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Tasmanian government bike trail fears ...

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Dr Christine Adams-Hosking* Pic*
23.05.17 6:00 am
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Image for Tasmanian government bike trail fears ...

*Pic: [Image from here](#)

I am writing in response to your article published on 16.05.17, [here](#)

As a Landscape Ecologist with many years' experience investigating the cumulative impacts of human activities on fragile ecosystems, I must express my serious concerns about this recent decision of the Tasmanian Government.

Before the development of this high-impact, 66 kilometre network of trails commences, I would like to ask the Tasmanian Government and the Break O' Day council (that I imagine will be managing this 'eco-tourism' development) four questions:

1. Will community consultation occur, in line with an appropriate *Social Impact Assessment*? **Because:** People other than thrill-seeking mountain bikers like to and have been, enjoying these natural areas for passive recreational pursuits such as walking and bird-watching. How do they feel about this development and where will it leave them?

2. Will a robust unbiased ecological survey occur along the 66 kilometres of proposed tracks, in line with development of an appropriate Environmental Impact Assessment? **Because:** Mountain bike tracks erode fragile soils, degrade watercourses, disturb wildlife and their crucial habitats (including endangered species such as swift parrots) and spread weeds.

3. Will a Management Plan for these mountain bike tracks be developed so that this sport can be monitored and controlled and the tracks maintained? **Because:** Ratepayers (mostly non-mountain-biking community members) in Break O' Day deserve to know what it will cost them. For example, who pays for the expensive and ongoing track maintenance, and who pays when riders injured themselves and need to be rescued; a very common occurrence with this sport.

4. Will an economic benefit analysis be conducted? **Because:** It needs to be determined whether this sport actually contributes economically to local communities and businesses. Mountain bikers tend to visit briefly, focus on their thrill ride, then disappear.

* For that matter, who is making up the shortfall of the 66 km track construction when it exceeds the government's one million dollar gift?

There is a plethora of overseas information regarding the social and environmental impacts and user-conflict with this sport that we should investigate and learn from before allowing mountain biking to spread whenever and wherever one single, specialised user-group wants.

image

***Dr Christine Adams-Hosking**, is Honorary Research Fellow, Global Change Institute, at the University of Queensland, St Lucia 4072, Australia. She is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Christine's main research interests have involved using a range of systematic conservation planning tools to model the predicted distribution of terrestrial species under future climate change and identify 'climate change refugia', using koalas and their food trees as case study species. Currently she is investigating the potential impacts of climate change on future agriculture, to assist Natural Resource Management bodies in developing climate change adaptation plans. Christine hopes that this information will be useful to decision-makers, planners and landholders to enhance ecosystem function and sustainable farming in a rapidly developing landscape and a changing climate. Christine's agricultural modelling for NRM groups in the East Coast Cluster can be found at <https://www.terranova.org.au/repository/east-coast-nrm-collection>

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