

# GOULBURN RIVER HIGH COUNTRY RAIL TRAIL

# THE PROJECT STORY...

A INITIATIVE BETWEEN MANSFIELD,  
MITCHELL AND MURRINDINDI SHIRES,  
STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS.



TALLAROOK  
YEA  
ALEXANDRA  
MANSFIELD





GOULBURN RIVER  
HIGH COUNTRY  
RAIL TRAIL

TALLAROOK – YEA – ALEXANDRA – MANSFIELD

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**Dr Will Twycross**

Chair of the Committee of Management  
Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail

## *A message from our flamboyant Chair of the Committee of Management, Dr Will Twycross*

WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG, my parents used to read me some very recently published stories about a blue tank engine called Thomas. My favourite was “Thomas and Bertie”, in which Bertie, a red bus, raced Thomas, one or the other gaining an advantage at various level crossings and tunnels. Inevitably, Thomas, the series hero, edged past Bertie on the final turn to win the race, as did all the heroes born in the general optimism of the post war years.

By the 1970s, a more local version of Thomas was being regularly beaten to Melbourne from Mansfield, Yea and Alexandra by Bertie and his road freight equivalent, the truck. First the passenger service, then the freight service, was discontinued as the roads over the Black Spur, the Break o’ Day Hills and along the Goulburn to the Hume corridor improved and road transports grew bigger, safer and faster. For better or worse, the railway closed, but the rail reserve remained in public ownership.

Gaining the funding to build a Rail Trail along the old embankment was a triumph for those with the vision to do strategic planning in preparation for the day that the stars and planets may align. It is now history that the confluence of the GFC with the tragedy of the Black Saturday bushfires set in place the political circumstances that allowed a visionary but unfunded Scope of Works to be dropped into a successful submission to the Federal Government as an “Economic Stimulus Package” project.

One of the biggest engineering challenges has been the crossing points, the key nodes where the road and rail intersected, where either Bertie gave way to Thomas, or vice-versa. Our engineers were left with the challenge of re-designing crossings originally sited so that a horse and cart travelling at, say, ten miles an hour, could safely stop to give way to a steam train which was very visible, very audible, and not very fast. As is detailed elsewhere, those design challenges have been met by our engineers, with VicRoads input and approval.

The Committee of Management, representing all three shires, has met the various political challenges the project has faced with good humour, and I am particularly grateful to Merv McAliece of the DSE for his regular attendance and valuable advice with leasing and regulations.

*The project is a fine example of what is possible in a partnership between local, state and federal governments, and our Rail Trail is one of the biggest Local Government delivered rural infrastructure projects in Victorian history.*

It is a credit to those who did the strategic work ten years ago, and those who have delivered it. One person looms large in both categories, and that is Ian Geer, our Project Manager, and author of the original funding submission. It has been a pleasure to work with Ian and his project team under the guidance of the Committee of Management, and to form alliances and friendships across the borders of three shires in delivering the Rail Trail on time and on budget.

There are two other particular pleasures in contemplating this project. One is a hope for the future and one is a nod to the past. The future sees the stage set for individuals and communities to value add to what has been built. A diverse range of economic, cultural, tourism, environmental and health promotion possibilities exist, and will be taken advantage of in years to come. A valuable past perspective comes from imagining the commitment of our forebears, over a century and a quarter ago.

# A RAIL TRAIL

*Our engineers were left with the challenge of re-designing crossings originally sited so that a horse and cart travelling at, say, ten miles an hour, could safely stop to give way to a steam train which was very visible, very audible, and not very fast.*

From first submission to completion there were six changes of state government and ten changes of Premier. What has been partly rebuilt in one year, took ten years to build. They carted in the huge amounts of ballast to form the new embankment, blasted and fashioned the new cuttings, built the superbly crafted wooden bridges, and constructed the very beautiful brick lined tunnel at Cheviot. Our efforts could in many senses be seen as an attempt to honour that endeavour, and to renew their hopes for a viable economic future in the communities surrounding the 22 sidings and stations along the original train line.

Our railway was built only one hundred years after James Watt's steam engine gave birth to the Industrial Revolution. A hundred years later it was closed, superseded by advances in road making and the internal combustion engine. Another third of a century on, and our communities and visitors will be walking, and riding bicycles and horses, where once there was steam. The one constant in life is change, and the Rail Trail is a worthy symbol of our communities' ability to respond positively to it.

I always secretly hoped that Bertie would win. It's time for the Fat Controller to get on his bike.



# MAYORS' MESSAGES



**Tom Ingpen**  
Mayor,  
Mansfield Shire Council (2011)



**Graeme Coppel**  
Mayor,  
Mitchell Shire Council (2011)



**Peter Beales**  
Mayor,  
Murrindindi Shire Council (2011)



My involvement with the Melbourne/Mansfield train commenced during the early 1970s when I purchased land at Ancona. Cattle were transported to Woodfield railway station where they were unloaded and walked to the property, four kilometres from the station.

Superphosphate deliveries were also made to Woodfield by train. The super came either, in bags which were transferred to trucks or in bulk. The bulk super was transferred by frontend loader from the train into trucks for delivery to the farm where it was unloaded at the airstrip to be aerially spread.

During the 1960s the train was regularly used by skiers travelling to and from Mansfield en route to Mt. Buller. The train left Spencer Street early in the morning and travelled to Tallarook where morning tea was served on the long platform. This took about 30 minutes. Passengers then reboarded for Mansfield where they transferred to bus for the journey to Mt Buller.

During 1996 the then Delatite Shire Council formed a local community committee which I chaired, to develop several kilometres of disused railway into a rail trail. The trail commenced near the old Bonnie Doon railway station and continued through the cutting to cross the Brankeet arm of Lake Eildon, via the Bonnie Doon railway bridge. A most distinctive swing style safety railing was selected for the sides of the railway bridge

The trail will bring huge benefits to the region, with its natural attractions and ease of access from Melbourne and other regional areas. I am sure it will become one of the most popular rail trails in Australia.

As Mayor of Mitchell Shire Council, I am thrilled to be able to launch the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail in conjunction with Murrindindi and Mansfield Shires. This trail represents more than just a track through the river and ranges region, it also represents a link that threads together rural communities with tourism incentives and an opportunity for trail users to reconnect with the wonderful rail routes of our shared Victorian heritage.

Mitchell Shire has the shortest section of the trail, taking up 13 kilometres and including bridges and an underpass that will assist users to cross under the Goulburn Valley Highway just past the Trawool Resort. Tallarook is the trail head on the western end of the alignment and the township hosts a farmers market the first Sunday each month. Trail visitors can stop by and stock up on delicious, locally produced items before embarking on their adventure.

The tranquil beauty of our regional landscapes offers a splendid backdrop for hiking, biking and exploring. Easy access to this natural attraction and the short distance from the urban development of Melbourne will make this trail a success for many years to come. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the generosity of the Federal and State governments. I would also like to recognise the working partnership of Mansfield, Murrindindi and Mitchell Shires and the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail Advisory Group for helping to turn a great idea into a fantastic reality.

This project has been a long term aspiration of councils in the Murrindindi region well before amalgamation.

The Yea Council was a strong advocate of utilising the rail corridor in the 1980s and it is pleasing to see that vision has now come to fruition.

This is a significant project not only for Murrindindi Shire, but it shows that by local government working together – with our friends at Mitchell and Mansfield – we have created an attraction that will be beneficial for all three shires.

While rail trails have their own unique features, I believe the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail is a standout for scenery and history. It is a mix of old and new. The historic Cheviot Tunnel takes us back to the 1880s, and yet at the historic Yea Rail Station there is a brand new skate park to entice the new breed of outdoor enthusiasts.

This project has received the support of our business and agricultural communities. As a Council we were always mindful of the role they would play in the project's development and on-going drawing potential in attracting visitors, events and even new business to our region.

The Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail is a credit to governments and communities working together to create a great public space. The colourful history of rail journeys in our region now has a new chapter to inspire us.

# CEOS' MESSAGES



**David Roff**  
CEO,  
Mansfield Shire Council

The concept of the Rail Trail has been around for many years with solid work on a Business Case having been undertaken, so when an opportunity came to apply for a significant amount of Federal funding, we needed to move fast, with Quantity Surveyors providing updated estimates of cost to support the application in a short time frame. Then the question – do we apply for the full amount or part thereof? A decision was taken to go for the lot and we were most fortunate to be successful. We have had many challenges along the way but I am pleased to say that with a dedicated effort from a team of committed people the project will have been delivered on time and on budget – a pretty remarkable achievement.

From a personal perspective I have enjoyed the Trail a number of times with highlights being the view back to Mount Buller as you rise out of Mansfield and the feeling of achievement when you cross the bridge at Bonnie Doon.

It is a great way to feel good as you know that the exercise is beneficial. I am excited at the potential of the trail to improve health outcomes in the region and to stimulate economic activity, with evidence already observed of investments being made.

It has been a great ride!



**David Keenan**  
CEO,  
Mitchell Shire Council (2010-12)

As the Chief Executive Officer for Mitchell Shire Council since September 2010, I was a relative newcomer to the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail Project. When I initially became involved, I found a project that was being run on highly ambitious timeframes with very high quality outcomes being proposed. The more I became involved in the project, the more aware I became that this dedicated team of project managers were intent on achieving these goals and that through a systematic process each of these objectives would be achieved.

The Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail is an enormous project that will be delivered on time and on budget. It has involved extensive community consultation. Part of this consultation has meant a number of heated meetings with the community, especially in relation to fencing as well as very high expectations from the community as to the economic and tourism benefits that will be derived from the project. Without a doubt, the project will create an incredibly important new piece of tourism infrastructure within the three municipalities and will significantly add to the visitor experience within the greater region.

I am already aware of people preparing themselves to capture the economic benefits that should be generated from the Rail Trail and I believe that there is a significant air of expectation from the community about these outcomes creating employment opportunities in the local communities.

All credit goes to Mansfield Shire Council and the project managers who have been involved in this important project. From a Mitchell Shire Council perspective, I very much look forward to the opening of the rail trail and in the longer term, seeing the connection installed from Tallarook to Seymour.



**Margaret Abbey**  
CEO,  
Murrindindi Shire Council

Works on the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail were well in hand when I arrived at Murrindindi Shire Council.

Certainly works were powering ahead in Mitchell and Mansfield Shires, and we were preparing to add the final link to the 134 kilometre project through our shire. While we had to overcome some obstacles in driving our leg of the project, the support of the community, particularly our business leaders and landholders, indicated that this was a project that would succeed.

Today we have a spectacular asset that not only highlights the diverse surrounds of what is the high country, we have a major tourist attraction, a driver of economic development, a catalyst for lifestyle change, a meeting point and a preservation of our history.

The Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail will be many things to many people, but in the Murrindindi Shire we see it as a great opportunity. The project has brought communities together, inspired confidence in ecotourism and importantly added yet another string to the bow of wonderful things to see and do in our region.

Within easy access of Melbourne by road or rail, the trail will be a significant driver of tourism for all three shires. Trains may have been swapped for push bikes, walking shoes and in some cases horses, but the enjoyment of taking the scenery and the many small towns and villages along the way will still create an historic journey.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER



**Ian Geer**  
Project Manager  
GRHCRT

## The Project Team:

- Lynn Plummer** Administration & Communications Officer
- Glen Sutcliffe** Technical Officer
- Gary Smethurst** Technical Officer
- Neville Byrne** Consulting Technical Officer
- Neil Kerby** Principle Consulting Engineer
- Geoff Holland** Consulting Engineer
- Ian Geer** Project Manager

To have been involved in a project that everyone said could never or would never happen was incredibly satisfying. I'm especially proud of the fact that Mansfield Shire Council was the lead agency for one of the largest infrastructure projects in North East Victoria.

Our Rail Trail is now a reality, made possible by: people with vision; a great project team; a high level of support and trust from Councils; contractors that went that extra mile; State and Federal Government support at all levels; adjoining landowners that were understanding of a public purpose project; and the enthusiasm of community and business excited by the social and economic opportunities.

The small project team could best be described as a wonderful bunch of eccentric, pragmatic, dogmatic, talented, experienced and dedicated individuals who have lived and breathed every millimetre of the 134 kilometres. I was flabbergasted, daily, as to their work ethic, knowledge and no theatrics approach to constant communication, design, budget and delivery challenges.

*Our, "if we do it this way..." discussions were always productive, inspiring and often hilarious! Many discussions were interrupted with "have I told you the story about..."*

A small team of regionally-based specialist consultants also played a key role in the development and delivery of the project. North East Victoria is very fortunate that such experienced and cost-effective consultants call our region home.

Three committees and three local governments, sounds ominous? Not so! The General Committee of Management was chaired by Dr Will Twycross. I have had the privilege and pleasure of working with 'Doctor Will' on many occasions and I am always in awe of his intelligence, capacity, passion and focus.

From project inception, it was agreed on what would be the non-negotiable guiding principle – build a high quality, low maintenance, cost-effective, access-friendly trail that user groups would be rapt to use time and time again, and tell others – every decision made was premised on this guiding principle.

The simple phrase, "as a consequence of the project..." guided the team's consistent and equitable dealings with adjoining landowners. It would be fair to say that some landowners, where the trail now intersects their property, would have preferred it not. In all instances the project team, contractors and consultants were treated with respect and consideration by adjoining landowners, we sincerely thank them, one and all, for their exemplary attitude and manners.

THE DOLLARS	
<b>Federal Government</b>	\$13,276,737
<b>State Government</b>	\$730,000
<b>Mansfield Shire Council</b>	\$230,000
<b>Mitchell Shire Council</b>	\$20,000
<b>Murrindindi Shire Council</b>	\$20,000
<b>Project Budget</b>	<b>\$14,276,737</b>

The amount of communication, negotiations, cajolery, hand-shakes, design and construction challenges, approvals and permits, and then make it fit to a challenging budget, was at times simply overwhelming.

A snapshot of some project management statistics might assist to tell a small part of a big story (see tables below).

My thanks and appreciation to the three Council's Chief Executive Officers, Margaret Abbey at Murrindindi, David Keenan at Mitchell and especially David Roff (my boss) at Mansfield who bravely asked me to take on the project manager role.

*It's an overused term but still feels great to say when achieved – "on time, on budget"*

So here's the story of building the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail, by a project team that I will miss greatly...

<b>Permits/approvals</b>	282
<b>Adjoining Landholders</b>	210
<b>Detailed Survey &amp; Designs</b>	Too many to count
<b>Bridges to design &amp; build/repair</b>	74
<b>Government reports</b>	Surprisingly few
<b>Pathway to construct</b>	134km
<b>Road crossings</b>	55+ 1 underpass
<b>Contracts for civil works</b>	45
<b>Files, photos, words, maps, correspondence</b>	Millions

# THE TRAIN LINE, TALLAROOK TO MANSFIELD/ALEXANDRA

In 1882 a branch line was surveyed to Yea from Tallarook with the construction contract for the 38.1km railway being signed by C & E Miller on 27 September 1882.

The first stage of the Tallarook to Mansfield railway line opened to Yea in November 1883 with stages opening to Merton in 1890 including the branch line to Koriella, Mansfield in 1891 and the final stage to Alexandra in 1909.

The route followed the Goulburn River passing through one of the most scenic sections of the trail, the National Trust listed Trawool Valley. Stations were located at Traawool (Trawool), Windham (Kerrisdale) and Homewood with sidings opening later at Wrights Siding which later became known as Trawool Falls Siding being renamed again in 1904 to Granite, so called as it was a source of large granite blocks from the Wright & Sons Quarry. King Parrot Creek Bridge at 89 metres is the largest engineering work between Yea and Tallarook.



The next section from Yea to Molesworth commenced in April 1887, delays involving accidents, deaths, strikes and floods caused construction to take over two years with the opening in November 1889. Instead of following the Goulburn River the line turned right out of Yea and crossed the Yea River and climbed into the foothills of Mt Cunningham. Cheviot tunnel was constructed to traverse McLoughlins Gap. The completion of numerous bridges over the Goulburn River flats permitted quick construction of the next section to Cathkin in 1890 followed by the 7.1km section to Alexandra Road. This area is now known as Koriella but the name was changed several times, Lily, Lily Gully and Rhodes before finally being called Koriella in 1916.

From Cathkin to Merton a 24.9km section was opened in 1890. The first train from Melbourne to Merton averaged 29km an hour passing relatively easy through Yarck and Kanumbra before ascending the Merton Gap (highest point on the line at 397m).

Although 15 minutes late the first train arrived at Mansfield on 6 October 1891 to the delight of some 2000 onlookers who were entertained by The Mansfield Brass Band. This final section into Mansfield passed through Woodfield, Bonnie Doon and Mairdample.

Some 19 years after the Alexandra Road station opened the line to Alexandra was complete. In 1908 work began on the Alexandra Township Railway Extension. The line to Alexandra opened on 28 October 1909 with 450 school children in attendance at the station.

Other than a passenger line, trains carried fat lambs and livestock, timber, superphosphate, potatoes and supplies for the construction of Eildon Weir.

With the downturn in passengers and goods on the line the number of trains dwindled as did the maintenance on the line. Support for railway services were falling rapidly and the 1970s saw many regional lines closed including the Mansfield to Tallarook line in 1978.

The line was quickly dismantled following closure and the many bridges fell into disrepair. Some station buildings were relocated while others remain in poor condition or have been given a new life as commercial premises.

## Railway Timeline

Tallarook Station opened	1872
Trawool	1883
Granite	1883
Kerrisdale	1883
Homewood	1883
Yea	1883
Cheviot	1889
Molesworth	1889
Cathkin	1890
- Koriella	1890
Yarck	1890
Kanumbra	1890
Merton	1890
Woodfield	1891
Bonnie Doon	1891
Mansfield	1891
- Alexandra	1909

# RAIL TRAIL BEGINNINGS

*The Mansfield to Tallarook rail trail began with the opening of the Bonnie Doon railway footbridge in May 1999.*

This bridge had replaced the former train line bridge in 1955 when Lake Eildon was extended. The local community of Bonnie Doon had for several years attempted to raise Government interest in developing a rail trail. With community representation to the Delatite Shire\* and local state politicians, funding of \$70,000 was received to upgrade the bridge and erect safety railing on the Bonnie Doon bridge.



Bonnie Doon

Tram Engineering & Services Pty Ltd (Tram Report), compiled a structural and condition assessment in 2000. The Tram Report is a detailed assessment of the various structures and trail surfaces between Tallarook and Mansfield. The assessment was prepared on the basis that it would provide a list of the various structures or line side elements along the trail, their current condition and whether any work was required for their use as a rail trail.

The Tram Report recorded that it is possible to walk the full length of the trail relatively easily though numerous electric fences and some creek crossings where the bridging has been removed require to be negotiated. Sufficient of the former gravel ballast remains generally to form a good walking surface, though in some places the ballast removal has left a trench, in which the surface becomes very soft when wet.

One down fall of the Tram Report was that it didn't include the section from Cathkin to Alexandra.

Anecdotally the Tram Report became known as the Bible in the project office. How long is that bridge? What distance is it between Bridge 9 and Gardner's Road? Is there a culvert pipe at Kubel's Road? The Tram Report can tell you.

In 2001 the Mitchell to Murrindindi Rail Trail: Feasibility Study and Concept Plan was produced by Urban Enterprise Pty Ltd. This study investigated the development of a shared bicycle, walking and bridle trail along the 74kms of former railway line that linked Tallarook and Alexandra. The Feasibility Study and Concept Plan was adopted by both Councils.

*A 3km section of bike path was constructed from the Bonnie Doon township to the eastern side of the Brankeet Arm Bridge in 2001.*

Land on the former railway within Mansfield Shire Council (between Merton Gap and Mansfield) has been surrendered to the Crown for conservation and recreation purposes. The land has been reserved under provisions of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 and Mansfield Shire Council has been appointed Committee of Management under the Act.

**Under the Kennett government, Graeme Stoney, member for Central Highlands, played a key role. In an address to the 2003 Victorian Rail Trail Conference, Stoney reminisced: "Straight after the election in 1992, I went to Mark Birrell the new Minister for Conservation and gave him a letter ... suggest[ing] we assess all closed lines in Victoria with a view to turning some into walking and riding tracks.**

In 2004 a small amount of funding was obtained in September 2004 to carry out a branding concept. Paoli Smith designed the original logo and branding guide in 2005.



# MANSFIELD - YEA - ALEXANDRA - TALLAROOK

In 2005 Mitchell, Murrindindi and Mansfield Shire Councils agreed to seek Federal Government funding and allocate cash and in-kind, to develop a detailed Concept Design and Business Plan and construct a pilot section in each municipality. A Federal Government grant of \$145,000 provided for the development of the Concept Design and Business Plan in 2006.

A Project Management Committee (PMC) was established which was made up of representatives from each Shire. The role of the PMC was to direct the project and monitor progress via regular meetings.

The Federal Government funding allowed a small amount of the money for implementation of a pilot project within the stage 1 areas in each Shire.



Yea Station

*In July 2006 Mansfield Shire formally adopted the Plan and commenced construction of the pilot section from Mansfield heading west to Maindample, completing the 1.3km section that is now known as The Wetlands.*

Murrindindi Shire Council secured Committee of Management over sections of the Trail in the Yea township and completed construction of a pilot section (1km) in 2007 linking the Yea Station Precinct with an existing formed section of Trail at the western end of the town.

On 30 June 2008, the Minister for Regional Rural Development, Hon. Jacinta Allen MP, approved a grant of \$650,000 from Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) to Mansfield Shire Council for the development of the Mansfield to Maindample Rail Trail.



Mansfield Station

This project was the first stage of the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail that would ultimately go from Mansfield to Tallarook via Yea (and include Alexandra) extending across the three municipalities of Mansfield, Murrindindi and Mitchell.

Gary Edwards was employed by Mansfield Shire to oversee this exciting first stage. Gary came with acute knowledge of rail trails having worked on the Murray to Mountain trail from its inception. With Garys' well-honed skills the project finished on time and on budget.

Like all things that are new there was cynicism from different sections of the community. Farmers were cautious, not sure what would happen when land that they had farmed for 30 years, since the last train ran, would be once again be used as a transport route.



Alexandra timber tramway

Others were concerned that privacy would be lost as the trail passed their back fence, heritage values would be lost as new infrastructure replaced old, trail users would trespass and litter would increase.

The project team worked closely with landholders to dispel any fears and insure that construction did not intrude on farming activities or privacy.

# MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING



On the trail...



Molesworth to Yea

## A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in November 2008 by the three shires.

'Mansfield, Mitchell and Murrindindi Shire Councils have resolved to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to progress the development, implementation, ongoing maintenance and marketing of the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail as a key regional project.

It is envisaged that the development of the entire trail connection Mansfield, Yea, Tallarook and Eildon may take several years to fund and complete and should logically be constructed in major stages connecting urban centres.'

The key rationale for developing the Trail was to provide an increase in social, economic, environmental and heritage benefits to the region by:

- Contributing to the preservation of open space
- Highlighting natural, cultural and heritage values
- Providing an opportunity for physical fitness and healthy lifestyles
- Creating additional connections between towns and villages
- Creating additional employment during construction and operation
- Creating additional tourism product and improving the overall product offer
- Attracting a higher yield market segment
- Stimulating a broad range of business activity through the presence of the Trail
- Maintaining a linear corridor of public land for future public transport options

The MOU was signed by the three CEOs; Bill Braithwaite Mitchell Shire Council, Mark Henderson Murrindindi Shire Council and David Roff Mansfield Shire Council.

As the planning permits, detail design and approvals were being sought for the Mansfield Line more funding was being sought for the remainder of the trail. Mansfield Shire Council on behalf of Murrindindi and Mitchell Shires applied through the Federal Government Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program 2008/2009.

The Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program was announced by the Prime Minister (Kevin Rudd) at the Australian Council of Local Government inaugural meeting on 18 November 2008 as part of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

## Funding Application

Extract of letter to The Hon. Anthony Albanese attached to funding application.

The strategic importance of the project has been amplified by the devastating impact of both the 2009 and 2006/2007 bushfires upon the three participating shires. The economic stimulus associated with both the construction and ongoing utilisation of the trail would undoubtedly play a major role in the economic and social recovery of the municipalities.

Our municipalities note that applications confirming cooperative cash funding will be viewed favourably. We would ask of the Hon. Minister to consider the extenuating circumstances our shires are under with successive bushfires and ongoing drought and the subsequent demand on our limited cash resources.

Due to the current strain on human resources posed by the bushfires within Murrindindi and Mitchell, Mansfield Shire Council will act as the lead proponent throughout the implementation of the project.

It was announced in April 2009 that the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government would fund the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail to the amount of \$13,276,737.

Media Statement 28/04/2009

# MEDIA RELEASE

## \$13.2 MILLION FOR TOURISM TRAIL TO LINK VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

Anthony Albanese, Minister for Infrastructure and Local Government, today announced that the Rudd Labor Government would offer up to \$13.2 million to help complete a 134-kilometre trail across Victoria's bushfire-affected communities.

The Government is contributing the lion's share of this \$14.2 million project.

Once completed, the trail is expected to be used by recreational walkers, cyclists, horse rider as well as provide emergency and maintenance vehicles.

The 'Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail' has been put forward by Murrindindi, Mitchell and Mansfield Shire Councils.

Federal funding will contribute to the project including the following components:

- Bridge and culvert repair and construction works;
- Road crossings; and
- Car park, rest stop and amenities construction.

During my meeting with Murrindindi and Mitchell Shires in 19 February 2009, they advised me that this project was about supporting local economies through tourism and building community spirit after the devastating bushfires.

It will stretch across disused rail lines through the communities of Trawool, Kerrisdale, Homewood, Yea, Molesworth, Cathkin, Alexandra, Koriella, Kanumbra, Merton, Woodfield, Bonnie Doon, Maindample and Mansfield.

Funding for this project is from the Government's \$800 million Community Infrastructure Program – the largest one-off investment in Australia's history.

It is part of the Government's plan to help disaster-affected regional economies recover and withstand the effects of the global economic recession.

This funding builds on \$1.7 million already allocated to the three councils for smaller-scale local community projects.

The Rudd Labor Government is working in partnership with local government to fund more than 3,000 community projects across Australia that will support jobs, stimulate local economies and deliver long-term benefits for the quality of life in communities.

## Project Team Sorted

*Ian Geer, the Tourism & Economic Development Manager at Mansfield Shire has worked on this project, on and off, since 1996 when Delatite Shire allowed him to investigate the long-term progression of a rail trail.*

Having written the funding application and having it approved, Ian was excited and very keen to take on the roll of Project Manager. What Ian lacked in engineering knowledge, he made up for with enthusiasm and exuberance for the project.

Gary Smethurst took leave from his position as Native Vegetation Planning Officer at DSE to take on the role of Project Officer. The Project Officer is responsible for delivery of the strategy, resolution of land tenure, planning and heritage issues, management and maintenance of the rail trail.

Lynn Plummer moved from her customer service position at Mansfield Shire Council to take on the administrative, clerical duties, governance and communications position.

Glen Sutcliffe, Technical Officer, was the all round fix it, go to guy who worked closely with the contractors and land owners. Glen was on secondment from the Mansfield Shire Depot and has many years of experience working with VicRoads.

When the opportunity arose for Gary Smethurst to take a permanent role at Mansfield Shire Council Neville Byrne stepped into the role to continue negotiations with landholders and finalise the required permits.

As planning began Neil Kerby joined the team as the principal contract engineer. Neil came to the project with years of experience, enthusiasm and a dry sense of humour that he likes to share.

Local Tallarook engineer, Geoff Holland joined the team to design bridges, culverts and walkways. Geoff's experience was invaluable to the project and much appreciated by the team who often called him asking how, what or where.



L to R: Neville Byrne, Lynn Plummer, Ian Geer and Glen Sutcliffe (seated)



Committee meeting

# COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT



L to R: Ray Watson, Dr Will Twycross (Chair GRHCRT COM), Kay Darveniza, Mayor Tom Ingpen and George Chalk cut the ribbon at the Mansfield station – Mansfield Shire Council

*A Committee of Management (Section 86 of the Local Government Act 1989) was established when works began on the Mansfield Line, the first stage of the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail.*

When the federal funding was announced for GRHCRT Mansfield Shire Council, through its Instrument of Delegation expanded the General Committee of Management to be expanded across the three municipalities, as outlined in the MOU, Funding Application and covering letter to the minister.

The first meeting of the General Committee of Management (COM) for the GRHCRT was held on 10 November 2009.

*Prior to the first meeting local doctor, Will Twycross had been appointed as the Chairperson of the COM. Will is well known by the Mansfield community, often for his eccentric dressing as a green frog but mostly for his strong community support, boundless energy and tireless volunteering.*

Each of the three shires was represented by a Councillor and one executive management officer. The rest of the committee was made up of a representative from Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), Advisory Group, Technical Group.

Ads were placed in local papers seeking expressions of interest from community members to be part of an Advisory Group for GRHCRT Committee of Management. The role of the Advisory Group was to represent the community and user group interest to the COM and to liaise with the COM on maintenance and management issues. A community representative was sort from each shire, along with a CFA and VFF rep and a senior officer from each shire council.

#### **Committee of Management Representatives over the period of the project.**

Dr Will Twycross (Chair), Merv McAliece DSE, Ailsa Fox VFF, Cr Bill Melbourne Mitchell SC, Peter Halton Mitchell SC, David Keenan CEO Mitchell SC, Kevin Minter-Lane Mitchell SC Michael Chesworth Murrindindi SC, Cr Sally Abbott Smith Murrindindi SC, Cr Chris Healy Murrindindi SC, Rod Clue Advisory Group Rep, Colleen Reynolds Advisory Group Rep, Bernard Morris Advisory Group Rep, Ian Geer Project Manager Mansfield SC,

David Roff CEO Mansfield SC, Cr Dean Belle Mansfield SC, Michael Dougall Mansfield SC, Gary Smethurst Mansfield SC, Phil Alexander Technical Group Rep Mansfield SC, Neville Byrne Mansfield SC, Kim Steinle Mansfield SC.

The Technical Group, which was formed for the Mansfield Line was expanded to cover the three shires, its first meeting was held 2 December 2009. The Technical Group had a representative from each Shire, a VicRoads rep and DSE and was chaired by Phil Alexander, Engineering and Works Manager, Mansfield Shire.

#### **Technical Group Representatives over the period of the project.**

Phil Alexander Mansfield SC, Chris Dack VicRoads, Sue Holzman VicRoads, Gaurav Verma VicRoads, Kelly Edwards DSE, Greg Pell DSE, Stephen Richards Mitchell SC, Bruce Stephens Murrindindi SC, Phil Squires Murrindindi SC, Neil Kerby Contract Engineer, Dr Will Twycross Chair COM, Ian Geer Project Manager, Garry Smethurst Technical Officer, Gary Edwards Mansfield SC, Michael Dougall Mansfield SC, Mike Daniels Risk Assessment Officer, Glen Sutcliffe Technical Officer

#### **Advisory Group Representatives over the period of the project.**

Rod Clue Murrindindi Shire Community Representative, Bernard Morris Mitchell Shire Community Representative, Colleen Reynolds Mansfield Shire Community Representative, Jane Archbold Murrindindi SC, Bob Elkington Murrindindi SC, Chris Guthrie Mitchell SC, Kaaren Smethurst Mansfield SC, John Sinclair VFF, Phil Browne CFA, Phil Hawkey CFA, Ian Geer Project Manager, Neville Byrne Technical Officer, Gary Smethurst Technical Officer, Michael Dougall Mansfield SC.

#### **GOULBURN RIVER HIGH COUNTRY RAIL TRAIL CREATES EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

*In order to maximize opportunities for local business involvement in the design and construction of the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail Mansfield Shire Council, on behalf of the Mansfield, Murrindindi and Mitchell Councils, is seeking to establish a panel of pre-qualified suppliers and contractors to provide the various activities necessary to complete the Trail. An Expression of Interest has been widely advertised across the region, and documents are available from the Mansfield, Murrindindi and Mitchell Shire Councils' website. Submissions close on 4 February 2010.*

# PLANNING BEGINS...

## VicTrack/Crown Land

VicTrack is the custodian of Victorian state railway assets which includes the former railway land from Merton Gap to Tallarook. (Mansfield to Merton Gap was surrendered to the Crown in 2000). Early in 2010 discussions were held with VicTrack who agreed to offer Mitchell and Murrindindi Shire Councils 5 year leases to use the land for a rail trail. During this five year lease period, VicTrack have committed to handing over the rail reserve to Crown Land (DSE).

Landholders in Murrindindi and Mitchell Shires with leases over disused sections of the Tallarook to Mansfield Railway Line reserve received letters from VicTrack advising that their leases would expire in August 2010. The letters received by landholders detailed specific time lines to,..."quit and deliver up possession of the land".

Thirty one landholders held leases with VicTrack and not all were happy that land that they had used and thought of as their own would now be used for a 'bike track'.

Landholders were notified in writing by the project team that the current land use would not change until construction works began. Individual meetings with landowners were being arranged to discuss timing of construction, access, fencing alignments and occupational crossings.

*You would have recently received a letter with a 'Notice to Quit' which advises that your lease will be terminated on 2 August 2010.*

*We want to reassure leaseholders that the project is taking a flexible approach to landowners retaining interim use of the land until works commence. The Councils have had discussion with VicTrack and this notice will not be enforced prior to the need to commence construction.*

*You will be contacted individually and consultation will be arranged prior to the commencement of construction. Site meetings with each landholder will be arranged according to construction schedules.*

*In general terms construction is planned between September 2010 and May 2011.*

*The project is committed to providing access for the continued use of any existing occupation crossing during construction and providing and installing any lateral (cross) fencing required for stock crossings. Furthermore the project team and Councils will be working in partnership to implement an on-going management and maintenance regime for the trail.*

*With 134 kilometres of trail to be constructed there was a lot of planning, permits, engineering design, walking, planting, removal, formation to be done.*

As funding had already been secured for the Mansfield to Maindample section it was decided to continue to Bonnie Doon and connect the previously formed 3 kilometre section and the Bonnie Doon Bridge.

There were originally fifteen bridges in this 22 kilometre section to Bonnie Doon. The Friends of Mullum wetlands had bridges 68 and 67 reinstated when they secured funding along with Mansfield Shire Council to develop a disabled access pathway using the former train line in 2004. In this section from the Mansfield Station the original train tracks are still in place and train carriages at the station platform are used by the Mansfield Historical Society for displays.

Since the last train ran in 1978 regulations for bridge heights on road ways have altered, to reinstate some of the bridges that have been removed would have been cost prohibitive. In several places along the trail low level crossings or culverts have replaced bridges. Lockharts and Dry Creek Roads Bonnie Doon, Yarc Station and Baynes Road are examples of this.

While construction to Maindample was being finished Gary Smethurst was out walking the trail marking trees for removal, registering assets, talking to adjoining landholders and when not physically on the trail he was plotting the path on the councils GIS (geographic information system). Gary's previous experience also came in handy when he had to find the *Delma Impar*, otherwise known as the legless lizard.

### Communication strategy

A communication strategy was developed for the construction phase of the trail. The strategy was to raise awareness of the GRHCRT, its benefits and potential outcomes, provide updates, increase public awareness, create and maintain the positivity of the project and the benefits it will bring.

A website was developed which gave regular updates on construction and a gallery of progress. Newsletters sent by email have been transmitted on a regular basis to a growing database. The rail trail has had many media agencies interested and it has had great coverage by the Weekly Times, Rail Trails Australia, North by North East, local papers, TV and radio.

A marketing strategy will be developed by the Marketing Sub-committee.



*Delma Impar, the legless lizard*

*Gary Smethurst's previous experience also came in handy when he had to find the Delma Impar otherwise known as the legless lizard.*



Original numbered carvings on timber bridge piers



Yea River in flood

### Management Plan

The Management Plan was developed to establish the management frame work for the completed rail trail. The plan was developed in cooperation with the Mitchell, Murrindindi and Mansfield Shire Councils, government agencies, emergency services and community. The management plan will guide management decisions and actions over the first 10 years of the trail. Its primary purpose is to provide guidelines for the management of the rail trail to help facilitate a safe and enjoyable user experience as well as the protection and enhancement of environment assets.

### Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct has been developed for the rail trail to ensure that users respect the rights of other users, landholders and the environment. The signage which is located at key entry points also gives tips on making your rail trail experience enjoyable.

After the Bonnie Doon to Maindample section was open it was decided to work in several areas at once, not in sections as was the original plan. Bridge builders could be working in the Tallarook area while trail works were happening at Molesworth. This also allowed for changing weather conditions which on occasions would see the contractors move from one area to another or change from laying trail to building the underpass.

The vegetation removal contractors were on the ground in October 2010. Vegetation removal was required as much of the land had been vacant since the last train ran. Some of the adjoining landholders had taken out leases with VicTrack and had grazed the land which had controlled growth and weeds. Many areas were infested with blackberries, broome, St Johns Wort, Burgan and saplings. The contractors were required to remove, lop and trim vegetation to create a corridor clear of vegetation for a minimum width of 3 and up to a miximum width of 4 metres and a height of 4 metres to allow access for construction vehicles.

Removal of native vegetation was in accordance with the conditions of the Planning Permit issued by the appropriate Council and removal of native vegetation was in accordance with the licence from the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

As with many of the contractors on the project the vegetation contractors were from the surrounding area.

Tree Tactics Kilmore, Biota Group Buxton, High Country Trees Mansfield, Timberline Tree Services Mansfield.



Vegetation removal created revegetation with biodiversity and screen plantings required. Evidence of these plantings can be seen at Tallarook, Trawool Station, Homewood Station, Cathkin Station, Woodfield and Mansfield. Plant species were adapted from the Ecological Vegetation Class Benchmark for Central Victorian Uplands supplied by Department of Sustainability and Environment. Revegetation was carried out by Steve Curnow of High Country Camel Treks and Rod Bain of Revegetation Victoria P/L. Revegetation contracts cover a two year period to allow for plant establishment, additional planting to achieve the two year minimum survival, pruning or thinning of vegetation and control of herbivores and weeds within the site.

### Fencing

Never intended to be part of the scope of works, boundary fencing took up an inordinate amount of time and resources for the project team. In 2010 fencing issues were starting to take priority over construction in the Murrindindi Shire. The concern of who was to pay for the fences between the public land and the private land was still to be resolved. Of the many kilometres of rail trail within the Murrindindi Shire, some was already fenced, other fences either needed replacement or repair or were not present at all.

The Murrindindi Shire had always intended that fences be paid for out of the \$13.2 million federal grant however the grant agreement for the rail trail did not include fencing.

### *The quandary was:*

"The Crown is exempt from the requirements of the Fences Act which states neighbours must share costs of construction or maintenance of fences that form a common boundary between their properties. This means that farmers with land bordering Crown land have to meet the full cost of constructing and repairing fences. However, fencing costs can be recovered if the Crown leases or licenses the bordering Crown land. The reverse also applies. If the Crown wishes to erect a fence, it cannot use the provisions of the Fences Act to recover costs from its neighbour(s).

### *"Who was going to pay!"*

Michael Chesworth, Murrindindi Shire's general manager sustainability was quoted in August 2010 saying "Murrindindi Shire Council does not want to commence construction until this issue is resolved. We don't expect the private landholders to pay and we have two options: to seek external funding or work out a way to create savings from other projects."

In September the headlines of the local papers read "Rail Trail Derailed".

*There is still no resolve on the issue of who pays for the fences for the Murrindindi Shire's section of the Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail. The matter was an item for discussion at last week's council meeting which was held at the Highlands Hall.*

*The Murrindindi Shire Council has released a statement saying "We believe that it is inequitable, but Murrindindi Shire Council is not in a position to meet the full costs of fencing within our municipality. Council is of the opinion a number of options could be available in terms of savings and/or funding allocations. This includes Mansfield Shire's proposal that interest earned on the project funding be directed towards fencing materials."*

By October a new deal was being offered to Murrindindi and had already been accepted in both the Mansfield and Mitchell Shires. Landholders would be offered \$4000 a kilometre for fencing or compensation if the fencing had already been done. Chairperson of the Committee of Management Dr Will Twycross, said "the money being offered to farmers has come from the interest on the money raised for the project already. It is important to note that this is not part of the projects budget, but money from the interest."

Late November found Murrindindi CEO Margaret Abbey issuing a statement where she said "To this end the Murrindindi Shire Council has agreed that all preparatory work associated with the project should still proceed up to the point of calling tenders for construction."

In December the headlines read 'Council still looking for rail trail fence money'. At this point the second stage of the trail in Mansfield Shire was nearing completion and other than vegetation removal nothing had happened in Murrindindi.

Murrindindi Shire had by this time accepted an offer of interest monies to pay in part for fencing materials.

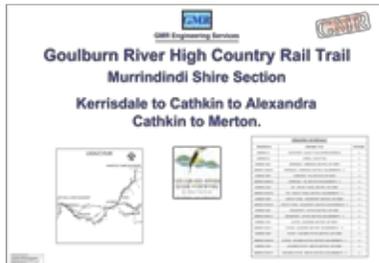
Late December Murrindindi councillors gave the all clear for the trail to proceed through their municipality. The fencing was now to be funded from sales of surplus concrete and steel bridge beams to the project and interest gifted from Mansfield Shire Council.



*Old insulators on gum tree*



# PUBLIC MEETINGS



*Now that activity could be seen across the shires it was time to address the public on progress and answer the hoard of questions that landholders, business owners, user groups and members of the public had been waiting to ask.*

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR RAIL TRAIL**

*The Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail Committee of Management has arranged a series of public meetings to report on the progress of the rail trail through the Shires of Murrindindi, Mitchell and Mansfield. Landholders, business owners as well as user groups and members of the public who will use the trail are welcome and encouraged to attend these public meetings.*

*The format of the meetings will be that project staff and management will talk about the project budget, construction, timelines, benefits as well as the planning and engineering processes which are being used in the project design. There will be an open question time where attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions of shire representatives and the project team.*

*“One concept that will be emphasised is that the total benefits of the project are greater than the sum of its parts, as this project represents a unique opportunity for a huge boost to tourism and local community infrastructure facilities for the Goulburn River and High Country communities, enabling them to work together in new and increasingly productive partnerships,” Chairman of the Committee of Management Dr Will Twycross said.*

*The dates, times and venues for these meetings, which will be held over the next few weeks in Alexandra, Yea, Seymour and Bonnie Doon, are advertised in the respective local papers of each municipality.*

*The Committee is delighted with the huge amount of community support for the trail in each municipality and is looking forward to the open forums.*



Molesworth to Yea

*All the meetings were well attended with CEO's, Councillors and project staff in attendance to answer the numerous questions. Meetings were dominated by adjoining landholders seeking clarification on fencing. Other issues that were discussed were monetary value of a rail trail and how the figure is derived, safety issues, toilet locations, shared pathways, land access, Landcare involvement and maintenance. Generally the support from the public was positive.*

Landholders were all given the opportunity to meet with a member of the project team to discuss their individual concerns be it fencing, privacy, access etc.

## **Contracts and Contractors**

January and February 2011 saw mountains of paper work in the form of tender documents and contracts being developed at the project office.

Contracts were awarded to three companies for the removal of bridge decking on twenty nine bridges. Removal was required due to the poor state of these bridges which would all require re-decking.

The contractors were North Central Constructions of Alexandra, a family run concern made up of brothers Ben, Sam and Matt and dad John Clark.

Spanco Australia Pty Ltd a local Benalla firm owned by Brian Watson received the third bridge deck removal contract. Brian had worked on the first stage of the rail trail and bought some warmth to the job always having his fire burning or his microwave plugged into a generator.

Focus Engineering and Construction is well-known within the Murray region for its capability in completing large structural projects. The company, based in Corowa, has played a major part in complex and impressive construction projects throughout regional Victoria, NSW and Melbourne



Focus Engineering were awarded the contract for supply of precast concrete bridge decks and bridge steel replacement. One thousand three hundred and forty one concrete panels were necessary, plus provision for additional panels if required by the bridge builders.

Focus also supplied one thousand and thirty one metres of bridge beam steel which was needed to rebuild 21 bridges.

Fourteen contracts were issued for bridge build, deck and handrail replacement.

Alex Steel works from Alexandra were awarded the contract to supply handrails to the new and existing bridges. Four thousand six hundred metres of handrail was required for bridge refurbishment.

All works were carried out in accordance with the Construction Environment Management Plan, VicTrack Environment Management Plan and Design Guidelines. The purpose being, to identify potential environmental impacts. Several endangered bird species along with the legless lizard and squirrel glider are located within the rail trail reserve.



*A requirement for contractors was that senior company representative or site managers attend an induction session regarding OHS practices, works on waterways, environmental management, threatened species, heritage areas, fences, gates and occupational crossings. This also involved following behind a grader in search of legless lizards, with Bertram Lobert, ecologist.*



# BRIDGES AND CROSSINGS 0-60



*Originally there were 73 bridges from Tallarook to Mansfield and Alexandra some of these bridges have now been replaced with culverts or low level crossings. There is a new bridge which will connect the township of Tallarook to the trail, this has been numbered 0.*

Bridge costs were one of the largest expenses incurred in the building of the rail trail over \$5,500,000.00 was spent on bridges, this did not include design and specification costs.

**Bridge 68** is in the Mullum Wetlands and has its original deck with new handrails situated 420 metres from the Mansfield Station.

**Bridge 67** is also in the Mullum Wetlands in Mansfield, this is the original part of the train line which was built in 1891. The rails can still be seen either side of the pathway.

Withers Lane is where **Bridge 66** was, it has been totally removed and the trail now crosses the road.

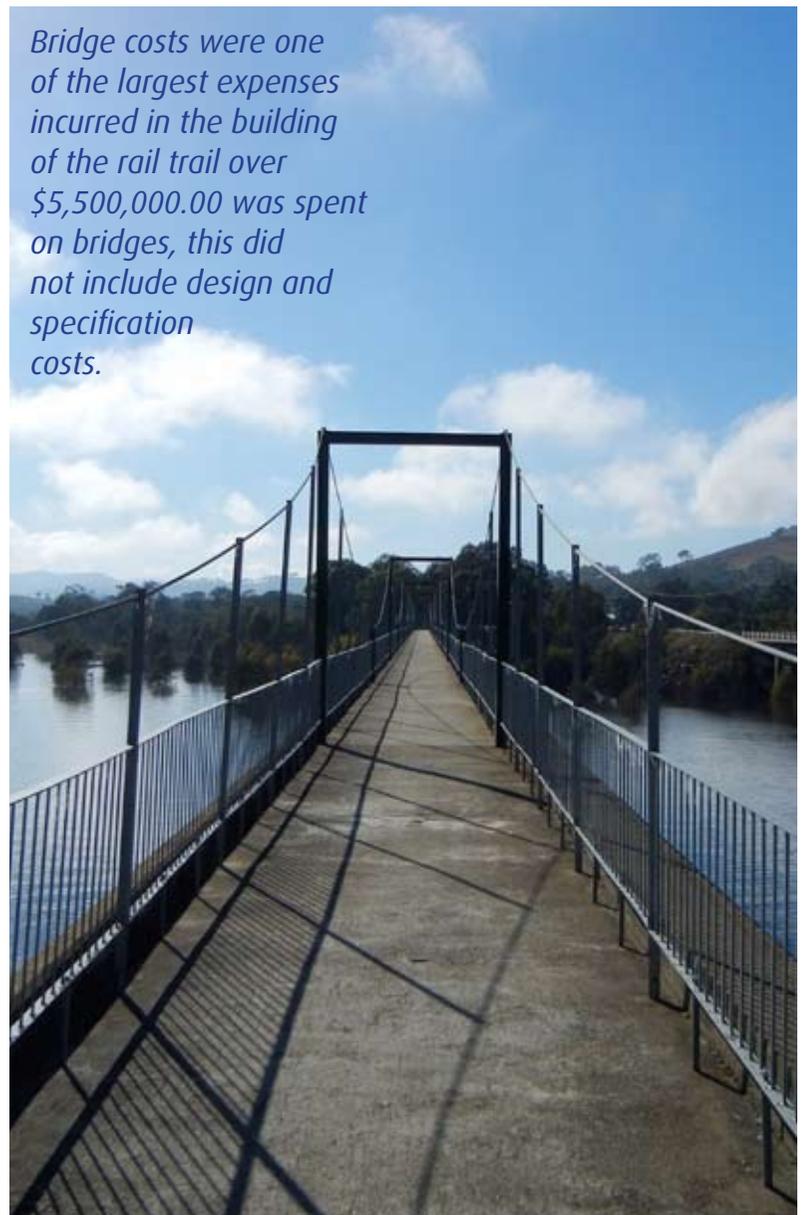
**Bridges 64** and **65** cross Monkey Creek or known by its other name Owens Creek Mansfield. Sixty four is a low level crossing which water will flow over after heavy rain.

**Bridge 63** crosses Fords Creek Mansfield and can be seen from Maroondah Highway.

The original **Bridge 62** can still be seen next to the low level crossing that is next to it. The bridge wasn't worth repairing.

**Bridge 61** is a Torrens bridge that came from Queensland on the back of a truck, it is a pedestrian bridge east of Midland Link Highway.

**Bridge 59** and **60** needed to be rebuilt to finalise the Bonnie Doon section. Fifty nine was rebuilt by Spanco Australia's Brian Watson. Brian added his own touches to this bridge adding two hitching rails and benches, cast in concrete with a rough finish.



*Bridge costs were one of the largest expenses incurred in the building of the rail trail over \$5,500,000.00 was spent on bridges, this did not include design and specification costs.*

**Bridge 60** was not rebuilt but replaced with six formed culverts. The weather in December 2010 created all sorts of problems for Alpine Civil who were contracted to this job. The wet weather caused delays which saw the opening of this section postponed until March 2011.



**Bridge 58** was replaced with a culvert, **bridge 57** at Lockharts Road had been removed and was not replaced. At Lockharts Roads the trail ramped down to the road and became a low level road crossing. Bridge 56 ran through the cutting above Dry Creek Road and has been replaced with a culvert pipe. Bridge 55 at Dry Creek Road had been removed and has been treated the same as Lockharts Road with a ramp down to the road.

**Bridge 54** is the Brankeet Creek otherwise known as Eildon Weir or Bonnie Doon Bridge. A push by a small community committee at Bonnie Doon gained funding of \$70,000 to upgrade the bridge and install safety railing in 1999. Glad Phillips, local Bonnie Doon resident was one of the instigators of this upgrade. Bridge 54 is the longest bridge on the trail at 385 metres.

**Bridge 53** is beside the sewage farm at Bonnie Doon and required rebuilding.

Despite the rampant blackberries **Bridge 52** had been replaced previously and only required handrails.



**Bridge 51** was in such disrepair that a new bridge was built downstream of the original bridge.

**50** is a heritage bridge that is being refurbished. These three bridges can be seen between the Maroondah Highway and Lake Eildon south of Bonnie Doon.

**49** has been replaced with a low level culvert and will be hard to pick now unless there is water flowing through it.

**48** had been burnt out requiring either a total rebuild or a low level crossing, financially a low level crossing was the best option.

**Bridge 47** also had been burnt down but required a rebuild as it crosses a stream.

**Bridge 46** had been eaten out by white ants as most of the wooden bridges have been. A low level crossing has replaced this wooden bridge with approval from Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.



Kippings Bridge at Merton, **number 45**, was rebuilt with new piles, steel and concrete deck.

**Bridge 43** and **44** between Durham and McGuigan's Lanes Kanumbra have been replaced with low level crossings. On occasions these low level crossings may have water running over them.



Between the old Kanumbra Station site and Durham Lane bridge 42 has been replaced with a low level crossing that on occasion may have water over it.

**Bridges 41** and **40** consisted of wooden piles which were replaced and concrete decks placed on top with handrails.

**Bridge 39** was one of the first bridges to be rebuilt as it was easy to access. It is seen quite clearly from Maroondah Highway heading south towards Yarck.



Bridge 52



Loading concrete decks



Removing bridge deck timbers

In the Yarck station grounds **Bridge 38** was 10 metres in length but was replaced with a culvert pipe.

**Bridge 37** became a low level crossing as the original bridge had been removed.

**Bridge 36** no longer exists as this is where the trail goes under the Maroondah Highway bridge that heads to Alexandra. NB: the trail doesn't head to Alexandra from here it continues onto Cathkin before it follows the branch line to Alexandra.

*The bridges from Cathkin to Alexandra were numbered separately as this was the spur line built after the opening of the line to Mansfield in 1909.*

**Bridge CA1** crosses Spring Creek like **CA3** it is a timber structure which required new piles, steel girders, deck and handrails

**CA2** and **CA4** required a new deck and handrail.

**CA5** crosses Johnsons Creek 1.5 kilometres from Alexandra Station, this bridge required new deck and handrail.

In the Cathkin Station grounds, past the platform is bridge number 35. This bridge when refurbished was raised above the flood level, 600mm higher than the original bridge.

Across the Cathkin flood plain **bridges 33** and **34** two wooden bridges have been rebuilt. Quite significant in size being 50 and 55 metres in length.

**Bridge 32** crosses Home Creek. This area is all flood plain and the trail and bridges are raised. Prior to construction this area was covered in blackberries which were removed by the vegetation removal contractors. **Bridge 31** crosses Home Creek flood plain for 73metres.

**Bridge 30** was still in good condition and only required handrails.

At Baynes Road you will find what was **Bridge 29**. The bridge was previously removed as many of the road crossing bridges were. Many of the bridges were too low for cattle trucks to get under and with new road regulations to replace these bridges would mean raising them to a height of 4.3 metres which was cost intrusive for the project.

***Bridge 28** was a 128 metre wooden pile bridge one of the longest bridges on the rail trail. The wooden piles can still be seen across the flood plain.*

Unable to rebuild the bridge from any of the remaining infrastructure the project team made the decision to create a low level crossing with culverts to cater for water flow and a large culvert for cows to walk through when they required access to the Goulburn River for water.



Bridge 28



Discussions on Bridge 28

At 318 metres long **bridges 26** and **27** over the Goulburn River at Molesworth is a great ride. Both of these bridges had been rebuilt during the life of the railway line and much of the infrastructure was in good condition which allowed for easy refurbishment regardless that the all the girders had been removed and bridge 26 is over a significant river. Focus Engineering and Spanco Australia worked together on these bridges.



Bridge 27



Bridge 28

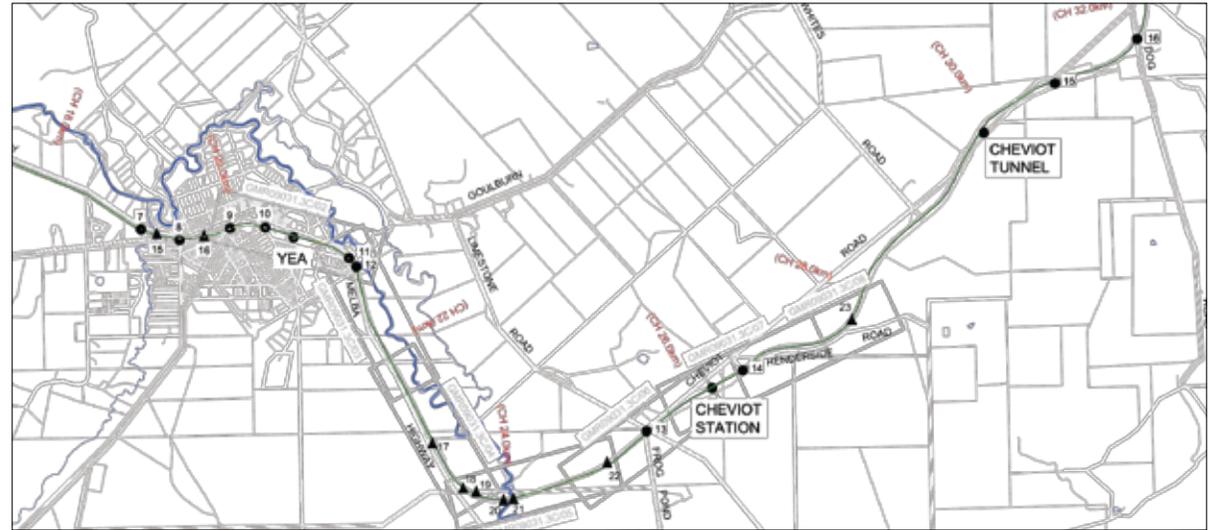
NO.28

**Bridge 25** crosses over a farm access which runs beside the old Goulburn Valley Highway, on the south side of sheep wash lagoon. This bridge was rebuilt in 1945 probably with returned service personnel labour.

**Bridge 24** was rebuilt in 1956 and again in 2011 using the original piers with new steel and concrete deck over Harvey's Gully.

East of Henderside Road is a 27metre bridge crossing a small creek, **bridge 23** was rebuilt in 1944 and refurbished in 2011 with a new concrete deck and handrails.

Heading west from Frog Pond Road the trail is a shared access for a farming property, **Bridge 22** was rebuilt in 1944 and had had new deck placed over the beams to provide farm access. Hand rails were placed by the project.



# NO.21

At 183 metres long **Bridge 21** across the Yea River is a picturesque sight. You may be lucky enough to see cattle in the paddocks below the bridge, parrots in the trees or a platypus in the river.



Bridge 27



Bridge 18

**Bridges 18, 19 and 20** total 138 metres leading into Yea alongside the Melba Highway in the Yea flood plains. This land is owned by Melbourne Water and played a significant part in the North South Pipe Line.

Rebuilt in 1946 **Bridge 17** only required handrails.

**Bridge 16** is a culvert in the Yea township and hasn't been touched by the project.

**Bridge 15** on the western edge of Yea township crosses Boundary Creek new deck and handrails were required.

**Bridge 14** crosses a waterway and only required handrails.

**Bridge 13** crosses Dairy Creek and is 55 metres long with new deck and handrails.

**Bridge 12** is only 9 metres and was rebuilt in 1944.

King Parrott Creek Bridge is **number 11** and quite significant at 90 metres long and 12 metres above the creek. This bridge can't be seen from Goulburn Valley Highway and is only accessible from the trail.

**Number 10** has been bypassed as the trail has come off alignment for safety reasons. The beams were removed and used elsewhere.

**Bridge 9** is 9 metres long and was rebuilt in 1946.

Rebuilt in 1946 bridge **number 8** is 37 metres long and is located 200 metres east of Trawool Resort.

**Number 7** is a small bridge of 9 metres.

**Bridge number 6** has had new deck and handrails.



Bridge 18



Bridge 12



Bridge 6



Bridge 39



Bridge 52

NO.12

*King Parrott Creek Bridge is **number 11** and quite significant at 90 metres long and 12 metres above the creek. This bridge can't be seen from Goulburn Valley Highway and is only accessible from the trail.*

NO.11

**Bridge number 5** crosses through the Landscape property at Tallarook. This bridge has timber kerbs and brick abutments.

Also crossing through the Landscape property is **Bridge 4** only hand rails were required.

**Bridge 3** is fifty five metres, over Sheep Station Creek Tallarook.

Also fifty five metres long is **Bridge 2** over Dabyminga Creek.

**Bridge number 1** is a 3 metre long, brick structure near Upper Goulburn Road, Tallarook.

The only new **bridge** is **0** at the Tallarook swimming pool. This was necessary to gain access onto the trail from township.

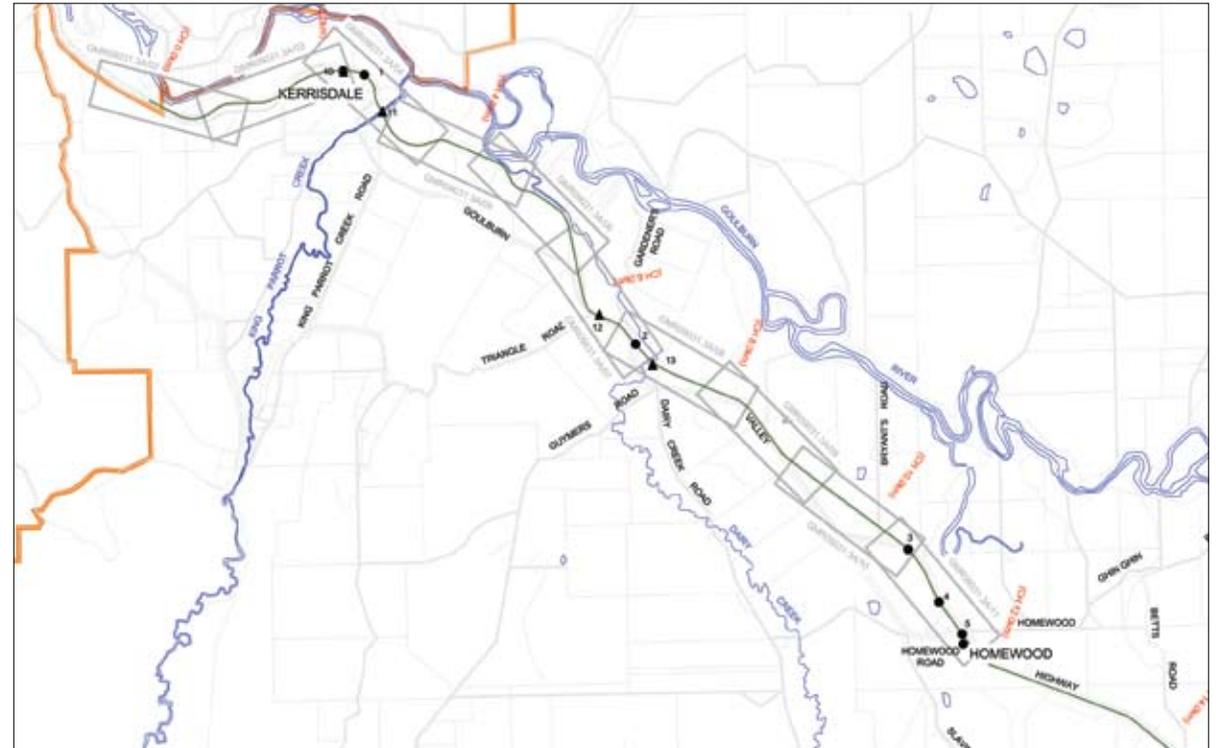
NO.0



Bridge 3



Bridge 1



NO.0



Bridge 0 Tallarook

# CONTRACTORS



Cheviot Tunnel

## Cheviot Tunnel

The historic Cheviot Rail Tunnel is a key feature of the Tallarook to Mansfield Rail Line which operated between 1883 and 1978. Being the only tunnel on this line, and made using handmade bricks using local clay, which remain in excellent condition today it has tremendous heritage values.

The 201m long tunnel was constructed to pass trains across the Black Range at McLoughlin's Gap roughly half way between Yea and Molesworth.

The tunnel was constructed from an estimated 675,000 handmade bricks using local clay. This was sourced from Quinlan's pit in a nearby paddock just west of the tunnel. Some steel hooks that held lanterns in emergencies still exist near the four indented safety alcoves. These are located at regular intervals along the eastern wall.



Cheviot Tunnel after track sealing



Piletech

## Granite Underpass

The underpass that is one kilometre east of Trawool Resort on the Goulburn Valley Highway was necessary due to the poor sight lines. As with any works that involved roads this was approved by VicRoads. The cost of putting a walkway over the highway was cost prohibitive and unsuitable for horses. Wrights Earthmoving was awarded the contract for the sum of \$455,000.



Underpass completed



Wright's Earthmoving contractors

## Bridge Works Contractors

*Focus Engineering Corowa NSW*  
*Spanco Australia P/L Benalla Vic*  
*AJ & SJ Shaw Excavations Caveat Vic*  
*Western Crane Services P/L Undera Vic*  
*Swarf King Engineering Seymour Vic*  
*Alex Steel Works Alexandra Vic*  
*Sfl/Piletech (EA) Pty Ltd Laverton North Vic*  
*Murray Valley Piling P/L Rutherglen Vic*  
*North Central Construction*



Wright's Granite Underpass contractors



Granite Underpass near completion



Wright's Earthmoving, Merton Gap



Focus Engineering contractors



Spanco contractors

# CIVIL WORKS

*Civil works included excavation of the trail, supply, delivery, placement and compacting of pavement gravels, reconstruction of drainage pipes or culverts, removal of any existing stockpiles of gravel, road realignments and low level crossings.*

Pavement gravels (chert and hill gravel) and granitic sand totalled \$2,200,000. Two different surfaces were used to accommodate horses on the trail where there wasn't sufficient area for a bridle path to run beside the trail. Chert, a black stone that has the look of bitumen is used where horses can be ridden beside the trail, horses will break this surface with their hooves. Hill gravel with a topping of granitic sand is used where the trail is a shared pathway and there is limited area for horses to ride off the path.

## Civil works contractors

Alpine Civil Mansfield Vic  
 Wrights Earthmoving Pty Ltd Kilmore Vic  
 JR's Earthworks Kinglake Vic  
 Mansfield Bobcat Hire Mansfield Vic  
 Pidgon's Earthmoving Mansfield Vic  
 Lachlan White Yea Vic  
 CPC Capital Constructions Wodonga Vic  
 NF & CR Pigdon Pty Ltd Mansfield Vic

## Granite Underpass

Wright's Earthmoving Pty Ltd Kilmore Vic

## Supply of pavement gravels and sand

Mansfield Constructions Pty Ltd Mansfield Vic  
 Murrindindi Constructions Alexandra Vic  
 GV Heavy Haulage Kialla Vic

## Engineering & Design

Winkfield Pty Ltd Mitcham Vic  
 GHA Engineers Tallarook Vic  
 GMR Engineering Services Shepparton Vic  
 Civil Design Management P/L Glenhantly Vic  
 Gary Edwards Benalla Vic  
 Currie & Brown (Australia) Pty Ltd Melbourne Vic  
 HJ Macey Camberwell Vic  
 Monger & Tomkinson Engineering Benalla Vic  
 Rural Works Pty Ltd Violet Town Vic  
 CPG Australia Pty Ltd (Bob Citreon) South Melbourne Vic  
 Traffic Works Pty Ltd (Bob Citreon) Ivanhoe Vic  
 Engineering Management Styles Golden Square Vic  
 Urban Enterprise Pty Ltd

## Vegetation Removal

Tree Tactics Pty Ltd Kilmore Vic  
 Biota Group Pty Ltd Buxton Vic  
 High Country Trees Pty Ltd Mansfield Vic  
 Timberline Tree Services Mansfield Vic

## Revegetation

High Country Camel Treks (Steve Curnow) Mansfield Vic  
 Revegetation Victoria Seymour Vic

## Toilets and Shelters

GR Design and Construct Pty Ltd Port Melbourne Vic

## Consultants

Atma Environmental Pty Ltd (Environmental Management Plan)  
 Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (Cultural Heritage)  
 Paoli Smith Pty Ltd (Logo Design)  
 Thornton Nunn & Associates (Communication Strategy)  
 Bertram Lobert Ecologist (Legless Lizard Survey)  
 Regional Development Company Pty Ltd (Management Plan)  
 Ivar Nelsen (Heritage Consultant)  
 Nigel Lewis (Heritage Consultant)

## Fencing

Alby Lockhart Bonnie Doon Vic  
 C & P Head Trawool Vic  
 Ghin Ghin Enterprises Yarck Vic  
 Alex Moore Yarck Vic  
 Bernie Cummins Merton Vic  
 Terry Murphy Mansfield Vic  
 Frank Tanner Mansfield Vic  
 Dale Van Duin Mansfield Vic  
 Adam Beilken Yark Vic

## Agencies

CFA  
 DSE  
 VicRoads  
 VicTrack  
 Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority  
 Goulburn Murray Water  
 Aboriginal Affairs Victoria  
 Victorian Farmers Federation  
 Various other businesses across the Shires of Mansfield, Mitchell and Murrindindi.



Alpine Civil contractors



Alpine Civil contractors



Mansfield Quarries



Tree Tactics

# CONTRIBUTORS

## Others

*Graph Attack Pty Ltd Yarck Vic  
Mansfield Signs Mansfield Vic  
Mansfield Printing Mansfield Vic  
Sunday Creek Construction  
Broadford Vic  
Stan the Handy Man Bonnie Doon Vic  
Exvac Engineering Mansfield Vic  
Black Cat Engineering Mansfield Vic  
Offshore Engineering Homewood Vic  
Various other businesses across the shires  
of Murrindindi, Mitchell and Mansfield*



Handrails



*Alex Steel works from  
Alexandra were awarded the  
contract to supply handrails  
to the new and existing  
bridges. Four thousand six  
hundred metres of handrail  
was required.*



Concrete deck manufacture





Ancona



Bridge 34



Bridge 47



Bridge 51



Bridge 28



Cathkin



Cheviot shelter



Project vehicle



Scouts at Cathkin



Eglington shelter



Scouts at Mansfield



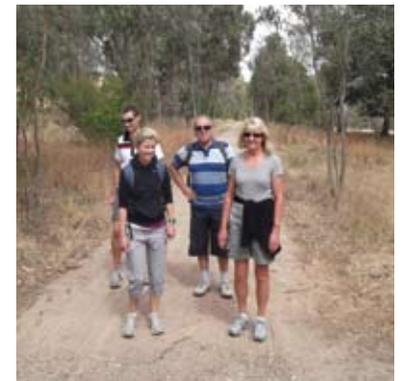
Signage



Merton crossing



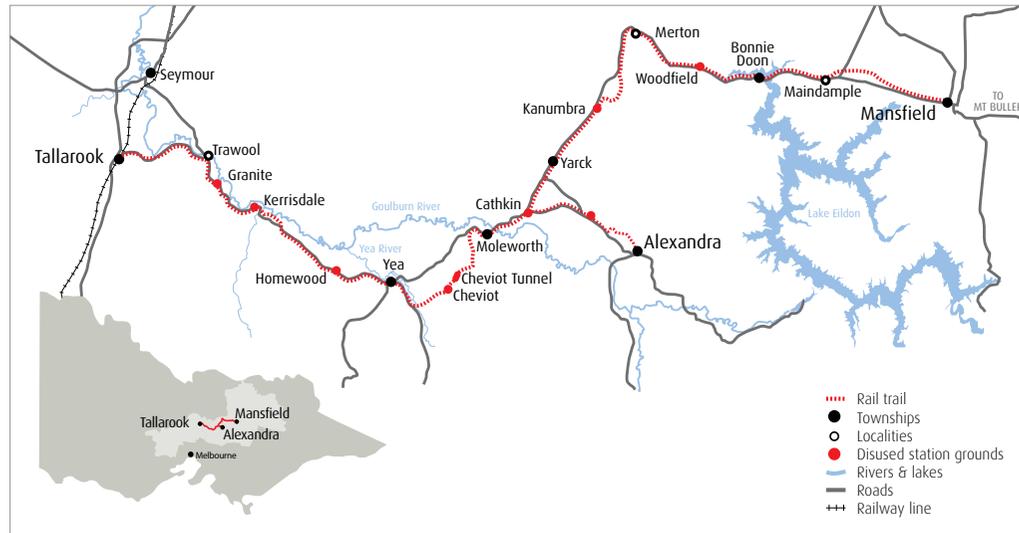
Riders at Trawool



Hikers at Tallarook



# GOULBURN RIVER HIGH COUNTRY RAIL TRAIL



*Thankyou to Ross Vaughan, The Project Team and Emma McPherson  
for supplying photos for the Rail Trail Story.*



GOULBURN RIVER  
HIGH COUNTRY  
RAIL TRAIL

TALLAROOK-YEA-ALEXANDRA-MANSFIELD