



BMX & SKATE PLAN
KNOX CITY COUNCIL
June 2002

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 The Project

In recent years, Knox City Council has identified a range of issues relating to skating and BMX related activities. Considerable interest by local young people in the development of facilities to undertake skating and BMX has led Council to further investigate demand and address needs expressed by the community.

In December 2001, consultants were engaged to develop a strategic plan for future development opportunities for skate and BMX facilities in the City of Knox. Throughout the course of the project, extensive consultation was undertaken with local stakeholders, Council Officers, peak sporting agencies and other Local Government authorities. As a result, the following key issues were identified:

- A need for Council take a proactive role in providing opportunities for people to participate in skating and BMX activity within the City. This is largely due to the City having many young people in the 10 to 19 year age group that are likely to be seeking access to opportunities to skate and ride in the local area. Demand for skating and BMX is considerable with around 10,000 potential skaters and riders in the municipality.
- The City has limited skate and BMX facilities that meets the needs of current participation patterns (ie. street and vert styles).
- There is a need to positively promote the sports and the opportunities available in the City to enhance the image of skate and BMX activity. A lack of awareness of issues surrounding skating and BMX can lead to misconceptions by some residents about participants and their behaviour which can cause conflict to occur.

As a result of these key issues a number of recommendations are nominated within an Action Plan (refer section 10). These recommendations are categorised into the following Key Result Areas:

- Council's Role
- Facility Provision
- Management of sites
- Sports Development, Marketing and Promotion
- Skate and BMX in the Street

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Knox City Council plays an important role in providing a range of sporting, recreational and leisure activities for the community. Providing facilities, services and opportunities for young people is a key aspect of this role. This is supported by Council's Corporate Plan that highlights the need to:

...“facilitate a range of safe, accessible services and leisure opportunities for young people”...

Skating and BMX activity attracts high participation by the Youth. In recent times this has resulted in increased popularity in the sports with many high quality facilities developed throughout Victoria. This has occurred with planning support and funding from Local Government Authorities and Sport and Recreation Victoria. The Skate Facility Guide¹ estimated that there were in excess of 650,000 skateboarders and inline skaters alone in the State of Victoria. Skating and BMX has spawned a thriving retail industry based around clothing and equipment and the unique ‘sub-culture’ associated with the sports.

Whilst no formal demand research has been undertaken by Council, observations by Officers has indicated that a significant number of young people in Knox participate in skating and BMX activities. There are several facilities located within the municipality that have been developed by Council or local young people. Facilities that have been developed by Council include:

- Knox Skate Park, Lewis Reserve Wantirna South (skate and BMX, concrete bowls and some dirt jumps)
- Knox BMX track (BMX Competition level race track and club)
- Llewellyn Park (limited dirt jumps at a former tip site – used for BMX and Mountain Biking), Wadhurst Reserve (old Motocross site located within a conservation area, used by BMX riders).

In addition, Council previously established a vert ramp in Rowville. However it was later removed as a result of negative impact on local residents and undesirable activities associated with the site. The ramp is still held by Council and there is some potential for it to be positioned in a more appropriate location.

In addition to the sites owned and managed by Council, young people have developed several dirt jumps on a range of sites, including bushland reserves, throughout Knox to engage in BMX activity. Such sites come to the attention of Council from time to time, but until now there has been no coordinated approach to address the legitimacy of these facilities and their usage.

There has been considerable interest in the development of new or improved facilities to cater for the needs of participants. This culminated in a petition (with in excess of 500 signatures) being submitted to Council seeking a fully developed skate facility in Knox, a high number of approaches to Council and significant coverage of the issue by the local print media.

Some Council's have trailed the use of mobile facilities to accommodate the needs of young skaters and riders. The Plan will investigate the viability of this option to meet community needs.

As a result of these complex issues, Council has initiated a project to strategically plan for the future of skating and BMX activity in the City. It was determined that each of the issues needed to be assessed

¹ Sport and Recreation Victoria, “The Skate Facility Guide”, 2001

in the light of the broad context of Council's role in providing leisure opportunities for the community. Agile Consultants was engaged in December 2001 to undertake the preparation of the Plan.

2.2 City of Knox

The City of Knox is located in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs some 25 kilometres from Melbourne's CBD, nestled in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges. Its neighbouring municipalities include the Cities of Casey, Whitehorse, Maroondah, Yarra Ranges and Monash.

After experiencing rapid growth in the Municipality during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, new development is now slowing. The 1996 population of the Municipality was estimated to be 136,799. This is anticipated to grow to 144,606 by 2011, and then begin to decline with the maturing of the population. The forecast population by the year 2021 is 141,894.

The demographic profile highlights two main groups in the community: young families, residing predominantly in the more recently developed areas to the south and mature families and retirees residing predominantly in the north of the Municipality.

Currently, 20 per cent of the population is estimated to be aged over 50 years. Population projections suggest that the population aged over 50 years will double over the next 15 years to 40 per cent. This maturing of the population could have a significant impact on local provision of leisure services within Knox, particularly for young people.

The diverse rural and urban character of Knox has a number of implications for development of skating and BMX activities in the city. In the developed areas, streets and shopping centres young people are likely to utilise built structures for street skating and BMX as well as purpose built skating facilities (as provided at Lewis Reserve). In the more urban areas, where often large tracts of open space are available, young people may seek to create dirt jump areas with or without permission of the land owners and other residents that may be impacted upon, or potential damage to sensitive environmental areas. These issues present a range of challenges for Council.

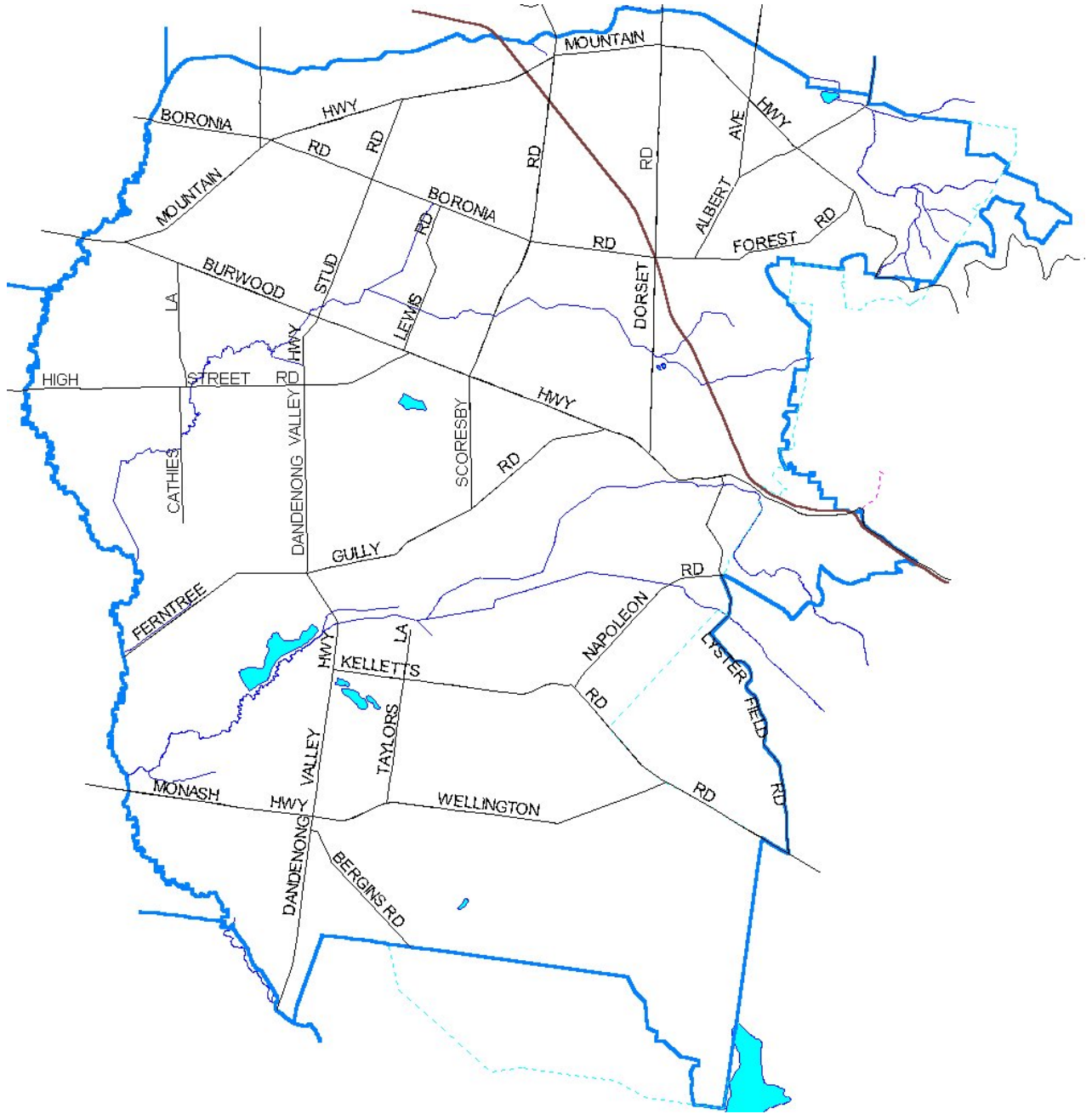
A map of the municipality appears on the following page:



Knox City Council
Towards New Horizons

City of Knox Skate and BMX Plan

Map 1. The City of Knox



2.3 The Project Direction

Several Skate and BMX facilities already exist in the City of Knox. However, not all have been developed in a strategic manner by Council. In addition, some facilities have been established by local young people without permission or regard for the potential impact of the development.

As a result of these issues, Council has initiated a project to strategically plan for the future of skating and BMX activity in region. It was determined that each of the issues needed to be assessed in the light of the broad context of Council's role in providing leisure opportunities for the community.

2.3.1 Aim of the Project

The aim of the project is to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the future development opportunities for skate and BMX facilities in the City of Knox.

The Plan will aim to optimise usage and provide the public facilities responsive to community needs,

2.3.2 Project Objectives

The key objectives of the study are as follows:

- Following consultation with stakeholders and analysis of industry trends report upon the need for skate boarding, inline skating and BMX cycling within the City
- Identify the number and type of existing skate and BMX facilities that service the Knox Community, both within and external to the City of Knox.
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the current skate and BMX facilities at the City of Knox, including the Knox Skate Park Facility and Knox Park BMX track.
- Where a demonstrated need exists for additional skate and BMX facilities make comment upon (in collaboration with Council Officers):
 - Recommended potential sites (as evaluated against 'Department of Sport and Recreation Victoria's Skate Facility Guide') based upon a hierarchal structure. Potential sites will include Council and non-Council property
 - Indicative design concepts and costs to develop such facilities, including the provision and management of temporary portable skate facilities.
 - Strategies to manage such facilities in a safe manner.

2.4 Methodology

Phase 1 - Project Establishment and Scoping

Meet with Project Manager to discuss objectives of the project and agree on project plan, including specific outcomes, standards of work to be achieved, meetings and responsibilities of Consultant and Council.

Confirm with the Project Manager key stakeholders and groups to be consulted throughout the project. We would anticipate the following providers/agencies may be consulted throughout the course of the project:

- Councillors
- Council management and staff including but not limited to:
 - ⇒ Interested Local Residents
 - ⇒ Relevant Community Groups
 - ⇒ Other Relevant Local Government Authorities
 - ⇒ Skating and BMX Fraternity in Knox
 - ⇒ Mountain Boarders Group
 - ⇒ Youth Issues Advisory Group
 - ⇒ Sport and Recreation Victoria

Establish contact lists from Council community directories, databases and other identified sources.

Undertake workshop with Council Officers to identify the range of issues relating to Skating and BMX activity in the municipality. This includes a review of existing and potential sites and inform the development of an 'Issues/Discussion paper' that could be used during consultation phases.

Phase 2 - Review Existing Information

Compile a profile of the community including existing and future population trends. Report on any likely future issues for Council with regard to skating/BMX facility provision.

Conduct a review of existing conditions including a comprehensive review of the facilities, services, programs and opportunities offered at the existing and proposed Skating/BMX sites.

Develop facility evaluation criteria in consultation with Council/stakeholders to analyse the issues at each site to arrive at the most appropriate recommendations.

Prepare detailed inventory, based on the above review.

Review any existing strategies, studies and reports relating to the study (including those undertaken in neighbouring municipalities).

Review relevant Council, State and Federal Government literature to ascertain current policy and funding directions.

Undertake a detailed review of Sport and Recreation Victoria's Skate Facility Guide.

Undertake a review of industry trends in service provision, and best practice examples that may assist in the future directions for provision of leisure facilities, services and opportunities in Knox.

Review relevant implications for the future provision of Skate and BMX Facilities in the region.

Develop an Issues/Discussion Paper to use throughout the consultation. The discussion paper would include a summary of the key issues developed to date in the project.

Meet with Project Manager to present progress report.

Phase 3 - Identify And Consult With Stakeholders

Undertake interviews with other LGA's who have recently developed skate and BMX Facilities to outline any issues they encountered which may inform facility developments in Knox.

Undertake a survey of existing facility users at skate/BMX locations in Knox.

Facilitating a Focus Group Meeting in a strategic location accessible to residents and stakeholders from the area. Significant issues identified in the study to date will be presented to the participants for feedback.

Invite participants to be involved in a working group that will assist with assessing the most appropriate site, developing concepts, determining the key facility components within the proposed budget and final designs.

Reviewing implications for existing and future skating/BMX/leisure opportunities in the area.

Phase 4 - Analysis of Issues

Undertake a detailed SWOT analysis regarding issues raised in Phases 1,2 and 3, with a particular emphasis on:

- Effectiveness and appropriateness of existing facilities;
- Determining Council's role in the delivery of Skating/BMX opportunities;
- Resident/stakeholder/participant expectations regarding facility provision;
- Trends in the provision of skating/BMX opportunities and policy development;
- Appropriate facility components and design in line with budget and site constraints and in accordance with identified needs of users and potential users.
- Funding for facility development;
- Safety and risk management issues;
- Develop the Plan in view of the broader management framework for Council;
- Consider best practice approaches for similar facilities/resources.

Use the Evaluation Criteria (outlined in Phase 2) developed in liaison with Council, SRV's Skate Facility Guide and skaters/riders to ascertain the most appropriate future provision of opportunities, and determining the most appropriate site(s) for development (if any). Potential sites will include Council and non-Council property

Undertake detailed financial analysis relating to the Plan and any potential facility development options and outline any implications for Council in the short medium and long term.

Phase 5 - Detailed Draft Plan Development Report

Development of the draft Plan for Council including:

- Proposed Vision for Council relating to skating/BMX provision
- Outlining objectives to achieve the proposed vision
- A profile of the community and future population trends and implications for facility/service/program provision
- Outline demand for facility provision
- Provide guidance on future trends in facility provision and policy development
- Identify financial implications
- Policy directions for Council in handling BMX/Skate facility provision, retention of sites and removal of illegal sites.

Outline Implementation Plan to realise the vision and objectives, including key areas for action, list appropriate tasks and actions, establish short, medium and long term priorities and timelines for action, develop key performance indicators and ongoing monitoring systems relating to the development and management of the Skate and BMX facilities.

Presentation to Project Manager, Steering/working Group and Senior Management for comment.

Phase 6 - Detailed Final Plan

Compilation of formal comments on Draft Plan.

Preparation of Final Report

Presentation of Final Report to Project Manager and Senior Management.

3 Review of Background Information

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines background information with relevance to skating and BMX in the City of Knox. This information will provide the basis for analysis of future development directions. Included is:

- The sport of skating and BMX
- The range of Skating and BMX activity
- Trends in the sport and in the design of facilities

3.2 The Sport of Skating and BMX

The popularity of skating and BMX has experienced ebbs and flows in development, with popularity peaks appearing to occur every four or five years. The peaks are perhaps best explained by the complex histories of each sport, outlined in the next section.

However, skating and BMX appears to have adopted credibility, with an expanding market surrounding the 'sub-culture' that goes hand in hand with the sport. This includes street fashion, equipment, music and even language and style.

The freestyle nature of skating and BMX activity and the absence of coordinated sports development have seen the transformation of a variety of hybrid activities and 'styles'. These include:

- Scooters
- BMX (vert style)
- BMX (street style)
- BMX tricks/jumps (dirt jumping)
- BMX track racing
- Skateboarding (vert style)
- Skateboarding (street style)
- Inline (vert style)
- Inline (street style)
- Inline speed
- Inline fitness, recreational
- Inline hockey etc
- Inline artistic
- Roller speed
- Roller hockey
- Mountain Boarding
- Street Luge

Sport and Recreation Victoria's Skate Facility Guide has outlined three key market segments to make some level of distinction between the range of users. These segments include:

- Aggressive skaters (inline, skateboards and BMX free-stylers)
- Competitive roller sports (in line hockey and roller sports)
- Recreational and fitness inline skaters (families and individuals)

These market segments could also be adequately applied to BMX activities. Additionally, whilst skating (inline and boarding) and BMX possess different qualities and disciplines, in recent times there have been considerable crossovers, with skaters and riders able to utilise the same facilities. This has resulted in a need for facilities that accommodate more than vert and street and can be used by a wide range of age groups and skill levels. In addition, these activities are still a major mode of transport for young people, which present issues relating to how skaters and riders interact with other vehicles and pedestrians, particularly in public areas.

3.2.1 The History of Skateboarding

Whilst information relating to the development of the sport in Australia is limited, considerable information regarding the history of skateboarding can be derived from American publications. Anecdotally, it appears that development of the sport in Australia has mirrored development in the United States with peaks and troughs in activity at similar intervals.

Dating back as far as the early 1900's, the first type of skateboard was more like a scooter. The design incorporated roller skate wheels attached to a piece of 'two by four' timber with the wood often having a milk crate attached to it with handles for control. Over the next five decades kids were dismantling roller skates everywhere and attaching them onto planks of wood.

In the 1950's modifications were made to the trucks (the device holding the wheels) enabling users to manoeuvre more easily. By 1959 when clay wheels entered the scene and 'sidewalk surfing' began to take hold.

In 1963 Larry Stevenson created Makaha Skateboards. Larry's company was responsible for sponsoring the first skateboarding contest held in Hermosa, California in 1963. Through promotion and publicity created by Larry's company Makaha, the sport experienced a wave of popularity and over a three-year period, which saw skateboarding movies, and magazines become popular. During that period over fifty million boards were sold.

In the autumn of 1965 skateboarding died suddenly, this death was put down to the continuous injuries and reckless riding that was happening. With the high demand for skateboards, manufacturers were hurrying the process and little effort was made in the form of research and development. Subsequently quality of skateboards suffered. As a result of poor equipment design accidents were a common occurrence. Some Councils began banning skateboards from sidewalks and streets, meaning skateboarding went underground.

The 'kicktail' in the late 1960's started the revival of the sport once again. In 1950 Val Surf joined up with surfboard maker Hobie Alter. In 1964 after seeing the popularity of skateboarding they began to design their own line of skateboards. In late 1964 Vita-Pakt Juice Company joined forces with Hobie Alter to form a manufacturing / marketing agreement. Hobie acquired some of the best skaters to and paraded them around the country conducting demo events and drumming up mass publicity. By 1965 Vita-Pakt had 20,000 orders for skateboards a day.

City of Knox Skate and BMX Plan

In 1965 a company called 'American Latex' approached Hobie Alter. The idea was to make wheels from urethane, but at the time it was thought to be cost prohibitive. It wasn't until the 1970's that the urethane wheel was brought in and used on a number of skateboards. This provided skaters with the much-needed grip and handling they had always required. Swimming pools around the country began being emptied for skating. The introduction of urethane wheels and a number of other improved technological changes made pool skating hugely popular as skaters were now able to perform a greater variety of aerial manoeuvre's.

By 1973 skateboarding was again popular and manufacturers began making trucks specifically for skateboarding. Board manufacturers sprung up over night and suddenly the industry was filled with new products and ideas. By 1975 with the invention of downhill skating, the sport was well and truly on a roll once again.

In 1976 the first outdoor skate park was built in Florida, this was followed by a number of skate parks all over North America. Skateboarding went from horizontal to vertical and slalom and freestyle skateboarding became less popular. In the late 1970's Alan Gelfand invented the "ollie", a no-hands aerial manoeuvre that moved skateboarding to the next level. Safety concerns again were the cause of the next downfall of skating as skate parks were bulldozed down due to insurance costs becoming too expensive. By the end of 1980 skateboarding had experienced its next death.

A hard-core contingent of skaters continued to develop the sport, building their own half pipes and ramps. In 1981 Thrasher Magazine began publication in an effort to inform skaters of the current skating scene. Skate contests were still being held but the turnout and prize money was small. By 1983 skate manufacturers were beginning to see the sport growing once again. The vert-riding scene then took off in 1984; street style skating closely followed this. Launch ramps became increasingly popular. The National Skateboard Association held numerous contests across North America and eventually throughout the world. Skateboard shoes and clothes became very popular.

The end of the decade saw a shift towards a street focus and vert riding became less popular, with the focus on technical tricks and aerial aspects. By 1991 a worldwide recession hit which put the skate industry once again in trouble with manufacturers incurring large losses. However by the mid 1990's through the promotional channels such as the Internet, television and the introduction of the ESPN 2 Extreme Games the sport had once again taken off in popularity.

Currently, skateboarding's focus remains street style, with long boarding making a comeback. Skate parks are again beginning to be built².

3.2.2 The History Of Roller Sports And Progression To Inline

In 1760 Belgium inventor John Joseph Merlin was thought to be responsible for inventing roller skating. However the first successful roller skate to be seen in public didn't arrive until 1849 when Frenchman Louis Legrange used roller skates to simulate ice-skating in the play *Le Prophete*. He created his skates by mounting tiny rollers down the centre of ice skates.

The first patent for an inline skate was taken out by an M. Petibled in France in 1819. Consisting of three wheels attached to a wooden plate, it had leather straps that held it to the shoe.

Many different types of skates were produced in the mid 1800s, however all suffered from the same flaw as Merlin's skates - the inability to be effectively controlled or stopped.

In 1863 the problem of controlling skates was rectified when New Yorker James Plimpton used a rubber cushion to anchor the ankles. It was Plimpton's design that is considered to be responsible for the basis of the modern skate. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the popularity of roller skates increased organised roller sports began to be developed.

² Brooke., M, *The Concrete Wave, the History of Skateboarding*, Warrick Publishing, Toronto, 2001

The first World Speed Championships occurred in Monza, Italy in 1937. The first U.S. Roller Skating Championships were held in Detroit in 1937. Competitions were also held in artistic skating, though the first World Championships were not held until 1947 in Washington, D.C. Roller hockey was played as a demonstration sport at the 1992 Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain.

Over the years many people attempted to design a successful inline-skate. However, none became popular. It wasn't until 1979 that Scott and Brennan Olson discovered one of the failed designs and by the 1960's the Chicago Skate Company attempted to market an inline skate, but lack of interest caused it to fail. Later, the designs were used by some Minneapolis hockey players, who made a few adjustments, adding wheels to adapt the ice-skate boot for ice hockey practice when no ice was present. As a result inline skating was born.

In 1983 Scott Olson formed a company in partnership with others to make and sell the product. Rollerblade Inc. released Rollerblades to a worldwide population. The popularity of the sport took hold and over the next 15 years blading developed into a significant sport.

3.2.3 The History of BMX

B.M.X. or Bicycle Motocross originated as bicycle racing around a dirt track head to head against other riders over obstacles and dirt jumps. The origins of bicycle motor cross go back to sometime in 1970 when a 14 year old Californian motorcycle racer watched a group of bicycle riders imitate Motor cross racers on vacant land.

Beginning in the early 1970's in California, BMX grew so fast that by 1974 several organizations in the U.S. began to sanction organized events across the country. Modelled on Motocross, BMX racing provided an alternative to motorized dirt track racing.

Throughout the 70s the passion for the sport grew, and bikes were reformed to suit the style of the sport. The old bikes were very heavy with heaps of suspension, suited for the hard terrains originally raced. Grounds covered with rocks, big ruts, huge obstacles and water jumps were favoured. Over time the bikes and the tracks were modified. Today BMX riders have bikes modified to suit their preferred style, be it dirt jumping, vert or flatland.

BMX began in Australia in 1978. The growth of the sport in Australia was slowed down by lack of promotion and only one track in Sydney. The existing track was modified and slowly attendances grew. It was then that the Inter City Challenge was introduced. This challenge was in the form of a major race, which pitted Sydney against Brisbane.

Another new track was formed and along with the introduction of a track at a multi-million dollar speedway in the western Sydney suburb of Liverpool, BMX has firmly established itself as an up and coming sport. BMX has spread to three to other states in Australia with more than five tracks now in operation.

With the improvement in tracks and organisation, Australian promoters linked into an Australian BMX Association. The first Australian National Championships were held in the Sydney area in June 1980 with entries from each state across the country.

More recently riders saw the potential BMX to emulate skating manoeuvres. As a result vert, freestyle, and dirt jumping has increased in popularity and has received large mainstream media coverage.

3.3 Trends in Skating and BMX

It is important to understand the range of trends and the potential impact on the provision of facilities and services by Council. Trends in the composition of the community and the impacts on the way people access services can be analysed to assist in determining the most appropriate Plan for skating and BMX activity in Knox.



City of Knox Skate and BMX Plan

Council should ensure that the services it provides continue to reflect the needs of the community. By continuing to monitor these trends, Council will be able to respond to changes and ensure that facility and service provision remains relevant.

The following highlights some of the general social trends in the community that may impact on future provision leisure opportunities, including skating and BMX, in the City:

- The national population has grown and is continuing to do so.
- The population is ageing however, which means a wider range of passive activities, rather than active, are likely to be needed by large sections of the community.
- There is increasing diversity in the population.
- There are higher levels of unemployment and long-term unemployment. Young people aged 15 to 24 years (667 000 persons) at June 30, 1999, account for 15 per cent of Victoria's population. Official statistics consistently show that teenagers aged 15 to 19 years have twice to three times the unemployment rate of the population as a whole.
- There are varying levels of disposable income. People's ability to make purchasing choices is often influenced by the level of disposable income available.
- There is higher vehicle ownership, and in turn a greater ability for people to access chosen facilities. This is countered however, by the fact that those without resources to travel, are far more reliant on low cost activity near to home or work.
- There is more all night and weekend trading, resulting in different work arrangements and flexibility in shopping time. As a result, people's discretionary or 'free' time for education, leisure and socialising is often structured very differently and limits them from making long-term commitments to activities (particularly organised pursuits that are time consuming).
- There is a greater propensity towards time specific activity (ie. a 30 minute yoga class where the participant can enter and exit in a timely manner, not disrupting the day's activities).
- There is greater demand for activities that are informal and offer the participant safety and security.
- There is also a move towards more casual participation, rather than making commitments (ie. becoming members of clubs/organisations etc.). Some organisations have responded to this by trialing more flexible arrangements for people to participate in organised activities.
- There is an increasing awareness regarding issues of public health and a direct link to lifestyle and leisure. This is reflected in a move towards a more holistic approach to health that incorporates physical and psychological health (including elements of nutrition, exercise, lifestyle choices, esteem etc).
- There is a greater emphasis on access and equity in all spheres of society.
- There is a reduced perception of "community" and a greater importance placed on the value of the family unit in terms of social and recreational interaction.
- Information technology is having a significant impact on Australians, with enormous increases in the proportions of households with a computer between 1994 and 1998. Similar increases were recorded with regard to Internet usage.
- People have access to better information about activities/pursuits they can participate in.
- A greater preparedness of people to pay for higher quality experiences and to travel further to access them.

- There is a greater emphasis on the multi-use of facilities as opposed to the development of single purpose facilities.
- Rapid advances in knowledge and introduction of new technology resulting in increasingly diverse lifestyle and leisure patterns.
- Television, video and computers (internet) being perceived as not only a source of entertainment, but as a source of information as well.
- Australian young people now face a more uncertain world. At the same time it offers greater opportunities than young people's parents experienced when leaving school.
- Increasing awareness and trepidation by service providers regarding public liability, risk management and potential litigation.

In addition, there are specific trends that have evolved in skating and BMX in recent years:

- It is estimated that there are 407,000 in line skaters and 250,000 skateboarders in Victoria and many are regular participants³.
- 'Street' is now the dominant style, with few single purpose vert ramps and bowls developed in the metropolitan area.
- Peak activity was seen in the 10 year to 17 year age group, with some participants still skating into late twenties to early thirties. More people are staying involved in the sport throughout teenage years and young adulthood.
- The majority of time spent skating and riding is after school and at weekends. Night use has created some issues at some parks in Melbourne.
- There is increasing development of facilities that have variety and are flexible in design to allow for future provisions or expansion.
- There is a great need for associated amenities (ie. drink taps, shade, seats, landscaping etc.) at skateparks.
- Many facilities have incorporated designs that allow for both street and vert activity, can accommodate skate, inline, BMX, scooters etc. Participants want all styles and levels catered for at the one facility.
- There are an increasing number of regional and municipal level parks being developed, and fewer, smaller satellite facilities.
- There have been concerns from some LGA's regarding the appearance of dirt jumps in parks, sometimes negatively impacting on the environment. There is a perception that young people creating jumps is a form of vandalism. Councils deal with this issue differently and there is a need for clear policy to address concerns.
- There is an increasing participation in inline skating (both recreational and aggressive)
- There is increasing development of hybrid sports (ie. mountain boarding, scooters etc.)
- There is strong support from State Government (Sport and Recreation Victoria) in planning for skate and BMX activities (ie. through *Skate Facility Guide*) and facility development grants. By the year 2000, local government authorities in Victoria had constructed 81 skating facilities and over 66 new facilities were being planned, or had commenced construction across the state.

³ Sport and Recreation Victoria, Skate Facility Guide, 2001

- There is a need for facilities to be located near shops, telephone, food, drink, petrol stations (to pump up tyres) and skate and BMX retailers. Public transport access is also important.
- There is a need for emergency access to facilities. This creates some problems where jumps have been established in remote areas that are not easily accessed by ambulance vehicles.
- There has been some development of indoor and privately operated facilities.
- Safety and security is an ongoing issue. However, there appears to be some degree of misunderstanding regarding risk management issues and how to effectively address concerns.
- Skaters/riders that do not have any facilities available will tend to use public facilities (schools, Council Offices, Open space, shopping centres and buildings and office blocks) and other infrastructure such as paths, roads, public property etc. As a result, skating/BMX is a unique sport that often sees extreme, high paced activity in populated public spaces.
- There is a requirement by participants that facilities are cleaned, free of litter and have no cracks/potholes. This is both for safety reasons and to ensure high standard of activity.
- There is very low female involvement in all Skate and BMX sporting activity. Young women tend to attend skate facilities and events as a spectator rather than an active participant. As such there is a need for role models in the sports (particularly women that may encourage greater participation by young female skaters/riders).
- Socialisation is very important to participation.
- Social, health and fitness benefits are derived from involvement in the sports.
- Parent involvement in the sports is growing. Parents are often responsible for transporting participants to skate parks and in some cases will stay to supervise activity.
- Skaters and BMX riders will travel widely to access regional facilities. Whilst having local facilities is important, many skaters and riders will regularly use a range of different facilities across the metropolitan area.
- Skateboarding, scooters, inline and BMX still a major form of transport for many young people.
- The sports have traditionally not been associated with the establishment of mainstream clubs (although this is somewhat different for BMX).
- More and more skaters and riders have an interest in participating in activities across each of the above market segments (ie. may skate and ride).
- Skating and BMX has for a long time viewed as non-mainstream, even anti-social. However, more recently the activities have been more accepted as legitimate sports with increasing television coverage (X games etc.) demonstration events and role models viewed as legitimate athletes in their own right adding to the profile of the activities. Visits to local skate parks will even highlight growing parental support and involvement.

The following information obtained from the ABS "Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities Australia". The report outlines some key statistical information in relation to children and their skating and bike riding habits.

- 31% of children in the survey skateboarded or roller bladed outside school hours in the designated two week period. Of the skateboarders and roller

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bladers, boys spent more time on this activity than girls. The average time spent over the two week period was 6 hours for boys and 4 hours for girls

- Over the same two weeks, 64% of children aged 5 to 14 years (71% of boys and 56% of girls) rode a bike outside of school hours. The difference in participation between the sexes is small for children aged 5 to 8 years. However, for children aged 14 years, the percentage of boys riding bikes (61%) is over twice that of girls (28%). This data shows that boys have a higher participation rate in skating and bike riding but also participate for longer periods of time when undertaking the activity. Also highlighted was the fact that as children grow the older the gap between male and female participation in bike riding grew larger. This indicated that boys participation rates decreased marginally over several years while girls participation in the activity declined dramatically.

The following tables show participation rates for male and female children in the age group of 5 to 14 years in the leisure activity of skating / roller blading and bike riding.

Male	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years	11 years	12 years	13 years	14 years	Total
Skateboarding / roller blading	21.5	32.8	34.9	42.4	42.4	40.8	35.5	39.5	34.7	30.1	35.6
Bike Riding	71.7	75.0	71.6	73.8	78.5	72.7	71.3	69.4	65.7	60.5	71.1
Female	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years	11 years	12 years	13 years	14 years	Total
Skateboarding / roller blading	17.9	29.0	38.1	35.8	35.0	30.8	28.0	19.3	14.2	11.2	26.1
Bike Riding	68.9	69.5	68.9	70.1	66.6	59.5	53.3	43.7	31.6	27.9	56.2

The following outlines participation rates for children 5 to 14 years in skateboarding / rollerblading and bike riding and their subsequent characteristics.

	Skateboarding or rollerblading	Bike riding
Birthplace of parents		
One parent families		
Parent born in Australia	38.5%	66.9%
Parent born in other main English-speaking countries	38.0%	69.3%
Parent born in other countries	26.5%	47.6%
Couple families		
Both parents born in Australia	31.4%	66.5%
Both parents born in other main English-speaking countries	21.1%	47.4%
Other	29.3%	64.8%

This table demonstrates that children with parents born overseas have lower participation in skating and BMX in comparison with children born in Australia.

The average number of hours spent by male children skateboarding or rollerblading over a two-week period were;

- 5-8 years (5.2 hours)
- 9-11 years (6.4 hours)
- 12-14 years (8.0 hours)

The ABS data shows that on average older males participate in skateboarding or rollerblading for longer periods of time than younger children.



Knox City Council
Towards New Horizons

4 Review of Literature

4.1 Introduction

A review of past reports and strategies has been undertaken to provide further background information to assist in development of a strategic direction for Knox. The review has included a range of key strategic documents, policies, relevant National and State policy directions with regard to skating and BMX. In addition, a range of local press articles and strategies were considered, however they have not been reviewed in detail here, but rather have been used to inform trends and raise issues to be addressed through the Plan.

4.2 Council's Strategic Direction

It is important to identify Council's strategic direction in order to determine its role with the provision of skating and BMX opportunities. This is perhaps best explained in the Corporate Plan, Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and the Recreation Strategy.

4.2.1 Knox City Council Corporate Plan (2001-2004)

The Knox City Council Corporate Plan provides the strategic direction for all facets of the organisation, including leisure, culture, sport and recreational opportunities. The Corporate Plan has outlined the following Vision and Mission:

Vision

"The City of Knox is Melbourne's premier family, work and leisure environment".

The City will be characterised by:

- A community which feels safe and well satisfied with its local government
- Vibrant businesses taking up opportunities
- A responsive, innovative, energetic Council providing effective and quality services to the community

Mission

The Council exists to facilitate and provide responsive, responsible and innovative municipal lifestyle, infrastructure and support services with a reputation for excellence.

This is achieved by:

- Delivering and facilitating quality and relevant services in a responsive, innovative, cost effective and accountable way.
- Promoting the growth and prosperity of Knox and the well being of Knox Citizens

- Advocating the views and needs of the people of Knox to other governments, community agencies and the private sector
- Encouraging the people of Knox to contribute to decisions about the way their community works and develops and building active partnerships with citizens, business and government.

4.2.2 Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS)

Council has developed a land use vision, which has been interpreted from the principles of the Corporate Plan and developed in conjunction with representatives of Council and the community. Vision statements relevant to this policy are as follows:

To develop and support the community of Knox by:

- *Maintaining, enhancing and protecting the key natural, cultural and lifestyle features of the City, both economically and environmentally.*
- *Encouraging a greater diversity in new development, which can adapt to the needs of a changing population structure.*

Council has identified some land use themes to achieve the vision. Relevant themes are:

- ***Making better use of urban facilities and services*** – covers two main issues: maintaining existing levels of infrastructure and ensuring that new development can be serviced in a cost efficient way whilst protecting the environment. Key issues raised are:
 - Knox has established a high level of infrastructure
 - Much of this infrastructure is now in need of significant maintenance and in some areas replacement
 - As families' mature and household sizes decline, there will be a reduction in population density. With reducing population densities, and the rate of new development slowing, the viability of infrastructure declines and its cost per household increases.
 - More flexible use and multiple uses of community facilities are options for ensuring their long-term viability.

As a result of these issues, Council has outlined objectives, strategies and implementation that includes the following recommendations:

- Maximise the use of existing infrastructure.
- Concentrate new development at identified nodes of existing services.
- ***Enhancing the potential for lifestyle and cultural activities in the community-*** Knox's popularity as a residential and business location is partly due to the lifestyle opportunities the municipality offers, including its range of leisure and recreational facilities. Key issues raised are:
 - Enhancing the perceived safety of urban spaces is also important to the community. Urban places and facilities that experience little usage and activity can create a sense of isolation and be perceived as a safety concern. This concern can lead to a further reduction in the use of an area, reduced standards of maintenance, security costs and the area's decline. This has important social consequences in relation to reduced opportunities for social interaction.

- Encouraging an appropriate mix of uses in strategic locations, such as at community activity and retail centres can increase opportunities for social interaction. It can also increase usage of areas and casual surveillance thus increasing the perceived safety of areas.
- Public open space and other community facilities need to be provided in a strategic manner, taking into account projected community need.
- To maintain their economic viability, community facilities need to be planned to encourage multiple use and be designed with a degree of flexibility to accommodate changing community needs.

As a result of these issues, Council has outlined objectives, strategies and implementation that includes the following recommendations:

- Encourage the provision of places where there is a strong community focus and where the community can carry out their domestic, business, leisure or social life.
- Promote mixed uses and higher density housing around activity centres.
- In considering proposals, ensuring that opportunities for casual surveillance of public spaces are maximised through design (eg. houses which overlook parks and streets).
- Requiring public open space contributions from developers where appropriate.
- Ensuring that open space contributions provide a linked network of open space where possible
- Coordinating with relevant State Government agencies to co-locate facilities into areas of community focus and activity, i.e. public open space areas and schools.
- Establishing management plans for key recreational facilities.

4.2.3 Recreation Strategy Plan

Council undertook a Recreation Strategy Plan⁴ (1998-2002) to guide the future direction for the provision, development and rationalisation of recreation services, programs and facilities. The Strategy proposed a Mission to:

...“provide recreation facilities, programs and services that enable residents and visitors, of all ages and interest, access and opportunity to participate in a diverse range of recreation activities. These facilities, programs and services will be developed, operated, managed and financed through shared responsibilities between Council, regional and local, public and commercial organisations, clubs, residents and users.”

The Mission statement recognises:

- Everybody has the right to participate in activities of their choice.
- Whilst no one organisation can be responsible or offer all required recreation facilities, Council in partnership with current regional and local providers, clubs and users can ensure a wider range of opportunities.

⁴ Knox City Council, Recreation Strategy Plan 1998-2001, Michael King and Associates Pty. Ltd

- There is a need to encourage a greater self-help and support system from existing organisations, clubs and users to ensure the broad range of existing facilities and activities can be supported, resourced and upgraded.

As part of the Recreation Strategy, a youth forum was held. Whilst no specific issues were raised with regard to skating and BMX, some important points were made that may impact on young people's participation.

- Young people raised the issue of limited public transport affecting their ability to access entertainment activities.
- Limited effective information services/networks get to young people.
- Young people registered the highest participation in sporting and recreation activity in the City.

4.2.4 Knox Youth Plan, 2001-2003

Council developed a Youth Plan in the year 2000 seeking to improve the health and well being of young people in Knox. The Plan involved identifying Council's role in servicing the needs of young people and extensive consultation with young people in the City.

The Plan identified the importance of leisure to young people and noted:

... "Constructive leisure provides opportunities to:

- *Acquire and practice specific social, physical and intellectual skills that may be useful in a wide variety of settings*
- *Contribute to the wellbeing of ones community and to develop a sense of agency as a member of one's community*
- *Belong to a socially recognised and valued group*
- *Establish supportive social networks of both peers and adults that can help one in both the present and the future*
- *Experience and deal with challenges and overcome obstacles.*

The plan highlighted that young peoples participation in constructive leisure activities was comparatively low and that opportunities and facilities were limited. The plan also highlighted the potential social benefits of providing young people with constructive leisure options including reduction in crime, lowering chances of school dropouts, lower rates of substance use, strengthening the family unit, healthy development of people into adulthood etc.

A recommendation of the plan was to establish skate/BMX facilities to service this identified unmet leisure need, at least to some degree.

5 Population Profile of Knox

5.1 Introduction

A review of the Knox Urban Indicators⁵ has been undertaken to identify the current and projected population in the City. This information can be used to predict likely demand for skating and BMX activity.

5.2 City of Knox Community Profile

The City of Knox is located in Melbourne's eastern suburbs some 20 to 25 kilometres south of the Melbourne GPO. The City includes the suburbs of Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Knoxfield, Lysterfield, Rowville, Scoresby, The Basin, Upper Ferntree Gully, Wantirna and Wantirna South.

The City of Knox is a well regarded and sought after residential and business address. After experiencing rapid growth in the municipality during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, new development is now slowing.

The estimated population of Knox in 1999 was 143,726 people. This was an increase from the population of 130,401 counted on 1996 in the Census. This is anticipated to grow to 144,606 by 2011, and then begin to decline with the maturing of the population. The forecast population by the year 2021 is 141,894⁶.

The area comprises 113.80 square kilometres. As at 1996 there were 45,109 dwellings, with an average 2.99 persons per dwelling. The age structure of Knox at 1996 was as follows:

▪ 0-4 years	8%
▪ 5-17	21.5%
▪ 18-24	10.1%
▪ 25-34	15.6%
▪ 35-49	24.9%
▪ 50-59	9.4%
▪ 60-69	5.0%
▪ 70-84	4.7%
▪ 85 and over	0.9%

Nearly 40% of the total Knox population was under the age of 24 in 1996. This category represents the majority of the population that may participate in skating/BMX, which suggests a strong need for skating and BMX facilities currently. According to estimates provided by the *Skate Facility Guide*⁷ it is likely that the number of skaters in the City would be approximately 10,000. Unfortunately no 'rule of thumb data' was available for inliners and BMX riders.

The City of Knox aged considerably between 1991 and 1996. There was a significant decrease in the proportion of the population aged under 35 and increases in those aged 50 and over. The greatest net changes in population during this period were in the age groups 50-59, 35-49 where increases were seen and 25-34, which experienced a decrease.

⁵ ID Consulting, Knox Urban Indicators, 2000

⁶ City of Knox, Municipal Strategic Statement, 2001

⁷ Sport and Recreation Victoria, Skate Facility Guide, 2001

Couples and families dominated the household structure of the City of Knox with 48.3% of households comprised of couples with children and a further 21.7% comprised of couples without children. The most significant changes in the household structure between 1991 and 1996 were in the proportion of couples with children with the share falling from 54.3% to just over 48% and in the proportion of lone person households, which grew from 11.7% to 15.4%.

This would suggest some decrease in the number of young people under 24 in the longer term, as the population ages in place. This could result in some declining need for development of new active recreation facilities.

There were substantial numbers of both older and younger families in the area, which is indicative of significant new housing development over several decades. The 1996 Census figures show that:

- 72% of the population was born in Australia
- 24.8% of the population of Knox was born overseas. Major countries of birth include:
 - 7.8% in the United Kingdom
 - 1.3% Malaysia
 - 1.1% Germany
- Of the languages spoken at home:
 - 82.7% spoke English only
 - 15.2% spoke a non-English language
- Of the non-English languages spoken Chinese, Italian and German were the most spoken. Some attention may need to be given to ensuring promotion of Council's skating and BMX facilities reaches these diverse populations.
- The number of dual income households has led to the greater proportions of household income being in top two income brackets. The average household income break-up for Knox is as follows:
 - 18.5% have an annual income of \$0 - \$19,240
 - 23.4% \$19,240 - \$36,192
 - 29.9% \$36,192 - \$61,000 28.3% \$61,000 and over
- This would suggest that generally people in Knox have access to a wide range of leisure opportunities, and are not likely to be constrained by price.

5.3 City of Knox Forecasts

The 2000 forecast resident population was 146,499, which forecast to decline slightly to 145,813 by 2015 at an average growth rate of -0.03%. The City of Knox is characterised by two distinct areas – the more established northern parts of the municipality and the southern area including Rowville, which has experienced considerable residential development over the past twenty years. The result of Greenfield land supplies reaching full development will mean a slowdown of new dwelling activity in Knox.

Now that new land supplies are limited, many Knox residents will look to expected growth areas such as the South Eastern Growth corridor (Berwick, Cranbourne) and the outer east (Lilydale, Kilsyth) to establish new households. Many older residents are expected to move to retirement accommodation both in the southern parts of Knox and the South Eastern Growth corridor over the forecast period.

The City of Knox will increase its supply of dwellings over the forecast period however unlike the immediate past, these dwellings will be evenly spread throughout the City rather than concentrated in the Rowville area.

The Knox City/Towerpoint Shopping Centre and, to a lesser degree, Stud Park Shopping Centre provide a regional retail and commercial focus for the Municipality. Trade figures produced by Business East, the Regional Economic Development Organization, indicate that Knox has an expenditure surplus. This means that the money spent in the Municipality exceeds the available money of its residents, indicating that the centres attract custom from persons living outside the Municipality. This has important implications for the role of these centres as regional community and business focal points, as well as issues of transport and access⁸.

5.4 Summary

- The City of Knox comprises an area of 113.80 square kilometres and had an estimated population of 143,726 people in 1999.
- It is likely that there are approximately 10,000 skaters in the municipality, not including in liners and BMX enthusiasts.
- As at 1996 there were 45,109 dwellings, with an average 2.99 persons per dwelling.
- The most populated age groups in Knox at 1996 were in the 35-49 year old bracket and the 5-17 years.
- The City of Knox aged considerably between 1991 and 1996. There was a significant decrease in the proportion of the population aged under 35 and increases in those aged 50 and over. The greatest net changes in population during this period were in the age groups 50-59, 35-49 where increases were seen and 25-34, which experienced a decrease
- 24.8% of the population of Knox was born overseas.
- The household income brackets that were most featured was in the \$36,192 - \$61,000 bracket and \$61,000 and over bracket. This is due to the number of dual income households.
- Couples and Families dominated the household structure of the City of Knox with 48.3% of households comprised of couples with children and a further 21.7% comprised of couples without children.
- The forecast resident population was expected to decline marginally over the period of 2000 to 2015. Household size is expected to decline in Knox over the foreseeable future.
- The population of Knox is expected to experience growth in the established parts of Knox such as Wantirna South and Boronia, while the Rowville-Lysterfield area is expected to decline in population over the period of 2000 to 2015.
- This decline is expected due to the establishment of new households elsewhere and relatively low levels of new housing are developed.

⁸ City of Knox, Municipal Strategic Statement, 2001

6 Provision of Facilities in Knox

6.1 Municipal Facilities

Council already has a strong commitment to skating and BMX in Knox through the provision of a range of facilities. Council also has played a role in facilitating events and demonstrations involving the sports at local festivals and events.

The municipal level facilities are located at:

- Knox Skate Park - Lewis Reserve Wantirna South (municipal skate and BMX which includes concrete bowls, 'skate pit' and dirt jumps). The facility is described by the users as an 'old school' facility and is extensively used.
- Knox Park BMX Track (BMX Competition level race track and associated club).

6.2 Local Facilities

In addition, there are several other local facilities (serving a smaller catchment or are targeted towards specific sporting activity). These include:

- Llewellyn Park (former tip site) limited jumps on shale/gravel surface embankment. Used by BMX riders and Mountain bike riders.
- Wadhurst Reserve Wantirna South (old motocross/BMX site within the conservation area). Not well utilised now and has been identified to contain significant remnant indigenous vegetation.
- Timothy Street - in Knoxfield. Informal jumps developed by local young people with some assistance from Council.
- Caribbean Rollerama in Scoresby – indoor centre catering for inline and roller sport. Includes artistic and speed skating and inline and roller hockey.
- Roller City Bayswater – indoor centre catering for inline and roller sport. Includes artistic and speed skating and inline and roller hockey.

6.3 Regional Facilities

Facilities in the region include:

- "The Shed" – located in Cranbourne – indoor centre with entry charges. Extensive facility that accommodates the needs of a wide range of users.
- Endeavour Hills skate park – recently established steel 'street' set up.
- Warehouse 20 in Noble Park. Located near Waverley Gardens Shopping Centre. Was a privately operated indoor facility, recently closed.
- Central Reserve, Glen Waverley – some street and vert equipment. Extensive regional facility recently developed. Very well utilised facility.
- Vermont South – Competition Vert ramp. Soon to be expanded by the City of Whitehorse to accommodate street style activity.

- Hemmings Park in Dandenong. Completed recently. Extensive facility incorporating both street and vert components. Concrete construction. Very well utilised facility.

6.4 Spine Skate Ramp

The City of Knox established a steel 'spine ramp' at Eildon Parade Reserve Rowville in 1999. As a result of resident complaints about drinking, vandalism, drug use and violence, Council elected to remove the ramp five months later.

Since then, alternative sites were identified, but no suitable location could be determined. As a result the dismantled ramp has been stored at the Council depot awaiting a decision on its future.

There has been considerable community interest in the re-establishment of the ramp facility, including a petition from local young people seeking a safer and better quality skate facility in Knox and considerable local media coverage.

The consultation process undertaken throughout development of the Skate and BMX Plan has sought to identify suitable locations for the re-establishment of the spine ramp, based on logical and clear criteria to ensure the best outcome for skaters and riders. Findings from the consultation favoured the development of a high standard centralised facility that could accommodate the needs of all skaters and riders. The spine ramp could be used to compliment such a facility. The findings are discussed in more detail in the following section of this report.

6.5 Temporary Skate and BMX Facilities

The consultants were asked to investigate the feasibility of locating temporary skate and BMX facilities. These facilities typically fall into two categories:

- **May be periodically located at a range of strategic sites** throughout the municipality and moved after a designated period. Some issues exist with transportable facilities as they do not engender community ownership. Users may begin to participate at a temporary site and it is then moved to another location. In addition, finding suitable locations that are highly visible and do not impinge residential amenity problematic. The ongoing cost to move this equipment (which is usually heavy and cumbersome) presents additional concerns. In addition, such facilities usually require a higher level of maintenance, as ongoing transportation can cause damage to equipment.
- **Facilities erected for short periods** specifically for events, competition etc. These are usually hired from private operators that offer demonstrations, coaching etc. These are particularly successful as an adjunct to existing facilities, but in most cases are not supported by users in the absence of permanent high quality facilities.

The consultation undertaken with the community did not indicate strong support for mobile facilities, with high standard, centrally located permanent facilities the preferred option.

In addition, a range of LGA's around Melbourne were contacted to gauge their experiences with temporary facilities. Opinions were mixed, with both positive and negative comments made. This information is outlined in more detail in the following chapter of the report.

6.6 Dirt Jumps in Open Space Areas

Knox has a range of open space areas that are used by the community for a variety of leisure activities. However, in the less developed areas, where tracts of open space are available, young people often

create dirt jump areas with or without permission of the landowners (whether this be Council, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water or privately owned land).

This issue is common for many LGA's and to date, the majority have difficulties addressing the issue. Whilst the development of dirt jumps often involves a great deal of work and creativity by riders, without the approval of the landowner potential risks are apparent. In addition, jumps can cause damage to sensitive environmental areas, hinder other people's leisure activity, negatively impact on the visual amenity of parks and pose problems for neighbouring residents. In some cases, residents view the creation of jumps as a form of vandalism, which does not assist the development of the sport.

Some Councils have sought appropriate sites to allow riders to erect jumps, and in some cases have supplied dirt, bobcats and water to assist. Knox Council has taken a proactive approach to addressing this issue. When jumps have been identified in inappropriate locations generally the users have been consulted and provided with an alternative location (sometimes in the same reserve).

Ideally, the creation of dirt jump sites at appropriate sites would be desirable. That way, Council could promote these locations and remove jumps in inappropriate areas as they arise.

6.7 Skating in Public Areas and the Street

The diverse urban character of Knox has a number of implications for development of skating and BMX activities in the City. In the developed areas, (including streets, schools, office blocks and shopping centres etc.), participants are likely to utilise built structures for street skating and BMX. Street environments offer new, interesting and often unpredictable challenges that may not be provided at purpose built facilities. However, it appears that more injuries to skaters and riders occur in the street environment than at purpose built facilities.

Whilst skating and riding in public spaces presents some issues relating to how participants interact with pedestrians, infrastructure and vehicles, prohibiting access does not appear to be an effective resolution. Skating and BMX is a legitimate form of transport that requires innovative approaches to managing how all parties can interact in public areas.

Education regarding responsible skating and riding, signage, 'skater friendly' design of streets and public spaces, installing speed calming devices in high risk areas etc. are all measures to be considered by Council to ensure the safety of participants and the general public. Involving skaters and riders in planning may also assist. In addition, the positioning of skate facilities may alleviate problems associated with skaters in some areas where risk of collision is high.

7 Consultation

7.1 Introduction

As part of the preparing the Plan, consultation was undertaken in order to involve Knox City Council Officers, peak bodies, Local Government Authorities and the community in establishing the future direction for skating and BMX activity in Knox. Information was sought regarding a range of issues including:

- Demand for skating and BMX activity in Knox
- Identification of issues for Knox and other municipalities
- Best Practice models
- Policy directions
- Standards of facility provision across the metropolitan area
- User needs and requirements

Consultation included:

- Interviews and meetings with relevant Knox City Council Officers;
- Interviews with representatives from the main peak skate and BMX bodies;
- Interviews with skaters and riders at the Knox Skate Park Facility;
- Telephone interviews with a range of Officers from metropolitan LGA's;
- Telephone interviews with a private provider of skating facilities and event operator;
- Presentation and discussion with Councillors;
- Liaison with the Youth Advisory Committee;
- A focus group meeting with young people, youth workers and representatives from local skating and BMX organisations.

A discussion paper was prepared to inform those consulted regarding the range of issues associated with skating and BMX activity in the municipality.

7.2 Telephone Interviews with Council Officers

Telephone interviews were conducted with relevant key Council Officers regarding planning and management issues relating to skating and BMX activity in the City. Officers were asked general questions surrounding any ongoing issues facing Council in their respective areas of professional expertise. The following key issues were raised during the interviews:

- Council has several skate and BMX facilities, both formal and informal. The only significant sites are at Knox Park and Knox Skate Park.
- There is a solid demand from local residents requiring public space for skating and BMX activity.

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- Young women have also approached officers seeking to access sites. However, observations have indicated the sports are male dominated making participation for young women difficult. It is believed that there is a need for greater female role models in the sports and development by the peak bodies to encourage greater female participation. This has occurred to some degree with Surfing.
- A dilemma for Council when developing skate/BMX facilities is whether to only establish the facilities, or programming activities and events at the sites. Programming could bring some benefits (ie. encourage more participation, particularly by young women) but can be costly to undertake.
- Skating and BMX events have been held during the Knox Festival. Participation has been high, but male dominated.
- Some Officers were impressed by the degree of organisation of users of the skate/BMX sites. There appears to be unwritten rules or behavioural codes that govern whose turn it is to skate, skater etiquette etc. The system appears to work very well with little argument between users, even in the different sports.
- Some Officers noted some parental support at the Knox Skate Park. It was believed that parents were not just there in a supervisory role, but were transported young people to their chosen activity and supported their involvement. This is very similar to support offered through formalised sporting club structures.
- The Knox Skate Park is very well used, but is old. It has a range of positive aspects however. Users appreciate that it is accessible, is not guarded or fenced and is free to use. The facility appears to engender a sense of “community or belonging”. Lewis Road appears to “work”.
- Development of facilities in Rowville did not prove to be successful and were removed due to the impact on local residents. Considerable consultation has occurred since the removal of the ramp. However, young people still have an expectation that the spine ramp will be re-commissioned. Young people have expressed concerns that no resolution has been forthcoming.
- The Youth Plan identified the need for a skate facility in the municipality
- Mountain boarders (hybrid version of skating on rough sloped terrain with soft rubber wheels and long boards) have contacted Council to access sites where they could develop trails and jumps.
- Local young people have developed some sites. In a few cases there has been support from Council (usually in the provision of soil for jumps, use of bobcats etc.)
- The community developed a motorcross facility (Wadhurst Reserve) some ten years ago. Local residents (parents and children) approached Council for a parcel of land to develop the facility and Council provided some assistance with soil etc. This site did accommodate some competitions organised by local residents, however in recent times has been relatively unused. Recent surveys have identified a range of remnant vegetation and plants of local significance. As a result, signage has been erected at the reserve highlighting the sensitivity of the area. The longer-term plan is to revegetate and restore the area. To date some maintenance works have been undertaken to ensure the site is safe (ie. removal of concrete etc.)
- Some issues exist with young people digging and erecting jumps in environmentally significant areas. Over the past 5 years Council has generally taken the approach of consulting with young people to assist in developing sites in more appropriate areas and removing existing jumps. In some cases Council have provided land, soil and use of bobcats.

- Development of Masterplans for specific sites has often considered provision of BMX facilities. Some reserve Masterplan designs have included mounded areas for BMX activity.
- In some cases Council has had to remove jumps and restore areas without consulting users. The systems that have been employed appear to be operating successfully with few complaints from local residents.
- The focus is on minimising impact on the environment, without severely impacting on the recreation aspirations of local residents

7.3 Focus Group Meeting – Internal Council Officers

As part of the consultation a meeting was held on Thursday 24th January 2002 at the Knox City Council involving relevant Council officers. The main objectives of the meeting were:

- To discuss the role of the group, project management and subsequent time-lines of the project
- Discuss the need for the Plan
- Identify and discuss relevant issues associated with skating and BMX activity in the City
- Develop a discussion paper to inform Council and the community of the range of issues to be addressed through the Plan development.

A great range of issues were canvassed at the meeting. The following is a summary of the issues raised:

- Questions were raised regarding Council's role be in the provision of skating and BMX activity;
- There was a need for guidelines that provided an Evaluation Criteria for sites, standards of provision, policy and funding directions etc;
- A hierarchal classification of sites was favoured to assist planned provision. Existing sites needed to be evaluated. In addition, a question was raised whether there were existing facilities that could have significant improvement to meet the needs of users.
- Consideration needed to be given to the management of facilities in the longer term.
- Sites that did not impose on residents and high profile facilities were favoured.
- Guidance was needed regarding the future use of the spine ramp that was previously located at Eildon Reserve in Rowville.
- Greater linkages were needed between the Knox Skate Park and Knox City Shopping Centre. This may be achieved through signage, landscaping and community education.
- Questions were raised regarding how accessible the Knox Skate Park was from other areas and what public transport was available.
- There was a need to encourage local 'ownership' of the Knox Skate Park to ensure it was used in the right manner and maintained by users (ie. litter removed, damage to the site minimised).
- The wide range of participation was discussed (ie. formal, informal, active, passive).
- There was a lack of female participation in the sport and few role models.

- There were limited opportunities for future facility development, due to lack of suitable land.
- The ongoing cost to maintain the Knox Skate Park was approximately \$9000 per annum.
- There was a need to address landscaping around sites and provision of amenities.
- Insurance and risk management concerns were raised. There was a need to minimise exposure to litigation.
- Safety and security could be a concern at some remote locations.
- There was a need for ongoing community input in the development of sites
- Skaters and riders appeared to be accepting of the need to travel to access good quality facilities
- Sites should be designed to adapt to new trends in the sport and be multi use
- Programming, events and demonstrations should be considered in the design of municipal level skate and BMX facilities. There may be some requirement to accommodate spectators
- There was a need to clearly identify target market when developing sites
- There was a need to recognise the ongoing recurrent cost of sites. Council could not build sites and then not manage and maintain
- There was a need for positive marketing and education relating to the sports to change some public perceptions about users. In addition a proactive approach to graffiti was needed. Sites could be promoted as places where legal artworks could be established.
- Design should consider security, surveillance and impact on residents
- Sites should be central to the community and not remote. Adjoining uses should be compatible or complimentary
- There was a need to involve young people in design of sites to engender more ownership
- Council should avoid duplication of facilities

7.4 Focus Group Meeting - Stakeholders

A meeting was held on February 27 at Knox City Council involving Council officers, local young people with an interest in skating, inline and BMX, representatives from the sport of Mountain Boarding, a representative from the Knox BMX Club and an outreach worker from Open Family (at Knox City Shopping Centre). The aims of the meeting were:

- To discuss relevant issues to the study
- To inform stakeholders of the need for the Plan, progress to that point and anticipated directions.
- To gain feedback from potential users of facilities in Knox and their requirements.

The main issues raised at the meeting included:

- The representatives from Mountain Boarding indicated that the sport includes freestyle, dirt board cross, downhill, combination down jump etc. Mountain Boarding was still a growing activity that did not have wide community awareness. However, the sport was gaining more acceptance with national

and state events and some media coverage. The technology of the sport is constantly improving. Boarders in Knox use Llewellyn Reserve, but the site is limited and could be improved for freestyle. Boarders were also looking for sites for the downhill version of the sport. Disused quarries good sites for downhill. The sport needs less gradient than mountain biking.

- A group of young people from Rowville indicated that they skated at their school (Rowville Secondary College) or the Knox Skate Park. The school was a good site as it had plenty of rails and stairs. The skaters/riders indicated that they generally walked, took the bus or travelled by car to facilities. Public transport was a problem as it did not always bring them close enough to sites. In addition, users indicated that they were not allowed to take bikes, and in some cases skateboards, on buses. Other facilities used included 'The Shed' in Cranbourne and Warehouse 20 (now closed). Users indicated the Knox Skate Park was well located. Overhanging trees and drainage were an issue at Knox Skate Park. It was important for facilities to be located in close proximity to skate and bike shops.
- An outreach worker from Open Family in Knox indicated that the Knox City shopping centre management wanted young people in the shopping centre. Part of the role of Open Family was to facilitate better relationships with young people and the centre. The representative indicated interest from the centre management in the development of skate facilities. This could alleviate some issues with skating in inappropriate areas and potential conflicts with shoppers. It was highlighted that security was an issue for young people. Knox City was a high profile transport hub and a meeting place for young people.
- A representative from Knox BMX Club indicated the club ran events run once a month. The club has a membership of 70, but the sport was fairly transient. BMX competition was experiencing a downward participation trend nationally. It is not a 'kiss & drop' sport, which meant high parental involvement. It is also reasonably expensive sport to participate in. American's dominate the sport, but Australia still has some good riders. The sport is supported through the Australian Institute of Sport.

7.5 Interviews with Sporting Peak Bodies

Peak sports bodies representing skating, roller, inline and BMX activity were contacted to ascertain participation trends, facility design trends, regional issues and development in the sports. Currently, these bodies represent the organised competitive versions of the sports and do not include street or freestyle activities to any great extent. However, moves are afoot to include these more informal participation activities under the organisations banners. The following information was of note:

7.5.1 Roller Sports Victoria

- Represent inline skating, but more in the form of indoor hockey, artistic skating and speed skating.
- There is a push to set up a more traditional formalised inline skating and street skating into a single body representing participants Australia wide. This is in the process of being developed currently.
- Membership details for the sport are not clear however it was thought that there were around 200 artistic skaters.
- Current trends in the sport have indicated dropping in numbers of older age groups 16 and up. Artistic skating has seen decreasing male participation.

There has been steady membership increases in inline hockey. Speed skating is male dominated.

- There is concern Australia wide regarding declining numbers. There has been a loss of several rinks (usually privately operated). Clubs operate and train from rinks, meaning if rinks disappear, clubs have no venue to operate.
- Liability and insurance issues have also been a concern for clubs and venues.
- It is anticipated that over the next five years the sports growth will depend on availability of venues, as artistic skaters require indoor rinks. Inline sports often compete for time against volleyball, badminton and netball etc. (multi-purpose venues). Indoor hockey is increasing in popularity, but is constrained by a lack of suitable indoor venues.
- Recent trends in facility design are mainly related to risk management issues (ie. nets and screens for inline hockey, more protective equipment being used in speed and hockey, roller and inline hockey).
- The sport has limited sponsorship.
- The organisation is constrained by a lack of staffing resources. At present, a part-time administrator and volunteers operate the body. Funding is obtained through Sport and Recreation Victoria.

7.5.2 BMX Victoria

- BMX Victoria currently only deals with the track racing versions of the sports and does not cover dirt jumping, freestyle or street BMX riding.
- However, the body is seeking to integrate these informal activities under the same banner.
- Vicsport and racing conduct comprehensive surveys in regard to BMX racing.
- Membership numbers statewide were not known. Recently the World Titles were held in Victoria. After the world titles there is always a decrease then an increase in the sport.
- State events have riders coming from Victoria & Australia. There are 6 State events held in Victoria each year.
- Measures to attract new members mostly involve club promotion at the local level and advertise through their Websites.
- Current trends in the sport include an ongoing requirement to update and maintain track facilities all the time. All tracks are different, meaning different requirements at each facility.
- The organization interacts with Council's when interest exists from the public or clubs for new facilities. This usually occurs with the Officer responsible for sport and recreation to evaluate potential sites in an area, transportation, access etc.
- Sports development programs are generally coordinated through Sport and Recreation Victoria.

7.6 Interviews With Local Government Authorities

A range of telephone interviews were conducted with relevant officers from several Local Metropolitan and Outer ring Councils. Officers were asked a range of questions relating to their experiences with the development of skate and BMX facilities. The following information was received:

7.6.1 City of Greater Geelong

The City of Greater Geelong has a Regional skate park, 2 sub-regional and four local facilities, with a commitment to establish 2 new facilities each year. Existing facilities have very high use and have received strong support from Council. The Regional facilities cost around \$500,000, whilst the Local facilities cost between \$30,000 and \$80,000. Local facilities generally involve a concrete base and transportable apparatus in steel or pre cast concrete that is fixed to the slab.

Council has developed a policy that outlines a maximum capital commitment of \$15,000 for any facility. Therefore the onus is on the community to drive the process, not Council. This brings about greater ownership and alleviates many of the issues associated with resident complaints.

Council provides guidance (ie. design, site selection), but the community are to fund raise for the remaining development costs and undertake the required consultation. Whilst this approach is 'hands off', it has placed the responsibility with the community to get behind the projects where a significant need exists.

In addition, Council owns transportable equipment that is hired through Youth Services. This equipment is moved through the City, but is also hired out to other municipalities. The equipment can be hired, or can also be supported by Council Staff who offer coaching etc. Equipment, safety gear and skateboards are also available with the apparatus. The rental to other Council has been a very successful venture and the equipment is hired out most weekends.

The equipment is transported on a tandem trailer, as it is of light construction mainly aluminium and steel frame with ply decks. The decks are replaced as needed. Council has to hire a vehicle (any large wagon – weighs 1.6 tonnes) to transport the equipment. The apparatus was purchased around the time of amalgamation and equipment is old. However, as it is hired out often, the apparatus is regularly inspected and repaired if required. The street style apparatus is light enough to be lifted by two people. Costs of purchase and ongoing provision are unclear. However, Officers are in the process of trying to realistically cost the program including assessment of maintenance and risk issues.

Hire of equipment is approximately \$220 a day, \$385 for a weekend and \$550 for a week. This does not include staff or transportation (staff costed around \$20 hour plus \$50 for transport, fuel etc). The average cost of hire is approximately \$650.

A positive aspect of the program is that skaters are the workers. They provide clinics, undertake maintenance and transport the equipment. This has resulted in employment opportunities for young people through Council. The program is very time consuming to run, but it is unlikely that a private operator could deliver such a program, as the cost of insurance is prohibitive.

7.6.2 City of Whitehorse

Council has recently completed a Skate Strategy that is out for public comment. The City of Whitehorse has one existing site in Burwood Highway, Vermont South. The site has a competition level vert ramp. The ramp was moved around 5 years ago. Previously it was located behind the Vermont Shopping Centre, however residential development and increasing complaints about anti-social behaviour meant a more high profile location was sought.

The Skate Strategy has recommended the further development of the existing Vermont South site (to a Local Level provision), and establishment of 2 additional sites that could cater for a more regional catchment. The site selections for the new facilities were high profile locations with good access and were assessed using detailed criteria.

Extensive consultation was undertaken throughout the development of the strategy, with more anticipated at the design phase of the new facilities. To date, community feedback has been positive, with great expectation surrounding the pending development.

Another interesting recommendation of the Skate Strategy was proposed development of skate and BMX apparatus along the existing shared trails network. This could mean that skater and riders using the trail could address apparatus (ie. grind rails) at strategic locations along the trails, resulting in greater recreational potential of the trails.

Whitehorse has one existing BMX Jumps track in Heatherdale. Officers indicated a future need to develop more specific policy around how to deal with BMX jumps in the future, as currently jumps are removed as they appear.

Council did have a transportable vert ramp at one stage, but the high cost to move it around proved prohibitive in the long term.

7.6.3 Boroondara City Council

Boroondara established one of the largest skate parks in Victoria in the year 2000 after an extensive planning and consultation process. The site is fenced and manned by security staff (which was part of initial agreement to construct the site).

Considerable research was undertaken during the planning of the site to address risk management and safety issues. Advice provided to Council indicated a need to establish appropriate signage and to ensure regular inspections, cleaning and maintenance to avoid potential risk for users that could result in liability for Council.

Council is in the process of determining whether to further extend the existing site to cater more for beginners and expand its recreational value. The site has been well utilised and is well known across the metropolitan area. It has received some degree of complaints from local residents, however this was not unexpected due to the nature of siting skate facilities.

Council has had some issues with the erection of BMX dirt jumps on inappropriate sites. In this case young people had generally constructed jumps on Council land without the permission of Council. Council has recognised the need for some facilities and more formal policy, however more research needs to be undertaken and greater assessment of potential sites.

7.6.4 City of Casey

Council engaged consultants to undertake a Skate Strategy that was adopted in 1999. The strategy was developed in response to a large number of requests from the community to construct skate and BMX facilities. The strategy proved a successful process as it identified 4 key development sites and enabled Council to seek funds from Sport and Recreation Victoria (successfully procured) for development of each site. Sites have been established at:

- Tooradin – which serves people in the coastal parts of the municipality;
- Endeavour hills - which services the Northern part of city;
- Cranbourne – serving the southern area; and
- Narre Warren – (being developed) has a catchment of 50,000 people in a 10 kilometre radius

The focus is to create provision along the central spine of the municipality. In addition, Council supports the Salvation Army who operates 'The Shed' in Cranbourne. The indoor

skate facility is located in a factory owned by Council and provided at a subsidised rental. Users pay to enter the facility and its financial performance has been solid.

Council also has 2 mobile vert ramps that are positioned in areas not easily accessible by public transport. The ramps are moved around 4 times each year to a range of identified sites. These sites are chosen using a criteria that includes suitability (ie. not too wet), residential amenity, distance to properties, noise factors, past experiences at the site. Sites are generally Council reserves that have some carparking.

There are some inherent issues in promoting where the mobile ramps are to be located. Currently this is done through word of mouth at Youth Services and the Youth Bus. However, Council is seeking to develop a calendar of where and when the ramps will be located (with a rider subject to site suitability). In addition, a card may be developed advertising the sites for the year.

The cost to transport the ramps is around \$800 each time for each ramp. However this does not include staff or vehicle costs. The ramps need to be transported using specifically designed trailers and are towed by Council road maintenance trucks with pilot vehicles.

In order to minimise risk, Council Officer inspects all facilities and signage regularly to no vandalism or damage has occurred that could pose risk to users

7.6.5 Council: Yarra Ranges

Yarra Ranges has a bowl in Lilydale and a street style park in Yarra Glen. A new facility in Upwey is currently being developed.

Council is currently developing a skate strategy that will identify new sites. Yarra Ranges, like Casey has a number of remote locations and a large geographic area, making it difficult for users to access one central site.

Finding suitable land is an issue for Council particularly flat land in the outer lying areas. Many residents do not want facilities located close to their premises making site selection difficult.

BMX dirt jumps often appear in unsuitable locations and have to be removed. It is Council's view that the dirt structures erected by riders create potential for accident and injury.

Council recently purchased mobile street style equipment for an event. However, the equipment takes over two hours (using two people) to position on a truck takes more than two hours to set up at the site. Council is undecided as to the future of the equipment. Presently it is being hired out (ie. to B-Cubed for the Knox Festival) to recoup some of the purchase cost (Approximately \$17,000). Cost of hiring equipment is approximately \$1200-\$1500 a weekend plus transport costs. There is some potential for the equipment to be used to service remote areas in the municipality.

7.6.6 Mornington Peninsula Shire Council

Council developed a Skate Strategy in 1999 that identified 4 sites for equipment to be located. This included 2 portable vert ramps (one small ramp on the Bay side and another on the Westernport side). The ramps are located in a township for approximately one month and then transported to another location. The ramps were purchased around 6 years ago and cost around \$200 for a contractor to transport. The ramps are mostly on grass or dirt areas, sometimes at the beach. Ramps are regularly inspected and signage is checked to ensure it has not been vandalised.

Site selection usually includes such issues as:

- Suitability of surface (ie. not too wet)
- Distance to residential properties
- Any reported past problems with a site

Therefore, portable facilities are usually located on Council reserves or carparks.

Some issues have been raised in regards to difficulty in promoting where portable facilities are to be located. Council has sought to address this by promotion through Youth Services and using the youth bus to promote sites. Council is also looking to develop a calendar and card to inform the community regarding facility locations.

7.6.7 Summary of Consultation with Local Government Authorities

The interviews identified that each Council has a different approach in dealing with the complex issues of skate and BMX facility provision. Some key themes did exist however. These included:

- Council's that had developed Skate/BMX Strategies generally had resolved many of the issues that exist, through good planning and consultation.
- The majority of facilities receive high usage by young people.
- Skate facilities were reasonably cost effective and generated higher participation, when compared with traditional provision of sporting reserves.
- There were difficult issues in responding to resident complaints. Most people support the provision of skate and BMX facilities, but do not want it located near them.
- High profile sites were favoured, as opposed to sites out of the view of residential properties or main roads.
- There was a constant stream of requests for new facilities, even where Council provision was high.
- Risk management and liability issues were usually dealt with by adequate signage, and regular inspections to ensure no hazards were prevalent.

7.7 Interview With Not-for-Profit Skating Event Coordinator

In interview was conducted with a representative from B-Cubed, a not for profit organization that works mainly through churches. B-Cubed run events aimed at young people and generally involve skating and BMX activity.

The organisation operates skating and BMX events on both portable and also use non-portable facilities. They are often contracted by Council's (including Knox) to run such events at festivals etc., in some cases for a single day, or for a weekend. Events range from large (ie. 2000 people) to small (50 people). It is important to have people who know the area before the event and the best sites to hold it.

The costs involved in operating such events using portable equipment include:

- Installation of equipment
- Delivery
- Transportation
- Insurance costs (which have consistently gone up)

B-Cubed covers the costs of insurance and is not subsidised. Insurance costs are 50% of the total event costs. Costs make it difficult to remain viable.

The organisation indicated that ideal sites for facilities were in built up, but non-residential areas and shopping centres.

Signage is important from a risk management perspective. Every competitor must sign an indemnity form and competitors sign agreeing that they will wear protective gear. Ramps are insured. As such, if there were an insurance issue regarding equipment the organisation would seek damages from the ramp company. Other considerations are helmets, safety barriers etc. B-Cubed also have put in place contingency plans, emergency plans etc.

7.8 Interviews With Skaters and Riders – Knox Skate Park (Lewis Road)

Skaters and riders were interviewed in order to gather information about the needs of skaters and riders in Knox. A total of 28 interviews were completed over a four week period, with users consulted in the afternoons and evenings at the park. The following is a summary of the findings:

Users were asked how they would characterise their skating style. The following responses were received:

- BMX (10 responses)
- Skateboarder (6)
- Skate – street (5)
- BMX Street (4)
- BMX – skate parks (3)
- Vert – BMX (2)
- BMX – Bowl (2)
- BMX tricks / jumps (2)
- Aggressive blading (1)
- Bit of everything skater (1)
- Everything (1)
- Motocross tracks / tricks / jumps (1)
- Freestyle (1)
- Scooter (1)
- BMX Freestyle (1)

Findings indicate a range of different activities conducted at the site.

Users were asked whether they had used the Knox Skate Park facility before during the past 12 months. 24 of the users indicated that they had used the facility.

Users were also asked how often they used the Knox Skate Park facility? The following responses were obtained:

- More than once a week (17)
- Once a month (6)
- First time (3)
- Not sure (2)

High regular usage of the facility, suggests those who are aware of the facility return often. This would also suggest that the facility provides reasonable quality skating and BMX activity and strong local support.

Users were asked how they heard about the Knox Skate Park facility. 85% of users of the facility had heard about it through a friend. Word of mouth is therefore an effective promotional method.

Users were asked how they travelled to the facility on the day that they were interviewed. The following responses were obtained:

- Skated / rode (15)
- Bus (5)
- Car – Friends (4)
- Car – drove (3)
- Car – Mum or Dad (1)

The majority of users interviewed (19 responses) indicated they intended staying at the skate facility for more than 120 minutes. The best aspects of the Knox Skate Park were considered to be:

- Bowls (22 responses)
- Social atmosphere / people (7)
- Caters for beginners (5)
- Grind blocks / boxes (5)
- Concrete – smoothness (3)
- 'Snake pit' - a section of the bowl (3)
- Close to home (2)
- Grind/hand rails (2)
- Banks (1)
- Clean (1)
- Contours – not much like other (1)
- Dirt jumps (1)
- Everything (1)
- Food (1)
- Good facilities (1)
- Good layout (1)
- Good fun (1)
- Locals are sick (1)
- Spine (1)
- New parks can get boring (1)

The worst aspects of the Knox Skate Park were?

- Cracks in concrete (5 responses)
- Dirt road / dust (4)
- No drinks (4)
- Grind boxes (4)

- Rocks/leaves/sticks on surface (4)
- Lighting (3)
- No girls (3)
- Too crowded (3)
- No toilets (3)
- BMX dirt jumps - need replacing (3)
- Drugs / theft (2)
- BMX riders take up too much room (2)
- Bowls (2)
- Graffiti (2)
- Glass on surface (2)
- Not enough street (2)

Knox Skate Park users indicated the worst aspects of the facility were the cracks in the concrete, the dirt road and the dust produced, the lack of drinking facilities, the grind boxes and the rocks / leaves and sticks that are commonly on the skating area.

Favourite skate / BMX facilities in the region were:

- Knox Skate Park– Lewis Reserve (10)
- The Shed (5)
- Dandenong/ Hemmings Park (5)
- Camberwell (3)
- Croydon (2)
- Alexandra Gardens (1)
- Elizabeth St. (old) (1)
- Endeavour Hills (1)
- Geelong (1)
- Glen Waverley (1)
- Mini Bowl (1)
- Skate bowl (1)
- Warehouse 20 (1)

The main attributes that made the above site their favourite were:

- Close location/Accessible (8)
- Variety (5)
- Size (3)
- Smooth surfaces (2)

Users were asked to rate several features of the Knox Skate Park facility on a scale of 1-5?

	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Don't Know
Level of difficulty	1	1	16	9		1
Range of components	4	10	9	5		
Range of skill levels catered for	1	6	12	5	4	
Accessibility ie. near to public transport	3	5	5	10	5	
Crowds	3	7	8	7	2	
Proximity to food and drinks	8	7	6	5	2	
Proximity to telephone	7	10	3	3	1	2
Proximity to skate/BMX shops	2	1	10	10	4	
Surrounding Environment	5	4	9	8	2	
Proximity to Water taps	7	3	7	5	2	4
Signage ie. easy to find	5	12	5	3	1	1
Proximity to Petrol stations ie. to pump tyres etc	2	12	6	3	1	4
Safety	8	6	9	3	2	
Security and lighting	15	9	1	2		1

The features of the Knox Skate Park facility that rated the best response from users were:

- Accessibility ie. near public transport;
- Proximity to skate / BMX shops;
- Surrounding environment;
- Level of difficulty; and
- Range of skill levels catered for.

The features of the Knox Skate Park facility that rated the lowest response were:

- Security and lighting;
- Signage ie. easy to find
- Proximity to telephone; and
- Proximity to food and drinks.

Users were asked what other skate facilities they have used in the past 12 months?

- Camberwell (11 responses)
- The Shed – Cranbourne (9)
- Dandenong (6)
- Glen Waverley (5)
- Lilydale Bowl - Lilydale (4)
- Carrington – Knox (3)
- Croydon (3)
- Knox BMX track (3)

- Alexandra – City (2)
- Endeavour Hills (2)
- Lilydale (2)
- Self-made ramp (2)
- Warehouse 20 indoor – Waverley Gardens (2)

This suggests that skaters and riders utilise a wide range of other facilities and are willing to travel to access them. Issues that were important to users when choosing a venue to skate / ride were:

- Range of skill levels catered for (7 responses)
- Safety (6)
- Variety range (6)
- Close to home (5)
- What it has to offer (3)
- Close to shops (2)
- Facilities (2)
- Quality (2)
- Street / vert / jumps (2)
- Surroundings are good (2)
- Boxes (1)
- Cleanliness – ie. Dirt, glass (1)
- Condition (1)
- Crowds (1)
- Don't really care (1)
- Drinks (1)
- Fun (1)
- Good locals **(1)**
- Half pipes (1)
- Handrails (1)
- Just try it - don't stay at one place (1)
- Location (1)
- Meet more people (1)
- People you can trust (1)
- Security (1)
- Size of the bowl & jumps (1)
- Smoothness of concrete (1)
- Stuff for BMX riders (1)
- The set up – ramps etc
- Toilets (1)

Users indicated that the issues most important to them when choosing a venue to skate or ride was the 'range of skill levels catered for', 'safety', 'variety range' and whether the facility is 'close to home'.

Users were asked if there were other skating / BMX activities that are not provided that they would like to see offered locally?

- Box jump (4)
- Grinding (4)
- Mini ramp (4)
- Ramps (4)
- Stairs (4)
- Fun boxes (3)
- More dirt jumping (3)
- Street (3)
- Competitions (2)
- No (2)
- Canteen (1)
- Clean water – tap (1)
- Cover some of the bowls (1)
- More facilities (1)
- More parks (1)
- More poles (1)
- More street skating (1)
- Shade cover for rain when skating (1)
- Toilets – footy closed (1)
- Wall rides (1)
- Rubbish bins / dumpster (1)

More street apparatus was favoured with users indicating that they would like to see 'box jumps', 'grinding', 'mini ramp', 'ramps' and 'stairs'. Improvements sought at Knox Skate Park were:

- Expand on existing facilities (6 responses)
- Grind blocks (4)
- Ground fixed, leaves & rocks (4)
- More ramps (4)
- Fun box (3)
- Remove cracks in concrete (3)
- Cover (2)
- Dirt jumps (2)
- Mini ramp (2)
- More street (2)
- Needs to be bigger (2)

Expand on existing facilities, improving surfaces and more street style equipment was sought by users. There was high satisfaction with the site however, with most respondents (26) indicating that they would recommend the park to family / friends.

Users were asked whether they would consider using a temporary facility (ie. ramps, vert ramp etc) that could be transported anywhere in Knox. There was high support with 27 responses indicating that they supported temporary facilities.

Users were asked their opinion on the best location for one central skate / BMX facility in Knox?

- Knox Skate Park(20)
- Next to the bowl, Round here next to the oval (4)
- 1 minute from shops (1)
- Behind the bowling centre (1)
- Close to shopping centre (1)
- Don't know (1)
- Egan Lee reserve – close to home

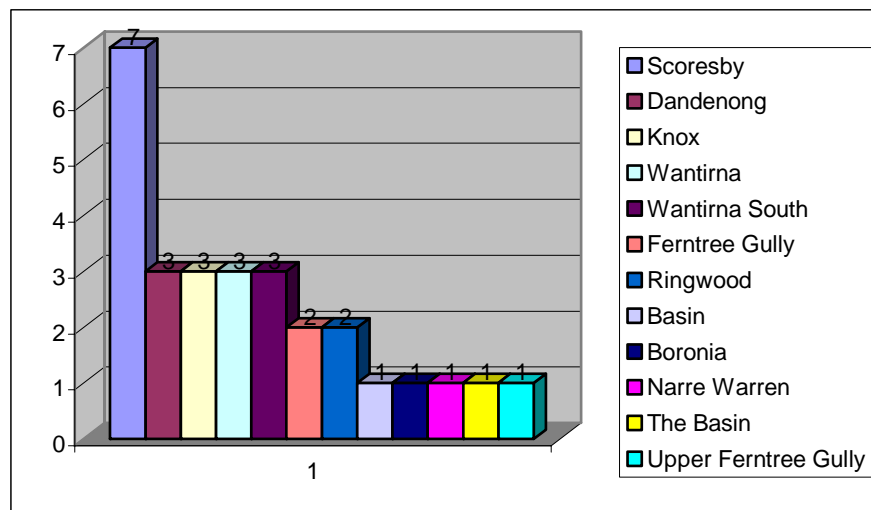
A number of suggestions were made as to what Council could do to improve the sport of skating / BMX in Knox. These included:

- Advertise / promote (6 responses)
- Better and more things to ride at existing facilities (4)
- Competitions (4)
- Add more to the skate park (3)
- Cater for all levels (2)
- Let skating at the shopping centre (2)
- Food & drink shop close to ramp (1)
- Big skate parks (1)
- Build box jumps and dirt jumps and sub boxes and street courses (1)
- Do up the bowl and get good BMX shops **(1)**
- Grinding **(1)**
- Half pipe **(1)**
- Just let people skate at Knox **(1)**
- Keep it safe - but don't bow to community pressure - stick with long term goals - Rowville was a bad example (1)
- Lighting for at night (1)
- Mini ramps - more concrete (1)
- More area to skate (1)
- More dirt jumps (1)
- More parks (1)
- Revamp the whole bowl (1)
- Signs (1)
- Square rails instead of round (1)
- Staff (1)
- Support it (1)
- Teach kids – people to come down (1)
- Toilets / taps / more amenities (1)

Users were given an opportunity to provide additional comments. Comments made included:

- Build the place better with help of locals in design
- Clean it up
- Council needs to pay more attention to what people say. This has been wanted for years
- 'Fix it'
- Good for skilled riders / skaters
- Improving the image of the facility would stop a lot of trouble which generally wasn't caused by people who regularly use the park
- It gets crowded with everyone from all styles around
- Fix up the existing dirt jumps at the Knox facility so we can ride some thing other than skate parks
- Needs more bowls
- There's no shade and no drinks / was thirsty
- There's not much shade and too many leaves and sticks on the ground

All 28 respondents were male with the majority aged between 11 and 22 years of age. A couple of users were in the 23-30 and over 30 age range. The suburbs of residence of park users were as follows:



Knox Skate Park users came from 12 different suburbs with the Scoresby representing the most users. Interestingly on three users were from Knox, indicating some willingness of users to travel to the facility from a relatively wide catchment.

7.9 Summary

The consultation process has identified a range of issues to be addressed in the development of a future strategy for skating and BMX in the City. The following issues are of note:

- The large variety in the forms of skating and riding requires facilities to be flexible in design, incorporating components to suit many styles and levels of skill.

- The 'street' facilities in Knox do not currently service the needs of users. Street skaters will skate at shopping centres, schools and other public places if skate facilities don't provide adequate facilities.
- BMX dirt jumps at Knox Skate Park are in need of significant repair or removal. They were not properly constructed and now are becoming dangerous, particularly as they are located in close proximity to the bowls.
- With many users of Knox Skate Park returning frequently, it appears that the facility provides a good level of activity. However, changes in trends in the sport suggest a need for more variety for users.
- In order to increase participation of the sport and usage of the facility there is a need for better promotion of the current facilities available. Current promotion of facilities is minimal and there appears to be some need for increased signage. Also there could be more promotion done through schools to educate about the sport and safe and responsible activity.
- There is willingness for users to travel to utilise facilities.
- With the facility being used for longer than two hours, issues such as lighting, amenities and areas to socialise are likely to be a factor. Social interaction is also an important part of the skating scene. Features such as benches and seats would encourage this further.
- The bowls are the most liked feature of the facility (which is not surprising considering they are the main feature of the facility). Skaters like the fact that the facility caters for different users including skaters, inliners, scooters and BMX.
- Skaters have expressed a desire for more facilities, in particular street-style aspects.
- There are several maintenance issues that are associated with this facility, including;
 - Cracks in the concrete, requires new concrete
 - Build up of dirt on the surface caused by dirt road access, possibility of laying a portion of the road in bitumen to prevent this.
 - Water taps needed, existing tap does not provide clean drinking water, positioning the tap closer to the skate facility would be more beneficial to the skaters / riders.
 - Sticks / leaves and rocks on surface caused by overhanging trees.
- Knox Skate Park was the most popular facility. This is likely to be associated with the fact that skaters and riders prefer to use facilities close to home where they can also interact with other frequent users.
- Users indicated their preference for facilities close to home, associating less travel, quicker access to the facility and also a familiar environment with other regular users, providing social benefits.
- Users are seeking:
 - variety (catering for varying proficiencies and different types of skaters/riders)
 - improved features (ie. Grind boxes)
 - large facilities (so they are not crowded and provide more variety and allow for different styles)
 - smoother ground (ie. for safety by preventing falls and injuries caused by bad surfaces)
 - increased security – secluded spot (not visible from road or shopping centre)

- Users have expressed a desire for better food and drink facilities in close proximity. There is a water tap provided at the facility, however some riders indicated that the water is quite often not suitable for drinking. A suggestion was made that a soft drink vending machine could be positioned in front of sports pavilion.
- Users expressed a willingness to utilise a range of facilities across the Melbourne area. There is a need for new challenges and different environments. However, frequent use appears to be at local facilities, with travel to other areas only on 'special' occasions.
- Users are prepared to use temporary facilities (which aligns with their need for more facilities and more variety).
- Development of central facilities was favoured to be near the existing Knox Skate Park. The location is central, is well known and has good access to public transport. In addition, skaters indicated retained existing facilities would maximise Council resources, without the need to establish a completely new facility.
- Users favour greater promotion of the sport. Skaters and riders indicated they wanted to have more competitions in Knox. This could also be used for promotion and sports development, as it generates interest and awareness and further legitimises skating and BMX as a sport.

8 SWOT Analysis

8.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the many issues raised throughout the course of the Plan. The analysis addresses the range of findings outlined in the previous chapters. It is aimed at establishing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to skating and BMX activities in Knox (SWOT Analysis).

Undertaking a SWOT Analysis is a recognised method for analysing large amounts of information, identifying trends, gaps and or oversupply in service and providing a means to formulating strategies and recommendations. The SWOT analysis will be used in this case to raise key issues and to assist in formulating recommendations regarding the future skate and BMX Plan for the municipality.

8.2 Strengths

- High participation in the sports at the national, state and local level.
- Expansion of the age ranges of skaters and riders.
- Increased community profile of the sports.
- Increased community awareness relating to the sports.
- Organised and interested group of young skaters and riders in the City. They have been passionate about the development of better facilities.
- Established sites that have reasonable levels of utilisation.
- An established central skate park that has a good level of awareness is accessible to public transport and a major shopping precinct (Knox City).
- Development of a Plan, ensuring a planned approach to provision and increased potential to obtain funding from external agencies.
- Commitment by Council to increasing skating and BMX opportunities.
- Past experiences in positioning facilities in inappropriate locations, and lessons for the future.
- Strong skate and BMX retail industry in the City to support users.

8.3 Weaknesses

- Ongoing perception that skating and BMX is highly dangerous and a 'fad'.
- Lack of appropriate sites available for new developments.
- Lack of up to date facilities (ie. facilities are ageing).
- Facilities do not reflect current trends in the sport (ie. a lack of street components).
- Facilities do not cater well for a range of skill levels.
- Questions as to the safety of existing sites.
- No policy relating to dirt jumps being erected without permission of the landowner.
- Lack of promotion regarding the sport and available facilities.

- Lack of amenities at existing facilities to promote greater use.
- No committed resources to development of new sites.
- Sport is male dominated.

8.4 Opportunities

- The former Rowville spine ramp being located at Knox Skate Park (even in the short term) to ensure it is utilised.
- Using temporary facilities for events, competition etc. as an adjunct to existing sites.
- Development of a central facility that meets the needs of skaters and riders as identified in the consultation.
- Increase profile and sports development.
- Involvement of more girls and women in the sport.
- Increased education regarding safety and responsible use.
- Involving skaters and riders in the design of facilities.
- Involving skaters and riders in the ongoing management of facilities.
- Establishing good standard sites for Mountain Boarders.
- Attracting elite competitors to the area to use newly developed facilities.
- Increased participation by young people in active and healthy recreation pursuits.
- Facilities that can be designed to change in response to new trends in the sport.
- Ability to hold high-level events at a new facility (if developed).
- Programming, events, coaching and sports development.
- Joint funding options.
- Enhanced streetscapes to encourage improved interaction between skaters/riders, pedestrians, vehicles, and infrastructure.
- Presenting young people with options for active leisure participation.

8.5 Threats

- No facilities developed, as has strongly pursued by local users (potentially resulting in frustration by local skaters and lack of development in the sports).
- Lack of ongoing maintenance of facilities.
- No policy development or strategies to address risk management issues at the sites.
- Locating facilities in sites that negatively impact on local residents or are not safe and secure for skaters and riders.
- Ongoing development of dirt jumps at inappropriate sites, resulting in negative impact on the environment.
- Lack of ownership by skaters/riders.
- Damage and vandalism.
- Liability issues inherent in the sports (if not managed).
- Development of sites that are not publicly accessible.

9 Key Issues

9.1 Introduction

The SWOT Analysis has identified a number of key issues to be addressed by the Skate and BMX Plan. In order to ensure that skaters and riders in Knox continue to have access to opportunities to participate in activity. It is considered that to be successful, the Plan will need to:

- Identify Council's role in the provision of skating and BMX activities to address need in the community.
- Support the development of the sports as legitimate activity.
- Positively promote the sports to the wider community to assist in greater understanding about skating and BMX and encourage parental support.
- Identify appropriate sites for skate/BMX facilities and determine a hierarchal classification to meet the needs of the community.
- Identify funding opportunities to develop or enhance sites.
- Determine workable and viable ongoing management practices for each site in Knox.
- Ensure urban design and planning practices accommodate the needs of skaters and riders.
- Facilitate increasing participation in skating and BMX activities in the City.
- Address the range of specific issues raised throughout the course of the project.

9.2 Council's Role

Council can play an important role in providing opportunities for people to participate in skating and BMX in the City. Skating and BMX are active and creative pursuits that allow young people to express themselves, exercise, socialise, develop skills and belong to established community structures.

Knox has a large number of young people in the 10 to 19 year age groupings that are likely to be seeking access to opportunities to skate and ride in the local area. The standard of existing facilities are not high in comparison with those provided in other municipalities are not necessarily in line with the needs of current participation patterns (ie. street and vert styles accommodated at the one site, with all types of riders and skaters catered for). Consequently there has been considerable interest in the development of better standard facilities.

In addition, there is a need to positively promote the sports and the opportunities available in the City to enhance the image of the sports. A lack of awareness of issues surrounding skating and BMX can lead to misconceptions by some residents about participants and their behaviour which can cause conflict to occur.

Council also needs to address how skaters and riders interact with the urban environment and the wider community. Proactive planning can ensure that skaters and riders can safely use the streets and other public places in harmony with the community.

9.3 Facility Provision

The development of the Plan has identified the need for facilities that accommodate the diverse needs of skaters and riders in Knox. The current provision of facilities does not address identified needs, with existing facilities aging, predominantly single use and not well promoted. A challenge also exists for Council in meeting unmet needs.

There has been considerable community interest in the development of sites that cater for current trends in the sports. In addition, past Council experiences in developing sites have not always proved to be positive, resulting in facility removal due to the negative impact on residents and undesirable behaviour.

A common theme identified through the consultation process favours the establishment of a central regional level site that can cater for a wide range of activity for various skill levels and across BMX, skate and inline activities. The existing municipal sites at Knox Skate Park and Knox Park appear to be well located and highly utilised. However, the Knox Skate Park site, whilst considered to serve the City, is not reflective of current trends in facility design.

The Lewis Reserve area has the capacity to be expanded to accommodate a greater range of use and be far more appealing to users across the City. Skaters and riders consulted throughout the project indicated that Lewis Reserve was an excellent location for a central facility. Advantages of this site include:

- it is in close proximity to Knox City Shopping Centre.
- is a well known site.
- is a central hub of activity.
- is serviced by a shared walking/cycling trail.
- has carparking.
- has good public transport linkages.
- has large areas of flat land with reasonable soil quality.
- presents minimal conflict with other users or groups of the park.
- is sufficiently located away from residential allotments.
- already presents a range of challenging opportunities, different to many other facilities around Melbourne.

In addition, Lewis Reserve has large tracts of open space that could be further developed to create a diverse improved regional level facility. Furthermore it is desirable that any future development of skate and BMX facilities be located in close proximity to the existing Knox Skate Park site. In addition, it would be advantageous to incorporate other youth orientated facilities at a regional level skate and BMX facility.

The development of smaller 'satellite' and mobile facilities were also investigated. Smaller parks generally involve less equipment and can be more single use than multi purpose in design and function. Smaller parks usually require similar site requirements such as larger sites, especially from the perspective of maintaining residential amenity. This creates difficulties for Council that is constrained due to limited suitable locations for skate and BMX facilities.

Some improvements to the Lewis Reserve facility may be needed to allow new activities to occur and to be viewed by the community as a high quality municipal level park. This would include:

- Enlarging the run off areas around the bowls.
- Establishing amenities (ie. seats, shade, bins etc.) and more functional landscaping of the site to assist its profile and reduce leaf and other litter from dropping into the bowls.

- Establishing dirt jumps or alternative BMX facilities away from the bowl areas to reduce risk to users.
- Introducing more 'street style' apparatus somewhere in close proximity to the Lewis Reserve site.
- Locating the Spine Ramp (that was formerly located at Eildon Reserve in Rowville) to the site.

9.4 Diversity in Design

In developing a central skate and BMX facility, it is important that a wide range of use and skill levels are catered for at the site. Consultation has indicated a strong preference for facilities that can cater for skaters, BMXer's, inliners, scooters etc (ie. with a mix of vert and street). In addition, skaters and riders should be able to utilise facilities, regardless of skill level. Many vert style ramps and bowls that were established in the past 20 years have been too difficult to use for the novice user. It is important that facilities be useable for beginners and provides challenge for the more experienced participant. Consultation with users in determining appropriate design of sites is a high priority.

Sites should incorporate amenities (ie. shade, taps, seats etc.) and be landscaped to present high quality environments the community and participants place value on and seek to use. Consistent signage can also assist in promoting sites and informing people about responsible and safe use. People will travel long distances to access facilities that are of a high standard.

For recreational riders and skaters, it is also important that they have access to the range of shared pathways in the City. Appropriate signage and promotion can assist in raising awareness about the availability of trails for recreational skaters, inliners and riders.

To maximise usage by all community groups it is essential that facility designs are inclusive and responsive of users safety requirements.

9.5 Management of sites

Skate and BMX facilities require a high level of ongoing maintenance to ensure the safety of users and minimise exposure to risk for the provider/owner. Council as the landowner of existing sites has the responsibility of ensuring effective management and maintenance. This is of particular importance with activities like skating and BMX where the risk of injury is constantly prevalent. However, this does not mean that fear of potential litigation should preclude Council from providing facilities for activity. Risk is also present in many other leisure activities supported by Council (ie. football, netball, cricket etc.).

A proactive approach to risk management is paramount. Council is bound to provide a duty of care to users and is subject to liability in the case of any negligence. Council should take steps to ensure a 'reasonable level of care' of participants by establishing processes that include continually inspecting sites and equipment for risk, undertaking regular maintenance and making repairs when required. In addition, signage should be established to inform users of the potential risks involved in using the skate and BMX facilities.

To address the individual management requirements of skate and BMX facilities it is recommended that individual management plans be considered for the future provision skate and BMX facilities.

9.6 Skate and BMX in the Street

'Street' skating and BMX continues to be a popular form of youth activity, due to the constant presentation of new and challenging activities, the ability to be creative using urban infrastructure and the fact that skating and BMX are still modes of transport that bring users into contact with the wider community (ie. pedestrians, vehicles etc.).

Banning users from public areas has never proved an effective Plan, with skaters and riders sometimes encouraged by the increased 'thrill of being caught', or the challenge of new areas proving too great. As such, proactive approaches should be developed to ensure that skaters and riders interact with the community and infrastructure in a safe and enjoyable manner. Environments should be created that entice users to specific areas where conflict is less likely to occur, where damage to infrastructure can be minimised (ie. grinding on benches, walls etc) and nominating paths/access areas for skaters and riders. In addition, education of skaters and riders should be undertaken to encourage responsible use of public areas and ensure a more positive image of the sport.

9.7 Sports Development, Marketing and Promotion

The image of skating and BMX is not positive in the minds of many people in the community. However, the sport presents a range of valuable benefits to users and the community including fitness and social networks.

It is important that skating and BMX present a positive image in the wider community and those activities are legitimised. Greater understanding by the community about skating and BMX should be developed to promote the activities are mainstream and beneficial, as opposed to commonly held beliefs about skating being anti social and linked to a range of undesirable behaviour.

In addition, skaters and riders need to be educated to ensure that they can more effectively interact with the wider community and portray a positive image for the sport. A positive image will assist in increasing participation, exposing myths about skating/BMX activity and legitimise the sports.

9.8 Funding

Funding new skate/BMX sites can be costly. The development of this Plan should assist Council with applications for skate and BMX facilities funding through Government agencies ie. Sport and Recreation Victoria. Where possible, Council should seek funding from government and/or private agencies to assist in sharing the capital development costs.

Indicative costs for the implementation of the Plan are nominated within section 10 – Action Plan.

9.9 Other Issues

Ranges of specific issues were raised during the course of the project that required assessment. These included determining a future use for the spine ramp that was previously located in Rowville, the viability of temporary transportable facilities, assisting the Mountain Boarding group in the area to access facilities and expand their activities, assisting the Knox BMX club to promote its activities and increase membership.

9.9.1 Future of the Spine Ramp

Throughout the course of the project, the future of the former Rowville Spine Ramp was raised. The spine ramp that was previously located in Eildon Park in Rowville and subsequently removed as a result of resident concerns and reports of undesirable activities. Since then, no appropriate sites have been identified within the Rowville area and the spine ramp equipment has been stored by Council awaiting a decision on its future.

The recommended development of the Lewis Reserve precinct as a regional skate and BMX facility suggests this could be an ideal location for the ramp to complement the existing

range of activities at the site. The spine ramp can be used by skaters, inliners and BMX riders and would complement the existing range of opportunities.

Consultation with users supports the Knox Skate Park as a future site for the spine ramp.

9.9.2 Temporary Facilities

The use of temporary or transportable facilities to service some areas of the City was investigated during the project. Temporary facilities had been used at festivals and events in Knox to generate interest in the sport of skating and BMX activity. Other Council's with geographically isolated communities, have also successfully utilised temporary facilities.

Issues associated with the use of temporary facilities include:

- Facilities are generally limited in the range of activities that are offered.
- The cost to purchase and transport equipment.
- Labour costs associated with the storage, erection and packing up of equipment (which is generally heavy enough that 4 people are required to set up and pack up, taking in excess of 8 hours)
- A requirement to promote where facilities will be moved to in the municipality
- Identifying appropriate sites for the facilities to be located, that are public, do not impact on residents and can be positioned on large concrete areas.
- Ongoing maintenance and insurance of the facilities.
- Community ownership of facilities is not achieved.

The initial purchase costs of temporary facilities are dependent upon the nature of the facility and range between \$20,000 and 50,000. It is estimated that the annual recurrent costs associated with a temporary facility would exceed \$20,000.

Whilst temporary facilities have a role to complement festivals and events, it is not recommended to pursue this option in place of a purpose built facility.

9.9.3 Mountain Boarding in Knox

Knox has a small but dedicated group of Mountain Boarders (a hybrid version of skating on rough downhill terrain) that have made a number of approaches to establish a suitable site for their activities. Currently, some mounded dirt areas have been made available at Llewellyn Park, however the area is quite limited and lacks variety.

Mountain boarding appears to have an increasing appeal that is highly suited to the environment in Knox. The skaters whilst, small in numbers currently, are seeking to develop a 'home base' for activities and are seeking sloped areas to participate in downhill activity.

9.9.4 Assistance for the Knox BMX Club

The Knox BMX club, like many other BMX clubs in across Melbourne, have experienced declining membership. However, the club continues to serve in excess of 70 members at a competition track, of which there are few in the south-eastern region. The track is well maintained and located within a large sporting/open space area.

The potential of considerable residential development around the site (ie. Waterford Valley) will most likely place a greater demand on the open space usage at Knox Park. The

improvement of the Knox BMX Club facility and surrounding area will serve to meet the potential open space needs of residents.

The club could also benefit from some assistance from Council in promoting its activities and in generating new membership to boost the sport in the area.

9.9.5 Indoor Facilities

The feasibility of developing indoor skate and BMX facilities was analysed as part of the project. Whilst indoor facilities are an attractive option for skaters and riders, a number of issues exist for Council's in developing these facilities.

Few indoor facilities are currently available in Victoria. Some commercial operators have established indoor facilities in factories etc. However, most have not been viable in the longer term and have closed operations.

A popular indoor facility located in the City of Casey is known as the Cranbourne 'Shed', This facility is only open on weekdays (5pm to 10pm), Saturdays (10am to 10pm) and Sundays (12pm to 6pm). Entry is \$8 per session that entitles the participant full use of the facility during opening times on that day. Safety gear is optional for participants throughout the majority of the facility, however management enforces the use of safety equipment and helmets on the half-pipe ramps. The City owns the facility and leases the site to an operator (the Salvation Army) on a subsidised rental basis. Given the cost constraints such as public liability insurance, low entry fees, hours of operation and high maintenance costs, the facility could not operate viable on a commercial basis.

In the light of these findings, major considerations for Knox City Council with the development of indoor facilities include:

- A substantial initial cost of capital development (for a suitable building and for equipment)
- Site availability
- Restricted public access (as the facility is not open at all times) due to staffing costs and the barrier to participation from user fees.
- Cost of entry for users, in sports that has traditionally been free of charge
- Ongoing operational and management costs associated with indoor facilities (ie. Staff, utility costs etc.)

Consultation conducted throughout the course of this project highlighted skater requirements for a publicly accessible facility.

10 Knox City Council Skate and BMX Action Plan

10.1 Key Result Area – Council’s Role

Principles

Provide a range of diverse opportunities to support the following target markets:

- Aggressive and freestyle inline, skating and BMX activity
- BMX, and other organised club activities
- Recreational skaters and riders

Open access to public skate and BMX facilities is encouraged.

Objectives	Actions	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Funded Yes/No
To encourage skating and BMX opportunities for residents and visitors to the City.	Developing suitable facilities at appropriate locations to meet the needs of the community (outlined in Key Result Area – Facility Provision)	High	Ongoing	Whole of Council	Refer Key Result Area – Facility Provision	NA
	Through Council’s existing publications, local media, internet, youth newsletters etc. promote a positive image of skating and BMX, increase awareness of the range of sites available, and encourage safe and responsible behaviour by participants.	High	Ongoing	Recreation and Youth	Recurrent existing	Yes
	Support the private sector in accommodating the needs of artistic, speed skaters, inline/roller hockey (who are generally serviced by local, private indoor facilities), through promotion of their activities.	Medium	Ongoing	Recreation	Recurrent existing	Yes
	Review the implementation of the Plan, identify community needs and industry trends and make recommendations for the future provision of Skate and	Low	2004/05	Recreation and Youth	\$5,000	No



Knox City Council
Towards New Horizons

City of Knox Skate and BMX Plan

	BMX activities					
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10.2 Key Result Area – Facility Provision

Principles

Future facility development will incorporate consultation with the relevant representative user groups and individuals. Council seeks funding partners, from both private and public sectors, for the establishment of further skate and BMX facilities. Where facilities are to be enhanced, Council ensure the following design issues are addressed:

- That the facility accommodates a range of street and vert style activity (in line with the Design Recommendations outlined in the *Skate Facility Guide*).
- Ensure that the facility can mutually accommodate the needs and abilities of skaters, inliners, BMX riders, scooter riders etc.
- Ensure that the facility accommodates a range of skill levels from beginners through to advanced users.
- Ensure the area has appropriate amenities and landscaping to encourage greater family leisure, socialisation, and areas for spectators etc
- Ensure that facilities are readily accessible to the wider community (ie. discourage establishment of fenced sites).
- Determine appropriate materials to be used (ie. steel, concrete or wooden construction)
- Ensure appropriate signage at sites.

Maximise opportunities for facilities to be modified or enhanced at a later stage to adapt to changing trends in the sports

Objectives	Actions	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Funded Yes/No
Provide a range of quality Skate and BMX	Relocate the spine skate ramp to an appropriate location	High	2001/02	Recreation and Engineering	\$35,000	Yes



City of Knox Skate and BMX Plan

facilities to meet the expressed needs of users.	to compliment the existing facilities at the Knox Skate Park (subject to Town Planning approvals and liaison with Melbourne Water).			and Infrastructure	installation Annual maintenance – Recurrent existing	
	Undertake a detailed assessment to develop a centralised regional skate and BMX facility in the Lewis Reserve precinct, incorporating other youth and family orientated activities. The scope of the assessment to include identification of potential costs and prospective funding partners and the integration and/or future location of the Knox Skate Park.	High	2001/02	City Strategy, Recreation and Youth	\$10,000	Yes
	Subject to the Lewis Reserve precinct assessment seek Council support for the development of a regional skate and BMX facility.	High	2002/03	City Strategy, Recreation and Youth	Recurrent existing	NA
	Make application to Sport and Recreation Victoria for grant funding to assist in the development of a regional skate and BMX facility.	High	2002/03	Recreation	Recurrent existing	Yes
	Development of a regional centralised skate and BMX facility in the Lewis Reserve precinct, incorporating other youth orientated activities	High	2003/04	City Strategy, Recreation and Engineering and Infrastructure	\$500,000 - \$1 mil	No
	Establish a dedicated Mountain Board facility at Llewellyn Park, including the provision of additional jumps.	Medium	2003/04	Recreation, Facilities and Engineering and Infrastructure	\$15,000 installation \$5,000 annual maintenance – Recurrent new	No No
	Continue to encourage the use of temporary skate and BMX facilities to compliment community events and activities.	Medium	Ongoing/	Whole of Council	Recurrent existing	NA
Preserve the natural environment through the encouragement of BMX activity in existing purpose built areas.	Restore Wadhurst Reserve as a passive bushland area.	Medium	2003/04	Conservation and Environment	\$5,000	No
	Remove the ad-hoc development of dirt jumps in inappropriate reserve areas and provide for site reinstatement.	High	Ongoing	Recreation and Facilities	Recurrent existing	Yes
	Enhance the visual amenity surrounding the Knox BMX Club to encourage increased community access (when	Low	2004/05	Conservation and Environment	\$20,000	No



Knox City Council
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City of Knox Skate and BMX Plan

	not being used for competitions). This could be achieved through landscaping treatments.					
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10.3 Key Result Area – Management of sites

Principles

Council is committed to the safety of skate and BMX users through the implementation of risk management actions. Council will ensure that purpose built facilities are maintained to a standard that provides a quality facility. Where appropriate, Council encourages users groups to assist with the maintenance of facilities.

Objectives	Actions	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Funded Yes/No
The establishment of processes to effectively manage and maintain skate and BMX sites in the City.	Develop and implement a risk assessment checklist that includes such aspects as potential hazards and degree of risk (scaled assessment from low to high risk and appropriate minimisation strategies)	High	2002/03 and Ongoing	Recreation and Facilities	Recurrent	Yes
	Undertake weekly maintenance and risk assessment inspections to identify risks and carrying out necessary repairs when required.	High	Ongoing	Facilities	Recurrent Existing	No
	Educate users through existing Council publications, marketing initiatives and events regarding responsible use of sites and use of safety equipment (ie. guards, helmets, pads etc.), potential injuries and measures to avoid and treat injury and reporting hazards to Council.	High	Ongoing	Recreation	Recurrent	Yes
	Position appropriately designed bins at facilities to enable users to dispose of rubbish that may present risks to users.	High	2002/03	Facilities	Recurrent existing	Yes
Encourage users to become involved in reporting of potential hazards or required repairs and informing users of responsible use, safety equipment, risk etc.	Install signage at skate and BMX facilities to inform users of potential risk and responsible use.	High	2001/02	Recreation and Facilities	\$5,000	Yes



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10.4 Key Result Area – Sports Development, Marketing and Promotion

Principles

Continue to support events that include skating and BMX activities (ie. Knox Festival and other potential community events). Encourage activities at skate and BMX venues (that may include coaching, demonstrations, appearances by elite participants etc.) to assist in the development of the sports in Knox.

Engender ownership by skaters and riders by regularly consulting with users regarding needs, changing trends etc.

Promote the range of benefits of skating and BMX activity to the Knox community and promote positive role models in the sports.

Objectives	Actions	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Funded Yes/No
To present a positive image of the sport and seek to increase participation.	Develop a skate/BMX advisory group made up of local users, community representatives, Police and Council Officers etc. This group could advise Council regarding issues for users and assist in spreading messages regarding responsible use of facilities and the streets and interaction with the wider community. It is recommended that this group meet at least twice yearly.	Medium	2002/03	Recreation and Youth	Recurrent existing	NA
	Promote availability of facilities through Council publications, local press, Internet, youth newsletters etc.	Medium	Ongoing	Recreation and Youth	Recurrent Existing	No
	Target market under serviced segments ie. Beginners and young women, to increase their participation within the sports through promotional workshops and skills training.	High	2003/04	Youth	\$6,000 Recurrent new	No
	Promoting user groups' activities through existing publications, internet etc.	Medium	Ongoing	Recreation	Recurrent existing	NA
	Facilitating training/development sessions to assist the Knox BMX Club and Mountain Boarders to increase membership and participation.	Low	Ongoing	Recreation	Recurrent existing	NA

10.5 Key Result Area – Skate and BMX in the Street

Principles

Consulting with riders and skaters is fundamental in the design of urban areas.

That skate and BMX be recognised as a legitimate recreational activity that contributes to the local economy through retail sales and be considered in the design of public spaces.

That skaters, riders, pedestrians and vehicles can co-exist in public areas.

That skateboarding, BMX and associated activities be recognised as a legitimate mode of transport.

Objectives	Actions	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Resources	Funded Yes/No
Development of planning and design guidelines to facilitate safe and responsible street skating and riding.	Widely promoting acceptable use areas and travel paths for skaters and riders to minimise conflicts in inappropriate areas, including the availability of shared pathways for skating and BMX activity.	Medium	Ongoing	Recreation, Governance and Engineering and Infrastructure	Recurrent existing	Yes
	In the planning and design of new areas (ie. shopping precincts, residential developments, commercial areas, office blocks etc), working with owners/architects to ensure the needs of skaters and riders are accommodated to minimise conflict with the wider community.	Medium	Ongoing	Conservation and Environment, City Strategy and Town Planning	Recurrent existing	Yes



10.6 Action Implementation Cost Summary

Funding Source	Funding allocation	Key Result Area	Actions	Priority	Funding 2001/02	Funding 2002/03	Funding 2003/04	Funding 2004/05
Capital	Funded	Facility Provision	Relocate the spine skate ramp to an appropriate location to compliment the existing facilities at the Knox Skate Park	High	\$35,000			
			Undertake a detailed assessment to develop a centralised regional skate and BMX facility in the Lewis Reserve precinct, incorporating other youth and family orientated activities. The scope of the assessment to include identification of potential costs and prospective funding partners and the integration and/or future location of the Knox Skate Park.	High	\$10,000			
			Install signage at skate and BMX facilities to inform users of potential risk and responsible use	High	\$5,000			
Capital Total – Funded					\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Capital	Unfunded	Facility Provision	Development of a regional skate and BMX facility in the Lewis Reserve precinct, incorporating other youth orientated activities	High			\$500,000 - \$1 mil	
			Establish a dedicated Mountain Board facility at Llewellyn Park, including the provision of additional jumps.	Medium			\$15,000	
			Enhance the visual amenity surrounding the Knox BMX Club to encourage increased community access (when not being used for competitions). This could be achieved through landscaping treatments.	Low				\$20,000
Funding Source	Funding allocation	Key Result Area	Actions	Priority	Funding 2001/02	Funding 2002/03	Funding 2003/04	Funding 2004/05
Total Capital – Unfunded					\$0	\$0	\$515,000 - \$1mil	\$20,000



Knox City Council
Towards New Horizons

City of Knox Skate and BMX Plan

Total Capital					\$50,000	\$0	\$515,000 - \$1mil	\$20,000
Operational	Unfunded	Council's Role	Review the implementation of the Plan, identify community needs and industry trends and make recommendations for the future provision of Skate and BMX activities	Low				\$5,000
		Facility Provision	Restore Wadhurst Reserve as a passive bushland area.	High			\$5,000	
			Annual maintenance associated with mountain boarding activity at Llewellyn Park	Medium			\$5,000	\$5,000
			Target market under serviced segments ie. Beginners and young women, to increase their participation within the sports through promotional workshops and skills training.	Medium			\$6,000	
Total Operational - Unfunded					\$0	\$0	\$16,000	\$10,000

11 Appendix 1

11.1 Interview sheet for Existing Users (Knox Skate Park)

The City of Knox is currently developing a Skating and BMX Plan to guide future provision of these activities. Council is interested in hearing your feedback and ideas and will use the survey information to provide better services for skaters and riders. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Part 1 – Introduction

1. How would you classify your skating/BMX style:

a.

Could include any of the following:

Aggressive skaters (inline, skateboards and BMX free-stylers)
Scooters
BMX tracks

Competitive roller sports (in line hockey and roller sports)
Bmx street
Motocross tracks

Recreational and fitness inline skaters

Bmx tricks/jumps
Motocross tricks/jumps
Inline speed
Inline artistic

Skate vert
Inline fitness, recreational
Inline vert
Roller hockey etc

Skate street
Inline hockey etc

Inline street

Roller speed
Other

2. Have you used this facility before during the past 12 months?

Yes 1 No 2

3. If yes, how often do you use it?

First time
Once a week

Once a year
More than once a week

Once a month
Not sure

4. If this is your first time, do you intend to return again?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure

5. How did you hear about the facility?

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Council publication | 4. Local newspaper |
| 2. Friend / family | 5. Internet <i>where?</i> _____ |
| 3. Magazines | 6. Brochure <i>where?</i> _____ |
| | 7. Other (please specify) _____ |

6. How did you travel here today?

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|------------------|
| Walked | Skated/Rode | Car – Mum or Dad |
| Car - Friends | Car - Drove | Bus |
| Train | Tram | |

7. How long do you intend to stay/or did you stay here today?

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. 10 - 30 mins | 4. 91 - 120 mins |
| 2. 31 - 60 mins | 5. > 120 mins |
| 3. 61 - 90 mins | |

Part 2 – Facility Usage

1. What are the best aspects of this facility?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

2. What are the worst aspects about this facility?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

3. What is your favourite skate/BMX Facility?

- a) _____

4. What is it that makes the above site your favourite?

- a) _____

5. How would you rate the following at this facility, on a scale of 1 – 5?

Facility area	1 Very Poor	2 Poor	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent	Don't Know
Level of difficulty						
Range of components/jumps etc						
Range of skill levels catered for						
Accessibility ie. near to public transport						
Crowds						
Proximity to food and drinks						
Proximity to telephone						
Proximity to skate/BMX shops						
Surrounding Environment						
Proximity to Water taps						
Signage ie. easy to find						
Proximity to Petrol stations ie. to pump tyres etc						
Safety						
Security and lighting						

Part 3 – Future Directions

1. What other skate/BMX facilities have you used during the past 12 months? (In Knox and outside)

Name	Suburb/location
a.....
b.....
c.....
d.....
e.....
f.....
g.....



2. What issues are important to you when choosing a venue to skate/ride?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

3. Are there other skating/Bmx activities that are not provided at this facility that you would like to see offered locally?

a) _____

b) _____

4. What improvements, if any, would you like to see made to the facilities provided here?

a.

b.

c.

d.

5. Would you recommend this facility to your family/friends?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure

If not, why not? _____

6. Would you consider using a temporary facility (ie. ramps, vert ramp etc) that could be transported anywhere in the Knox?

1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure

If not, why not? _____



7. If Council was to develop one central skate/bmx facility, what is the best location for it in Knox?

8. What could Council do to improve the sport of skating/Bmx in Knox?

9. Are there any other comments you would like to make in relation to any aspects about the facility you have visited today?

Part 4 - Respondent (STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL)

1. Gender of respondent? 1 Male 2 Female

2. Age range?

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. 4 - 6 years | 4. 15 - 18 years |
| 2. 7 - 10 years | 5. 19 - 22 years |
| 3. 11 - 14 years | 6. 23 - 30 years |
| | 7. Over 30 years |

3. What Suburb do you live in? _____

4. Postcode: _____

Many thanks for your valued participation!

12 Appendix 2

12.1 References and Useful Sites

- Sport and Recreation Victoria, [“The Skate Facility Guide”](#), 2001
- Knox City Council, [Recreation Strategy Plan 1998-2001](#), Michael King and Associates Pty. Ltd
- City of Knox, [Municipal Strategic Statement](#), 2001
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- www.rollerblading.com.au
- www.dirtjump.net
- www.fatbmx.com
- www.sbbmx.com
- www.skateboarddirectory.com
- www.skategirls.net
- www.skateboarding.com
- www.bmxmuseum.com
- www.y2k.co.nz
- www.skatepark.org