

# Exploring the Culture & Villages of the Dandenong Ranges

## Economic impact

During the construction phase the project will result in an influx of local income that equates to the equivalent of 36 jobs and \$12.4M in benefits in output in parts of the economy. Local traders and accommodation providers will benefit the most from more residents and tourists visiting the townships. New jobs will be created by the purchase of goods and services by the users of the Walk.

It is estimated that over 40,000 visitors will visit the RidgeWalk in the first 12 months, adding over \$5.8M to the local economy or the equivalent of creating 28 jobs. This usage will grow significantly over time along with the local benefits of greater resident interactivity through better access to townships.

## What will it cost?

Funding is required to deploy the infrastructure needed to establish the Walk.

- 14km of walking tracks
- Pedestrian crossing at Sassafra
- Landscaping, art and cultural features
- Way finding and directional signage (Seating and associated walking infrastructure)

**Total Investment: \$5.78M**

## For more information:

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Fred Williams  
Upwey hillside 1965  
gouache  
48.2 x 68.4 (image and sheet)  
National Gallery of Victoria,  
Melbourne

Purchased through The Art Foundation  
of Victoria with the assistance of the  
H.J.Heinz II Charitable and Family Trust,  
Governor, and the Utah Foundation,  
Fellow, 1980 (AC2-1980)  
© Estate of Fred Williams



# The RidgeWalk



# The RidgeWalk

*Wander with family or friends through stunning national parks... explore forests of spectacular mountain ash trees and abundant wildlife... be inspired by the artists and stories of the region... meander through the many coffee shops and small emporiums... get lost in the hills that surround Melbourne.*

The iconic RidgeWalk will be a cultural and tourism experience connecting the villages of the Dandenong Ranges. This visionary project offers numerous benefits to residents and the 3 million tourists who visit the region each year.

Culture, creativity and the celebration of the unique Dandenong Ranges story of landscape and art are key components of the walk. This story of national significance will be told through multiple significant art works that engage with the natural environment. Using public art, heritage interpretation and the creation of outdoor platforms for expression, the walk will explore art, landscape and memory surveying indigenous interpretation and the history of Australian art within the 'hills' context.

The margins of cities are places where artists, musicians and writers have always congregated. Some of Australia's greatest visual artists were informed by the landscape of the Dandenong Ranges from Eugene Von Guerard and Fredrick McCubbin to Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton. Indigenous artist Lin Onus worked and painted in the area and the many 'Upwey Landscape' paintings of Fred Williams are some of the finest works created in Australian Art history.

Today the 'hills' continues to be a place that attracts artists, inspiring their creativity and connection to the land. The cultural component of the RidgeWalk will express and celebrate the rich artistic heritage and create space for contemporary responses and connections between past, present and future. The project will draw local, intrastate, interstate and national visitors to the region to experience this unique and evolving identity.

## The Walk

The RidgeWalk will physically connect via a series of pathways and networks, from Upwey/Tecoma to Montrose, through the villages of Ferny Creek, Sassafras, Olinda, Mount Dandenong and Kalorama. It will create continuous safe pedestrian access to local destinations and will increase length of stay in the townships and expenditure in the region.

This Walk will focus on strengthening pedestrian links through signage and better connecting footpaths to walking trail networks. This will promote health and wellbeing and community connectedness by providing accessible and efficient walking paths.

The RidgeWalk will have minimal environmental impact on the natural setting and existing vegetation. The location of the pedestrian links has been aligned to road verges, and uses a number of construction treatments including boardwalks, gravel paths and exposed aggregate (concrete). These methods are designed to reduce disturbance to the immediate environment and protect significant vegetation and tree roots.

## Assets

- Celebration of region's rich cultural heritage
- Access to Melbourne
- Mixture of walking, cultural and tourism infrastructure
- Safer pedestrian infrastructure including new Sassafras crossing
- Significant views and "hero" features along the Walk
- Unique mountain villages to explore
- Strong community benefit
- Fern and tall trees experience plus established gardens
- Good supporting amenities such a boutique accommodation, B&B's, car parks, toilets, picnic grounds, restaurants

## What will it look like?

The RidgeWalk consists of 14km of new and upgraded walking infrastructure, and will compliment and connect existing trails to create a continuous 26km network. It will cost an estimated \$5.78 million and include walking pathways and boardwalks, crossings, street furniture, maps, artworks, signage and a pedestrian crossing at Sassafras.

