

22 March 2016

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Dear Wendy

CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS SHIRE (CGS) WALKING AND CYCLING STRATEGY

BWV thanks you for the opportunity to comment on this matter, which has been the subject of a number of recent communications between BWV representatives and yourself.

BWV represents the common interests of over 70 Victorian bushwalking clubs, with in excess of 8,000 members. BWV also aims to proactively represent the interests of all recreational walkers in Victoria as well as walkers visiting from interstate and overseas. One of the common interests of BWV clubs and their members is the conservation of the ecosystems and natural landscapes through which they walk, so that they can enjoy the maximum variety of native flora and fauna and unspoilt scenery and ensure their preservation for future generations. Founded in 1934, BWV has a long history of active interest in conservation, including being one of a group of like-minded organisations pressing for legislation to create a comprehensive system of national parks in Victoria as early as the 1940s.

BWV is familiar with several walking areas within the CGS, and our comments on them, as well as our more broadly-based remarks, are designed to pinpoint where improvements could be made to encourage more people to walk, so as to increase the general level of fitness of visitors to, and the community within, the municipality.

Many of our walkers also cycle, and we are very impressed with the range of routes CGS has individually mapped with cyclists in mind, including the following trails:

- Avoca Mountain View
- Carisbrook Settlers
- Craigie Forest
- Dunolly-Havelock Gold Rush
- Majorca Kong Meng
- Paddy's Ranges

- Talbot Heritage
- Timor Grand Duke

as well as the consolidated Maryborough Cycling chart within the Cycle Central Goldfields brochure. It seems to us that cyclists are already well-catered-for in the CGS bailiwick, and we would like to see walkers receive equal focus.

For walkers, what appears to be missing is similar individual and consolidated mapping showing walking opportunities within the shire. For instance, CGS has the 22km Paddys Ranges Cycling Trail well mapped through a large bushland area that one expects would be a Mecca for many more walkers than it currently attracts were the walking potential there given the same high profile as the cycling opportunities. We realise that the cycling track traverses part of the Paddys Ranges State Park, over which CGS does not have direct management control, but this has not prevented the mapping of a cycling track that goes through Parks Victoria (PV) territory.

BWV would like to see in shire literature, a dedicated walking map, showing the walking trails that traverse this park in addition to other Goldfields Shire walking trails

We have studied the PV Paddys Ranges State Park Parknotes which *do* map walking and other trails within the State Park and the adjoining Maryborough Regional Park, but walking in the shire would be better promoted were the Shire to also take some responsibility for publicising walking trails throughout the whole municipality, not completely leaving the Paddys Ranges/Maryborough Regional Park portion to PV to promote. In recommending such a course of action we are mindful of reports from our members who have walked there that signage is extremely poor and there are many unmapped informal tracks. Facilities seem minimal. There is one picnic site (the Settling Ponds Track Picnic Area) and one camping area (the Karri Track Camping Area) in a 1,954ha State Park plus a 270ha Regional Park. The mapping is inadequate, with many of the tracks not identified by name on the PV Paddys Ranges Parknotes map.

BWV would like to see maps and signage that are completely compatible; sadly this is nowhere near a reality in many of the State's Parks, and Paddys Ranges is no exception.

There is a large number of roads and tracks in the State and Regional Parks, and navigation for the walker without proper maps and signage can be extremely tricky. Encouraging more walking in the area will therefore depend on good quality mapping and signage. Relying on walkers to employ GPS technology to navigate the Parks is not satisfactory, as not all walking groups or individuals have them, and they can be subject to failures that push walkers back onto map and compass, with good mapping then even more essential to effective route-finding.

Walking within the CGS, including within PV-controlled areas does not get sufficient promotion. Even prospecting gets a better run than walking in the literature, while cycling is accorded vastly more attention.

BWV would recommend that walking be given more prominence and that the walking and cycling strategy includes objectives related to improving walking information and promoting walking as a healthy and positive recreation.

In addition to the Paddys Ranges and Maryborough Regional Parks, there are, in particular, two other areas within the CGS that are employed by walkers but could be more utilised were they better publicised and appropriate signage installed:

1. The 14km Bealiba Circuit, taking in Mt Bealiba (450m) and Bealiba Reservoir
2. The 14 ½ km loop walk from the Flynn memorial Moliagul past the Welcome Stranger memorial to the top of Mt Moliagul (525m) and return on another track.

There are other hills not in CGS but close to it which are also on public land that could be promoted, along with the Shire's attractions, to get people, especially walkers, into the general area. For example, Ben Major (610m) and Mt Beckworth (635m), not far from the CGS boundary, could be promoted as peaks worth visiting along with Mts Bealiba and Moliagul within CGS borders. In other words, a more global approach may attract more visitors into the Shire than a strictly parochial one. In this context it is noteworthy that the adjoining Loddon Shire gives Dunolly (in the CGS) credit for being a walking, cycling and heritage centre. Where possible making tracks in the CGS continuous with tracks in abutting shires gives walkers better options for longer hikes.

People love to walk beside streams and lakes. Several of the towns in the CGS have them, including Cochranes Creek Bealiba, Tallaroop and McCallum Creeks Carisbrook, Burnt Creek and a series of ponds Dunolly, Lake Victoria and Goldfields Reservoir Maryborough and Back Creek Talbot. Even when regional creeks and ponds are dry, or almost dry, streamsides and lakes still remain an attraction for walkers and picnickers even if they merely consist of a string of waterholes or a water catchment that retains only a fraction of its maximum capacity. There may be opportunities in the CGS in these or other towns for more to be made of such features in order to draw in more visitors or stir residents to go on nearby walks. Aboriginal and goldfields heritage might also be more prominently pursued in the Shire's literature.

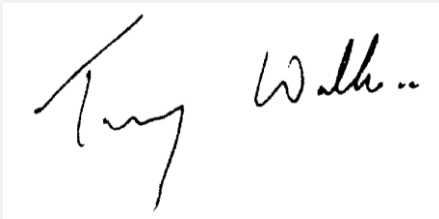
People also like to get to the top of hills and mountains to enjoy the views and benefit from the exercise while they socialise with friends as they do it. In the VicRoads State Directory several peaks in the Shire (additional to those mentioned above) high enough to have their altitudes recorded, like Mt Cameron (417m), Mt Moolort (325m), Mt Hooghly (373m) and Wiseman Hill (375m) as well as several other named points where heights are not given, but which may provide views, like Lane Hill, Fawcett Hill, Mt Greenoch, Peters Hill, Hard Hill, Daisy Hill and Mt Glasgow. Many hills have interesting geological pasts, and interpretive signage may help raise interest and bring more walkers to these features. It seems possible that these sorts of prominences might be better exploited to attract walkers and tourists to the Shire.

BWV would emphasise that lakes, streams and peaks, are focal points that might be better exploited throughout the municipality where they occur on public land or where they could be reasonably economically acquired. It would also be worth considering whether access could be negotiated between the Shire and landowners to prominences on private land to allow the public enjoyment of the views from the summits.

One item currently lacking from the Shire's promotional material is a map showing the Shire's boundaries and the towns and features within it (Loddon Shire has a beautifully-constructed map of this type). BWV would recommend that CGS develop a similar map.

We trust that you will take the above comments into account in developing documentation preparatory to the next consultation phase.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature reads "Tony Walker" in a cursive, slightly slanted script. The first name "Tony" is written with a large, sweeping 'T' and a long tail that extends downwards. The last name "Walker" is written in a more compact, cursive style.

Tony Walker
President