

GRANT APPLICATION - MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

Narooma is on the far south coast of NSW near the Victorian border between Bateman's Bay and Eden, 220km southeast of Canberra, and 350km south of Sydney.

Local mountain biking enthusiasts together hand built 30km of trails over 4 years, then sought grant writing support from Tilma Group to secure funding to add another 50km of trails and a trailhead to develop a world-class trail network and mountain biking hub.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The Narooma Mountain Biking Hub would form the central hub of a South Coast regional network of mountain biking (MTB) trails from Bateman's Bay south to Tathra and Eden and inland in Cooma - the biggest MTB region in Australia - lifting the region's appeal for multi-day, interstate, international and year-round visitation by high-value visitors.

This would smooth highly seasonal visitation, create jobs, future-proof the local economy against shocks, and support the Black Summer bushfire-affected community's physical and mental health with recreation, access to nature, and social bonding.

Narooma Mountain Bike Club applied for funding to build the trails from the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund would cover 100% of the costs of projects that would support a bushfire-impacted community's economic or social recovery.

This project relied completely on the club's faith in themselves and their potential trail, as their council, Eurobodalla Shire Council, was applying for funding for a competing MTB trail in Bateman's Bay (Mogo) that had been identified in several of Council's strategic

plans. Additionally, Eden's mountain biking club in the neighbouring shire to the south, was also applying for funding to build MTB trails!

The club's project steering group was adamant that their trail would be the best of all of them in terms of the quality of the trails due to the natural assets of their region, and dispersal of tourists away from the over-tourism mecca of Bateman's Bay.

"Tilma Group did a great job getting across the detail of our project for the BLERF application and helped us produce a very professional application, which benefited greatly from their expertise in grant writing."

- MARK STUBBINGS, NAROOMA MOUNTAIN BIKE CLUB

OUTCOMES

Just 30% of applications to the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund were successful - the grant was significantly oversubscribed, with over 650 applications submitted, and only 195 successful projects.

Narooma Mountain Bike Club secured \$3.9 million, twice the average amount for the round. Mogo and Eden trails were also successful in securing funding, quite likely because the president of the Narooma Mountain Bike Club visited the region's state MP and shared the club's vision of developing Australia's biggest mountain biking destination for increased visitation appeal.

In its first year of operations, the Narooma mountain biking hub is predicted to attract 18,200 visitors and \$8.1 million in visitor expenditure and create 47 local jobs.

Together with other mountain biking destinations on the South Coast, the Narooma trails will create a large, regional mountain biking circuit that will attract interstate and international visitors - the densest collection of mountain biking trails anywhere in Australia, creating a truly world-class and globally attractive mountain biking destination.

Factors which likely contributed to the success of the grant application include

- The club pitched a bigger idea to their state MP and let him claim the idea as his own.
- The club was ready for the grant opportunity: they had received a previous grant that enabled them to have a business case developed by an economist and trail design developed by a top trail designer which were submitted along with their application.
- The club showed a very high level of community support by requesting numerous letters of support from a variety of community members, businesses, government representatives and departments (such as the Destination Network), the landowner, the local Aboriginal Land Council, nearby MTB clubs, cycling organisations, users including youth, community groups, and business chambers. They got the story published by the media, and shared clippings with the grant application. They ran a community survey, shared trail usage stats, showed how many volunteers had been engaged in building and maintaining the existing trails, and shared the donations they had received, and even their merchandise sales!
- The application clearly showed the project's public benefit, and how it aligned with numerous local and state government strategic plans, and used quotes from government strategic plans to show the community's need for such a project.

REFEREE

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