

VICTORY HEIGHTS TRAIL NETWORK GYMPIE QLD

USAGE MANAGEMENT POLICY (Version 1.5)

Victory Heights Trail Complex is situated on Bath Terrace, Gympie Queensland on approximately 60ha of Freehold land owned by Gympie Regional Council. This area of historically vacant land has been secured by the Cooloola Trail Care Alliance (CTCA) under a ten year fixed term lease that allows for the development of a passive recreational trail facility. The lease is bounded by Bath Terrace in the south, Sandy Creek Road on the eastern side, Gympie North Railway line on the northern side with neighbouring freehold (private) land and sporting shooters club leases on the western side. Though the lease provides CTCA with exclusive rights to the land, CTCA aims to develop and manage the trail assets on it for the benefit of local residents and visitors who wish to engage in a diversity of compatible outdoor pursuits that involve either walking, jogging, cycling or horse riding.

The trail complex is situated conveniently close to Gympie's town centre within easy access for the many schools and active sporting and community organisations within the township. CTCA subsequently encourages community organisations including but not limited to schools, sporting and scouting groups, bird watchers and naturalists, geocachers and orienteers to make use of the facility for their trail-based recreation pursuits and activities, guided by the purposes and limitations set out in this Policy.

This Policy has been devised with the express purpose of managing public usage in a way that:

- encourages and promotes shared public use of the facility,
- reduces the potential for conflict between different uses or users,
- promotes safe and responsible use of the facility by members of the public,
- promotes respect for the trail assets, infrastructure, natural environment and biota that comprise the facility and
- aligns with and supports state and local laws.

CTCA requires that users acquaint themselves with the conditions and requirements set out within this Policy, to observe them at all times during use of the facility and also when planning to undertake any activity within the facility.

For the purposes of this document particular words have the following meaning:

CTCA - for the Cooloola Trail Care Alliance, its officers and committee members.

Council – for the Gympie Regional Council.

Facility, Complex or Venue - for the Victory Heights trail complex which encompasses the land, vegetation, waterways, buildings, structures, trails, features and improvements contained within the portions of Lots 17 and 18 on RP221336 that are held by the CTCA under leasehold title.

Organised Event – for any activity that comes about as a result of prior soliciting, invitation, advertisement or promotion in any form including but not limited to telecommunication, print media, social media or word of mouth.

Conditions of usage

Dogs

- 1) Dogs are prohibited within the facility except when securely restrained on a lead and in the company of their owner. Owners are responsible for collecting and disposing of their dog's faeces by either bin disposal or burial in a location where it will not come into contact with trail users. Dogs that are not well socialised or that have the potential to act aggressively towards other animals or trail users must not be brought onto the facility. Under no circumstances are dogs to be allowed onto any mountain bike specific trail within the facility (refer further to Condition 13).

Smoking

- 2) To avoid the risk of bushfires and to provide a healthy and pleasant smoke-free environment for all patrons, smoking is prohibited within the trail complex.

Fires and cooking

- 3) The public are prohibited from lighting fires, cooking or lighting barbeques within the complex. Council provides a range of public parks and reserves throughout the township where barbeques, social gatherings and parties are well catered for. These public parks provide rubbish bins, toilets, drinking water, accessible parking, lighting, concrete pathways and disability access as required for public parks and reserves. It is not the CTCA's intention to duplicate these park facilities and social venues within the Victory Heights Trail Complex. Members of the public who wish to hold outdoor social gatherings, parties or BBQs are encouraged to make use of the appropriate Council facilities where these activities are provided for.

Alcohol

- 4) Consumption of alcohol by members of the public is prohibited within the complex.

Rubbish and littering

- 5) There is no provision within the complex for depositing rubbish or enabling its collection. Consequently patrons are required to take out whatever they bring in. There is a Council "wheelie bin" permanently installed on the Bath Terrace Road Reserve adjacent to entrance car park. Limited usage of this bin for convenience when leaving the trail facility is encouraged. To prevent overfilling of this bin and inadvertent littering of the road reserve and car park, it is recommended that larger volumes of rubbish (shopping bag size or larger) be disposed of at an alternate appropriate site that can accommodate those volumes of rubbish more easily.

Prohibited vehicles, machinery and structures

- 6) The bringing onto or use of any machinery, implement, motorised vehicle or structure upon the facility without prior written consent from the CTCA is prohibited.

Wildlife and native vegetation

- 7) The complex is home to an abundance of native wildlife and local flora. Patrons are requested to not frighten or chase wildlife encountered within the facility and to always stay on designated trails and fire roads. If wildlife is encountered either on or close to a trail, please stop and observe and wait for it to move on without panic.
- 8) Damage to or removal of any vegetation within the complex by any member of the public is strictly prohibited. Patrons concerned about overhanging vegetation or fallen timber that is impeding trail access or public safety are requested to make contact with the CTCA as soon as possible via email to contact@cooloolatrailcarealliance.org.au) to register their concerns.

Shooting club leases

- 9) An area of land adjacent to the central western portion of the CTCA lease is occupied by the Gympie Clay Target and Gympie Small Bore Rifle club ranges. Signage has been installed around the perimeter of these shooting ranges to warn trail users of the dangers of trespassing outside of the trail complex. Additional signage has been installed on fire roads that eventually lead onto these shooting ranges to alert fire road users to take an alternate route that stays within the trail complex. Members of the public are not permitted to trespass beyond the boundary of the trail complex in these locations because of the obvious risks to public safety.

Heritage values

- 10) Several relic sights and structures (buildings, concrete footings, telegraph poles and old firing range targets) within the trail complex hold some heritage value. The CTCA aims to gather historical information about these sites and provide interpretive information so trail users can appreciate their place in our town's history. Any interference with or modification to these sights or structures by members of the public is prohibited.

Assumption of risk

- 11) Any person, group or organisation using the facility does so entirely at their own risk and must assume all responsibility and liability for their usage of the facility. All users of the facility are advised to carry appropriate insurance and liability cover for their activities prior to entry.

Multi-use Trails and Mountain Bike-specific Trails

- 12) At the time of publication of this policy the trail complex supports approximately 12km of multi-use (shared use) trails. These trails consist of wide fire roads and vehicle access tracks and more narrow single tracks that provide linkages between fire roads and access tracks. These trails are provided for walkers, runners, off-road cyclists, and horse riders. All users of these roads and trails must control and regulate their speed and be prepared to encounter other trail users at any point. During an encounter on a shared use trail, cyclists must stop and give way to both pedestrians and horses while walkers must stop and give way to horses. Common courtesy between all trail users is paramount to the safety and enjoyment of shared use trails.
- 13) At the time of publication of this policy the trail complex supports approximately 9km of mountain bike specific trails. Each of the entrances to these trails is signposted with a 100mm x 100mm 'blue bike' symbol along with other directional symbols and advice for cyclists. Under no circumstances are members of the public permitted to walk, run or ride horses on these trails. Members of the public who do so are not only endangering themselves but also other unsuspecting trail users. Members of the public who ignore these directions can expect to be excluded from the facility.

Mountain bike trails and off-road cycling

- 14) Mountain biking trails within the complex have been constructed and graded in accordance with international standards for mountain bike trail construction and management. Their provision is part of an ongoing trail development program carried out by community volunteers and contractors working under CTCA's authority, in accordance with a Trail Master Plan endorsed by Council and documented workplace procedures adopted by the CTCA. Trail modification, construction or enhancement by any member of the public without CTCA authorisation is strictly prohibited and will result in immediate dismantling of the unauthorised trail work or feature, potential expulsion of the offender/s from the facility and exclusion from future roles in trail planning and development.
- 15) Signage within the facility is provided primarily to assist trail users to "self-guide" their way throughout the facility and select trails that are suited to their preferences and abilities. The purpose of such signage is not to alleviate the responsibility of trail user's to make sensible choices toward self-preservation; it is to assist people in having enjoyable trail experiences. Signage does

not exist as an absolute guarantee of trail conditions or trail difficulty. In an outdoor and relatively uncontrolled environment, trail conditions will change every day. Skill and confidence levels vary greatly between individuals and also for any one individual on any given day. While trail signage has been provided to assist trail users in their decision making, it is always the personal responsibility of every trail user to safely inspect and assess each trail and trail feature before making a decision to ride it in earnest. No amount of signage or safety measures can compensate for or prevent injuries or property damage resulting from a lack of planning, foresight, personal care and attention to the surrounds. Outdoor pursuits are intrinsically enjoyable for the levels of environmental unpredictability and freedoms of choice involved. With this freedom of choice comes personal responsibility for those choices.

- 16) All persons intending on riding a bicycle anywhere within the facility should first make themselves aware of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) 'rules of the trail' reproduced in Appendix I of this policy. Cyclists are required to abide by these guidelines at all times when using the facility. It is recommended that these guidelines be observed and practised whenever engaging in the sport of mountain biking anywhere, as within the sport they are universally recognised as good sense and common practice.

Watercourses and wet areas

- 17) The trail facility contains a number of watercourses and damplands that are prone to flooding and prolonged inundation following high rainfall events. Members of the public are advised to not approach or attempt to cross any watercourse or wetland that has standing or flowing water in it, unless a secure bridge or culvert is in place that provides a dry crossing point. Entry is prohibited at all times into any area of soft ground, mud or standing water, as traversing such areas leads to widening of the trail footprint, soil erosion and trail damage that places further burdens on the community of volunteers who give up their time to maintain the trails. Ongoing damage to trails eventually leads to their permanent closure and subsequent removal from the trail network.

Closure of the facility or specific areas within the facility

- 18) CTCA will seek to close the entire trail complex, or sometimes specific trails, during and following periods of intense or prolonged wet weather. These trail closures are principally to protect the trail assets from damage and erosion associated with horse, cycle and foot traffic when the ground is wet and muddy. Closures are also in the interests of public safety as heavy rainfall, high wind and wet ground can lead to destabilisation of trackside vegetation and any technical trail features which, in a wet and slippery state, may pose a risk to the safety of trail users.
- 19) Closures of all or parts of the facility due to weather or poor trail conditions may occur at short notice and require the cancelling or postponing of organised events or activities that were scheduled prior to the closure. While every effort is made to maximise public access to the trails throughout the year, organisers of events and activities, including the general public, should be prepared for unexpected closures of the trail facility due to unforeseen circumstances such as weather, fire conditions or the need for facility maintenance and repairs. Following a period of closure, trails will be inspected and re-opened once favourable trail conditions have been restored.
- 20) CTCA may also from time to time find it necessary - in the interests of public safety and safe work practices - to close the entire trail facility or parts of the facility to the public whenever works are being carried out that are not compatible with public trail use. Such instances include fuel reduction burns, trail repairs and maintenance, trail builds, construction activities, mechanical and chemical weed control, timber harvesting or falling dangerous dead trees.
- 21) Members of the public are required to observe and follow all directions provided by CTCA signage, media or authorised persons advising them of entry restrictions applying to any part of the facility.

Organised events

22) It is the CTCA's intention to attract a limited number of regionally significant and professionally run, mass-participation, trail-based events to the Victory Heights Trail Complex throughout each year. Large events generally require temporary closure of the facility to the general public in order to safely and professionally stage and control the event proceedings. This inevitably denies the general public access to the facility for a short period of time, most commonly over a weekend. CTCA's decision to close the facility to the general public on a given day (or days) in order to host and cater for such events will be informed the demonstrated professionalism and reputation of the event promoter, the net public benefit to be gained by staging the event, the existence of alternative local venues and the event's potential contribution to the following outcomes:

- benefits to the local economy and community associated with holding the event,
- beneficial exposure of the facility to a new and larger audience of prospective trail users from outside the Gympie Region and the likelihood of attracting return visitors to the Region and
- opportunity for local residents to participate in or be exposed to a new outdoor recreation activity that they may not have previously had access to or been involved in.

Applications for such events will be considered firstly on the basis of how they might address the above considerations and desired outcomes, followed by the suitability and timing of the event, its impact on the venue and impacts on the local community or other activities in the local events calendar.

23) Any group or organisation wishing to hold an event within the trail complex is required beforehand to seek permission in writing from the CTCA and complete and sign the CTCA Waiver of Liability Form available for download from www.cooloolatrailcarealliance.org.au or by emailing a request to contact@cooloolatrailcarealliance.org.au. Applicants should allow sufficient time in their event planning for the CTCA to consider the event proposal and to provide additional information about the event to the CTCA if requested. Time and effort spent in planning for an event should also allow for adequate pre-event publicity to be generated and the necessary logistic preparations that will promote good attendance and high levels satisfaction with the event and the venue. It is in the CTCA's interest to ensure that any approved events are successful and as far as possible, deliver on the desired outcomes sought by the CTCA. To ensure the event's success and flow-on benefits to the Gympie Region, where possible and appropriate, the CTCA will assist organisers with local media contacts and advertising options, course selection options and advice, specific trail preparations and event requirements, event staging area preparation and layout, event parking arrangements and local catering and accommodation options.

24) The CTCA, prior to granting permission for any event, will assess the likely impact of the event on the facility and may levy a charge to cover administration, maintenance and restoration costs incurred by the CTCA as a result of the event. Depending on the potential impact on the venue, CTCA may request a bond to be paid as security against unforeseen remediation costs or failure by the event organiser to make good on prior agreements to restore the facility to its pre-event condition.

25) Granting of permission by the CTCA to hold an event within the trail complex does not confer on any entity the right to claim association of any kind with the Victory Heights Trail Complex or the CTCA.

END OF CONDITIONS

The CTCA from time to time may modify or otherwise alter these conditions of use and refine the policy intent as circumstances require. Please be sure that you have the most current version of this policy, available from www.cooloolatrailcarealliance.org.au.

Appendix I

IMBA Australia Rules of the Trail

IMBA Australia developed the "Rules of the Trail" to promote responsible and courteous conduct on shared-use trails and purpose built trail networks. Keep in mind that the guidelines related to sharing trails, direction of travel and passing may vary in different locations, or with different traffic conditions. If in doubt, give way to other trail users and say hello.

1. **Ride Open Trails:** Respect trail and road closures — ask a land manager for clarification if you are uncertain about the status of a trail. Do not trespass on private land. Obtain permits or other authorisation as required. Be aware that bicycles are not permitted in some areas protected as state or federal Wilderness and Nature Reserves.
2. **Leave No Trace:** Be sensitive to the dirt beneath you. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones. When the trail is soft, consider other riding options. This also means staying on existing trails and not creating new ones. Don't cut switchbacks. Be sure to take out at least as much as you take in.
3. **Control Your Bicycle:** Inattention for even a moment could put yourself and others at risk. Obey all bicycle speed regulations and recommendations, and ride within your limits.
4. **Share the Trail:** Do your utmost to let your fellow trail users know you're coming — a friendly greeting or bell ring are good methods. Try to anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners. Bicyclists should give way to other non-motorized trail users, unless the trail is clearly signed for bike-only travel. Bicyclists traveling downhill should yield to ones headed uphill, unless the trail is clearly signed for one-way or downhill-only traffic. In general, strive to make each pass a safe and courteous one.
5. **Respect Wildlife and Livestock:** Animals are easily startled by an unannounced approach, a sudden movement or a loud noise. Give animals enough room and time to adjust to you. When passing horses, use special care and follow directions from the horseback riders (ask if uncertain). Running sheep or cattle and disturbing wildlife are serious offenses.
6. **Plan Ahead:** Know your equipment, your ability and the area in which you are riding and prepare accordingly. Strive to be self-sufficient: keep your equipment in good repair and carry necessary supplies for changes in weather or other conditions. Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.