

Call to get cycle plan back on track



Off road bliss: Council are doing a preliminary study on whether tracks such as this, between Katoomba and Medlow Bath, could be turned into a cycling "rail trail". Photo: Martin Krause.

By Jacqui Knox

It's a cyclist's dream: 30 kilometres of gently undulating pathway, offering glimpses of magnificent views, and not a single speeding truckie to contend with.

The advocate of an Upper Mountains "rail trail" has urged council to seriously reconsider the proposal four years after it was shelved due to an estimated cost of \$4 million.

If built the path would follow existing tracks next to the railway line from Mount Victoria to Wentworth Falls, linking popular mountain bike trails without cyclists having to negotiate narrow shoulders on the Great Western Highway.

Council's environment working party discussed the proposal last month and according to Councillor Terri Hamilton they are preparing a preliminary report into its feasibility which should be finished in approximately six months.

"I'm supporting it (but) we have to look at it very carefully," said Cllr Hamilton.

The trail is the brainchild of part-time

Wentworth Falls resident Martin Krause, a physiotherapist, who has succeeded in having the idea incorporated into council's bike strategy since he first brought it to council as a petition with 914 signatures in 2001.

However he says council and tourism bodies have delayed on the proposal which would still take 5 to 25 years to open once necessary studies are finished.

Mr Krause is a firm believer in the health benefits of cycling. However he added that the tourism potential is enormous, pointing to overseas studies, and suggesting rail trails attract families and backpackers rather than hardened road cyclists.

"It's impossible to safely ride between Katoomba and Mount Victoria," said Mr Krause.

"As soon as you go that little bit away from the highway, it becomes a recreational thing, it becomes a pleasant thing.

"You include another huge group of the population."

He also believes the previous cost estimate

from a report in 2003 was off the mark, and says it would generally cost closer to \$20,000 per kilometre, and would largely be funded by State and Federal governments.

"The fact is the tracks already exist," he said. "Generally speaking there's very little engineering that needs to be done."

Aside from it being a low priority for council, according to Mr Krause, one of the major obstacles is that the existing tracks also travel through Sydney Water and RailCorp land to which access has traditionally been denied.

NSW also lags behind other States in building rail trails - for example Victoria has about 1000 kilometres of rail trails open or under construction.

With such questions still hanging over the proposal Councillor Terri Hamilton didn't want to raise hopes about the likelihood that the proposal would get off the ground.

"It's not anything you can do overnight - it's a huge enterprise," she said.

Police rounds

DUI charges

A 27-year-old Werrington man was arrested and charged for driving under the influence of cannabis and driving whilst disqualified in Glenbrook last week.

Springwood Police stopped the man driving on Bruce Road for a random roadside breath test.

Inquiries revealed that he was a disqualified driver.

Police submitted the man to a sobriety test which he failed.

He will appear at Penrith Local Court on May 14.

At 4.20pm on April 15, a 30-year-old Blackheath man was stopped by police on the highway in Katoomba for a mobile random breath test.

The man returned a positive breath test at the scene and was taken to Katoomba police station

where he returned a low range reading of 0.07.

He was charged and had his licence suspended and will appear at Katoomba Local Court on May 10.

Trouble in Katoomba

Police are investigating an assault that occurred at about 11.20pm on Sunday, April 15 on a 23-year-old Katoomba man at a Katoomba Street taxi rank.

The man was waiting for a lift when he saw a man screaming and shouting into a phone.

That person is alleged to have pushed the victim and thrown a punch at the victim, which caused him to fall to the ground.

The man then allegedly kicked the victim while he was on the ground.

Investigations by police are continuing into the incident.

On Friday, April 13, a 15-year-old Katoomba girl was issued with an infringement notice by Katoomba Police after she was warned on three separate occasions by police to stop using offensive language while on the train station platform in Katoomba.

And at 5.10 pm on Monday, April 9, police attended a business in Katoomba after receiving a report that an amount of money had been stolen from a till.

Anyone who may have seen the incident is asked to contact Katoomba Police or Crime Stoppers on 1800-333-000.

Station vandalised

Police are investigating a malicious damage incident to

Springwood Railway Station that occurred at about 2pm on Friday, April 13.

A person or persons spray painted a graffiti tag on the station's elevator door.

Anyone who may have seen the incident is asked to contact Springwood Police on 4751-0299 or Crime Stoppers.

Drinking on street

A 29-year-old man was given an infringement notice by police after he was found drinking alcohol on the footpath on Macquarie Road, Springwood at 12.45am on April 12.

Police would like to remind people that it is an offence to be drinking alcohol in a designated alcohol-free zone.

Restaurant owner to face slave charges in May

Faulconbridge resident and local Indian restaurant chain owner Yogalingam Rasalingam will appear in the District Court on May 11, 2007 as he continues to defend charges related to keeping a slave.

Mr Rasalingam, 44, faced Sydney Local Court (Downing Centre) last on April 10, charged with facilitating the entry of a person, reckless as to whether the person would be exploited and dishonestly influencing a federal police officer.

The court was told about 24-year-old Indian immigrant Anbalagan Rajendra, who allegedly was forced by Mr Rasalingam to live in a tin shed behind his house, work 16-hour days for no pay and hand over his passport.

Mr Rasalingam owns the Star of India and Taste of India restaurants and was arrested by federal police officers seven weeks after Mr Rajendra began working for Mr Rasalingam in June 2006.



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