

Richmond Vale Rail Trail Meeting

Venue: Station Hotel, Kurri Kurri

Date: Monday March 19, 2018

Time: 9.00am-11.00am

Attendees (in alphabetical order):

Billy Metcalfe wmetcalfe@bigpond.com	President RVRT Inc.	0417 453 152
Brian Coffey Governor2018-19@rotary9670.org.au	Rotary 9670	██████████
Clayton Barr MP cessnock@parliament.nsw.gov.au <i>*Did not attend meeting</i>	Local State Member for Cessnock	██████████
Colin East Cm.east9@gmail.com	Donaldson Conservation Trust	██████████
Darrin Gray dazgray@bigpond.net.au	CCC	██████████
David Atkinson e-david.atkinson@bigpond.com	RVRT Vice President and Secretary	██████████
Emma Crosdale Emma.crosdale@cessnock.nsw.gov.au	CCC	██████████
Geoff Wickens Geoff.wickens@outlook.com	Newcastle Council	██████████
Jodie Bond Jodie.bond@bsmuniverse.com	RVRT Inc. - Committee Member	██████████
Kim Pagan Kim.l.pagan@aph.gov.au	Meryl's Secretary	██████████
Kylie Martin kylie@martini-media.com.au	Comms Director RVRT Inc.	██████████
Paul Hughes paul@plhughes.com	Treasurer RVRT Inc. / President Kurri Rotary	██████████
Marilyn Eade Marilyn.eade@gmail.com	Worked on Fernleigh Trail	██████████
Meryl Swanson MP	Federal Member for Paterson	██████████
Ross Jones rjones@lakemac.nsw.gov.au	LMCC	██████████
Tim Roberts Tim.roberts@newcastle.edu.au	Tom Farrell Institute / University Of Newcastle	██████████
Terry Lewin Terry.lewin@bigpond.com	Donaldson Conservation Trust	██████████
Wendy Heys wendybh@pacific.net.au	Worked on Fernleigh Trail	██████████

Points of discussion:

Background

- Summary of the RVRT project and animation of the proposed route of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail and key features can be found here:

<http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Council/News/Projects-Works/Richmond-Vale-Rail-Trail>

- Since the early 2000's, over \$1million has been spent to date on the feasibility of the RVRT
- all the relevant studies have been completed, now is the time for action.

- Competing with the entire country for \$30million to build the trail and associated amenities.

- Geoff spoke about the trail from Shortland to Tarro - this is at the shovel-ready stage and will cost approx \$12 million and has the support of the RMS and community as it takes riders off Tarro Bridge and the New England Highway.

- The recreational-focussed and favoured by bird-watchers Shortland area has been built to offer universal access and is 100% wheelchair-friendly, the standard height of the viewing area has been modified so people in wheelchairs have a clear view and it features full-access toilet facilities.

- Having worked on this development, Geoff has a template for creating universal accessibility areas. View the Shortland to Tarro shared path - animation showing the proposed universal access pathway from Blanch Street:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=19&v=GyGGLb7RvwA

- Newcastle University is accessible via Shortland.

Hexham to Kurri trail

- The next phase of the RVRT is Hexham to Kurri - this route is designed around commutability and recreational use.
- The map of the proposed Hexham to Kurri portion of the RVRT can be found here: <http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/getattachment/Council/News/Projects-Works/Richmond-Vale-Rail-Trail/Map-of-Hexham-to-Kurri-Kurri-Section-2-of-RVRT.pdf.aspx?lang=en-AU>
- The Hexham to Kurri route is in concept design (not shovel-ready).
- At this stage, everyone would be happy for the surface to be gravel so it can be used to ride/walk on, with a long-term view to making the trail accessible for everyone. However this would require a proper surface that is more expensive.
- Therefore the trail will look different in each area (with Shortland to Tarro being properly surfaced and Kurri to Hexham having a gravel surface).
- It is estimated the Kurri to Hexham portion of the trail will cost \$21million.

Current update:

- The findings of twelve studies on the RVRT covering biodiversity, ecology, business case etc will be delivered on Friday, March 23.
- Geoff commented that the cost benefit of the RVRT is amazingly strong.
- The primary concern with the RVRT is the potential for disturbing the habitat of endangered birds and damaging indigenous artefacts.
- Detailed and respectful conversations need to be had with environmental groups (especially bird watching groups) and Indigenous communities (Paul to start a dialogue with his contacts within the Indigenous community).
- Kathleen from State National Parks (who own and control the use of the RVRT land), is very open to ideas around the RVRT, but is fearful that if we “Build it and they shall come” that there will be an influx of disrespectful visitors to the sites trampling on sacred ground.
- Stakeholders want to ensure that the project is managed correctly to avoid the above scenario.

Funding:

- The Business Case for the RVRT is VERY strong and what they are projecting is very strong.
- The three LGA's (CCC, LMCC and NCC) need to determine their role in the future of the RVRT and the project relies on buy-in from the Mayor's of these councils.
- The major issue is funding for the RVRT is in competition with short-term projects like parks, proper drainage, footpaths, potholes etc.
- Once the findings from the EIS (NCC) and REF (CCC and LMC) are delivered, we would like to propose a sub-committee of key members from the three councils in conjunction with the RVRT Inc. members to take the project forward to the point where everyone is on the same page to present the proposal to the Mayor's of the three LGA's. We propose Meryl is the point person to request the Mayor's attendance to present the case for funding for the RVRT.
- There could be three outcomes from this meeting:
 1. Nothing happens
 2. Each council may choose to use funding to build their areas on the trail separately.
 3. The council's work together to secure funding to ensure the proposed 32km cycling and walking track becomes a reality.
- It was raised whether there is enough time to bid for RVRT to be considered for the Federal Government's new Regional Growth Fund. The criteria is as follows:
 - * Project needs to be greater than \$20million
 - * Has to be in a regional area
 - * Needs to be shovel-readyThe RVRT ticks those boxes, however submissions close mid-April.
- Note - NCC cannot apply for this regional grant as they are considered a city/metro.
- Meryl suggested the need for supporters of the RVRT to be vigilant and get on the phone and write letters to their councils to express their support of the project and to ask for an update on how it is progressing...if community are asking about it, the higher priority the project becomes >>> we would like to engage with local schools to show their support for the RVRT by hosting their cross country events at the site, excursions for geography and science students, commerce students building business plans for tourism possibilities, and most importantly, children from K-12 writing letters to their local councils in support of the project.

Summary:

We owe it to the community and future generations to make the RVRT a reality. Once every generation there is a project that changes a community for future generations to come and the RVRT could be that project for our community with the hope that the community and visitors can proudly declare that they have done the RVRT, along the same lines as they would say that they have done the Great Ocean Road... making it a must-do experience on everyone's radar whether they are a proud local or curious visitor to the area.

The benefits of the RVRT

1. Recreational and health benefits
2. Opening up a safe and healthy way to commute from Kurri to Newcastle
3. Taking cyclists off dangerous roads and bridges and offering them a safe and scenic route connecting communities from Cessnock, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle LGA's.
4. Informative and educational artwork opportunities e.g. timeline at the head of the Kurri section of the RVRT to showcase the history of Kurri as a mining town for the local community to respect and learn about the history of their town and to educate visitors to the area.
5. Bringing visitors to the area to experience the RVRT and opening up tourism and business opportunities in the area.
6. A shared pathway for pedestrians, joggers, cyclists and sightseeing.

Follow up:

- Create a new logo for RVRT and use the hashtag #RVRT on all social media posts
- Stickers for local business and schools e.g. "We support the #RVRT" "We want the #RVRT" etc
- Meryl has suggested a community get together to walk part of the trail at the Pelaw Main end of the RVRT
- Would it be possible for Meryl and Clayton to give us a heads up on what grants from the Federal and State governments are available for us to send submissions to?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your stories, vision and passion for the RVRT.

Please email kylie@martini-media.com.au with amendments/additions to the minutes by **10.00am on Wednesday, April 4, 2018.**

The revised and final version of the minutes will be sent to all attendees of the RVRT meeting as well as the Mayor's at CCC, LMCC and NCC.