

GIPPSLAND PLAINS RAILTRAIL COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT INC.



ABN : 49 152 690 887



President: Helen Hoppner

Main Street
Cowwarr 3857.
Ph : 5148 9233
Fax : 5148 9001
Email : helenho@net-tech.com.au

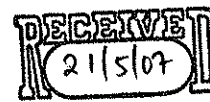
16/05/2007

The Executive Officer
Rural and regional Committee
Parliament House
Melbourne Vic 3002

Dear Sir/Madam,

I enclose our submission to the enquiry into rural and regional tourism.

A C Richards
Vice Chariman
Gippsland Plains Railtrail Committee of Management



SUBMISSION TO THE ENQUIRY INTO RURAL AND REGIONAL TOURISM

May 2007

By Gippsland Plains Railtrail Committee of Management

We address the terms of reference of the enquiry as follows.

1. We have no doubt that tourism provides economic benefits for rural areas. In the case of railtrails this has been measured in Victoria in at least one study. (Dr Sue Beeton, An economic analysis of rail trails in Victoria, La Trobe University 2003) This study found that on average each visitor to a railtrail spent \$51 per day. The established railtrails in Victoria have thousands of users on busy days. The benefits to towns along these trails are in the millions of dollars per year. Bicycle Victoria is monitoring railtrails with further studies and has found increasing patronage and benefits.
2. As we see it, the main impediment to sustained growth in regional tourism is insufficient investment in tourism infrastructure. In the case of our railtrail there has been virtually no ongoing funding since the original grant of \$130,000 in 1999. For reasons we cannot understand some railtrails seem to have received a lot of funding. We estimate that 3 million dollars would be required to build a reasonable trail along the full distance. Despite the lack of support, the committee has constructed a useable track over about 20km and has done initial works over much of the rest. We have had to live with the frustration of spending hundreds of hours and some of our scarce resources applying for grants, none of which have yielded significant funds. We have made some money selling ballast, but this is almost gone.
3. Our project has not benefitted at all from current programs because we have not been able to turn our concept of a 70km trail into a marketable reality. To reach its potential as a tourist attraction, it needs to be of a higher standard and provide a continuous link between the main population centres at each end, Traralgon and Stratford. Our trail is unique in that it is accessible at both ends by rail and passes through a number of

large and small towns namely Glengarry, Toongabbie, Cowwarr, Heyfield, Tinamba and Maffra.

4. Railtrails attract visitors from interstate and overseas as well as providing local people with a place to safely exercise and appreciate rare flora.
5. Our trail has not been severely affected by drought or bushfire so we have not benefitted from mechanisms of recovery. Railtrails have the advantage of relative resistance to drought and fire.
6. Railtrails are an excellent example of a way in which modest government expenditure can lead to private and corporate investment in tourism. Along the established railtrails one can see eating places, accommodation places, sales outlets and equipment hire places. A railtrail also provides visitors to a town with an attraction even if they visited the town for another reason. Our railtrail connects eight towns. Many businesses in these towns could easily expand and flourish.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Richards', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony C Richards

Vice chairman

Gippsland Plains Railtrail Committee of Management