

Submission Response to recommendations for the Trails on Mount Gibraltar

- The riders have taken the advice told by the council, and diligently followed their directions over the past few months.
- Taking away the trails without providing an alternative will leave kids on the street
- The riders have been the party most cooperative, as members of landcare have inflicted physical and verbal abuse upon them
- Removing the trails will only cause more damage, and will cause the emergence of unsanctioned trails elsewhere.
- The trails have been in place for over 20 years, and have obviously caused no significant environmental harm in that time
- Council promised the riders that they would adopt a pragmatic approach, and ensure a new facility is built before the gib trails are destroyed, and they have failed to deliver upon that promise.
- These trails have provided an outlet for the youth to be in nature, exercise, and form a strong, long lasting community of mateship between all riders, and without it, many young boys will experience drastic effects upon their mental health, and wellbeing
- The bonds these trails have created are nothing but beneficial for all riders, as well as the numerous experiences which are unique to the community created
- All the riders have been trying to do while riding the gib, is experience nature at its core in a safe, friendly environment, irrespective of skill level or where they come from. The atmosphere of the trails is inclusive, and gives everyone the opportunity to better not only their riding but their connections throughout the shire.
- It is absolutely disheartening for all the riders involved, to put in so much effort and care that is rarely seen from youth and often some adults, and then be reprimanded, labelled vandals, and shown a complete lack of compromise.
- This has shown nothing to us riders but the fact that our needs wont and will never be met, the best way for us to enjoy ourselves doing what we like is by doing it off the books. We have also learned that even when we show willingness to change and compromise, we still will not be listened to.
- On behalf of all riders, I would like to emphasise the complete and utter waste of time and energy the past 6 months have been. Finally, I would like to say that I hope landcare are happy they at last have the Gib all to themselves, free of people just trying to enjoy themselves.

Submitted by Tavish McPherson on behalf of all riders

Dissenting Document - Issues to Be Raised at Council Meeting - September 20, 2023 McPherson Family and Mountain Bike Parents Group Stakeholders

Introduction

This dissenting document aims to express our profound concerns regarding the proposed course of action outlined in the issues to be raised at the upcoming Council meeting on September 20, 2023. While we acknowledge the efforts of the Wingecarribee Shire Council in supporting young people aged 12 to 24, we strongly dissent from the recommendations and decisions made, particularly concerning the riders of the Gib and their recreational activities.

Background Information

While the Wingecarribee Shire Council has a commendable intention of aiming to support youth programs and activities, we question the Council's commitment to the youth population in light of recent decisions. The Youth Strategy aims to encourage collaboration, enhance understanding, and advocate for increased funding. However, we believe that the Council's actions have not aligned with these noble intentions.

Questions to Council

1. **Lack of Financial Support:** We demand answers regarding the absence of financial support for the riders of the Gib, who fall within the age range of 12-24. How does this align with the Council's policy of supporting youth activities, and why has the recommendation for further support not been pursued?
2. **Support for Lobbying:** We question the Council's commitment to supporting our lobbying efforts for increased opportunities. Where is the Council's tangible support for the youth's aspirations and demands for greater opportunities?
3. **Environmental Levy Allocation:** We seek transparency in understanding how the environmental levy is utilized and how ratepayers are engaged in decisions regarding environmental conservation. What precisely is the allocation of this levy, and why are ratepayers excluded from these important discussions?
4. **Financial Reports:** We demand financial reports from the past five years to account for the allocation of the environmental levy, as part of the Council's fiduciary duty.
5. **Support for Bushcare:** We request an explanation for the Council's continued support of Bushcare members who have openly admitted and participated in track tampering, endangering the youth. This is supported by irrefutable video evidence.
6. **Funding for Youth Gravity Riding:** We seek clarification on why funds have not been allocated to support youth gravity riding through service providers, as stipulated in the youth engagement policy.
7. **Forcing Youth to Leave:** We demand an explanation for the statement suggesting that young riders must leave their shire to pursue their recreation. How does this align with the Council's youth engagement policy and its commitment to youth aged 12-24?
8. **Reduced Services:** We question the decision to remove tracks that have served generations of youth, as it directly reduces services rather than increasing them. What interim provisions will be made for these riders?
9. **W2031+ Goals:** We seek answers regarding the absence of youth riders' access to recreational and sporting activities, the removal of an inclusive and healthy lifestyle

for the boys, and the redirection of riders to seek activity outside the shire, which contradicts the goal of providing services locally.

Action Plan Priority Area 1: Participation and Engagement

10. **Youth Involvement:** We demand an explanation for how the removal of beloved activities supports youth involvement and the commitment they have shown. The youth have met performance indicators and followed Council guidelines throughout the consultation.
11. **Engaging Landcare:** We question the Council's refusal to engage with Landcare for an intergenerational activity, which is a departure from its policy. Why is the Council not fostering a partnership that respects the needs of both groups?
12. **Support for Local Businesses:** We seek an explanation for the recommendation to remove trails that have supported both the riders and local businesses. How does this decision support local businesses and the community's economic well-being?

General Questions

13. **Data Collection:** We demand an explanation for the lack of new data collection since 2018.
14. **Youth Forum Frequency:** We question the infrequent holding of the Wingecarribee Youth Forum and its absence in recent years. Why is this not held regularly to ensure ongoing youth engagement?
15. **Outdated Data:** Given the dramatic demographic changes in the region, we seek an explanation for the outdated data in the 2016-2026 Youth Strategy Action Plan. How does this align with contemporaneous requirements?
16. **Lack of Specific Outcomes:** We emphasize the need for specific outcomes in Council's actions and decisions. The community deserves clarity on the expected results of the Action Plan Priorities.
17. **Scorecard of Performance:** We request a scorecard demonstrating Council's performance against all Action Plan Priorities and the actual outcomes delivered for the youth of the Wingecarribee Shire.

Action Plan Priority Area 2: Health & Wellbeing

18. **Advocacy for Health Services:** We seek details on the services identified at a regional level that are not currently servicing the Wingecarribee. What new services have been delivered as a result of this advocacy?
19. **Awareness of Youth Needs:** We demand information on how the Council has increased awareness of young people's needs and the tangible results achieved.
20. **Assessing Youth Needs:** We question how the Council continues to assess the needs of young people in Wingecarribee, especially in light of the high-profile youth issue.
21. **Addressing Youth Needs:** We emphasize that redirecting youth to satisfy their needs outside the shire is not a satisfactory answer. How does the Council plan to address these needs comprehensively?

Action Plan Priority Area 3: Recreation & Leisure

22. **Inclusive Recreation Planning:** We seek details on how the Council includes young people in consultation strategies for planning recreational facilities and open spaces. What new facilities have been delivered, and how were these decisions made?

23. **Support for Gravity MTB Riding:** We question how the need for gravity/downhill MTB riding, a clear youth need, will be incorporated into Council's recreation planning. What provisions will be made in the interim?

Community Strategic Plan - Wingecarribee 2041

24. **Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** We demand an explanation for how the current course of action promotes healthy lifestyle choices, especially given the negative impact on youth recreation.
25. **Meeting Community Desires:** We seek clarification on how Council has met the community's desire for better local services and facilities, given the current situation.
26. **Protection of Shire Land:** We question the allocation of 2,700km of shire land for protection, which appears to prohibit its use. How does this align with community values and aspirations for access to natural environments?

Social Justice and PEOPLE - HOW WE WILL GET THERE

27. **Equity and Fairness:** We seek an explanation of how the Council's recommendations align with principles of equity and fairness, especially concerning the closure of the north side of the Gib.
28. **Promotion of Equal Rights:** We emphasize the importance of promoting equal rights for everyone, including youth. How does the current approach reflect this commitment?

Conclusion

In conclusion, we urge the Council to reconsider its decisions and recommendations and to prioritize the well-being and recreational opportunities of the youth, particularly those involved in gravity MTB riding. The consequences of the current course of action are profound, affecting not only the physical health but also the mental well-being of these young individuals which correlates with recent research and statistics on a lack of physical activity and exposure to nature found in the links below.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-18/mental-health-depression-anxiety-support-coming-for-schools/102831464> and

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_protect_kids_from_nature_deficit_disorder

We call upon the Council to leave a legacy of forward-thinking decisions that truly reflect the needs of the majority of residents and to support our youth in their pursuit of happiness, health, and community connection.

Transcript from cited Article;

JS: How will this trend impact pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors in kids?

RL: If nature experiences continue to fade from the current generation of young people, and the next, and the ones to follow, where will future stewards of the earth come from?

Past research has shown that adults who identify themselves as environmentalists or conservationists almost always had some transcendent experiences in the natural world. What happens if that personal experience virtually disappears?

There will always be conservationists and environmentalists, but if we don't turn this trend around, they'll increasingly carry nature in their briefcases, not in their hearts. And that's a very different relationship.

Submitted by: Janine McPherson

As we deliberate on the decisions made by the council, it's essential to contemplate the legacy the council aims to establish in the Southern Highlands. Will the council be remembered as an institution that embraced forward-thinking and took actions that genuinely reflected the needs and well-being of the majority, particularly the youth? Does the council prioritize the welfare of families and the flourishing of the young generation, or are these policies mere checkboxes on an administrative to-do list? We urge the council to consider the lasting repercussions of its choices. We implore the council to preserve the long-standing track for the riders while concurrently devising plans to address the broader community's needs. Neglecting the well-being of our youth and erasing their beloved activities could yield severe consequences that will not be easily forgotten by the community. Regrettably, recent events have left many young individuals, including the sons of the writer, apprehensive about pursuing outdoor activities they once cherished—a situation that should bring no pride to the council.

Submitted by Janine McPherson

Richard
Macdonald.

Council meeting 20th September 2023.

We acknowledge the decision by council to carry out the REF however it is inexcusable that WSC has not clearly outlined a way forward for an alternative trail(s) to be built, if a status quo is not allowed for the mountain bike riders to use part of the existing unauthorised GIB trails.

As we have had little time to review the draft REF report, more time for public consultation should be allowed before the final report can be tabled and approved by council.

As an interim point in question to the draft REF Report;

Part of the supposed unauthorised mountain bike trails mapped by WSC is in fact an existing walking trail that has been there for many years before the boys started on the unauthorised trails. At the very high end of the supposed unauthorised trails, 205m of this existing trail, (approx. 40% of the unauthorised trails mapped by council) that also passes through private land, is untouched and not used by the MTB riders. This must be amended in the draft REF report.

Independent of the REF report we wish to also bring to the councils' attentions the following;

1. Over the last 20 years, it has been documented in surrounding councils, that when MTB trails are closed new trails will open elsewhere, and the cycle of old and new unauthorised trails being built will continue.
2. Due to the publicity of the unauthorised trails on social media, some of the boys involved in the originally building of the trails no longer ride them, even though councils have allowed this, due to intimidating actions of Bushcare volunteers.
3. In the ordinary Council meeting on the 19th July 2023, the Administrator stated and I quote 'the Landcare group can't do what they want to do without consent & Direction from the Council'. The General Manager Mr Davis confirmed that any Bushcare works not authorised by council will be subjected to Penalties.
4. On the 10th September when myself and a few of the mountain bikers were measuring the trails to assist in our response to the impending REF report, a supporter of Bushcare verbally admitted on camera to physically participated in track tampering and laying of debris across the unauthorised trails. This was recorded on video. Will the General Manager of Council, Mr Davis, stand by his words regarding this above matter and apply penalties to this person?
5. Members of Environmental Groups within WSC have been actively targeting parents' workplace's with falsely written letters stating that the parents has been involved in illegal activities in the GIB reserve which is totally unacceptable.
6. Andrew Lemann, a supporter of Landcare, have been actively requesting supporters of Landcare to passive intimidation and taking photos of the MTB riders, even though they have been allowed by Council to ride the unauthorised trails.
7. We therefore wish to highlight and request as rate payers of the environmental levy that supports Bushcare, an explanation as to why council will continue to support the Bushcare group when supporters of Bushcare verbally admitted on camera to physically carrying out unauthorised works and passively intimidating young members of the community?

The barely discernible white line is the extent of the bike track that is apparently causing The Gib to dissolve. Most have been there for decades, enjoyed by generations of kids. The Gib is still there!



Legend

All Current Features

Protected by a Code Council

Protected by a State Council

Aerial photography current
85 on November 2002.

0 100 200 400 600 Meters

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The barely discernible white line is
the extent of the bike track that is
apparently dissolving The Gib.

Most have been there for decades,
enjoyed by generations of kids.

The Gib is still there!

The barely discernible white line is the extent of the bike track that is apparently causing The Gib to dissolve.
Most have been there for decades, enjoyed by generations of kids. The Gib is still there!



Legend
La Grande Reserve
Proposed Bike Track

Aerial photography current as of November 2002.

Scale: 0 100 200 400 600 Meters

North Arrow



The barely discernible white line is the extent of the bike track that is apparently dissolving. The Gib. Most have been there for decades, enjoyed by generations of kids. The Gib is still there!

Ch: 697.00

Ch: 292.00

Ch: 00.00

00m

549m

1274m

Ch: 419

1998m

Ch: 472

2448m

Ch: 580 Private Property Sign

Ch: 677 Start Track

NSW

Aqua line is
the
existing
decrepit
Fire Trail

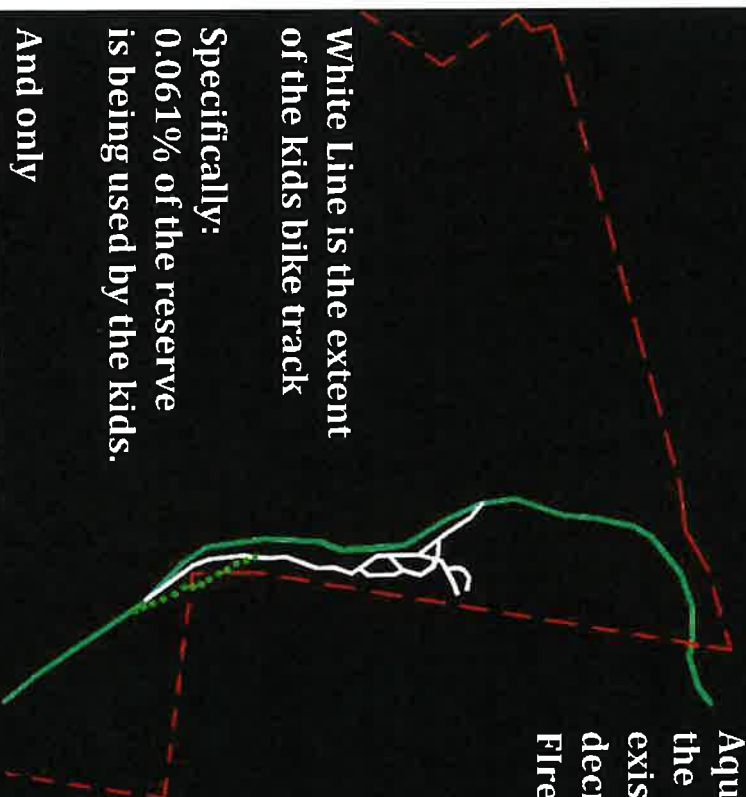
White Line is the extent
of the kids bike track

Specifically:
0.061% of the reserve
is being used by the kids.

And only
0.015% has been disturbed
by the kids.

Whereas the decrepit Fire Trail occupies

0.216% of the reserve



A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	WSC_Bike Tracks_Quantum								
2	17-Sep-23								
3	Peter Cunningham								
4	lingus@ecenet.com.au								
5	0418-246-546								
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11	ORIGINAL PRE TRAIL								
12	In the specific area - of biking activities and is shared by the kids - not new disturbance.								
13	Red Dashed Line Fire Trail (approx)	1000	3	1	4	4000			
14	Used by the kids:	679	3	1	4	2716			
15									
16	MAIN GRAVITY TRACK								
17	Is the degraded fire trail / walking track.	80 to 292	3	1	4	1168			
18	Is the degraded fire trail / walking track.	292 to 679	3	1	4	1548			
19	Has not been modified.	188 to 885 = 205m	1.5	1	2.5	512.5			
20									
21	Disturbance by kids on bikes:								
22	Gravity Trail with constructed bike berms	114	1.5	1	2.5	285	285		
23	Gravity Trail - Small side track	50	1.5	1	2.5	125	125		
24	Step-Up Jump through watercourse.	48	1.5	1	2.5	120	120		
25	Loop walking track after circuit done.	34	1	1	2	68	68		
26	Clearing A	4	4	1	25	100	100		
27	Clearing B	4	4	1	25	100	100		
28									

	Square Metres	the whole
Mt Gibraltar Reserve total area (hectares)	130	1,300,000
Total area USED by the kids (mostly comprising of existing tracks):	2716	0.209%
Total area WORKED by the kids:	798	0.061%
Total area of 'major' disturbance (two zones):	200	0.015%

Length Metres	Average disturbed width	Conservative ADD 1metre	Allow Total width	Maximum Disturbed Area Square Metres	Maximum Bike Disturbed Area Square Metres
1000	3	1	4	4000	
679	3	1	4	2716	

798 Square Metres

THE CALCUS FOLLOW A MEASURED SURVEY OF TRACKS AND TYPES.
TRACK WIDTH IS TOTAL VEGETATION DISTURBANCE - NOT
JUST THE ACTUAL TRACK.

FURTHERMORE: WIDTH HAS A FURTHER METRE ADDED.

- (1) THE RESERVE AREA IS 1,300,000 Square Metres
- (2) THE MAXIMUM AREA USED BY THE KIDS IS:
798 SQM = 0.061% OF THE RESERVE
- (3) THE AREAS NOTED IN THE ENVIRO REPORT AS BEING A DISASTER:
100 SQM = 0.015% OF THE RESERVE

Assistance with Mount Gibraltar Issues

Dear Mr Davis,

I represent Trail Care, an organisation that has been working with local and state government agencies for over a decade to assist in managing issues relating to mountain bikes.

Over the weekend, I was contacted by numerous sources regarding the unsanctioned trails at Mt Gibraltar, and would like to offer my services to Council. In situations like this, we have a policy to offer consultancy services free of charge, given the importance of acting fast to avoid unfortunate and unsustainable outcomes.

The current situation is obviously a tricky one for council, given environmental, risk, and social considerations. However, having been around these many times over the last 15 years, I've seen first hand the unfortunate outcomes and unintended consequences of rushed decision making. I'm also concerned that there could be an escalation of tensions on-site, having seen evidence of local people seeking to demolish/sabotage jumps without involvement of council. There are, however, ways this can be turned into a win for council and the community.

As an introduction to myself, professionally I am a commercial lawyer, and I work with Trail Care on a not-for-profit basis given personal satisfaction in outcomes that

approval and construction process, and now am responsible for ongoing maintenance and a safety officer program.

- Golden Jubilee Bike Park: Ku Ring Gai had a similar situation to what you face now; I identifying an opportunity to modify an existing underutilised facility to provide the desired user experience, assisted with user group engagement, and worked with Council employees onsite to design and construct the current facility.

- Wyatt Avenue Bike Park: in late 2022 we delivered a bike park aimed at young/inexperienced riders, working in collaboration with a Northern Beaches Council landscaping team. This model allowed the council to deliver a fantastic facility at a much lower cost and complexity base, as the majority of works were conducted using council's own internal resources under guidance from Trail Care. We handled all works which require specialist understanding of trail construction and design.

I've also been heavily involved in a range of other projects, including the Illawarra NPWS mountain bike projects that have been ongoing to several years.

In any case, feel free to contact me via email or on [0408228833](tel:0408228833) any time.

Regards,

Matt Ward
Trail Care

Strategy and User Experience





