Conference program

Friday 6 November

9.00-9.10 Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country, and Opening

9.10-9.40 **Opening keynote: Exploring successes and opportunities of rail trails**
Hon. Steve Whan, Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education (NSW)

9.40-10.05 **Keynote 1:** The Tumbarumba and Wagga Wagga Rail Trail Success Story
Cr Mayor Julia Ham, Snowy Valleys Council (NSW)

10.05-10.30 **Keynote 2:** Wadandi Track Tourism Opportunities Report
Lenore Lyons, Concept 2 Strategy (WA)

10.30-11.00 Morning tea

11.00-11.20 **Keynote 3:** The Riesling Trail Success Story
Allan Mayfield, Riesling Trail CoM (SA)

11.20-12.20 **General presentations**

Developing the Great Southern Rail Trail as a premium rail trail
Penni Elliot, South Gippsland Shire Council (VIC)

Beyond the Ribbon Cutting: How the Northern Rivers Rail Trail continues to evolve and grow
Dean Cooper, Northern Rivers Rail Trail (NSW)

Volunteers improving rail trails
Emma Stone, Landcare (NSW)

12.20-1.05 Lunch

1.05-1.25 **Keynote 4:** National view on ebikes and support to get more people cycling
Stephen Hodge, We Ride Australia (ACT)

1.25-2.35 **General presentations**

Bicycle NSW Activities
Peter McLean, Bicycle NSW

NSW Rail Trails: Developments in the Framework and Approvals Process
Ian Jordan, Transport NSW

Overview of All Active Rail Trail Groups in NSW
Dennis Puniard (NSW)

Monaro Rail Trail Progress
Andrew Carter, Monaro Rail Trail Inc. Committee (NSW)

2.35-3.00 **Panel discussion 1:** Roundtable on Council Issues

3.00-3.25 Afternoon tea

3.25-3.45 **Rail Trail Resilience Launch**
Damian McCrohan, Rail Trails Australia

3.45-4.20 **Panel discussion 2:** Rail Trail Service Businesses

4.20-4.30 Conference closing

5.00-5.30 RTA Annual General Meeting

7.00-Late Conference drinks and dinner at 59 Cameron (Mercure Hotel)

Dinner presentation: From Rusty Rails to Rail Trails – An Engineer's View of What Happens in Between
Mark Ricketts, Burchills Engineering Solutions

Saturday 7 November

11:00-2:00 Event: Group walk around Lake Ginninderra (7km)
Meet at Mercure Hotel at 11am

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2026 Rail Trails Conference

Exploring Successes and Opportunities of Rail Trails

RailTrails AUSTRALIA

Allan Mayfield - Riesling Trail CoM (SA)

A career in agriculture, specialising in research and advice in broadacre cropping in southern Australia, was handy when Alan joined the Riesling Trail Management Committee in 2011, as was his appreciation of biodiversity and expertise in weed control. He is currently Chair. Alan's accolades include being awarded a Churchill Fellowship, SA Citizen of the Year (for service to the community, including Lions Australia) and agricultural awards.

Allison Hatton - Cycling Vines Tours

Allison is a passionate cyclist who loves exploring Australia's beautiful regions on 2 wheels. Along with Libbie Geason she started Cycling Vines Tours - a boutique cycling tour company born from their love of leisurely rides, delicious local food, great wine and discovering regional gems. They are proud supporters of rail trails, local communities and the wonderful small businesses that make each region special.

Andrew Carter - Monaro Rail Trail Inc. Committee (NSW)

Andrew's interest in rail trails began with a trip on New Zealand's Otago Rail Trail in 2013. He then found like-minded people to push for the development of the Monaro Rail Trail in NSW. Andrew was one of the very enthusiastic supporters to form the first MRT Inc committee in 2015. Today, the enthusiasm of the committee continues for a project that will bring so many benefits to regional NSW.

Bob Kirk - Goulburn Mulwaree Council (NSW)

Cr Bob Kirk was re-elected to Goulburn Mulwaree Council in 2024, marking his fifth term as a councillor. First elected in 2008, he served 8 years as deputy mayor before becoming mayor 2016-2021. Bob was the founding Chair of the Goulburn-Crookwell Rail Trail committee and has recently taken up the role of Chair of the council-led Goulburn Rail Trail Steering Committee.

Damian Cerini - Tour de Vines (VIC)

Damian started Tour de Vines in 2012, what seems like (to him) many moons ago, from a love of travel. Having worked in the travel industry for over 2 decades, with some senior roles in top-notch travel businesses, he struck out and started Tour de Vines. Tour de Vines was the first to offer and deliver packaged self-guided and guided multi-day cycling tours in Australia and uses mainly rail trails as the backbone of their trips.

Dean Cooper - Northern Rivers Rail Trail (NSW)

Dean is a tourism and destination development professional with extensive experience delivering initiatives that strengthen regional economies, visitor experiences and community outcomes. As Regional Lead for Northern Rivers Rail Trail, he works across 4 local government areas to guide one of Australia's most successful rail trail projects. Dean's career has included working with Tourism Australia on industry and content projects.

Emma Stone - Landcare (NSW)

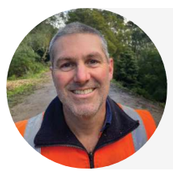
Emma has volunteered with Landcare in Northern NSW for more than 25 years and has been the Landcare Coordinator for the past decade delivering projects spanning biodiversity, threatened species, Rivercare, environmental education and resilient rural communities. She has supported the formation of Naughtons Gap Landcare, a group focused on restoring habitat alongside the Northern Rivers Casino–Bentley Rail Trail.

Erin Wileman - Australian Cycle Tours

Erin has over 15 years working in the adventure travel industry. As brand manager she specialises in walking and cycling tours within Australia and loves exploring our natural landscapes with her young family. Erin has been part of Australian Cycle Tours since its launch 6 years ago. She's ridden on rail trails including the Murray to Mountains, Brisbane Valley, Northern Rivers and Lilydale to Warburton.

Ian Jordan - Transport NSW

As Project Manager for Corridor Renewal and Activation, Ian supports the re-purposing and reactivation of non-operational rail lines across NSW. Ian is currently engaging with many councils and community groups across NSW to provide advice on process and support the preparation of rail trail proposals. He also leads Transport NSW's role in the regulation process for new rail trail proposals.



Jon Openshaw - South Gippsland Shire Council (VIC)

John has been working in arboriculture and conservation for 30 years, in both Australia and the UK. As supervisor, biodiversity, Jon is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Great Southern Rail Trail for visitor experience, conservation and community involvement.

Julia Ham - Snowy Valleys Council (NSW)

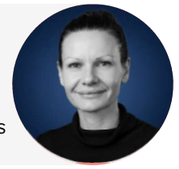
Her Worship the Mayor of Snowy Valleys Council Cr Julia Ham is a strong advocate for the development of the Tumbarumba to Rosewood Rail Trail. Julia is a regular user of the trail and understands firsthand its social, recreational, tourism and economic benefits. She champions the expansion of rail trails across the region and actively promotes cycling tourism as an important contributor to the region's visitor economy.

Lenore Lyons - Concept 2 Strategy (WA)

Lenore has more than 20 years' experience in trail tourism, nature-based tourism, outdoor recreation and ecotourism. She advises governments, tourism organisations and industry on tourism opportunities, feasibility, product development and destination planning. Lenore is currently Independent Chairperson of Australia's South West Regional Tourism Organisation. Before establishing her consultancy, she co-founded and managed an ecotourism business that was inducted into the Western Australian Tourism Hall of Fame.

Mark Ricketts - Burchills Engineering Solutions

Mark is a qualified engineer with over 30 years' experience. He has a genuine passion for rail trails and active transport — the connectivity, community benefit and revitalisation they bring to the regions they pass through. He has been involved with over a dozen rail trail projects across Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania, including in Tweed Valley, Lismore, Logan, Yarrabilba, Woodford and Stanley.



Michelle Veljanovska - Transport for NSW

As Executive Director of the Active Transport, Design and Activation branch at Transport for NSW, Michelle leads work to embed active transport, urban design, place activation and vibrancy across policy, planning, investment, and delivery. Michelle specialises in systems thinking, human-centred design, infrastructure, asset management, and organisational transformation, building partnerships that deliver accessible services, connected communities and better transport and place outcomes statewide.

Penni Ellicott - South Gippsland Shire Council (VIC)

Penni has almost 20 years of local government experience and has been instrumental in the development of Victoria's Great Southern Rail Trail, from securing funding for each stage to leading its marketing and visitor activation initiatives. As the Coordinator Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy, she's passionate about regional tourism and community development.

Peter McLean - Bicycle NSW

Peter McLean is a not-for-profit specialist and has successfully advocated for new and amended regulations and legislation as well as securing funding for major projects and education initiatives to change behaviour and culture. He is excited to be leading Bicycle NSW into their fiftieth year as the peak body in NSW and his personal mission is to be out of job as NSW becomes a bicycle-friendly utopia.

Stephen Hodge - We Ride Australia (ACT)

Stephen has decades of experience and expertise championing cycling and smarter transport, driving healthier, safer, more sustainable cities. He has worked to ensure the case for investment in bicycle transport across all jurisdictional levels is supported with key research and programs. As Director, National Advocacy, Stephen's work has ensured that We Ride Australia has a trusted and unique role as the independent voice for cycling nationally.

Steve Whan - Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education (NSW)

Steve was re-elected as Member for Monaro at the 2023 election after 8 years out of politics. Steve was the member for Monaro between 2003 and 2011, and a Member of the NSW Legislative Council from 2011 to 2015. Steve and his wife Cherie have lived in Queanbeyan for 26 years. Steve currently serves as the Minister for Skills, TAFE, and Tertiary Education in the Minns Labor Government.

For biographies of all Rail Trails Australia presenters, please scan the QR code: