

# New England Rail Trail



## Why a Rail Trail?

- Rail trails are safe, wheelchair accessible off-road pathways for the whole family to enjoy.
- They promote active living transport routes for tourists and locals, encouraging nature and environmental appreciation and awareness.
- They take advantage of under utilised assets and help promote the country, attracting visitors from the city who will stay and spend tourist dollars with local businesses, generating jobs with cycling now the 4th most popular physical activity for adult Australians.
- Rail trails bring significant economic and community benefits to regional areas. This project is expected to deliver \$5.8million annually into the local economy. 15,000 day visits, 14,000 overnight visits annually leading to the creation of 26 new full-time equivalent jobs (REMPLAN 2019)
- Rail trails ensure the preservation of rail heritage assets including bridges, tunnels and cuttings. They also preserve the rail corridor for all other future uses.

## Did you know?

- The total Rail Trail once completed will be a distance of 103km at a cost of \$19.8m (grant funded).
- Glen Innes Severn Council (GISC) have been successful in securing \$8.7million from the NSW Government's Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund for the Ben Lomond to Glen Innes section.
- Armidale Regional Council (ARC) has applied for Building Better Regions funding for the Armidale to Ben Lomond section.
- An act of NSW parliament will be required to close the rail corridor and transfer ownership from Transport NSW to Crown lands. Crown Lands will then entrust maintenance and developing the rail trail to Armidale Regional and Glen Innes Severn councils. In many cases in NSW, funding has been awarded to show

government and community commitment before parliament transfer ownership.

- The rail corridor will remain in public hands and ARC and GISC would assume responsibility for the rail trail including annual maintenance. Annual maintenance for the 103km section of the trail will cost around \$154,000 per year and will aim to be offset by trail user donations, community volunteer input, event income and fund raising (donations, sponsors).
- The creation of a rail trail does not prevent opening of a rail line at any time in the future.
- A study by the AEC Group in 2018 examined possibility of re-opening rail line for freight and/or passengers. The economic viability of returning passenger and freight services have been calculated and deemed unfeasible with costs outweighing benefits by 2 to 1.
- All artefacts and relics can be preserved for potential static displays in the train stations.
- There are 5 bridges along the Armidale to Ben Lomond route. Most of these will be retained (with upgrades) or replaced with pre-fabricated bridges.
- The Guyra Tourist Trike has been included in the Rail Trail Plan.
- Access is provided onto and along the trail for emergency vehicles.
- Runners, hikers and cyclists travel 'light' carrying little except water & mobile phone 'leave it as you find it' is the motto of trail users.
- Trespass, injury, bio-security and littering have not been notable concerns along the thousands of KM of rail trails throughout Australia and New Zealand.
- Adjoining landholders' needs are catered for in trail planning - a NSW government requirement. A bio-security risk assessment and implementation plan has been completed. (See over page).
- The 2.5m wide trail is enclosed with fencing producing a 6m wide corridor. The remaining areas of the rail

corridor can be used by landholders for grazing stock. Grazier's access rights and lease arrangements are maintained.

### Looking to the Future

- The rail trail will provide access to lost history and stories and the rail heritage assets will be preserved.
- An opportunity to promote the Aboriginal stories, flora and fauna along the trail with tribal borders recognised
- There are a number of small villages along the intended route who no longer have viable retail businesses – the addition of rail trail visitors may reverse this situation.
- Towns along the route from Armidale to Glen Innes are heavily reliant on agriculture, these economies would benefit from economic diversification.

- The quality of the railway stations is outstanding and provide a good opportunity for the development of trail-related businesses, such as cafés, bike hire, etc.
- Landholders along the trail can develop another income by offering a service or product such as farm gate sales, accommodation, camping, meals, drinks, farm tours, etc.

The following documents are available on the Armidale Regional Council Website.

*New England Rail Trail Biosecurity Risk Assessment and Biosecurity Implementation Plan*  
*Business Case New England Rail Trail*  
*Armidale Regional Council Capital Expenditure Review*

### NERT Biosecurity Risk Assessment and Implementation Plan Summary

To view the full plan please visit the Armidale Regional Council website.

- Graziers access rights and lease arrangements are maintained
- Crossings are provided as needed to move stock across the trail for grazing and watering.
- Stock grids prevent stock from entering the rail trail
- Where the rail trail crosses from one paddock to another, gates with automatic closing features and stock grids are provided to allow walkers and cyclists to move along the trail.
- Where the trail crosses roads, usual pedestrian safety features are installed.

**Risk:** Trail users introduce exotic animal diseases  
**Action:** Biosecurity Act signage; rubbish bins with lids; Biosecurity responsibility included in Rail Trail user rules; no trespass signage at access points; consult with farmers around specific biosecurity risks on their farms and any additional measures that may need to be considered.

**Risk:** Animals move and spread established diseases between farms  
**Action:** Provide fencing along the rail trail with crossings created where stock or vehicles need to move between each side; position signs reminding people of existing trespass laws; ensure that an emergency response plan is in place which includes closure of the trail in the event of a disease emergency.

**Risk:** Livestock entering the rail trail  
**Action:** Cattlegrids installed along the rail trail at crossing points; include gates along the trail that allow stock to be removed easily off the trail; provide locks on the gate for extra security so that land holders and council are the only people who have access; establish processes for alerting owners of stock.

**Risk:** Rail Trail fences prevent stock accessing watering points  
**Actions:** Farmers construct new watering points where needed; crossings to be created where stock or vehicles need to move between each side.

**Risk:** Pets on rail trail attack farm animals  
**Action:** Signage that dogs must be on a leash at all times. All other animals except dogs are prohibited with council monitoring stray dog activity.

**Risk:** Faeces from pet dogs spread parasites and disease  
**Actions:** Provide signage and dog poop bags at access points

**Risk:** Frightening animals  
**Actions:** Signage instructing no contact with animals and no trespassing; signage prohibiting all animals (except dogs on leash) and unauthorised vehicles including motorbikes; quadbikes etc.

**Risk:** Rail Trail users injured by livestock  
**Actions:** Signage instructing people not to have any contact with animals; contact numbers on signage to report stray stock; fences are monitored and maintained.

**Risk:** Rail Trail users exposed to herbicides  
**Actions:** Ensure council spraying protocols are followed; landholders have a responsibility to follow 'good practice' principals using signage where appropriate.

**Risk:** Foxes, pigs and wild dogs attracted by food scraps  
**Actions:** Fully enclosed rubbish bins that are emptied regularly along the trail

**Risk:** Bushfire caused by rail trail users  
**Actions:** Provide safe cigarette disposal at rest points along the trail; reduce build up of vegetation; Emergency Response Plan and Trail Management Plan is implemented.