



**Newsletter May 2019**

**Our Mission Statement:** We wish to put the disused Monaro rail way line to productive use as a recreational trail for cycling, walking and running and in doing so boost tourism, the economy and the wellbeing 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.

Hello Monaro Rail Trail supporters. In this update we let you know how our proposal is travelling and what's happening with government discussions on rail trails in NSW. We were there at Tumbarumba for the commencement of works on the Highlands to Riverina rail trail. We also present some data indicating just how far the NSW Government has fallen behind other Australian states and New Zealand in building opportunities for safe cycling holidays.

#### MRT Feasibility studies



**SNOWY MONARO**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL  
*Stronger together Better together*

In August last year we successfully crowd funded \$12,500 to undertake a scoping study of the rail trail proposal. That study was completed by the end of October and in December we presented the results to the Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) which has 90% of the rail corridor within its boundaries. You can read the full results of that study on our website. A special thanks to all those who contributed to the crowd funding as that scoping study made our job of convincing council to further investigate the proposal very easy.

In March 2019 the SMRC endorsed a recommendation to fund a full feasibility study of the MRT proposal. The council recently appointed MHA and Transplan Pty as consultants to undertake this work, they are very experienced in rail trail development in Australia.

The scope of this new feasibility study will be to address in detail key issues; user numbers, construction costs, social and economic benefits, return on investment and conduct community consultations with village communities and adjoining land holders. Other matters to be addressed include, needs for accommodation and supporting transport and other services, review trail construction and supporting infrastructure, provide a time frame for construction and provide a model for governance of maintenance and funding.

Council staff are planning for, a first report draft and community feedback by end July 2019 and the final report of the feasibility study by September 2019.





## Rail Trails in NSW

Rail trails in NSW may have been given a boost recently. Wednesday 17 April was the long-awaited commencement date of work on the Highlands to Riverina rail trail. The first section of the trail is Tumbarumba to Rosewood, a gentle 21 km run through scenic country. The campaign to get this rail trail going has been running since 2002 and it has been a long wait for campaign leaders such as Owen Fitzgerald of Laurel Hill Lodge near Tumbarumba. His constant agitation together with the strong support of local and NSW MP Greg Aplin was also important in getting the project to this point.

The project was originally selected by the NSW Government as an administrative model for how to develop rail trails in NSW. Now that trail development has commenced other rail trail proposals should be able to follow this model.



## Rail Trail planning in NSW

The slow development of cycle trails in NSW is high lighted by the following data compiled from Rail Trails Australia information, see Table 1. Clearly NSW is a long way behind all other states in cycling infrastructure. The opportunity cost to the NSW economy through lost tourism activity is not known but what is known is that thousands of NSW cyclists are heading interstate and overseas to New Zealand and Europe to find safe off-road cycling opportunities. On the Otago Rail Trail in NZ the 2015 user survey showed that of the 15,000 visitors riding the complete trail on one occasion, 15% were from Australia. And now with so many new trails becoming available in NZ the number of Aussie cycling tourists heading that way continues to grow.

The second Table shows the results of the strong commitment to cycle tourism by the NZ national and local governments. There are now 22 multiday rides to draw visitors to all regions of NZ. Each ride is supported by service providers in bike hire, accommodation and meals and refreshments and shuttle bus or transfers.



Table 1. Rural Rail Trails in Australia: The number of trails longer than 20km

State	Number of trails	Combined length
Victoria	15 plus	900km
Queensland	5 plus	326km
South Australia	4 plus	217km
Tasmania	7 plus	100km
Western Australia	6 plus	269km
Northern Territory	1	25km
New South Wales	1 under construction	

Table 2. Rail/Cycle Trails in New Zealand listed as Great Rides by NZ Cycle Trails.

North Island	10 trails	Total length 1013km
South Island	12 trails	Total length 1374km

This NZ information comes from Gary Patterson developer of the Great Rides App which is a very useful app for anyone considering a ride in NZ.

Clearly NSW is well behind other Australian states and NZ in developing cycle tourism opportunities. It is heartening however to see NSW government planners are taking greater interest in rail trails and in the last 24 months a number of reports have been released that show that interest. Planners in regional economic development, transport strategy and tourism development make reference to rail trails. In several of these reports the Monaro Rail Trail is specifically referred to. You can access all of these reports on the MRT website but the most relevant is the recently released Snowy Monaro tourism report [Snowy Monaro Destination Tourism 2019](#)

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