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Orange City Council
Blayney Council
Cabonne Council

www.cwecouncil.com

Dear Sirs/Madams

Orange Region Destination Management Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this plan.

The Central West Environment Council (CWEC) is an umbrella group representing a number of district environment groups in Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo, Lithgow, Rylstone, Blayney and individuals throughout the central west region. CWEC aims to conserve the region's environment for future generations.

CWEC is supportive of the basic principle of encouraging the growth of tourism in the region providing that this does not lead to unsustainable development involving over-extraction of water, destruction of natural bushland or waterways (both already in very short supply in the region) or environmental pollution. So any new tourist infrastructure should be assessed not just on its environmental impacts *per se*, but also on the increased pressure it could put on the natural resources of the region.

There is a clear recognition of the desire by many tourists for nature-based tourism, so it is extremely important that any proposed developments do not reduce the value of the natural assets of the region. For example, putting in new tracks and trails should only occur in areas where these will not cause loss of habitat – for example in state pine forests or highly disturbed sites, rather than conservation areas.

Theme 7 states: *Leverage the growth in nature-based and cycle tourism through investment in nature-based experiences, infrastructure, promotion and activations.*

If this means improving the quality of the walking and existing cycling tracks while at the same improving environmental education to enhance the visitor experience, this can be beneficial to both the environment and the tourism. However, if it means construction of large infrastructure developments such as the > 100 km mountain bike circuit proposed for Mount Canobolas State Conservation Area, then this is not supported. This type of development is designed to provide an extreme sports experience, not an appreciation of nature and will, concomitantly, discourage other tourists seeking a more relaxed and intimate experience of nature.

Part A 'Assessment' needs to include a section on the effect an increased tourism industry will have on the already stressed biodiversity of the region. The decline in biodiversity of the region is well known and outlined in several papers in the following conference proceedings (Kinross et al. 2019).

It is suggested that the tourism industry focuses its growth on events that do not require large capital expenditure and does little environmental damage, such as country fairs and music festivals. Cycling should be encouraged, of course, by providing cycling routes throughout the region, but leaving conservation areas in their natural state as far as possible.

In Section 4 the plan states: *Emerging strengths within the Orange Region include nature-based assets, arts, culture and heritage, events and festivals and boutique accommodation. These experiences require further investment and activation to become hero experiences.*

It is not clear what is meant by 'hero' experiences, but this unfortunate expression is of concern as it conjures up visions of extreme adventurers, rather than tourists interested in nature tourism.

Part 6 Key Considerations includes the: *Need for cycling and walking path links to wineries, nature-based attractions and towns and villages*

CWEC supports this in principle, but is concerned about the push for linking 'nature-based attractions' if this includes activities such as an increase in mountain biking in natural areas.

Part B

Theme 4 includes: *...working with Traditional Owners of the Wiradjuri nation to develop products, experiences and educational offerings would provide a compelling experience for visitors, and create a platform for Traditional Owners to share their stories, culture and heritage.*

Assuming it was supported by the local Aboriginal groups, this is an excellent initiative and could be implemented at Mount Canobolas as a more suitable alternative and less destructive proposal than that of the mountain bike track.

Theme 7 Nature, cycling & recreation priority initiatives.

Mount Canobolas has been set aside for conservation. It has a high number of threatened species and ecosystems and is not simply an asset or human playground ripe for development. It is beautiful mountain to be enjoyed through simple passive recreation and educational activities with management of the area focusing on conservation of the flora and fauna.

In general, CWEC is also concerned about the fallacious idea that it is possible to have eternal growth in a region of limited resources. Tourism can be one of the solutions to true sustainable development, but only if it is carefully planned to ensure that the region's environmental assets are enhanced, rather than damaged.

Reference

Kinross, C. , Goldney, D., Kerle, A. (eds) (2019) Biodiversity Dreaming: Sustaining nature and agriculture after 200 years of European settlement in the Central Western Region of New South Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "C M Kinross" in a cursive, flowing script.

President
Central West Environment Council