



## Bike Hire Trial Report

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

October 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

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Mountain bikes purchased through a grant were utilised in hire trial for a period of six weeks, from 16 May to 30 June 2019. The bikes were placed at Lake Boondooma and the Visitor Information Centre's (VICs) in Kingaroy and Wondai.

Five (5) bikes in each of the three centres were available for hire. There was no charge for the hire. Hirers were required to complete a Bike/Equipment Hire Form and have a copy of their drivers licence taken to enable hire of the bike.

When not in use, the bikes were stored in proximity to the hire location or on display.

The bike hire trial program was undertaken between Council's Economic Development and Natural Resources Departments.

Through the six week trial, no bikes were hired at Lake Boondooma, with underlying comment being that there was no demand. This report is therefore based heavily on the hire activity and subsequent comments and suggestions received through the trial from the VICs.

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## BIKE CONDITION AND MAINTENANCE

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In the lead up to the trial, volunteers at the VICs voiced their concerns re bike repairs and maintaining rideable condition of the bikes through the trial. Volunteers were advised that support for maintenance of the bikes would be provided through local bike shop, with support to enable this to occur undertaken by Council staff.

The bikes were delivered with baby seat attachments. In Kingaroy VIC, one bike had the baby seat attached and a further three unattached baby seats were stored with the bikes. In Wondai VIC, the baby seats were not attached to the bikes. The attachments could not be easily attached to the bike as there were no tools provided with the attachments. Volunteers expressed concern re attachment of baby seat to bike, for fear of not completing the attachment securely enough. No baby helmets were provided with the bikes and did not make up any part of the hire equipment.

As above, no tools were provided with the bikes, with expectation that tools would be available in the hire locations to enable actions requiring tools to be completed, such as adjusting seat changing gears, etc. The bike design meant that two allen keys were required to move the seat up or down. No tyre pumps were provided with the bikes, which meant that even basic maintenance would need to be completed off site. Some volunteers did not embrace basic maintenance of the bikes, as per examples above. Volunteers refused to complete these actions as they felt these tasks were outside of their roles as volunteers and/or didn't feel comfortable/confident completing the tasks.

## DISPLAY AND STORAGE

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At Kingaroy, the bikes were displayed during opening hours at the rear of the VIC and stored at the back of the Museum. As a result of the storage of bikes in the Museum, repairs to a glass door were made to enable easier access to the bike storage area. Limited storage area for the VIC and Museum mean that this storage location could only be considered for short term trial.

In Wondai, the bikes were displayed inside the VIC and stored in the Wondai Woodworkers room. The display and storage in these locations could not be undertaken long term as it disrupts the activity of both locations, particularly when they are busy.

At Lake Boondooma, the bikes were not on display. Potential hirers could be directed to storage location to access bike for use.

Given the short term nature of the trial, temporary storage and display was needed. Volunteers at the VICs were required to move bikes between the storage and display areas for potential hire.

## BIKE HIRE AND USE

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Bikes were hired manually from each location.

Some volunteers did not actively participate in the trial.

Through the course of the trial, the bikes were double-booked in Kingaroy VIC.

16 bike hires were completed from Kingaroy VIC, with the most popular day of hire being Saturday (7 hires) closely followed by Thursday (6 hires).

12 bike hires were completed from Wondai VIC, with the most popular day of hire being Saturday (10 hires).

Through the six week trial, no bikes were hired at Lake Boondooma.

A local resident used the hire service three times from Wondai. Two residents used the hire service numerous times. Persons staying in the Wondai Freedom Camp utilised the bike hire after seeing the bikes displayed in the Wondai VIC.

The most popular date for hire of bikes during the Bike Hire trial was 29-30 June, with 1 group booking 5 bikes through Kingaroy VIC while a second group booking for 3 bikes was unable to be fulfilled at Kingaroy, with the group referred to Wondai VIC.

Comments received from users included:

- Great ride enjoyed it
- Bikes great! Murgon to Wondai good ride, a bit of a rise but well worth the effort
- Great ride, great service, wonderful availability
- Good quality bikes, great initiative
- Great idea, absolutely loved it. Easy to ride all the bells and whistles
- Best quality bike

## PROMOTION

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The bike hire trial was promoted through a media release from Council, featured in social media content prior to and during the trial and with physical signage and display of bikes in the Visitor Information Centres. It was noted that there was no predetermined budget for bike hire promotion.

Feedback from the promotion generated comments through social media including:

- What a wonderful initiative
- Fantastic news
- Wow, this is brilliant
- This will be good
- Saw the bikes lined up at Wondai this morning
- This is fantastic
- This is a good idea, when we don't want to haul our bikes up there
- This is an absolutely incredible idea. But as a former avid mountain cyclist, I have some concerns for the way this has been thought out.
  - o What information is being supplied to customers for emergencies?
  - o What are the monetary charges for something routine that may damage the bike such as a flat tyre?
  - o In the event that a tourist without local knowledge is unable to return to the Visitor Information Centre where it was hired, for a legitimate reason, what happens?
  - o Does the Council, or the person responsible, attempt to discover the reason for failure of the bike being returned, before police being notified?
  - o Imagine if I was a tourist, marooned, on one of these bicycles, stuck between two towns I didn't know with no one to help me.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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The following suggestions for improvement were identified by volunteers through the course of the trial period:

- Need smaller bike for ladies
- Need stands for bikes
- Bikes were double booked due to lack of booking system in place
- Needs promotion
- Needs suitable long term housing
- Requires a system to monitor condition of bikes (pre and post hire). Possibility of camera to record condition and folder on pc to store photos
- Bikes need identification numbers
- Needs to be a system to return them after hours particularly weekends.
- Add details in Volunteer Operations Manual on basic hire functions, including advice re collection and disposal of personal information. Volunteers checking bikes out may not be the same volunteer that checks bikes in – add to procedures.
- Training on practical use of the bikes and basic repairs, including adjustment of seat, changing gears, etc, is required.
- Consideration for one way hire of bikes.
- Consideration of how bikes are transported to original point of hire after maintenance requirement ie. flat tyre.
- Information pack including emergency markers and their use, process for dealing with a flat tyre or other maintenance requirements, contact details for out of hours return, etc.
- Schedule of bike servicing to minimise

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## CONCLUSION

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The Bike Hire Trial identified a number of issues that would need to be addressed if the bike hire program were to be implemented more permanently. Short-term storage and display, volunteer capacity and willingness to complete tasks associated with the bike hire, ie bike movement, condition assessment and booking process, proved problematic.

Demand for the bikes was not high, with only 28 hires over six weeks across the three hiring centres.

There are many suggestions for improvement, both from volunteers and prospective hirers. The most telling of these is the concerns raised for personal safety and the responsibility of South Burnett Regional Council, as the owner of the bikes being hired, should a person be stuck midway between towns. These concerns translate further to the acceptance of responsibility of the hirer which potentially result in financial and/or legal charges.

The trial bike hire period has proven that there are many hurdles to be overcome if bike hire is to be implemented as an ongoing service of Council. Despite these hurdles, a number of members of the public have requested hire of bikes post completion of the hire period. These numbers are not in excess of the hire activity witnessed through the trial period.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Bikes utilised through trial are offered to external groups.
  - a. The future undertaking of any hire activity is completed externally to Council.
  - b. Potential users of the bikes, seeking to establish a similar service, are provided with contents of this report to inform planning for the elements associated with hire of bikes identified through the trial period.

Should the above recommendation not be accepted and South Burnett Regional Council decide to implement hire of bikes permanently, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Bike hire is not considered for implementation through the VIC network.
2. A detailed risk assessment for bike hire, including the risk associated with hirers being stuck midway between towns they don't know with no identifiable assistance, are documented and considered in planning for long term implementation of bike hire. Commitment to the implementation of identified mitigation strategies to minimise risk.
3. Budget supporting appropriate/permanent storage, display and promotion is clearly defined under the responsibility of a single Department within Council.
4. Performance measures are identified so that ongoing reporting on the use and associated success of the bike hire program can be reported.
5. Hire program is suspended or stopped if in direct competition with an existing or proposed private business. This action should be informed by members of the business community or general public.
6. Attachments, such as baby seats, etc are not supplied with bikes.
7. Tool kit, including pump, is included as accessory for each individual bike.

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