

MEDIA RELEASE

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History made: Monaro Rail Trail agreement signed

Representatives from Monaro Rail Trail Inc (MRT) and Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) met on Friday 28 January 2022 to sign the historic first formal agreement for the Monaro Rail Trail, a memorandum of understanding between SMRC, MRT and Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council (QPRC).

With the agreement signed, the two councils and MRT can now proceed to develop detailed plans for the rail trail, which is planned to run along the disused rail corridor from Queanbeyan to Bombala. Over 208km, the Monaro Rail Trail will run through Queanbeyan, Michelago, Bredbo, Cooma, Nimmitabel and Bombala.

“With this signing, Snowy Monaro Regional Council has made a commitment to work with the Monaro Rail Trail and to provide the opportunity for our communities to develop new businesses and improve the economic prospects for our whole region,” said Mayor Narelle Davis, Snowy Monaro Regional Council.

“The Monaro Rail Trail has the potential to be a world-class shared trail that attracts tourists from all over to visit the Snowy Monaro, bringing with them enormous economic benefits for our smaller towns and villages.”

A feasibility study, completed in November 2019, concluded that the Monaro Rail Trail is an extremely worthwhile project with a benefit to cost ratio of 8:1. The report indicated that this project will boost the local retail and hospitality economy from the top to the bottom of the region, with the total yearly economic gain estimated to be approximately \$25M. Certainly a game changer in the tourism space.

The three organisations, MRT Inc, QPRC and SMRC, will now pursue funding for the detailed finance, legal, engineering, environmental, maintenance and risk management planning required before work can begin.

Trail Development Plan Consultants are currently completing detailed design of three sections utilising funding from SMRC and QPRC including:

- 24.5km Bombala to Jincumbilly
- 11.5km south from Nimmitabel Railway Station to MacLaughlan Meatworks
- 49km from Queanbeyan to Michelago

“The terrain and landscape will provide trail users with an unmatched tour of our region’s natural environment, scenery and history” said Ken Lister, President of Monaro Rail Trail Inc.

“Local communities will benefit from thousands of cyclists, walkers and charity riders spending about \$25M per annum in our region, creating employment, linking to other tourist attractions and providing opportunities for healthier lifestyles.”

Local residents will be able to enjoy the benefits too, making it easy to enjoy a day out close to home, or travel between regional centres without having to rely on a car or public transport. This will help keep us all happy and healthy, and go a small way to helping lessen our region’s dependency on fossil fuels.

Rail trails have become common and successful tourist attractions across Europe, North America and New Zealand. The nearby Tumbarumba – Rosewood Rail Trail has helped lead an economic resurgence of the town. Funding has also been approved for rail trails in the New England and Northern Rivers regions (NSW).

To learn more, please head to www.monarorailtrail.com.au or www.snowymonaro.nsw.gov.au

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