

ITEM NO: 15

SUBJECT: KATOOMBA SKATE PARK

FILE NO: F02274 - 11/42604

Management Plan Link

Principal Activity: Social - Looking After People

Service: Sport and Recreation

Project: Provide aquatic and leisure centres, clubhouses, sportsgrounds, parks and playgrounds, public toilets in parks, reserves and picnic areas, skate parks, sporting amenity buildings, sports courts, dog off leash areas

Recommendations:

1. *That the Council notes this report;*
 2. *That the Council retains Goldsmith Place skate facility as the skate park in Katoomba for senior skateboarder use, subject to minor modifications;*
 3. *That the Council adopts Melrose Park, in principle, as the location for a skate park facility for junior skateboarder use; and*
 4. *That the Council receives a further report on the outcomes of the consultation and design process by February 2012.*
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Report by Group Manager, Community & Corporate:**Reason for report**

At the Ordinary Meeting of the Council on 8 June 2010, the Council resolved:

- “1. *That further investigations and negotiations are undertaken into making the current Katoomba Skate Park located in Goldsmith Place a permanent site;*
2. *That a further report comes to the Council on the detailed outcome of the negotiations and investigations within 12 months; and*
3. *That Council undertakes a clean up of the Katoomba Skate Park located in Goldsmith Place that includes rubbish removal and weed eradication by 1 September 2010.”*

[Minute No: 242]

This report responds to Items 1 & 2 of that resolution.

Background

In 2010 an investigation took place to make recommendations into an alternative location for the Katoomba Skate Park. The reasons for the investigation were:

- The Katoomba Skate Park at Goldsmith Place was originally designated as a temporary facility;
- Issues had become apparent with the Goldsmith Place facility, including:

- the long access to the site;
- its isolation;
- poor surveillance; and
- a community perception that the Goldsmith Place facility is an unsafe area for young people.

A Steering Committee was formed which included:

- 3 members of the Katoomba skateboarding fraternity;
- Mountains Youth Services Team (MYST) staff;
- Council's Youth Officer;
- Council Recreation Team staff; and
- Community Safety and Crime Prevention Officers from Springwood Police Station.

The 2010 investigation into skate park sites in Katoomba identified two potentially acceptable options that addressed the above issues:

1. Modifications to the existing site at Goldsmith Place; or
2. The relocation of the skate park to Melrose Park.

Subject to further investigations confirming feasibility the option to improve the existing site in Goldsmith Place was considered a more sustainable approach than relocation.

The investigation in 2010 showed that the Goldsmith Place facility was liked by its current users and information received from the Police and skate park users indicated that the level of antisocial behaviour in the skate park is no higher than any other location in the Blue Mountains. An independent assessment of the condition of the Goldsmith Place facility in 2006 noted that the layout of the park functions quite well.

The investigation also found that Melrose Park had the advantages of:

- Good visibility of site;
- Existing open level space where a skate facility could easily be constructed;
- More than 40 metres from residential property boundaries;
- The existing facilities on-site (play equipment, toilet block and sports field) that combine to make a family friendly site; and
- Current skaters consider it still within an acceptable distance from the town centre.

Outcome of the further investigations

The potential modifications to Goldsmith Place have been further investigated. In summary, whilst many of the suggested changes to the site are not practical, some modifications to the size and layout of the facility are possible. The results are summarised below:

Table 1: Potential improvements to the existing Katoomba Skate Park in Goldsmith Place

Issue	Proposed changes	Outcomes of investigation
Accessibility	1. Formalise the existing worn track into the skate park from Yeamans Bridge.	Not Feasible. Formal access to Yeamans Bridge not a possibility due to impracticalities of adding pedestrian sequence to the lights. See point 2 below.
	2. Provide pedestrian sequence to the lights on Yeamans Bridge to reach the proposed formalised access in 1.	Not Feasible. Investigations showed that whilst this is possible, the costs associated with an RTA investigation and implementing such a change far exceed any advantage gained from utilising this for pedestrian access.

Issue	Proposed changes	Outcomes of investigation
		There are also safety issues to manage if pedestrian access is encouraged alongside Highway.
	3. Provide steps and disabled access from Yeamans Bridge on the eastern side	Not Feasible. Costs of implementing a suitable stairway from Yeamans Bridge will be over \$100,000. This is considered excessive.
Visibility and surveillance	4. Remove recently planted hedge which will block view from railway station.	Feasible. Negotiations are in place with Railcorp.
	5. Provide viewing platform on proposed path from Yeamans Bridge	Feasible. Whilst path from Yeamans Bridge not possible, viewing area can still be implemented on slope.
	6. Trim the trees on site between the bridge and the park	Feasible. Need to ensure healthy attractive trees.
	7. Encourage more access through site	Not Feasible. See accessibility points above.
	8. Create more activity in Goldsmith Place	This is proposed in a current Development Consent, however it is private land and not in Council's control.
	9. Encourage other users to the skate park through providing skating facilities for younger people and changes to the existing facilities	Not Feasible. There is limited space for additional facilities. Relocation of cul-de-sac to the eastern side of the bridge is required. Review of traffic design standards, land tenure and proposed development changes show that this is not possible.
	10. Provide an outreach venue; possibly a tuck shop.	DA process required and possible re-zoning, and also viability issues of tuck shop to consider, but Youth Centre vans can visit.
Improvements to the setting	11. Remove the weeds, provide seats in shade, plant some attractive shrubs, provide lawn if space permits, reduce concrete where it is not necessary. Provide bins, seats, bubbler and night time lighting.	Feasible. See details in table 3 below.
	12. Improve diversity and layout of skating equipment at the park to attract a better cross section of users.	Only a small range of modifications in size and layout are possible. See Table 3 below.

The modifications that are feasible will improve the site and increase its appeal to the senior skateboard users. However many of the limitations which restrict the wider community access and use would still remain. These include:

- Only one entry point is possible. This being the current one from Goldsmith Place;
- The additional space available to extend the facility is very limited; and
- Issues such as disconnection to other recreational areas and perceived risks still persist.

It can be concluded that while some improvements to Goldsmith Place are feasible, they are not sufficient to make the Goldsmith Place site attractive to the wider community, in particular for use by junior skate boarders or their carers.

There is a strong need for an improved and upgraded skate facility in Katoomba to reflect changes in usage, such as scooters, and new skating styles. Many users are losing interest in the current site and are being attracted to the newer and higher grade facilities out of the Blue Mountains area, with the consequence that the ambience of the current site is effected by the decline of interest. The preferred approach by the users and the ideal solution from a skating viewpoint would be the construction of an upgraded facility at Katoomba of a higher standard.

Construction of a new facility at an alternative location is not considered feasible for the following reasons:

- The estimated cost in excess of \$400,000;
- Uncertainty as to whether north Katoomba is a suitable venue for a large facility; and
- The inefficiency of creating a double-up on the provision of a senior skating facility; and
- The seeming waste in the event the option was to demolish the Goldsmith Place facility when it currently fulfils the needs of one sector of the skating community.

Recommendations

An efficient approach to provision of skating facilities is the modification of Goldsmith Place to better suit senior skaters and the provision of a facility for junior skaters at Melrose Park. Details on what would be required and preliminary cost estimates are shown in the table below. There would need to be consultation and design development with existing skate park users, potential skate park users, community groups and the neighbourhood of Melrose Park to confirm the elements and costs for each site. Budget provision for recreation facility design is allocated in 2011-2012 budgets and could be used for this process.

Once the consultation and design development has occurred, it is recommended that Council receives a report on the outcomes.

The components for both Goldsmith Place modifications and Melrose Park junior skate facility, and the associated costs, are listed in the tables below.

Table 2: Goldsmith Place modifications

Component	Preliminary cost
Design of modifications	\$10,000
Modify cul-de-sac to create more area.	\$15,000
Barricade between the skate facility and the street frontage for better safety	\$4,000
Partially extend the skate park area to include the cul-de-sac	\$7,000
Upgraded skate ramps etc	\$40,000
Viewing area and seating to be established on the north slope	\$14,000
Improve vision by removing and modifying shrubs on Goldsmith Place/Railcorp boundary	\$1,000
Improve site amenity by planting, plant maintenance and weeding	\$5,000
Add additional amenities including:	
o bubbler/water source; and	\$9,000
o increased grassed space.	\$5,000
Total	\$110,000

Table 3: Melrose Park junior skate facility

Component	Preliminary cost
Design	\$30,000
Construction of small junior skate facility	\$120,000
Associated works around the facility, e.g. planting, landscaping, seats	\$20,000
Total	\$170,000

Consultation

Consultation will be an important part of the process in developing both of these new proposals.

A suitable consultation plan for Goldsmith Place will involve:

- Notification and feedback from skate park users;
- Consulting with organisations associated with youth, including Mountains Youth Services, Schools and Council Youth Officers, Police.

A suitable consultation plan for Melrose Park will involve:

- Formal notification, meetings and feedback opportunities provided to:
 - Potential users including local schools, child organisations and current skate park users;
 - User groups for Melrose Park including sporting clubs;
 - Affected residents;
 - Police;
 - Skate park and recreation design experts; and
 - Other organisations associated with junior youth.

Sustainability Assessment

Goldsmith Place – Minor upgrades

Effects	Positive	Negative
Environmental	Development to follow DCP/LEP guidelines; Opportunities for additional landscaping of the site; and Minimal materials required from using existing facility. No demolition disposal required.	May require removal of trees on adjoining RailCorp land.
Social	Improve the site layout and the enhance the recreation potential for this site; Provide a safer and more usable recreation space; and A central location is maintained for the Katoomba Skate Park.	Continuing use of Goldsmith Place as the primary venue for the Katoomba skate park will limit the potential users from the wider community unless alternative facilities can be provided elsewhere.
Economic	Young people accessing retail and other service opportunities in Katoomba.	Nil
Governance	The Resolution of the Council meeting of 8 June 2010 is carried out. This process has been undertaken utilising professional expertise and community stakeholders with documented measured methodology.	Nil

Melrose Park – Junior skate facility

Effects	Positive	Negative
Environmental	Development to follow DCP/LEP guidelines.	May require some landscape modifications. Increased runoff from facility to be managed.
Social	Skate facility is established in an existing recreation area; Setting is more 'family friendly' than existing skate facility; and Increase in potential user group.	Location won't be as central to the railway and shopping area as the current site. Local community adjustment to a new facility.
Economic	Nil	Nil
Governance	The Resolution of the Council meeting of 8 June 2010 is carried out. This process has been undertaken utilising professional expertise and community stakeholders with documented measured methodology.	

Financial implications for the Council

Budget provision of \$40,000 is available for the design phase of these projects in the 2011-2012 Capital Works Program. A further \$240,000 has been allocated in the draft 2012-2013 Capital Works Program for the Katoomba Skate Park construction, as presented in the Delivery Program. Initial cost estimates indicate that additional funding within the 2012-2013 Capital Works Program is sufficient to deliver both the Melrose Park and Goldsmith Place projects.

Recurrent operational and maintenance costs are currently funded in maintenance budgets. It is anticipated that the existing maintenance budget for the Goldsmith Place skate facility will remain with its upgrade. If an additional facility is established at Melrose Park, additional ongoing maintenance costs will be incurred.

Legal and risk management issues for the Council

As the upgraded skate park facility and the additional new skate park will be constructed on Council property, the Council must fulfil its duty of care to the users of these facilities. The Risk Management Co-ordinator will be involved in developing an appropriate risk minimisation plan to be implemented in relation to the siting, construction, maintenance and use of any works associated with either of these facilities.

It is noted that there are no specific Australian Standards relating to skate facilities.

External consultation

The external consultation that occurred in investigating the feasibility of changes to the Goldsmith Place skate facility included:

- RailCorp for:
 - Assessing viability of constructing a pedestrian stairway from Yeamans Bridge; and
 - Negotiating clearance of planted pine trees on RailCorp/ Goldsmith Place boundary fence;
- RTA through the Local Traffic Committee on:
 - Re-design of Goldsmith Place cul-de-sac; and
 - Pedestrian sequence change on traffic lights at Yeamans bridge; and
- Consulting with skate board users on the options of Goldsmith Place and Melrose Park.

Conclusion

The current Katoomba Skate Park at Goldsmith Place serves as a functional skate facility which is generally liked by its current users and it has the advantage of being located close to the station and shopping area. There are some issues with this facility including its isolation, visibility and a perception amongst the wider community that it is an unsafe and uninviting venue. As a result, many potential users in the community do not come to this site.

Further investigations have concluded that, whilst some changes can be made to the Goldsmith Place facility to improve its usability, the changes that would be required to make it conducive to the wider community are not feasible.

Accordingly it is recommended that a smaller facility suitable for junior skaters and small children be constructed at Melrose Park. Melrose Park offers an ideal layout for such a facility where it can be located in a highly visible manner amongst a number of other highly used recreation facilities, including children's play equipment.

It is also recommended that some modifications are made to the layout at Goldsmith Place to make it a more conducive venue and to update its current facilities.

This will provide an option that will have minimum disruption to the current skate facility users, park users, adjoining land owners and will be cost effective and make the best use of the current spaces available.
