Implementation of the Munibung Hill Management Plan



Credit: Lake Macquarie City Council



Produced by Munibung Hill Conservation Society
September 2026

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Introduction

Extract from Executive Summary, Munibung Hill Management Plan publication

The **Munibung Hill Management Plan** sets out how Lake Macquarie City Council (Council) will manage access and use of Munibung Hill over the next decade, to protect important natural and cultural values, and provide safe access for passive recreation for people in surrounding communities and further afield in the City.

The Management Plan explains how Council will implement a Concept Plan which identifies access points, tracks and track uses that are feasible over the next 10 years. The Management Plan and Concept Plan draw on three working documents: context, site analysis and constraints review; community and stakeholder engagement report; and an options analysis which considered the full range of potential access points, tracks and types of recreational use, as well as important areas for conservation.

Munibung Hill

Munibung Hill is a natural landmark at the northern end of Lake Macquarie. Its elevated ridge crest is surrounded by steep slopes, including cliffs formed in conglomerate and sandstone. Although parts of the hill have been extensively cleared, some remnants of important vegetation communities and species remain. Munibung Hill is an important cultural place for the Awabakal people.



Source: Good Sense Media, from LMCC

For many decades, people from surrounding suburbs have followed tracks to the ridge crest of Munibung Hill, enjoying access to modified bushland and extensive views across Lake Macquarie and surrounding areas. Some of the tracks are on Council land, but some involve uncontrolled access across privately owned land. *Source: Extract from LMCC Munibung Hill Management Plan publication, prepared by Unwelt, for LMCC.*

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Council does not 'own' Munibung Hill. Council holds those portions under its jurisdiction in trust as custodians on behalf of the people – which is how indigenous people viewed the land, with them acting in a stewardship capacity for those to come. It is public, community land. In addition, those portions designated/zoned as C2 (formerly E2) Environmental Conservation, are covered by legislative requirements providing Council with opportunities to ensure its ecological integrity is preserved. Council is therefore, a key stakeholder - a community agent if you will – in seeing Munibung Hill preserved and conserved as a primary green infrastructure site where significant geological, cultural and ecological values are located, and it has oversight - a duty of care.

Do Councillors and Council SEO's still support and endorse the Executive Summary as stated in the Management Plan for Munibung Hill and the associated Concept Plan?

The evidence in support of the Plan has never been stronger i.e. the Australian Sports Commission – see details below and in Attachments. Note: Visitor numbers during COVID19 especially during lock down when social distancing was required; for health and wellbeing, getting out into nature is indisputable - a case of countering nature deficit syndrome; an intergenerational low way of keeping fit, in the knowledge that Munibung Hill is family friendly.

Mayoral site visit

There was to have been a Mayoral site visit of Munibung Hill. This is an overview of the site visit scheduled and then rescheduled:

- April 2025 – this visit did not eventuate, being postponed until later in the year;
- October 2025 – this visit also did not eventuate, being postponed for later in the year
- December 2025 – this visit also did not eventuate, being abandoned in favour of a virtual visit
    - by way of drone generated footage
- Date unknown 2026 – to the best of our knowledge this virtual visit did not occur and no report was prepared nor presented to a post site visit briefing of Councillors.

Munibung Hill Conservation Society (MHCS) was to have been advised when these visits were to be held and provided with access to the subsequent report. This has not happened.
There has been no explanation or communication with MHCS or the community.

For more please turn to Attachment A – Munibung Hill: An overview of plans.

Funding availability and justification for its allocation

Development Control funds originally collected for Munibung Hill are understood to remain available, although they have since been allocated to other projects. We are therefore seeking the reallocation of these funds to their intended purpose.

The justification for allocating these funds within the current operational context is clearly outlined in the attachments accompanying this document. We encourage you to review these materials, which provide the evidence and rationale supporting this request. They include references to the ASC CEO Keiren Perkins.

Munibung Hill provides a rare and valuable opportunity to support community fitness and engagement with the environment right in the heart of our city. The **Australian Sports Commission (ASC)** points out that …

> *Bushwalking is one of Australia's most popular physical activities. While the non-competitive nature of bushwalking historically excluded it from traditional sports funding, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) tracks its immense national participation through the AusPlay survey to inform health and recreation policy.*
>
> *AusPlay Participation Data*
> *The ASC's national AusPlay data consistently ranks bushwalking (or hiking) as one of the top physical activities in the country.*
>
> *Funding for bushwalking tracks is justified by their proven ability to boost regional economies, improve public health and protect vulnerable environments. Well-maintained trails drive nature-based tourism, while engineered tracks prevent trampling and erosion, ensuring ecologically sustainable access.*
>
> Physical Activity | Clearinghouse - Australian Sports Commission, 20 Feb 2026 — * Walking - 4,640,000. * Fitness/Gym - 1,805,000. * Bush Walking - 1,044,000. * Swimming - 954,000. * Cycling - 632,000. * Golf - ...Australian Sports Commission

And we include this reference:

> *The activities with the highest participation by Australians over 15 years old are walking, fitness/gym, bushwalking, running/jogging and swimming.*
> Source: **Australians love sport, but which ones do they actually play? National survey results paint a surprising picture**. Vaughan Cruickshank and Louisa Peralta, *The Conversation,* November 1, 2024.

https://theconversation.com/australians-love-sport-but-which-ones-do-they-actually-play-national-survey-results-paint-a-surprising-picture-242593

NOTE 1
The NSW government is investing $130 million in the state's national parks as part of the 2026 budget. The funding is to keep parks safe, accessible and equipped to handle a record surge of over 65 million visits. Ref: NSW Environment and Heritage.

NOTE 2
Lest there be claims of lack of funds for the actioning of the Munibung Hill Management Plan, it is the same story the world over, when a government or agency wants to carry out a project it considers important funds are found to make it happen. And when it does not want to carry out a project every excuse couched as a reason is trotted out claiming insufficient funds to do it.

For more please turn to Attachment B – Justification for funding the upgrading of bushwalking tracks by way of the implementation of the Munibung Hill Management Plan (MHMP)

Recreation (sport) and Visitor Economy

'Sport' is the overarching word used by many people to describe exercise or fitness training. It has become synonymous with organised activities like rugby league, soccer, netball, tennis, swimming, etc and other team activities held on a sporting field or in a built sports centre. It has been given disproportionate priority over other forms of physical recreation of which bushwalking in the case of Munibung Hill, is one. While bushwalking ranks in the top 3, without the exposure afforded televised sport, it hardly ranks at all in funding.

This discrimination needs to be corrected so that bushwalking is duly recognised as a highly desirable way of engaging in a 'sport'. After all, walking is an Olympic event. Running is called athletics when held on a track and organised by Little Athletics for example.

There are reasons enough in each of the MHCS Five-fold Visions for Munibung Hill to be protected …

- A prime visitor attraction within Lake Mac – in fact it could become the most visited of all;
- The panoramic views
- The millions-of-years-old Permian Gully Rainforest ecosystem
- The geological and cultural heritage
- The recreational value that ranks within the top 3 of the Australian Sports Commission ways to keep fit and stay well

The Retrospective sections in the Munibung Hill Conservation Society, Munibung Musings magazine, carry many accounts of the significance of Munibung Hill for the lives of so many people and by extension the community, over the last 60+ years. We encourage you to become familiar with these to fully appreciate why we are advocating for the protection and conservation of Munibung Hill as a green infrastructure asset for Lake Mac City and generations to come.

In other words, a legacy project of the present for the future.

With the appropriate track upgrades and lookout installations Munibung Hill will bring substantial visitor dollars to the LGA. The diversity of topography within the Munibung Hill site ranges across areas lending themselves to recreation (sport), ecological diversity, education and research opportunities, health and wellness, heritage and culture, regeneration and Landcare, all in addition to the panoramic views that elicit the 'Wow' factor.
The 'jewel in the crown' is lying idle, waiting for Council to get on with the job of implementing the Management Plan. The 'sporting field' that is Munibung Hill comes with add-ons, at no extra charge.

For more please turn to Attachment C - Bushwalking as an acknowledged and legitimate physical activity

Cultural, Conservation and Geological Values

The conservation of Munibung Hill falls within Council's Urban Greening Strategy and Heat Sink policies.

Education and cultural awareness are two important values, not to be overlooked. Munibung Hill from a tourism and visitor economy perspective is at least equal to many other areas promoted by Lake Mac Council as places to visit when visiting Lake Mac, with an added emphasis that from the top of Munibung Hill visitors are able to take in panoramic views that overlook most other areas of the LGA.

The elevated views were valued by Awabakal people for the survey of Country by elders such as Biraban. And they were vital in watching a large portion of Country be inundated by the ocean. Lake Macquarie as we know it today is only 6,000 years old. By comparison Munibung Hill is 251 m years old.

Explanatory signage would raise awareness of this geological fact and help us contextualise the ancestral lineage of the area. Added to the cultural heritage the story is an important one to convey to the next generation as we develop a deeper appreciation of where we fit into nature in this fast-paced industrial society where human-nature and nature intersect – where it can be easy to ignore the need for a sense of place and a sense of space within the wider cosmos – think urban dark sky conservation.

We have a national and international obligation to protect and conserve our wildlife. There are legal frameworks at State and Federal level that require us to protect matters of significance, including threatened species and critical habitat, noting that birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals are all protected.

Munibung Hill being home to numerous threatened species and to a geological wonder in the Permian Gully Rainforest ecosystem located on Hawkins Creek. It is – they are - worthy of protection and conservation in their own right. These plants and their associated species within this ecosystem have a lineage millions of years old.

Besides, what right do we have to say to those yet unborn, should we choose to wipe them out by neglect and not implementing the Munibung Hill Management Plan, you had no right to experience this aspect of our local landscape, thus leaving them less well off and denying them the right to appreciate the beauty and diversity of Munibung Hill. One of the tenets of the sustainable development guidelines that Lake Mac Council subscribes to is that future generations will not be worse off than we who live in the present, are.

Community engagement

Just as Council pro-actively engaged with the community to bring about the Management Plan and see it go on public exhibition and then adopted in April 2022, so we now need Councillors, per the office of the Mayor, to engage with the community.

Under the leadership of the Mayor and the CEO Dave Hughes, Council needs to progress the Management Plan beyond the current stalemate with on-site works publicly declared as taking place within this term of Council, so that the community can be kept informed and updated. And the good faith and trust placed in Councillors by the community to 'do-the-right-thing' *by the community* and consequently to oversight Munibung Hill being protected and conserved for generations to come. In other words:

a. An assurance that what was to be expected following the adoption of the Management Plan will come to fruition in a realistic sense, considering the number of times plans have been prepared over the past 40 years, but then sidelined and abandoned.
b. *Let this be the Council that doesn't squander the opportunity and all the good work and good will and time and money, to get the job done.*

Conclusion – Closing remarks in support of the implementation of the Munibung Hill Management Plan

Funding and Councillor commitment. Must it be a case of taking from Peter to pay Paul? It need not be a case of either / or. There is an obligation to disclose.

From the beginning of this planning process, to now have a plan prepared for the protection and conservation of Munibung Hill and not follow through is a travesty of justice, a letting down of those who entrusted Councillors with the job of, getting the job done.

We (MHCS) did what Councillors asked of us, we garnered community support. A Councillor responded by moving that a plan be investigated, Council then engaged consultants, a plan prepared and duly exhibited, with a large community response. Councillors then unanimously supported and subsequently unanimously adopted the plan. The plan was followed up with more plans including plans for the upgrades of tracks and it all seemed like full steam ahead.

BUT, a plan without an allocation of money sits on the shelf and goes nowhere. There has been no explanation as to why the plan is starved of funds, and worse than that, why the funds have been allocated to projects that have nothing to do with Munibung Hill. With no disclosure, no transparency, no taking the community into its confidence. The community is rightfully concerned that Munibung Hill has been abandoned**. We have the right to know.**

Council places significant emphasis on community consultation, regularly inviting residents to provide input into planning and decision-making processes. It also consistently recognises the environment as a fundamental part of the Lake Macquarie way of life and a core community value.

MHCS submits that Council has walked away from its social contract with the community. With a wall of silence being the apparent plan of action.

Question:
Do Councillors support the implementation of the adopted Munibung Hill Management Plan, or do they not? As elected representatives, Councillors have a responsibility to clearly communicate their position on the implementation of an adopted Council policy so the community can understand where they stand.

If the adopted Management Plan is not to be implemented, what is Councils justification for departing from its own endorsed policy? Is the community expected to accept that a plan developed through consultation, formally adopted by Council, and intended to guide the future management of Munibung Hill will simply not be acted upon?

If Councillors are looking for more reasons to justify funding the implementation of the Munibung Hill Management Plan, then it is all here in this document and in the associated references from the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), National Parks Association, the fact that the NSW government is pouring millions of dollars into upgrading tracks in National Parks in NSW and in many pages on the Munibung Hill Conservation Society website.

Science tells us that walking through a natural environment reduces rumination and significantly lowers the risk of mental illness compared to a similar walk through an urban environment. The evidence is so compelling **that Beyond Blue** advocates bushwalking as one of the activities for managing moderate anxiety and depression. And, **Mind**, a British mental health organization considers 'green exercise' as a clinically valid treatment for people experiencing mental distress. Ref: National Parks Association NSW, "*Bushwalking: A natural tonic for the modern world*" 9 March 2016

How bushwalking benefits sport…
Bushwalking benefits sports by building foundational aerobic endurance, strengthening and stabilizing muscles through uneven terrain and improving agility. It also provides essential mental recovery. This combination makes it a premier cross-training activity for athletes, providing:

1. Superior aerobic conditioning
2. Core strength and stability
3. Gentle muscular endurance
4. Mental toughness and recovery
5. Sports psychologists note that "green exercise" i.e. exercising in nature, significantly reduces stress hormones like cortisol.

The 'playing field' for a bushwalker, walker, jogger, or a runner is a living entity – a living ecosystem that has numerous attributes – biodiversity, variations in elevation within living watershed catchments, housing a diversity of plants and animals. It is, for the most part, self-sustaining and regenerative by design. The 'field' is the landscape. All that's required is well-maintained tracks for access and to preserve the integrity of the bushland.

The ‘playing field’ is not only a bushwalker’s playing field, but an educational classroom, artist’s inspiration, a scientist’s field studies centre and much more. The bushwalker’s playing field doesn’t need to be constructed, it already exists. It doesn’t need regular curating. It doesn’t necessarily need staff.

The bushland, the bushwalker’s playing field, is a veritable mix of flora and funga, curated by the fauna. It has been maturing over centuries. The Permian Gully Rainforest ecosystem in the Hawkins Creek catchment, can’t be replicated by any human engineer. It is a living treasure, while being integral to a bushwalker’s playing field.

Green infrastructure is at least as important as human built infrastructure and the residents living in Lake Macquarie will become increasingly dependent on places like this for their physical and mental well-being. Consistent with health science for example Forest Bathing, as prescribed by medicos within Japanese culture tick all the boxes.

The elevated views were valued by Awabakal people for their survey of Country. And they were vital in watching a large portion of Country be inundated by the ocean. Lake Macquarie as we know it today is 6,000 years old. By comparison, Munibung Hill is 251 million years old. Explanatory signage would raise awareness of this geological fact. Added to the cultural heritage, the story is an important one to convey to the next generation as we develop a deeper appreciation of where we fit into nature. An industrial way of life tends to overlook or ignore the need for a sense of place and a sense of space with the wider community that is the Lake Macquarie LGA. Munibung Hill can help us rebalance the scales.

We invite you to be one of the Councillors that sees the implementation of the Munibung Hill Management Plan as a legacy project that Council lifted out of the shadows and given the opportunity to contribute to the Lake Mac visitor economy mix.

We submit that there is no justifiable reason why the upgrade of other sporting venues should come at the expense of Munibung Hill.

The community of interest that is the walking, jogging, running community
that make Munibung Hill their primary physical exercise / recreation site,
is entitled to have their ‘playing field’ funded.
That Munibung Hill languishes and is sidelined, denies the legitimacy of those
who choose other than playing organised sport an upgrade to their chosen place.
It need not be an either or, but rather a fairer distribution of funds.

Do we see ourselves; do Councillors see themselves, as custodians for coming generations, for those yet unborn grandchildren of our children.

Indigenous people would say we are the custodians of Country for the grandchildren of their children. Do we share a similar worldview? The manner in which indigenous people interacted with the land meant they had an inter-generational ethic, caring for country as a means of caring for themselves and their family groups.

For more please turn to Attachment C - Bushwalking as an acknowledged and legitimate physical activity
For more please turn to Attachment D – Councillors speak in favour of the Munibung Hill Management Plan.

Inclusion of photos

List photos with captions

Panoramic view
180-degree panoramic view from Munibung Hill, overlooking Lake Macquarie. The sweep takes in Farm Street, Speers Point (left), Quarry Road (right) and includes the Friends of Munibung Hill Landcare site (bottom centre)

Cliff face
The cliff face is a prominent landmark at Munibung Hill. The Tamarind Nature Walk, from Quarry Road to Farm Street is at the base, passing through a section oof the Permian Gully Rainforest (bottom centre)

South along Munibung Hill
Looking south along Munibung Hill across to Lake Macquarie with Warners Bay (left), Speers Point (right) Booragul Marina (top right)

Rainforest vegetation
Permian Gully Rainforest vegetation community in the Hawkins Creek Catchment at Munibung Hill off Farm Street, Speers Point.

Framed photo for presentation to Mayor
Looking south along Munibung Hill across to Lake Macquarie with Warners Bay (left), Speers Point (right), Booragul Marina (top right). This photo is mounted in a frame that was purchased from Life Line, Cardiff. It is an example of upcycling within a circular economy context, in keeping with Lake Mac Circular Economy Policy, April 2021.

Photo credits: Ian English

Attachments List

Attachment A - Munibung Hill – an overview of plans
Attachment B - Justification for funding the upgrade of bushwalking tracks as part of the implementation of the Munibung Hill Management Plan
Attachment C - Bushwalking as an acknowledged and legitimate physical activity
Attachment D – Councillors speak in favour of Munibung Hill Management Plan.

Attachment A

This section of the document was prepared as a backgrounder for what was to be a site visit by Lake Macquarie Councillors, arranged by MHCS under the leadership of Gavin Ord.

The site visit did not take place and was then to be replaced by a Mayor-sponsored visit.

Munibung Hill – an overview of plans

Prepared by Munibung Hill Conservation Society –
Munibung Musings magazine - https://www.munibunghill.com/newsletters/
Munibung Hill Explainers - https://www.munibunghill.com/munibung-hill-explainers/

Since the late 1970s, plans for Munibung Hill have evolved from a potential lookout in the 1970s and a failed park in the 1980s to a focus in 2022 on conservation and passive recreation.
This shift is reflected in the Lake Macquarie City Council's Munibung Hill Management Plan, which outlines protecting the Hill's natural and cultural values, improving safe access via new trailheads, and managing existing threats like erosion and overgrown vegetation.

1970s: Early proposals

- In the late 1970s, a local Lions Club president, John Ure, proposed establishing a lookout and public reserve on the Hill.

Around the same time, the Lake Macquarie Municipal Council planned for rehabilitation and potential parkland at the Hardy's Quarry site, including a sealed road and parking area.

1980s: Quarry operations and failed park

- Instead of a public park, a gravel quarry operated by Boral Resources Pty Ltd ran on the site from 1986 until 2014.

- The planned park never materialised due to safety concerns related to the quarry, and public access was eventually restricted.

1988: Resource Planning Pty Ltd in July 1989 was commissioned by LMCC to produce the Munibung Hill Planning and Development Control Study – Site Constraints and Opportunities (MHPDCS-SCO). The 80 page report makes for interesting reading.

Recommendations were made and a timeline proposed. Here's one relevant extract:

> *7.1.3 Council's Declaration in Respect of the Establishment of a Recreation Area, Lookouts and Walking Trails.*
>
> In August 1988, Council decided to further investigate the possibility of acquiring land for the establishment of a lookout park along the Munibung Hill ridgeline, with vehicle access to a car parking area, rest areas, amenities, tourist facilities and walking trails. It was proposed that the development of the lookout park would be a worthy project to be completed by the year 2000. To date acquisition of the ridgeline lands has not proceeded. (Council report of 15 August 1988) - on page 39 of the report.



2015 - Present: Conservation and management focus

- https://www.lakemac.com.au/Our-Council/City-strategies-plans-and-reporting/Strategies-and-plans/Munibung-Hill-Management-Plan

A more recent management plan prioritises conserving the natural and cultural values of the Hill.

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PDF
8 Mar 2022 — The *Management Plan* and Concept Plan draw on three working documents: context, site analysis and constraints review; community and stakeholder ... 101 pages –

Overview

The Management Plan for Munibung Hill aims to protect its natural and cultural values while providing safe access for passive recreation over the next decade. Key actions include upgrading and stabilising walking tracks, restoring natural areas, managing vehicle access, and conducting detailed studies on issues like contamination and erosion.

Goals and objectives

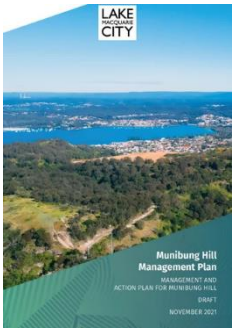
- **Protect cultural and natural values**: Preserve the ecological communities and Aboriginal cultural heritage of the area.
- **Improve recreational access:** Make walking tracks safer and more stable and improve public access to the Hill's vantage points.
- **Manage activities:** Restrict vehicle access to only essential services, as the plan focuses on walking, not mountain biking or other vehicle-based recreation.
- **Encourage public benefit:** Ensure activities on the Hill are for public enjoyment, not private benefit.
- **Increase visitor numbers:** Share the area's potential with the community.

Key management actions

- **Track and trail development:** Implement a Concept Plan for new, safe track heads with facilities and upgrade the main tracks, particularly along the main ridge.
- **Site studies:** Conduct detailed studies on contamination, erosion hotspots, and the risks associated with accessing cliff tops to inform track design and remediation.
- **Remediation and construction:** Carry out remediation works based on study results and develop detailed plans and operational protocols for construction to ensure sustainability.
- **Facility development:** Build new track heads with parking, picnic tables, signage, and toilets.

Implementation and future steps

- **Detailed design:** Prepare detailed designs for tracks and facilities.
- **Environmental management:** Ensure all construction and remediation is done in an environmentally sustainable manner, with detailed plans guiding the process.
- **Community engagement:** The Lake Macquarie City Council will continue to engage with the community on the plans, including incorporating feedback on the draft plan and concept plan.



The Munibung Hill Management Plan was adopted by Council in April 2022.
https://www.lakemac.com.au/Our-Council/City-strategies-plans-and-reporting/Strategies-and-plans/Munibung-Hill-Management-Plan

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Carpe diem – seize the day
Post author: Munibung Hill, October 28, 2020
https://www.munibunghill.com/carpe-diem-seize-the-day/

Reading the archives is not everyone's cup of tea. Trawling through page after page of type and B&W maps can be tedious. To some extent it was tedious, but the content made it all worthwhile.

The year was 1989. The idea, we assume, was to set in train a process that would see Munibung Hill protected from further residential development and make the E2 zoned land accessible to the community for recreational and other visitor purposes.

Resource Planning Pty Ltd in July 1989 was commissioned by LMCC to produce the *Munibung Hill Planning and Development Control Study* – Site Constraints and Opportunities (MHPDCS-SCO). The 80 page report makes for interesting reading.

Recommendations were made and a timeline proposed. Here's one relevant extract:

7.1.3 Council's Declaration in Respect of the Establishment of a Recreation Area, Lookouts and Walking Trails.
In August 1988, Council made a decision to further investigate the possibility of acquiring land for the establishment of a lookout park along the Munibung Hill ridgeline, with vehicle access to a car parking area, rest areas, amenities, tourist facilities and walking trails. It was proposed that the development of the lookout park would be a worthy project to be completed by the year 2000. To date acquisition of the ridgeline lands has not proceeded. (Council report of 15 August 1988) - on page 39 of the report.

It begs several questions: why spend ratepayers' money that produces no tangible outcome? Why not follow through on recommendations? Why waste staff time and skills and shelve further action?

Thirty-two years later, we are on the cusp of another report being done. This follows the acceptance by Council on 22 June, that a plan, in consultation with the community, be prepared for the General Manager.

Much of what MHCS is advocating - included in the MHCS Fivefold Vision for Munibung Hill, to ensure the protection and conservation of Munibung Hill - tallies with the Aims and Objectives set out in the MHPDCS-SCO back in the late 1980s.

For years the community that loves Munibung Hill has been saying: *let's get on with it, don't dilly dally any longer*. Here's hoping that this anticipated plan will deliver the outcomes the community has been calling for. We are quietly optimistic.

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Management plan underway to map out Munibung Hill's future
Nicole Somerville, Newcastle Weekly, March 23, 2021
https://newcastleweekly.com.au/management-plan-underway-to-map-out-munibung-hills-future/

A new management plan under development for Munibung Hill, and adjoining slopes, will map out the future for one of the most spectacular but least-visited sites in Lake Macquarie.

Lake Macquarie City Council is now seeking community input to create the proposal, which will seek a balance between protecting, managing and restoring areas of high importance on Munibung Hill, and providing safe public access and recreation opportunities.

Council's Manager Assets Management, Brendan Callander, said the plan would need to consider Munibung Hill's unique natural character and cultural significance, as well as environmental hazards and community desires.

"This is a site with incredible potential," he explained.

"The 360-degree views stretch across the lake to the coast, all the way up to Port Stephens and across to the Watagans.

"So, the potential is there to create something really special for the community, but public access to Munibung Hill is difficult due to a lack of safe formal access."

Council-owned land on Munibung Hill is bordered by the former Pasminco land on one side, and residential development in Warners Bay, Lakelands and Boolaroo.

Mr Callander said Umwelt Australia had been engaged to develop a draft management plan, with a study area including the southern parts of Speers Point and Warners Bay, and parts of Lakelands, Boolaroo and Macquarie Hills bordering Munibung Hill.

"We need to weigh up any options with costs, environmental impacts and how it might work in with the surrounding community," he added.

"We need community input into what they'd like to see on Munibung Hill and how they'd like it to be used.

"We'd also love to hear from people who have memories of how the area was used historically."

Munibung Hill's historical significance dates to pre-European settlement when the Awabakal people used it as a source of ochre.

After European settlement, its natural spring was a stop-off point for travellers. Large sections of the Hill were later quarried for gravel.

Go to www.shape.lakemac.com.au to have your say (Note: Closed in 2022)

A draft management plan is expected to go on public exhibition later this year, with further feedback sought from the community. (Note: Public exhibition opened in December, 2021)

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Reflections on exploring Munibung Hill

Luke Adams, October 6, 2023

Post category: Visitors – Retrospectives, MMM … Issue 34, October-November 2022

https://www.munibunghill.com/reflections-on-exploring-munibung-hill/

Artist, Luke Adams, reflects on times spent exploring Munibung Hill

Back in the mid-70s and early 80s Munibung Hill was a children's paradise. In part two, Luke Adams, now an artist living in Melbourne, shares the story of his virtual neighbour – growing up next door to Munibung Hill.

Luke shares our (MHCS) concern that Munibung Hill has become cut off from surrounding bushland.

"All the Glendale shopping area, back in those days was bush that linked up with Munibung Hill, except for the train line and railway fences. All that bush was removed for commercial development"

But there are some good things to note.

"The top ridge line that was impacted by cattle grazing is regenerating, the quarries have shut down, the lead smelter is gone, and there are no more trail bike tracks. These were all competing demands on the natural environment 30 and 40 years ago, back in the 80s."

A lot of what Luke terms self-serving behaviour has been replaced with something akin to a conservation ethic of today.

"This means there are now opportunities that we would not have had before. This needs to be kept in mind, because as we now recognise, Munibung Hill is a very diverse landscape with some parts that are relatively untouched. When we expand our worldview, we find that the micro issues being played out at Munibung Hill, the tension between conserving forest and expanding suburbia, protecting wildlife habitat from encroaching human introduced species such as cats, places huge pressures on nature. How we address these tensions will determine how viable the remaining landscape will be for other species we share our suburbs with," said Luke.

In relation to the bicentennial beacons mentioned by Luke, these two references from the historical records add a small amount of detail …

2000 watch as beacon blazes

Newcastle Herald, June 20, 1988

More than 2000 people braved chilling winds at Horseshoe Beach to watch the flames of Newcastle's Bicentennial 'Birthday Beacon' lick more than 25 metres into the air.

The fire was one of the last of about 500 lit around Australia in the Bicentenary's truly national event.

The Governor General Sir Ninian Stephen, set off the chain on Saturday night by lighting a 50 tonne bonfire at Botany Bay, in Sydney.

From there the chain of beacon lighting continued south along the coast, looping around Australia and arriving back in the Hunter at Stroud, then Nelson Bay and Newcastle.

Thousands more witnessed the lighting of other local beacons at Munibung Hill and Morpeth.

Lake Macquarie City Council

At the Meeting of Council held at Speers Point, Monday, 20th June, 1988. Ald . Edwards and Ald. Carley, moved:

.. That Council recognises the two very successful Bicentenary Events held on the weekend of the 18th and 19th of June, 1988, namely the Mayoral Ball and the lighting of the Beacon on Munibung Hill; and further,

.. That Council also recognise the work carried out by its staff on Friday, 17th June, 1988 under adverse conditions in respect of the preparations for the Munibung Hill Event ; and further,

.. That the Wyee Bush Fire Brigade be thanked for their involvement in building the Beacon on Munibung Hill and undertaking the feeding of those persons present at that event.

Attachment B

Justification for funding the upgrade of bushwalking tracks as part of the implementation of the Munibung Hill Management Plan

Reference the **Australian Sports Commission** –

Bushwalking is one of Australia's most popular physical activities. While the non-competitive nature of bushwalking historically excluded it from traditional sports funding, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) tracks its immense national participation through the AusPlay survey to inform health and recreation policy.

AusPlay Participation Data
The ASC's national AusPlay data consistently ranks bushwalking (or hiking) as one of the top physical activities in the country.

Popularity: It regularly ranks among the top three to six most popular physical activities for adults, just behind recreational walking and fitness/gym.
Growth: Post-pandemic participation surged, with millions of Australian adults hitting the trails annually, driven by the strong demand for accessible, flexible, and health-focused outdoor recreation.

Funding and Recognition
Non-Competitive Focus: Because bushwalking is non-competitive, it sits outside the traditional definition of a competitive sport. Consequently, bushwalking does not receive the same direct tier-one funding from the ASC that competitive sporting bodies do.
Broader Recreation Focus: Instead, support and infrastructure for the activity are typically driven at the state and territory level through government environment departments (like NSW National Parks) and outdoor recreation grant programs.

ASC Resources for the Community

Although the ASC doesn't fund bushwalking as a traditional sport, it provides resources that active outdoor clubs and groups utilize:

Gameplan: The ASC's online Gameplan tool is frequently recommended by peak bodies like Bushwalking NSW to help community bushwalking clubs conduct health checks, manage risk, and apply sensible governance.

Physical Literacy: The ASC framework for Safety & Risk offers guidelines on behaving responsibly outdoors, which perfectly aligns with bushwalking safety principles.

Physical Activity | Clearinghouse - Australian Sports Commission20 Feb 2026 — * Walking - 4,640,000. * Fitness/Gym - 1,805,000. * Bush Walking - 1,044,000. * Swimming - 954,000. * Cycling - 632,000. * Golf - ...Australian Sports Commission

Justification for funding bushwalking tracks -

Funding for bushwalking tracks is justified by their proven ability to boost regional economies, improve public health and protect vulnerable environments. Well-maintained trails drive nature-based tourism, while engineered tracks prevent trampling and erosion, ensuring ecologically sustainable access.

1. **Economic Benefits and Ecotourism**
   - **Regional Growth:** Upgraded tracks attract overnight visitors, supporting local hospitality, retail and accommodation providers
   - **Job Creation**: Trail construction and ongoing maintenance generate local employment, often stimulation economic recovery in regional communities affected by natural disasters
   - **Destination marketing**: High-quality trails enhance a region's international and national reputation, allowing local councils to capture a share of the multibillion ecotourism market.
2. **Public Health and Community Wellbeing**
   - **Active Lifestyles:** Accessible waling infrastructure encourages physical exercise, helping to reduce obesity and prevent chronic diseases

- **Mental Health:** Time spent in natural environments is proven to reduce stress, anxiety and depression, lowering broader public healthcare costs
- **Social Inclusion:** Safe, well-graded trails provide free, equitable access to recreation for people of varying fitness levels and demographics

3. **Environmental Conservation and Resilience**
   - **Confining Foot Traffic:** Formalised tracks and boardwalks prevent hikers from trampling sensitive flora, compacting soil and degrading natural habitats
   - **Climate Change Adaption:** Purpose-built, durable trails can withstand severe weather events like floods and landslips, future-proofing vital infrastructure and reducing the need for costly emergency repairs
   - **Conservation Education:** Walking trails allow the public to intimately experience nature, fostering long-term community support for conservation and environmental protection initiatives
4. **Cultural Heritage and Indigenous Engagement**
   - **Cultural Awareness:** Trails can be designed in collaboration with traditional owners to highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and storytelling
   - **Economic Enterprises:** Partnerships with local Indigenous communities (e.g. guided whaling tours and land management contracts) create direct enterprise opportunities and sustainable economic empowerment



- Position Statement on Funding and Protection of Natural Assets

27 March 2025 — Increased funding for our parks and forests – Ensuring essential maintenance, infrastructure, and conservation programs are adequate... ..Bushwalking Australia



- Walking tracks and trails in national parks | Park management

20 Feb 2023 — Through this funding, we are transforming national parks into destinations of significance by improving accessibility, providing ... NSW Environment and Heritage



- Position Statement on Funding and Protection of Natural Assets

Page 1. Position Statement on Funding and Protection of Natural Assets. Bushwalking Australia calls on the federal and state government... ..Bushwalking Australia

……

We aren't in any way knocking organised sport or suggesting that the venues used by them shouldn't get funding. Many of our members belong to and play these games. We are simply stating that the activities attracting the greatest participation rates get their fair share. Just because they don't have the profile, organisational backing and the facilities and infrastructure that is the case for rugby league or soccer or tennis or netball or cricket or swimming or other team sports, doesn't justify preferencing these higher profile sports over bushwalking at Munibung Hill.

The thing about Munibung Hill and other free spaces is you get triple the bang for your buck. Protecting and conserving bushland for recreational walking along with **respecting a significant cultural site**, is a win-win-win.

Australian Sports Commission, CEO Keiran Perkins OAM, said results show the many ways adults and children can get involved in sport and play activity. "We need to ensure that there are enough places and spaces available for people to get active in ways and at times that suit them."
Results show:

- Informal activities like going for a run, alone or with friends/family, on a casual basis, are more popular than organised activities for both men and women
- Reference: 30/05/2025 "Australians are redefining the way they play"
- https://www.ausport.gov.au/media-centre/news/australians-are-redefining-the-way-they-play

Participation rankings of organised sports (**all of which rank below the top 3**)

1. Swimming
2. Football (Soccer)
3. Australian Rules Football (AFL)
4. Basketball
5. Cricket
6. Tennis and Golf

Sports move beyond the club to parks, pavements and backyards, with adults opting to exercise in local parks, streets, beaches etc. with informal activity proving most popular across the country.

The conclusion to draw from the ASC findings is that Munibung Hill is a prime underutilised example of a 'sporting venue' regularly chosen by thousands of people, young and not so young, as a highly desirable place to 'play', exercise, get and keep fit.

Attachment C

Bushwalking as an acknowledged and legitimate physical activity

Bushwalking is participatory and non-competitive. While it can be organised by way of bushwalking clubs it is for the most part enjoyed by individuals, families and groups of friends.

An advantage of walking and bushwalking is that they don't require an opponent or a referee for them to be played.

Bushwalking offers athletes a break from the high-pressure environment of competitive sports while fostering mental grit and focus needed to push through physical barriers.

For further justification, we once again reference the CEO of the ASC, Kieren Perkins, who has highlighted bushwalking as a leading example of the modern shift toward flexible, individual physical activities that improve community wellbeing.

- As an individual pursuit, Perkins notes that more Australians are turning to bushwalking because it offers personal health benefits without the rigid structure of traditional club sports.
- Furthermore, from a lifestyle adaptation perspective, as work and life commitments change, the ASC recognises that physical recreation spaces like walking trails helps accommodate flexible schedules while keeping communities active.
- And for mental and physical health, AusPlay findings supported by Perkins emphasise that unstructured, nature-based activities provide vital mental health and social outlets for all age groups.

Bushwalking, not being a high-profile physical activity – 'sport' – is for the most part hidden from view. Unlike a sports ground where players are congregated in large groups, where there are night matches in blazing flood lights, where there are sponsored sports signage boards and hours of sponsored television coverage, bushwalking is effectively hidden from view.

And therein lies the contradiction. The 'sport' that requires the least investment, ends up getting the left overs at best, and nothing at worst, in the case of Munibung Hill. This needs to change and this Council can be the change; Councillors can be the change agents, provided they are willing to seize the opportunities.

Making the case for upgrading the tracks on Munibung Hill shouldn't be the job of a small, not-for-profit volunteer organisation like the Munibung Hill Conservation Society. It should be an action that just happens because the tracks are in a very poor state; because the funds are available; because it's long overdue and it's the right thing to do.

The tracks have been the 'next cab off the rank' for years, but have been left to deteriorate and become user-unfriendly, leaving bushwalkers, as a consequence, out of the funding allocations – unjustifiably, we believe.

Let this be the Council that puts some balance back into the sports funding equation. It's time, **one,** that Munibung Hill was given a guernsey and called onto the field of play and **two,** that the spotlight that shone on Munibung Hill during the Management Plan public consultation, and adoption process, was re-focused on it.

Munibung Hill has been rested on the bench for far too long; it's time this significant landscape was given the opportunity to play and express all those attributes glowingly profiled during the Management Plan preparation period.

Attachment D – Councillors speak in favour of Munibung Hill Management Plan.

11 April 2022 - Councillors speak in favour of Munibung Hill Management Plan.

Lake Macquarie City Council's Built and Natural Assets Standing Committee (BNASC) met on 11 April. The Committee, voted on item 22BNA003 Adoption of Munibung Hill Management Plan, in a one line recommendation, that: Council adopts the Munibung Hill Management Plan.

Chaired by Deputy Mayor, Councillor Jason Pauling in the absence of Mayor Kay Fraser, the item received unanimous support and now progresses to the April 25 Council meeting.

There were two speakers for the motion: Councillor Brian Adamthwaite, mover, and Councillor David Belcher, seconder. A transcript of their comments in support of the recommendation, follows …

Councillor Adamthwaite
This is a process that's gone on for quite some time now and it has involved a lot of people, individuals, and a lot of groups. A lot of staff have worked very hard in putting this proposal together and a lot of community groups have been involved in discussions, communications and consultations to get us to this point. I think that whilst we are moving through this fairly quickly tonight, we ought to recognize that it has taken us literally years to get to this point, and I think that it's appropriate, because this is one of those momentous things that we get to do from time to time in Council. And I believe that this potentially is going to create for us something great for our city and for our citizens. But I think also potentially, it is going to create something great for the future of the city and our children and grandchildren. So, while it does appear as if it's very straight forward and I feel very confident that it will be unanimously passed, I think we need to just pause for a moment to acknowledge that many many people – staff and community – have worked hard to get us here and many many people in the future will enjoy the decision that we make here tonight. Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor.

Councillor Belcher
I guess I just wanted to reiterate all the points made here by Councillor Adamthwaite. Community interest and voice in this has been quite significant. I think it would be somewhat remiss not to point out a particular individual, Mr Stuart Carter, who came to me probably during my second week on Council, as an individual. He wanted to see a strategic plan around what to do at that site. That is what we have in front of us now. And as Councillors have said, very well done to staff. That's a fantastic document. It really does provide a way forward and a framework for Council on the Munibung Hill site. Again, kudos to everyone involved. Especially for community participation in this fairly long event. Thank you Mr Deputy Mayor.

Listen here: Drag the play dot forward to 8 minutes 40 seconds for this 4 minute segment, with the passing of the recommendation being voted on 12.00 minutes
https://webcast.lakemac.com.au/archive/video22-0411.php

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