



Monaro Rail Trail Newsletter

September 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 on the MRT?

At the southern end - MRT President Frank Bakker tells the story



In late 2024 the Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) received a \$1M grant from the Federal government to begin development of the MRT at Bombala, but progress is slow. All documents from the project team at SMRC have been submitted to Transport for NSW, these include; the business case, the trail development plan, the biodiversity and biosecurity reports, and the soil contamination report. These have been acknowledged and accepted by the NSW Dept of Primary Industries and Regional Development as compliant with the NSW Rail Trail Framework. Also, SMRC has endorsed the development approval. One of the next steps is a survey of the unfenced rail corridor but gaining approval from UGL, the corridor managers, to access the corridor to do survey and other work has been slow and is delaying preparation of a lease on the corridor. Long story short, we have been told not to expect the lease to be ready for SMRC signing till late this year. In the meantime, the SMRC project team are seeking quotes for survey work and then for detailed design work.

At the northern end in Queanbeyan – MRT member Andrew Carter gives a wrap up



The recently formed MRT advocacy group in Queanbeyan has been working to strengthen relationships with key stakeholders. The focus of their advocacy is the construct of the first 7km of the rail trail, which when linked to other shared paths will create a 25km trail for Queanbeyan. The work of Sandy Lolicato, Margot Sachse, Grant Toyer and Peter Coumbis has enabled 2 meetings in the past few months with Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council Mayor, Kenrick Winchester. In these meetings, the mayor continues to show strong support for the rail trail. The General Manager, Rebecca Ryan is also a supporter and has stated that the projected maintenance costs of the proposed rail trail would be a minor component of the annual budget for maintenance of roads and footpaths in the shire. Council will apply for grant money to fund construction when the appropriate grant line becomes available.

In recent months there has been 2 meetings with MP Kristy McBain, the Federal member for Eden-Monaro, and she also supports the plan to integrate the short section of rail trail with other Queanbeyan shared paths to make the 25km circuit. She keenly acknowledges the recreational, road safety, community and tourism benefits that will come from the trail.



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Landcare in the corridor- MRT advocate, Sandy Lolicato, comments



The construction contract would remove the immediate weeds on the dis-used railway line, including feral woody plants such the pine trees and blackberries. During the construction phase, there will need to be care to not spread seed from weeds along the corridor, especially African Love Grass. As per the draft Biosecurity Plan, there will be a weed strategy along the corridor to manage weeds on an ongoing basis. These include St John's Wort, blackberries and African Love Grass. Queanbeyan Landcare has expressed an interest in restoring the area into a nature corridor. This would be a longer-term project and require additional grant funding.

Federal Government Active Transport Grant



In July 2026 the Australian Government announced the \$500 million grant line for active transport projects. The new funding ensures opportunities will continue to be provided to those Councils and governments around the country who want to create bikeways and shared paths for their residents. Applications for funding close at the end of September and the funding guidelines suggest that the disused rail corridor from Queanbeyan Station to the new residential areas of South Jerrabomberra and Tralee might be an eligible project. The 7km corridor links residential areas and provides safe off-road transport options. Cycling advocacy group, We Ride Australia, organized a promotional event for the grant at Parliament House Canberra and amongst the breakfast time networkers were L – R: Ric Moor (MRT Inc), Peter MacLean (Bicycles NSW) and Cecily Michaels (Pedal Power ACT).

Rail Trails Australia (RTA) – MRT and RTA member Peter Coumbis gives a summary



Since the MRT newsletter in April, Rail Trail Australia's meetings with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and the NSW Dept of Primary Industry and Regional Development have continued on a monthly basis in an attempt to resolve the major obstacles facing NSW regional councils seeking to establish a rail trail. The five largest issues identified were:

1. Access and leasing delays with rail corridor managers UGL Pty Ltd and TfNSW. On the one hand funding bodies will not approve a grant to councils unless the project is "shovel-ready". On the other, the TfNSW will not formally approve a rail trail unless the council produces evidence that it has funding in place for construction and maintenance of the trail.
2. Lack of a practical planning and implementation guide for establishing rail trails.



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3. No dedicated funding sources for preliminary works, construction and maintenance.
4. Unclear agency roles, weak cross-portfolio coordination and minimal government support.
5. Councils are responsible for maintenance and renewal of all assets and infrastructure within rail corridor even though no ownership and lack of baseline condition reports.

The RTA-TfNSW-DPIRD Working Group has made significant progress on each of the above by also meeting with Ministers, Senior Policy Advisers and heads of community infrastructures grants at both State and Federal level. They have advanced drafts of an ease-of-use flowchart detailing the steps for establishing a rail trail in NSW and have also developed a uniform glossary of the confusingly different terms used in the sector. They have established a template form for obtaining approved access to the rail corridor and gaining an Approval in Principle for third party works which is an essential pre-requisite.

Finally, the RTA team have an agreement with TfNSW to be provided with a template for lease of the corridor as a rail trail.

RTA plans to release a Draft NSW Rail Trails Manual for comment at its bi-annual conference in Canberra on 6 November 2026 which everyone is encouraged to attend, see this link [RTA conference](#)

Strong Community Support for MRT at Nimmitabel



On Saturday 29 August 2026, Monaro Rail Trail (MRT) members joined the Nimmitabel Advancement Group (NAG) for a vibrant community gathering in Nimmitabel - the historic birthplace of the MRT proposal.

MRT member Dave Byrne delivered an update on the trail's recent regional momentum. Key milestones highlighted included a \$1 million federal grant secured for the initial Bombala section and the upcoming finalisation of a 30-year rail corridor lease.

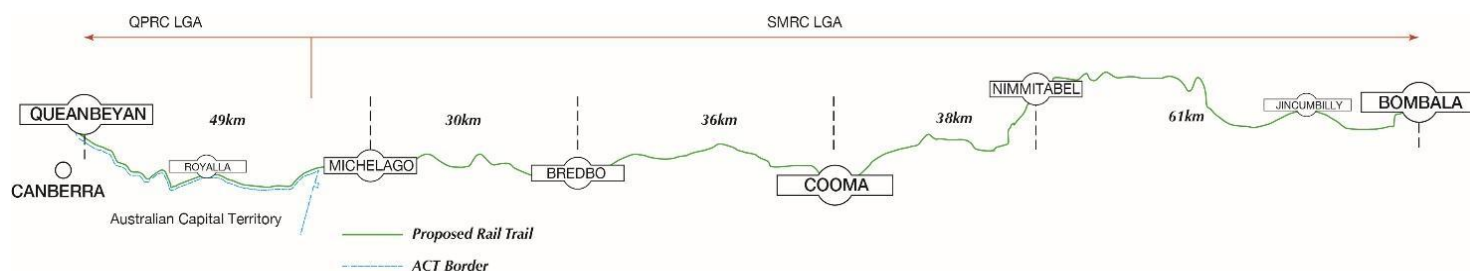
The presentation focused on a vision to develop local precinct trails in the small towns along the route. Local planning for a proposed \$72,000 precinct trail and a potential rail trolley cart attraction for Nimmitabel was exceptionally well received.

Over morning tea there were productive conversations with several community groups concluding with NAG and several local representatives signing up for MRT membership. Moving forward, both groups will continue to actively investigate shared grant opportunities.

In the pic you see L-R. orange shirted MRT members Dave Byrne and Peter and Rosanne Coumbis with Nimmitabel residents David Wicks and Vicky Pollard.



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For Further Information please see

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