



Outdoors Queensland hosted the 2025 Queensland Mountain Bike Forum at James Cook University, Cairns.

The event was supported by Blue Sky Trails, The Cairns Institute and FNQ Regional Organisation of Councils.









The 2025 Queensland Mountain Bike Forum brought people together to explore the future of mountain biking and what it means for riders, the community and the industry. Topics included trends, gathering data, sustainable funding and management practices, sustainable trail construction and management, participation initiatives, mountain bike tourism, and relevant consultation opportunities.

Travis Sydes from FNQ Regional Organisation of Councils facilitated the forum. The forum agenda is provided in appendix A.

Thirty-eight (38) people from various organisations attended the forum. Organisations represented included mountain bike clubs, peak body organisations, other community organisations, local government, state government, schools, trail builders and consultants - see appendix B for list of organisations represented.











The Welcome to Country was provided by Gavin Singleton, a Yirrganydji man from the Cairns to Port Douglas region.



Councillor Rhonda Coghlan of Cairns Regional Council opened the forum.

Cr Coghlan's address included a memorial to Cairns local mountain bike champion, Frank Falappi, who passed away a short time before the forum.



Cr Coghlan spoke about the value that Cairns Regional Council places on mountain biking, and welcomed attendees to the 2025 Queensland Mountain Bike Forum.











The keynote presentation was delivered by Glen Jacobs from World Trail. Glen provided an amazing presentation regarding the history of mountain biking, emerging trends and lessons from experience.



Topics covered in Glen's presentation included:

- Destinations
- Connectivity
- Natural features
- Supporting infrastructure (pubs, cafes, accommodation)
- Event overlays
- Progressive expansion
- Professional design and construction of trails
- Working with, and embracing, nature
- Quality time
- Reveals/surprises
- Safe trails ratings
- No forced risk safe adventures
- Quality trails











Rachel White from Ridefundamentals provided a presentation about the remarkable work they are doing – using fun, play and healthy risk-taking in teaching kids to ride mountain bikes.

Rachel flagged that some children have gone on to ride in competitions, but all have developed skills and the knowledge that riding is fun.

Rachel highlighted the power of community and collaboration because MTB is a social activity, which can offer trailside chats, carpark challenges and riding with mates.



Jodie Margetts from Gravity Girls Cairns told the forum about the amazing work Gravity Girls Cairns is doing to get more women and girls feeling safe and confident while riding, with the hope that other organisations might be inspired to do likewise.

Jodie highlighted the inclusivity of all skill levels (beginner to experienced), social rides for fun, connection and skill-building, and a supportive, pressure-free environment created by the Gravity Girls community.

Gravity Girls offer skills clinics, downhill development and shuttle days (allowing participants to focus on descents without the climb).

Gravity Girls has an amazing crew of all-female ride leaders and coaches, who make it all happen.



Teona Cousin from Mackay Regional Council spoke about Mackay's significant investment in MTB trails in the MTB Finch Hatton project, starting with the purchase in 2020 of the old Cattle Creek Sugar Mill site by Mackay Regional Council.







Council engaged consultants in the delivery of the project to create a destination, including 14.5km of trails in Stage 1 and Finch Hatton MTB merchandise, which is distributed by local businesses. Council has developed good working relationships with MAD (Mackay and Districts) MTB Club and various local businesses, including Off Camber shuttle services for riders.

FH MTB is generating significant statistics, allowing Council to measure the impact of its investment. Council has engaged consultants to develop the Stage Two Finch Hatton MTB Trail Feasibility Study to assist in delivery of future trail networks, including forecasts of future economic benefits.



Pete Marshall from Ride Tumbarumba joined online to share the story of Mount Tumbarumba Mountain Bike Park.

Pete told an impressive story of a club that sourced funding from the local community to purchase land, developed mountain bike facilities and implemented a user-pays model for riders at the mountain bike park.



Dave Prete from Tableland Cycle Sports told us about the club's work at Atherton Forest MTB Park.

Dave spoke about the collaborative approach to trail maintenance and job creation through engaging trainees.

Some of the trainees and their supervisor joined the forum as another learning opportunity.



Brendon Munge from University of Sunshine Coast joined online to talk about research into the values of MTB users, generously providing the forum with a sneak peek at research that is expected to published in coming months.







Brendon presented information about how riders see their activities, their motivations and how they engage with nature.

Brendon presented the following reasons given by MTB riders for placing a high level of importance on nature:

- Physical and mental well-being stress reduction and mental health, escape and tranquillity
- Outdoor adventure and exploration
- Social & community connection social cohesion
- Nature is integral to the activity
- Appreciation for biodiversity
- Environmental stewardship

This research also showed that people's perception of the importance of nature increased over the duration of their participation in MTB riding.



Toby Porter and Mel Tortike from Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service & Partnerships (QPWS&P) took the group through a presentation on mountain biking in Queensland's protected areas.

QPWS&P is Queensland's largest active land manager, with over 14.5 million hectares of protected areas, with a significant network of MTB trails across the state. Planning is critical, and QPWS&P uses a strategic approach with its Values-Based Management Framework to ensure outdoor activities, including MTB, are well managed.

Components of the Nature Conservation Act 1992 were discussed, along with landscape character and classification, which collectively guide why, how and what is built in the QPWS&P estate to ensure world-class natural and cultural values are protected and preserved for future generations.

Distinctions were made between different tenure types within QPWS&P protected areas, with different management principles set for national parks compared to conservation parks.

QPWS&P design principles inform sustainable MTB trail design, planning, construction and maintenance.

The Wangetti Trail and Smithfield MTB Trail Network were discussed as case studies of significant MTB trails on the QPWS&P protected area estate.











Rowan Lamont from Blue Sky Trails spoke about data informed best practice trail management, and how Blue Sky Trails can help with that.

Rowan flagged that there is growing pressure on natural areas due to demand and that land managers are being challenged to manage trails as assets. Data is key, especially being able to visualise data. Data has value when it is part of a governance structure, where governance dictates what trails are built and where, who does what and when, how activities occur, and how success is measured.

Mapping trails provides a baseline. Trail rating systems dictate user experience and provide a critical risk management tool.

Rowan provided an overview of the Trail Vision system that allows land managers to capture quality data, create reports, manage assets and make data visible and accessible.

Rowan highlighted the importance considering both economic return on investment and social return on investment of trail networks.











Evan Winton and Ryan De La Rue from Contour Works spoke about trail design for disaster resilience and recovery.

Resilient trails are sustainable, durable, and fit-for-purpose.

Various elements were flagged for consideration, including significant weather events, design process, trail preparation, maintenance requirements, trail lifespan, and collection of data.

Several aspects of trail building into the future were discussed, including:

- User considerations, e-bikes and adaptive bikes
- Usage volumes
- Design considerations
- Construction techniques



Richard Buning from University of Queensland gave an overview of research into MTB tourism.

Richard noted that there are various different types of MTB tourist. The different types of MTB tourist need to be considered, since they have various wants and needs.

Attracting MTB tourists relies on a combination of contingent factors (such as physical attributes and investment) and non-contingent factors (such as community).



Tony Hewitt from Sport and Recreation told us about the Queensland Government Sport Strategy consultation process that is underway.

Attendees were encouraged to make submissions and complete surveys to ensure their voices are heard in developing the new government strategy.











Dom Courtney from Outdoors Queensland provided some info on the review of the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and Good Practice Guides – key takeout is for people to register on the online platform and contribute to that review. Dom also provided a summary of the day's proceedings and thanked all attendees, contributors and supporters of the forum.

Special thanks to Mackay Regional Council for sponsoring the event and for providing Finch Hatton MTB merchandise which was given to some attendees in a random draw.

Thanks also to Australian MTB magazine for providing magazines for all forum attendees.



During the event, attendees were invited to complete online polls via Slido. Due to time constraints, polls were not done after each session. At the end of the event, attendees were invited to complete additional Slido polls based on their likes, their wishes and their dreams ("What if"). Responses are provided in Appendix C.

After the event, attendees were emailed a link to a short survey to inform future events. Unfortunately, insufficient surveys were completed to allow confident analysis, so a summary of that survey is not available.









Appendix A – Draft Agenda

QUEENSLAND MOUNTAIN BIKE FORUM

James Cook University Ideas Lab – Building D4/14-88 McGregor Rd, Smithfield

SESSION #1		
9:30	Keynote	Glen Jacobs – World Trail
10:00	Cairns Young Shredders and Gravity Squad	Rachel White – Ride Fundamentals, Cairns
10:15	Gravity Girls Cairns	Jodie Margetts – Gravity Girls Cairns
10:35	MORNING BREAK	
SESSION #2		
11:00	The Finch Hatton Journey - Mackay Regional Council	Teona Cousin – ED and Tourism, Mackay Regional Council
11:15	Mt Tumbarumba – new approaches to a trail network	Pete Marshall – Ride Tumbarumba online
11:30	Atherton Forest Trail Trainee Program	David Prete - Tablelands Cycle Sports – Atherton Forest Mountain Bike Park
SESSION #3		
12:00	Values of MTB users	Brendon Munge – University of Sunshine Coast
12:30	QPWS and MTB - Wangetti and Smithfield Mountain Bike Park	QPWS – Toby Porter and Mel Tortike QPWS
1:00	LUNCH BREAK	
SESSION #4		
2:00	Data informed best practice trail management	Rowan Lamont - Blue Sky Trails
2:30	Trail design for sustainability	Evan Winton and Ryan De La Rue- Contour Works
SESSION #5		
	Mountain Bike Tourism	Pick Bunning LIO/BO
3:00	Mountain Bike Tourism	Rich Bunning – UQ/BQ Tony Hewitt, Queensland Dent, Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic
3:00	Mountain Bike Tourism Queensland Sport Strategy	Tony Hewitt - Queensland Dept. Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic
3:00 3:30 3:45		
3:00 3:30	Queensland Sport Strategy	Tony Hewitt - Queensland Dept. Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games
3:00 3:30 3:45	Queensland Sport Strategy	Tony Hewitt - Queensland Dept. Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games
3:00 3:30 3:45 CLOSING THOU(Queensland Sport Strategy Update on Australian Adventure Activity Standards	Tony Hewitt - Queensland Dept. Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games
3:00 3:30 3:45 CLOSING THOUG	Queensland Sport Strategy Update on Australian Adventure Activity Standards SHTS AND TAKE HOMES Where to from here and key take homes? Wrap up and thank you	Tony Hewitt - Queensland Dept. Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games Dom Courtney – Outdoors Queensland
3:00 3:30 3:45	Queensland Sport Strategy Update on Australian Adventure Activity Standards SHTS AND TAKE HOMES Where to from here and key take homes?	Tony Hewitt - Queensland Dept. Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games Dom Courtney – Outdoors Queensland Travis









Appendix B – List of organisations represented

- Atherton Forest
- BDO Australia
- Bicycle Queensland
- Blue Sky Trails
- Cairns MTB CLUB
- Cairns Regional Council
- Cassowary Coast Regional Council
- Contour Works
- Department of Sport, Racing and Olympic and Paralympic Games
- Department of Environment Tourism Science and Innovation
- Economic Development Australia
- FNQROC
- Gravity Girls Cairns
- Mackay Regional Council
- Outdoors Queensland
- Pew Charitable Trusts and Protect Beautiful Queensland
- Ride Fundamentals
- Tablelands Cycle Sports
- Trailworx Australia
- Trinity Anglican school
- University of Queensland
- Wagners CFT
- Wet Tropics Management Authority
- World Trail









Appendix C – Feedback from attendees

 ${}_{\bigcirc}$ Session #1 : What were the standouts for you from session #1 ?

Wordcloud Poll 🖸 41 responses 🔗 21 participants



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Note - due to time constraints, Slido poll was not taken for session 2









Session # 3 : What were the useful lessons for you from this session?

Open text poll 🛛 20 responses 🖓 15 participants

- Anonymous Early trails give momentum to local support
- Anonymous Maintenance must high priority
- Anonymous Amazing people do amazing things
- Anonymous Good business case
- Anonymous Passion & proactivity
- 8 Anonymous Trail Maintenance importance and cost
- Anonymous Business opportunities
- Anonymous Non government control
- Anonymous Ongoing management
- Anonymous Local businesses getting on board
- Anonymous Innovative leadership makes a difference
- Anonymous Persistence and proactivity
- Anonymous Partnerships and interagency opportunities
- Anonymous Marketing
- Anonymous Council support
- Anonymous Different ways to skin the cat
- Anonymous Innovative funding models
- Anonymous Approvals
- Anonymous Creative Funding
- Anonymous Funding models





THE CAIRNS INSTITUTE Research in tropical societies

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At the conclusion of the forum, attendees were invited to complete additional Slido polls based on their likes, their wishes and their dreams. Responses were as follows:

📄 I like Open text poll 🖸 15 responses 🛛 310 participants Anonymous 8 Considering more than just riding Anonymous පී The giveaways Anonymous 8 Our history Anonymous පී Consideration for the holistic approach Anonymous පී The sense of community and collaboration for the love of both the outdoors and sustainable MTB Anonymous පී Knowledge sharing / updates Anonymous පී Diverse range of speakers. Great environment Anonymous පී The Aus MTB trail industry is coming of age Anonymous පී Sharing lessons Anonymous පී Passion for riding Anonymous පී People who like bikes Anonymous පී The event, information and sharing of knowledge Anonymous 8 **Riding bikes** Anonymous පී

- friendly and open atmosphere
- Anonymous Bikes

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==	I wish	
	Open	text poll 🖸 11 responses 🛛 8 9 participants
	Q	Anonymous Perception of mountain biking being hard or damaging would change
	Q	Anonymous For sustained momentum in improvements in technologies, trail design
	Q	Anonymous We could help Land managers could cross pollinate between silos
	ව	Anonymous There was more time to really explore what our future in mountain biking looks like
	Q	Anonymous more Mayors said 'everyones in tourism'
	Q	Anonymous Trail work could happen quicker
	oŋ	Anonymous more decision-makers understand MTB
	OD	Anonymous There was more government coordination and delivery
	Q	Anonymous There was less red tape
	00	Anonymous I wish there was less red tape

Anonymous More funding

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what	: if
Open	text poll 🛛 12 responses 🔗 8 participants
9	Anonymous Locals and visitors are considered equally important
2	Anonymous If you could measure ride happiness 😁 ?
ති	Anonymous If everyone rode bikes they'd understand the positives and challenges
8	Anonymous Parks generated resources/funds by operating MTB trails?
0	Anonymous More trails equaled healthier communities
Q	Anonymous Local businesses shared the love back into the trails that support them
9	Anonymous Building bridges with conservation
9	Anonymous We all reconnected to nature
0	Anonymous Councils and governments viewd investing in trails as solutions to health and social issues
Q	Anonymous people thought MTB was truly sustainable
පි	Anonymous We collaborated with other sectors

Anonymous Everyone in our town rides bikes!!!

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