

Dear Councillors and Council Officers

A very disturbing article was published recently in the Sun Herald describing the devastation caused by the construction of illegal mountain bike trails in the Dandenong Ranges. With the number of illegal trails soaring, authorities are very concerned about how they are to manage the growth of mountain biking in their region. The issues are not restricted to Victoria or the Toowoomba Region. They are a world wide phenomenon. These illegal extreme, ecologically damaging tracks contravene key elements of the Toowoomba Regional Council's recently released Green Infrastructure Strategy.



For some time we have been discovering **unauthorised mountain bike tracks being built in our bush land parks.**

The list is quite extensive and includes the Picnic Point Parkland, Duggan, Nielsen, Hancock Street, Redwood , Jubilee, Glen Lomond, Blue Mountain Heights, and Franke Scrub.

It is not so much the cross country trails that are the problem but the challenging **down hill trails** that are constructed illegally. It seems that once the riders have mastered a particular track they want something new, more exciting and more challenging. More often these tracks are built during holiday periods or weekends, and by the time authorities are made aware of them, it is too late and the damage has already been done. I suspect that some of these track builders are not members of the Toowoomba Mountain Bike Club.

Earlier this year a walker encountered youths building tracks between Webb Park and the Bridle Trail in Redwood. When he spoke to them, the youths, armed with hoes and shovels, became quite threatening. He reported it to council and to me.

Last year another unauthorised track was built in Redwood by well equipped men armed with chain saws and brush cutters. Again it was reported by a walker and council was notified.

None of these tracks followed the few existing guidelines for track building. Council's efforts to place **signs in the parks warning against illegal track building** are not having any impact. The signs are either ignored or pulled out and thrown into the nearby bush.

I have asked council about what they can do. I am told that council does not have the resources to monitor illegal track building and apart from signage, there is nothing that they can do.

In the case of the unauthorised track building in the Dandenongs a Ferntree Gully man was fined nearly \$2000 for the destruction of protected vegetation, bringing dogs into the park, and destroying signage and barriers installed by Parks Victoria.

I believe that many of the unauthorised tracks built over the years in Jubilee Park by mountain bikers have been legitimised by Dirt Art in their report and by the council through their acceptance of the report.

- **Does council have guidelines in place to monitor this activity?**
- **How does council propose to control unauthorised track building activities?**
- **Is there any mechanism that council can use to discourage unauthorised and illegal track building?**

I have attached two articles from Victoria about the issues.

Yours Sincerely

Hugh Krenske