided by the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination.</p>	Minimisation

ID	POTENTIAL IMPACT	STAGE	MITIGATION OR CONTINGENCY MEASURE	MITIGATION TYPE
MM-SM3	C1: Project operations in Wesburn impact residents' privacy and amenity.	Operation	<p><b>Minimise impact of project operations in Wesburn on residents' privacy and amenity</b></p> <p>Council would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Engage with each landholder directly impacted by trail operation to build trust, better understand their concerns and develop appropriate responses collaboratively.</li> <li>▪ Investigate appropriate screening and noise reduction measures, potentially including choke points to mitigate amenity and privacy concerns.</li> <li>▪ Continue negotiations with club representatives to identify mutually beneficial outcomes for the proposed MTB trail head.</li> </ul>	Minimisation
MM-SM4	C2: Project operations reduces appeal and sustainability of the Warburton golf club.	Operation	<p><b>Maintain appeal and sustainability of the Warburton golf club</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to negotiate with Warburton Golf Club representatives to identify mutually beneficial outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Provide appropriate screening and protection of trails running through the course.</li> </ul>	Avoidance/ Minimisation/ offsets
MM-SM5	C3: Project operations in Warburton impact residents' privacy and amenity.	Operation	No additional mitigation measures required.	NA



ID	POTENTIAL IMPACT	STAGE	MITIGATION OR CONTINGENCY MEASURE	MITIGATION TYPE
MM-SM6	D1: Project operations impacts access, safety and enjoyment of other recreation users.	Operation	<p><b>Maintain access, safety and enjoyment of other recreation users</b></p> <p>To maintain access, safety and enjoyment of other recreation users, Yarra Ranges Council would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriate signage is established at trail heads and popular trails to advise riders of the MTBA code of conduct (always give way) and to ride on marked trails only</li> <li>▪ Choke points/slowing techniques are used before intersection with another track/trail</li> <li>▪ Intersection points are clearly marked on trail maps and marketing collateral including details of other likely users</li> <li>▪ An extensive education campaign is conducted and all user groups (such as Bushwalking Victoria and local horse-riding groups) are regularly updated, to ensure they are aware of intersections between trail types and to minimise users mistakenly accessing MTB trails</li> <li>▪ Yarra Ranges Council works with land managers to install appropriate signage and barriers to prevent bike riding on intersecting walking trails and monitor compliance.</li> <li>▪ 4WD organisation representatives are engaged to discuss the implications of closing Cemetery Trail</li> <li>▪ Increased monitoring of trail bike riding activity, ensuring appropriate MTB trails are only used by MTB riders.</li> </ul>	Avoidance/ minimisation

ID	POTENTIAL IMPACT	STAGE	MITIGATION OR CONTINGENCY MEASURE	MITIGATION TYPE
MM-SM7	E1: Increased traffic impacts liveability for residents.	Operation Construction and operation	<p><b>Minimise impacts to liveability for Warburton residents from increased traffic</b></p> <p>To ensure that increased traffic does not impact liveability in Warburton, Yarra Ranges Council would complete the recommendations set out in the Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy (2020-2040) and the Local Movement and Transport Report as important mitigation strategies. In particular, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and implement a Traffic Management Plan to minimise disruption during all stages of construction.</li> <li>▪ Develop and implement a stakeholder communication plan to ensure that appropriate consultation and advanced notice is provided prior and during construction.</li> <li>▪ Undertake a Road Safety Audit to ensure that roads, intersections and the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail are designed and constructed to provide safe vehicle movements during both construction and operation.</li> <li>▪ Undertake Improvement works where necessary based on the pavement conditions survey.</li> <li>▪ Implement mitigation measures to ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist movements during the operational phase of the project.</li> <li>▪ Establish a parking management plan to implement appropriate measures for the operation of the Mountain Bike Project to ensure that parking congestion does not exceed acceptable limits for visitors or residents.</li> <li>▪ Establish an emergency access plan.</li> </ul>	Minimisation
MM-SM8	F1: Reduction in affordable housing stock displaces vulnerable residents.	Operation	<p><b>Increase affordable rental housing stock</b></p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investigate potential to increase social housing in or near Warburton through applying affordable housing provisions as part of both rezoning, and permit applications for major developments</li> <li>▪ Work with accommodation providers to increase the supply of visitor accommodation to absorb some of the impact of the additional visitors in Warburton</li> </ul>	Avoidance/ minimisation

ID	POTENTIAL IMPACT	STAGE	MITIGATION OR CONTINGENCY MEASURE	MITIGATION TYPE
MM-SM9	G1: Increased demand disrupts residents' capacity to access appropriate community infrastructure.	Construction and operations	<p><b>Maintain Warburton residents' access to appropriate community infrastructure</b></p> <p>To ensure that the project does not diminish Warburton residents' access to appropriate community infrastructure, it is proposed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed community infrastructure works, including toilet upgrades at Mt Donna Buang and construction of toilets at the Mt Tugwell and Golf Club Trail Heads, would be completed as priorities.</li> <li>▪ Yarra Ranges Council monitor the impact of the project on dog walkers at Wesburn Park and provide additional areas elsewhere if necessary.</li> <li>▪ Yarra Ranges Council work with relevant authorities to ensure that CFA capacity and medical emergency capacity are assessed to ensure that essential emergency management services are maintained.</li> <li>▪ An emergency management plan would be prepared and approved before use of the land for the project commences to ensure that risks to life are reduced and managed appropriately. The emergency management plan would include specific bushfire response measures developed in consultation with the Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, Department of Environment Land Water and Planning and Parks Victoria.</li> </ul>	Avoidance / offsets
MM-SM10	H1: Disadvantaged residents do not benefit from increased employment.	Operation	<p><b>Maximise the benefits of job creation for Warburton youth and disadvantaged</b></p> <p>Yarra Ranges Council would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include a training and work placement component as part of the contracts to construct the mountain bike trails.</li> <li>▪ Through a partnership model, coordinate employment and education opportunities with appropriate wrap around services to facilitate employment opportunities for local unemployed people.</li> </ul>	NA

ID	POTENTIAL IMPACT	STAGE	MITIGATION OR CONTINGENCY MEASURE	MITIGATION TYPE
MM-SM11	I1: Project operations reduce trust, connections and overall cohesion of local communities.	Operation	<p><b>Improve trust, connection and cohesion</b></p> <p>To improve trust, connection and cohesion in Warburton, Yarra Ranges would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support and promote social enterprises locally.</li> <li>▪ Support community events and initiatives separate from mountain biking to sustain community diversity and engagement.</li> <li>▪ Promote the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination to families, with a particular focus on diversity of riders (women, children, ages).</li> </ul>	Minimisation

# 13 Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to assess the potential socioeconomic impacts associated with the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination to inform the preparation of the EES required for the project. A summary of the key assets, values or uses potentially affected by the project and an associated assessment of socioeconomic impacts and recommended mitigation measures, are summarised below.

With the implementation of the mitigation measures recommended throughout this assessment, potential adverse social and economic impacts at local and regional scales would be minimised.

## 13.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The assessment of existing socioeconomic conditions is based on reviewing reports and assessments, as well as interviews and consultation with council representatives, affected landholders, community representatives, state government agencies and contacts in locations with comparable mountain bike developments.

The proposed trails currently intersect five private landholdings and run within approximately 100m of a further 29 private residences. None of these landholders are opposed to the development, however, some feel Council has not provided sufficient planning details and they have privacy, remuneration and safety issues still to be resolved.

The proposed trails intersect with a range of existing recreational uses. This includes bushwalking, horse riding, trail bike riding and 4WDing on tracks and trails in the same general area. The most heavily used is the Lilydale to Warburton Rail Trail which, at its peak, has as many as 7,000 cyclists, walkers and horse riders per day.

Warburton is already an emerging tourism destination within the Yarra Valley, with high visitor numbers during weekend and school holiday peak times. There are signs that the proposed development is already driving increased investment in retail businesses, particularly food, beverage and accommodation.

Warburton Highway is the primary connector between Wesburn, Warburton and East Warburton, and further on to Yarra Junction, Lilydale and the broader Melbourne metropolitan area. As the Warburton Highway is the primary thoroughfare for the town, residents have indicated traffic congestion in town is increasingly a challenge.

Parking in Warburton is a challenge for residents and businesses, particularly along the Warburton Highway within the township. However, a 2018 parking survey indicated parking was generally available during peak periods, albeit located away from (but within walking distance of) Main Street.

There is a low number of rental houses on the market in Warburton and the weekly rental price has increased significantly over time. As much as 34 per cent of rental households are experiencing rental stress, making them vulnerable to any further increases in prices.

Most households within Warburton and surrounds live in purchased homes. Median house prices in Warburton have increased by over 59 per cent since 2015.

Existing accommodation in Warburton includes a hotel (up to 80 guests), motel (up to 22 guests), holiday park (with several multi-occupancy cabins and over 100 camping/caravan sites) and several bed-and-breakfasts. In addition, 85 private properties are listed on on-line sites.

Services in Warburton, Wesburn, Millgrove and East Warburton are generally regarded as broadly adequate though more resources – particularly for housing and employment – are needed to better support vulnerable members of the community.

Warburton's natural environment and green space is at the heart of its appeal and character. Current facilities provide residents with a mix of green-space amenity, physical fitness opportunities and opportunities for social connection.

Based on 2016 ABS census data, the unemployment rate in Warburton was 7 per cent, higher than that of the Yarra Ranges Council region as a whole (5 per cent). The rate of young people who are not employed, seeking work or studying was particularly high at 14 per cent, compared with 8 per cent for the Yarra Ranges.

Social cohesion measures a community's connectedness, focusing on the sense of belonging and relationships among community members. For this assessment, indicators of social cohesion are social mobility, social capital and social exclusion. Available data indicates residents in the Warburton and surrounding townships are currently experiencing upward social mobility. Based on levels of volunteerism, sense of belonging and community trust, social capital in the Warburton community is high. In contrast, social exclusion rates are also high based on the area's score against the index of socioeconomic disadvantage.

## 13.2 IMPACT ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

An iterative assessment was undertaken to evaluate potential impacts associated with the project, considering the existing conditions within the study area and associated construction and operational activities.

Potential impacts and key findings are presented here:

- **IMPACT A: Impact of project works on business (including tourism) operations or other existing or approved land uses, including private land use:**
  - Five private residences directly impacted by trail construction are likely to experience noise disturbance and may experience inconvenience in property access for two to seven days
  - The 29 private residences indirectly impacted by trail construction may experience various degrees of low-level construction noise. Of these 29 residences, however only about four are located within a 25m distance to the trail alignment. Further potential management and mitigation measures related to noise for these four properties are provided in EES Chapter 11: Land use and planning, as well as EES Technical Appendix D: Land use and planning technical report
  - Residents are likely to see increased traffic and construction noise associated with the upgrade works for proposed trail heads at Wesburn Park (Old Warburton Rd) and Warburton Golf Club (Dammans Rd).
  - It is unlikely works relating to the construction of trails or trail heads would significantly impact local business in the township
  - Construction of proposed Golf Course Bridge and Old Warburton Road bridge may take six months to complete, and would cause minor delays during that time for local residents, commuters and visitors
- **IMPACT B: Impact of project operations on business operations (including tourism):**
  - The project would have a direct and positive impact for local businesses
  - By 2022, the project is expected to bring 131,000 visitors to the area and generate up to \$10 million in regional income (business profits and salaries). The impact of the project is expected to increase over time, and in 2031 would attract 221,000 visitors and generate \$18 million in regional income.
  - Some existing businesses may close (and be replaced by new businesses) due to higher rents and labour costs as a result of the project

- IMPACT C: Impact of project operations on private land use:
  - Impact of riders using trails alongside residential properties is minimal. For other comparable developments, no landholders there have reported noise, trespassing or privacy concerns relating to MTB operations. About four properties are located within a 25m distance to the trail alignment. Further potential management and mitigation measures related to noise for these four properties are provided in EES Chapter 11: Land use and planning, as well as EES Technical Appendix D: Land use and planning technical report
  - Establishment of a trail head at Wesburn Park (including overflow parking) would have a moderate impact on nearby residents
  - Creating and operating the trail head at the Warburton Golf Club would likely have a moderate impact on members, since the proposed route would mean golfers would have minimal encounters with riders on two holes and high levels of interaction at the clubhouse and surrounding parking
- IMPACT D: Impact of project operations on other existing or approved land uses:
  - Operations would have a moderate impact on recreation users in and around Warburton township
  - There is some increased risk to the safety of other individuals where trails intersect with established tracks used for bushwalking. Experience from comparable MTB projects indicate that conflict between walkers and riders is rare.
  - Cemetery Track would need to be closed to 4WD use, for the safety of bike riders and preservation of the local ecosystem
  - Local hunters are likely to be moderately impacted by the operation of new trails in State Forests and may need to seek alternative locations
- IMPACT E: Socioeconomic impacts: increased traffic:
  - Increases in traffic would have a moderate impact on local residents, including some increased commuter time and some increased competition for parking
- IMPACT F: Socioeconomic impacts: existing housing:
  - An increase in visitor numbers can lead to increases in the numbers of private properties listed for short-term accommodation
  - An increase in tourism-based demand for short term accommodation, could displace long-term renters
  - Increased rental costs mean that some renters would need to relocate from Warburton
- IMPACT G: Socioeconomic impacts: community infrastructure:
  - Community services are unlikely to be adversely affected by increased visitor numbers
  - Trail and shuttle services have been designed to protect the visual amenity of the townships
  - Demands on emergency management services – such as the CFA – may increase with increased use of the State Forest and National Parks
- IMPACT H: Socioeconomic impacts: employment:
  - The trails are expected to generate a total of 133 FTE jobs in 2022, increasing to 229 FTE jobs in 2031
  - The project would generate regional income (business profits and salaries) of up to \$10 million in 2022 and \$18 million in 2031
  - The positive employment impacts of the project would create a social benefit for Warburton residents
- IMPACT I: Socioeconomic impacts (other): social cohesion:
  - Operation of the project is likely to have a moderate negative impact on the social cohesion of the community

- Over the next 15-25 years, the project would almost certainly increase the social mobility of those that live in Warburton
- The most vulnerable in the community are likely to leave the area as cost-of-living increases drive people to locations with more affordable housing
- The project would contribute to changes in the character of Warburton over time.

### 13.3 MITIGATION AND CONTINGENCY MEASURES

Potential socioeconomic impacts due to the project would be avoided, mitigated or managed to required standards through the following recommended mitigation measures.

- **IMPACT A: Impact of project works on business (including tourism) operations or other existing or approved land uses, including private land use:**
  - Construction schedules for all works are developed in partnership with affected residents, through phone or face-to-face discussions wherever possible
  - Where construction bisects a property, temporary measures (which may include fencing or barriers as appropriate) are placed along trail construction sites to clearly demarcate safe areas for residents
  - Ensure that daily communication between residents and construction teams is easy and that residents have a clear mechanism to raise complaints or concerns, ideally through a single contact at Council.
- **IMPACT B: Impact of project operations on business (including tourism) operations:**
  - Council to advocate for and facilitate access to business adaptation programs and government grants to help businesses adapt to the changing market.
- **IMPACT C: Impact of project operations on private land use, Council should:**
  - Engage with each affected landholder to understand their concerns and collaboratively develop appropriate responses
  - Provide appropriate screening and protection of trails.
  - Continue negotiations with club representatives to identify mutually beneficial outcomes for the proposed MTB trail head.
- **IMPACT D: Impact of project operations on other existing or approved land uses:**
  - Appropriate signage is established at trail heads and popular trails to advise riders of the MTBA code of conduct (always give way) and to ride on marked trails only
  - Choke points/slowing techniques are used before intersection with another track/trail
  - Intersection points are clearly marked on trail maps and marketing collateral including details of other likely users
  - An extensive education campaign is conducted, and all user groups (such as Bushwalking Victoria and local horse-riding groups) are regularly updated, to ensure they are aware of intersections between trail types and to minimise users mistakenly accessing MTB trails
  - Yarra Ranges Council works with land managers to install appropriate signage and barriers to prevent bike riding on intersecting walking trails and monitor compliance.
  - 4WD organisation representatives are engaged to discuss the implications of closing Cemetery Trail
  - Increased monitoring of trail bike riding activity, ensuring appropriate MTB trails are only used by MTB riders.
- **IMPACT E: Socioeconomic impacts: increased traffic:**
  - Develop and implement a Traffic Management Plan to minimise disruption during all stages of construction.



- Develop and implement a stakeholder communication plan to ensure that appropriate consultation and advanced notice is provided prior and during construction.
- Undertake a Road Safety Audit to ensure that roads, intersections and the Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail are designed and constructed to provide safe vehicle movements during both construction and operation.
- Undertake improvement works where necessary based on the pavement conditions survey.
- Implement mitigation measures to ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist movements during the operational phase of the project.
- Establish a parking management plan to implement appropriate measures for the operation of the Mountain Bike Project to ensure that parking congestion does not exceed acceptable limits for visitors or residents.
- Establish an emergency access plan
- IMPACT F: Socioeconomic impacts: existing housing:
  - Investigate potential to increase social housing in or near Warburton through applying affordable housing provisions as part of both rezoning, and permit applications for major developments
  - Encourage the development of visitor accommodation
- IMPACT G: Socioeconomic impacts: community infrastructure:
  - Proposed infrastructure works, including toilet upgrades at Mt Donna Buang and construction of toilets at the Mt Tugwell and Golf Club Trail Heads, would be completed as priorities.
  - Yarra Ranges Council monitor the impact of the project on dog walkers at Wesburn Park and provide additional areas elsewhere if necessary.
  - Yarra Ranges Council work with relevant authorities to ensure that CFA capacity and medical emergency capacity are assessed to ensure that essential emergency management services are maintained.
  - An emergency management plan would be prepared and approved before use of the land for the project commences to ensure that risks to life are reduced and managed appropriately. The emergency management plan would include specific bushfire response measures developed in consultation with the Country Fire Authority, State Emergency Service, Department of Environment Land Water and Planning and Parks Victoria.
- IMPACT H: Socioeconomic impacts: employment:
  - Include a training and work placement component as part of the contracts to construct the mountain bike trails.
  - Through a partnership model, coordinate employment and education opportunities with appropriate wrap around services to facilitate employment opportunities for local unemployed people.
- IMPACT I: Socioeconomic impacts (other): social cohesion:
  - Adopt housing mitigation measures identified for impact F
  - Supporting and promoting local social enterprises
  - Supporting community events and initiatives separate from mountain biking to sustain community diversity and engagement
  - Promoting the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination to families, with a particular focus on diversity of riders (women, children, ages).

## 13.4 RESIDUAL IMPACTS

The mitigation measures described above will reduce the socioeconomic impacts of the project. However, some residual impacts will remain.

### **13.4.1 SIGNIFICANT**

The two most significant impacts are:

- The impact will be that 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 will provide employment for Warburton residents, particularly young residents.

### **13.4.2 MODERATE**

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

- The impact of the project on traffic will 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) will have a moderate impact on residents' perception of the liveability in Warburton
- A residual impact on the social cohesion of the Warburton community.

### **13.4.3 MINOR AND INSIGNIFICANT**

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 will be short-lived and relatively minor.
- The (negative) impact of project operations on businesses. For most businesses the impact of the project will be positive, however it is anticipated that a small number of businesses will 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 4WD 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 off-leash dog area at the 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.

### **13.4.4 UNCERTAIN**

The impact on the physical health and social connection of Warburton Golf Club members is highly contingent on the result of ongoing negotiations between Yarra Ranges Council and the club.

### **13.5 COMPARISON OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS**

It is not possible to objectively compare the positive and negative socioeconomic 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 they are and what their values are.

The following analysis has been written to clarify the positive and negative socioeconomic impacts and who is affected to help the community and decision makers reach a decision regarding the socioeconomic impact of the project. It focusses on 'moderate' and 'significant' impacts only.

There will be positive impacts for:

- Property owners. Those who own a commercial or residential property will benefit from increased property prices.
- Business owners (the majority of), who will experience higher revenue and profits from the project
- Many young people and low skilled workers who will benefit from increased employment opportunities.
- Warburton residents who will enjoy the increased activity in the town
- Residents who enjoy mountain biking (the number of which will increase with the construction of the project) who will benefit from the increased recreational opportunities
- There will 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 will be experienced by

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

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# Appendix 1: Risk register

Table A1-1: Risk register

RISK ID	RISK PATHWAY	INITIAL MITIGATION	INITIAL RISK LEVEL			FINAL MITIGATION	FINAL RISK LEVEL		
			LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCE	RISK		LIKELIHOOD	CONSEQUENCE	RISK
<b>Construction</b>									
Risk A: Impact of project works on business (including tourism) operations or other existing or approved land uses, including private land use	A1: Project work teams for trail construction disrupt local residents	Adherence to local planning scheme	Almost certain	Moderate	High	Collaboration with impacted residents to minimise consequence; adjusting work schedules and complaints mechanism established	Almost certain	Minor	Medium
	A2: Project works teams for construction of trail heads disrupt local residents	Adherence to regulatory construction constraints (EPA)	Almost certain	Moderate	High	Face-to-face engagement with local residents to hear concerns, map out schedules and identify potential changes	Almost certain	Minor	Medium
	A3: Project works adversely impact local business/recreation operators	Adherence to local planning scheme	Unlikely	Minor	Low	Ongoing notifications to businesses of construction schedule	Unlikely	Minor	Low
	A4: Traffic delays resulting from bridge construction adversely impacts local amenity, convenience and business	Adherence to regulatory construction constraints (EPA)	Almost certain	Minor	Medium	Apply mitigation measures set out in Traffic Assessment	Almost certain	Insignificant	Low
<b>Operation</b>									
Risk B: impact of project operations on business (including tourism) operations.	B1: Existing local business are replaced by new businesses.		Likely	Minor	Medium	Training, marketing, or grants to help businesses adapt to the changing market	Possible	Minor	Low
Risk C: Impact of project operations on private land use	C1: Project operations in Wesburn impact residents' privacy and amenity	Appropriate screening, noise reduction and fencing	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Face-to-face planning and solutions tailored to address specific concerns of local residents	Possible	Minor	Low
	C2: Project operations reduces appeal and sustainability of the Warburton golf club	Appropriate screening, noise reduction and fencing	Likely	Moderate	High	Ongoing negotiations; consideration of additional remuneration	Possible	Moderate	Medium
	C3: Project operations in Warburton impact residents' privacy and amenity	Appropriate screening, noise reduction and fencing	Possible	Moderate	Medium	Further negotiations to finalise agreement	Possible	Minor	Low
Risk D: Impact of project operations on other existing or approved land uses.	D1: Project operations impacts access, safety and enjoyment of other recreation users	Minimise shared trails, appropriate signage, establishment of choke points for intersections	Almost certain	Moderate	High	Additional engagement with other user groups to allay concerns	Almost certain	Minor	Medium
Risk t E: Socioeconomic impacts: increased traffic.	E1: Increased traffic impacts liveability for residents	Road safety audit Operational parking management plan Stakeholder communication	Almost certain	Major	Very high	Apply mitigation measures set out in Traffic Assessment	Almost certain	Moderate	High
Risk F: Socioeconomic impacts: existing housing.	F1: Reduction in affordable housing stock displaces vulnerable residents.		Almost certain	Major	Very high	Investigate potential to increase social housing in or near Warburton Encourage the development of visitor accommodation	Likely	Major	High
Risk G: Socioeconomic impacts: community infrastructure.	G1: Increased demand disrupts residents' capacity to access appropriate community infrastructure	Apply infrastructure upgrades set out in Project Masterplan	Unlikely	Minor	Low	Assess capacity and needs of CFA to maintain essential emergency management services	Unlikely	Minor	Low
Risk H: Socioeconomic impacts: employment.	H1: Disadvantaged residents do not benefit from increased employment.		Likely	Moderate	High	Targeting employment opportunities to local unemployed people	Possible	Moderate	Medium
Risk D: Impact of project operations on other existing or approved land uses.	I1: Project operations reduce trust, connections and overall cohesion of local communities		Likely	Moderate	High	Additional support for community groups and events, clear strategy for community cohesion long-term, ongoing dialogue with communities	Possible	Moderate	Medium

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