



## **Trains North Inc. Information Sheet**

### **Armidale Regional Council Meeting, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

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#### **Benefits of a Restored Train Service North of Armidale**

##### **Passenger Trains**

- Superior train experience attracts higher usage compared to buses
- Accessible for vulnerable passengers; the disabled, sick & elderly
- Maintenance cost borne by the NSW government - not councils
- Cost of restoration of existing rail infrastructure is modest
- Better connectivity within & between regions & states
- Potential to attract visitors, students, residents & future ratepayers
- Logical extension to the existing Sydney to Armidale service
- Direct link to Sydney for Guyra, Glen Innes, Deepwater & Tenterfield
- Growth driver for region: tourism, education, business, services & housing
- Potential for land value along the line to be increased
- Enhanced Tamworth-Armidale connection with a second daily service
- Scope to extend service on existing rail corridor to Toowoomba & Brisbane

##### **Freight Trains**

- Cost savings for businesses, farmers & manufacturers
- Linkage to intermodal terminals in Toowoomba & Tamworth
- Climate change mitigation by greatly reduced carbon emissions on highway
- More efficient, higher volume of rail freight carried compared to trucks
- Cost savings by not constructing & repairing roads for heavy trucks
- Significant reduction in road accident trauma – fatalities, injuries & costs
- Operation of trains by private sector – at no cost to government
- Ability to attract more business, industry & commerce
- Serve existing companies e.g. tomato farm, proposed abattoir in Guyra
- Flood free alternate eastern rail corridor for when coastal & inland rail fail

##### **Heritage Trains**

- Tourist attraction for all ages & abilities will contribute to visitor economy
- Organised tours by travel agents and Armidale & district historical society
- Showcase New England's cultural and environmental heritage
- Northern Regional Railway Company & New England Railway Inc train plans
- NRRC & NERI are conducting a study on railway line condition & restoration
- Recent heritage train rides to Armidale have been very popular & sold out
- Maximise use of beautifully restored 1883 Armidale station precinct

## **Why Trains North opposes council motion for a bicycle Rail Trail from Armidale Station to Dumaresq Station**

- Negative impact on prospects & financial cost of restoring rail line & services
- If rail corridor reverts to use for future rail services, council's potential liability to re-construct the line is approximately \$469,967 per km
- ARC application to Growing Regions Fund for \$1.8m on 15 Jan 2024 requires Council co-contribution of \$1.8m, ratepayers oppose this
- Armidale - Ben Lomond annual rail trail maintenance to cost \$102,000
- Less incentive for ratepayers, businesses and professionals to live here
- Use of rail trail limited to narrow athletic demographic, mainly cyclists
- Inaccessible for those who are less able to ride bikes or walk
- Key natural attractions are gorge & waterfalls, not track through cleared farmland
- Failure of council to engage in legislative requirement of community consultation
- Minimal community support evident for rail trail in any form in New England
- Support for trains evident in 10,740 signature petition to NSW parliament 2024
- Armidale public forum 2023 voted unanimously (bar a few) to restore train service
- At ARC 2024 strategic plan forum 5 public speakers favoured trains, 0 for rail trail
- Trains North has active branches in Armidale, Guyra, Glen Innes & Tenterfield
- Glen Innes councillors divided & Tenterfield council favours trains over trails 2024
- Long term contribution of a rail trail to regional economy would be marginal
- Elsewhere after initial euphoria rail trail users declined e.g. Northern rivers
- ARC got \$5.4m bushfire recovery grant for 34km Black Mountain to Ben Lomond
- Grant was not for the present proposal Armidale to Dumaresq of 9.4km
- Uncertainty about funds & approval to complete whole trail to Ben Lomond
- Train service to Armidale requires 2 to 4km as reserve in case brakes fail
- Existing bicycle tracks need better maintenance e.g. Creek lands town to UNE
- Proposed bicycle tracks don't destroy rail: UNE-Dumaresq dam, town-Blue Hole
- Council needs to end financial commitments to dubious new projects given historic deficit & extraordinary rate increase of 50%

### **Preferred Council Resolution**

- Defer decision on rail trail preliminary works until full funding available
- Defer decision until legally required community consultation on rail trail occurs
- Defer decision until state approval of lease for rail trail is confirmed
- Defer decision until after council elections in September 2024
- Apply for variation to \$5.4m bushfire recovery grant to build alternate bike tracks
- Consult community in a comprehensive, independent way about various options