



Bike jumps in Greater Shepparton Frequently Asked Questions

Council acknowledges there has been some community concerns in the past week following works undertaken by Council to level out what it considered a dangerous, unauthorised bike jump constructed on crown land.

The jump was constructed near the Broken River, where Council is the land manager.

It is important that members of our community understand why this action was undertaken, and moving forward how Council and our community can work together to an even better and safer outcome particularly for our young people who like to tackle these types of jumps.

While it's important for our community to understand our decision and action, it's equally as important for Council to have a better understanding of the issues and needs of our community regarding bike jumps. We are eager to have an authentic conversation on how Council can work with the community to provide a solution that is safe, acceptable and appropriate for all.

Why can't people build their own dirt jumps on Council or crown land?

While Council understands it may seem like harmless fun to build a few dirt jumps in an empty grassed area, there are a number of reasons why Council cannot allow this to happen.

The first is safety. Council needs to ensure that structures built on Council land are safe – for both the users and passers-by. When community members build their own jumps, we can't ensure that what has been built is safe – either in the design or construction.

While some of these jumps are relatively small and might appear to be low risk, regardless of size there is always the possibility of serious injury, and no one wants to see a young person get unnecessarily hurt doing what they enjoy.

While most crashes on these usually result in abrasions or perhaps a broken limb, there is a real risk of a much worse outcome such as brain damage and loss of mobility with devastating lifelong impacts for the individual and their families and friends, especially when a jump is not structurally sound.

These outcomes can, do, and have happened, therefore Council has an obligation to ensure the safety of our community including our young people, hence why Council has for many years removed such jumps build on Council and crown land.

Why is a dirt jump not acceptable when Council has a skate park and BMX track with jumps?

While there will always be some level of risk associated with any skate or BMX facility, Council can manage this by having facilities professionally designed, engineered and built, and by regularly checking and maintaining them.

There are documented standards for building such facilities with the aim of minimising risk of serious injuries for users. If a facility is built in accordance with standards and regularly inspected and maintained, the risk of injury and liability is mitigated and managed.

Often these type of facilities are built in a prominent locations where there is a level of supervision that can reduce the likelihood of peer pressure, not to mention being accessible in an unlikely event that any medical treatment is required.

It's easy for young people to overestimate their abilities, and Council facilities are frequently designed to accommodate for varying levels of abilities or competency, unlike a well-intentioned but homemade high-risk jump that doesn't take into consideration the requirements such as incline, angles, gradient, radius and so on to ensure a safe landing.

Importantly, Council has an obligation to ensure it is not negligent. Providing facilities that meet accepted standards and keeping them in good condition helps ensure we are not negligent regarding things that are built on land we are responsible for.



Why has Council just now decided to remove these jumps?

Council acknowledges building jumps in these areas has occurred for many years, and Council has also, for many years, regularly removed these jumps. It's actually a common practice.

What has changed of late is the amount and scale of the jumps which has escalated. Clearly COVID-19 has meant children in Greater Shepparton are looking for an outlet outside of home schooling and cancellation of regular sports. In addition, the use of social media, such as YouTube, has fuelled the desire to do "something unique or extreme" in order to capture it on video and share it.

As a results jumps created have become larger with more risky elements to negotiate on the bike, and as such Council has an obligation to respond and manage this risk, we don't want to see anyone get hurt, especially if it can be avoided.

If people chose to ride these jumps, then isn't it at their own risk, not Council's?

While Council acknowledges to some extent we are all responsible for our own actions, there is clear legal precedents and clear advice that Council, as land manager for these areas, has a responsibility to manage the risks and failure to do so would be considered negligent, and potentially see Council held legally and financially liable for an injury.

Peer pressure can and does push people, particularly young people, to try and do things that are beyond their capacity, the result of which can be disastrous.

Unfortunately when people do get hurt many seek compensation and want someone to be held liable even if the person was a willing participant and aware of the risks.

It is extremely difficult to justify using rate payer's money to pay compensation for an injury that occurred on Council land or property when Council is aware that the risk existed and failed to do something about it.

At the end of the day Council endeavours to keep members of our community safe and well where possible.

Has Council bulldozed and closed bike tracks?

Council has not closed any tracks or bulldozed them despite some of the information and commentary that has been circulating.

With the current jump in question, Council responded by levelling this jump using small equipment. The work undertaken at this site was only interim to remove the initial hazard.

There is some further work to be done to repair erosion of the river bank and undermining of a large tree that has occurred as a consequence of the jump being created, along with some general tidying up.

Unfortunately in creating such a jump, the impact to the environment is not taken into consideration.

The remaining works will be undertaken when the weather is more suitable to avoid further damage.

Riding bikes and exercising is good for the mental health of kids and outweighs the risk of injury

Council encourages healthy living and exercise, and has heavily invested in shared path networks across the municipality, the BMX track, the Skate and Bike track at Victoria Park Lake are a few examples. There is a vast array of sealed and unsealed paths in and adjacent to the region's bush land for all to enjoy. These tracks have natural features and provide for riders who like a smooth and flat path, as well as those who like a bit more of a challenge.

There are still many options to ride and take on a challenge without the use of an unauthorised and dangerous jump.



Is there a safe way to provide an alternative BMX jump?

Council is actively looking into the opportunities to construct more bike riding facilities, including a Pump Track, and we welcome support from the community to explore this and any other options that could be considered.

Council has already engaged with some local cycling enthusiast, including some local young people, to progress some ideas but we we're still keen to hear from others and hope more will get on board. We encourage you to please register your interest at Council **5832 9700** or council@shepparton.vic.gov.au via or one of our local bike shops.

For those of us who are novices, a "pump track" is a circuit of rollers, banked turns and features designed to be ridden completely by riders "pumping"— generating momentum by up and down body movements, instead of pedalling or pushing. They were originally designed for the mountain bike and BMX scene, and cater to a wide variety of rider skill levels

Other aspects of dirt jumps on crown land/river frontage

Council also needs to be particularly careful of the damage dirt jumps can cause to the natural environment. Often when dirt jumps are built by members of the community, it results in damage to the surrounding environment including river banks and trees. Understandably kids won't be carting dirt into the sites to build the jumps, it is usually dug up from next to the jump. This means that the area impacted is greater than the jump, and creates extra risks next to the track and often starts erosion, quickly impacting a significant area of the river bank. This can be difficult to stop.

Sometimes the jumps are built in conservation areas, causing damage to endangered plant species. It's important that Council ensures the region's natural environment, beautiful landscapes and open spaces are taken care of.

Crown Land (National Parks, State Parks, DELWP managed land, etc.) is deemed potentially culturally sensitive, and before any activities (including construction of tracks/jumps) take place on such land a Cultural Heritage Assessment must be conducted. If these steps are not taken, respective land owners/managers can face significant fines.

Council acknowledges it needs to consider what the whole community wants. While an open space may seem like a good place to build jumps, residents with properties that surround that open space may not like the idea of having something built so close to their homes.

What Next?

Further inspection and works

- Council recently removed one jump that it considered too extreme and risky, however it is apparent that there are many more along both sides of the Broken and Goulburn Rivers that need to be inspected. This will result in more jumps being removed and likely result some community frustration, however, as stated Council has an obligation to respond and remove any risk that may result in any potential injury.

We understand that this may not be a popular decision but we don't want to see any of our young people injured, especially when it could have been avoided.

If Council failed to take action and there was an accident, not only are there legal implications but there would also be a public request to please explain why action wasn't taken sooner.

Understanding what the community really wants

- We want to work with the community to achieve the best outcome for the users, and provide an alternative that is safe and sustainable. Having a conversation will ensure that this will happen.



Council has been buoyed by the fact that many of the kids and adults involved in these jumps also understand and accept Council's position. And we commend them for having some great alternative ideas and their willing to work with us to get an even better outcome.

Some suggestions to date include development and promotion of single track trails and mountain bike tracks using the existing unsealed trails that are in the area between Mooroopna and Shepparton. While Council is not responsible for this land, we are eager to work with the community to not only get a safer result but a more exciting and sustainable solution.

Points of consideration will include considering costs, accessibility, land ownership, catering for a range of abilities and so on, and we encourage members of the community to continue to come forward with constructive suggestions and/or offers to get involved.

Pursuing alternatives

- We have already spoken to a member of our community who made contact via email suggesting that an initial Zoom meeting is held with interested parties to explore creating a working group to explore options and seek an alternative. This idea has been positively received.
- We will continue the work we have started with local cycling enthusiasts regarding the potential establishment of a Pump Track, with regularly updates to be communicated.
- We will continue to look at other municipalities that have created similar safe facilities so that we can learn from their experiences.
- We will seek input from Word and Mouth, other youth forums and groups and individuals on what they feel is an appropriate way forward, and gauge their interest in participating/leading the way.

How can you get involved or help

We encourage any members of the community interested in being involved in having their say or being part of the solution to make contact with Council directly on **5832 9700** or via council@shepparton.vic.gov.au or alternatively drop into one of our local bike stores.

Register your interest - Bike jumps in Greater Shepparton

Name	Contact Number	Email Address