



## Newsletter February 2021

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 bringing new business opportunities and preserving the Monaro's rich rail heritage.

**Hello rail trail supporters.** In this news update you can read about our new committee and what they have been busily doing in the community as we build up the case for the MRT. We are really pleased to tell you we are now in the position to begin lodging grant applications which if successful would allow a start on construction of more than 90km of trail.



**The AGM and committee.** At the November AGM there were several changes in key roles. Our long serving President Mary Walters stepped aside to be replaced by Ken Lister whose enthusiasm and experience will continue the early momentum of MRT. Also, our first serving Secretary, Michael Daniel has stepped down and passed the reigns to Fay Steward who comes to us with executive level experience in government. The committee thank Mary and Michael for all their hard work on the last five years. You can read more about the new committee and the steering group here. (<https://www.monarorailtrail.com.au/about/committee-members>)



**Community participation.** In December and January, the committee were out in the streets of Cooma and Bombala actively sharing information and gathering letters of support. Two very enthusiastic MRT members leading the Cooma drive were Peter and Rosanne Coumbis and in Bombala, Merrita Coombes and Zoe Smith took time out from their busy jobs to promote MRT. Their efforts were rewarded with over 1,000 people signing an open letter of support for MRT and its application for funding. Also, more than 130 letters of very encouraging support were received from individuals, farmers, business operators and community associations. Politicians to step forward with support were Senator Jim Molan (NSW), Kristy McBain MHR (Federal Eden-Monaro), Andrew Leigh MHR (Federal Fenner in ACT) and Andrew Barr (Chief Minister ACT).





**Local government participation.** The 213km rail corridor passes through the shires of Queanbeyan – Palerang and Snowy Monaro and it borders a 35km section of the ACT. Achieving support of these stakeholders is vital to the continued forward momentum of the MRT campaign. At this stage all three have given letters of “in principle” support. As

we prepare detailed construction and maintenance plans, we are seeking greater involvement of the two shires as they would become owners/managers of the rail corridor should the project succeed. At this stage our discussions are primarily with the Snowy Monaro Regional Council as we work through issues relating to funding of trail maintenance.



**The BLERF grant application.** To help local economies recover from bushfires, \$250M was made available through the jointly funded NSW and Federal governments Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. Communities in bushfire impacted regions were able to apply for funding to cover a range of activities including infrastructure projects such as the rail trail which would lead to long term and sustained economic activity. It is difficult to estimate how much time it took our team to put together this application but it certainly drew on all the resources of our engineers, financial analysts, planners and business writers to build our business case and present a case. Evidence of; community need, alignment with

planning at State, Regional and Local levels and evidence of public support and participation were part of our case. The grant closed on 28 January and results won’t be known until May.



**Have you seen the MRT video?** As part of our campaign to inform key stakeholders we produced a short video to inform and enthuse key stakeholders. One of our recent briefings was to The Village Building Co who are developers of the South Jerrabomberra residential estate adjoining the rail corridor south of Queanbeyan. All the staff present liked the proposal and recognized that it would add recreation opportunities for future residents. The CEO, Peter Doherty, later sent us a letter of support. Check out the video here.

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

Images, (top to bottom) – Southern Monaro landscape, MRT and Cooma Rotary Markets, Michelago Valley, Ingelara Creek bridge.

Fay Steward for the MRT Inc team.

**Contact**

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