

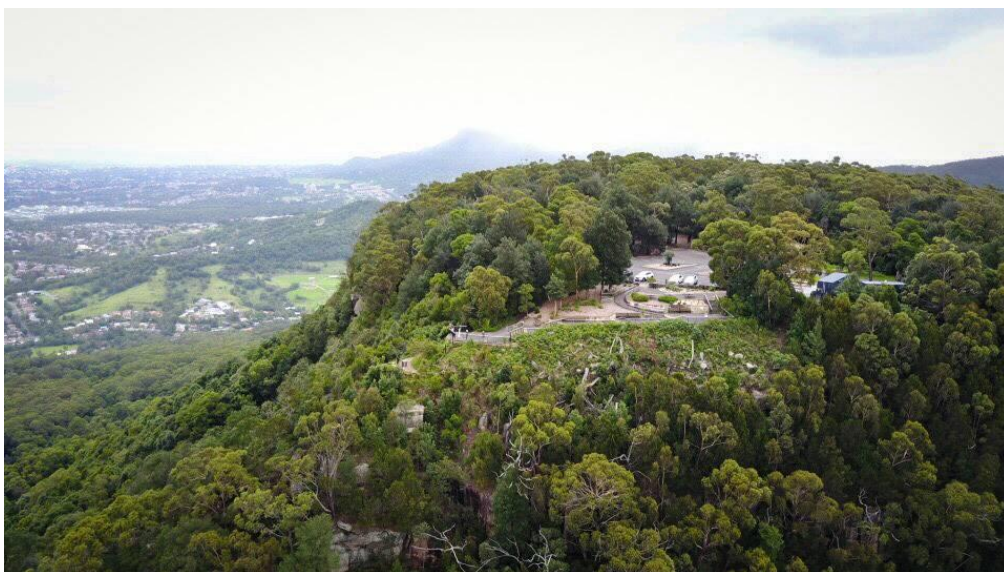
Mount Keira Summit Park Plan of Management

Submission

14 December 2018

A Submission to Wollongong City Council

by Regional Development Australia – Illawarra



Mount Keira Summit Park

1) Executive Summary

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Illawarra is pleased to provide this submission on the Mount Keira Summit Park Plan of Management.

RDA Illawarra supports the implementation of the proposed Plan of Management, as it:

- Supports economic development of a significant Illawarra tourism catalytic site, Mount Keira
- Is aligned with NSW, regional and local tourism strategies
- Considers the Aboriginal, cultural, protection and sustainability of the site as well as allows for private sector development in line with the vision and principles
- Could enable a range of exceptional visitor experiences to be developed on Mount Keira, including Mountain Bike Riding.

However, **we urge Wollongong City Council when assessing development applications for investment at the Mount Keira Summit Park to carefully consider the economic benefits of growing the Illawarra's tourism sector. Furthermore, the timely assessment of developments, within the vision and principles of the plan of management, is imperative for private sector investment.**

In addition, **we recommend that the Plan of Management includes Mountain Biking as a permissible use.**



Rotary volunteers serving Mount Keira since 1950's

2) Introduction

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Illawarra has an active and facilitative role in the Illawarra region, with a clear focus on growing a strong and confident regional economy that harnesses competitive advantages, seizes on economic opportunities and attracts investment.

RDA Illawarra Board, its CEO and staff are neutral brokers and collaborators across all levels of government, community, business and stakeholders for the growth of the Illawarra's economy (including Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama local government areas).

Mount Keira is located within close proximity to the CBD and is a defining point of difference to the Wollongong landscape, with the CBD close to the ocean and the mountain providing a vista for tourists to view the city.

The development of Mount Keira could bring significant economic benefits to the region through the growth of the tourism sector and economic flow-on impacts. Tourism is a vital sector of the Illawarra's economy and a developed Mount Keira could be a major drawcard for visitors to the region.

3) The Illawarra region Opportunity

There are a plethora of opportunities for Mount Keira. An enhanced Summit Park could be a catalyst for additional eco-tourism initiatives, such as mountain biking and tree top walks.

It is noted that the Draft Illawarra Escarpment Mountain Bike Strategy is also open for review and consultation at present, and RDA Illawarra has made a separate submission to support the Mountain Bike development Project. Our rationale for supporting the Mountain Bike development is that it could have a significant impact on our regional economy, with the estimated economic impact including 175,000 annual visitors, direct economic impact of \$21.9m per annum, and combined direct and indirect economic impact of \$63.2m per annum.

The Mount Keira Summit Park Plan of Management (PoM) aims to support a projected increase in visitors to Mount Keira Summit Park and to provide improved visitor facilities, offer high quality visitor experiences, along with opportunities for private sector investment. The PoM also notes the following management strategy:

Provide a diversity of exceptional visitor experiences that are distinctive to Wollongong, showcase the Escarpment's environmental and cultural values and define its identity and sense of place while supporting tourism to the region.

It is for this reason that RDA Illawarra supports the Draft Plan of Management's implementation, as the development of Mount Keira Summit Park could enable increased tourism visitation to the Illawarra region.

The PoM's strategy is also importantly aligned with the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Regional Plan, RDA Illawarra's strategy and other state, regional and local strategic imperatives, see below:

- ✓ NSW Government's:
 - *Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan 2030*, which aims to triple overnight 2009 visitor economy by 2030
 - *Illawarra-Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2015*, which identifies Tourism as a priority growth sector of our economy
- ✓ Regional Development Australia Illawarra's *Strategic Plan*, (see Appendix A):
 - Which identifies tourism as a priority growth sector, and identifies Mount Keira as a key tourism catalytic project
- ✓ Destination Sydney South Surrounds *Destination Management Plan 2018-22*:
 - Which identifies Mt Keira Summit Park development as a part of Strategy 2, Destination Infrastructure which has the potential to significantly impact on the visitor economy at a regional level
- ✓ Wollongong City Council's Community Strategic Plan, *Our Wollongong 2028*
 - Which aims to build Wollongong as a tourism destination
- ✓ Destination Wollongong's Strategic Plan 2017-21:
 - Which aims to promote Wollongong, grow the visitor economy and attract investment to the region.

4) Implementation of the Plan of Management

Mount Keira Summit Park Vision:

A trip to Mt Keira Summit Park will change the way people see and experience Wollongong. It will be a place to enjoy the beautiful views of the city, mountains and the sea and to appreciate the cultural and environmental landscape of the Illawarra Escarpment through a range of exceptional visitor experiences.

The following Planning Principles will be applied in achieving the Vision.

<p>Planning Principles for Mt Keira Summit Park</p>	<p>INTEGRATE</p> <p>Ensure visitor infrastructure and services are integrated and connected with the surrounding Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area so that visitors are offered outstanding, high quality visitor experiences</p>
<p>EXPERIENCE</p> <p>Provide exceptional cultural and nature based experiences that support tourism to the region and that are integrated with the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area</p>	<p>RESPECT</p> <p>Respect the wishes of the Aboriginal people to safeguard and present their culture through a variety of means they consider most appropriate</p>
<p>APPRECIATE</p> <p>Present information and experiences in a way that will enhance appreciation and understanding of the cultural and natural values of Mt Keira and the Illawarra Escarpment</p>	<p>CONSERVE</p> <p>Contribute to the protection and conservation of the Escarpment's natural, cultural and scenic values</p>
<p>INVOLVE</p> <p>The Aboriginal community, tourism industry, local community and NPWS will be involved in decision making</p>	<p>SUSTAINABLE</p> <p>Visitor experiences will be economically viable and financially sustainable and demonstrate social and environmental benefits to the community</p>

It is our understanding from reviewing the Mount Keira Summit Park Plan of Management (PoM) that a range of exceptional visitor experiences could be enabled through the PoM's implementation.

There is an extensive history on Mount Keira, which includes early settlers to the region, Rotary who have been volunteering at Mount Keira since the 1950's (see image page 2) and includes the Aboriginal custodians of the land.

There is no doubt that Mount Keira is a highly iconic feature of the Illawarra region, which deserves both protection and utilisation for tourist related activities. While it notes the significant history and Aboriginal importance of the site, it also allows development to be undertaken which drives the visitor economy. The Planning Principles should provide a balance between protection and enabling tourism for future development of Mount Keira.

In line with this, it is pleasing to note from *Table 3, Permissible Uses and Developments in Mount Keira Summit Park*, that the following are specified for developments, in line with the planning principles:

- Upgrading of picnic facilities
- Upgrading or development of new toilet facilities
- Permanent or temporary café/restaurant/food vans/pop-up food services
- Spaces and facilities for education, interpretation and visitor enjoyment, Art and sculpture
- Group tours and activities
- Events and functions
- Recreational activities.

The PoM does not specifically address Mountain Biking as a 'permissible use'. We therefore recommend that the PoM include Mountain Biking as a permissible use. There could be a need for Mountain Biking to connect with the aforementioned enhanced community facilities at the Summit Park, especially if Mountain Biking events are secured into the future. At a minimum, access to these events by Mountain Bikes would be required through part of the Summit Park.

It is noted that Council have committed to delivering power to the Mount Keira Summit Park. This is both a commendable action as well as no doubt a critical element to the sites further development.

However, we urge Wollongong City Council to also consider the economic benefits of tourism generating activities in any assessment of development applications for the Mount Keira Summit Park. The supportive attitude of Council staff, along with the timely assessment of any private sector investment and development proposals, should be undertaken by Wollongong City Council.

5) Conclusion

RDA Illawarra have reviewed the Mount Keira Summit Park Draft Plan of Management and are generally supportive of the vision and principles outlined in the plan.

However, we urge Wollongong City Council when assessing development applications for investment at the Mount Keira Summit Park to carefully consider the economic benefits of growing the Illawarra's tourism sector. Furthermore, the timely assessment of developments, within the vision and principles of the plan, is imperative for private sector investment. We also recommend that Mountain Biking is specified as a permissible use.



Debra Murphy

Chief Executive Officer

RDA Illawarra

Appendix A

RDA Illawarra Strategy

Vision

We will grow a strong and confident Illawarra regional economy that harnesses competitive advantages, seizes on economic opportunities and attracts investments.

Purpose

We are neutral brokers who collaborate across all levels of government, community and business for the growth of the Illawarra's economy. We value our people, culture and sustainable development.



Infrastructure



Industry



Integration

STRATEGY	Enabling infrastructure to improve connectivity and unlock investment opportunities	Supporting development and capability of industry growth sectors from our Regional Plan	Leveraging a collaborative regional culture and working together on innovative solutions
ECONOMIC ASSETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to Western Sydney Future Western Sydney & Illawarra Airports Port of Port Kembla Smart Cities (ICT) Road and Rail corridors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shell Cove Marina Wollongong Harbour iAccelerate Leaders in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health & Aged Services Advanced Manufacturing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Wollongong Highly skilled workforce Leading Health Alliances
PROJECTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for improved road and rail connectivity Business development for airports, Port of Port Kembla and Western Sydney synergies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support tourism catalyst projects (eg WEC, Mt Keira, Cruise) Blue Economy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen inter-regional/city alliances (eg Sandstone Mega-Region, NUW Alliance) Foster a collaborative leadership culture and grow the next generation of leaders (eg LIP)

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Illawarra is an independent organisation with a Board of 14 local leaders. We are active and facilitative across the three local government areas of Shellharbour, Wollongong and Kiama. We are a member of a national network of 55 RDA's, largely funded by the Australian Government and local Councils and Cities.