

**Submission
No 167**

INQUIRY INTO USE OF E-SCOOTERS, E-BIKES AND RELATED MOBILITY OPTIONS

Organisation: National Parks Association of NSW

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17 August 2024

Park Management Committee

NSW Legislative Council
Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts

Dear Chair,

INQUIRY INTO THE USE OF E-SCOOTERS, E-BIKES AND RELATED MOBILITY OPTIONS.

The National Parks Association of NSW (NPA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the use of e-bikes specifically within the protected area network in NSW managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). NPA's concerns however relate to e-bike usage in all natural landscapes.

NPA's mission is protecting nature through community action. Our strengths include State-wide reach, deep local knowledge, evidence-based input to policy and planning, and over 65 years' commitment to advancing the NSW protected area network and its professional management. We also provide outstanding opportunities to experience and learn about nature through our unrivalled program of bushwalking, field surveys, bush regeneration, and other outdoor activities.

At the community level, the NPA supports the use of e-scooters, e-bikes and mobility options as they provide enhanced opportunities for users to increase personal mobility, expand recreational opportunities, and reduce traffic congestion and fossil fuel usage.

The concern that the NPA raises is with the expanded use of e-mountain bikes within national parks, reserves and other natural landscapes. Evidence indicates that e-mountain bikes have increased the damaging impacts that bikes have on the natural values within natural areas

Attachment A outlines NPA's specific concerns.

I can be contacted at

Yours sincerely

Ross McDonnell

Convenor, Park Management Committee
National Parks Association of NSW

protecting nature through community action



Attachment A.

The NPA considers that:

1. Mountain bike (MTB) usage has been a long term established recreational activity within natural landscapes.
2. Improved MTB design has expanded the usability of MTB's. Prior to the advent of lithium batteries and small linked motors, MBT usage was limited to small areas within reserves and natural landscapes due to the physical exertion required by bike users linked to the desire to ride on challenging terrains (i.e. mountains),
3. Since e-bike capabilities have been extended to MTB's, a noticeable shift has emerged in the range/distance/speed available to MTB users,
4. The changed use patterns have resulted in recognised impacts such as,
 - a. e-MTB's travelling further on established walking tracks causing conflicts with other track users, and riding on constructed walking platforms,
 - b. Other walking track users (e.g. bushwalkers) are regularly exposed to e-MTB's travelling at speed along tracks causing alarm and increasing the incidence of physical impacts. Downhill racing is an increasing evident niche performed within reserves,
 - c. Expanding the damage to existing tracks and trails caused by MTB tyres on fragile soils especially across ecologically important areas,
 - d. An expansion of new MTB tracks in fragile ecosystems such as those containing known and mapped endangered ecological communities (EEC's),
5. To manage the expanded use and impacts of MTB's within national parks and reserves, the NPWS has finalised a state wide 'Cycling Strategy' with the aim to clarify the extent to which MTB usage will be accommodated within NPWS managed lands,
6. In addition, NPWS has finalised individual reserve-based MTB plans linked to revised reserve-based plans of management (e.g. The Royal National Park in southern Sydney),
7. Prior to the MTB plan for Royal NP, the creation and use of illegal MTB tracks was evident both witnessed on the ground, and shown with on-line mapping of user rides,
8. In the 2 years since the Royal NP plan of management and MTB plan have been finalised, NPA strongly believes there is no evidence of change, meaning that new illegal tracks are continuing to be established, additional impacts on lands with EEC's is occurring, and no remediation of illegal tracks has occurred (as outlined in the MTB plan),
9. Similar experiences are evident across NSW. While NPWS reserves around Sydney (e.g. Royal), Wollongong (e.g. Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area) and Newcastle (e.g. Glenrock SCA) have borne the brunt of expanded e-MTB's, similar impacts are occurring in coastal and mountain locations such as Coffs Harbour and Bathurst/Orange (e.g. Mt Canobolas SCA),
10. NPA believes that NPWS planning for a 'mixed use' model regarding the location and use of tracks within reserves, where all track users are increasingly exposed to e-MTB's, new additional resources are required by the NPWS to implement both the state-wide and individual reserve-based cycling/MTB plans,
11. Similarly, NPA is aware of examples of vacant crown and local government managed natural areas which are being heavily impacted by MTB's and specifically e-MTB's. Some local councils have responded by placing large stone blocks and fallen trees across newly established MTB tracks to reduce access,