



---

## **DRAFT BASS COAST MOUNTAIN BIKE / BMX / PUMP STRATEGY**

### **SUBMISSION**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Bass Coast Mountain Bike Association (the "**Association**") is a not-for-profit community group which has been formed to promote, advocate and improve mountain bike facilities in the Bass Coast. Founding members include Morgan Barnes (Business Owner, WheelHeat Wonthaggi), Greg Price (Director Alex Scott & Staff, Cowes), Eve Hollole (Lawyer, BRB Law), Michael Wright (Director South Coast Bus, Cowes & Wonthaggi) and Tom Basterfield (Bike Enthusiasts & Mechanic, WheelHeat).
- 1.2. Our members are actively involved in the local mountain biking community and some are highly experienced in the design and construction of mountain bike facilities. All members maintain extensive MTB networks in the Bass Coast and throughout Australia.
- 1.3. The Association is keen to collaborate with all key stakeholders including Bass Coast Shire Council ("**Council**"), Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Parks Victoria, Phillip Island Nature Parks and various special interest groups.
- 1.4. The Association is committed to ensuring that as a community, we are reframing the dialogue about mountain biking, and that we are moving forward together in new and innovative ways.
- 1.5. The Association is pleased to provide this submission to Council for its consideration.

#### **2. Types of Facilities**

The Association is advocating for the following facility types:

- 2.1. Destination Gravity Trail Network
- 2.2. Micro Trail Systems
- 2.3. Urban MTB Facilities
  - Pump Tracks (Regional);
  - Pump Tracks (small scale); and



---

- Jump Lines & Skills Parks.

### **3. Sites supported by Bass Coast Mountain Bike Association**

The Association supports the development of the following sites:

- 3.1. **The Gurdies:** (Destination Gravity Trail Network) the Association supports the development of The Gurdies Nature Conversation Reserve ("***The Gurdies***") between Dunbabbins Road Picnic Area and the Bass Highway Car Park. The Gurdies has been ridden by the local mountain biking community for at least forty years and already hosts a network of unofficial trails, with Council sanctioned events being held at this particular site in the late 1980s.

The Draft Strategy indicates that The Gurdies is unsuitable for mountain biking due to its conservation status and rich biodiversity (see Page 62). In our view, the Draft Strategy has failed to consider the suitability of this site for mountain biking; it has simply considered its *biodiversity values* based on guidelines which were prepared by Parks Victoria four years ago. From a technical perspective, the terrain of the Gurdies is not dissimilar to Maryvale Pines MTB Park (Traralgon) or Red Hill MTB Park, making it highly suited to mountain biking. Unfortunately, the Draft Strategy appears to contain an underlying assumption that mountain biking and protecting the natural environment are mutually exclusive concepts.

In Australia, there are numerous examples of where mountain bike parks have been developed, and at the same time, culturally significant sites and environmentally sensitive areas have been protected and preserved.

The Association considers that there are infinite opportunities to educate and inspire all park users in terms of protecting and conserving our natural heritage. For example, there is currently no information, signage or photographs at The Gurdies regarding the sites and habitats of rare orchid colonies. The antiquated cycle of "build and knock it down" has plagued the Bass Coast for decades and has repeatedly failed to address the underlying issues, causes and concerns. The Association notes that it has also led to a profound lack of respect for the environment in our young people.



- 
- 3.2. **Kilcunda:** (Destination Gravity Trail Network) the Association supports the development of the Kilcunda Coastal Reserve ("**Kilcunda**") and notes the extensive work that has already been completed in relation to the development of this site by Destination Trails back in 2016. While it may not offer extensive ride lengths, its central position, panoramic vistas, existing infrastructure, and convenient accessibility compensate for this shortfall. The potential of Kilcunda extends to complementing the ongoing positive transformations within the area.

The Draft Strategy indicates that Kilcunda is also unsuitable for mountain biking due to its conservation values (see Page 67). The Association repeats its comments above regarding guidelines by Parks Victoria and the lack of due consideration that has been given as to the suitability of this site.

- 3.3. **Wonthaggi Coal Mine Site, West Area Road:** (Micro Trail Network) the Association supports the development of the Wonthaggi Coal Mine Site, West Area Road ("**Wonthaggi Coal Mine Site**") and sees the potential for the implementation of trails similar to Pioneer Park Recreation Reserve in Bright, including a Pump Track and Jumps Trails, noting however that this site may not cater for all mountain bike riders, particularly those who are seeking to progress their downhill skills. The Association notes that there are existing trails at the Wonthaggi Coal Mine Site which could be further developed.

- 3.4. **Phillip Island Nature Parks Sites:** (Micro Trail Network) the Association supports further exploration for Micro Trail Networks in small pockets on Phillip Island Nature Park Sites with suitable grade for Mountain Biking. Possible locations include parts of Oswin Roberts Reserve, 5 Ways Nature Reserve or Koala Reserve, Ventnor. We are committed to assisting Council in negotiating suitable implementation of Micro Trails within these Nature Reserves.

- 3.5. **Small Sloped Nature Reserves:** (Micro Trail Network) the Association supports further exploration for the implementation of Micro Trail Networks around the Shire. Hell Track site in Wonthaggi or Sunset Strip Reserve are examples of suitable sites. We are committed to



---

assisting Council in negotiating suitable implementation of Micro Trails within these Nature Reserves.

- 3.6. **Urban MTB Facilities:** The Association supports accessible all skills urban style facilities and jumps trails in the Bass Coast which are designed to help riders progress their skills. The Association supports the construction of two large scale Destination type urban MTB facilities in Phillip Island and Wonthaggi. The Association would also like to see the Draft Strategy list opportunities for smaller scale Urban MTB Facilities dotted around the shire so that riders are able access these facilities within a bike ride away.

#### **4. Feedback on the Draft Bass Coast Mountain Bike / BMX / Pump Strategy**

The Association provides the following general comments on the Draft Strategy:

- 4.1. The reports and/or data relied upon in the Draft Strategy is in some instances, outdated, factually incorrect or otherwise not fit for purpose. For example, the Victorian Mountain Bike Strategy 2021 is largely focused on the development of larger scale mountain bike trails and single tracks. The Association does not consider that mountains, elevation or large spaces are required for the development of world class mountain bike facilities. While the Draft Strategy cites a number of organisations and groups who have been consulted in the current process (including Auscycling), there is no indication of what was discussed and/or the outcome of those discussions.
- 4.2. The consultants (Leisure Planners) appear to have limited experience in mountain biking. There are numerous trail building specialists (for example Trailscapes and Common Ground) who are well versed in partnering with local councils. It is disappointing that the mountain biking community was not consulted prior to the Draft Strategy being prepared and/or Council's tendering processes have precluded appropriate consultants from being appointed. The Association considers that consultation with the local mountain biking community could have saved Council officers and Bass Coast rate payers a lot of time and money.
- 4.3. The preservation of environmentally sensitive or conservation areas should not be considered a driver for excluding the development mountain bike facilities. The provision of mountain bike facilities should be considered as paramount for protecting our natural heritage. As the



---

population of the Bass Coast continues to grow, a shift in collective thinking is absolutely critical.

- 4.4. Significant attention has been given to community education regarding unauthorised jumps, inappropriate sites and risk management. However, there is nothing in the Draft Strategy which indicates that Council has been willing or is willing to be educated on the needs and goals of the local mountain biking community. To date, young people in particular have not been included in the discussion. Mornington Shire Council is an excellent example of how a local council has repeatedly worked together with young people, schools and other key stakeholders to deliver facilities such as Overton Bike Park, Citation Reserve and Red Hill.
- 4.5. There is no explanation as to how the Site Selection Criteria has been developed in the Draft Strategy and similarly, and it appears to have been arbitrarily applied.
- 4.6. Numerous terms that have been adopted in the Draft Strategy (for example, “community-level facilities” and “modest bike park”) which are undefined and it is therefore difficult to ascertain what is intended. Similarly, no specific timelines have been included.
- 4.7. The Association strongly disagrees with the proposition that *“the capability of providing for specific MTB disciplines and competitions in the Bass Coast is limited”* (see Page 11). Dromana Secondary College is the current host of the first round of the Auscycling Victorian MTB Schools Series. It is anticipated the Newhaven College will also host a round of this statewide mountain biking series once their facilities have been completed.
- 4.8. The Association does not agree with the proposition that *“Bass Coast may support a network of community facilities but is not likely to be able to find a site for a regional MTB facility”* (see Page 18) and repeats its comments above regarding The Gurdies and Kilcunda.
- 4.9. The Association does not agree with the proposition that *“the focus on provision should be to serve residents that collectively enhance visitor experiences – rather than a major destination facility”* (see Page 18). Regional towns across Australia are recognising the economic benefits of mountain biking. The Association considers that if The Gurdies and Kilcunda were to be developed, tourists and weekenders will travel to the Bass Coast specifically to ride.
- 4.10. There is no evidence of *how* Council intends to partner with other bodies including but not limited to State and Federal Governments.



---

## 5. **Conclusion**

- 5.1. The Association supports the development of Destination Gravity Trails in The Gurdies and Kilcunda and a network of Micro Trail Networks around the Shire with the implementation of urban style facilities in Wonthaggi and Phillip Island.
- 5.2. The Association supports the continuation and expansion of shared cycle / walking paths on Phillip Island in Phillip Island Nature Parks and Bass Coast Shire controlled areas and further exploration for Micro Trail Networks in small pockets on Phillip Island Nature Park Sites.
- 5.3. The Association looks forward to working with Council in a positive and constructive manner going forward.