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Police are vowing to tackle skate bowl users head-on in a crackdown to protect riders

Put on your helmet or pay up!



Michael Gleeson
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BMX riders could be stung with \$55 fines for repeatedly not wearing helmets in skate parks.

While police are vowing to crack down on those riding without helmets, a veteran BMX rider says it's unnecessary to force experienced riders to wear full safety equipment.

The *Leader* recently photographed several BMX riders including Dave McComb (pictured) performing tricks without helmets at the Lewis Park skate bowl in Wantirna.

Rowville Acting Sen-Sgt Wayne McDonald said skate parks were not exempt from normal safety regulations, with police authorised to fine riders without helmets.

"There does seem to be some defiance these days from young people who don't want to wear them - who see it as not being cool," Sen-Sgt McDonald said.

"I've been down to skate parks on weekends for their competitions and they go around pretty fast."

But David Lalama, the organiser of the Save Knox Bowl campaign that forced Knox Council to scrap plans to demolish the Lewis Park site, said most BMX riders knew the risks involved and should be allowed some discretion.

He said the wearing of helmets should only be enforced in skate parks for less experienced riders, nominating 13 and under as a possible age cut-off.

"If police are going to be enforcing that,

they should probably be pushing for helmets to be compulsory in all contact sports and also in skateboarding," Mr Lalama said.

He said helmets should be worn by riders out in public, but not in skate parks.

Sen-Sgt McDonald said unhelmeted riders usually received an informal warning if it was their first offence.

He said fines of \$55 would be meted out to riders who repeatedly put their safety at risk.

■ Readers have their say: Page 38.

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Opinion

Knox Leader



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Cull or relocate

WELL said Rae Thompson (*Knox Leader* June 17). I live in Rowville so I am sure the possums that visit us are not coming from the national parks.

I am tired of cleaning up possum droppings before I can hang out the washing on my clothesline. If not culling, surely they can be trapped and relocated to forest areas.

**John Green,
Rowville.**

We were stunned

I ATTENDED my first Knox City Council meeting on June 24 as part of The Goulburn Drive Resident Action Group (TGDRAG).

I and a number of other members attended to seek answers about our concerns that gum trees on our nature strips in Goulburn Drive are causing significant structural damage to private homes and to council assets, such as the roadway and footpaths, through their root systems. We are also equally concerned to have learned recently that our estate was built on reclaimed land, which may have also contributed to the problems.

We all left the meeting stunned and dissatisfied about how our genuine concerns and questions were simply washed over by a sea of bureaucratic jargon and the citing of council policies. It became evidently clear to all of us that the trees are worth much more than us ratepayers. All we wanted was an acknowledgment by council that perhaps the gums and the reclaimed land our homes are built on might be contributing to the problems and that council would possibly look at these issues.

Our disappointment and dissatisfaction have made us all much more determined to



Goulburn Rd residents angry with council over gums on nature strips damaging their homes.

become more intense in our campaign. There is one last thing that Knox City Council, its mayor and its councillors must remember. We the residents are the ratepayers – not the trees. And that we vote for our councillors at the next election in November this year. So get your heads out of the trees and listen to your ratepayers.

Nick Tricarico, secretary, The Goulburn Drive Resident Action Group.

No information

I attended the Knox Council meeting last week as a member of GDRAG (Goulburn Drive Residents Action Group). GDRAG members submitted questions for the meeting days in advance, allowing council staff time to investigate our concerns and bring solutions or further information to the council meeting. We were sorely disappointed. The Mayor Jim

Penna, and a council officer dismissed our concerns with bureaucratic waffle. Cr Penna tried to stifle my right to free speech during public question time; I must however, thank Cr Karin Orpen for attempting to stand up to him on my behalf.

I am angry, firstly from a sense of frustration that I cannot be properly heard. I am also disappointed that in public question time a ratepayer may ask a question, but when it has been answered (to council's satisfaction, not the questioners) there is no debate or discussion allowed. Nor can the questioner seek public clarification of points made.

Secondly, why will council not commit to investigating our concerns about house cracking, and raised and cracked roads and footpaths? This is a community issue, not a personal one. Council has committed \$14.7 million to asset renewal (roads, footpaths and drains repairs) over the 2008-09 year.

Surely as part of a thorough risk management strategy the root causes of asset deterioration should be investigated to avoid longer-term problems? Find the problem, fix the problem, and then have more money to spend on new community assets.

**Naomi Nelson,
president, GDRAG,
Goulburn Drive Rowville.**

Why no helmets?

KNOX Leader ran pictures of young cyclists, without helmets, performing stunts. Are these cyclists exempt from the law requiring the wearing of helmets?

**John Porter,
Ferntree Gully.**

- It is illegal and cops are cracking down on cyclists without helmets - Editor.

Prevent damage

FURTHER to articles on large trees on nature strips. Having contacted council in regards to a large tree damaging the footpath and stormwater drains.

Also a well established silver birch and a small bush lost, as well as our lawn, all affected by the drought and not being able to compete with this moisture sucking monstrosity of a tree. Council's response to our request to have the tree removed was a drive-by inspection, a discussion with a passer by and a neighbour not close enough to have any problems with this tree, a phone call and letter to say the tree was healthy and therefore no action was to be taken.

This council is quite happy to spend our rates on stupid projects rather than common-sense maintenance to prevent damage in the first place.

Trevor Gough, Ferntree Gully.