



Design and Consultation Update

Planning and development of the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination is continuing, with exhibition and public submissions on the project's Environment Effects Statement planned for the second half of 2021.

This update details changes we are making to the project in response to recent community consultation and the design and specialist studies work we have been doing.

Environmental investigations continuing

Warburton Mountain Bike Destination has been in development since local riders suggested the idea in 2010. Since then, we have done several stages of detailed work on feasibility, planning, site investigations and consultation to develop the project concept and design.

At each stage, we have improved and refined the project in response to what we've learned.

In the current stage, our focus has been on the preparation of the project's Environment Effects Statement (EES). Specialist teams have been working to understand potential impacts and undertake consultation to help us further refine the design.

KEY TOPICS RAISED IN RECENT CONSULTATION



Environmental concerns



Amenity for residents



Traffic and parking



Support for the project

Latest project updates – have your say

Based on our recent work, we are making the following updates to the project and invite your feedback on:

- Further consideration of traffic and parking needs and potential changes
- Improvements of the project at Wesburn Park to prioritise safety and reduce traffic pressures

- Further trails near those already proposed following a review of mapping
- Inclusion of two options for the iconic Drop AK trail in EES assessments and exhibition.

Visit our interactive map at www.rideyarraranges.com.au to register your feedback

Latest design updates

Traffic and parking assessments

Pressure on traffic and parking was a key concern raised in recent feedback. Comments related to current pressures on roads and parking, amenity and potential safety concerns, with some participants seeking reassurance that Warburton's infrastructure can handle increases in visitation.

With this topic continuing to come up through community feedback and with local attractions growing in popularity, the traffic assessment being done as part of the EES will look at the best way to handle increased traffic, particularly when there are peak periods as we have seen over summer and long weekends or when community events are being held.

Prioritising safety for all

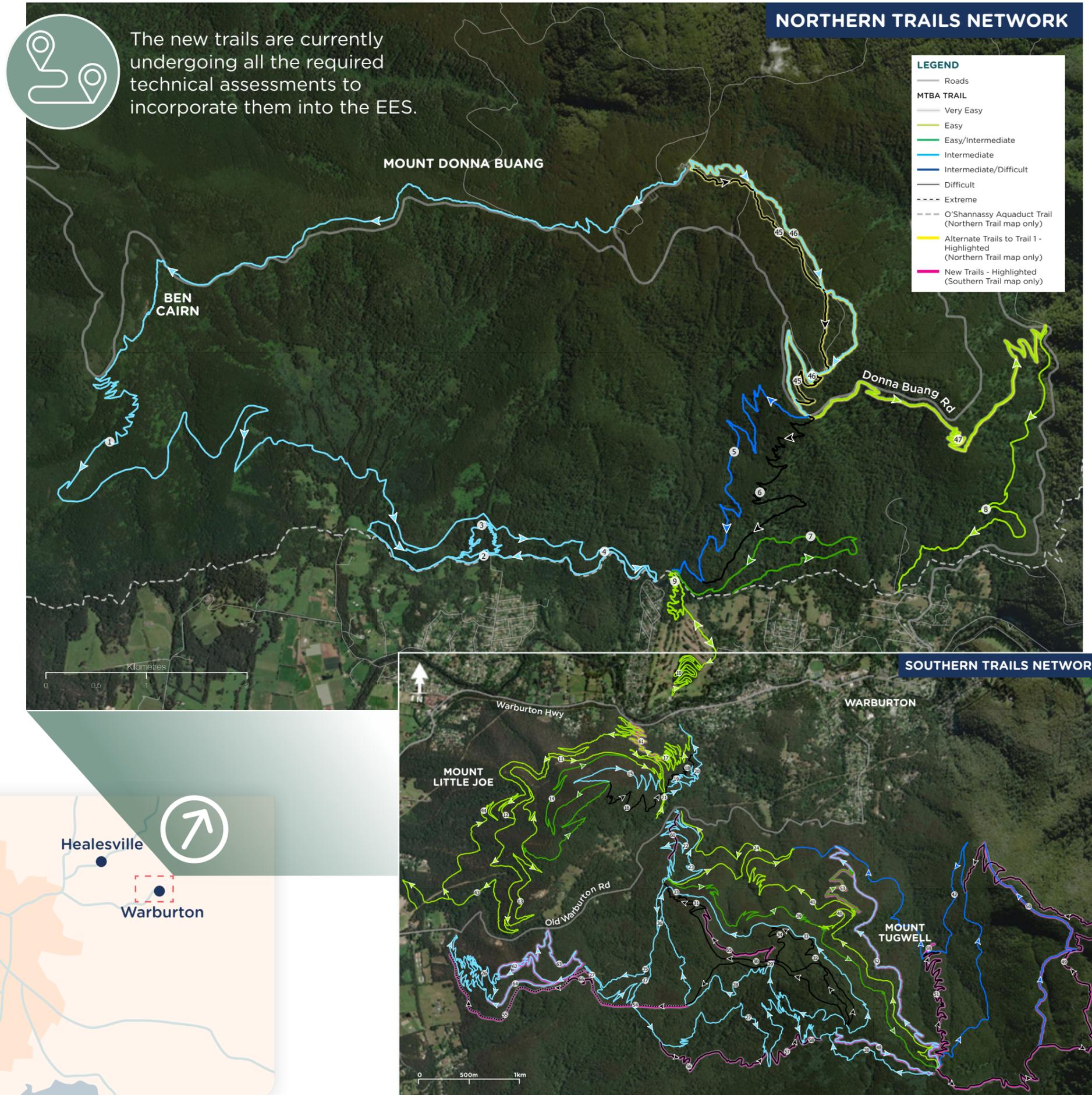
The project team is embedding safety in the design and operation of the project. We know that trails and surrounds need to be carefully managed to avoid interaction and incidents between all user groups.

Equestrians want to ensure that Wesburn Park continues to operate well and that horses and young riders aren't impacted by mountain bike riders, sporting groups and other people using the area. Mountain bike riders, hikers, runners and recreation visitors all want to know they can safely use the area.

Importance of Wesburn Park

We've been looking at more ways to address concerns about traffic and safety and identified that including additional parking with the proposed Wesburn Park trailhead would better distribute the flow of traffic and help to reduce pressure on roads and parking in Warburton.

We're proposing to include 120 car parks as part of the Wesburn Park trailhead. This proposed upgrade will be included as part of the development of the Wesburn Park Master Plan and will also be considered in the EES. Ongoing consultation with all users of Wesburn Park will help shape the final Master Plan.



Changes to trails

The project's fact sheet on 'Designing and operating our network of trails' describes the project's five-stage design process, which includes site visits by specialists to help understand impacts, identify any differences between mapping and on-ground conditions, and refine the design.

During on-ground and detailed technical assessments in late 2020, Council became aware that there was an error in spatial data that resulted in an overestimation of trail length across the network. While the spatial location of the trails was accurately represented geographically, background algorithms that calculated trail length were incorrect, resulting in an approximately 20% overestimation in trail length. This meant that the proposed network was actually in the order of 145km.

A key project objective is to deliver a world-class mountain bike destination that qualifies the project for classification as a Gold Level Ride Centre under the International Mountain Bike Association Ride Centre accreditation process. This objective underpins the economic and jobs outcomes that Council is seeking as a core driver for the project. The minimum length of trail required to meet this standard is 160km.

The project team has undertaken further planning and assessments to add approximately 30km of trails to the network to meet the 160km threshold (allowing for the potential reduction of the network by 10+km should the alternate to Drop A-K be adopted). Planning for these additional trails was conducted in discussion with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), and was approached with the philosophy of minimising additional ecological, heritage or social impacts.

The new trails are situated in the Yarra State Forest and predominantly within or alongside the existing geographic footprint. By using existing disturbed areas, informal tracks, and an extension of the use of Cemetery Fireline Track we have sought to further minimise impacts of the new trails.

A number of alignments near Old Warburton (Cemetery Fireline Track/Mineshaft Hill Track) have been altered to remove conflicts with roads and move trails further from residential areas.

The requirement to add new trails has also created an opportunity to provide some additional diversity to the mix of trails in the network. Steep technical climbs, designed with e-bikes and elite riders in mind, have been added to create shortcut routes to the top. Longer distance cross country trails and more challenging descents feature alongside some new beginner trail, providing something for everyone.

Drop A-K trail – two options to be assessed and exhibited

The project's signature 'Drop A-K' trail would provide a 1000m vertical descent trail from the summit of Mount Donna Buang to the trailhead at the Warburton Golf Course.

The Drop A-K trail presented during recent consultation would pass through a 2.42km area of cool temperate rainforest, due to constraints and requirements not to encroach into a crucial water catchment area.

The assessment of alternatives is a critical component of the EES and the project team is investing significant effort in this area to ensure it is a rigorous and effective process that provides for the avoidance, minimisation and mitigation of impacts while meeting project objectives.

Three new trails have been identified as a package that can be considered as an alternative to the existing proposed alignment.

On advice from DELWP Impact Assessment Unit, Council has decided to include two alternates for Drop A-K in the EES.

This means that the two options will undergo a thorough assessment of ecological, social and physical impacts. This comprehensive assessment will be available for review and feedback through community and stakeholder submissions on the EES, and will provide the enquiry panel with the ability to make recommendations to the Minister for Planning on which alternate should progress.

Given the sensitive nature of potential impacts and the importance of the trail to project objectives, we believe this is the best strategy to deliver a rigorous and transparent process.

The new trails are shown on our interactive map at www.rideyarraranges.com.au – tell us if there are potential impacts we've missed or ways we could improve these trails.





Update from 2020 consultation

Following a difficult year for Victorian communities, we were pleased to provide a major update on the project and talk directly with locals about their ideas and questions.

In November and December, we received over 1700 comments from locals, riders and other stakeholders through our interactive map, online community sessions, emails and drop-in sessions.

What we heard

Understanding and protecting the natural environment

Not surprisingly given the natural beauty and important features in the area, many participants talked about the importance of caring for the environment. Feedback on this topic ranged from stronger concerns about possible impacts on the National Park to questions and suggestions about how impacts could be minimised.

A peaceful home

For locals, living in Warburton offers peace, serenity and connection with the natural world. Some respondents raised concerns that mountain bike riding and increased visitation to the area could impact this sense of peace.

Traffic, parking and safety

Traffic and parking was stand out issue for people raising concerns. Both locals and visitors wanted to understand how the road network could continue to operate with increased traffic and demands on parking. Safety for all users was also raised – for mountain bike and other riders, equestrians, hikers, runners and pedestrians in town.



Continuing consultation

The feedback highlighted the importance of sharing comprehensive information about the project, potential impacts and how these are being considered. Both locals and visitors who participated want to stay informed, get the full picture and ensure their feedback is being considered in the design.

Support for the project

The majority of the feedback was supportive of the project. Positives included the value of visitors for the local economy and businesses, excitement about a world-class trail network and feedback on key trails, and opportunities for young people to build their skills and connect with the natural environment.

Fire preparedness

Locals have a high awareness of fire risks and the need to be prepared, highlighting the need for an Emergency Management Plan which will be developed with emergency services.



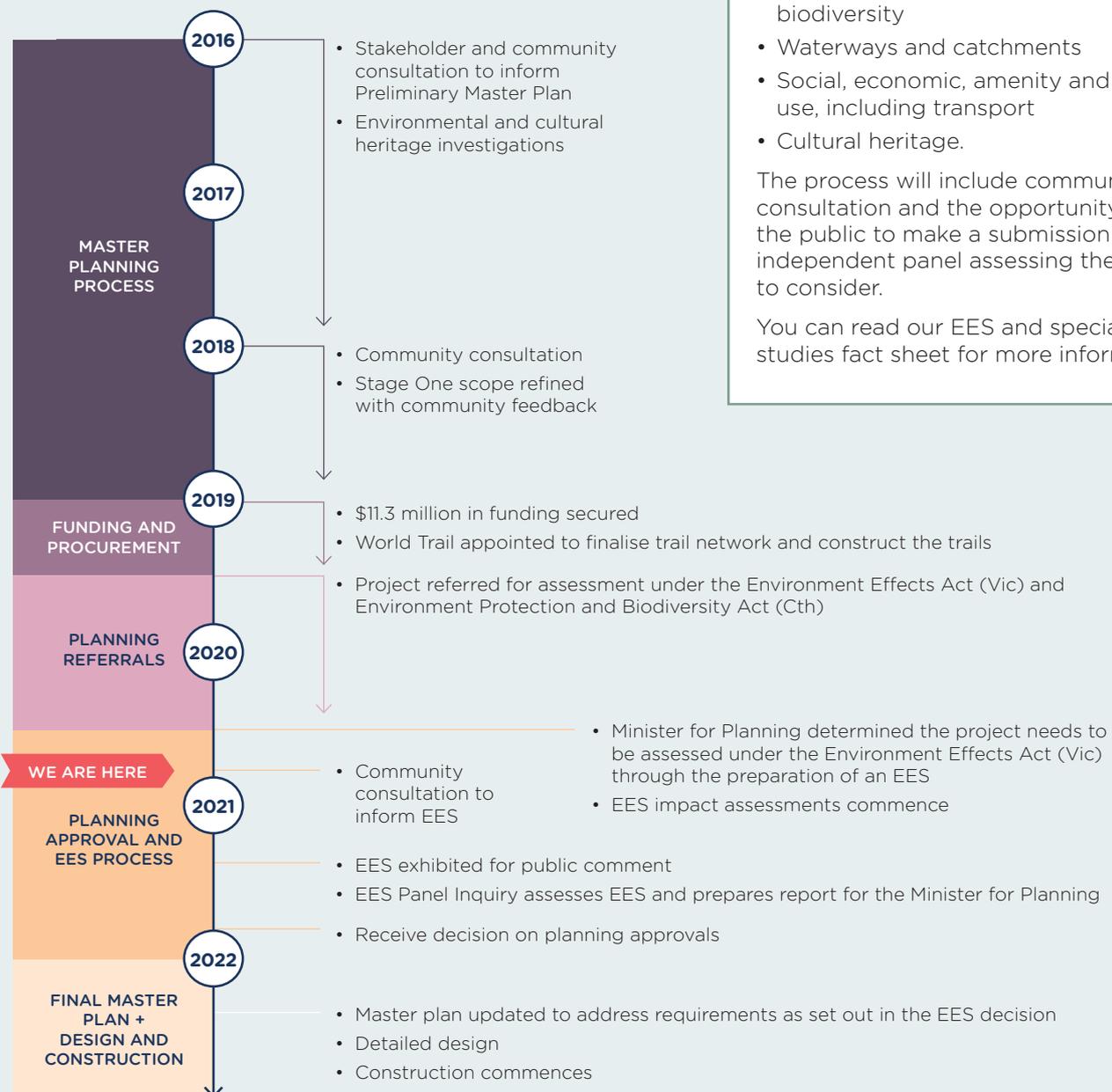
The EES will include a comprehensive Consultation Report which you can view during the exhibition phase.

Have your say on the latest project update

Visit www.rideyarraranges.com.au to provide your feedback on the proposed trails, features and potential impacts using our online interactive map.

Tell us if there are any impacts we've missed or ways we could improve the project. Your feedback will be incorporated with recent consultation findings and considered in the preparation of the project's Environment Effects Statement.

Project timeline



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

We are now working through the EES process, which can take around 18 months. The process needs detailed investigation across a wide range of environmental factors including ecological, physical and social factors.

The EES will assess the effect the project will have on:

- Environment, habitats and biodiversity
- Waterways and catchments
- Social, economic, amenity and land use, including transport
- Cultural heritage.

The process will include community consultation and the opportunity for the public to make a submission for the independent panel assessing the EES to consider.

You can read our EES and specialist studies fact sheet for more information.

Find out more and stay involved

MARCH 2021

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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