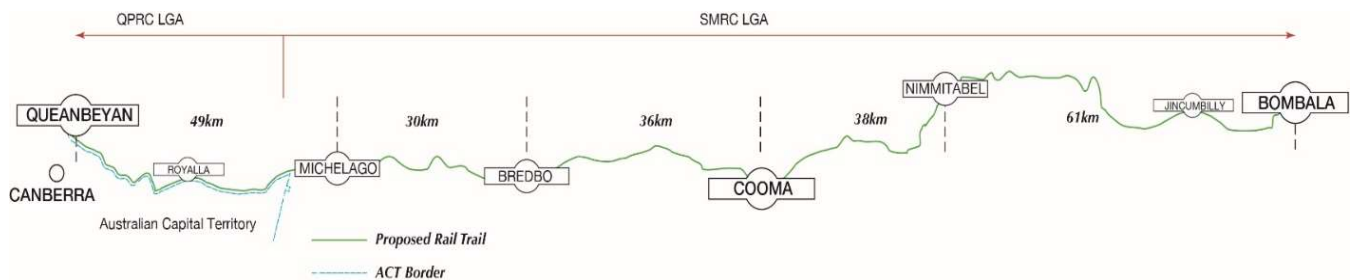


## August 2023

### So, what's the news?

In this newsletter our President gives an update on progress and looks at some of the issues involved and how our local politicians are helping. On a lighter note, we look at one of our new supporters, Dane Waites, and why he is a supporter and what he is doing to promote MRT. A solid piece of news is the announcement of the consultants who will be undertaking the work for Phase 2 of the Trail Development Plan. We also look at how the MRT can be linked with an existing recreation trail in Queanbeyan to create an interesting 25 km circuit bound to be popular with residents of Queanbeyan and Canberra. Finally, you can read that the finishing touches to the Bombala Precinct trail are laid in concrete.



### Mid-year report by President Carlo Botto.

Since our last newsletter quite a bit has been happening – albeit slower than we would want! This year we are targeting grant funding for construction of Stage 1 of the MRT – Queanbeyan to Michelago in the north and Bombala to Jincumbilly in the south. So, I'll go through a few of the key items progressing us to our objective.

#### Federal and State Political Support – Grant Progress

At Federal level, our local Member for Eden Monaro, Kristy McBain has been a great supporter and has put forward \$1M of funds to kick things off. Kristy is particularly interested in the regional economic benefits that the MRT will bring to the towns at the southern end of the MRT, as they have a genuine need of an economic boost. We have engaged with Kristy on many occasions.

Our new State Member for Monaro, Steve Whan is a long-time supporter of MRT and has recently been in the media publicly supporting the MRT. Together with Narelle Davis, Mayor in the Snowy Monaro Regional Council, we have met with Steve to develop a plan on how to best position ourselves for a grant.



## **Council Support**

Both Councils, Snowy Monaro and Queanbeyan Palerang, are supportive. We need them to make any grant applications and to take control of the rail corridor via a lease – so their support is critical.

The key issue for them is ongoing operating costs of the MRT once built. As everyone in our Local Government Area understands, Councils are under enormous financial pressure and, although operating costs are relatively modest when compared to the enormous economic benefits the MRT will bring, the Councils will not receive any of this revenue directly. Hence, we are spending a good deal of our time discussing and trying to resolve this issue, including finding revenue sources and innovative approaches to maintenance.

The good news is that SMRC's Mayor, Narelle Davis, is personally very passionate about the MRT, having been involved with development of the NSW Tumbarumba Rail Trail. She is driving the project within Council and at the State/Federal level and is assisted by a great relationship with both Members.

MRT Inc in conjunction with SMRC and QPRC has identified potential capital grant sources for construction of MRT Stage 1, and reviewed the grant conditions. This has been quite challenging and is an area where we continue to engage with and seek support from our local Members, particularly at the State level.

## **MRT Working Group - Progress**

The joint working group of MRT Inc and the two Councils has been meeting fortnightly. We are working to meet the 3 major requirements of the NSW Government Rail Trail Framework - community support, financial viability and biosecurity plans. Our draft business case is continually updated to align with these requirements so we can apply and be successful in our grant application. To this end, in late 2022 we were successful in a grant application from Regional NSW. See the Consultants story below.

The other important piece of work recently initiated is negotiating a lease for the rail corridor with Transport for NSW (TfNSW). This has become a little easier with the release of a framework for a lease.

Although all this work may not be fully completed in time for some of the grant applications, we are working with the grant bodies to see what level of completion will be required. This is another area where our local members can help. Regional NSW departmental staff based in Queanbeyan have been very supportive of our project and are able to provide valuable assistance.

Finally, and this is where you can help. Although we have consulted widely with the community and, for example, have several petitions with over 1,000 signatures, we need to increase pressure on Government at local and state level to give greater priority to the MRT. The Bombala community is in dire need of economic



development and to be delivered quickly. They have formed a community working group and have drafted a petition to Council to get things moving. We believe this is an important initiative, and other towns and villages such as Cooma, Nimmitabel and Michelago should do the same. We also ask MRT members, supporters and friends to write letters to their Federal and State politicians and importantly to local Councillors asking them to support grant applications and raise the priority of this important economic development project.

.....

## Dane Waites our Diamond Ambassador



Dane Waites is a new ambassador for the MRT project. He comes to the project with a special purpose – to create an awareness that rail trails can provide safe recreational opportunities for people of all abilities. Dane lives with autism and is gifted with an amazing ability to run. He runs to offset the challenges of his condition and to help promote charitable causes. Several years ago, he ran the 2100 km from Perth to Pambula (on the NSW South Coast) and raised \$120 K for research into autism. Now he wants to help the MRT project and recently he took to the highway to run the 86 km from Cooma to Bombala and promote rail trails as safe recreation places for people of all abilities. Farewelling Dane from the SMRC chambers in Cooma were Councillors Lynda Summers and Chris Hanna and staff member David Rawlings. Amongst those welcoming Dane into Bombala was Charlie Maslin, one of our ambassadors and also a veteran of a Perth to Pambula crossing. Charlie did it on bike a few years back. Inspirational stuff!



.....

## Consultants for Trail Development Plan Stage 2



Late last year SMRC received a NSW government grant of \$272K to further complete planning studies on the proposed rail trail and in early July announced the consultants contracted to do the work. Mike Halliburton and Associates (known as the two Mikes) have been appointed to undertake Trail Development Plan Stage 2 which is Queanbeyan to South Jerrabomberra (10 km) and Michelago to Cooma (65 km).

Macrozamia Environmental has been engaged to provide reports for Biosecurity and Biodiversity aspects of the sections; South Jerrabomberra to Michelago, Nimmitabel to Old Bombala Rd and Jincumbilly to Bombala.

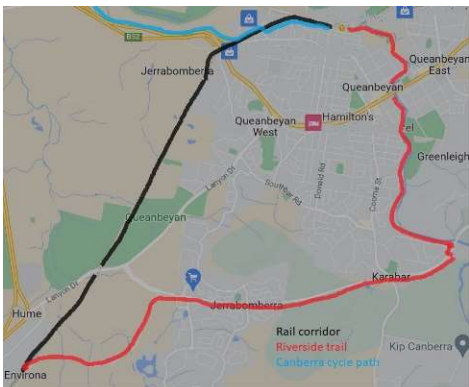
In addition, Lytton Advisory has been engaged to review potential income streams that will be available for funding the operating and maintenance costs of the rail trail. This includes surveying how other trails around Australia and internationally are managed.

This work will allow updates to our business case by providing current Trail Development Plan pricing and also contributes to the environmental assessments as required in the NSW Framework for Rail Trails.

All this work is scheduled to be completed by end of September which will fit the timelines of upcoming grant applications.

.....

## Queanbeyan Precinct Circuit



Until recently there has been uncertainty about the availability of the rail corridor from Queanbeyan Station to South Jerrabomberra. This 10 km section had been part of the rail access to a proposed intermodal freight station near South Jerrabomberra. However, late last year, Queanbeyan Palerang Council withdrew the proposal and freed the way for this section to be included in the planning for the MRT. This inclusion means cyclists leaving the rail station get into the rail trail





experience very quickly and without road crossings. Also, this section is right on the ACT border so it will give north Canberra cyclists easy access to the rail trail near Harman. The other major benefit to arise is that this section of the MRT can be linked with the almost completed Riverside - Ellerton Drive cycle way to create a 25km circuit around Queanbeyan. This circuit travels along the banks of the Queanbeyan River and through the Jerrabomberra grasslands - an appealing recreation trail for Queanbeyan residents and a great drawcard to bring Canberra cyclists into Queanbeyan. It is also an opportunity for community groups to get involved and already the QBN Landcare group have committed to working with MRT on weed management and re vegetation initiatives.

.....

### Bombala Precinct Trail

In 2021 MRT Inc received a grant from Boco Rock Community fund to develop the Bombala Cycle Trail, which is a 3km trail around town and linked to the Railway station precinct. Signs, maps and brochures and have since been produced. Part of the trail is an optional 5 km up to the Bombala Lookout offering great views over the town and surrounding district. This provides an additional attraction for visitors to Bombala.

A local contractor has been engaged to do the last of the path upgrades. Darrell Grant from Wyndham has now completed three sections of concrete paths on the existing riverside shared path and the approach to the footbridge over the railway station. We are sure these new paths will be much appreciated by the Bombala community and already children are enjoying cycling on the smooth surface. We also wish to acknowledge a donation of road base to help “finish the job”. This was from Schmidt Quarry in Nimmitabel and is very much appreciated.



.....

**Thanks for your interest !!**

Website <https://www.monarorailtrail.com.au/>  
 Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MonaroRailTrail>

Email [monarorailtrail@gmail.com](mailto:monarorailtrail@gmail.com)

Phone President Carlo Botto 0400 926 340