

Extracted from RVRT Inc. *Facebook Post* – June 21st 2023:

<https://www.facebook.com/richmondrailtrail/posts/pfbid0se3trCMFRsjFJzb73XLF2YeSDQJ5oLwRpwSsjPmWNI3pHBB283VNsJuZkvcdngl>

From Terry J. Lewin (*RVRT Inc. Vice-President - RVRT Supporters' Group*)

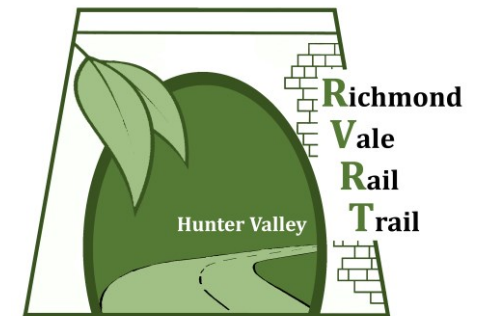
Relevance of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail (RVRT) for Lake Macquarie Residents and Visitors

At first glance, the RVRT appears to have limited direct relevance for Lake Macquarie residents and visitors. After all, only 2.7 km of the trail actually falls within Lake Macquarie LGA, and in a relatively inaccessible north-western portion of the LGA, near Seahampton. Moreover, this short section borders Cessnock LGA on both sides.

However, as outlined briefly below, there are many reasons for Lake Macquarie residents and visitors to get excited about the RVRT's development and construction, and to encourage Lake Macquarie City Council to continue to actively work with the other participating Councils to finalise initial approvals and seek regional funding.

Unique Overall Features of the RVRT: The RVRT will comprise a 32km (40km with connections) continuous off-road shared pathway, running from Shortland (near the *Hunter Wetlands Centre*) to Kurri Kurri (*Log of Knowledge Park*) and connecting four LGAs (Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock and Maitland). The trail runs primarily along the former Richmond Vale railway alignment [a private coal line that closed in 1987], as well as utilising Hunter Water Corporation pipeline corridors. Currently, five local community hubs are planned – at Shortland, Tarro, Fletcher, Minmi and Kurri Kurri – and, to date, 27.5 km of the RVRT has received initial planning approval.

The RVRT will support a broad range of user groups and deliver a cost-effective array of life-changing benefits, including: community access and connection; health and lifestyle benefits; environmental and heritage appreciation; economic and tourism; as well as cycling-specific safety and commuting benefits.



Importantly, the RVRT will also uniquely link metropolitan and rural communities and attractions, and facilitate access to multiple previously inaccessible high conservation value areas (e.g., Hunter Wetlands National Park, Pambalong Nature Reserve, Stockrington and Werakata State Conservation Areas).

Abundance of Features Within Lake Macquarie RVRT Section: **Image 1** shows the overall location of the Lake Macquarie section of the RVRT, while **Image 2** illustrates some of the proposed design elements and controls within this part of the trail [both images utilise extracted Figures and Drawings from the *Review of Environmental Factors (REF, March 2022; GHD Pty Ltd and Cessnock City Council)*]. On a ‘Features per Kilometre basis’, this 2.7 km section is very well endowed. As highlighted in **Image 2**, and supplemented by three montages (**Images 3 to 5**), there are two historic brick tunnels, a reservoir, an attractive creek, a cave, interesting cuttings and walks, and views to Hunter Expressway Bridges, all of which reside within Stockrington State Conservation Area – making it essential that we have a universally accessible carpark or drop-off area between the two tunnels, adjacent to the existing service access road (off George Booth Drive).

[**Note:** The *REF* for the Western RVRT section (within Cessnock and Lake Macquarie LGAs) was jointly exhibited by the participating Councils in May-July 2022. Cessnock City Council unanimously approved the *REF* and associated reports at its Meeting on May 17th 2023, subject to 44 Conditions of Approval. Lake Macquarie City Council is yet to separately approve their 2.7 km section of the trail (and *REF*).]

Western and Northern Connections: Of course, Lake Macquarie residents and visitors will also want to access RVRT sections outside of Lake Macquarie LGA. In a recent Facebook Post (June 12th 2023) we highlighted some existing off-road shared pathways that will facilitate future RVRT connections from Lake Macquarie LGA (e.g., Speers Point to Wallsend Shared Pathways), as well as current Principal Bicycle Network routes such as the R6, which will enable connections to both western (Fletcher/Minmi to Kurri Kurri) and northern (Shortland to Tarro/Beresfield) segments of the RVRT (see **Image 6**).

[Previous Facebook Post:

<https://www.facebook.com/richmondrailtrail/posts/pfbid0AD6Vn5EvSQ7UoZWBMhio44ePrhRQ9wpdpesSqUeZeNFNGusijHiz3zaH2G9bGeyfl>].

The northern RVRT segment will enhance access to Hunter Wetlands National Park, provide an off-road active transport corridor (as an alternative to Maitland Road/New England Highway), and facilitate future connections to Maitland networks and

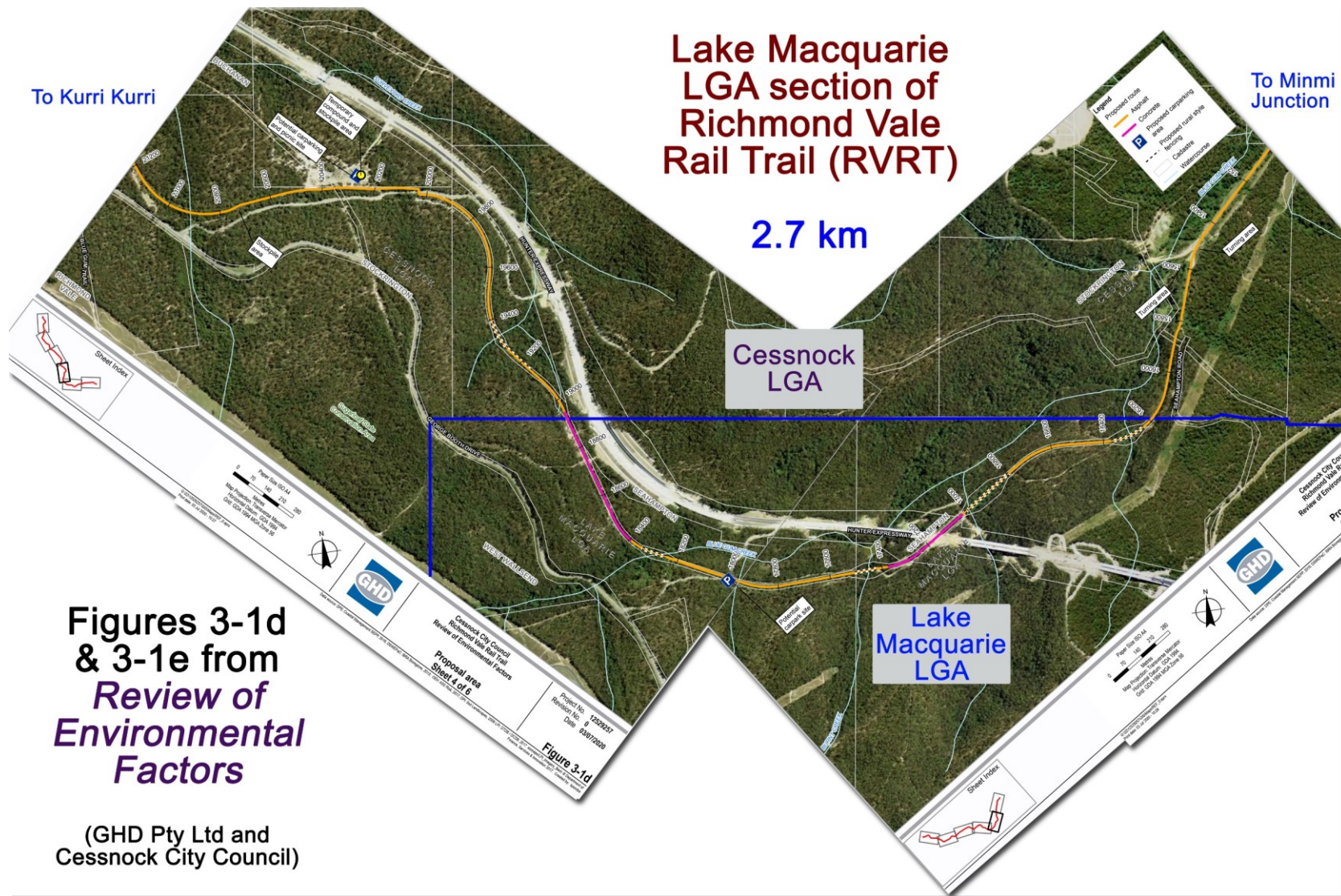


Image 1: Lake Macquarie LGA section of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail (RVRT) – 2.7 km within the Seahampton portion of Stockington State Conservation Area. Composite image based on Figures 3-1d and 3-1e from the *Review of Environmental Factors (REF, March 2022; GHD Pty Ltd and Cessnock City Council).*

Lake Macquarie LGA section of Richmond Vale Rail Trail (RVRT)

2.7 km

Bordering Cessnock LGA at both ends

Concept-level Design Drawings from *Review of Environmental Factors*

Extracts from Drawings: 12529257- C1123 to C1126 (GHD Pty Ltd and Cessnock City Council)

Features: Brick Tunnels (No. 1 & No. 2); Carpark or Drop-off Area (between tunnels); Burrenjim Dam; & Views to Hunter Expressway Bridges

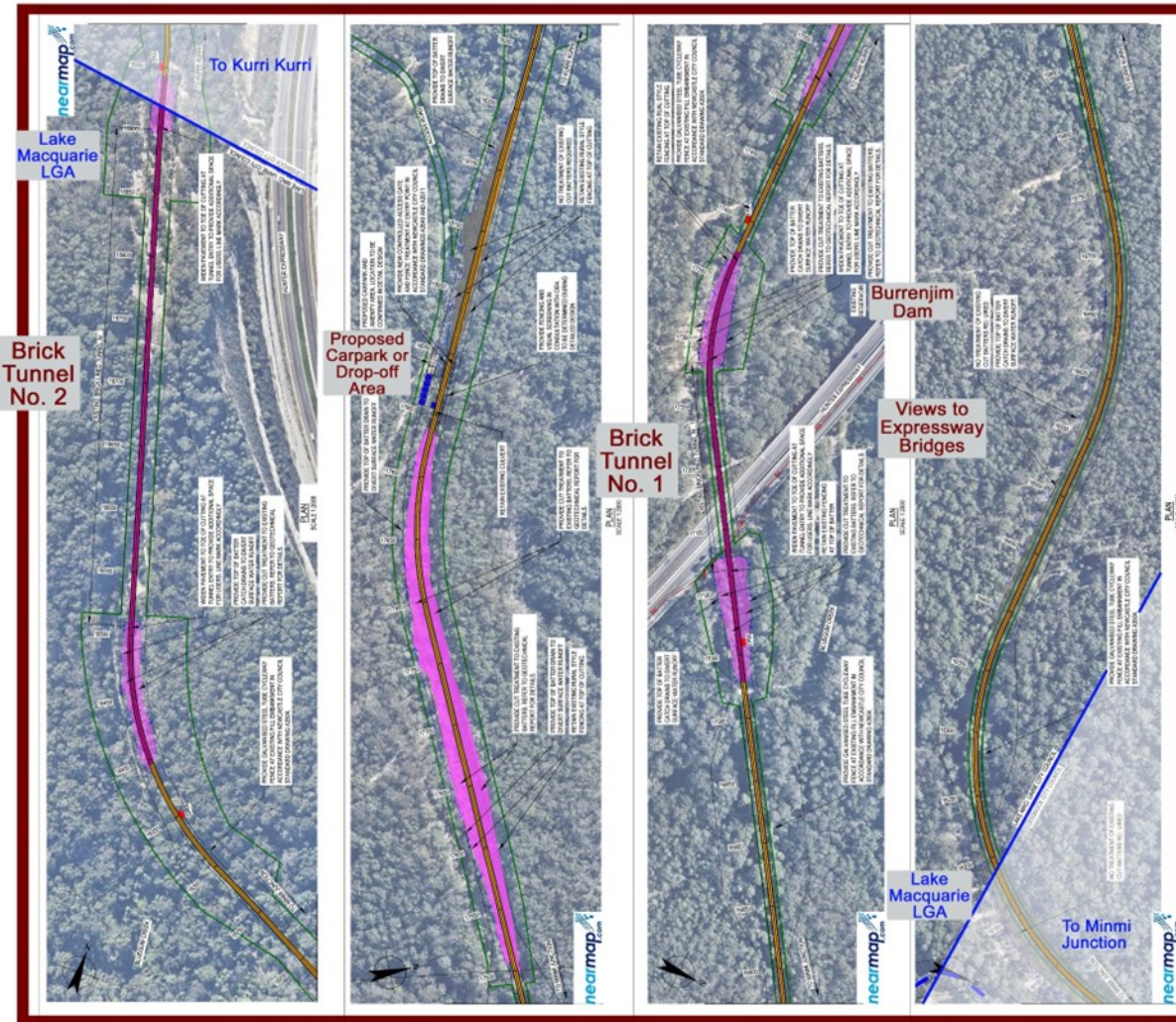


Image 2: Concept-level Design Drawings for the Lake Macquarie LGA section of the RVRT – illustrating proposed design elements and controls. Composite image based on four Drawings (C1123 to C1126) from the *Review of Environmental Factors* (REF, March 2022; GHD Pty Ltd and Cessnock City Council). Highlighted features (our labels): Brick Railway Tunnels (No. 1 and No. 2); proposed carpark or drop-off area (off George Booth Drive, between the two tunnels); Burrenjim Dam (Reservoir); and views to overhead Hunter Expressway Bridges.



Image 3: Photos Along or Near the Lake Macquarie LGA RVRT section (approx. east to west). Montage 1: Services access to Stockrington State Conservation Area from Seahampton Road (via bridge over Hunter Expressway); approach to Tunnel No. 1 from eastern end; and three photos of Tunnel No. 1.



Image 4: Photos Along or Near the Lake Macquarie LGA RVRT section (approx. east to west). Montage 2: Tunnel No. 1 portal (February 2016; and during construction in 1904, Source: *SRA Archives*); two photos of Burrenjim Dam (Reservoir) and two photos of Hunter Expressway (from walking tracks near Tunnel No. 1).



Image 5: Photos Along or Near the Lake Macquarie LGA RVRT section (approx. east to west). Montage 3: Blue Gum Creek; Jewboy Cave; walking track; rocks adjacent to railway cutting; site for proposed carpark or drop-off area (off George Booth Drive, between the two tunnels); and entrance to Tunnel No. 2.

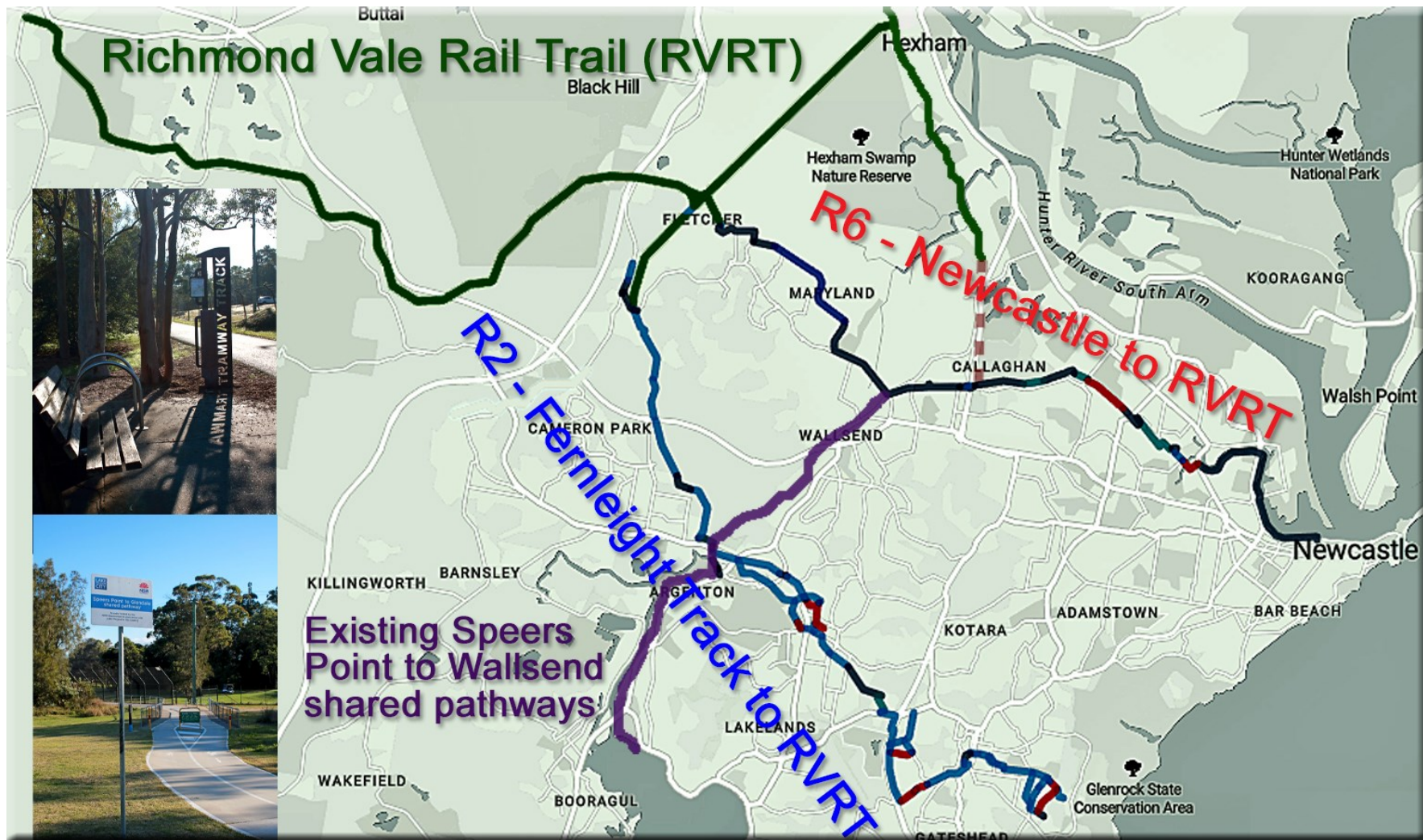


Image 6: Likely future connections to the RVRT via Principal Bicycle Network routes (R2 and R6) and existing Speers Point to Wallsend Shared Pathways. [Base Map extracted from Lake Macquarie City’s Open Data Portal].

Raymond Terrace (via cycleway links to the approved M1 Extension).

Future RVRT Linkages Through Lake Mac's North-western suburbs: Additionally, proposed R2 Principal Bicycle Network routes through Hillsborough, Glendale, Edgeworth, Cameron Park and Minmi (otherwise known as the 'Fernleigh Track to RVRT' connections— see **Image 6**) will provide future links to Lake Macquarie's north-western suburbs, as well as to proposed housing estates along the Newcastle Link Road.

Sharing of Trails and Shared-pathways Expertise: Collectively, Lake Macquarie residents and visitors, local Council staff and Councillors, and local businesses have a substantial body of experience and expertise to draw upon when it comes to designing, funding, constructing, maintaining and using local trails and pathways - after all, there are currently over 120 km of LGA shared pathways. Participating Councils, community groups, and other stakeholders need to build on this existing expertise – working together to ensure the RVRT is fully integrated, and that its local and regional benefits are optimised – thereby, further promoting the Hunter Region as an active lifestyle and cycling/rail trail tourism destination.

'Shiraz to Shore' Hunter Cycle Trail: Further to all of the above, the RVRT will be an essential element within the proposed 100+ km broader 'Shiraz to Shore' Hunter Cycle Trail [an initiative of the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils] – from which we can all benefit if we collaborate effectively. Notwithstanding, we also strongly believe that the RVRT should be prioritised in any Hunter Cycle Trail construction staging plans, given its strategic relevance, long planning history, and its ability to add directly to existing Newcastle and Lake Macquarie shared pathways (effectively doubling the length of potential off-road rides or walks).

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK WELCOME.

RVRT Inc. contact information:

WEBSITE: <https://richmondalrailtrail.org.au/>
FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/richmondrailtrail/>

Secretary & Treasurer: Sam Reich
Email: rvrt.inc@gmail.com
Telephone: 0418 402 644 (Sam)

President: Billy Metcalfe
Email: wmetcalfe@bigpond.com
Telephone: 0417 453 152 (Billy)

Vice-president: Terry Lewin
Email: Terry.Lewin@bigpond.com
Telephone: 0404 439 616 (Terry)