

Submission

No 63

INQUIRY INTO THE UTILISATION OF RAIL CORRIDORS

Name: Mr Martin Krause

Date Received: 23/04/2012

Dear Carolyn,

I have only just noticed the on-going enquiry into the use of Rail Corridors in NSW. Unfortunately, I was unaware of the proceedings and have not managed to meet the submissions deadline. Never-the-less, I wanted to voice my efforts during several terms of the previous Labor governments to build Rails to Trails on abandoned railway corridors (see my website <http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/health-advocacy/blue-mountains-rail-trail-advocacy>), as well as build a cycle trail along one of 3 already existing tracks along the railway line between Leura and Mt Victoria. I'm hoping some of my fellow advocates have kept their eye on the ball and made submissions by the deadline.

yours sincerely

Martin Krause

Blue Mountains Rail Trail Wentworth Falls–Mt Victoria

Several reasons exist for the development of a cycle path along the railway line between Mt Victoria and Wentworth Falls. These reasons include

- the environmentally friendly nature of recreational and commuter cycling
- the physical and mental health benefits of exercise to both the young and old
- a non-motorised link between the towns of the Upper Mountains
- tourist attraction to some of Australia's most spectacular scenery
- viable economic proposition to local businesses and the railways alike
- reduced risk of death to cyclists presently forced to use the great western highway
- part of a trans-mountain link to the Andersons and Oaks fire trails used by Mountain Bikers between Wentworth Falls and Glenbrook.

The majority of the trail already exists. What is required is legal access to the area, upgrading of the trail, and public awareness of its existence.



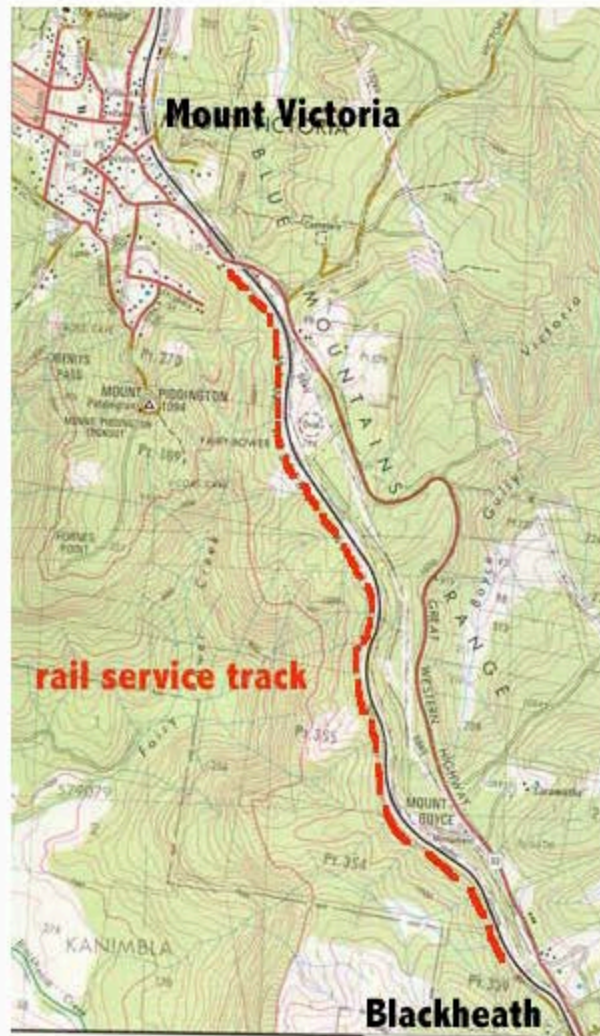
The political precedence of funding has already been set with

- the opening of the Parramatta to Liverpool cycle rail trail
- proposed construction of the Hornsby to Homebush cycle rail trail
- immensely successful Bulli to Shellharbour Illawarra cycle path
- the Parramatta river cycle way
- the Homebush - Cooks river - Botany Bay - Cronulla - Kurnell cycle network
- construction of a separate purpose-built 47km bike path along the new Orbital Motorway
- proposed 130km and 23km [Riverina Rail Trails](#)

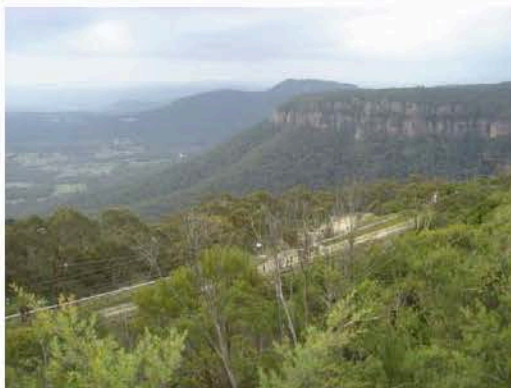
Unfortunately, whilst Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia are spending \$10's of millions on Rail Trails and Greenway projects, NSW is spending next to none.

Maps of route

<http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/railTrail.php>



<http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/images/bluemountains/MtVictoriaBlackheath.gif>



<http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/images/bluemountains/MtVictoriaMedlowBath.gif>



<http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/images/bluemountains/MtVictoriaKatoomba.gif>

A petition containing close to 1000 signatures was submitted to council in 2001. Although some debate to the merits of the proposal were discussed at council meetings, a vague cost assessment ranging in multiples of 1000's made the proposal seem impossible to attain. According to Blue Mountains council meeting of the 1 April 2003 (unfortunate date) the Blue Mountains Rail trail proposal between Mt Victoria and Katoomba will cost \$4 000 000 with extension to Lapstone costing another \$9 000 000. Ongoing maintenance will cost "hundreds of thousands of dollars per year".

It is naturally difficult to make inroads into a political process which is fragmented in its decision making. Unlike Victoria, NSW doesn't seem to have an authority specifically charged with the development of cycling facilities along railway lines (greenway projects) or Rail Trails along abandoned railway corridors. It is highly intriguing for a location which prides itself on its tourist attractions, not to create facilities which cater for a wider spectrum of people. The Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail in Victoria is estimated to generate \$1 000000 in tourist revenue annually. ([Link to Rail Trails: http://www.railtrails.org.au/](http://www.railtrails.org.au/)) Victorian tourism actively promotes several Rail Trails in their interstate marketing strategies. Such strategies have even included a color lift-out in the weekend Sydney Morning Herald. [During Easter 2006 the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail had an estimated 8000 visitors, which generated \\$2.3 million and 19.6 F/T jobs \(http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/railtrailsecoimpactvictoria2006.pdf\)](http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/railtrailsecoimpactvictoria2006.pdf). Cyclists on average spend \$258.- per day when they visited the trail. In contrast, during this same period of time, Blue Mountains Tourism appears to be extremely concerned regarding depleting tourist numbers. Bush fires and September 11 and various other intangibles have been blamed in the past. Yet, apart from steep bush walks and rock climbing, little other outdoor 'family' activities are catered for in the Blue Mountains. I am not suggesting that a Rail Trail - Greenway project will save Blue Mountains tourism from the political nature of itself, however similar models in the USA, Canada and even the UK have shown major economic, environmental, health and social benefits where they have been constructed. [Although, the Blue Mountains has an iconoclastic tourist pull, how much money do bus loads of day tripping international tourists at Echo point leave behind in the local economy?](#)

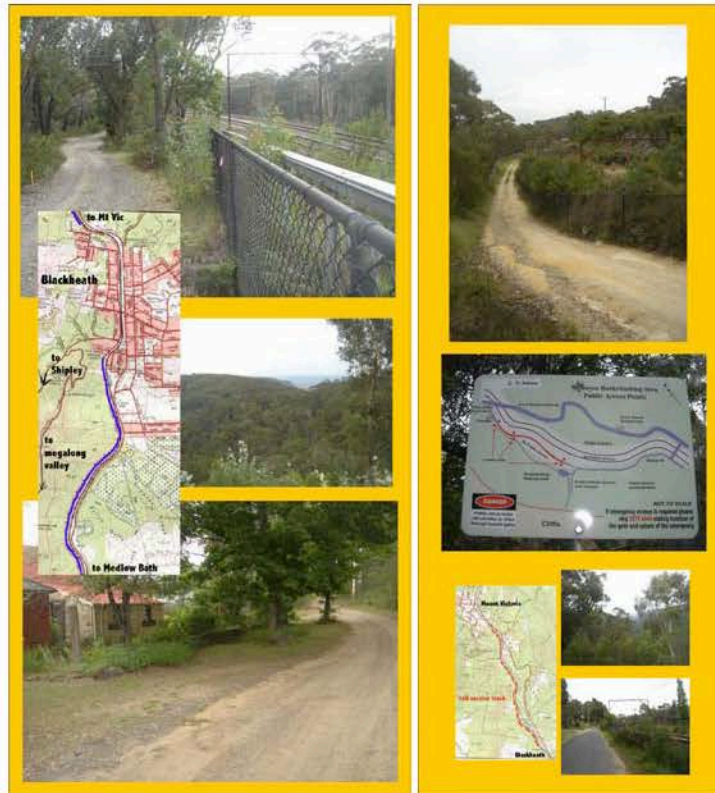
The Australian Financial Review recently quoted Peter Strang of the Bicycle Federation of Australia saying that sales of bicycles have gone from a steady 800 000 to 1 million a year in 2002 and 2003. Furthermore, the article argued that participation rates in physical activities rose from 54% to 62% and that the overall trend was to *"that which work isn't - freedom from time constraints, less stress and competition and a meaningful connection with people or places"*. Paramount is *"the ability to get fit with minimum hassle, to socialise and commune with nature...club sports focused on competition are in decline"*. Cycling appears to be able to accommodate well in *"the quest for well-being"*

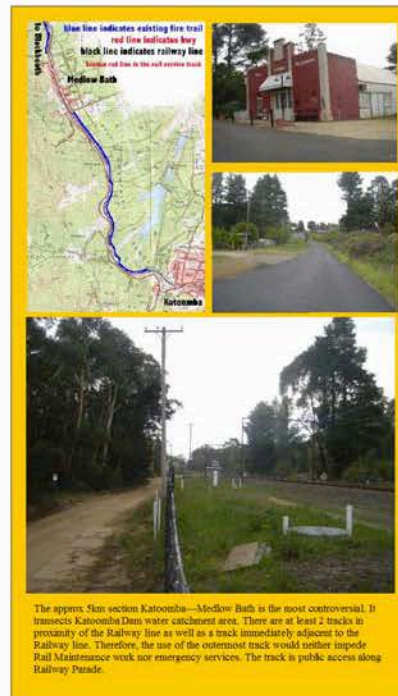
Sydney Water and Katoomba Catchment Area

Sydney Water considers the catchment area of Katoomba reservoir as a sensitive issue. However, it is highly unlikely that pollution from bicycles would contaminate the ground water anymore than trains, or the service vehicles which now use the 3 parallel tracks. Furthermore, any contamination issues should be made as a comparison to 'run-off' from the Great Western Highway at Jamison Creek (Wentworth Falls) and at the Cox's River at Hartley. Additionally, the provision of a fence either side of the Cycle Track is likely to deter rather than enhance people trespassing beyond the Track. Finally, open use of the track is in line with the Federal Governments Anti-Terrorist Policy of reporting suspicious activity. The Rail Trail thus becomes the eyes and ears of the community.

Australian Rail Track Corporation (formerly Rail Corp)

ARTC are the owners of some of the land where the proposed Rail Trail is to be constructed. Significantly, most of the Rail Trail is already situated outside the ARTC fencing. The remaining 8km, include approx 1km between Railway Pde and Glenview St (Leura - Katoomba), approx 5km between Katoomba and Railway Pde in Medlow Bath (the outer track could possibly belong to Sydney Water?!), and finally approx another 2km between Blackheath and Mt Victoria. At the latter site, Rail Corp had given special permission for climbers to use part of the track (see beautiful pictures & map in links above). It is envisaged that in those locations where ARTC is to be approached it would be on the basis of requesting the use of the outer perimeter of their property. In this manner there won't be any hindrance for maintenance work or emergency services. Finally, ownership issues could be resolved through the setting up of a trust and leasing arrangements between the trust and ARTC.





Cost

According to Blue Mountains council meeting of the 1 April 2003 (unfortunate date) the Blue Mountains Rail trail proposal between Mt Victoria and Katoomba will cost \$4 000 000 with extension to Lapstone costing another \$9 000 000. Ongoing maintenance will cost "hundreds of thousands of dollars per year". This seems to me to be a very gross estimate? Since I am not an engineer I would love to hear of anyone's opinion of these latter estimates? The track is approximately 30km long. Using US figures, at \$US50 000.- per mile this would represent \$US937,500. at a lower estimate and at \$US200,000 would represent \$US3,750,000 at a higher estimate (see below). These figures include the purchasing of land as well as using poured concrete. It is likely, that even the lower figure is greater than the true cost, as we are only asking for fencing, signage and the upgrading of the surface of the already existing gravel track between Mt Victoria and Leura. From Leura to Wentworth Falls a concrete path may be more appropriate. Yet, here again, a concrete path already exists from Wentworth Falls shops past Blue Mountains Grammar and TAFE. Similarly, a partial bike track exists past Korowal school.

Funding and Cost Assessments by the Queensland Government

The Queensland Labor Government has pledged \$3.6 million dollars for the development of a 157km Rail Trail in the Brisbane Valley (January 2007). The \$3.6 million funding includes; \$2.1M for track construction (earthworks and track base) fencing, erosion control, toxic site remediation, tree planting, signage and gates; \$700,000 - Rail bridge at Harlen (over Cressbrook Ck), other bridges and gully crossings on the Linville to Blackbutt section may require substantial work or replacement. \$500,000 - road crossings

for the D'Aguila and Brisbane Valley Highways and other major roads \$160,000 [Horse yards + pedestal toilets + camping area for 15 people + water tank + fencing + bike rack + fireplaces]. A further \$2.4 million will be spent on a 76km Rail Trail. The Boonah to Ipswich Trail will be approximately 76 kilometres long and will cater for the current and future populations in Greater Ipswich and the Western Corridor. It will link Ipswich to the new Wyaralong Dam and the Boonah district. The \$2.4 million funding includes: \$160,000 [Horse yards + pedestal toilets + camping area for 15 people + water tank + fencing + bike rack + fireplaces] \$150,000 sleeping shelters \$400,000 [Trail head facilities with car park for tow vehicles + floats+ pedestal toilet + fencing + bike rack] \$400,000 road crossings, \$780,000 60km new track or works, \$20,000 safety signs. These cost estimates are a lot less than my estimations (based on North American assumptions) and strongly suggest that the Upper Blue Mountains Rail Trail is a much cheaper proposition than what was originally thought.

Crime and costs of Rail trails

- generally users of rail trails become the eyes and ears of the community
- *"Crime and fear of crime do not flourish in an environment of high energy and healthy interaction among law abiding community members. Thus, the quality of life is enhanced in several ways including the enhancement of individual physical fitness, a safer mode of transportation for cyclists and pedestrians and the potential for less crime overall in the communities."*
- *"The average trail costs \$50,000 to \$200,000 per mile to acquire and build, compared to \$1 million a mile for a suburban street and \$100 million a mile for some highways. In addition, the economic benefits often outweigh the costs. For example, an analysis of economic impacts of the Northern Central Rail-Trail in Maryland showed that in 1993, tax revenue on user purchases alone (\$303,750) surpassed operating costs (\$191,893)"*

See: report by the City of Virginia Beach

<http://www.rkengineers.com/vbbike/trailq-a.html>

See: link to **Bicycling Information Organisation**

<http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/rt/development/printerversion.htm>

See: link to **Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse - EXTREMELY USEFUL link for engineers and activists**

<http://www.trailsandgreenways.org/resources/highlights/default.asp>

Real Estate prices

Real Estate prices increase in areas close to a Rail Trail

see : http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/trail_plans/rail_trail_studies.html

Tourism

Television appearances (March 2004) suggest that Blue Mountains Tourism is worried about the dwindling numbers of visitors. Yet, Rail Trails during a similar period in Canada are awash with tourist dollars. Australian Cyclist (Aug 2003) reported that cyclists spend over \$CAD95 million (\$AUD104 million) annually along the Route Verte in Canada. The Canadian Governments annual report explains that this represents around 2000 jobs and revenues of \$CAD15.1 million for the Government of Quebec and \$CAD11.9 million for the Government of Canada. Therefore, even if the Rail Trail was as expensive as the Blue Mountains City Council makes out, it would still represent a minimal investment when compared with potential income!!!! (PDF version : http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com.au/rv-sept2004_en.pdf)

Please inspect the Route Verte website which places the entire bikeway network within reach of your fingertips, region by region and route by route. The site includes information about tourist attractions and events, accommodations (you can even reserve on line), bicycle retailers and transportation options. *“It now comprises over 3,000 kilometres of bikeways crisscrossing all regions of Québec. There is no more convenient, user-friendly or effective way to plan your cycling vacations — and to set just the right pace”*

See: **Route Verte in Canada** : <http://www.routeverte.com/ang/index.lasso>

Similar projects in Australia include ‘The Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail’ in Victoria, which brings an estimated \$1 000 000 in tourism alone. It is 98km in length and was a feature article in the Australian Geographic during 2004.

More Recently, La Trobe University Associate Professor Sue Beeton has released the results of a further study into the economic effects of Regional Communities and Cycling. Results indicated that in 2006 the average cyclist spends a total of \$258.- per person per day ! This is up from \$203.- in 2003. Additionally, it was found that the 8300 **Easter visitors alone contributed \$2,141,400** to the local community. This represented 21.6 F/T jobs being created by the Easter visitations.

The study was conducted on the **Murray to Mountains rail trail** in north east Victoria, Australia's most well used regional rail trail. It follows up on a study of several Victorian rail trails Professor Beeton carried out in 2003.

This study indicates that the Average Expenditure, per person per day is significantly higher than the 2003 report.

The report concludes

"Rail Trails provide outstanding opportunities for tourism and recreation, and can encourage outdoor activities and exercise due to the relatively gentle nature of the gradients and the attractive places many pass through. They also provide economic opportunities for the local host communities as well as the increased pride 'showing your place' to visitors creates. However they require not only funds to be developed, but significant maintenance support. In addition, local businesses and communities need to proactively develop, manage and promote the Trails to their markets. Successful tourism does not simply happen – it must be planned for and managed for the long term."

See: Rail Trails Victoria for full report :

<http://www.railtrails.org.au/news/news.php3?news&200&/>

See: www.railtrail.com.au for full description

"they (Rail Trails) develop stronger, healthier, more active communities.....socially, economically and environmentally the concept was given the thumbs up in a recent report in the USA looking into the benefits for communities of having rail trails for biking, walking and jogging" (Australian Geographic April-June 2004, p75).

Furthermore, rail trails are appealing for young and old, fit and not so fit. Sealed Rail Trails also appeal to people with severe disability.

Similarly, the **Otago Rail Trail in New Zealand** demonstrated major and significant positive economic impacts to local business. One quarter of businesses interviewed stated that they had set-up since 2001 due to the Rail Trail. 68% of businesses stated that 20% of their income was directly related to the Rail Trail. The results are simply stunning and the trail should be viewed at <http://www.atoz-nz.com/railtrail.asp>

The **Swiss Federal railways** (SBB) actively encourage train-cycling tourism. You can even hire bicycles at railways stations, and there certainly aren't any impediments for taking your bike on most trains.

"Tour de Suisse: with SBB, of course.

Switzerland – a cyclist's paradise. The country is criss-crossed by over 3,300 km of cycle tracks suitable for all ages. There are many spectacular mountain bike trails for more energetic cyclists to enjoy.

SBB takes you to your starting point and back in comfort. Whether you want to take your own bike or rent one, you will find all the information you need here."

http://mct.sbb.ch/mct/en/reiselust/freizeit/velo_bahn.htm

Therefore, the cost of construction and maintenance of the Rail Trail would be recouped through higher employment and hence personal taxes, business tax, increased stamp duty on the sale of real estate and increased council rates as a result of increased land value, as well as GST. In Quebec, Canada, further recuperation of costs occurred through the

production of pamphlets with maps of the cycle route on one page and advertising of accommodation, restaurants, etc on the opposite page.

Recuperation of costs

The original constructions of Rail Trails, in various places around the world, were undertaken during major recession. Both the State Government of Victoria and the Provincial Government of Quebec were bankrupt when construction was commenced. This leap of faith was based on feasibility studies which suggested major economic, health and social returns on such an investment. In 2007, NSW is facing both moral and economic bankruptcy through major road projects instigated by previous leadership. Furthermore, Australia is in the grip of serious drought which is eroding the confidence and independence of country communities. Now is the time to make major investments into Rail Trails in NSW. All other states have, so it would seem ludicrous if NSW doesn't.

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- 4 days over Easter 2006 generated over \$2.3 million in tourist revenue in Victoria

- based on this figure alone, my estimate of return on investment through 10%GST, personal tax (21.6 F/t jobs) and 30% Business Tax is in the vicinity of \$250 000 - \$400 000 in just 4 days!

<http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/railtrailsecoimpactvictoria2006.pdf>

- Route Verte in Quebec enjoys \$95 million of economic spin offs per annum for an initial \$7.5 million investment. This includes the generation of 2000 jobs and revenues of \$CAD15.1 million for the Government of Quebec and \$CAD11.9 million for the Government of Canada.

http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/rv-sept2004_en.pdf

Early in 2007, NSW agreed in principal to Carbon Trading. It would be expected that Rail Trails could gain Carbon Sink credits. An obvious example of an industry requiring Carbon Credits would be Wallarawang Power Station in Lithgow.

Health

- Did you know that only 15% of the American population does an amount of exercise considered to be a minimum for good health?

- Australian statistics in some demographics are similar!!!!!!!!!!
- According to Diabetes Australia – NSW in 2006

Postcode 2780:

13,700 people are diabetic, average age of people with diabetes is 39.

Postcode 2782:

5,390 people are diabetic, average age of people with diabetes is 42.

Postcode 2785:

4,223 people are diabetic, average age of people with diabetes is 41.

Postcode 2786:

1,082 people are diabetic, average age of people with diabetes is 38.

These figures supplied by Diabetes Australia appear rather high and may require independent verification. Never-the-less, the AusDiab report, Diabesity & Associated Disorders in Australia 2000, presents the main findings based on data collected from a stratified sample of 11,247 Australians aged 25 years or over, residing in 42 randomly selected urban and non-urban areas of Australia.

Significant findings of the study are that:

- **For every known case of diabetes, there was one undiagnosed case**
- About 940,000 Australians over the age of 25 years have diabetes
- The number of people with diabetes has trebled since a broadly-based blood survey was undertaken in 1981
- **Almost one in four Australians aged 25 years and over has diabetes** or a condition of impaired glucose metabolism. Impaired glucose metabolism is associated with a substantially increased immediate risk of heart disease as well as an increased risk of diabetes in the future.

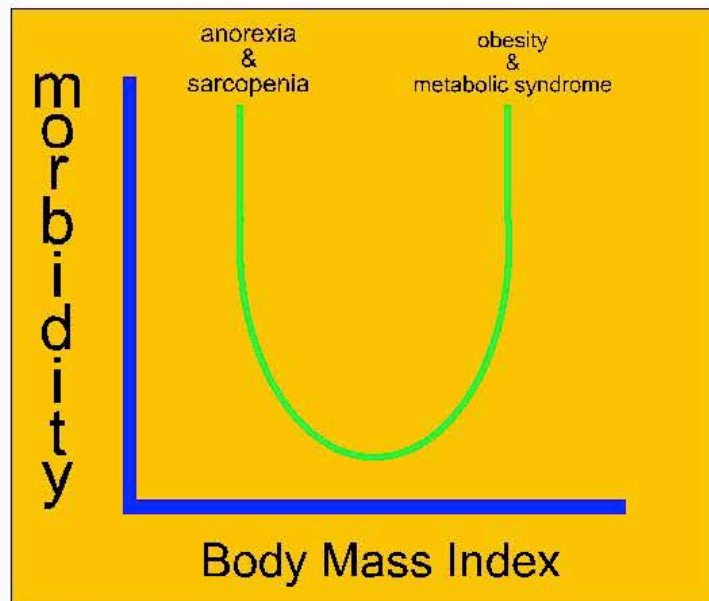
Interestingly, the 2006 Pollie Pedal charity bike ride, which included the Federal Minister for Health Tony Abbott, has raised more than \$300,000 for diabetes research at the Westmead Millennium Institute at Westmead Hospital.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/pq-diabetes-study>

- Arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions cost \$4.7 billion to treat in 2000-1 and caused more disability than any other medical condition, affecting 34% of all people with a disability. In the same year cardiovascular disease cost \$5.5 billion dollars. Both these conditions can be prevented or alleviated through lifestyle changes, which includes regular exercise. **Source: Australian Financial**

Review; Friday 10 June 2005 : \$247 million allocated for control of chronic illness, p9

- Morbidity from lack of exercise begins in youth!
- According to Australian Cyclist (March 07) 52% of Australian Women and 67% of Australian Men are overweight (BMI>25) or obese (BMI>30).
- One in five children or adolescents is either overweight or obese. From 1985 to 1995 the number of overweight 7 - 15 year olds doubled, and the prediction is 65% will be overweight or obese by 2020
- Comparative Scandinavian versus USA population studies (using émigré Scandinavians) demonstrate that participation in regular exercise enhances longevity and places lesser demands on their health care systems.



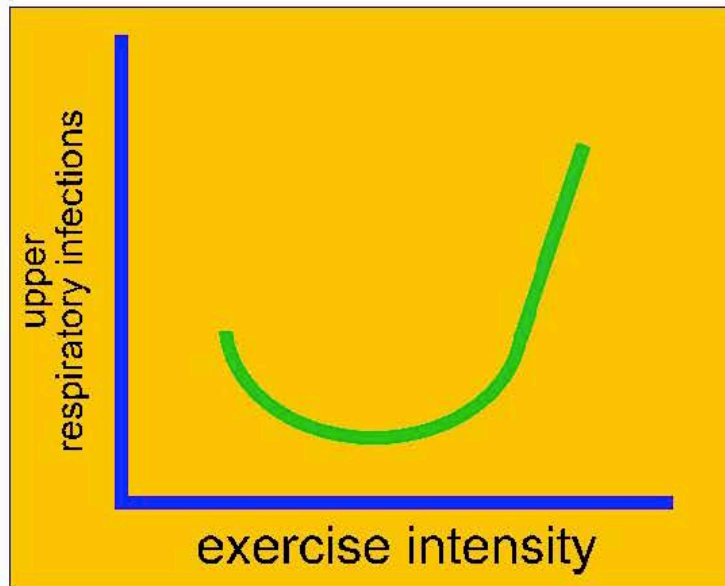
see paper on - Obesity, Exercise and Weight loss

http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/exercise_weightloss.php

Regular exercise which is enjoyable and convenient is more likely to become a routine commitment. Cycling offers the great opportunity for graded physical activity. Moreover, when increased weight, or osteo-arthritis is involved then a non-weight bearing form of exercise is likely to gain acceptance by the general population. Furthermore, the grade of a Railway line obviates the need to negotiate steep inclines, which could also prove a disincentive to cycling.

Regular exercise, every 72 hours, not only reduces the risk or severity of diabetes, it also is essential in combating sarcopenia. Sarcopenia is muscle wasting associated with sedentary lifestyles and commences in the 4th decade of life. Muscle protein is an important source of amino acids for our immune system. Muscle protein also acts as a sink for several hormones, including insulin. The loss of muscle bulk, therefore not only

reduces mobility and independence, but furthermore increases the risk of diabetes as well as increasing the risk of succumbing to immune related diseases.



- Exercise, Muscle Mass and enhancement of the Immune System

http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/exercise_sarcopenia_immunology.php

Exercise can help with weight loss, morbidity associated with diabetes, cholesterol and heart disease.

<http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au/home/index.htm>

"The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) estimated 129.6 million Americans, or 64 percent, are overweight or obese, which has been shown to increase the risk for developing heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some forms of cancer, and other disabling medical conditions. And according to the 2001 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity, the total direct and indirect costs, including medical costs and lost productivity, were estimated at \$117 billion nationally for 2000."

Fortunately, the human toll and the economic costs of inactivity are avoidable. The **Surgeon General** (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity>) recommends moderate physical activity -- 30 minutes a day, five days a week -- to combat the threat of diseases including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, certain forms of cancer and depression. With the Surgeon General and HHS, the White House recognizes the need for physical activity and in June launched the "**Healthier U.S. Initiative**" (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/fitness/fitness-policy-book.pdf>) fitness campaign designed to educate and inspire Americans to be active. Trails figure prominently in the fight against obesity and inactivity. The National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention

and Health Promotion (CDC) trumpets the positive impact trails can have on the overall health of their users. Click **here** (<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/trails.htm>) to check out "**Promoting Physical Activity Through Trails**," a valuable resource for trail information from the CDC.

Rail-trails provide ideal settings for enjoyable recreation and regular exercise like walking the dog, commuting to work, walking to town and biking to school. Individuals must choose to exercise, but communities can make that choice easier by providing attractive and safe networks of sidewalks, bikeways and trails for people to use."

Summary of investigations into links between cycling and good health

<http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com/Cycling&Health&References.pdf>

Ride to school initiative

The proposed Rail Trail would provide cycling access to 3 schools and TAFE at Wentworth Falls, 2 schools at Leura, 3 schools at Katoomba and 2 schools at Blackheath. This is in line with initiatives by Sydney West Area Health Service and BMCC.

"The Bike to School program can only work with the support of local communities, schools, students, parents and caregivers. We must work together to provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy active, healthy lifestyles" said Bike to School Program Officer Dave Logan.

"By providing the opportunity to be more physically active through safe cycling the Bike to School Program is contributing towards the prevention of chronic disease associated with lack of physical activity, overweight and obesity, particularly childhood obesity" said Mr Logan.

<http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/mediacentre/mediareleases/biketoschool/>

Similar initiatives are being developed in Melbourne, with the Victorian Government announcing funding of \$4 million over 4 years with the aim of having 500 schools and 34,000 regular new riders by the end of 2010. It is also noteworthy that Melbourne has 1300km of bicycle pathways as well as 450km of Rail Trails. **NSW has next to none!!!**

Global warming

Cycling as a commuting pursuit can provide a viable transportation alternative thereby aiding in the reduction of green house gases produced by cars. The NSW government until recently had shown it's commitment to commuter cycling with the construction of the Lane Cove tunnel and it's concomitant dedicated cycling path which links the City and Harbour bridge with the North West and West of Sydney. Although many motorists are complaining about the cost of the enhanced PPP (private public partnership) motoring

trip to and from the city, cyclists can rejoice in the construction of a cycle path where government money is lacking. Unfortunately, the NSW Government, prior to the election in 2007 delayed road closures at a cost of \$25 million. Furthermore, they approved the upgrade of the M2 motorway to 3 lanes, thereby removing the cycling facility, forcing bikes to use a more circuitous route. The irony is that the Lane Cove Tunnel is only 2 lanes in each direction. Pure common sense would indicate that more lanes in one section will only create traffic jams due to bottle necks in other sections.

40% of fuel consumption by road vehicles is due to interruption of traffic flow

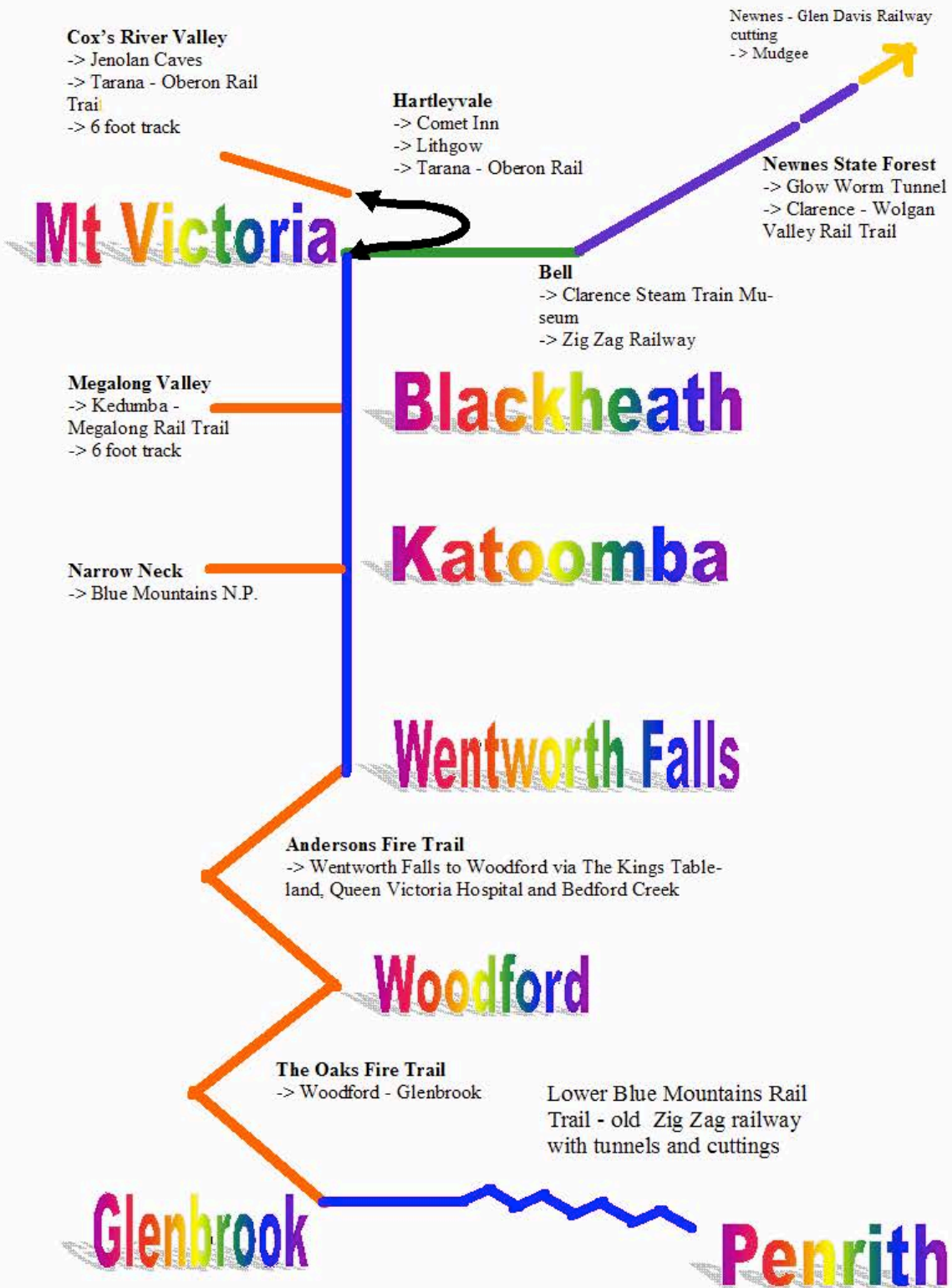
Stationary cars expel 13 million tonnes of greenhouse gases in Australian cities per year

If everyone who lives within 5 miles of their workplace were to cycle to work just one day a week and left the car at home, nearly 5 million tons of global warming pollution would be saved every year, the equivalent of taking about a million cars off the road

<http://www.environmentaldefense.org/article.cfm?contentID=5483>



The Rail Trail would serve as an important link for future Rail Trail initiatives, as well as serve the current cycling needs



Other adjacent future Rail Trail options

- Newnes historic shale railway connecting Bell/Newnes Junction with the Wolgan Valley <http://www.railtrails.org.au/states/trails.php3?action=trail&trail=52>
- Tarana – Oberon Rail Trail
<http://www.railtrails.org.au/states/trails.php3?action=trail&trail=115>
- Megalong – Kedumba Rail Trail
- Lower Mountains Rail Trail (Glenbrook – Lapstone)
<http://www.railtrails.org.au/states/trails.php3?action=trail&trail=53> ;
<http://www.infoblueMountains.net.au/rail/lower/lapstone.htm>

Heritage

The Rail Trail from Mt Victoria to Wentworth Falls holds significant national cultural heritage interest. The area has significant aboriginal history as it was a trading region for 3 tribes (Gundungurra, Dharug, Wiradjuri).

<http://www.gundungurra.net.au/gundungurra.htm>

The death of **Pemulwuy** and his fellow guerillas, allowed the first Europeans to safely cross the Blue Mountains.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/perspective/stories/s706273.htm>

From a European historical perspective the history of the Blue Mountains demonstrates the pioneering spirit of mining, timber cutting and the building of roads and railways to connect Sydney with the gold and agricultural boom towns of the west. The route taken by Lawson, Blaxland and Wentworth is similar to that of the proposed Rail Trail.

<http://www.infoblueMountains.net.au/rail/Default.htm>

Geologically, the Blue Mountains represent a unique sandstone environment with steep spurs and gullies transecting altitudes from a few hundred meters above sea level to over 1200m. This creates diversity in fauna and flora. The panoramic views from the Rail Trail across the Megalong and Kanimbla Valleys would be awe inspiring.

Other links

- Australian Bicycle Council website for engineers

http://www.abc.dotars.gov.au/Communique/july_2003.aspx

- Statistics on Cycling injuries (PDF file version)

<http://www.back-in-business-physiotherapy.com.au/cycling-injuries.pdf>

- Planning guidelines for walking and cycling for community activists

<http://www.dipnr.nsw.gov.au/cycling.htm>

- Info Blue Mountains Cycling for tourists

<http://infobluemountains.net.au/activity/mtb.htm>

The Cost : Benefit ratio to health, the economy, the environment and to the community at large are obvious

Conclusion

Since writing the initial proposal in 2001, very little progress has been made. It is naturally difficult to make inroads into a political process which is fragmented in decision making process. Similar models in the USA, Canada, Denmark, The Netherlands, Switzerland and even the UK have shown major economic, environmental, health and social benefits where cycling facilities have been constructed. Presently, the road upgrades on the Great Western Highway are seen as a substitute for the Rail Trail! However, would you ask your children to go and play on the highway? Highway cycling is only appealing to a select few, whereas Rail Trails appeal to young and old, cyclists and non-cyclists, tourists and is a great family bonding activity.

This proposal should be a whole government and whole community initiative.

Prepared by Martin Krause

It should be noted that I have no financial interest in any way with the future construction of this proposed Rail Trail. I am simply a family man who has a vested interest in healthy pursuits for my friends and family.