



# EES chapter 7 – Communications and engagement

Warburton Mountain Bike Destination

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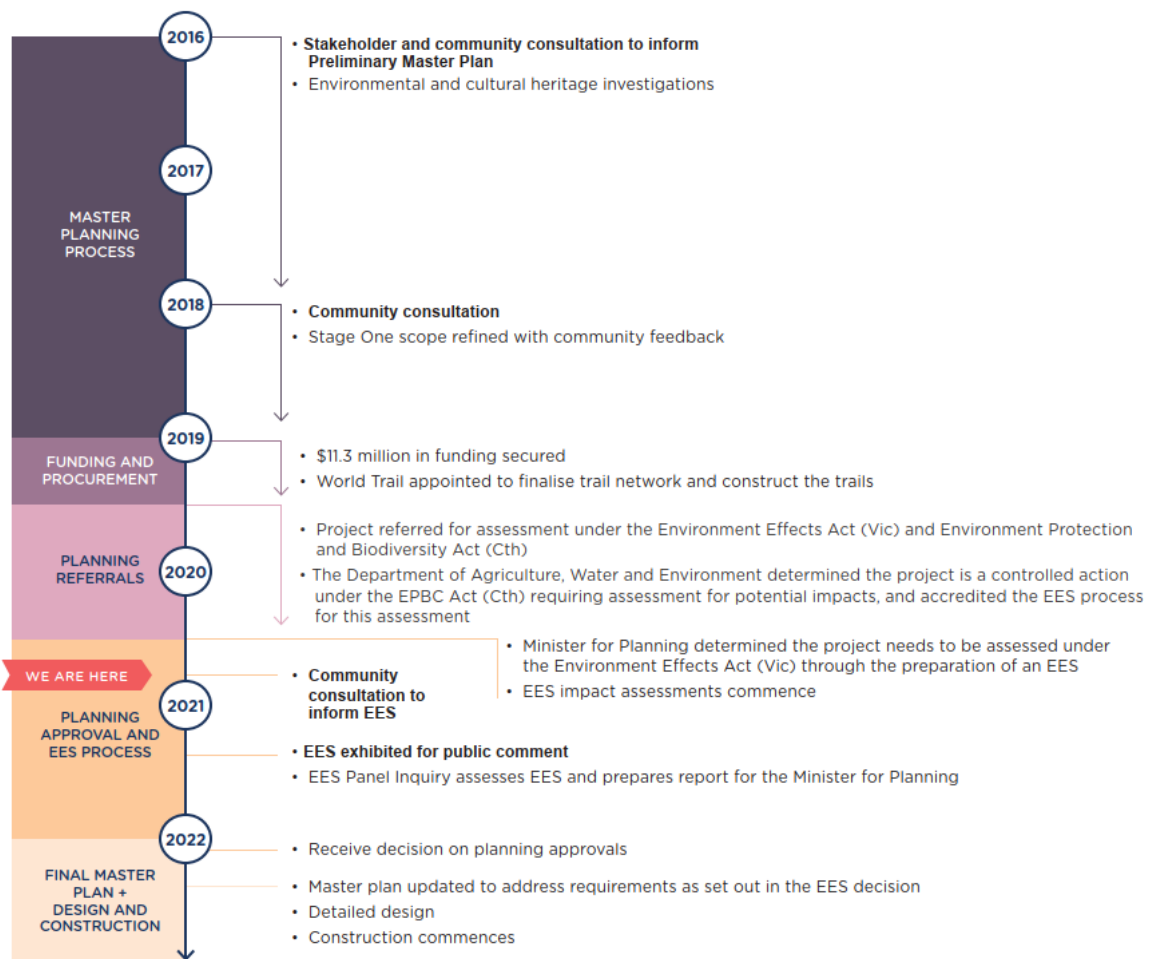
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## 7.0 Communications and engagement

This chapter describes how the Yarra Ranges Council have consulted with stakeholders and local communities about the proposed Warburton Mountain Bike Destination (the project). The information in this chapter is a summary of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination environment effects statement (EES) Consultation Report (Consultation Report) provided as Attachment III to this EES.

### 7.1 Overview

Yarra Ranges Council has consulted extensively for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination since project development commenced in 2013 and have sought feedback from stakeholders including residents, businesses, community groups, government agencies and mountain bike riders, on an ongoing basis. Prior to the EES assessment process, extensive consultation was undertaken as part of the master planning process. A community engagement report was prepared in October 2019 to summarise findings. This report is available on the Ride Yarra Ranges website. In 2020, an EES Consultation Plan was prepared to guide engagement in conjunction with the EES preparation. Figure 7-1 summarises the key stakeholder engagement activities since master planning began in 2016.



**Figure 7-1 Overview of stakeholder engagement for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination**

The feedback received covered a range of topics including the potential positive impacts for businesses and the local community, positive physical and mental well-being impacts from mountain biking, questions about how the project's potential environmental impacts would be managed, and concerns about local amenity, traffic, parking, and safety and how these impacts would be managed. Overall, the number of stakeholders that expressed positive sentiment about the project was higher than participants that expressed negative sentiment.

In response to the EES scoping requirements, Yarra Ranges Council has engaged with and documented the issues raised by the community and stakeholders. Feedback has been considered in the development of the project and the EES.

## 7.2 EES scoping requirements

The scoping requirements for the project set out the specific environmental matters to be investigated and documented in the project's EES in order to satisfy the Commonwealth and Victorian assessment and approval requirements.

The scoping requirements require that the Yarra Ranges Council undertake consultation to enable stakeholder and community knowledge and views to be considered in project planning and formal decision making. This includes the preparation and implementation of a consultation plan with the purpose of informing and engaging the public and stakeholders to identify and respond to their issues and keep them informed of the EES studies.

The requirements also set out that the Yarra Ranges Council should include documentation of the process and results of consultation, including issues raised and the project's responses to these issues.

## 7.3 Engagement approach

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

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

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

### 7.3.1 Principles

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

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

### 7.3.2 Technical Reference Group

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has established a Technical Reference Group (TRG) of Victorian Government agencies including: Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation; Heritage Victoria; First Peoples – State Relations; DELWP Planning and Biodiversity; Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria; Parks Victoria; Department of Transport; Melbourne Water; and Yarra Ranges Council. TRG meetings were held every four to six weeks and advised the TRG on environmental issues throughout the EES assessment. The project worked collaboratively with the members of the TRG, seeking their advice and considering their input in preparation of the EES.

Off-site meetings were often organised outside of the scheduled TRG meetings. These meetings helped the TRG become familiar with the project area and support technical investigations.

Feedback provided by the TRG and other key stakeholders has been considered by the technical investigations. The Technical Reports include a table detailing community and stakeholder feedback and how feedback was considered in project design or the impact assessment, including mitigation measures.

### 7.3.3 Stakeholders

Broadly, the Yarra Ranges Council have engaged with the following stakeholders:

- Victorian Government, including agencies and land managers
- Federal Government
- Local communities
- Cultural groups and Traditional Owners
- Private property owners
- Environmental groups
- Emergency services
- Mountain bike riders
- Sporting groups and educational institutions
- Business owners

### 7.3.4 Direct engagement with stakeholders and interest groups

The following stakeholders have played an active role in the consultation process for the project and have been kept up to date about the preparation of the EES. The engagement has occurred through a range of channels including via existing Council liaison officer relationships, briefings, proactive and responsive calls and emails, and through consultation on other council plans (such as the Wesburn Park Master Plan).

- Bushwalking Victoria
- CEDA – Warburton Community Economic Development Association
- Dog User Group
- Friends of Leadbeater’s Possum
- Field Naturalists of Victoria
- Gem Club
- Healesville Environment Advisory Community
- Healesville Environment Watch Inc
- Mt Toolebewong Landcare Group
- Rethink WMBD
- State Emergency Services (SES)
- U3A
- Upper Yarra Sustainable Development Alliance
- Victorian National Parks Association
- Warburton Environment
- Warburton Pony Club
- Wesburn Adult Riders Club
- Wesburn Football Club
- Yarra Junction Cricket Club
- Yarra Valley ECOSS Field Naturalist Club
- Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory Committee
- Yarra Ranges Landcare

### 7.3.5 Engagement with impacted landowners

Yarra Ranges Council have been engaging with impacted landowners and residential property owners throughout the project. This includes regular project updates and emails from the project team, phone calls and face-to-face meetings where possible.

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

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

Technical specialists have been engaging with impacted landowners including business owners and residents to develop a social assessment as part of the project’s technical assessments and EES documents. The social impact assessment is summarised in **Chapter 12: Socio-economic**.

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

### 7.3.6 Engagement channels and activities

A range of communication channels were used to create awareness, inform stakeholders and the community, and engage or encourage participation in the consultation process. The engagement channels and activities are described in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1 Description of engagement channels and activities

Engagement channels and activities	Activity description
<b>Aware</b>	
People reached through social media	Provide information and promote consultation through the Yarra Ranges Council Facebook page
Homes and businesses received project and consultation pack	Project overview factsheets and consultation invitations were sent to residences and businesses
Advertisements in local papers	Advertisements in local newspapers including the Upper Yarra Mail and the Mountain Mail
E-newsletter subscribers received email updates	Project updates sent to email subscribers – the option to subscribe to updates was available on the Ride Yarra Ranges website
Posters	Posters placed across the Yarra Ranges Shire at high-traffic areas
<b>Informed</b>	
Visits to the Ride Yarra Ranges website	The Ride Yarra Ranges website includes links to the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination and Yarra Valley Trail webpages and an overview of project highlights, funding, updates, and the opportunity to get in touch for both projects.
Visits to online information about Warburton Mountain Bike Destination	<p>The Warburton Mountain Bike Destination webpage can be accessed through the Ride Yarra Ranges website. The website linked to an interactive map using the Social Pinpoint platform. The interactive map included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed trails</li> <li>• Points of interest – information about project features and known areas of local importance, with questions inviting comment on potential impacts and improvement ideas</li> <li>• A free text comment option</li> <li>• A summary describing each of the 66 trails</li> <li>• A survey on each trail</li> </ul> <p>The website also included additional detail, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About the project</li> <li>• Project overview</li> <li>• Documents and maps</li> <li>• Project updates</li> <li>• Frequently asked questions and an opportunity to provide feedback.</li> </ul>
Briefings with stakeholders	<p>Specific briefings were held to speak with project interest groups and discuss specific issues relevant to these groups. Drop-in visits to local businesses in Warburton and Yarra Junction, and phone calls to local residents and community groups were also undertaken.</p>
<b>Engaged</b>	
Pieces of feedback online	Participants could provide feedback through the Ride Yarra Ranges website.
Trail surveys completed	Respondents were invited to complete a survey for each trail, to indicate which of the proposed trails were most important to their riding experience. The survey could be found on the interactive online map.

Engagement channels and activities	Activity description
Hard copy feedback pack and forms	The feedback pack included a poster replicating the interactive map layout, the fact sheet available online and a survey using the same questions as the interactive map. Additional project updates and hard copy feedback forms were hand delivered during Phase 3.
Online information session	Online information sessions were held due to physical distancing requirements. Attendees heard from the project director and technical specialists, and were able to submit questions during registration or through a chat function during the presentation. All pre-submitted questions were answered during the presentation, and some questions submitted in the chat were asked where time allowed.  A Q&A document summarising the questions asked and responses was distributed after the event to everyone who attended, and a recording of the information session was put on the project website.
Community information session	Community drop-in sessions were held. These sessions featured project displays and maps, and provided local residents, visitors, and other community members with an opportunity to talk with the project team, ask questions and share their feedback on the project.
Email enquiries and phone discussions with the project team	The Ride Yarra Ranges website included a 'contact us' page and the Yarra Ranges Council website included the contact details for the project manager of the project.

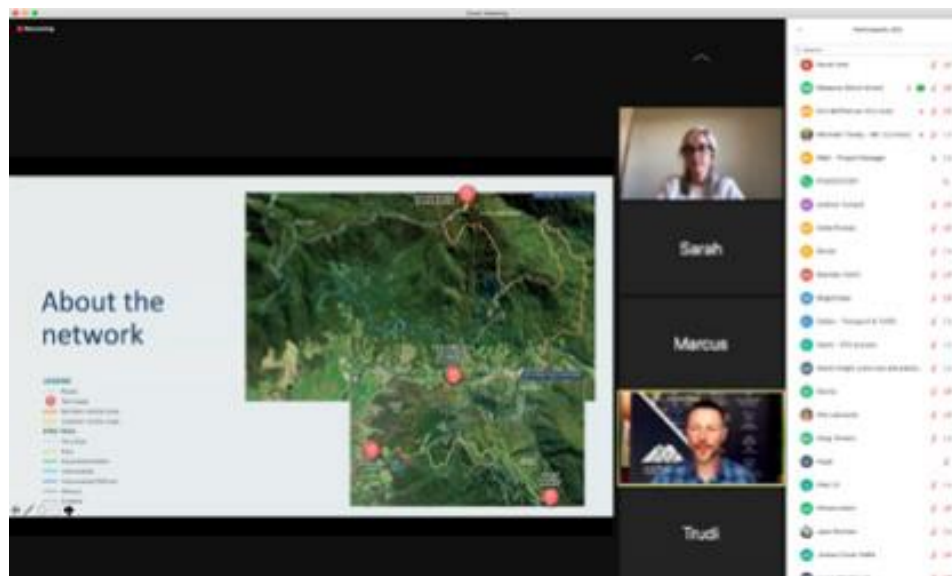


Figure 7-2 Online community information session

### 7.3.6.1 Recording of feedback

All received feedback was recorded through Council's interface and document management programs in the extensive Yarra Ranges Stakeholder database, which logs all incoming communication and correspondence, as well as outgoing communication and correspondence, including relevant associated information.

All Council records are 'Public Records' and are covered by the *Public Records Act 1973*. All employees of Council are considered to be 'Public Officers' and are therefore obligated to manage corporate records in accordance with this legislation. Councillors, contractors, and volunteers also have some obligations to maintain Council related documentation appropriately.

## 7.4 Phases

### 7.4.1 Phase 1: Preparation of scoping requirements (mid 2020)

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

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

### 7.4.2 Phase 2: EES and design consultation (late 2020)

Phase two occurred in late 2020, during which Yarra Ranges Council asked communities and stakeholders to comment on the project and provide feedback about the proposed trail network, local features, and impacts. This feedback was then considered in the preparation of the EES.

Engagement during this phase focused on three key areas:

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

The following engagement channels and activities were utilised to provide information about the project and to promote consultation. Table 7-2 also details the number of people who participated in phase two of the consultation process.

**Table 7-2 Engagement with channels and activities during phase two**

Engagement channels and activities	Phase 2
<b>Aware</b>	
People reached through social media	46,000+
Homes and businesses received project and consultation pack	13,000
Advertisements in local papers	3
E-newsletter subscribers received email updates	2500
<b>Informed</b>	
Visits to the Ride Yarra Ranges website	3,212 visitors and 4,192 visits
Visits to online information about WMBD	1981 visitors and 2428 views
Briefings with stakeholders	7
<b>Engaged</b>	
Pieces of feedback online	1,693
Trail surveys completed	1,092
Hard copy feedback forms completed	24
Online information session participants	66 (across two sessions)
Community information session participants	100
Email enquiries and phone discussions with the project team	38



### Feedback on the consultation process

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

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

Feedback provided was considered and consequently staff were asked to take the time needed to understand all perspectives being raised, and to answer questions thoroughly and to the best of their ability.

### 7.4.3 Phase 3: Design update (early 2021)

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

Engagement during this phase focused on three key areas:

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

The following engagement channels and activities were utilised to provide information about the project and to promote consultation. Table 7-3 also details the number of people who participated in phase three of the consultation process.

**Table 7-3 Engagement with channels and activities during phase three**

Engagement channels and activities	Phase 3
<b>Aware</b>	
People reached through social media	10,000+
Homes and businesses received project and consultation pack	2,200
Ads in local papers	2
E-newsletter subscribers received email updates	2800
<b>Informed</b>	
Visits to the Ride Yarra Ranges website	6455 visitors and 7636 visits
Visits to online information about the project	2802 visitors and 3537 views
Briefings with stakeholders	8
<b>Engaged</b>	
Pieces of feedback online	1,004
Trail surveys completed	143
Hard copy feedback forms completed	2
Online information session participants	9
Community information session participants	15
Email enquiries and phone discussions with the project team	26

#### **7.4.4 Phase 4: Ongoing conversations with community and interest groups**

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

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

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

Communication during this phase focused on:

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

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

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

#### **7.4.5 Phase 5: Exhibition and Inquiry and Advisory Committee submissions (late 2021)**

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

The focus of phase five is to support the public exhibition through:

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

### **7.5 Receiving and addressing feedback**

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

There were 488 unique participants in phases two and three of engagement. Of which, 223 contributed in phase two, 230 contributed in phase three and 35 contributed to both. Approximately 26% of participants were locals (24% non-riders and 12% riders), and 64% of participants were visitors (8% non-riders and 56% riders). Local participants are defined as those that reside within postcodes 3799, 3797 and 3139.

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

Overall, more unique participants expressed positive sentiment about the project than negative sentiment, as summarised in Table 7-4.

**Table 7-4 Sentiment of participants by percentage**

Sentiment	Count	%
Negative	75	15.37%
Neutral	51	10.45%
None	129	26.4%
Positive	225	46.11%
Response*	8	1.64%
<b>Total</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>41</b>

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

From the feedback received, 13 high level themes were identified. Table 7-5 contains a description of each of the feedback themes and a summary of how the project has responded to each theme. A detailed description of community feedback and concerns, and the project response can be found in the Consultation Report provided in Attachment III to this EES. Feedback received has been incorporated into relevant technical assessments. The technical assessments include a consultation sections that lists specific community concerns and how and where feedback has been addressed within the technical report, including any correlating mitigation measures. Relevant technical reports for each theme are identified in the response column of Table 7-5. A percentage breakdown of participants (local or visitor) is also provided in Table 7-5.

**Table 7-5 High level feedback themes and project responses**

Theme	Description	Response
Looking forward to seeing world class trails  <b>Local:</b> 25% <b>Visitor:</b> 75%	The most common feedback received was around excitement and anticipation of the project. Feedback was general in nature and included comments about individual trails that respondents were excited to ride, but also the trail network more broadly. A group of respondents raised the potential for world class trail status as being exciting, and made reference to other networks constructed by World Trail.  145 comments from 69 unique respondents across both phases provided comments that were positive in sentiment.	As all feedback received was positive in sentiment, a detailed response has not been provided in this EES.
Positive effect for local business and economy  <b>Local:</b> 28% <b>Visitor:</b> 72%	Respondents noted the positive impact that the project would have on existing local businesses, the potential for new industry with increased tourism and the overall impact this would have on the Yarra Ranges economy. A small proportion of comments highlighted that increased economic activity may provide incentive for local youth to seek employment in the area.  137 comments from 105 unique respondents across both phases provided comments, the majority of which indicated positive sentiment (two neutral comments).	As the majority of feedback received was positive in sentiment, a detailed response has not been provided in this EES, although some coverage of the socio-economic benefits can be found in <b>Chapter 12: Socio-economic</b> and <b>Technical report E: Socio-economic</b> .

Theme	Description	Response
<p>Traffic and parking implications</p> <p><b>Local:</b> 84% <b>Visitor:</b> 16%</p>	<p>Respondents raised concerns regarding the potential impact the project would have on traffic and parking in the local area. There was a concentration of attention on the dog park at Wesburn Park and the impact to facilities. Other concerns included local roads not being equipped to deal with additional traffic (i.e., narrow roads, increased chances of collision, impacts to emergency egress and congestion during fire evacuation).</p> <p>134 comments from 64 unique respondents of which, majority were negative in sentiment.</p>	<p>The detail of the concerns raised by respondents and the project response can be found in the Consultation Report. Additionally, the assessment of traffic and parking impacts can be found in <b>Chapter 13: Transport and Technical report F: Transport</b>.</p> <p>The assessment of impacts on the off-leash dog park and facilities is provided in <b>Chapter 12: Socio-economic and Technical Report E: Socio-economic</b>.</p>
<p>Concerns and ideas about environmental impacts and protection</p> <p><b>Local:</b> 77% <b>Visitor:</b> 23%</p>	<p>Respondents expressed concerns for a range of endangered/protected species (including Leadbeater's Possum, lyrebirds, and Myrtle Beech trees), rivers and aquatic life as a result of the project and concerns about potential landslide and erosion risks and their potential implications.</p> <p>103 comments from 25 unique respondents, majority of which were negative in sentiment.</p>	<p>The detail of the concerns raised by respondents and the project response can be found in the Consultation Report. The following technical reports and chapters provide assessments of impacts, mitigation measures and residual impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Technical Report A: Biodiversity and Habitats</b></li> <li>• <b>Chapter 8: Biodiversity and habitats</b></li> <li>• <b>Technical report B: Surface Water, Groundwater, and Geotechnical Hazards</b></li> <li>• <b>Chapter 9: Surface water, groundwater, and geotechnical hazards</b></li> </ul>
<p>Amazing project which fosters appreciation of nature</p> <p><b>Local:</b> 31% <b>Visitor:</b> 69%</p>	<p>Respondents noted that the project would foster a greater appreciation of nature for both locals and visitors to the area.</p> <p>68 comments from 51 unique respondents provided comments that were all positive in sentiment.</p>	<p>As all feedback received was positive in sentiment, a detailed response has not been provided in this EES.</p>

Theme	Description	Response
<p>Impacts and safety for horse riding and other recreation</p> <p><b>Local:</b> 90% <b>Visitor:</b> 10%</p>	<p>Respondents were concerned about access, amenity, ambience and safety impacts to hikers/ walkers, equestrian activities, pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>63 comments from 21 unique participants, the majority of which were negative in sentiment.</p>	<p>The detail of the concerns raised by respondents and the project response can be found in the Consultation Report: The following technical reports and chapters also provide assessments of impacts, mitigation measures and residual impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Technical report F: Transport</b></li> <li>• <b>Chapter 13: Transport</b></li> <li>• <b>Technical Report D: Land Use and Planning</b></li> <li>• <b>Chapter 11: Land use and planning</b></li> </ul>
<p>Doubts about the consultation process</p> <p><b>Local:</b> 47% <b>Visitor:</b> 53%</p>	<p>Respondents expressed concerns about accessibility of information, legacy issues, secrecy and ineffective/incomplete consultation and that consultation wasn't a true reflection of local community feedback.</p> <p>45 comments from 19 unique respondents across both phases, the majority of which were negative in sentiment.</p>	<p>Yarra Ranges Council prepared and implemented an EES Consultation Plan in accordance with the requirements in the <i>Environment Effects Act 1978</i>.</p>
<p>Don't support the project due to size and local impacts</p> <p><b>Local:</b> 80% <b>Visitor:</b> 20%</p>	<p>Respondents did not support the project due to its size and the potential impacts that it would have on the local area, including residents, businesses, heritage structures and the environment.</p> <p>37 comments from 17 unique respondents across both phases, the majority of which were negative in sentiment.</p>	<p>The details of the concerns raised by respondents and the project response can be found in the Consultation Report. The following technical reports and chapters also provide assessments of impacts, mitigation measures and residual impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Technical Report D: Land Use and Planning</b></li> <li>• <b>Chapter 11: Land use and planning</b></li> <li>• <b>Technical Report E: Socio-economic</b></li> <li>• <b>Chapter 12: Socio-economic</b></li> <li>• <b>Technical Report C: Cultural Heritage</b></li> <li>• <b>Chapter 10: Cultural heritage</b></li> </ul>
<p>Loss of peaceful ambience of the area for locals</p> <p><b>Local:</b> 92% <b>Visitor:</b> 8%</p>	<p>Respondents raised concerns about the potential loss of amenity or the peaceful ambience of the local area due to an increase in tourism. Amenity concerns included noise, air quality and visual impacts.</p> <p>37 comments from 12 unique respondents across both phases, the majority of which were negative in sentiment and put forward by local residents.</p>	<p>The details of the assessment of concerns about noise, air quality and visual impact can be found in <b>Chapter 11: Land use and planning</b> and <b>Technical Report D: Land Use and Planning</b>.</p>
<p>Requests to keep trails</p>	<p>There were a broad range of places where respondents asked for the trails to be moved away from. Specific places were most commonly locations adjacent to private property or within the National Park. Some</p>	<p>The details of the concerns raised by respondents (including the specific locations identified) and the project responses can</p>

Theme	Description	Response
away from specific areas  <b>Local:</b> 89% <b>Visitor:</b> 11%	responses mentioned locations of abandoned mineshafts which could be dangerous to riders. 28 comments from 12 unique respondents across both phases, the majority of which were negative in sentiment.	be found in the Consultation Report. A detailed response of the development of trails in response to community concerns (including landowners) is included within <b>Chapter 4: Project development and alternatives</b> and <b>Attachment II: Alternatives Assessment Report</b> .
Mountain bike riding provides both physical and mental benefits  <b>Local:</b> 25% <b>Visitor:</b> 75%	All respondents shared a view that mountain bike riding promotes a healthy lifestyle that will improve the mental and physical wellbeing of locals and visitors to the area. 24 comments from 19 unique respondents across both phases, all of which were positive in sentiment.	As all feedback received was positive in sentiment, a detailed response has not been provided in this EES.
Need for a fire emergency plan  <b>Local:</b> 83% <b>Visitor:</b> 17%	Respondents were concerned that an increase in visitors would consequently increase the fire risk and the possible challenges of evacuating people from the area. 18 comments from 14 unique participants across both phases, majority of which were negative in nature.	The mitigation measures proposed in this EES include a requirement for the Yarra Ranges Council to establish an approved emergency access plan for the project before operation commences.  A bushfire assessment has been undertaken and is included in <b>Technical Report D: Land Use and Planning</b> and <b>Chapter 11: Land use and planning</b> .
Need to protect national park  <b>Local:</b> 78% <b>Visitor:</b> 22%	Respondents expressed the need to consider the important and vulnerable ecosystems and habitat in the local area, including highlighting that the project area has never been impacted by bushfires. 13 comments from 9 unique participants across both phases, all of which were negative in sentiment.	The project has sought to avoid or minimise the impact on sensitive values as part of the design development.  Avoidance and minimisation through design measures are outlined in chapters related to specialist studies.

## 7.6 Engagement during construction and operation

To continue communication and engagement with the community and stakeholders during construction and operation of the project, systems and processes would be established to respond to new and emerging issues in accordance with the environmental management framework and environmental management measures for the project.

A Communications and Community Engagement Plan would be prepared for both the construction and operation phases of the project prior to commencement. This would outline the approach to informing potentially affected stakeholders about the progress of the project during its construction and operation and to identify opportunities to work together to minimise construction and operation impacts.

The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Operations Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) specify the stakeholder communications proposed to keep stakeholders (particularly communities in the immediate vicinity of the trails) informed regarding trail construction and operations.

The key elements of stakeholder engagement during project construction would include:

- Direct communications with landowners and land managers directly affected or in the vicinity of works by face-to-face meeting, telephone, email, or letter box drop to advise of forthcoming construction activities
- Periodic briefings for Yarra Ranges Council partner agencies (Parks Victoria, DELWP and Melbourne Water) on construction progress through the project steering committee
- Regular updates on the construction program on the Yarra Ranges Council website
- Provision of contact information on the Yarra Ranges Council website for any enquiries.

The key elements of stakeholder engagement during project operation would include:

- Information on the trail network posted on the Yarra Ranges Council website to guide users on how best to enjoy the facility and how to use it responsibly to avoid biodiversity, heritage, and socioeconomic impacts
- Trail network bulletins posted on the Yarra Ranges Council website advising of any trail closures due to weather conditions and for other reasons and providing details of any events planned on the network
- Signage at the trail heads and around the trail network to facilitate safe and sustainable use of the trail network
- Direct communications with landowners and land managers by face-to-face meeting, telephone, email, or letter box drop in relation to the function of the trail network and providing details of any events planned on the network
- Periodic briefings for Yarra Ranges Council partner agencies (Parks Victoria, DELWP and Melbourne Water) on trail network operations through the project steering committee
- Provision of contact information on the Yarra Ranges Council website for any enquiries.

Any community complaints in relation to the project would be managed through the Yarra Ranges Council Complaint Policy. This policy sets out procedures that:

- Provide a standardised approach to managing complaints
- Provide a framework for the management of complaints and feedback with a view to continually improving services, systems, and capabilities
- Increase the level of satisfaction by resolving issues in an effective, fair, respectful, and professional manner
- Ensure all statutory requirements are satisfied, and escalation options are communicated clearly.

The procedures under Yarra Ranges Council Complaint Policy require that:

- Complaints are recorded in a register including the date and time of the complaint, details of the complainant (if known) and the nature of the complaint

- The complainant be contacted directly (where possible) to discuss and better understand the concerns raised
- An investigation of the complaint is undertaken proportionate to the nature and the severity of the issues raised in the complaint
- A written response is provided to the complainant to communicate the findings in relation to the investigation of the complaint and details of any actions taken by Yarra Ranges Council in response to the issues raised.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

Yarra Ranges Council have conducted consultation with the community and stakeholders since project development commenced in 2013. As a requirement of the EES a formal consultation process began in mid-2020 and four phases of consultation have been undertaken.

The consultation program included a range of activities to create awareness, inform stakeholders and the community and engage or encourage participation in the consultation process. Overall, the number of respondents that expressed positive sentiment about the project was higher than respondents that expressed negative sentiment.

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

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

Feedback has informed the development of the proposed Warburton Mountain Bike Destination and this is demonstrated in the Consultation Report and the EES technical reports. To continue communication and engagement with the community and stakeholders over the next phase of the project, systems and processes would be established in accordance with the environmental management framework and environmental management measures for the project.