



Environment Effects Statement (EES)

Yarra Ranges Council has commenced a comprehensive and transparent planning, consultation and assessment process for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination through an Environment Effects Statement (EES).

The EES for the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination will be exhibited publicly in early to mid 2021 and marks a significant project milestone.

What is an EES?

An EES is a well-established process, under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*, that provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the environmental effects of major projects in Victoria.

The Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects defines the environment as the physical, biological, heritage, cultural, social, health, safety and economic aspects of human surroundings. All of these are considered in the EES.

The guidelines state the objective of the assessment process is to provide for the transparent, integrated and timely assessment of projects capable of having a significant effect on the environment.

The EES process is managed by the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) on behalf of the Minister for Planning. Information about the process is available on the DELWP website www.delwp.vic.gov.au.



THE WARBURTON MOUNTAIN BIKE DESTINATION EES

Yarra Ranges Council's aim is to deliver a range of positive opportunities for the region through the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination. Protecting the area's significant natural and cultural environment and minimising potential impacts continue to be central to the project's development.

In May 2020, the Minister for Planning determined an EES would be required for the project. In June 2020, the Commonwealth Government determined that approval would be required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and accredited the EES process for the related assessment.

In September 2020, DELWP issued draft Scoping Requirements for the project's EES for public comment. Following consideration of feedback, the final Scoping Requirements will be issued and will identify the matters to be investigated and documented in the EES.

The Minister for Planning will provide a final assessment of the effects of the project following public exhibition of the EES and a subsequent inquiry.

How the EES will inform the project's development

Building on extensive investigations, sensitive design work and consultation undertaken over several years, the project team has already begun the planning process to inform development of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination EES.

The previous technical studies and assessments have helped to establish the existing conditions in the project area, which provides a baseline to examine and review changes and possible impacts.

The project team will undertake a range of specialist studies to inform the impact assessments in the project's EES, which will clearly describe the potential impacts and possible mitigation measures.

These studies, outlined below, will be incorporated into the EES, which will be exhibited to the public in early to mid-2021.

More information on each of these studies is available in separate fact sheets and the EES Scoping Requirements: www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/warburton-mountain-bike-destination

Aspect	Focus of the assessment
Biodiversity and habitats	<p>The term biodiversity refers to all components of the living world: the number and variety of native plants, animals and other living things across our land, rivers, coast and ocean. It includes the variety of their genetic information, their habitats and their relationship to the ecosystems within which they live.</p> <p>The project area is within the Victorian Alps Bioregion and the Highlands Southern-fall Bioregion, with trails through the native forests surrounding Warburton.</p> <p>Evaluation objective in the EES Scoping Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid, and where avoidance is not possible, minimise potential adverse effects on native vegetation and animals (particularly listed threatened species and their habitat and listed ecological communities), as well as address offset requirements consistent with state and Commonwealth policies.
Waterways and catchments	<p>The trails will be located within Melbourne Water's Yarra River Upper (Rural) sub-catchment and two Water Supply Protection Areas. The project will include many water crossing points and will be designed to avoid direct contact with surface water to minimise impact to waterway quality. The project will avoid trails within water supply catchment areas.</p> <p>Evaluation objective in the EES Scoping Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain the functions and values of groundwater, surface water and floodplain environments and minimise effects on water quality and beneficial uses.
Social, economic, amenity and land use	<p>The town of Warburton is home to about 2000 people and includes a small community in the historic settlement of Old Warburton. Warburton, which has a range of shops, cafes and other businesses, is already a popular Yarra Valley visitor destination.</p> <p>Evaluation objective in the EES Scoping Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimise potential adverse social, economic, amenity and land use effects at local and regional scales.
Cultural heritage	<p>The proposed trails are within the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people.</p> <p>These forested areas have historically been used for gold mining, timber harvesting and its processing.</p> <p>Evaluation objective in the EES Scoping Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid, or minimise where avoidance is not possible, adverse effects on Aboriginal and historic cultural heritage.



Does the EES process determine if the project will go ahead?

The Minister for Planning will provide a final assessment of the effects of the project.

The assessment will consider all relevant information including the EES documents, public submissions, the proponent's response and the inquiry report.

This information and the Minister's advice, as to whether the project provides an acceptable outcome, will be provided to other government agencies who make statutory approvals decisions in relation to specific aspects of the project.

Government agencies will consider the Minister's Assessment in deciding whether to approve a project under Victorian law.

The Minister's Assessment will also inform the decision of the Commonwealth Government in relation to the EPBC Act approval.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN AN EES?

An EES usually contains:

- A description of the proposed development and alternatives considered
- An outline of public and stakeholder consultation undertaken during investigations and issues raised
- A description of the existing environment that may be affected
- Predictions of potential environmental effects of the proposal
- Proposed measures to avoid, minimise or manage adverse environmental effects
- A proposed program for monitoring and managing environmental effects during project implementation.



TECHNICAL REFERENCE GROUP

A key step in developing an EES is the establishment of a Technical Reference Group (TRG).

A TRG is specifically appointed for a project to advise on the preparation of an EES and help ensure all potential impacts are thoroughly considered.

The TRG includes representatives from: Yarra Ranges Council, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Heritage Victoria, Aboriginal Victoria, DELWP Planning, DELWP Biodiversity, EPA Victoria, Parks Victoria, Department of Transport and Melbourne Water.

The TRG will provide regular advice and meet monthly to formally consider the EES before it is publicly exhibited for comment.



EES timeline

There will be the opportunity to view the EES and have a say when it is publicly exhibited in early to mid 2021. Formal feedback will be considered by an independent Inquiry Panel and public hearing.

For more information about the EES process, please visit the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning website at delwp.vic.gov.au

WE ARE HERE

MID 2020 -
EARLY 2021

Prepare the EES

- Specialist studies and investigations
- Community consultation
- Technical Reference Group advice and review of the EES

EES public exhibition and hearings

- EES released for public comment for no less than 30 days
- Appointment of an independent Inquiry Panel
- Panel conducts public hearings
- Panel considers the EES, project effects and written and verbal submission and provides a report to the Minister for Planning

EARLY-MID
2021

Minister for Planning's assessment

- Minister assesses the EES, public submissions and the Inquiry report
- Statutory decision makers will consider the Minister's Assessment in their decisions regarding project approvals
- Project designs amended if required, to address conditions

LATE 2021

Find out more and stay involved

Community input is an important part of the EES process and the project's continued development.

 Sign up for project updates, find the latest information or ask a question on our website rideyarraranges.com.au

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NOVEMBER 2020

