



## Newsletter December 2017

**Our Mission Statement:** We wish to put the disused Monaro rail way line to productive use as a recreational trail for cycling and in doing so boost tourism, the economy and the well being of the region. At the same time, we wish to preserve the old rail buildings, bridges and the Colinton tunnel that are part of the Monaro rail history NSW

### **NSW Govt and rail trail tourism.**

Government handling of rail trail development has been less than heartening. In 2014 it allocated \$50m for rail trails, however all but \$45m was used for regional airport development and the remaining \$5 million was allocated for use on the Tumbarumba to Rosewood rail trail. That money remains unused as the government administration moves at a glacial pace and construction of this project approved in July 2015 is yet to commence.

Somewhat more heartening to see is new work by policy writers and planners within the NSW Govt who are currently preparing a vision statement on how unused transport infrastructure can be used to support tourism growth. The framework for this vision includes finding alternative uses for currently unused assets in road, marine and rail infrastructure. Regional cycle tourism is specifically mentioned in relation to the statement "NSW has 3100 km of non-operational rail lines that can be developed for social and economic benefits for regional NSW" The vision paper "Future Transport 2056" has been available to review at <https://future.transport.nsw.gov.au/react-feedback/supporting-plans/tourism-transport-plan/11-transport-infrastructure/>

The NSW electorate of Monaro tends to be a closely contested seat. The next election in March 2019 may be no different and the funding of rail trail development could become an election issue. Kick starting the issue is the media release from Mick Veitch MLC and Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, for Lands and for Western NSW. On 27 Nov he stated that "NSW Labor today committed \$75,000 to fund a feasibility study of the Monaro Rail Trail proposal if elected in March 2019". Last week while visiting the Monaro region he said "Rail trails can be a real game changer when it comes to kicking along local regional economies through tourism"



Travelling with Mick Veitch was Bryce Wilson, the Country Labor candidate for Monaro and he also supports the call for an assessment of the proposal. “Doing a feasibility study is the smart thing to do, lets get behind the Rail Trail Committee and Council and place all the information on the table” In the photo are Will Jardine left, Bryce Wilson centre and MicVeitch right.

## **Regional govt and cycling tourism**

Earlier in the year the Queanbeyan Palerang shire prepared a tourism strategy paper that supported rail trails as part of developing tourism in the region. The ACT government has prepared a similar paper but it specifically addresses cycle tourism. The initial report by Visit Canberra set up the framework for outlining areas of cycle activity that showed potential for cycle tourism and that should be reviewed in detail. The final report with those detailed reviews and with outcomes and recommendations is due to be considered by the ACT Government cabinet this month. We hope the outcomes will be an inducement for a regional discussion of the Monaro RT.

Within the Snowy Monaro shire there are mixed opinions on the MRT. However at the October 2017 meeting a motion calling for financial support for a feasibility study of the proposal was passed.

## **Cycling and Tourism**

Would you like to be part of an industry where you could spend a dollar and profit more than two dollars? Well that’s what is happening in New Zealand. A recent report prepared for the NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment summarized annual costs and benefits for 22 NZ cycle trails in the year 2015. A net benefit of \$2.55 was earned for every dollar spent on costs.

One of the financial aspects investigated was daily spend rates. For NZ domestic visitors to rail trails the average daily spend per person in 2015 was NZ \$173 and for international visitors the spend was NZ\$207. In the case of the Otago Rail Trail, very similar to the proposed Monaro RT, surveys put the daily spend for domestic visitors at \$150 and international visitors at \$275. This spending pattern points to a very rosy future for small business along the corridor of the MRT.

## Support for Monaro RT

Demonstrating community and business support for our proposal is essential. Only when politicians and planners realize that this proposal is something that the broad community want will they take notice. In the last few months we have started to seek that support and the results are starting to look solid.

Village community associations are with us and Chambers of Commerce in Bombala and Cooma have written letters of support for the feasibility study. Small business such as hospitality suppliers and cycle related business that directly benefit are keen. The Alpine Hotel in Cooma the Federal Hotel in Nimmitabel and Bredbo Inn are obvious business winners as are cycle suppliers such as Pushys and cycle tour operators Mulga Tours and Sacred Rides. However, others with little direct benefit are also coming on board. Our thanks to Monaro Meats and Macks Tyre Plus, Cooma Sports Store, Eucumbene Trout Farm, Sports Power and Blue Sky Outdoors.

For the full listing of supporters follow this link. <http://www.monarorailtrail.com.au/supporters>

## Information sharing

Throughout the year we continued to push the proposal so that it has become a conversation topic at many levels. We need the public to be aware of the idea, we need business supporting the idea and regional planners assessing the proposal.

Getting the message out to the public has been boosted with the continued interest from ABC radio in Canberra and Bega South East Region. In October, Genevieve Jacobs of ABC Canberra 666 interviewed Bob Stewart a Bombala farmer who is a great advocate for MRT and as councilor in the Snowy Monaro Shire will be working hard to have the proposal objectively assessed. Also in Canberra, the Canberra



Times had a two page story covering the rail trail and cycling tourism. Journalist. Tim the The Yowie Man has been a supporter since early days of our existence.

You can read his story here

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/canberra-life/full-steam-ahead-for-monaro-rail-trail-20171117-gzny2y.html>



Our most recent outing was to the Tour L'E'Tape cycle race and ride. The ride village was at the Ski Tube centre near the Crackenback Resort and the event organizers generously gave us marque space and the Michelago Region Progress Association kindly lent us the marque. On the Friday we were outside in wet windy weather but for Saturday, organizers moved us inside and here Cate Spencer and Jennifer Smart used orange to draw the interest. The two days of conversation with local and visitors was a good promotion for MRT and we now have new supporters at individual and corporate level.

### Contact

Michael Daniel at [monarorailtrail@gmail.com](mailto:monarorailtrail@gmail.com)

### Stay up to date



Friends of Monaro Rail Trail