

## Benefits, Motivators, Deterrents and Potential Usage – Some Clues from Recent Cycling and Rail Trail Reports and Assessments:

[Original RVRT Supporters' Group Facebook Post (February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024) -

<https://www.facebook.com/richmondrailtrail/posts/pfbid0B4A9wgZ345YKkp24F39RREkAYXkfKWQJcNXGq24aFUCfaf16hHczLYeAeAzUmKoNI> ]

As we move forward in our planning and advocacy for the Richmond Vale Rail Trail (RVRT) and the broader *Shiraz to Shore* Trail, we need to draw from and build upon the good work of other Australian organisations and networks.

Securing sufficient funding to build a quality and sustainable trail depends to a large extent on demonstrating strong community support, cost effective and culturally/environmentally sensitive approaches to construction and maintenance, and appropriate ongoing management and promotional strategies.

However, it is often difficult to lay your hands on the right piece of **external supporting documentation** at the right time.

While this Post is generic in nature, it provides **some additional broad support for our ongoing trail and cycling related activities** by drawing on recent reports from around Australia.

**Benefits:** The significant economic, health and environmental benefits associated with cycling are graphically illustrated in **Image 1**, which forms the **Executive Summary** from the recent “2023 *WeRide* Australian Cycling and E-Scooter Economy Report” (November 2023) – to which we have added some Selected Extracts (see notes with image).

Additionally, comparisons with the previous report suggest that the “total direct output from cycling increased by 5% from 2020 to 2022, from an estimated \$6.3bn to \$6.7bn” ... “With an increasing focus on physical and mental wellbeing and the benefits of outdoor recreational activity, it is **expected that cycling will continue to grow**” ... “With an increase in local and state government expenditure on safe cycling infrastructure, it is expected that more Australians will take up cycling and also cycle more often”.

**Motivators and Deterrents:** The recent survey conducted by *WeRide* also identifies some key Cycling Motivators and Deterrents (see **Image 2** to **Image 4**).

In the 2022 survey:

“**Exercise and fitness** (96%) was the most popular reason for riding a bike followed by the impact of cycling on **mental wellbeing** (93%)”; while

“73% of respondents noted that they **would cycle more if there was more safe and connected infrastructure**”.

**Suggested Cycling-related Budgetary Actions for the Australian Government:** See **Image 5** and associated notes from *Bicycle Network* (November 2021).

While the ‘Five Essential Budget Items’ recommended here were nominally for 2022/23, they are **equally as important for the upcoming 2024/2025 Federal Budget** (e.g., focusing on active transport, active tourism, behaviour change programs for young people, a national bike incentive scheme, and a safer national vehicle fleet).

## Illustrative Summary of Current and Potential Rail

**Trails:** See **Image 6** and associated notes, which were based on material from *Rail Trails Australia* Website – clearly demonstrating the overall and growing popularity of rail trails, but also the **tremendous opportunities, particularly in regional NSW** – which will be partially realised by funding trails like the *Shiraz to Shore* (from Wine Country, **via the RVRT**, to the Shores of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie).

We hope that you find this collection of recent materials of interest. Rail trails are obviously much more than cycleways (as illustrated by our many Posts during the past few years) and clearly we need to **optimise both the local and the regional benefits** – but it is also good to see where and how our efforts fit within broader national and state cycling and rail trail initiatives and programs.

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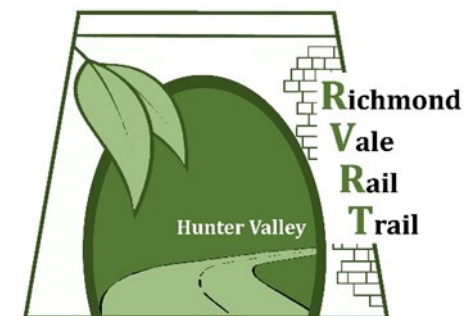
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**Image 1: Executive Summary Figure** (Page 4) from “2023 *WeRide* Australian Cycling and E-Scooter Economy Report” (November 2023).

An assessment prepared by Ernst & Young (“EY”) for *We Ride Australia* (‘*WeRide*’), which continues from EY’s 2021 study – “The *WeRide* Australian Cycling Economy Report”.

Link to Download Report:

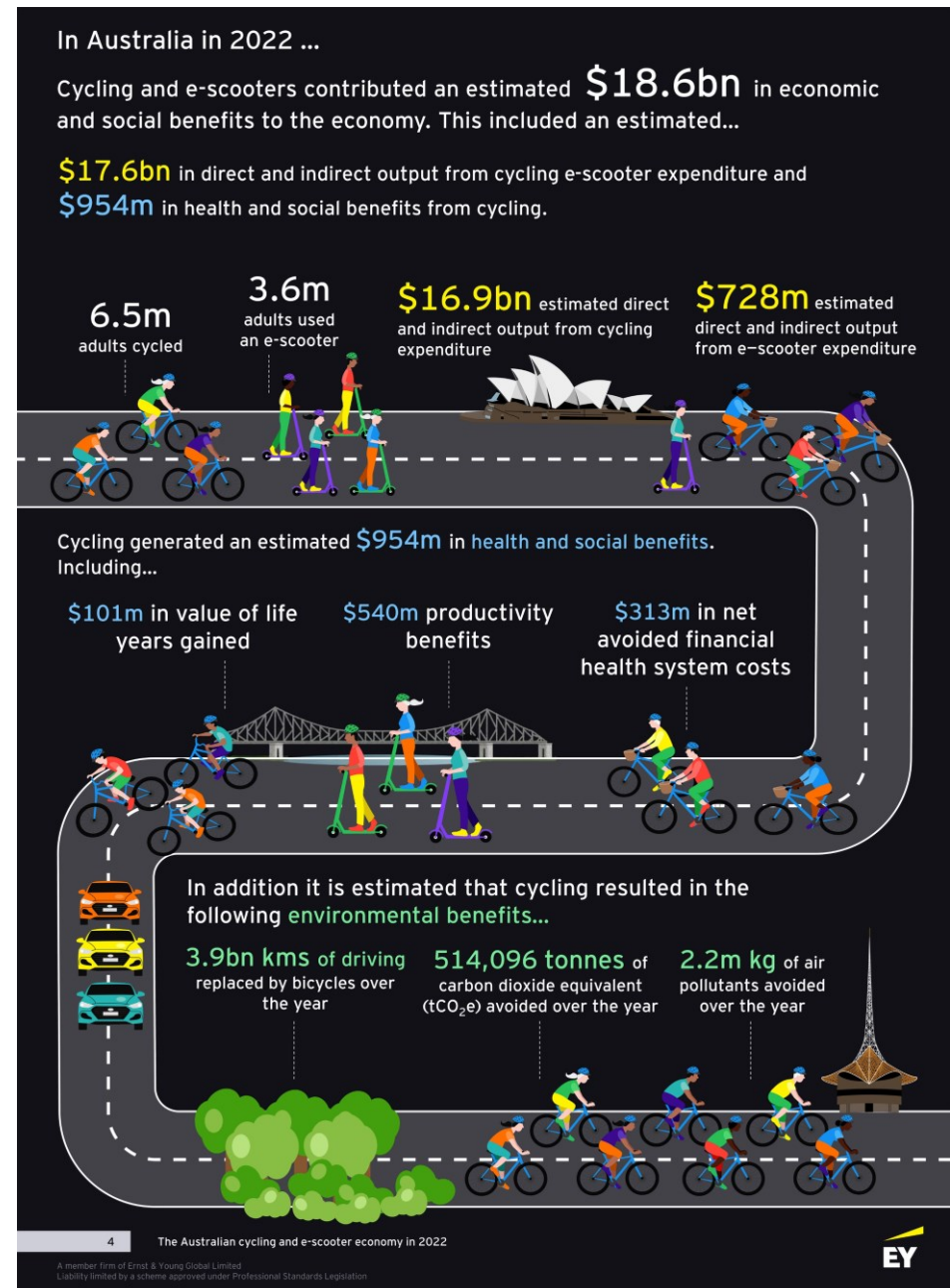
[https://www.weride.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The\\_Australian\\_Cycling\\_and\\_e-scooter\\_Economy\\_in\\_2022\\_WeRide\\_and\\_EY\\_2023\\_Report\\_Final\\_web.pdf](https://www.weride.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The_Australian_Cycling_and_e-scooter_Economy_in_2022_WeRide_and_EY_2023_Report_Final_web.pdf)

**Selected Extracts:**

“In the largest ever study of its kind undertaken in Australia funded by governments, bicycle and E-Scooter industry, motoring and bicycle groups, the ‘2023 *WeRide* Australian Cycling and E-Scooter Economy Report’ has **reinforced cycling’s importance in delivering triple bottom line outcomes with significant economic, health and environmental benefits**”.

“The report revealed that in 2022 the sector generated:

- More than 60,000 jobs (FTE) and \$18.6 billion in economic and social contribution from cycling and e-scooter use.
- Cycling contributed \$954 million in health and social benefits including \$313 million in savings to the Australia health system, and



- Cycling avoided 514,096 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e in greenhouse gas emissions, through replacing 3.9 billion kilometres of motor vehicle travel”.

“The extensive research conducted as part of the study found that **a large proportion of adults would cycle more often if there was better infrastructure and programs** to make cycling easier and safer”.

“The report also highlights the **importance of cycling to the regions**, for the first time providing a detailed picture of the positive impact of cycle tourism, valued at \$1.9bn nationally” (*WeRide*’s Executive Officer Mr. Peter Bourke).

“With an increase in local and state government expenditure on safe cycling infrastructure, it is **expected that more Australians will take up cycling and also cycle more often**”.

**Image 2: Cycling Motivating Factors – Summary** (Page 22) – See **Image 1** for Report Details and Link.

This study carefully profiled adult preferences for cycling in 2022 (N = 2,630 respondents).

“Exercise and fitness (96%) was the most popular reason for riding a bike followed by the impact of cycling on mental wellbeing (93%)”.

Almost two-thirds “(64%) of respondents are deterred from cycling as they don’t feel safe on the roads with motor traffic”.

See **Image 3** for further details about Cycling Motivators and Image 4 for Cycling Deterrents.

#### 4. Cycling motivating factors

**Exercise and fitness was the most popular reason for riding a bike followed by the impact of cycling on mental wellbeing.**

This study profiled adult preferences for cycling in 2022. The key findings are as follows:

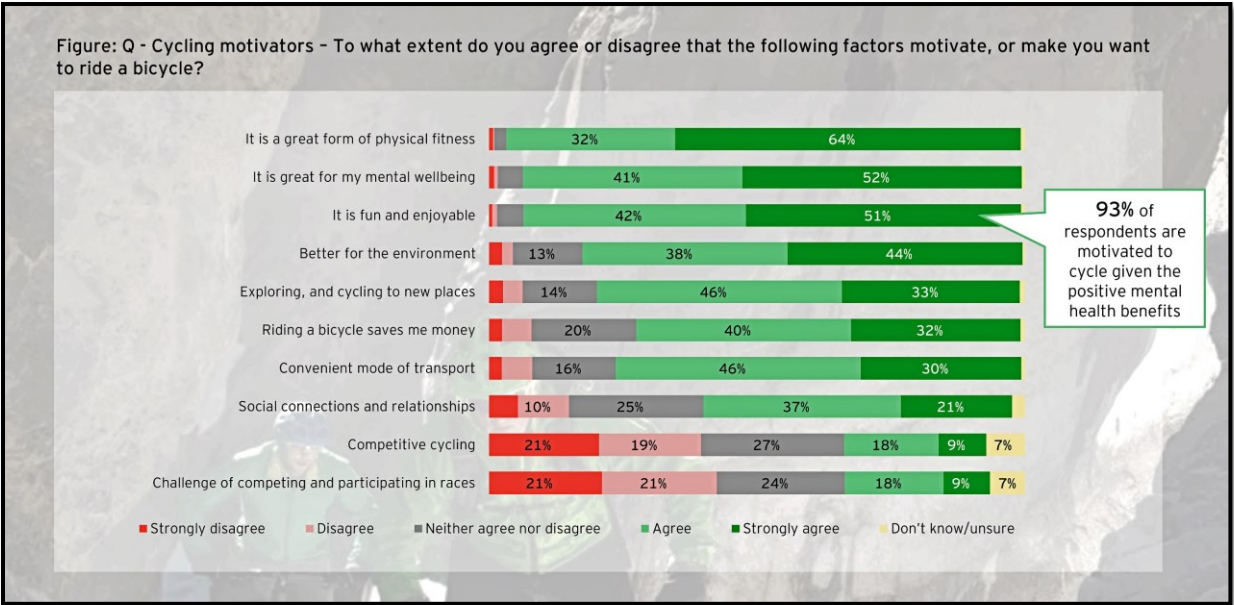
- ▶ Exercise and fitness was the most popular reason for riding a bike with 96% of Australians stating that they are motivated to ride a bike for fitness. Cycling for mental wellbeing is the second most popular motivator for cycling, with 93% of respondents noting they cycle as it is “great for their mental wellbeing”
- ▶ Reducing transportation costs is also a popular reason for riding a bike with 72% of adults motivated to ride a bike as a means to save money
- ▶ Maintaining connection remains a popular reason for riding a bike with 58% of adults motivated to ride a bike as a way to socially connect with their friends
- ▶ The majority of respondents (64%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they don't feel safe riding bikes on the road with traffic around them and that there is not enough safe and connected road bicycle infrastructure.



**Image 3: Cycling Motivators** – Figure Q  
(Page 22) – See **Image 1** for Report Details and Link.

Responses to the Survey question: “To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following factors motivate, or make you want to ride a bicycle?”

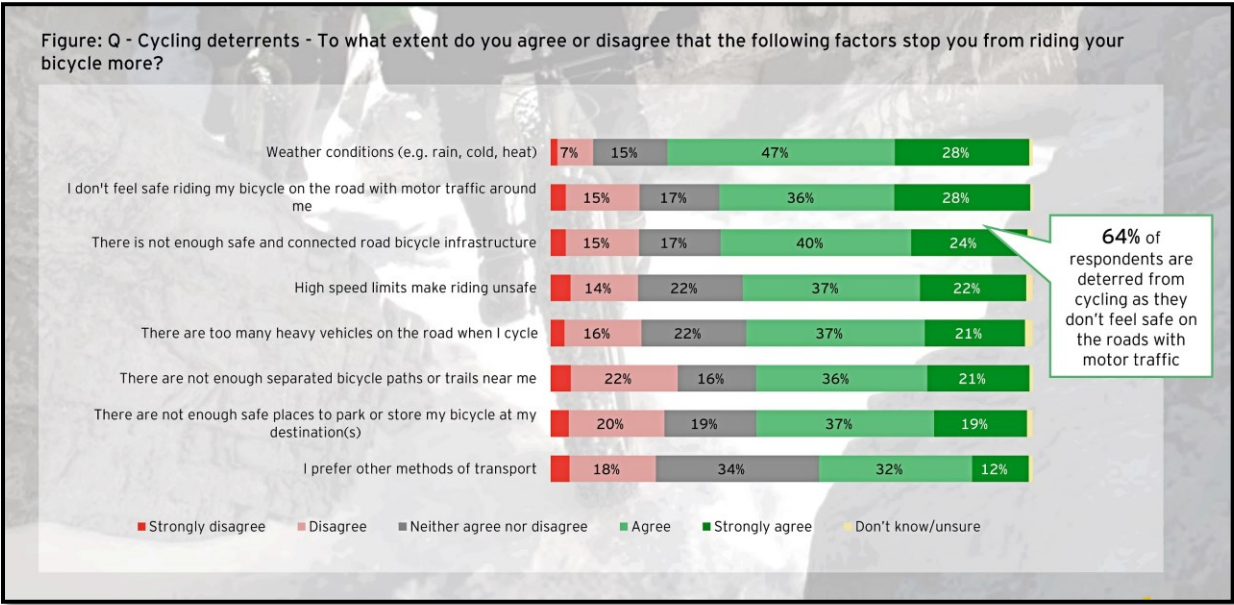
**Agree or Strongly Agree – Top 5:** Physical Fitness (96%), Mental Wellbeing (93%), Fun/Enjoyable (93%), Better Environment (82%), Exploring (79%).



**Image 4: Cycling Deterrents** – Figure Q  
(Page 22) – See **Image 1** for Report Details and Link.

Responses to the Survey question: “To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following factors stop you from riding your bicycle more?”

**Agree or Strongly Agree – Top 5:** Weather Conditions (75%), Don't Feel Safe with Motor Traffic (64%), Not Enough Safe and Connected Infrastructure (64%), High Speed Limits – Riding Unsafe (59%), Too Many Heavy Vehicles (58%).



**Image 5: Five Essential Budget Items** “that would benefit Australia in its shift towards a sustainable active transport friendly future”.

Federal pre-budget submission 2022/23 (November 2021) from *Bicycle Network*. Link to Download Report:

[https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2022-2023\\_Federal\\_Budget\\_Submission\\_Bicycle\\_Network\\_final.pdf](https://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2022-2023_Federal_Budget_Submission_Bicycle_Network_final.pdf)

### Selected Extracts:

#### 1. An active transport budget (Page 7)

“We need a clear investment commitment, it’s that simple. At present, the Australian Government only funds active travel as part of larger infrastructure projects. We are recommending a change.” “*Bicycle Network* is pushing for the Australian Government to **commit 5 per cent of the federal transport budget to active travel** ... It is time for Australia to match international efforts”.

#### 2. A stimulus package to fund active tourism (Page 8)

“A focus on active tourism funding brings an **exciting opportunity to get Australians out of their homes and back into their communities and regional areas**” ... “A \$150 million per annum ‘local discoveries’ fund, offered to state governments in the form of grant packages, for repurposing existing space with active travel facilities, or to develop and expand current facilities (e.g. rail trails), as a means of stimulating domestic tourism and regional jobs. We already have the breathtaking scenery, let’s add some wheels to it”.

## Five steps to build for bikes

We don't want to derail the budget consultation process with a horde of infeasible asks. Let's keep things simple.

National and international data and research suggests to us that there are **five essential budget items** that would benefit Australia in its shift towards a sustainable active transport friendly future.

These recommendations are the critical step forward for advancing Australia forward, providing support for people of all levels of bike experience, and encouraging those who are not yet participating. They are simple, focussed and achievable.



**An active transport budget**



**A stimulus package to fund active travel tourism**



**Behaviour change programs for young people**



**A national bike incentive scheme**



**A safer national vehicle fleet**

### 3. Behaviour change programs for young people (Page 9)

“Many young people currently use bikes for recreation, but do not ride for transport purposes, such as travelling to school. Moreover, they do not learn important road safety behaviours in a controlled environment. This is why **a national bike focussed behaviour change program is critical for ensuring we foster generations of bike-positive kids**”.

### 4. A national bike incentive scheme (Page 10)

“An Australian bike subsidy scheme doesn’t have to be complicated. We can **develop the right framework by leveraging successful incentive program models** in Sweden, Germany, Austria, and the UK, which have demonstrated increased rates of active travel, reduced rates of transport-related emissions, and increased participation from new female riders”.

### 5. A safer national vehicle fleet (Page 11)

“We need to **start taking real action on vulnerable road user deaths**” ... “*Bicycle Network* recommends that the Australian government provide heavy vehicle operators with an assistance package to ease financial pressures associated with procuring and fitting critical safety technologies”.



<b>Rail Trails Australia Website</b> (February 9th 2024) <a href="https://www.railtrails.org.au/trails/">https://www.railtrails.org.au/trails/</a>					
<b>Current and Potential Rail Trails</b>					
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Open</b>	<b>Partially Open</b>	<b>Potential</b>	<b>Temporarily Closed</b>
<b>NORTHERN TERRITORY</b>	3	2	1		
<b>NSW (NEW SOUTH WALES)</b>	36	13	4	18	1
NSW Country and ACT	23	5	2	15	1
NSW Newcastle region*	5	3		2	
NSW Sydney and Blue Mountains	8	5	2	1	
<b>QUEENSLAND</b>	24	15	6	3	
<b>SOUTH AUSTRALIA</b>	23	23			
<b>TASMANIA</b>	20	17	1	2	
<b>VICTORIA</b>	48	40	4	4	
<b>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b>	23	18	4		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2</b>
* <b>Open:</b> Fernleigh Track, Glendale to Wallsend Tramway Track, Fassifern to Toronto Greenway Track; <b>Potential:</b> Richmond Vale Rail Trail (RVRT), Awaba – Wangi Rail Trail.					

**Image 6: Illustrative Summary of Current and Potential Rail Trails** – Extracted from *Rail Trails Australia* Website (<https://www.railtrails.org.au/trails/>). “*Rail Trails Australia* is a volunteer-driven, not-for-profit, organisation that strives for the creation and promotion of a rail trail network across the country”.

Their website currently provides useful practical information (e.g., location, status, accessibility, usage/suitability, length, surface, attractions) for **148 Open or Partially Open Rail Trails**.

It also identifies **27 Potential Rail Trails**, 18 of which are in NSW (including the RVRT) – which largely reflects the fact that **NSW is well behind the other states** in the development of rail trails and related community infrastructure. Indeed, as shown in the Table, NSW currently has the lowest number of open/partially open rail trails.

Of particular note, 17 of the potential NSW rail trails identified by *Rail Trails Australia* are outside of the Greater Sydney Area – so, there are **plenty of opportunities for the NSW and Federal Governments to fund active transport and active tourism in regional areas** (in line with *Bicycle Network's* recommendations – see **Image 5**).

Furthermore, if the success of The Tweed section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail (NRRT) is anything to go by, then **new NSW Rail Trails should be very popular with locals and visitors alike**.

“Since the Rail Trail’s opening in March, the Tweed has hosted 108,829 trail guests. On average, that’s 16,329 visitors per month, 3,726 people per week or 532 people daily. This achievement is nothing short of remarkable” (Mayor of Tweed Shire Chris Cherry, Media Release, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023).

Cr Cherry said the success of the Tweed section of the NRRT could be attributed to the unique nature and outdoor recreation opportunities the trail provides, especially as a free, safe and family-friendly experience.

“The Rail Trail provides an opportunity to reconnect with nature, breathe in fresh air and soak in the breathtaking beauty of the Tweed’s landscapes and the charming village life at our seven rest stops,” she said.

Link: <https://www.northernriversrailtrail.com.au/northern-rivers-rail-trail-welcomes-over-100000-guests-in-seven-months-2>

**Thanks to all of our RVRT supporters.**

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK WELCOME.