



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

**MRT PRESIDENT'S REPORT
28th AUGUST 2019.
ALPINE HOTEL COOMA 2630**

The year started off with the launch of the online crowdfunding campaign to fund a feasibility study. The target was reached within 6 days which indicated to us the widespread and deep interest in the MRT proposal. Post raising \$12,225 we were able to engage a local Jindabyne firm TRC, headed by Janet Mackay, to undertake a study on the economic benefits of a rail trail from Queanbeyan to Bombala. This report would enable us to present data to our local Snowy Monaro Regional Council and regional tourism planners. We already had a number of NSW government agencies, including "Destination NSW" supporting the MRT project. I would like to thank Andrew Carter who was at the helm of getting this campaign off the ground and Jen Smart and Jack Clayton for their contribution.

The TRC report was released in November 2018. It gave a positive summary of the proposal – the unique Monaro landscape had tourist cycle appeal and the towns/villages were rideable distances apart. Also, these communities would benefit from the tourist spend on food and accommodation. Post the release we had ABC regional radio interviews to inform the public of the positive results of this report.

Other events throughout the year are noted here.

July 2018: Peter Cottrell produced an excellent MRT flyer which has been distributed to various businesses in the region. Cate Spencer organised an MRT banner for our use at local events / forums that we attend in the region.

August 2018: The NSW government announced a one-million-dollar feasibility study to look at reopening the rail service from Canberra to Bombala and build a new rail line from Bombala to Eden. We are aware that this report will slow down acceptance of our MRT proposal. The original tender called for the report to be completed by June 2019. The Canberra Times newspaper has recently suggested that there may be more delays in the completion of the study.

October 2018: This was the commencement of the pilot Tumbarumba to Rosewood rail trail. It is always a positive for us when action on rail trails is happening somewhere in our state. Andrew Carter "quits" from painting any more orange bikes after a magnificent effort of painting many. A well-deserved retirement for Andrew! Cate Spencer obtained Public Liability Insurance through NFR Insurance Brokers for MRT.

November 2018: Peter Cottrell and I presented the TRC report to Peter Bascomb, the SMRC general manager. Our aim was to get council involvement to move forward with the next stage of the full feasibility study. They had previously committed up to \$75,000 for this study and on seeing the positive results of the TRC report council took over the responsibility for obtaining tenders for a larger study. They set up a subcommittee to oversee this. In May 2019 the tender was given to Halliburton and Associates. Work commenced in July 2019 and the final report to SMRC is expected in September 2019.



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November 2018: MRT committee members attended the Nimmitabel Festival. They noted strong support locally for the rail trail. This same month we released the full TRC report, via our website, Facebook page, and newsletters. Media releases stimulated news stories and interviews for print and radio media.

December 2018: Andrew Carter and Michael Daniel worked on a presentation to the SMRC council meeting which was delivered by Michael. It showcased results of the TRC economic feasibility study and how the NSW state government and ACT agencies that are supportive of rail trails have them noted in their strategic plans.

February 2019: The Snowy Monaro Tourism Management Plan 2019 was released by SMRC. This was done by consultants TRC. The report nominated MRT as one of 14 ways to boost tourism in our region.

March 2019: This was the month of the NSW State Election. It was a state wide opportunity to bring to candidate's attention the unnecessarily slow development of rail trails in NSW. Candidates needed to be aware of the economic, social and health benefits offered by rail trails to the regional/rural areas of NSW. Also, it was the right time to showcase the benefits of rail trails in other states and how far behind we were. Other States are getting the tourist dollars that we are missing out on!

April 2019: Andrew Carter attended the turning of the sod to mark the beginning of construction work on the first section of the Highlands to Riverina Rail Trail.

May 2019: SMRC announces the tender for the feasibility study was given to Halliburton and Associates. Work commenced in July 2019, and the first draft of the report to SMRC is expected in September 2019.

August 2019: MRT committee members attend the open forums held by the consultants and SMRC both of whom were keen to engage with stakeholders, in particular the rural landholders who are bordering the rail easement. This was done by holding evening forums in Bombala, Nimmitabel, Cooma and Michelago. The Cooma and Michelago forums had a good attendance from a variety of stakeholders and the interested public.

Throughout the year committee members, largely headed by Jack Clayton, have attended local Rotary markets with the aim of gaining public support and exposing our MRT project. We need to continually fight back against government inertia on rail trails in NSW. For the future I feel we need to re-establish contact with our local and federal members so that MRT remains on their agenda. Although we now have council on board to help assess the MRT proposal, until the train feasibility comes out, we are at a standstill. The study and its delayed report have left us in limbo.



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I would like to thank our committee members for their contribution to the ongoing MRT project over the last 12 months. In particular I thank Michael Daniel our secretary and Andrew Carter our treasurer, both are indeed the backbone of MRT. They spend many countless hours behind the scenes working together and keeping up to date with political trends and what is happening around MRT and NSW rail trails.

Let us hope with each passing year we are getting closer to turning the first sod on our MRT project.

Mary Walters – President Monaro Rail Trail Inc