



# Monaro Rail Trail Newsletter

April 2026



Our mission is to create Australia's greatest rail trail where people of all ages and abilities can cycle, walk, and run. It will see the wellbeing of local economies flourish through tourism that brings new business opportunities and preserves the Monaro's rich rail history.

## So, what is the latest news?

### At the southern end - Bombala trail to start



At the February meeting of SMR Council, a paper was submitted by Council staff describing the pros and cons of (1) a stand-alone rail trail and (2) a shared corridor with the rail trail beside rails which could be used for other options. After lengthy discussion a motion was put and voted on to proceed with, the rail trail only on the rail formation for a short section near Bombala as originally scoped and funded. It was voted up by seven votes to four.

Immediately afterwards, however, a rescission motion was put by three councillors claiming not enough information had been provided and that the previous motion could not be proceeded with until a later council meeting. More information was provided in the business papers for the next SMRC meeting on 19th March. At that meeting the rescission motion was debated and defeated eight votes to one. So, the original motion to proceed with the rail trail on the rail formation remains and will be acted on.

In the trail development plans the trail head is currently proposed to be across the road from Bombala Tourist Information Centre meaning the rail trail will not be intruding on any of the existing Bombala Railway station precinct. Also, as per Council resolution in 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 meeting, the steel rails for this section will be set aside and preserved for potential future rail history use.

MRT Inc. appreciates this strong support from the Councillors and looks forward to building the section of trail that is currently funded.

Now Transport for NSW will push ahead with preparing the consultations, regulation changes and Ministerial Approval to provide the Lease of 5km of the corridor to SMRC. Once that is achieved, construction can commence.

While this decision by SMRC to proceed with rail trail only on this section will disappoint other rail history stakeholders, MRT Inc. is more than willing to work with other stakeholders to investigate sections where the rail corridor can be jointly used with other rail activities such as tourist heritage trains.



# Monaro Rail Trail Newsletter



## At the northern end – Queanbeyan



In early 2025, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council lodged a grant application for funding to construct a section of the trail from Queanbeyan to South Jerrabomberra and then on towards to the QPRC boundary, south of Royalla. The application was unfortunately not successful, but this does not reflect on the merits of the rail trail proposal, the difficulty lay within the grant guidelines which QPRC was not able to meet. Council will apply again when the next opportunity arises.

In a new initiative, Council will begin working to integrate the MRT into the planning of cycling facilities within Queanbeyan. The rail corridor provides a very direct commuting link between Queanbeyan CBD and the newer suburbs of South Jerrabomberra. Furthermore, with planning the trail can be integrated with other cycling trails to make an appealing and safe off-road circuit. A new enthusiastic group has formed in Queanbeyan to advocate for this planning.

### Queanbeyan to South Jerrabomberra rail corridor

Within the 7km of rail corridor from Queanbeyan rail station to South Jerrabomberra, the one



substantial timber rail bridge to be found crosses the Jerrabomberra Creek just north of the new suburb of Environa. The 32 m long timber bridge built in the 1880's has 4 spans. As part of the Trail Development Plans for the MRT, timber technology consultants were hired to review all bridges on the corridor, and they report that the bridge has some structural issues and that repairing the existing structure is the likely cheapest option. This is a good outcome for the

rail trail as rail heritage is preserved and trail user experience is increased. Given that the bridge is close to urban areas, its restoration will be appreciated by the many cyclists, walkers and runners that will view it.

### How good is cycling tourism?

Well, in New Zealand it is very good and the key 23 cycling trails are having a huge impact on the NZ tourism economy. Users of these trails which come with alluring names such “Alps to Ocean”, “West Coast Wildness” and the “Great Tastes Trail”, spent A\$1.1 Billion on their trips in the year ending June 2025. Domestic users contributed 70% and international visitors 30%. Another very



positive feature of the nature of the tourism spend is that cycling tourists on these off-road trails spend twice that of other tourists in the same area. Undoubtedly this is because the cyclists are travelling slower and staying overnight in villages bypassed by road tripping tourists. You can read the full report here

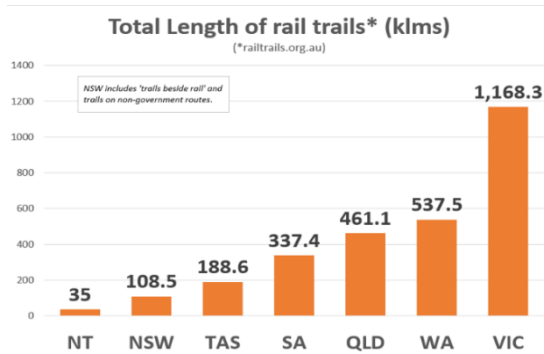
<https://www.nzcycletrail.com/assets/evaluation-2025/2025-NZCT-Evaluation-Report-14-November-2025.pdf>



# Monaro Rail Trail Newsletter



## Cycling Tourism in NSW



Surely such good stories from NZ should prompt some questioning of how the Australian cycle tourism economy compares. Sadly, the lack of development of off-road cycle trails, excluding MTB trails, in Australia means the cycle tourism spend in 2024 was worth less than \$900M. Even more revealing is the fact that 45% of this was spent in Victoria alone and that NSW is sharing the other 55% with Tas, SA, WA and Qld. Clearly, off-road multiday cycle tourism in NSW is massively underdeveloped and needs greater

government support to get it started. The graph makes that point so obvious.

### Why are there so few rail trails in NSW?



The Tumbarumba and Northern Rivers rail trails already established in NSW are proving to be great successes. On the Northern Rivers RT, Murwillumbah, in northern NSW, more than 315,000 people used the trail in the 12 months since the opening in March 2023. Furthermore, an evaluation of tourist spending in the year ending June 2024 indicated the dollar value of increased tourism was estimated to be \$3.7M.

So why has rail trail development stalled? Reasons might include a lack of a clear government process to guide development and a lack of resources to assist councils develop proposals and finally, and this is the big one, there is a lack of funding opportunities for regional councils wishing to construct a trail. Reviewing the reasons for slow development of rail trails is a task that has gone to several people in the Rail Trails for Australia organisation and here RTA member Geoff Cahill in NSW gives an update on some of their work-

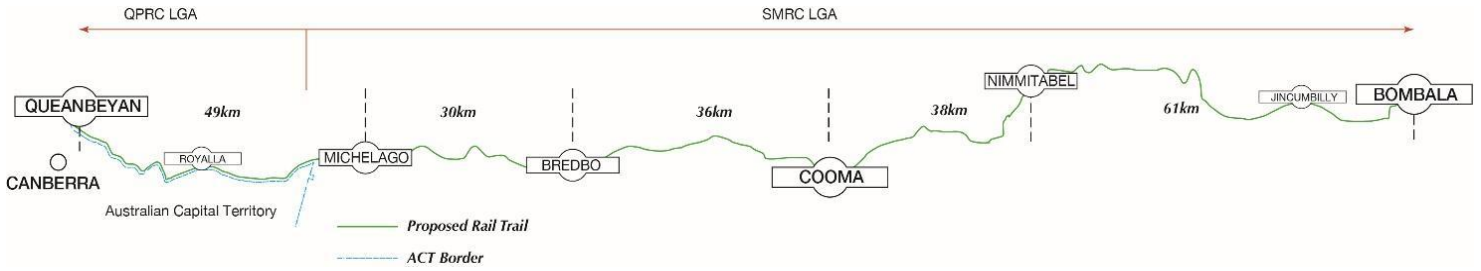
The next key milestone activity was a half-day workshop in March 2026, in person and in Newcastle, to review the draft Transport for NSW Flowchart for RT development and the Challenges List to seek ways to streamline and improve the Rail Trail Framework process. It is expected that a second all-day workshop will then be held in Newcastle to initiate the development of the NSW Rail Trails Manual to sit alongside the NSW Framework for RT development. This manual will assist councils and supporters wanting to develop rail trails. It is intended that the Manual will contain templates, guidelines, minimum requirements and contact details.

From the beginning of this process, the plan has been to eventually bring every RT supporter's group and interested local councils in to make best use of the improved Framework. This process will commence once the Manual is nearing completion.

Funding issues are also being pursued independently with relevant NSW State Ministers.



# Monaro Rail Trail Newsletter



For Further Information please see

Website <https://www.monarorailtrail.com.au/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MonaroRailTrail>

Enquiries to [monarorailtrail@gmail.com](mailto:monarorailtrail@gmail.com) Secretary: Andrew Carter

