

ITEM F NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR TAKACS - KEN AUSBURN TRACK

Councillor Takacs has submitted the following Notice of Motion –

“I formally move that Council write to the appropriate persons at the University of Wollongong and the Illawarra Office of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, expressing our desire to work with them in formulating a long-term management plan and agreement for the Ken Ausburn Track.”

Background provided by Councillor Takacs:

The Ken Ausburn Track was constructed by Wollongong City Council in 1996, with agreement from the then landowners, Wollongong University and BHP Billiton, to formalise public pedestrian access to the escarpment via the Mt Pleasant fire trail and the Mt Keira ring track; and to provide a link from the Botanic Gardens and the annexe it manages on top of Mt Keira. The construction was aided by a Commonwealth Government grant. Construction included paved sections, wooden staircases, interpretive signage, a lookout, a bridge, and track stabilisation using wooden logs.

Management of the track was initially done by staff from the Wollongong Botanic Gardens until the ownership of the top half of the track was transferred to NPWS. The track has stood the test of time and is extremely popular. Unfortunately some sections of the track were not stabilised and are now eroding badly. Last year the lookout was removed by NPWS without community consultation, and several of the interpretative signage plaques have been removed by vandals. The Botanic Gardens holds a replacement stock of these signage plaques in storage.

I envisage a joint management plan and agreement might comprise a shared vision as to the management principles, with the University and NPWS taking responsibility for routine maintenance on the sections on their respective lands, and Council taking on responsibility for replacing interpretative signage and coordinating grant applications for funds to construct those sections not originally constructed and to replace the lookout.

On a recent visit to the Blue Mountains, I read a report of Blue Mountains Council receiving a grant of \$810,000 to do work on pathways providing access to NPWS tracks at Leura and Katoomba, and to a private operated tourist facility at Scenic World in Katoomba, providing a precedent to this approach.