

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOREST PATROLS SHOW UNEXPECTED RESULTS

A weekend trail bike operation in State forest and parks near Shepparton and Echuca showed unexpected results, with many trail bike riders receiving infringement notices.

Department of Sustainability and Environment's Trail Bike Project Officer, Felicity Wardlaw said that the results were surprising as the trail bike riders in the region had been steadily improving in rider safety and behaviour.

"It was unfortunate to see so many trail bike riders breaking the law and a total of 34 infringement notices have been issued over the weekend.

"The majority of offences were for unlicensed and unregistered riding as well as people riding underage or off the designated tracks.

"We really were expecting to find more trail bike riders doing the right thing as previous operations this year have seen DSE officers speak to more than 600 riders with only 114 riders issued with infringement notices.

In the North East region, 13 joint operations involving DSE, Parks Victoria and Victoria Police officers have been undertaken this year.

"We were starting to notice a positive change in rider behaviour, but the weekend's results indicate that people need to be reminded of safety measures," Ms Wardlaw said.

"It is so important that trail bike riders only ride their motorbikes in State Forests if they have a licence and their motorbike is registered and roadworthy. Registered and licensed riders are more than welcome to use the forest tracks and roads which are open for public use.

"The safety of riders and other park users is compromised when riders illegally ride off the roads and tracks. This also causes significant damage to the environment.

"DSE wants to encourage trail bike riders to enjoy the bushland, but to do so in a safe and positive way.

Ms Wardlaw said that infringement notices were also issued to under-age riders and those not wearing helmets. "Some young riders went home with a fine of over \$1000; parents should understand that unlicensed and unregistered riding, and failing to wear a helmet are regarded as serious offences"..

"I urge riders who have been issued with infringement notices to go and obtain the necessary registration or licence.

"The operations are providing a great opportunity for agencies to work together to educate trail bike riders and the public to ensure the proper use of forests and public land, but it is disappointing when we receive high non-compliance results, such as last weekend.

Future compliance operations focused on noise, off road riding and unlicensed and unregistered motorcycles will be conducted throughout the year as part of the State Government's \$5 million Trail Bike Project.

For more information on trail bike riding visit: www.dse.vic.gov.au/trailbikes or contact the DSE Customer Service Centre on 136 186.