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COUNCILS WARNED ON BIKE PATHS

A public liability specialist says councils need to focus on making bike paths safer, after a suburban council recently settled a legal claim arising from the fatal crash of a champion triathlete in 2007.

Warrandyte Secondary College teacher Robert Graham was riding on the Diamond Valley track, near the Eltham rugby oval, when his cycle hit a culvert hidden by long grass.

He suffered severe spinal injuries and died six days after the accident.

His wife Julie Vomero recently settled her legal case with Nillumbik Council.

Lawyer Barrie Woollacott from Slater & Gordon says the case is a warning to all councils to lift their standards on maintaining bike paths.

“Councils have made playgrounds safer -- now it's time to focus their attention on bike paths,” he said.

“The open drain that caused the accident was purpose-built but its design, location and maintenance were poor.

“Since the accident Nillumbik Council has been compassionate and acted appropriately to fix this site, but who knows how many other hidden dangers are out there on the Melbourne bike paths used regularly by thousands for work and recreation?”

“Hopefully other Councils will learn the hard lessons of the Eltham tragedy: authorities responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of bike paths need to apply adequate resources to ensure that the pathways are safe for all users.

“Councils need to be pro-active and remove any dangers or they can expect more accidents and more legal action. “

For more information

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