



MRT Inc. - 2022 AGM

PRESIDENTS REPORT

It has been an honour to be President of MRT Inc. for the last 12 months and work with such a dynamic and competent team of passionate people to achieve our vision of the Monaro Rail Trail between Queanbeyan and Bombala. I also wish to acknowledge the superb foundation work undertaken by the previous Committees and numerous Supporters which has helped awareness and support.

Much has been achieved through the efforts of many people including the Committee, Steering Team, Precinct Team, Consultants, Ambassadors, Friends of MRT as well as our numerous Business, Political and Community supporters. To each of you, I express gratitude for your contribution to the substantial progress. I also record the appreciation of the support of both the Snowy Monaro and Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council Officers and Councillors.

Some of the key achievements during 2021 include;

- 1) Completion of the Trail Development Plans for three sections;
 - Bombala – Jincumbilly (25km)
 - Nimmitabel – Old Bombala Road (10k)
 - Tralee – Michelago (41km),
- 2) Completion of the Bombala Precinct Trail through \$53k funding from Boco Rock Community Fund,
- 3) Completion of a comprehensive Business Case based on the successful NSW Rail Trail projects but with strengthened economic data, community consultation details and detailed risk assessments (planning, construction and operations & maintenance). The Benefit Cost Ratio for the whole project is conservatively estimated to be 4.1. To help offset operations and maintenance costs, it is proposed that a “subscription model” be implemented to raise funds as well as the sale of steel rails (rather than offsetting the construction cost) which are innovative for Australian Rail Trails.
- 4) Pre-election commitment of \$1million by Federal Member for Eden-Monaro in April 2022 to “kick-start the MRT” at Bombala. Currently on-hold pending resolution on the use corridor south of Cooma by CMR (see below).
- 5) Resolutions by new Councils during September 2022 confirming “in principle” support for the Monaro Rail Trail
- 6) Letters of support from both ACT Government, NSW Cross-Border Commissioner and Regional Development Australia – Southern Inland
- 7) Public interest and awareness of MRT continues to grow with new supporters at individual and business level. Friends of MRT Facebook now has 3022 Followers and regular Newsletters have been widely distributed.
- 8) Favourable media coverage on ABC Radio and Monaro Post.



- 9) Lodging of an Application by SMRC for a grant of \$272,781 in August 2022 under the NSW Government Business Case and Strategic Development Fund to enable completion of the Trail Development Plan between Michelago and Cooma as well as Environmental and Bio-Security Plans. Awaiting an announcement hopefully prior to MRT Inc AGM.
- 9) Briefings for Q-PRC Councillors and Executives quarterly SMRC Councillor Briefings.
- 10) Fortnightly Working Part Meetings with Q-PRC, SMRC and MRT Inc officers to co-ordinate and progress key issues.
- 11) NSW Parliament passing legislation in August 2022 to establish the NSW Rail Trails Framework which simplifies and clarifies the process for establishing Rail Trails.
- 11) A recommendation to SMRC that negotiations commence with Transport for NSW and QPRC regarding a Lease of the corridor between Queanbeyan and Bombala.

The main disappointments were;

- a) The position of Cooma Monaro Railway (CMR) to insist on steel rails not removed from the corridor between Cooma and Bombala since they recently announced plans to run a tourist train to Bombala. There was a previous agreement that the MRT would share the corridor south of Cooma to Rock Flat which could provide mutual benefits. The corridor south of Rock Flat to Bombala has substantial cuttings, embankments, bridges and major highway crossings which are problematic for both the MRT and CMR. The SMRC Mayor has tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a way forward during several meetings. Hence MRT Inc, with Council support, has re-focused efforts on the Queanbeyan-Cooma sections until there is a clear resolution of a way forward for the MRT south of Cooma.
- b) The decision by Councils to vote against lodging an application for construction of the Queanbeyan-Michelago section due to concerns over maintenance cost and asset risks. The treatment of depreciation is of critical concern to both Councils as they currently suffer from financial deficit positions.
- c) Of lesser significance was the un-successful application for funding of the Nimmitabel Precinct Trail from the Boco Rock Community Fund.

I am hopeful that over the next 12 months, the next MRT Inc Committee will;

- have Trail Development Plans, Environmental and Plans for the Queanbeyan – Cooma sections to complement the completed plans for the Bombala – Jincumbilly and Nimmitabel – Old Bombala Road sections,
- have an operating model/structure including maintaining, funding and marketing the whole MRT involving Q-PRC, SMRC and MRT Inc.
- apply for funding and complete the Nimmitabel Precinct Trail which will be the second “rib” off the MRT “spine”
- obtain full support from Q-PRC and SMRC in early 2023 to;
 - accept responsibility for leases of the corridor from Transport for NSW & Regional NSW
 - lodge applications for Grant Funding to commence construction.



I am grateful to the numerous people who have willingly contributed countless hours towards this magnificent project which will diversify and boost the Monaro economy creating needed jobs. It will encourage physical and mental health strength as well as complementing other tourism activities.

It is a delight to note the teamwork and progress achieved and I thank you for your active participation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Lister", is positioned below the text. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "K".

Ken Lister

President - MRT Inc.