



## Warburton Valley CEDA response to the Warburton Mountain Bike Hub proposal

*The Warburton Valley Community Economic Development Association (CEDA) offers its full support for the proposed Warburton Mountain Bike Hub as specified in the consultant's report by World Trail currently available for public consultation. CEDA does this on the following grounds:*

### **Issues of sustainability and environmental effect**

Our first concern in offering support for this proposal was to satisfy ourselves that the development would not cause any significant or increasing damage to the environment surrounding it as use of the complex went on.

- We note that a specialist consultant (Biosis Pty Ltd) was engaged to investigate this in detail, and that the associated design recommendations in respect to minimising effect on flora and fauna were incorporated in the proposed design.
- The initial design and on-going maintenance of the complex are obviously planned to be of a high standard, complying with international benchmarks set for such developments – both in terms of the technical nature of the trails themselves, and the minimisation of environmental effects
- Current estimates are that some 40km of “unofficial” mountain bike trails already exist in the forest areas surrounding Warburton, and that these are used extensively. We see that the proposed development will contain any negative effect that these trails currently have by ensuring the design standards are acceptable, they are contained to a planned area, usage can be controlled and supervised.
- Maintenance cost has been estimated, and can be provided for from within the on-going operation of the complex. There is a built-in mechanism to ensure the trail complex remains in good condition on into the future

These features of the planning and eventual operation of the complex allow CEDA to confidently support the proposal.

### **Breadth of appeal of the proposed complex**

CEDA is particularly pleased with the breadth of appeal that the proposed development will have:

- The proposal includes the creation of an additional 35km recreational loop connecting the O'Shannassy Aqueduct Trail with the Rail Trail, allowing easy off-road access for both walkers and riders across a broad range of abilities. The connection with the Aqueduct Trail at Cement Creek allows off-road access to the trail as far east as the O'Shannassy Weir.

Warburton Valley Community Economic Development Association  
ABN 65 456 853 603  
Phone – 5966 9028  
Secretary – [geoffvickers@warburtons.own.net.au](mailto:geoffvickers@warburtons.own.net.au)

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- The mountain biking areas themselves provide for a range of riding disciplines and levels of ability- so providing for top-level competition and more casual and recreational use.
- Warburton is well known as a bush trail walking centre. Whilst the focus of the planned complex is on mountain biking, we see a big attraction for walkers in the trail connectivity achieved by the proposed development.

### Agency Support

Broad agency support is indicated by the following:

- The proposal has the support of key state government agencies – in particular, Parks Victoria (PV) and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), who have been drivers of the proposal since inception of the concept.
- The Yarra Ranges Council, at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014 voted unanimously to accept the consultant’s proposal and release it for public consultation. The proposal was enthusiastically supported by all councillors.
- The proposed development seems to fit very well with concepts such as: *Healthy Parks, Healthy People*, YR Council’s *Hike and Bike* strategy, and the general nation-wide shift to allowing greater public access and usage of National Parks.

### Regional Development Opportunity

The potential economic benefits to the Upper Yarra Valley are well documented in the consultant’s report, and need no repetition here. We are particularly keen to support the pursuit of these benefits for the following reasons:

- This region does not have the possibility of progress from significant industrial development, or from the general population growth from metropolitan Melbourne. The Upper Yarra Valley is just a little too far out from the urban fringe to gain benefit from these developments. The natural features of the area itself will be the major opportunities of the future.
- As is well documented in the consultant’s report, the Warburton area “ticks all the boxes” in respect to its suitability to the proposed development.
- We are encouraged by the fact that the consultants have studied in some detail the experiences of similar complexes in other parts of the world in order to define future economic possibilities for this area. The results of this investigation point to the fact that the proposed complex will be of world standard, and that this is greatly contributed to by the natural attributes that the Warburton area itself offers.

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