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Dear Hugh

## Illegal Mountain Bike Trails

Thank you for your further correspondence of 15 December 2021 in relation to the *Toowoomba & Lockyer Valley Escarpment Mountain Bike Master Plan* (the Master Plan), and specifically regarding the perceived risk of unauthorised trails being constructed through Redwood Park if the project is delivered.

While recognising your concerns regarding the potential for additional unauthorised trails being developed as a result of introducing additional authorised mountain biking trails into Redwood Park –Council has received advice that a well designed and built network of trails which provides a diversity of experiences, such as those provided by a Nationally Significant Mountain Bike Destination, would be expected to reduce / halt the development of any unauthorised trails in future. This advice is supported by the [Central Coast Council \(NSW\) Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper 2021](#), where it was found that the provision of authorised tracks that meet demand will reduce unauthorised track construction and associated impacts to environment, heritage, and other users.

In relation to the two articles that you have referenced from Victoria (Parks Victoria and Dandenong Ranges) both reference the same facility which has less than 15km of authorised mountain bike trails available. While this facility meets requirements for close proximity to a major population centre it does not cater for ride times which meet the users' needs.

Both the [Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service \(QPWS\) Operational policy](#) and [New South Wales National Parks & Wildlife Services \(NPWS\) Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy](#) state that the primary demand is for quality trails catering for rides of up to 4 hours within close proximity to population centres and which provide high quality legitimate experiences that meet riders' needs. Meeting this demand helps to prevent the creation of unauthorised tracks.

In the Dandenong Ranges example, the closest facility that meets the requirement for “quality trails catering for rides of up to 4 hours” is located more than 3.5 hours' drive from Melbourne and this is seen as a contributing factor to the increase in unauthorised trails at the smaller facilities located closer to the City.

Your request for evidence that providing new tracks to meet demand will stop unauthorised track construction is a key theme throughout the Central Coast Discussion Paper. Through research and review of case studies from Old Mans Valley (Hornsby Shire Council) and Glenrock State Conservation Area (NSW NPWS), Central Coast Council have found that land managers have reported that the provision of purpose-built trails in conjunction with building good partnerships, communication and education programs, and strategic planning, has reduced unauthorised riding/track construction. Furthermore, Toowoomba Regional Council have also seen this in a local setting through the construction of Stenner Street Skills Park, which saw a noticeable reduction in the development of unauthorised trails through Hancock Park.

Users of bushland parks (such as Jubilee and Redwood Parks) with multiple recreational uses including walking, cycling, horse-riding and others are expected to abide by Council's Track Usage etiquette system, as outlined on signage throughout parks and described in Council's *Walks & Trails of Toowoomba Region* booklet. There are examples across the globe where mountain bike trails exist within natural environments without causing damage to their environmental values (including in an Australian World Heritage listed park).

Immersing yourself in natural settings is part of the experience and appeal for mountain bikers (not dissimilar to bushwalkers, birdwatchers and other recreational users of such areas). It is therefore reasonable to infer that most park users, including mountain bikers, will hold an interest in preserving the values which have attracted them to the area. The comprehensive environmental assessment work being undertaken as part of progressing the Master Plan, together with legislative requirements and Redwood and Jubilee Parks' status as Reserves, provides sufficient and appropriate recognition (and protection) of the parks' ecological and environmental values.

There is an understanding that unauthorised trails can and may still be constructed through all current bushland parks within the Toowoomba Region not just Redwood Park. If the project is approved and delivered in accordance with the recommendations of the Master Plan (including the provision of additional council resources, the building and maintenance of high-quality trails and the building of good partnerships, communication and education programs), the incidents of unauthorised riding/track construction will likely be reduced throughout the project area.

Thank you for your passion and interest in Redwood Park. I look forward to working with all park users to facilitate diverse recreational opportunities and experiences for all, whilst ensuring that the unique environments within Redwood Park are managed and protected for future generations.

Yours Sincerely



Micheal Condren  
Manager Parks and Recreation Services