President Frank Bakker

Monaro Rail Trail Inc
1149 Old Bega Road
Steeple Flat NSW 2631

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 heritage.

President's Report presented at the 2026 AGM.

Well, 2026 started with a bang but we still have some unfinished business.

In February we worked with Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) to apply for a grant under the NSW state REDCIP scheme. This was to seek funding to construct a rail trail from Queanbeyan station to near Royalla, a distance of 21km which would have been great start to the northern end of the corridor, but unfortunately for reasons unrelated to the merits of the MRT, this application was unsuccessful.

In March we had a delegation present at the Bombala Show which was well received. Nearly everyone that we spoke to on the day were extremely supportive of our project at Bombala and our plans to go beyond in future. Also, we were pleased to be invited to the Nimmitabel community day in August. Residents were keen to learn of progress of the MRT proposal and to add their voice of support.

Speaking of the Bombala project, this is slowly taking shape with Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) inviting tenders to survey the rail corridor and prepare the detailed design packages. They have also submitted an application for the Approval in Principle (AIP) with UGL Pty Ltd who are the current managers of the disused rail corridor. The AIP signifies that the rail network operator has reviewed our conceptual plans and agreed they are acceptable *in theory*, allowing SMRC to move forward with deep planning, budgeting, or funding applications. All other requirements set by the NSW Government have been met so once the AIP is in place, the formal consultation phase can occur prior to finally getting the Minister for Regional Transport to enact the Regulation changes, which in turn will enable the Lease for the corridor to be provided to Council. So, we are hoping construction activity to start early next year.

More recently we have assisted QPRC to submit another grant application, this time to the Federal Government Active Transport fund. If successful, the grant will fund building the 8.7km section from Queanbeyan station to Tralee and this will also create links with the existing local active transport network around Queanbeyan and provide safer commuting and recreation riding options. While the successful outcome is not guaranteed, we live in hope.

In order to keep the ball rolling a working group has been meeting monthly with the QPRC and SMRC. This has been going for several years now and is continuing to maintain our relationship with these main stakeholders.

Late last year we had meetings with SMRC, Cooma Monaro Railway and Friends of Bombala Rail groups. This included some discussion on the possibility of developing a trail beside rails at Bombala, which was subsequently concluded to be not feasible within the cost and time constraints of the existing funding agreement. We have since tried to suggest future opportunity on other sections of the corridor but CMR have not yet responded to this. We will follow this up with both SMRC and CMR to see where this goes.

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We are also aware of considerable lobbying being done by Rail trails Australia to Transport NSW for, the development of guidelines for implementing the NSW Rail Trails Framework, and to encourage the NSW Government to fund Rail Trails in NSW.

The MRT team will have a stall at the Queanbeyan Show, 7 & 8 November, and also will be attending the biennial Rail Trails Australia conference being held in Canberra 6 November.

Sincere thanks to all committee members and particularly the Queanbeyan support group for their considerable effort at keeping the show on the road. Without your valued time and guidance, our progress this year would have been limited but with continued effort and some luck we will have more to show next year.

Good luck and Thanks
Frank Bakker

1 November 2026
Frank Bakker
President