



A Scotsburn resident has sought retrospective approval at VCAT for a motocross track built in one of their paddocks.

Dirt track bites dust

Timothy Cox

VCAT rules out family's private course

A Victorian family who built a private motocross track on one of their paddocks has been red-flagged by the local council for failing to get permission.

A dirt motor racing track was built in Wiggins Rd, Scotsburn near Ballarat - which is listed as a farming zone - between 2022 and 2023 without the permission of Moorabool Shire Council.

The family tried to gain approval from the council retroactively, but couldn't get a permit over the finish line.

The earthworks, containing various turns and jumps up to 3m in height, occupy about 5ha of a 40ha farm, are hedged on all sides and were meant for family use only.

The fill for the works was obtained from Ballarat residential developments.

The rest of the farm has been used to graze cattle and bale hay.

But in February 2025, the council refused a permit for

the track because it was deemed to be disorderly, fragmented an agricultural lot, and would result in reduced amenity for neighbours.

Other objectors were involved in a consequent VCAT hearing in October last year who had concerns the track "detrimentally impacts on good quality agricultural land and local farming activity" as well as nearby businesses.

The land at the corner of Wiggins and Attwoods roads is in the middle of an area containing large agricultural lots and smaller rural or residential lots.

Nearby businesses include Thistlebury Farm and Back Creek Farm, a commercial dairy and rural educational site run by Christian College Geelong with a turnover of about \$800,000.

A town planner representing the school said the track could "adversely affect both

the farming operations and the learning environment activities conducted at Back Creek Farm".

Others said the land was "highly fertile red volcanic soil" and the track diminished how much was available for production and could detract from the soil's quality.

There were other concerns to do with drainage into waterways and noise.

The person who built the track and her representatives countered that those issues could be minimised by sediment controls, reseeded and pasture renovation.

They said track use could be limited to 90 minutes a day from Mondays to Saturdays, and only in daylight hours.

Tribunal members Christopher Harty and Donna D'Alessandro found, however, that while the track's visual and sediment impact was "not unreasonable", its effect on the agricultural land was unacceptable.

"We are concerned with the size of the motor racing track and the extent of area taken up by its coverage, with imported soil that results in the loss of agricultural land from production," they said.

"The motor racing track is a substantial and, what appears to be, a professionally designed and constructed facility.

"It is on land that is highly productive, and the area of loss and fragmentation is an impact that we consider significant.

"Although the applicant proposes to re-establish areas around and within the track for grazing purposes, we find

“It is on land that is highly productive, and the area of loss and fragmentation is ... significant

VCAT ruling

the extent and the quality of agricultural production will be diminished to a level that is not outweighed by the community benefit of the proposal as it is as a private track for family use."

The tribunal affirmed the shire's decision not to grant a permit.

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Plant-safe 'sunscreen'

PMIT University has developed a sound-driven technique to coat the most fragile surfaces, such as living plant leaves, using a fine mist formed at room temperature. The breakthrough allows advanced materials known as covalent organic frameworks to be made and applied in a single step, overcoming a longstanding barrier that has held them largely confined to laboratory research.

In a proof-of-concept test, the coating acted like a plant-safe "sunscreen", shielding leaves from harmful ultraviolet radiation without affecting photosynthesis or plant health.

Because the method uses high-frequency sound waves rather than heat or harsh processing, it opens up potential applications across agriculture, electronics and advanced manufacturing.

Big takeaway in Qantas rewards program

Andrew Hedgman

Australians ordering takeaway and catching an Uber will now be able to rack up airline rewards after Qantas and Uber expanded their long-running loyalty partnership.

Uber One members with a linked Qantas Frequent Flyer account now will be able to earn Qantas Points on Uber Eats orders and a broader range of premium rides.

Australians have placed more than one billion Uber Eats orders since the delivery service launched locally in 2016, highlighting the scale of the market that the expanded partnership is targeting.

Under the changes, eligible Uber One members will earn one Qantas Point per \$2 spent on Uber Eats restaurant delivery orders, with a \$20 minimum spend.

They will also earn one Qan-

tas Point per \$1 spent on Uber Comfort, Comfort Electric and Uber Black rides.

All Qantas Frequent Flyer members, regardless of whether they subscribe to Uber One, will still earn up to one Qantas Point per \$1 spent on eligible Australian airport rides.

Qantas Loyalty chief executive Andrew Glance said Uber members when they travelled to and from the airport.

"With millions of Uber Eats orders made across Australia every week, we are now rewarding members for everything from midweek dinners to their daily commute," he said.

Uber Eats ANZ managing director Ed Kitchen said the expansion marked a new phase in the partnership. "Expanding our partnership with Qantas Frequent Flyer to include Uber Eats is an exciting step forward for our Uber One members."

Cops to tackle walker deaths

Jordan McCarthy

Victoria Police have launched a special operation in the wake of an alarming number of pedestrian deaths, with six people killed in April alone.

Operation Aware will run through to September and will see police focused on addressing the behaviour that leads to the tragedies.

It comes as 17 pedestrians have lost their lives in Victoria this year - one more than the same time last year, which saw a nearly 20-year high of 52 pedestrians killed.

Areas with 40-60km/h speed limits will be in police sights as the most common locations for pedestrian trauma.

Police will also be watching for vehicles failing to give way, as well as other behaviours that put pedestrians at risk such as distraction, speeding, impaired driving and riding on the footpath.

The same operation was run in June 2025 and saw police issue 266 traffic infringements, including 62 speeding offences, 39 mobile phone offences and 16 disobeying traffic signs or signal offences.

Road Policing Acting Assistant Commissioner Justin Goldsmith said everyone had a role to play in keeping pedestrians safe.

"It is absolutely paramount now that we prioritise pedestrian safety and do all we can to protect our most vulnerable road users," he said. "This is not about levelling blame at anyone, this is about saving lives and reducing the amount of trauma on our roads."

Police will be focusing on high-risk areas including the Melbourne CBD, Glen Eira, Stonnington, Monash, Whitehorse, Casey, Hume, Wyndham and Geelong.

With the high number of deaths in April, police are on edge for May, which Acting Assistant Commissioner Goldsmith said has "traditionally been our highest-risk month" for pedestrian incidents.

"All road users should consider not only their own safety, but how their actions can impact the safety of others," he said. "Pedestrians have little to no protection, so when they're involved in a collision with a vehicle, the consequences can be catastrophic."

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