



20 October 2023

Monaro Rail Trail on Track for Construction

Snowy Mountains Regional Council passed a resolution to apply for a \$1 Million grant at a Council meeting held in Bombala on 19 October.

Prior to the last federal election, then local Eden-Monaro MP Kristy McBain pledged \$1 million to begin construction of the Monaro Rail Trail at Bombala if re-elected. The Council was advised by the Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) via email on 13 July 2023, that it could now apply to receive the pledged \$1 million funding through the "Investing in Our Communities Program".

At the meeting Council took a vote on proceeding with an application to apply for that grant. Bombala business owner, Paul Perkins representing the Bombala Chamber of Commerce spoke in support of the paper and screened a short video highlighting the trail corridor in the Bombala area.

Mr Carlo Botto, MRT Inc President, stated "the Council seeking a grant to commence construction of the Monaro Rail Trail is an extremely important first step in this important economic development project, and that starting it in Bombala is also significant. This part of our local government area is in desperate need of economic stimulus, and the rail trail will provide it in a timely way."

He thanked MRT Inc members and Council staff who have worked hard and passionately to get us to this point. He also thanked the Councillors who voted in support of the grant application and Kristy McBain for recognising the community need and pledging the grant funds.

Council will now apply for the grant assisted by MRT Inc and with the support of local member, Kristy McBain. The grant funds will be used to construct the first 3.5km of the 25 km Rail Trail from Bombala to Jincumbilly. This short section in conjunction with the recently completed precinct trail around the town will provide benefits to the local community as well as visitors, but the main benefits are:

- Providing a clear direction of Council's preference for use of the corridor at Bombala and demonstrating consistency with the direction and priorities in current Council strategies in a real and practical way.
- Enabling Bombala to begin receiving benefits from the rail trail as soon as possible, assisting in rejuvenation of the Bombala station precinct and Bombala Visitors Centre.
- Would provide a good foundation for further grants to extend the rail trail further from Bombala by providing real experience in construction and operation of the trail.
- Would reduce the cost of future grant applications for the MRT. (The 3.5km is about 15% of the Bombala to Jincumbilly trail.)

Rail Trails are being developed around the world and in Australia as an active tourism attraction. The draft Business Case for the entire MRT from Queanbeyan to Bombala estimates a benefit to cost ratio of 4:1 for the full project based on information available to date. A feasibility study commissioned in 2019, estimates that the full MRT would attract just under 70,000 users annually and add almost \$24.5 million to the local economy along the route.

In NSW, the Tweed section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail opened on 1 March 2023 and is the first



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stage of that project. This section is 24 km long which is also the length of the Bombala to Jincumbilly section of the MRT. The business case for this section of trail estimated 27,000 people per year would use the trail. However, after the first 4 months of operation an estimated 70,551 people have used the trail which is more than double the estimated annual use in the business case.

In our region, NSW's first publicly funded Tumbarumba to Rosewood rail trail has been in operation for around three years and has attracted 50,000 riders during this time. At 22km it is similar length to the Bombala to Jincumbilly section of the MRT. Tumbarumba has had nine new businesses open, and the per head tourist spend is up by 20%, with discretionary spend on leisure activities up by 55%.

According to the Council paper, the additional visitors to ride the Bombala to Jincumbilly rail trail would add another \$9 million in spending to the local economy in Bombala and increase the visitor spend by 61% when compared to the visitor spend in the last 12 months. This results in growing Bombala's economy by \$4 million and the Snowy Monaro economy by \$5.2 million per year.