

Your Say Wingecarribee

Report on what we heard

PLAN OF MANAGEMENT MOUNT GIBRALTAR HERITAGE RESERVE (THE GIB)

A Plan of Management is a public document that sets out how community land is to be used, improved, managed, and maintained. Council develops Plans of Management under the *Local Government Act 1993* and assigns one or more category to the land which will govern how the land can be used.

Throughout June and July 2022, engagement was conducted in preparation for a new Plan of Management for the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve. Consultation began with a workshop held at Renwick Community Centre with 30 representatives from the Mount Gibraltar Landcare Bushcare group. The general community was then invited to provide feedback on how they use the reserve and key issues via Your Say Wingecarribee. Feedback was collected over four weeks, from 20 June until 19 July 2022.

The project page received 491 visits. Documents and information were viewed by 243 visitors, and 217 visitors contributed to the online feedback form.

THE CONVERSATION

An online survey was open during the consultation period on the *Your Say Wingecarribee* website for the community to provide feedback on how they currently use The Gib, what is valued most and what improvements would you like to see to help protect the heritage reserve. A total of 217 surveys were completed.

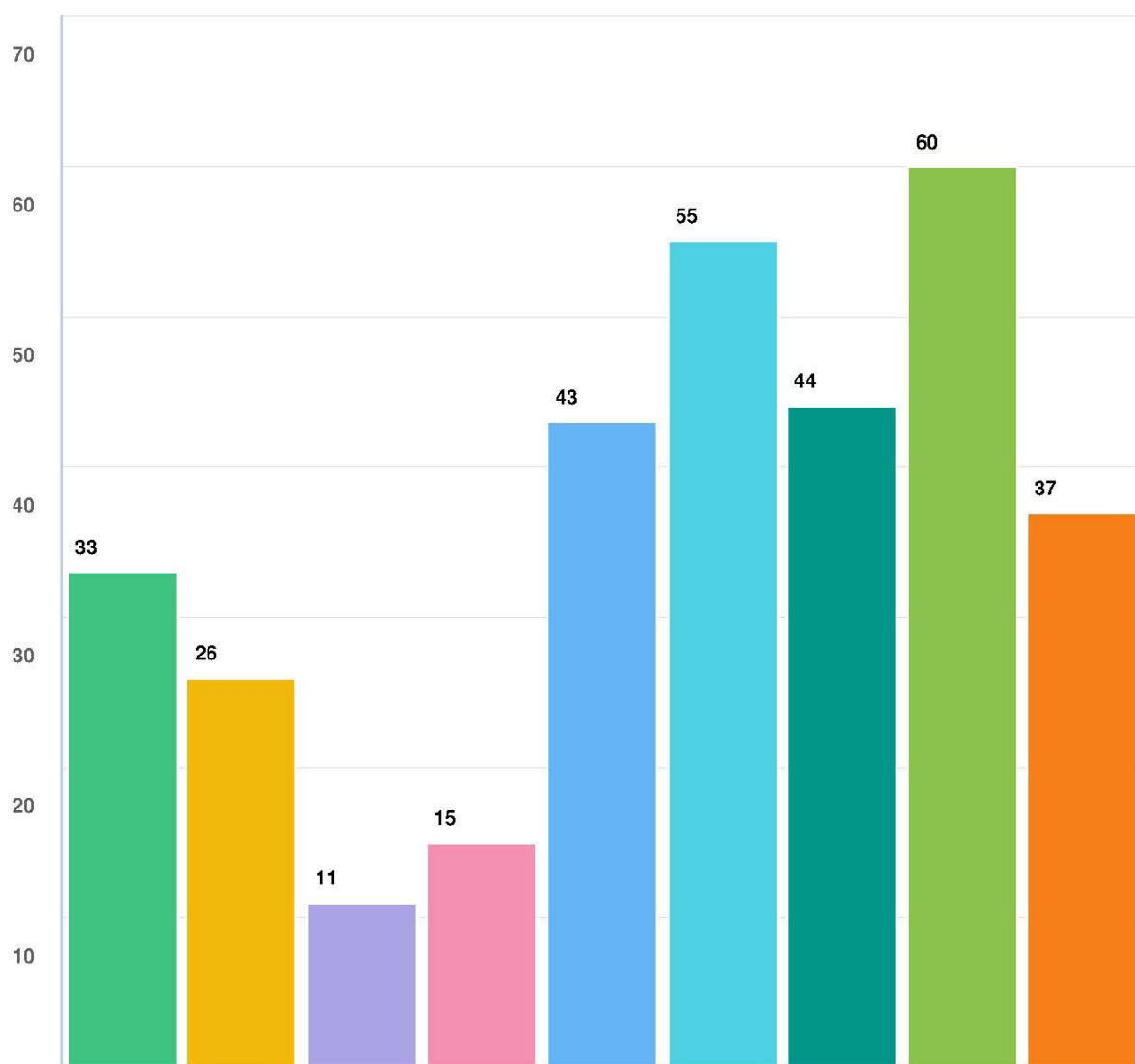
WHO WE ENGAGED

The consultation targeted Wingecarribee residents but did not exclude those who visit from outside the area.

The consultation was promoted via numerous channels including the Your Say Wingecarribee newsletter, Community Update, Social Media, Council's newsletter, radio, along with emails to identified groups.

WHAT WE HEARD

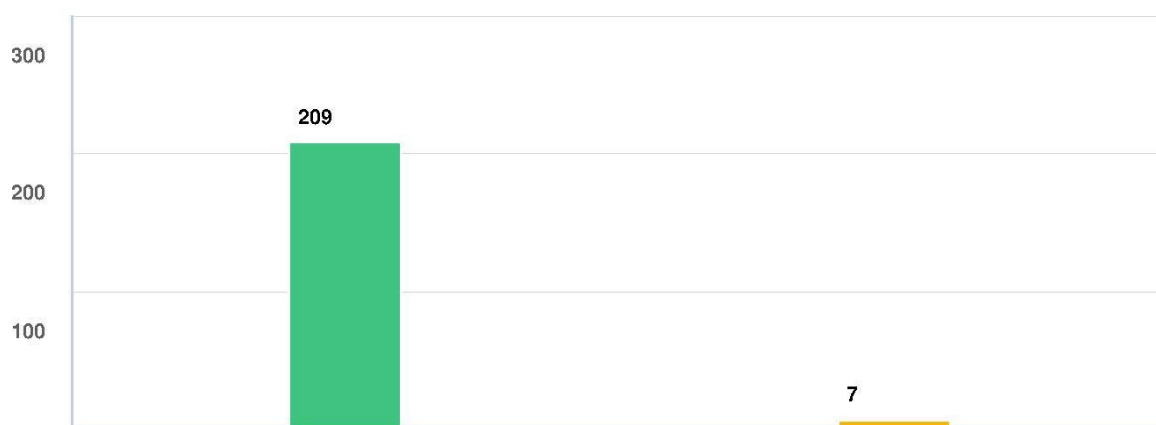
To help us understand what age groups are visiting the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve, please select your age group, along with those who may visit the area with you.



Question options

- Under 12 years old 12-17 years old 18-24 years old 25-34 years old 35-44 years old
45-54 years old 55-64 years old 65-74 years old 75 years or older

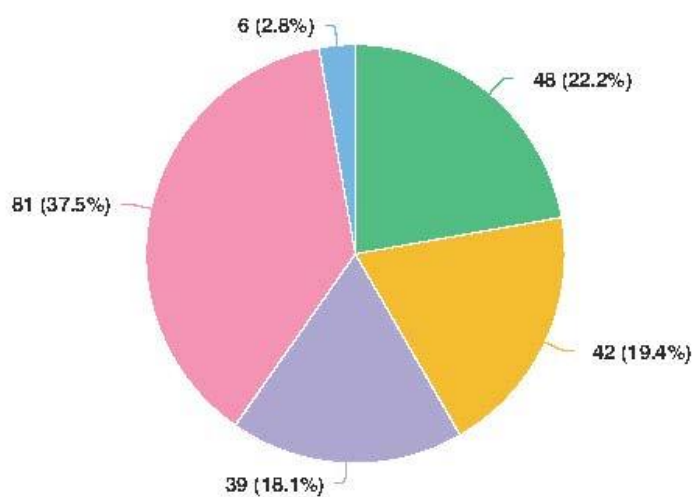
Do you live in the Wingecarribee Shire?



Question options

Yes No

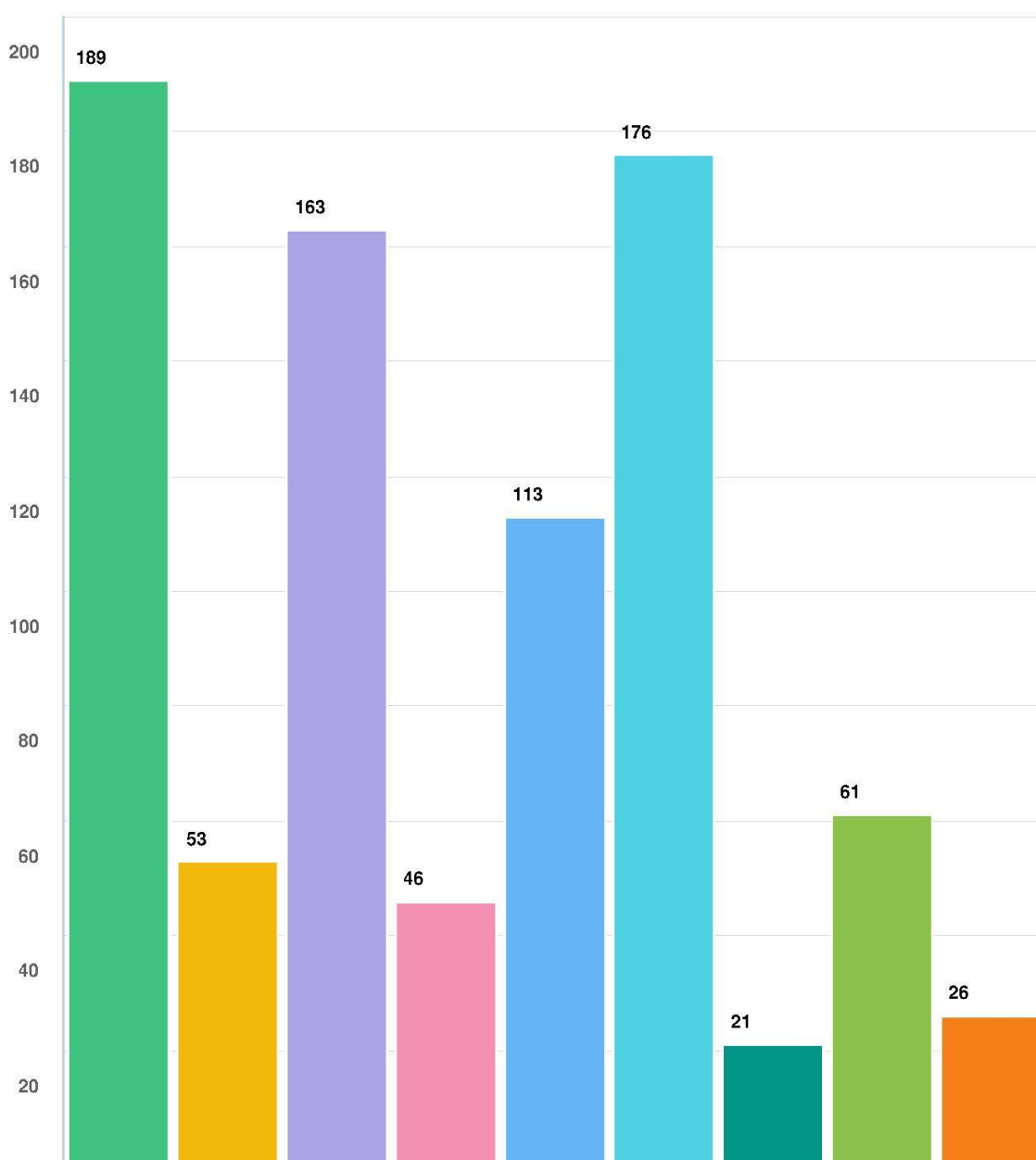
How often do you visit The Gib?



Question options

At least several times a week Weekly Several times a month Several times throughout the year Less than once a year

What activities do you do when visiting The Gib?



Question options

- Enjoying nature Picnicking Enjoying the views Bushcare Wildlife watching Walking
Running Cycling Other (please specify)

What do you value most about The Gib?

Major Themes:

- ❖ Nature and the natural environment
- ❖ Peace, serenity, tranquility
- ❖ Views
- ❖ Wildlife and bushland, flora and fauna
- ❖ Landscape character, location
- ❖ Walking tracks and trails
- ❖ Heritage and history

Representative sample comments:

The variety of plant life bird life and native Australian fauna, as well as the land forms and water courses. The serenity of the area, the preservation of the bush, it's connection with the first inhabitants, and its beauty are all, for me, highly valued aspects of the Gib.

It contains many different types of floral communities within a remarkably small area. This makes it unique not just for the Wingecarribee Shire, but also a unique ecosystem for the state. It contains plants which are difficult to find elsewhere in the shire. It is also a wonderful haven for endangered creatures such as the Powerful Owl and Lyre birds.

Its serene natural environment, the commanding views over the area, native animals, native flora, its resilience in the face of human incursions. Also the industrial and cultural history. The Inner Bowl is a magnificent part of the Reserve.

The natural environment close to town, the views and the freedom to enjoy it all.

Its remnant bush and wildness, along with the rare flora and fauna to be found there. Its population of the Greater Glider and its koala habitat are especially important.

The natural beauty of the vegetation and biodiversity.

The rockscapes of the quarries.

The tall trees and ferns in the Inner Bowl.

The opportunity to walk quietly on the bush tracks.

The chance to see birds and animals including the rare and endangered.

The area of natural beauty very close to the centre of Bowral.

A destination to take visitors to see Bowral and the Highlands spread below. And a picnic at the tables with friends and family.

The fact of its being a rare and precious urban native habitat and flora preserve for plants and animals increasingly endangered - so so important in every way!

Feeling far from and not seeing or hearing suburbia, the many bush walks, distant views, quiet places, wildlife, historical aspects, the general growing awareness of Indigenous relevance, ongoing removal of weeds

The wonderful forest areas with the intermittent surprising views to the district, mountains offering a variety of walks, picnic and outdoor immersion opportunities.

What improvements / activities would you like to see to help protect and manage The Gib?

Most frequent responses:

- ❖ Improve walking tracks and trails
- ❖ Manage traffic, reduce roadkill
- ❖ Control weeds
- ❖ Protect wildlife and bushland
- ❖ Conservation management actions including Landcare/Bushcare
- ❖ Build mountain bike trails
- ❖ Improve visitor facilities and access
- ❖ Bush fire management actions
- ❖ Policies and education for neighbouring properties
- ❖ Incorporate Indigenous Land management practices

Representative sample comments:

The most thorough measures possible to protect and enhance the biodiversity. Speed controls to minimise road kill at night, and in daytime.
Explore ways to encourage neighbouring landowners to protect habitat as far as is compatible with their needs. Making necessary information available.
Improve footpaths in line with the new track plan to enable the public to engage.
Repair to the access road to the Gib Lookout and the Inner Bowl car park.
Informative signs explaining the unique environment and history.

Stop chopping down the trees and prevent further subdivision and building development around the perimeter of the Mt Gibraltar Conversation Area.

Preservation of native species of all fauna and flora as well as landforms, rocks and watercourses indigenous to the area. Removal of feral species of plants and fauna. Areas set aside for regeneration for periods of time for recovery from tourist encroachment.

Better maintenance of facilities at the Bowral Lookout, walking track maintenance, increased recognition of the Reserve and its boundaries. All these things sit under a belief that Mt Gibraltar is highly valued for its unique natural, cultural and biodiversity attributes.
Control of the pittosporum plants that are invading and out-competing the natural tree cover. They are a serious pest.
Steps to protect native animals from traffic.

Properly maintained and sign posted tracks so people stick to them. Create water diversions on tracks to prevent erosion. Sign post flora/fauna particularly sensitive areas so people are aware of them and don't disturb them. Education is better than fencing off.

1. Keep the trails cleared of grass and overhanging vegetation - so it's not a snake hazard.
 2. Improve the quality of the bush walking tracks; remove some rocks to make it easier to access, improve drainage, install track maps, and replace way-markers.
 3. Construct concrete footpaths in high foot-traffic areas, e.g., where there are picnic spots on the top.
- Improve road surface for parking areas and access roads to parking areas (spray seal).
4. Drinking water access points.
 5. Improved public toilets.
 6. Doggy poo bag dispensers and bins.
 7. Maintenance to remove litter and graffiti.
 8. Improve the road surface and widen slightly Oxley Drive. Improve drainage to prevent flooding over the road. This will make it safer for motorists and cyclists.
- Good maintenance of the bush land
 Appropriate picnic areas - seating shelters, paving, etc. + toilets
 Regular checks for litter, update of any equipment

The walking trails on the Gib have been neglected, they are unkempt and need work. There is a great opportunity to create a recreational space for walkers, mountain bikers, road cyclists and climbers. All of the above needs addressing. The fire trails are in a terrible state and would be great to have them used for mountain biking and walking. In addition there are no footpaths on Oxley drive, which really limits use of the area from residents, not just on the Gib but from Mittagong and Bowral. The roads also need significant update and there is now very limited parking in the reserve.

Eliminate weeds, including *Pittosporum undulatum*; declare the reserve a Wildlife Protection Area under the Companion Animals Act to provide a basis for excluding domestic cats and domestic dogs that are off-leash, with some parts of the reserve dog-free zones because of wildlife habitat sensitivity (particularly koala); reinstate an ecologically sound fire regime that will help to restore more natural structure and floristics and to suppress non-native weeds and native mesophyll invaders; take more action to prevent erosion of tracks and the misuse of tracks such as by mountain bikers.

Walking trails maintained and sign posted, fire trails cleared & mowed regularly. Regular back burn.

What do you think are the main challenges / management issues that are impacting The Gib?

Most frequent responses:

- ❖ Weed management
- ❖ Track and trail maintenance
- ❖ Mountain bike trails
- ❖ Protect and manage significant natural and cultural heritage
- ❖ Reserve management
- ❖ Managing development adjacent
- ❖ Bushfire risk management
- ❖ Wildlife protection
- ❖ Visitor facilities
- ❖ Traffic management
- ❖ General maintenance of the reserve
- ❖ Erosion and water runoff

Representative sample comments:

Access is a major issue. The infrastructure is dilapidated. There needs to be an improvement of roads, footpaths, trails and drainage to make this location that enables residents and visitors an opportunity to enjoy this area to maximum potential.

The three lookouts need to be vastly improved and made to be great destinations for visitors. The dead wattles at the Bowral Lookout need to be dropped etc. as all that is there now is a poorly maintained viewing platform, a well built stone wall, a very old shelter and two very old toilet blocks, one of which is on private land.

Why not allow development of a kiosk and exhibition space, leased out to private operators, so as to generate income to maintain the reserve? There are many examples of private enterprise operating facilities better than government.

If there is no plan to improve these lookouts, then perhaps they should be shut down and Oxley Drive closed too so as to return Mount Gibraltar Reserve to a bush environment.

Illegal activities that threaten biodiversity such as rubbish dumping, vegetation removal and mountain bike tracks. Urban development and infrastructure maintenance that are poorly assessed approved and managed.

Track maintenance, weed control, damage caused by major weather events, parking in inappropriate and unsafe areas. The numbers of cars and people. Safe ways to walk from Mittagong station to the top of the Gib.

the Gib is being loved to bits. but it needs us to look after it by keeping weeds under control, garbage removed (always a challenge). the road could be widened as the edges are tricky.

Weeds are a huge issue. Cars and rubbish being dumped.
This is such a unique area and needs to be preserved for future generations not destroyed by developers.

Weeds, insensitive and damaging use (eg dirt bikes), the large area which is managed just by a few council staff and volunteers at times seems overwhelming; maintaining walking tracks

Traffic moving too fast through the reserve.
Inappropriate land management by neighbours, whilst acknowledging their rights as landowners
Connecting the Gib with nearby areas of biodiversity richness to enhance safe movement of birds and animals
Weed control including on the quarry walls.

Maintenance of tracks & preventing vandalism. Toilet facilities leave much to be desired.

How to allow respectful passive recreation while protecting the ecology is a major issue. There are too many visitors who go off trails, park cars on forest edges and generally damage the ecosystem. There is too much housing impinging on its fringes. There are too many speeding cars. There are too many trails being made by people pushing through anywhere. There is a lot of litter and dumping.

Controlling human behaviour that diminishes endemic flora and fauna, and causes erosion, rubbish and weed spread. Changes to council and state government policies and regulations that favour development over sustainability and environmental concerns in the face of climate change.

1) Ensuring the biological integrity of the reserve eg size and boundaries are maintained as Community Land, the reserve size is expanded where possible, bushfire management regime is as considerate as possible of the needs of the ecological communities with the reserve - low intensity hazard reduction burns, not during bird nesting times, not too frequent or too infrequent burn intervals etc 2) Ensuring that regulation of unauthorised use of the reserve is enforced and damage remediated in a timely manner. 3) That the approved usage of the reserve is compatible with protection the ecological communities found in the reserve and for passive recreation e.g Bushwalking, bird watching. The definition of what is and isn't passive recreation needs to be agreed. 4) Ensure sufficient funding is provided for bushcare in the reserve including part of the funds received from council for the rent of infrastructure/ communication tower land

WHAT'S NEXT

Feedback from phase one consultation will assist in the draft Plan of Management for Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve.

Once a draft plan has been created, and has Council's endorsement, we will then reach out to the community once again.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK