

Five-fold Vision for Munibung Hill

Acknowledgement

Munibung Hill Conservation Society takes this opportunity to acknowledge the First Peoples of the Awabakal culture that acted in a custodial manner, such that for 60,000 years the land was held in common, was not vacant and had standing¹ as 'hallowed' ground.

We pay respects to elders past, present and future.

We acknowledge that the custodians in more recent times have overseen a decline in native plant and animal diversity.

With the insights that our more recent understanding of indigenous culture brings - and the application of earth law principles - we undertake to work in concert with the current custodians in a spirit of reconciling our past practices with our future aspirations leading to a plan of care and an attitude of respect for Munibung Hill.

¹Christopher Stone: **Should trees have standing?** 3rd ed., OUP, 2010

Unless somebody leads, nobody will.
It's axiomatic. Why not us?

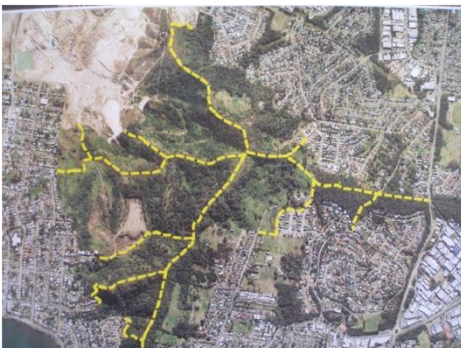
- Ray Anderson, Founder and Chairman, Interface Inc.

Today we walk where they once walked.

I Am - Aborigine

I am born of the land, my soul is the sun
Nature is my mother, I am, mother nature's own son
The wind is my spirit, running wild, running free
The water is my mirror, reflecting visions of me
I am like a great river that slowly runs dry
Polluted and abused I am the river, slowly - I die
I am a child of the earth, created from dust
I live for the land, taking only what I must
I am a hunter of animals, imitating their stance
I am what I hunt, I am it's spirit in the dance
I am a painter of walls, I am an artist of dreams
Depicting mythological creatures, and spirits in my scenes
I am from the never never, a long time gone by
The Dreaming is my creation, I am at home when I die
I own no land, for the land owns me
That's the way it has been, how it always will be
For I am what I am - I am – Aborigine.

Author, Stephen Clayton



Munibung Hill - The Place

Situated between Macquarie Hills / Cardiff to the north and Speers Point / Warners Bay to the south.

Entry points from three sides are not marked.

Grades range from easy to hard going depending on one's level of fitness.

Distances range from 300 metres to 2km, with a total of 4.5km all up.

There and back as the map indicates describes most tracks, but there are **some circular** walks on the south-west side.



Fivefold Vision for Munibung Hill

1. Geological and Cultural Heritage Park
2. Conservation area / Nature reserve
3. Visitor Economy
4. Rest and ReCreation area
5. Observatory and Planetarium site



Taken on a 12 km run over Munibung Hill by Scott Alder

The Plan

This Five-fold Vision sets out a plan for Munibung Hill to be reinstated as a culturally significant site and for the reintroduction of some plant and animal species that were present pre European settlement.

The Five aspects acknowledge the diverse interests within the community that the Munibung Hill Conservation Society (MHCS) embraces. This extensive ongoing consultation process has demonstrated that Munibung Hill warrants a much greater level of care than she is currently receiving. As a provider of core human needs on a pro-bono basis, Munibung Hill has given much – materially and ecologically.

It is now time to give back. She is entitled to have us substantiate the sentiments stated in the acknowledgement to country that is spoken so freely at all public events.

Without implementation they are but gestures cast in the sand that are so easily erased or ‘scrubbed out’² – part of the art of forgetfulness³.

For the purpose of establishing the standing of Munibung Hill as an enduring geological landscape, MHCS believes that a collaborative and integrated approach in the framing of a holistic plan is a necessary first step. The community of interest that values beyond measure the intrinsic qualities of Munibung Hill is our *raison d’être*.

²Bruce Pascoe: **Dark Emu, Black Seeds**, 2014

³WEH (Ted) Stanner: **The Great Australian Silence**, ABC Boyer Lectures, 1968.

Each aspect of the Five-fold Vision is sufficient justification for Munibung Hill to be given special attention within our social, cultural and economic plans. Attempting to separate out each of the Visions into discrete segments is like trying to dissect or carve up the human person all the while knowing that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Each intersects the other. Each complements the other.

When the 5 parts are viewed as a whole, we believe this justifies the right for Munibung Hill to be allocated resources sufficient to carry out a care and regeneration program whereby she is restored to a semblance of health not dissimilar to that which she enjoyed pre 1788. This is well within our capacity from a material wealth and social justice perspective.

Anything less would be a dereliction of our duty-of-care.

This Five-fold Vision for Munibung Hill

meets the Community Values of many key focus areas as set out in
Lake Macquarie City Council’s Strategic Plan 2017-2027 – Our future in Focus
as well as contributing to many Strategic Goals as set out in the
Arts, Heritage and Cultural Plan 2017-2027 – Culture Makes Life Worth Living.

Our future in Focus: *Unique Landscape; Lifestyle and Wellbeing; Mobility and Accessibility; Diverse Economy; Connected Communities; Creativity; Shared Decision-Making*

Culture Makes Life Worth Living: *Strategic Goal 1: Celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture; Goal 2: Develop out City’s visual identity; Goal 3: Champion local heritage and history; Goal 5: Actively encourage creative learning and experience; Goal 6: Continuously improve Council’s cultural facilities, programs and teams; Goal 7: Foster open communication, partnerships and leadership; Goal 8: Value and support our creative industry and cultural economy; Goal 9: Communicate our culture: be local, aim global.*

1. Geological and Cultural Heritage Park

Geological aspects ...

"Geological and geomorphological features have been valued for many thousands of years by indigenous Australians. They were obviously a part of their everyday life but also formed important landmarks for navigation, provided shelter, art sites, burial locations and places to sit and consume meals."⁴



Munibung Hill, at 251 million years of age is our local example of: "The direct value of geological, geomorphological and soil systems to humans – those elements of geodiversity which are of significant value to humans for non-extractive purposes."⁵

Munibung Hill is an asset as a scientific, research and education site, with the capacity to inspire people because of her aesthetic qualities and features. Significant also, as possessing cultural and spiritual values within indigenous communities.

"The story of our natural diversity, the links between geodiversity and biodiversity and how it has all evolved needs to be explained to the masses. This is a powerful way of improving communications in the earth sciences."⁶

The increasing number of visitors to Tasmania's national parks that contain significant geological areas, is a testament to how carefully crafted tourist information can work to drive tourist numbers up and support local businesses who service this sector of the society and economy.

"In Australia many natural and reserved areas are considered to have very important geo values including places like Uluru, Kata Tjuta, Wave Rock, the Twelve Apostles, Wilpeena Pound, Wolf Creek Crater But how often do the public know what they really are or how often are they told what the features are and how they formed. In a number of instances there are explanations which cover some of these sites but nowhere near as often as bio interpretation. Just as there is respect for the biological resources on earth there needs to be a swing to a similar respect for geodiversity."⁷

^{4,5,6,7} **Conserving geodiversity, the importance of valuing our geological heritage.** Michael Pemberton, Senior Earth Scientist, Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (TPWS) http://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/geocon_abstract.pdf

Cultural aspects ...

The significance of Munibung Hill within indigenous culture is without question. To quote Charles Drazin: **Mapping the Past: A search for five brothers at the edge of empire ...**

Overlooking Boolaroo, Brooks Mountain, is the highest point on the map. It was named after William Brooks a settler who had opened a coal mine there on land that had been given to him as a Crown grant. The Awabakal Aboriginals who had been dispossessed of their land around Lake Macquarie many years earlier, would not have understood this kind of ownership, because they believed that the land, and all that was on it, belonged to everyone – to them, their ancestors and generations to come. Nor would they have understood the folly of killing the land that provided sustenance – what the white man so often called 'progress'. Today the place is known again by the name the Aborigines used, Munibung Hill.



Munibung Hill is a part of the storylines passed down through the centuries from times before humans walked its slopes and ridges.

There is a wealth of knowledge held within her soul. First People storylines are our best way of connecting with this timeless land, since they were the keepers of her revelations.

Munibung Hill was, and continues to be, an important place to the Aboriginal community. It was once the location of a number of stone arrangements and traditional stories regarding their origin have been recorded. Threlkeld (in Gunson 1974) reports that the Aboriginal name for the hill was 'Kona-konaba' and that it was a place where ochre was obtained.

The principal issues for future management are considered to be:

the Aboriginal cultural value of Munibung Hill is in its landscape context. This value appears to be attributed particularly to the high ridge crest. The area is not currently accessible to local Aboriginal people, but the stories about the past uses of Munibung are well known in the local Aboriginal community. This value exists whether or not any archaeological evidence of past activities is retained;

It should be noted as Bruce Pascoe points out, that: "If we are to attempt to understand Indigenous philosophy it has to begin with the profound obligation to the land." (Dark Emu, p.127)

This extract from: **Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Issues 2.3.1** (Umwelt Environmental Consultants, 2004) confirms the connection of the Aboriginal community with Munibung Hill:

Threlkeld also refers to this hill during a discussion about high places tending to be held sacred by many cultures around the world: 'The only thing I have ever noticed, as rather puzzling to account for on a high hill, or rather range of hills, was a circular erection of stones, of about 5 or 6 feet diameter, and two or three feet high, evidently built, but not cemented with anything. At first I thought it was a burying place, and searching a little distance on, say a quarter of a mile another mound, and afterward several more were

A black and white portrait of a Native American man. He has a large, curly wig that covers his head and ears. He is wearing a headband or bandana. He has a serious expression and is looking directly at the viewer. He is wearing a simple, light-colored tunic or shirt. The background is plain.

*'Barabahn, or MacGil, Chief of the Tribe at Bartabah, on Lake Macquarie;
a Reward for his assistance in reducing his Native Tongue to a written Language'.*

Aboriginal Education Officers within the NSW Department of Education and Catholic Education stress the importance of truth telling when it comes to passing on the stories of what has happened to country since 1788. Working together we can be the change that brings reconciliation closer one day and one story and one child at a time.

1. a geological heritage site* with the installation of explanatory boards detailing the geological and geomorphological features that have taken place over her 251 million year history – including the flooding of ‘country’ stabilizing 6,000 years as Lake Macquarie - and how these features and events have been valued for many thousands of years by indigenous Australians;
2. an indigenous heritage site* with the installation of a memorial to Biraban in the form of a life-size bust complete with a replica of the gorget presented to Biraban by Governor Sir Ralph Darling in 1830,
 - a) creating a memory trail with story boards, arriving at the place on Munibung Hill where it is believed Biraban would have communicated with other tribes, would be a fitting tribute to this elder within the Awabakal nation.

*Principal, Floraville Public School, Oct. 2015



2. Conservation area / Nature reserve

As an example of what came first look no further than bush land plants and animals, wetlands and mangrove swamps, coral reefs. It is from within these ecosystems that we find the nurseries for the lives upon which all human societies and economies are utterly dependent.

The plant and animal life residing within the Munibung Hill parkland is invaluable in that it cannot be replicated by any other means. Just as we make every effort to save a human life and establish intensive care units for this express purpose, when a partner organisation like the Hunter Wildlife Rescue (HWR) needs to return an animal to the wild, its first preference is its original local habitat. When this is not possible due to the demise of veteran trees in the suburbs and due to increasing density within existing suburbs of the city, then Munibung Hill becomes a critical refuge and sanctuary. As Jill Dean, HWR, says, “we need to preserve and nurture every bit of remaining bush land we can, especially bush land within and between suburbs.”

Kira Mileham, Director Strategic Partnerships, *Species Survival Commission, IUCN*, wrote to MHCS from Washington D.C. via email 17 July 2018.

“Australia needs to reconnect with nature, whether through restoring local parkland or nation-wide conservation efforts. While Australians are becoming increasingly urbanized and spending more time indoors, our wildlife and wild places are facing a crisis. Australia has the worst mammal extinction rate in the world, with 30 native mammals having become extinct since European settlement. More than 1,700 species of animals and plants are currently listed by the Australian Government as being at risk of extinction.

Protecting nature at the local level is key to turning this trend around. These efforts can preserve key habitats and green corridors which provide refuge to species and allow our human communities to reconnect with the outdoors; both of these are critical to ensuring a sustainable future for wildlife and people.”

The diversity of plants and animals on Munibung Hill has decreased since 1788, to be only a fraction of what was present before this time. This is blot on our record book. Even so, she is still a wonderful example of mother earth’s biodiversity and with careful attention she will be restored to health and be once again an experience not of extinction – in plant and animal terms - but of renewal and regeneration. In the meantime let this not hinder opportunities for our children to experience Munibung Hill in all her aspects; as a conservation area or nature reserve across the four seasons of the year.

This provides opportunities for us to explore indigenous calendars and how they compare with European calendars originating in the northern hemisphere.

<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/resources/teacher/episode/20171114-indigenouseasons.pdf>

Are there actually six seasons in Australia? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-x84fjbba0>

At the end of the book “The birds at my table”, the author Darryl Jones mentions a phenomenon called the “extinction of experience.” The extinction of experience can be summarised by the loss of immersing yourself in nature, be it with wildlife watching, making mud pies or building tree forts, in this era of the digital age.

Reference: Extinction of experience, Jessie Panazzolo, at: <https://wildernessteachings.wordpress.com/2018/06/20/extinction-of-experience/>

Nature is an amazing, powerful force. Every creature plays a role, even the tiniest insects are essential for the ecosystem.

[Germaine] Greer talked about how often humans arrogantly think and act as if they are above nature and can somehow control it and use it for our benefit – but we *are* nature. When we damage nature we are in fact, damaging ourselves. Although we may care more when a cute, fluffy animal is at risk of extinction, we need to care about the others too, and take more action to restore the environment and precious eco systems before it’s too late. <https://ethicalhour.co.uk/women-life-earth-evening-germaine-greer/>

Recommendation: That Munibung Hill be declared a Conservation Area or Nature Reserve:

1. for the protection of her unique flora and fauna;
2. to ensure the safety of her endemic species, including the establishment of an arboretum or even small botanic gardens;
3. to allow for further regeneration projects, resulting in the possible re-introduction of plants and animals;
4. to explain the story of ‘nesting’ – that we are all part of a larger whole within which we find safe harbour.

3. Visitor Economy / Tourist attractions

From time immemorial humans have gone uphill to get a better idea of the landscape below and experience what those who have gone before have experienced: be it scaling Mt Wellington at Hobart; the hilltop lookouts at Tomaree or Ghan Ghan at Port Stephens and of course visiting Munibung Hill as Awabakal elder Biraban has done. Humans have been attracted to, been fascinated by, high places for a multitude of reasons – a sense of achievement, to fulfill a challenge, to reach the summit, to take in the surrounding landscape, to get a sense of perspective.

5 reasons why we scale mountains. <https://www.bookallsafaris.com/news/mountain-hiking>

It has been said and not without a good deal of wisdom, that we are all visitors to this earthly place we call home. Life is a journey not a destination, so the saying goes. We are passing through, the beneficiaries of our ancestors and the determiners to a large extent – as Anthropocene members – of what our children will experience. Visitors come from all walks of life and from all localities and when visitors come by whatever mode of transport, they contribute to the local economy. In the case of Munibung Hill, the regulars will be the locals, then there are the Staycationers, the regional, the state, the national and the international visitors.

Now that Munibung Hill has a presence on the international stage, thanks to the Munibung Hill website, the Munibung Hill story is no longer hidden from view. There is the opportunity now to explore a living culture, deep time history, the wild aspects of nature, the rainforest like creek valleys, the ridges with the panoramic views, the stars and the cosmos beyond. Awaiting visitors within the surrounding suburbs is first class accommodation, great dining venues, a wonderful range of cafes and coffee shops, along with all the other attractions Lake Macquarie City has to offer – the Art Gallery, libraries, tourist parks, sporting complexes. The Tourist Information Centre at Swansea - <http://www.visitlakemac.com.au/explore-the-city/visitor-information> - is where visitors get an idea of the fantastic range of opportunities awaiting the tourist and why so many people make Lake Macquarie City their home. Lake Mac Business - <http://lakemacbusiness.com.au/> - functions to support small businesses, the engine rooms of our local communities, which benefits the entire region. "Let's build a better business community together and make Lake Macquarie an even greater place to live, work, visit and do business".

Tourism has the potential to save or destroy an ecosystem and to conserve or harm animals in the process of this, so Heroic Tourism was born to make sure that tourism is a tool for global positive change instead of environmental degradation.

<https://heroictourism.wordpress.com/>

Visitors to Munibung Hill, have the potential to leave with not only great stories of their visit but also a heightened sense of awareness of how their lifestyle choices can play a role in habitat preservation and cultural understanding wherever they call home.

Recommendation: That Munibung Hill ...

1. provides ideal locations for the siting of visitor viewing platforms permitting expansive panoramic views across the four points of the compass to the Lake and surrounding 'country' ;
2. has within her pantry a range of attractions meeting descriptors such as: tourist attraction, plant lovers haven, bird observers dream, family friendly rest areas, walkers circuits, astronomers go-to site. Therefore from a visitor economy perspective it is recommended that Munibung Hill ...
 - a) be allowed to show off her local plant and animal communities that have existed across 2,400 human generations and beyond this back to the time of the dinosaurs – into deep time (see Vision 2);
 - b) be acknowledged for her geological status that has attracted humans to explore her makeup and how this has resulted in a variety of land uses across time (see Vision 1);
 - c) be acknowledged for her status as 'hallowed ground' from an indigenous culture perspective (see Vision 1);
 - d) provides wonderful opportunities for the installation of walking and bike trails, family picnic areas, rest and reCreation spaces – leading to improved outcomes for human health and wellbeing (see Vision 4);
 - e) provides the ideal location for the siting of the Lake Macquarie Stardome, including the provision of refreshments in the form of café and a garden setting for outdoor eating and socialising (see Vision 5).



Nature based tourism

Nature-based tourism forms a significant component of Australia's visitor economy, ranking among top travel motivators for international visitors to the country.

Economic Contribution and Potential: In the year ending June 2017, 69 per cent (or 5.4 million) of international visitors engaged in some form of nature-based activity. The top international nature-based markets were China (17 per cent), the United Kingdom (10 per cent), New Zealand (10 per cent) and the USA (9 per cent).

<http://www.tourism.australia.com/en/markets-and-research/industry-sectors/nature-and-wildlife.html>

Seven factors of which the first is: Can drive regional economies and create jobs

<https://www.ecotourism.org.au/assets/Uploads/Manifesto-v5.0.pdf>

Australia's Great Outdoors Needs to be more Accessible for Nature-based Tourism

August 9, 2017 – Environment / Parks / Tourism

Australia's potential as one of the world's leading nature-based tourism destinations will not be realised unless there is significant investment in making the wealth of our natural treasures more accessible to tourists, according to a new paper from the Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF).

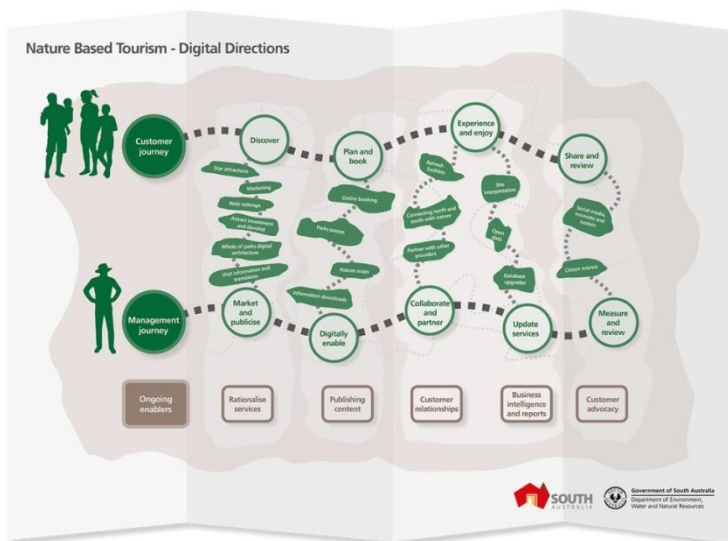
Releasing the paper, Unlocking our Great Outdoors, TTF Chief Executive Margy Osmond said that the report will make an important contribution to the debate around how Australia's natural areas can best be conserved while also unlocking the economic benefits that can be delivered by nature-based tourism.

Osmond stated "we are one of the most beautiful destinations in the world but if we do not make that beauty more accessible we will miss out on a potential pipeline of new tourism dollars especially for regional Australia.

"There is no doubt that nature-based tourism across Australia is already big business, with last year alone seeing more than 25 million domestic and international visitors engaging in some form of nature-based tourism and spending \$41 billion on nature-based activities.

"It is also a key driver of regional economies and jobs growth, with just under 100,000 people directly and indirectly employed in nature-based tourism across Australia's 15 premier natural regions. "However, our research has found that we are only just starting to scratch the surface of the potential for nature-based tourism in Australia.

<https://www.ausleisure.com.au/news/australias-great-outdoors-needs-to-be-more-accessible-for-nature-based-tour/>



Nature Based Tourism Strategy 2025

- Ecotourism Australia has been working with key industry stakeholders to prepare **Australia's Nature Based Tourism Strategy 2025** and Action Plan.
- There is currently **no collaborative, nation-wide strategy** to maximise and realise the potential for nature-based tourism.
- **Geotourism offers strong experiential characteristics**, embracing all elements of natural and cultural heritage, inclusive of ecotourism and indigenous tourism values.

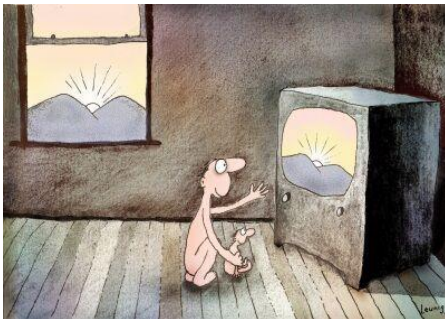
4. Rest and ReCreation park

Balance. The word crops up all the time when discussing work and life, income and expenditure, proteins and carbohydrates, acid and alkaline. With such a large slice of the economy consisting of social activities held indoors and separated from the natural world, it is important to balance this with a healthy dose of outdoor living - fresh air, open space and unsanitised nature - to be found nowhere else except within the natural state of a bush land setting. Not just the outdoors on a concrete walking path.

More fundamental, less structured, is the bush. It's much easier to relax and unwind when all our senses can be immersed in a single activity of simply being. Children often find this much easier to do than adults. They can imagine themselves as a tree or a wallaby or a wombat or a soaring eagle. Again we connect with our indigenous cousins and the dances held in NAIDOC week (i.e. Cardiff High School where Aboriginal students acted out being native animals and then challenged teachers to follow suit). The inspiration and the final actions did not come from some imagined fantasy creatures but from the animals within their deep time history.

An antidote to life's stresses can be obtained free-of-charge with a walk in to the bush at Munibung Hill (Witness Kylie Munro).

There is no substitute for the natural world in spite of all our virtual reality shows and nature documentaries. Munibung Hill is a one-off for us in the Lake Macquarie area.



Leunig's message was clear: we are at risk of settling too easily for mediated images rather than engaging with the real thing
Mackay, H: *The Art of Belonging*, p. 179

Healthy Parks, Healthy People

http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/672582/HPHP_state-of-the-evidence_2015.pdf

When we think of parks, we think of places for people to recreate and connect with nature and their history, but they also provide places for people to find mental, physical, and spiritual health, and social wellbeing.

Historically, the justification for the creation of park land is rooted in public health through the provision of clean air and clean water, and also providing spaces for finding respite from the stressors of everyday life.

Parks can foster a sense of community and shared identity.



Parks create an opportunity for kids to enjoy themselves and interact with others in an environment where they're shielded from adversity in their daily lives. When kids play, they develop higher order cognitive skills that complement classroom learning.

Kids also need space to interact with caring adults which leads to social and emotional health. Parks create a space where they can spend time with their families and learn norms of behavior across the community. Parks and playgrounds are the safety valve, a place where they feel protected.

We need to think about parks holistically. Having green infrastructure contributes to our air quality and to our water quality.

The power of parks is that they transcend age, ethnicity, race, income, politics and geography. Space that isn't programmed for particular activities gives us freedom to explore and to discover, to see butterflies and birds and spy larger animals. We see that as a necessary part of our culture and humanity—the free space to play, to gather or to simply be by yourself. We have a need for parks and green space, and to connect with nature, just as surely as we have a need for water. They feed our souls.

Six reasons why parks matter to health

https://www.rwjf.org/en/blog/2016/08/6_reasons_why_parks.html



Munibung TRAILS with Anthony leading the group



Australian Plant Society visit



Recommendation: That Munibung Hill provides the ideal location for:

1. establishing walking and running trails as proposed in LMCC Glendale Recreation and Land Plan, Oct 2015; See map > >
2. the installation of family picnic areas, rest and reCreation spaces, out quiet places;
3. building community cohesion through spaces suitable for the staging of festivals and special events;
4. educating us all about our shared responsibilities - encouraging Plogging as an action based community service.



time

Justification for public neighbourhood parks and getting outdoors

Extracts from:

If Meditation Is Not Your Thing, Try a Walk in the Woods

There are times when I don't know what to do with myself. I feel at odds with the world, irritated by the people in it, in a funk about myself and what I'm achieving or, rather, not achieving, overwhelmed by the obstacles and complications of life. Happiness seems like an entirely elusive state of being.

At such moments, my friends know exactly what I should do. "When's the last time you've been on a hike?" they inquire gently, and it's time for a head smack. Of course, that's the answer. I might not feel like pulling on my hiking boots ... But what I need is the trail.

To say that I return in a better mood would be damning nature with faint praise. I'm wholly restored, optimistic, energized, almost euphoric. I sleep soundly that night.

For a long time, hiking felt like my personal mental health elixir, a magical relationship just between me and nature. The truth is that I was experiencing phenomena well known to science. Hiking is a near-perfect combination of elements known to relax us, raise our alertness, elevate our self-esteem, and physically prepare us for true rest afterward. It exposes us to sunlight, outdoors, the color green, the sound of water, physical activity, social interaction. All of these have been shown in research to have beneficial effects on our mental well-being.

[A walk in the woods] easily brings me to that sought-after state of being "in the moment." Hikers pay attention to where they are and what's going on. They have to, in order to avoid obstacles along the trail as well as such annoyances as poison oak and ivy. At the same time, the trail is a multisensory experience that calls on us to observe wildflowers, smell aromatic plants, and hear bird calls and the rustle of small animals in the brush.

That's not to say that hiking can cure serious mental illness. But research shows it's a useful adjunct to other treatments for serious emotional conditions. For mild to moderate stress and depression, nature walks have time and again been found to boost mood and banish stress.

Science says it's both the walking and the nature that make powerful medicine together.

Despite how cheap, helpful, and easy hiking is, access to nature itself can be uneven and downright difficult.

There's plenty of evidence in favor of exercise, which improves mood and reduces anxiety, releasing endorphins and raising serotonin levels. But a 2016 study in the journal *Mental Health and Physical Activity* specifically found that bouts of outdoor exercise were significantly better at lifting the mood of people with mild to moderate depression than indoor activity. Previous studies found that so-called "green exercise"—and they didn't mean golf courses—raised self-esteem, especially among those with mental illness.

Exposure to sunlight alone improves cognitive function, according to a 2009 study in the journal *Environmental Health*. For that matter, outdoor exercise has been shown to lead to more vigorous workouts; people walk faster and longer but perceive their workouts as easier.

Other aspects of nature have a calming rather than stimulating effect; studies have found that the colors green and blue—the hues that make up most nature scenery—are relaxing, as well as the sound of flowing water.

According to a 2014 study in the journal *Ecopsychology*, group walks in nature were linked to significantly lower depression and stress, as well as an enhanced sense of mental well-being.

Karin Klein wrote this article for YES! Magazine. Karin is a longtime journalist who has worked at the Los Angeles Times for 29 years, covering health, environment, education, and other topics. She's also a certified naturalist with OC Parks and the American Cetacean Society who authored the book "50 Hikes in Orange County," now in its second edition.

5. Observation, Forest Field Studies and Indigenous Interpretation Centre

Note: This revision replaces Vision 5 as stated in the formation document 2017.

Observation of natural landscapes, from the most intricate to the big picture, is an age old practice. It was and remains at the core of indigenous ways of knowing and living. What they observed became part of who they were / are.

Munibung Hill provides an ideal location for the siting of an Observation, Forest Field Studies and Indigenous Interpretation Centre (OFFSIC).

Observation is vital to our understanding of our place in the universe because it extends the frontiers of knowledge beyond our immediate, often myopic, gaze. Observation is at the heart of citizen science which can open doors to many other fields of 'work' within a circular economy.

As already stated, interest in observation dates back eons. It's what all wildlife does as part of their survival and day to day living. The human species, are late comers and in more recent times it could be concluded that we have lost the art, the skills of observation. A keen bird observer, native plant observer, or geological observer, or regenerative land carer, will have a completely different view of a landscape compared to the non-observer. **Reading the Landscape** – a Local Land Services publication - could be a template for a tailored Munibung Hill version of a localised observation study guide.

https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1277514/8340_PPW_LLS-Readingb-The-Landscape_compressed.pdf

In some ways, observation has become a lost art, since it requires us to adopt a slower mode of living. Not noticing what's going on around us, has to some degree lead to our being blind to the obvious. Anyone who has walked through the bush with a botanist gets to appreciate a lot more about that place simply because the botanist has eyes for observing what many of us haven't got a clue about. This is particularly so when it comes to groundcover plants such a fungi and orchids, especially because they are in many ways inconspicuous. But this doesn't make them any less important. In fact it could be said that they are all the more important because they work in what the untrained person thinks are mysterious ways that are beyond their understanding – which is not the case.

The same could be said of invertebrates. These species make up over 90% of all the animal kingdom and yet for the most part are ignored, overlooked and therefore treated as being a less importance, while the reverse is the case. They are the foundation – keystone - species that all others are reliant on.

An Observation, Forest Field Studies and Indigenous Interpretation Centre, would be a tremendous asset not only for schools and those conducting research, but also for the local adult community.

An observation area with a dedicated field studies and interpretation centre would act as focal point for families, since it would provide a base station from which to radiate out into Munibung Hill, as well as a place for the wider community to congregate for community events and festivals.

As an integral part of the multi-faceted Munibung Hill Heritage Park complex, it would not only include indigenous interpretation areas, but also geological displays, a function room, information centre and socialising areas including landscaped gardens with café.

An Observation, Forest Field Studies and Indigenous Interpretation Centre, located within the Munibung Hill Heritage Park is perceived as a meeting place for walkers, bird observers, conservationists, HSIE students, indigenous communities and tourists.

The beauty of this facility is it allows the amateur observer to rub shoulders with the more serious observer – the 'uneducated' with the educated - and provides the opportunity to explore in a safe setting, on equal terms since the same landscape is available to everyone. Most people who 'know' are more than willing to share their knowing. This is community building stuff. It's possible to do it online, but it has another dimension when it happens in the flesh. There is no substitute for one-on-one contact and for on-the-spot engagement.

Access is vitally important in this respect, so the establishment of a main centre with perhaps two smaller satellite centres at other locations would be advisable. These need only be natural clearings within tree-scapes and circular yarn benches.

Recommendation: That Munibung Hill ...

1. provides the ideal location for the siting of an Observation, Forest Field Studies and Indigenous Interpretation Centre (OFFSIIC) incorporating nature play areas:
 - a) with the provision for refreshments by means of a pop up café,
 - b) within a garden setting for outdoor eating and socialising,
 - 1.1 three locations for the siting of the proposed OFFSIIC
 - i. former quarry site – access from Quarry Road, Speers Point (our preferred main site),
 - ii. cleared area on the north eastern slope – access from Blaxland Road, Macquarie Hills (satellite site),
 - iii. cleared area on the north western slope – access from Kunara Close, Macquarie Hills (satellite site).
2. provides an ideal location for a Festival of the Trees, including celebrating the contribution of Indigenous knowledge within a storyline context.

Affiliates and Partners

1: Clubs and Organisations

Australian Plant Society, Newcastle
Hunter Bird Observers Club
Lions Club of Charlestown
Rotary Club of Warners Bay
Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre
School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, University of Newcastle
St Pious X Catholic School, Adamstown, Jennie Nemeth
St Paul's Catholic College, Booragul
Transition Newcastle
Lindough Investments P/L, Danielle Hilton
Total – 1,232

2: Individuals

Stuart and Heather Carter	Anne Kirsten
Wendy and Craig Patrick	Wendy Abel
Fergus Hancock (3)	Kylie Monro
Greg Irwin	Elaine Fereday
Robyn Johnson	David Morrison
Dr John Carr	Ian and Judy Klein
Helen Winton	Judith Flanagan
Graeme Mee and Marilyn McHarg	Dr Richard Addinall
Maree McCarthy	Total - 28
John Hagen	
Lindsay Mason (3)	
Colin Lawrence	

Total 1+2 = 1,260

Endorsements

As a bush walker I often ramble about and over Munibung Hill. Have walked it many times and lead walks for my walking club. In my view, it's a hidden treasure! It can be developed into something that young and old enjoy on a regular basis. It would attract visitors like the ANZAC walk at Bar beach, that is continuing to proof a very popular activity to do. The views from the top are breathtaking and overlooking most of Newcastle and our beautiful lake. Most local people I speak to have never been up the hill, A, they don't know you can, B, it's not easy to get up safely, due to the erosion on steep sections that makes it dangerous to negotiate. A hill as beautiful as this with million dollar views can be treasured like Blackbutt Reserve and provide healthy exercise and enjoyment. The Hill should be able to be enjoyed by everyone! Had this hill been in some other country, it would be treasured and cared for in a responsible way. Let's be positive and hope we can turn this around into something special for Lake Macquarie.

John Hagen – Watagan Wanderers.

It's come to my attention that people like the Hill to be better cared for than it is. The only people that seem to be able to enjoy it, are the motorbikes who just rip it up!

*"When people ask me where I come from,
I always answer planet Earth.
I am an Earthling.
I am related to all other Earthlings."*

Germaine Greer, Perth Writer's Festival
23 February 2012, +
with Julia Zemiro, Home Delivery, ABC1 TV,
July 2018

The lepidopterist [Robert Pyle](#) first introduced the term “extinction of experience” in 1975, writing:

“As cities and metastasizing suburbs forsake their natural diversity, and their citizens grow more removed from personal contact with nature, awareness and appreciation retreat. This breeds apathy toward environmental concerns and, inevitably, further degradation of the common habitat....So it goes, on and on, the extinction of experience sucking the life from the land, the intimacy from our connections... people who don’t know don’t care. What is the extinction of the condor to a child who has never known a wren?”*

<https://www.thenatureofcities.com/2015/03/15/extinction-of-experience-does-it-matter/>

*in the Australian context read Masked Owl



Attributed to:

Nelson Mandela, *President of South Africa, 1994-1999*
and Joel A. Barker: *Futurist, The business of paradigms*,
Star Thrower Distribution, 2001

Five-Fold Vision for Munibung Hill

Prepared by Munibung Hill Conservation Society

Lead author: Stuart Carter

munibunghcs@gmail.com

M: 0437 543 465

July 2018 / Revised April 2021