



CASINO TO ELTHAM

Northern Rivers Rail Trail

BUSINESS CASE | APRIL 2019



Prepared By



*Lismore City Council, Richmond Valley Council and
the NRRT Committee acknowledges the people of the
Bundjalung Nation, traditional custodians of the land.*

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PROJECT INFORMATION

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Project	Northern Rivers Rail Trail – Casino to Eltham Stage
Lead Proponent	Richmond Valley Council
Lead Proponent ABN	54 145 907 009

LEAD PROJECT SPONSOR

Name	Vaughan Macdonald
Position	General Manager
Phone	02 6866 00312
Email	vaughan.macdonald@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au
Address	Richmond Valley Council Locked Bag 10 Casino NSW 2470

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Casino to Eltham Stage represents Stage 2 of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail (NRRT), an iconic tourism and recreational asset for NSW and Australia. The 45km section will deliver the Southern Trail Head, extending from Casino to Eltham, providing an integral part of the overall 130 kilometres Northern Rivers Rail Trail and a critical link with Stage 1 – Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek (24km) currently under development.

Attracting over 54,000 users annually, the Casino to Eltham Stage will deliver significant economic, social and environmental outcomes for the Northern Rivers Region, NSW and Australia. The Rail Trail will attract visitor expenditure, improve regional health outcomes and directly facilitate an active and alternative form of transport for residents and communities in the region. The Project will also preserve key heritage infrastructure and create a natural wildlife corridor to protect the biodiversity of the region whilst strengthening the connection between tourism and conservation.

PROJECT LOCATION

Project Address	Casino to Eltham, Northern NSW.
Local Government Area	Richmond Valley and Lismore Local Government Areas
NSW Electorate	Clarence
Federal Electorate	Richmond

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Casino to Eltham section represents Stage 2 of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail and is located within the Lismore City and Richmond Valley Local Government Areas. Forming the Southern Trail Head, the 45 kilometre length of Rail Trail commences in Casino, extends to the City of Lismore and finishes in Eltham.

The Northern Rivers Rail Trail (NRRT) is 130 kilometres of proposed recreational trail that follows the disused Casino to Murwillumbah railway corridor. The trail is a significant Nature-Based tourism and recreational infrastructure project that will secure NSW position in the growing Rail Trail market. The complete NRRT is being undertaken in stages, with Stage 1 being Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek, in the Tweed Local Government Area and forms the Northern Trail Head. The Tweed Stage is due for completion in 2021.

On completion the Rail Trail will assist in protecting the natural and cultural assets of the Northern Rivers Region whilst delivering a world class tourism product and recreational asset that will drive visitor growth, support local communities, generate environmental outcomes and significantly contribute to the Northern Rivers Region, NSW and Australian economies.

With an estimated construction cost of \$33.3 million, substantial research and planning has been undertaken to ensure the Rail Trail is investment-ready including analysis of economic, environmental, heritage and construction elements.

A comprehensive Economic Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Casino to Eltham Stage of the Rail Trail, which provides robust financial evidence for investment in the Project. The direct economic benefits of the Project include:

- During the construction phase, the Project will generate 62 cumulative direct local jobs and support \$24.4 million in additional spending in the community and a further 127 indirect jobs.
- On completion, the Casino to Eltham Stage is forecast to attract almost 52,000 persons per annum initially, including 28,250 local users and attract 23,200 visitors to the Northern Rivers region.
- The direct spending associated with these visitors is approximately \$1.9 million per year, which will support an additional 15 direct jobs across the region.
- Over the next 30 years, the NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage will deliver a Net Present Value of \$21.5 million, with almost \$1.70 in benefits to the community created for every dollar spent in construction and maintenance of the Rail Trail.

The Casino to Eltham Stage will drive visitation directly to the Lismore City and Richmond Valley Shire's providing and enhancing opportunities for revitalised and new community facilities, vibrant public spaces, community events, and facilitate urban renewal priorities. The Project will deliver a high quality, accessible, well maintained public recreational and outdoor space that will assist in improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents in the Richmond Valley and Lismore communities.

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will also provide an alternative safe, level transport route for active transport (walking and cycling) users located in the Casino and Lismore suburbs and outlying rural communities. Additionally, the Rail Trail will assist to reduce congestion on local roads, improving safety outcomes for the region's pedestrians and cyclists.

Importantly, the Rail Trail will connect the smaller rural communities located alongside or adjacent to the trail with the recreational areas, retail and industrial precincts of Lismore and Casino's main urban centres, reducing the current reliance on private vehicles for transport needs.

Stage 2 of the NRRT will create new opportunities to attract the accessible tourism market whilst catering for the region's senior age groups, families with prams and those with a disability. Greater inclusion and social opportunities will be available through the Rail Trail which will assist to reduce disadvantage, isolation, and discrimination. The NRRT will also provide opportunities for host communities to create local events that will assist to increase social cohesion, enhance community spirit and foster a sense of place and pride amongst residents.

The Project will result in the preservation of the heritage value of the corridor itself and associated infrastructure such as bridges and heritage listed railway stations. These features will act as conservation and educational tools for future generations preserving the heritage and cultural significance of the Trail.

The Trail will generate a highly valued conservation corridor covering some 200 hectares, providing opportunities for environmental protection by individuals, groups and environmental organisations. The corridor will assist in raising environmental awareness of the conservation and biodiversity value of the area including Big Scrub remnants and the adjacent Wollumbin, Nightcap, Mount Jerusalem, Mooball and Goonengerry National Parks and Whian Whian State Conservation Area. The Rail Trail will showcase endangered ecological communities and threatened flora and fauna species located within the corridor to expand each visitor's awareness, understanding, and advocacy, strengthening the connection between conservation and tourism.

The Project aligns with a range of Federal and NSW Government Strategies and Plans across the key policy areas of health, economic development, tourism, sport and recreation, heritage, conservation, and disability. The Project will assist in delivering on key actions identified in the various regional planning documents. At a Local Government Area level, the Project aligns with and will assist Lismore City, Richmond Valley, Tweed Shire, and surrounding councils to drive visions and key outcomes identified in their respective Shire's Long Term Community Strategic Plans.



The development of the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT is evidence of the region's communities, groups/ organisations and local government working together to achieve the vision of revitalising the disused rail line into an active community facility and tourism asset.

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT Project has strong support from regional, state and national organisations including local government, surrounding tourism organisations, residents and private operators and peak sporting bodies. These groups recognise the importance of the Rail Trail as a regional tourism attraction and economic, social and environmental benefits that the Project will deliver.

The development of the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT is evidence of the region’s communities, groups/ organisations and local Councils working together to achieve the vision of revitalising the disused rail line into an active community facility and tourism asset.

The construction stage of the Project will be managed by Richmond Valley Shire Council as the designated ‘Project Sponsor’. Council has the expertise, capacity and demonstrated experience to oversee the construction of the Project including the management of any grant funding.

SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES OF THE NRRT – CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE		
ECONOMIC	ENVIRONMENTAL	SOCIAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment generation during and post construction phase. • New business development to support users of the Rail Trail. • Support the existing business base. • Drive the visitor economy through increased revenue from Rail Trail tourism leading to higher spending on local services such as transport, food, accommodation. • Maximise opportunities from international visitor growth into Gold Coast airport. • Attract visitors inland, providing a required boost to the NSW regional economy. • Provide a safe and alternate transport route for residents. • Self-funding ongoing maintenance costs. • Revitalisation of disused rail stations into viable businesses. • Increase land prices through the creation of active open public space. • Protect the existing rail corridor for future transport use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the connection between conservation and tourism. • Provision of a habitat corridor. • Foster eco-tourism products and experiences. • Protection of nearby environmentally sensitive areas. • Allow proper maintenance and land management along the corridor. • Reuse of materials from the existing rail infrastructure. • Revegetation of local flora and fauna. • Provide opportunities for environmentally sustainable support infrastructure such as lighting. • Opportunities to explore Biosequestration as a community engagement and partnership tool. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserving and creating new recreational spaces in the Northern Rivers region for community use. • Educational learning opportunities on local heritage, environmental ecosystems, and food production. • Provide an active transport route for residents. • A way to promote, encourage and enable health benefits to all age groups. • Increased sense of pride and social cohesiveness amongst regional communities. • Encourage nature and environmental appreciation and awareness. • Preserve and incorporate historical assets such as local stations, rail structures and historic bridges. • Provide an opportunity for communities along the route to develop their own recognizable identity. • Development of local events and festivals. • Create opportunities for volunteerism.



2. CASE FOR CHANGE

2. CASE FOR CHANGE

2.1. BACKGROUND

2.1.1. DISUSED RAIL LINE

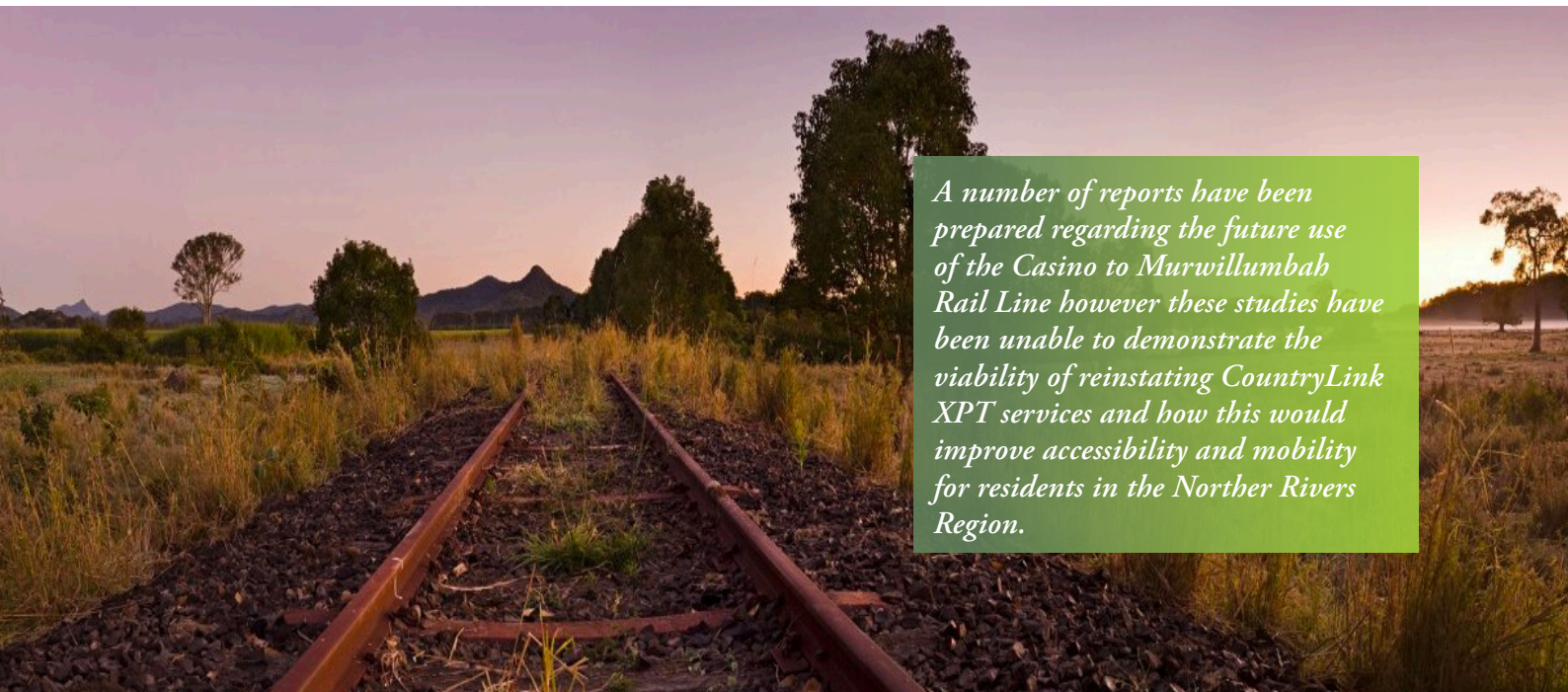
The Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line, located in the Northern Rivers Region was opened in 1894. The single-track line originally had 24 stations located along its 130 kilometre length, including Lismore, Bangalow, Byron Bay and Mullumbimby. The line passes through the four Local Government Areas of Bryon, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed, with stations and infrastructure at several notable towns including Casino, Lismore, Bangalow, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah (Historic Heritage Considerations, Dan Tuck, 2018).

The Murwillumbah to Casino Rail Line features:

- 164 underbridges including rail bridges over roads, waterways and flood plains;
- 23 overbridges including road bridges over rail;
- 9 tunnels with a total length of approximately 1.8 kilometres;
- 40 registered level crossings consisting of 19 public road crossings;
- 18 crossings of private access roads; and
- 3 walkway crossings.

(Historic Heritage Considerations, Dan Tuck, 2018)

Currently Country Regional Network (CRN) manages the track including easements and infrastructure, as a non-operational line. The Network is owned by Transport for NSW (TNSW) but is operated and maintained by John Holland Rail under a 10-year contract that commenced in January 2012. Those track elements not managed by CRN are owned or managed by RailCorp or the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) (Historic Heritage Considerations, Dan Tuck, 2018).



A number of reports have been prepared regarding the future use of the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line however these studies have been unable to demonstrate the viability of reinstating CountryLink XPT services and how this would improve accessibility and mobility for residents in the Northern Rivers Region.

From 1990, the rail line was used to operate a daily return XPT service from Murwillumbah to Casino, continuing to Sydney. Freight services were discontinued in 2002 as a result of “independent commercial decisions” (Casino to Murwillumbah Transport Study, Transport for NSW, 2012). The Murwillumbah to Casino passenger services were suspended in 2004 due to the high cost of ongoing maintenance, low patronage and the requirements for a relatively high taxpayer subsidy to keep the line operational. The last XPT service left Murwillumbah on 16 April 2004 with replacement bus services being operated by CountryLink (Casino to Murwillumbah Transport Study, Transport for NSW, 2012).

2.1.2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

A number of reports have been commissioned regarding the potential future use of the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line. The reports have considered restoring CountryLink XPT services to Sydney, the feasibility of reinstating freight services, extending the rail network to Queensland and introducing a local rail commuter service. These reports and their subsequent main findings are summarised in Table 2.1.2 below.

TABLE 2.1.2 STUDIES AND REPORTS UNDERTAKEN ON THE CASINO TO MURWILLUMBAH RAIL LINE

STUDY	FINDINGS
Options for the Casino Murwillumbah-Robina Rail Corridor (1992), Travers Morgan.	The Transport Options Study considered bus, rail and dual gauge rail and did not include a detailed consideration of need and benefits.
Review of Investment Options – Casino to Murwillumbah Line: Final Report (1994), Kearney – Sinclair Knight.	Focus was an economic appraisal of investment and operations options for a bridge program and development of business strategy for CountyLink. One recommendation noted that the significant investment in the rail line was considered a high risk and that train services should be designed to address specific objectives rather than using services on an ad hoc basis.
CSO Line Funding Agreement Discussion Paper, Casino – Murwillumbah (2003), Rail Infrastructure Corporation.	Infrastructure option assessment only, no consideration of social/economic impacts. The Study found that the track was generally in good condition however found the bridges in poor condition and that substantial investment was required to allow for long term operations. No preferred option was identified.
Closure of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail service (2004), NSW Legislative Council.	The Study recommended the preparation of a preservation plan for the rail line, guidelines to improve inter agency consultation and a greater period of notification of rail line closure to allow for community consultation.
Feasibility Study for passenger and/or commuter on the Murwillumbah to Casino branch line (2004), Price Waterhouse Cooper.	The Study found this was a high cost branch line with significant maintenance and upgrade costs and a rail transport solution requiring ongoing subsidies of between \$4 – \$6 million annually.
Casino to Murwillumbah Transport Study (2012), Transport for NSW.	The Study found that the rail line would not meet current or future transport needs and that \$952 million would be required to enable passenger rail services on the line.

The Casino to Murwillumbah Transport Study prepared by Transport for NSW and released in 2012, investigated the feasibility, benefits and costs of reinstating passenger services on the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line. The Study assessed the current and future transport needs of people living and working in the region as well as the potential connections to the South East Queensland public transport network. Conducted in accordance with the Terms of Reference developed by Transport for NSW, the Study provided community feedback for input into the development of the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan.

The Study considered options for the future use of the rail line including mode options, services and staging, reinstatement, freight opportunities and alternative use as a Rail Trail.

The report notes,

“Sections of the existing line could be used for walking and cycling, utilising existing assets and contributing to the maintenance of the line. There is local stakeholder interest in undertaking a feasibility study for using sections of the line as a Rail Trail, with Byron Bay being the focal point” (Casino to Murwillumbah Transport Study, Transport for NSW, 2012).

The Study determined that the rail line would not meet current or future transport needs and that the rail infrastructure had deteriorated significantly. It was estimated that \$952 million would be required to reinstate the line to a standard to enable passenger transport, an estimate of over \$7 million per km. The Study also noted that the cost of ongoing maintenance (\$2.9 million per annum prior to 2004) was forecast to increase to an average of \$9.4 million per annum over the subsequent 20 years if the line remained operational (NSW Legislative Council, 2004).

Furthermore, the Study found through demand modelling that provision of a rail shuttle service from Casino to Murwillumbah with nine services each way per day would only increase public transport trips in the Northern Rivers by 0.4% or 59 trips per day by the year 2031. The Study noted that a better public transport outcome would be provided by improved bus services, estimating that public transport trips in 2031 would rise by 1.38% or 203 trips per day.

Importantly, the Transport Study identified that the potential repurpose as a Rail Trail warranted further investigation to assess potential demand, benefits, costs, and feasibility.

Responding to the Transport Study, the NSW Government in 2014 released the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Trail Study which investigated converting the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line for use as a Rail Trail. The Study examined the economic, environmental and social benefits, engineering assessment and cost estimates, potential funding sources, stakeholder consultation, rail corridor preservation and legislative requirements.



“Subject to funding, the scoping assessment has demonstrated potentially strong benefits for the community and that the project is likely to be viable.” ARUP Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Trail Report.

The Study recommended the rail services remain suspended and that reinstating rail services would not meet the existing and future public transport needs for the region. There was insufficient demand to warrant the significant investment (in excess of \$900 million) needed for a safe operational rail corridor.

The Study found that the conversion to a Rail Trail would be economically viable determining:


- The Rail Trail would be financially viable with a base scenario of 88,320 visitors, an expected Net Present Value (NPV) of \$121.8m and benefit period of approximately four to five years. This analysis conservatively assumed day visitors only.
- The Rail Trail will break even (i.e. a BCR of 1.0) assuming 34,802 visitors annually. As such, visitors in excess of 34,802 per year would indicate a positive return for investment.
- The Study noted that all case studies examined, apart from one, have higher visitations than the break-even scenario.

2.2 NORTHERN RIVERS RAIL TRAIL

The Northern Rivers Rail Trail (NRRT) is 130 kilometres of proposed recreational trail that follows the disused Casino to Murwillumbah railway corridor. The Trail will follow, wherever possible, the existing rail line providing users the opportunity to walk, cycle or ride along a corridor and enjoy the spectacular scenery of the Northern Rivers Region of NSW.

Extensive research and analysis has been undertaken to demonstrate the need to convert the disused line into an iconic state tourism asset. Preliminary work on the viability of the NRRT was commissioned by the NSW Government with subsequent reports and analysis undertaken by the NRRT Association, a group of dedicated and skilled professionals advocating for the Rail Trail development. These reports are summarised in Table 2.2.

A Heritage Report commissioned by the NRRT Association notes that the proposed NRRT route features a number of places (precincts and individual items) that are listed variously within the heritage schedules of the Richmond Valley, Lismore City and Byron Shire Local Environmental Plans; the heritage and conservation registers of government authorities (s170 registers); and/or on the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR). These listings, mostly station precincts, bridges, and tunnels, have practical and economic implications for the realisation of the NRRT.



Extensive planning and research underpins the development of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail.

TABLE 2.2 STUDIES AND REPORTS UNDERTAKEN ON THE CASINO TO MURWILLUMBAH RAIL LINE

STUDY	KEY FINDINGS
Historic Heritage Considerations Northern Rivers Rail Trail – Casino to Bangalow June 2018	A number of places that are listed on state and local heritage and conservation schedules will have practical and economic implications for development of the NRRT.
Economic Impact Assessment (Casino to Eltham)	<p>During the construction phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 62 cumulative direct local jobs and 127 indirect jobs will be created; and • \$24.4 million in additional spending in the region. <p>Post Construction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract 51,400 persons per annum initially, including 28,250 local users and 23,200 visitors to the Northern Rivers region; and • The direct spending associated with these visitors of approximately \$1.9 million per year, will support an additional 15 direct jobs across the region. <p>Over the next 30 years, the NRRT Casino to Eltham will deliver a net present value of \$21.5 million, with \$1.66 in benefits to the community created for every dollar spent in construction and maintenance of the facility.</p>
Rail Trail Cost Estimates (Casino to Eltham)	Detailed staged costings prepared by qualified engineers estimated the total project cost at \$33.3 million.
NRRT Biodiversity Assessment	Potential impacts on biodiversity from the development of the Rail Trail were identified, and mitigation measures and future opportunities examined. On the basis of the assessment findings, and with the adoption of various construction safeguards and mitigation measures. The Assessment concluded that the development of the Rail Trail can be managed in such a way that impacts to biodiversity are relatively low.

It is proposed that the NRRT be completed in three key stages, these being:

Stage 1: Tweed Stage - 24 kilometres extending from Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek, which is currently in pre-development stage and forms the Trail Head to the north.

Stage 2: Casino to Eltham - 45 kilometres linking the towns and villages of Casino, Bexhill, Woodlawn, Eltham, and the City of Lismore, forming the Trail Head to the south.

Stage 3: Eltham to Crabbes Creek – the middle section will utilise the rail line between Eltham, through Bangalow, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby, Billinudgel and connect with Crabbes Creek, a distance of approximately 60 kilometres.

On completion the NRRT will provide a myriad of user groups, such as walkers and cyclists with a unique opportunity to experience the diverse rural landscape of the Lismore, Richmond Valley, Byron Bay and Tweed areas and also provide an alternative transport corridor for residents in the region.

The Northern Rivers Rail Trail will be an iconic world-class tourism and recreational asset driving significant economic, environmental and social benefits to the Northern Rivers Region. The Trail will enhance the States Nature-Based tourism offering to national and international markets and meet the growing demand for accessible recreational tourism products whilst catering for the strong growth trends in cycling and walking.

Figure 2.2 Map of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail



2.2.1 STAGE 1 MURWILLUMBAH TO CRABBES CREEK

In 2017, the NSW and Australian Governments partnered to recognise the significance of the NRRT and allocated \$13 million in funding for Stage 1 of the NRRT which extends from Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek (referred to as Stage 1 or Tweed Stage). This section forms the Trail Head to the north for the complete NRRT. This section of the Rail Trail passes through a number of smaller villages including Stokers Siding, Burringbar, Mooball and Crabbes Creek, linking these smaller rural communities and providing residents with a greater sense of connectedness and pride in their region.

The NRRT - Tweed Stage is 24 kilometres in length and occupies a corridor averaging 40 metres in width and totalling 88 hectares. This Stage incorporates 2 tunnels (one approximately 500 metres long), 27 bridges and provides beautiful vistas of the Tweed Caldera landscape.

The heritage listed Murwillumbah Railway Station will be utilised as the Rail Trail base where cyclists and hikers can plan out their day trip to the surrounding attractions including the Tweed Regional Gallery and National Parks, which take in the fantastic panoramic hinterland views.

The Tweed Stage will link many of the region's natural features and nature-based tourist attractions such as Mooball, Mt Jerusalem and Wollumbin National Parks, whilst also connecting the Region's art galleries and creative industries, such as the Tweed Regional Gallery and the Margaret Olley Art Centre.

Tweed Shire Council conducted and commissioned extensive planning, investigations, design and community consultation activities to advance the establishment of the Trail including detailed costings and estimates which provided a realistic estimate of the schedule, milestones and costs involved to convert the disused rail line into a functioning Rail Trail.

The works to complete the Tweed Stage of the NRRT comprises three main phases which will be undertaken over a two-year period. The phases are identified as:

Stage 1: Procurement

The first stage is the selection of a contractor who has the necessary resources, skills and experience to complete the Rail Trail within the available budget under a Design and Construct Contract. The selection process will be based on an 'Expression of Interest' process, followed by an 'Early Tenderer Involvement' process (with a selected shortlist if prospective tendered), and finally the pricing tender phase which will determine the final successful Contractor.

Stage 2: Detailed Design

Stage Two involves the preparation of detailed design for the Tweed Stage of the Rail Trail. During this period, early works will commence within the former railway corridor, which will include the establishment of construction site offices and laydown areas, preparation of access paths, clearing of weeds, and removal of rails and sleepers where necessary.

Stage 3: Construction

Lastly, the Trail is then constructed, with the rail surface constructed (either sealed or unsealed), access paths constructed, tunnels retrofitted and bridges either constructed, rehabilitated, or bypassed. Ancillary works, such as the installation of way-finding signage and the repair of fencing will also be undertaken during this Stage as required. It is anticipated that bush regeneration works utilising volunteer organisations may also be undertaken during Stage 3.

2.2.2 STAGE 2 CASINO TO ELTHAM

The Casino to Eltham Stage will deliver an integral part of the NRRT capitalising on Stage 1 Tweed Stage by forming the southern Trail Head from Casino. This stage is located within the Lismore and Richmond Valley Local Government Areas. The Rail Trail will commence at Old Casino Railway Station (referred to as the 'Railway Museum') and traverse through the picturesque countryside to the City of Lismore, then through the smaller communities of Woodlawn, Bexhill, and Eltham. Users will also be able to access the Rail Trail at many access points along the route.

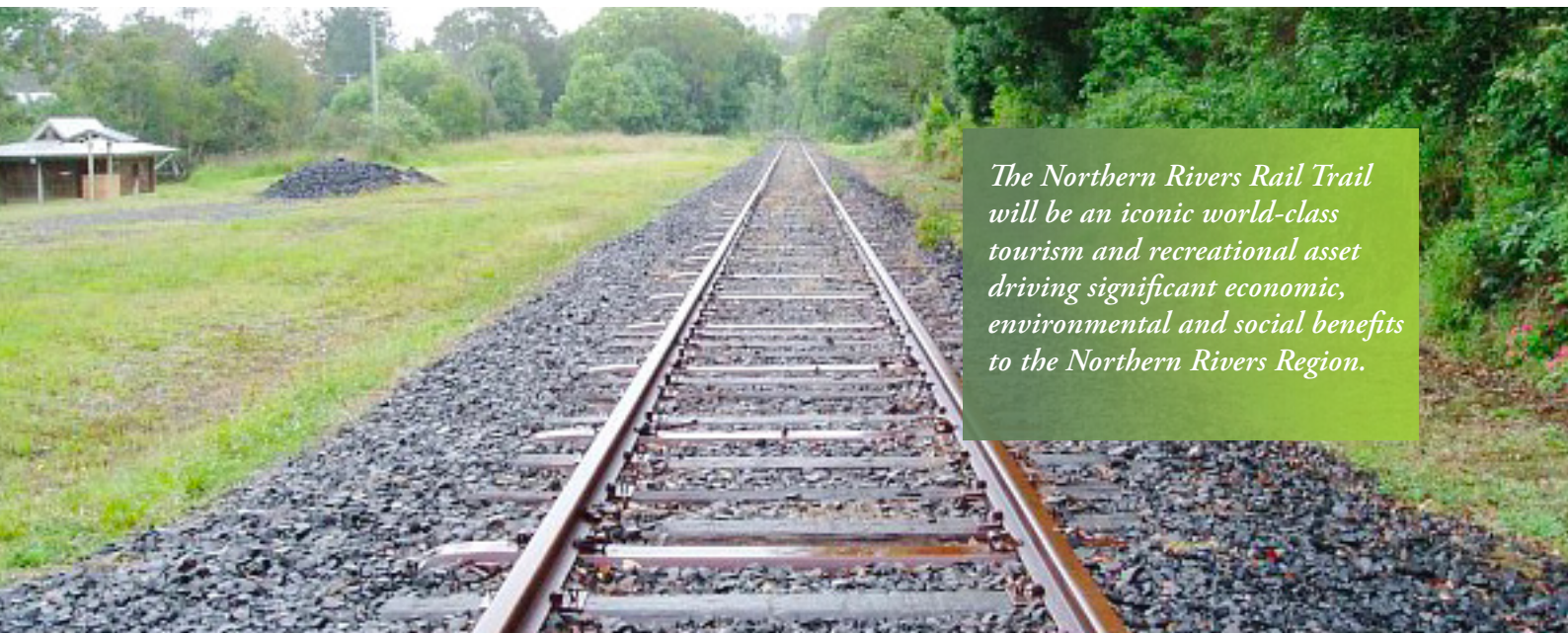
The Project is located within the Federal Government's Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers. The Rail Trail will provide a key non-motorised link for businesses and residents with the town centres and suburbs of Casino, Lismore and Eltham. The Trail will become a strategic link in the Lismore City and Richmond Valley strategic pathways and transport networks.

The broad scope of works for construction of the Rail Trail within the existing railway formation is as follows:

- Remove undergrowth, weeds and trees on the top of formation and in ballast (around 5 metre width).
- Clean out, repair longitudinal and transverse drains and culverts.
- Remove and dispose (preferably recycle) existing railway lines and sleepers.
- Trim, spread and compact existing ballast.
- Import, spread, compact and trim road base material 150 mm thick, 3.5 metre wide over ballast for rail trail path pavement.
- Bitumen seal the path surface 3 metres wide.

In addition to creating the Rail Trail pathway, other works required include (but are not limited to):

- Remediation or replacement of overpasses/bridges (subject to engineering assessment).
- Installation of safety and boundary fencing as required.
- Installation of interpretive and way finding signage.

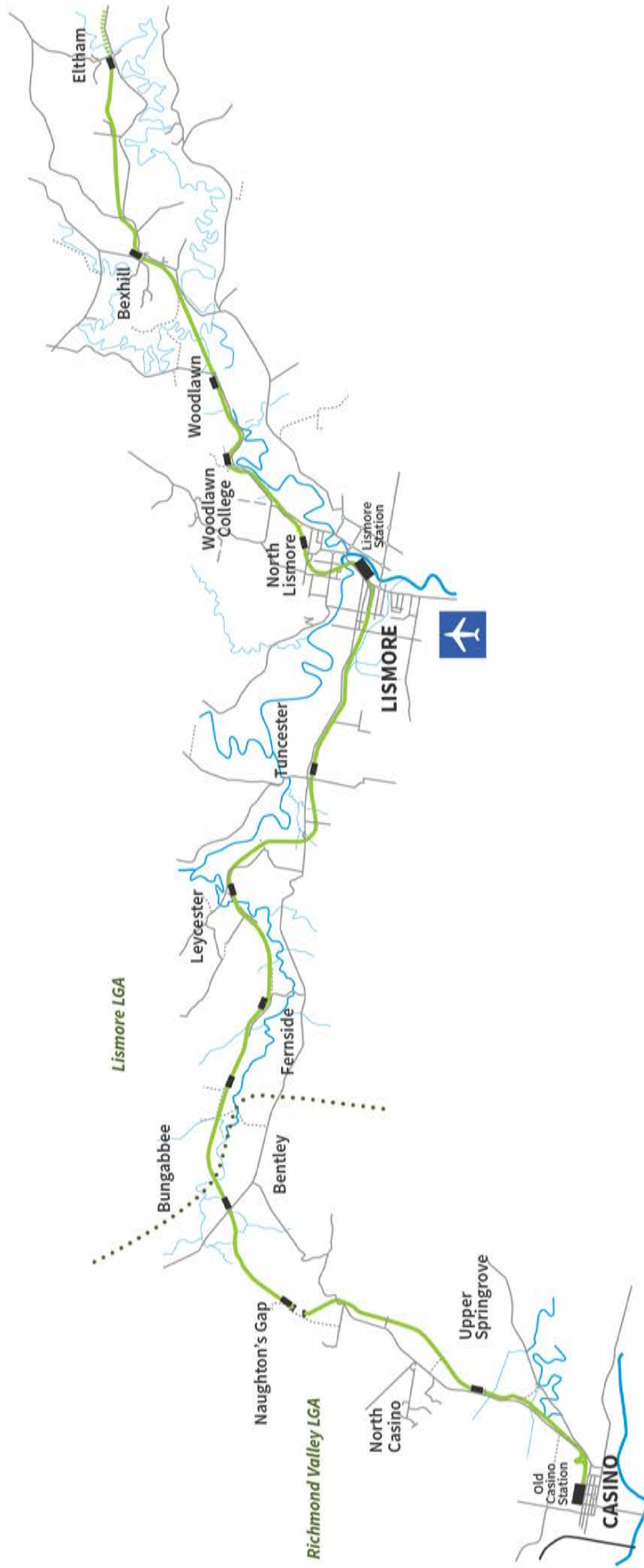


The Northern Rivers Rail Trail will be an iconic world-class tourism and recreational asset driving significant economic, environmental and social benefits to the Northern Rivers Region.

Figure 2.2.2 Map of Stage 2 Casino to Eltham

NORTHERN RIVERS RAIL TRAIL

Stage 2 – Southern Trail Head, Casino to Eltham



LEGEND

- Northern Rivers Rail Trail
- LGA boundary between Lismore and Richmond Valley

DISTANCES


Casino to Lismore	29.5 kms
Lismore to Eltham	15.5 kms
Casino to Eltham	45 kms

2.3 RATIONALE FOR INVESTMENT

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail has been identified as the construction priority as it will form the southern Trail Head and provide a key access hub for the entire Rail Trail. Construction of this Stage will also assist in addressing a number of existing and emerging issues in the region. The following section details the factors for the rationale for investment in the Project.

The core objectives of the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage include:

1. Develop the NRRT as a demand driver for the region to encourage visitor dispersal to regional areas and distributing tourism dollars inland to revitalise towns and villages;
2. Diversify the regional economy;
3. Increase visitation and length of stay to the Northern Rivers Region by leveraging key market segments;
4. Assist to differentiate and brand the Northern Rivers Region for tourism marketing purposes;
5. Provide a safe, active transport route for residents within the region;
6. Provide accessible infrastructure for those with a disability, families with prams, and the aged;
7. Provide key recreational infrastructure to support population growth;
8. Preserve key heritage infrastructure including the corridor for future generations;
9. Revitalise and re-purpose disused infrastructure;
10. Enhance village life by converting rail yards into public spaces;
11. Encourage social interaction and participation to build community connectivity and wellbeing; and
12. Provide a natural habitat corridor for wildlife and reconnect remnant forest sections.



Investing in the Northern Rivers Region's rail trail infrastructure and Nature-Based tourism offering presents a major opportunity to enhance NSW reputation both internationally and nationally as a destination.

Rail Trails represent the opportunity to revitalise a significant piece of disused infrastructure into a major tourism and recreational asset. There is much evidence globally that highlights the vast myriad of economic, social, and environmental benefits of the conversion of disused rail lines into viable Rail Trails.

The Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line was completed in 1905 as a branch line to the inland North Coast Line that connects Sydney to Brisbane. The single track, standard gauge line originally connected 24 stations along its 130 kilometre length. The entire rail line traverses through the Bryon, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed Local Government Areas (Transport for NSW, 2013).

The line was initially constructed to transport cedar and later became integral to the development of pastoral industries in the Northern Rivers Region. However, the use of the line progressively moved from freight transport to passenger transport. The last passenger service departed Murwillumbah on 16 April 2004 with the line ceasing operation at this time. Prior to the closure of services in 2004, the rail line infrastructure was considered to be in a fair condition, with the exception of some timber bridges for which considerable maintenance was required (Transport for NSW, 2013).

The NSW Government commissioned a study in 2013 into the transport needs of the communities located along the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line (Transport for NSW, 2013). The Study found that the rail line would not meet the current or future needs of the community as the rail line did not service two of the three largest population centres, Tweed Heads and Ballina. The Study also indicated that there was no commercial demand for freight to be returned to the line (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2014).

An engineering examination conducted as part of the Transport for NSW study found that the track and associated infrastructure had deteriorated significantly since 2004. The Study estimated that approximately \$900 million would be needed to clear vegetation, stabilise landslide areas, replace timber bridges and sleepers, and extensively replace ballast to re-establish the line to the safety and operating standards for frequent and efficient train services (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2014).

Between 2004 and 2013, the rail line was maintained to a suitable safety standard, however limited station and infrastructure maintenance and vegetation management was undertaken. The Study noted that despite a reduced maintenance program as a result of the closure of the line, the annual budget for the corridor maintenance from 2007 to 2011 continued to average around \$750,000 each year (Transport for NSW, 2013).

A key outcome of the Casino to Murwillumbah Transport Study highlighted the potential for the Casino to Murwillumbah rail corridor to be converted to a Rail Trail for use by pedestrians and cyclists. This led to the Department of Premier and Cabinet commissioning a scoping study examining the feasibility, cost and benefits of a proposed Rail Trail. The Study found that the conversion to a Rail Trail would be financially viable, had broad community support, and would attract a large number of visitors annually.

The conversion of the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line to a Rail Trail provides a unique opportunity to create a major NSW tourism asset. There are currently few active Rail Trails in NSW, and the Casino to Eltham Stage will leverage the development of Stage 1 of the NRRT – Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. Stage 1 is funded and construction is due for completion in 2020.

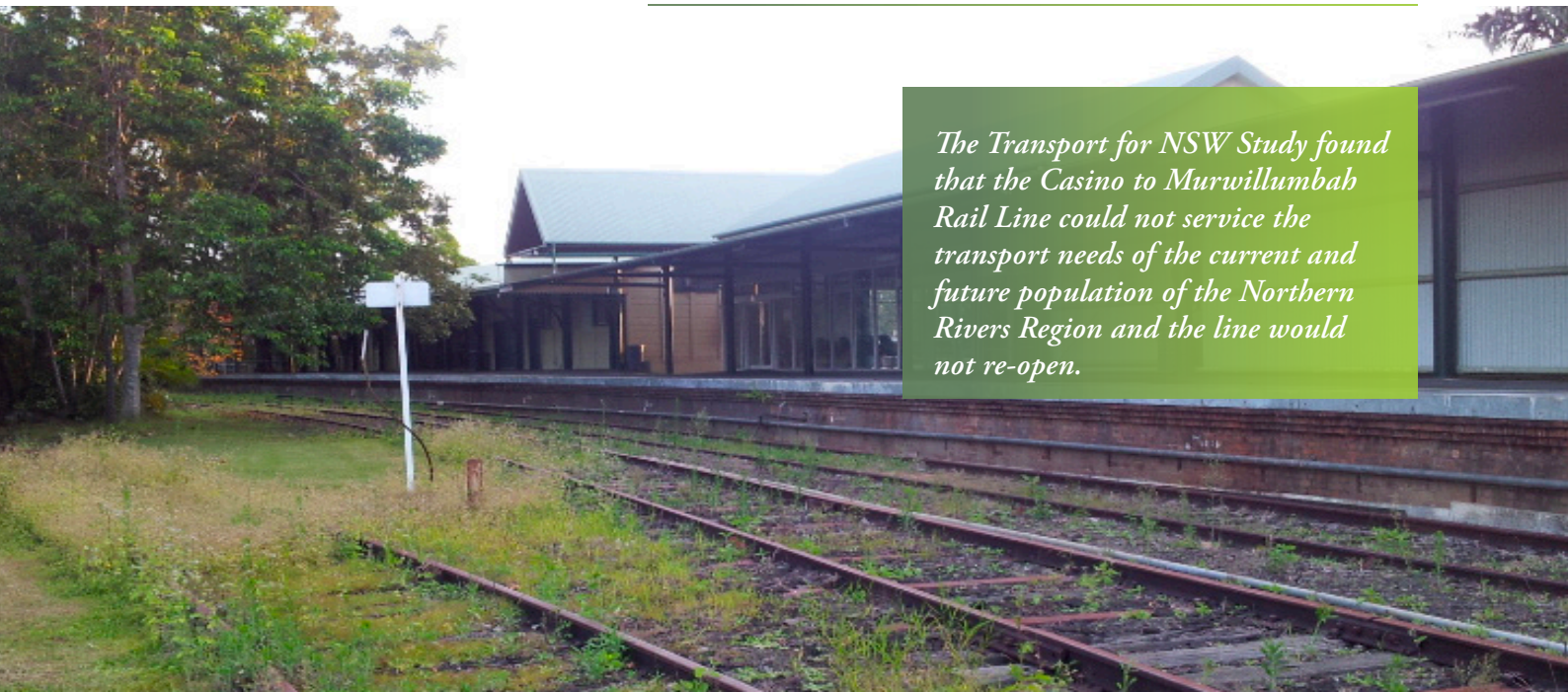
There is global evidence to support the reuse of a disused rail line into a tourism demand driver that can drive economic, environmental and social benefits. Rail Trails attract visitors to a region and have grown in popularity significantly over the last 20 years.

Some examples of major Rail Trails include:

- Murray to Mountains (High-Country Region of Victoria). The 116-kilometre trail was established in 2009 and attracts more than 45,000 visitors per annum to its three stages.
- The Hauraki Rail Trail (New Zealand). The 160 kilometre trail was opened in 2012 and more than 21,000 visitors per annum cycle and walk along five different stages.
- The Otago Central Rail Trail (New Zealand). Established in 2002, the Trail attracted more than 14,300 visitors in 2017/2018. However, the Trail also attracts over 80,000 users per annum for community or short ride recreation purposes (Monaro Rail Trail, Pr-Feasibility Study, TRC, 2018).
- The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) (Brisbane). The Trail is Australia's longest trail at 161 kilometres and was opened in 2016. The BVRT winds its way along the western side of the Brisbane River traversing farmland, forests, picturesque rural settings and links 12 towns and villages. Being on the old railway line, the BVRT provides an easy climb up the valley for day trippers, overnight camping or longer-term adventures. The BVRT is used largely by residents, however it also attracts approximately 1,000 visitors per month.

Numerous studies have concluded that the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line, having ceased operations in 2004, is no longer viable as either a passenger or freight transport link, currently or in the future. Additionally, the ongoing maintenance costs within the rail corridor are significant, especially given the value of the infrastructure in its current form to both government and the community. The NRRT presents an opportunity to transform a disused and decaying piece of infrastructure into a proven tourism demand driver, which will increase domestic, interstate and international visitation to the Northern Rivers Region of NSW.

The following section details the main issues in the region that the Project will address.



The Transport for NSW Study found that the Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Line could not service the transport needs of the current and future population of the Northern Rivers Region and the line would not re-open.

2.3.1 DIVERSIFY THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage passes through the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Richmond Valley and Lismore City. These LGAs have economies based in the Agriculture and Manufacturing sectors, with employment rising in the service sectors, including Health Care and Social Assistance sectors, as identified in the Council's Long Term Strategic Plans and Economic Development Strategies. These communities are seeking to diversify their industry base and provide broader employment opportunities for their residents.

Lismore City Local Government Area

Lismore City LGA is home to 43,905 residents (Estimated Resident Population, ABS, 2017) with Lismore being the main urban centre. Over 31% of the population live in rural areas including the smaller communities of Goonellabah, Dunoon, Bexhill, Clunes, Eltham, Nimbin, Rosebank, The Channon, and Wyrallah.

Lismore City LGA is home to almost 4,100 businesses providing over 23,000 employment positions (economy.id.com.au). In the Lismore City LGA, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector is the largest employer generating 5,380 local jobs in 2017/18, followed by the Education and Training (2,973), Retail Trade (2,718), and Construction (1,658) sectors.

Lismore City LGAs Gross Regional Product was \$2.13 billion in the year ending June 2018, a growth of 2.9% since 2017 (economy.id, 2019). Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest sector contributing over \$330 million in value add, followed by Education and Training (\$226 million), and Public Administration and Safety (\$142 million).

The regional Tourism sector is a relatively small contributor in both the Richmond Valley and Lismore City LGAs. Of the 7,283 people working in Richmond Valley LGA, it is estimated that 379 jobs are supported by the Tourism sector. The Tourism sector contributes almost \$32 million or 3.11% in value add to the local Richmond Valley economy (Remplan Economy Profile, 2019).

In Lismore City LGA, the tourism industry employs an estimated 810 people directly and 382 indirectly (1,192 in total), and contributes \$203 million to the local economy (economy.id, 2019).

Richmond Valley Local Government Area

Richmond Valley LGA covers an area of approximately 3,050 square kilometres and has a population of 23,300 people (Estimated Resident Population, ABS, 2017). Casino, the largest population centre (10,900) is supported by towns of Evans Head (2,850), Coraki (1,278), Woodburn (730) and Broadwater (643) which provide rural lifestyle and coastal living opportunities (North Coast Regional Plan, 2036).

The five largest employment sectors in the Richmond Valley LGA are Manufacturing (1,435), Health Care and Social Assistance (873), Education and Training (734), Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (712), and Retail Trade (666), which comprise just over 60% of all employment (Remplan Economy Profile, 2019).

Richmond Valley LGA contributes \$1.134 billion to the Northern Rivers economy. Manufacturing is the largest industry sector contributing over \$183 million, followed by Rental, Hiring and Real Estate (\$177m), Agriculture Forestry and Fishing (\$117m) and Health Care and Social Assistance (\$81m) (Remplan Economy Profile, 2019).

Industry diversification is critical to supporting a strong economic base within the Lismore and Richmond Valley LGAs. The Regional Australia Institute has conducted research into regional competitiveness and links to industry diversification, noting the importance to regional areas:

“While industry specialisation can contribute to business sophistication through clustering, in non-metropolitan regions of Australia dependence on a limited number of industries can prove detrimental to a region’s economy. Economic diversification plays an important role in providing resilience and flexibility for regional Australia’s economies. Without this cushion, regional economies may suffer disproportionately during adverse external shocks, with exacerbated negative effects on employment security, income and living standards.” (Regional Australia Institute)

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage will drive employment in the Northern Rivers Region, both during construction and on-going operation, through the attraction of visitors to walk, cycle and ride along the Trail. The NRRT Association commissioned an independent Economic Impact Assessment of the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT. The assessment estimated that an additional 28.8 FTE jobs (both direct and indirect) will be created annually in the Northern Rivers Region from indirect visitor expenditure. These jobs will be largely in the Accommodation and Food Services and Retail Trade sectors.

The creation of new employment positions will strengthen and facilitate further Tourism sector opportunities, including product development, and enhance the visitor experience within the Lismore City and Richmond Valley LGAs. Similar Trails in other regions have reported business growth in the Accommodation and Food Services sectors, as well as cycling hire and packaging of tourism products.

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage will provide employment opportunities not only in the main centres of Casino and Lismore. The Rail Trail will pass through villages and communities throughout the picturesque rural countryside, creating many unique accommodation, food, produce and experience opportunities throughout the entire region.



The Project presents an opportunity for the Lismore City and Richmond Valley LGAs to grow their economies and diversify their employment base, through the increased visitation and injection of direct spending into the regional economy.

2.3.2. DIVERSIFY THE REGIONAL TOURISM PRODUCT

Whilst tourism is currently a relatively small industry sector within the Lismore City and Richmond Valley LGAs, tourism is a significant industry in the broader North Coast Region, being the third most popular Australian tourism destination by overnight stays (North Coast Regional Plan, 2036). Lismore City and Richmond Valley LGAs are located within the NSW Government tourism body, Destination NSW, designated 'Destination North Coast (DNC)' tourism region.

The North Coast Region attracts approximately 13.2 million visitors each year that stay 24.5 million nights and contribute \$4.5 billion to the regional economy. Domestic overnight visitors accounted for 20.8 million visitors or 42% of all visitors to North Coast in 2017. The primary reason for domestic overnight visitation was for a holiday (52%) followed by visiting friends or relatives (31%), and business (12%) (Tourism Research Australia, 2018).

The average length of stay in the North Coast Region by domestic visitors is 3.9 nights with an average trip spend of \$549. The source markets vary significantly across the region, however, overall 38% of domestic overnight visitors come from regional NSW, 24% from Sydney, and 38% from interstate. Queensland contributes 77% of all interstate visitors (DNC Destination Management Plan, 2018)

There were 7.3 million domestic day trip visitors to the Region in 2017, representing 55% of all visitors. The primary reason for day trip visitation was for a holiday (59%), followed by visiting friends or relatives (22%) (Tourism Research Australia, 2018). An estimated 30% of day trip visitors were from interstate, once again indicating the importance of the South-East Queensland market (DNC Destination Management Plan, 2018)

The North Coast Region attracts approximately 345,000 international visitors each year staying 3.7 million visitor nights. International visitors contribute more than \$246 million to the local economy and spend an average of \$66 per night (Tourism Research Australia, 2018).

The overarching objective of the DNC Destination Management Plan 2018 to 2021 is to grow the North Coast visitor economy in a sustainable way that supports the NSW Government's goal of doubling overnight visitor expenditure by the year 2020. The Plan notes that this will be achieved by:

- Attracting an appropriate mix of intrastate, interstate and international visitors;
- Increasing visitation in low and shoulder seasons;
- Encouraging greater dispersal and spend; and
- Ensuring tourism is managed sustainably.

Key issues for the North Coast Region include the seasonality within the tourism market as well as overcrowding in some of the coastal and more popular locations. The Destination Management Plan's key objective is to grow the local visitor economies in rural and hinterland areas and to attract higher yielding and appropriate visitor markets to achieve sustainable tourism outcomes for mature destinations that are impacted by high tourist numbers in peak times (e.g. those in prime coastal areas). The Plan notes:

“Some destinations on the North Coast are already experiencing strains on infrastructure and amenities and socio-cultural impacts including resentment from some local communities due to the year-round volume of tourism activity, as well as peak season overcrowding problems.”
(DNC Destination Management Plan, 2018)

The North Coast Destination Management Plan identifies that the average accommodation occupancy rate across the region is 57.6%, which does not take into account the large number of holiday let homes and apartments. The Plan states that “the moderate occupancy rate illustrates the seasonal nature of the industry on the North Coast and one of the key challenges that needs to be addressed” (DNC Destination Management Plan, 2018).

The situational analysis and stakeholder engagement process undertaken to inform the Destination Management Plan identified the need to “leverage the potential of the region’s natural attractions through the development, enhancement and promotion of significant drives and trails that encourage visitor dispersal and connect visitors to distinctive nature experiences and attract an appropriate mix of visitors (e.g. international, grey nomads, business events, and educational that are more likely to travel outside of peak school holiday seasons)” (DNC Destination Management Plan, 2018).

At a more localised level, Byron Shire is the fourth most visited destination in NSW and the 11th in Australia. Between 2014 and 2018, total visitation to the Shire was estimated to have grown by 49%, compared to 11% for NSW (Tourism Scale and Impact Analysis, id.com, 2018). The Shire had an enumerated population of 33,624, which is 6.6% higher than its usual resident population (31,556) and equivalent to over 2,000 additional people. Further, Byron Shire had an average of 14,000 visitors in the LGA each day in 2017/18 with 11,100 being overnight visitors. This is higher than all other locations on the NSW North Coast (Tourism Scale and Impact Analysis, id.com, 2018).

Byron Shire Council is currently preparing a Tourism Management Plan that will address the key issues of the large and growing number of visitors to the region. Seasonality and overcrowding have been an issue for a number of years, as identified in the ‘Destination Byron 2014 - 2020 Destination Management Plan’ which had the key objective of “managing visitor numbers and the dispersal of visitors” when it was released in 2014.

Ballina Shire, also a coastal LGA located adjacent to the Rail Trail, has identified the need to diversify the area’s tourism product to attract visitors in the off-peak or low season. A key objective of their Destination Management Plan was ‘Investment Attraction’ linked to events as well as the hosting of sporting events and conferences to support the visitor economy by providing an economic boost in low or ‘off-peak’ seasons (Destination Management Plan, Ballina Coast and Hinterland 2014 – 2020).

The Destination Management Plan for Ballina outlined a range of activities to drive visitation to the Shire including the development of trails and hinterland drives to attract people away from beaches to the villages and communities in the rural parts of the Shire.



“Our region, legendary for its contrasts and luxe diversity, is a place of World Heritage-listed rainforest’s, extensive coastal vistas, outstanding bathing and surf beaches, unspoilt hinterland, tropical agriculture, relaxed and diverse cultural communities, and innovative enterprises.”
Destination Byron, 2014-2020

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage will contribute to diversifying the local tourism product by encouraging visitors away from the traditional beach focus of the North Coast Region into the spectacular rural hinterlands and smaller communities. Lismore is approximately 40-minutes' drive inland from Ballina and Byron Bay, making it an attractive and alternative tourism option for visitors to the Region to experience.

The benefits of diversified tourism products and experiences will allow for a year-round tourism season and provide less reliance on the summer and school holiday peak periods in the coastal communities. The walking and cycling market will attract year-round visitation, providing greater stability for current tourism operators and improved employment options for the region.

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage will increase visitation to the Lismore and Richmond Valley LGAs. The unique nature, rural and heritage features of the region will attract visitors from the Nature-Based, walking, cycling, heritage and accessible tourism market segments.

Nature-Based Tourism

In August 2018, the NSW Government released the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan 2030 (VEIAP) which builds on the previous VEIAP that was originally released in 2012. As part of the updated Plan, the NSW Government recognises the value of Nature-Based tourism to the NSW economy and has committed to developing a Nature-Based Tourism Strategy to further attract and grow this market segment.

Destination NSW defines a Nature-Based visitor as one that participates in at least one of the following activities:

- Bushwalking or rainforest walks;
- Visits to National or State parks;
- Whale or dolphin watching;
- Visiting botanical or other public gardens;
- Visiting farms;
- Going to the beach;
- Visiting wildlife parks, zoos or aquariums; or
- Visiting the outback (for international visitors only).

Destination NSW reports that NSW received nearly 28.3 million international and domestic Nature-Based visitors in the year ending 2017 (September quarter), an increase of 5.6% on the previous year. These Nature-Based visitors spent nearly 129.2 million nights in NSW and an estimated \$19.6 billion in expenditure (Destination NSW).

Nature-Based visitors accounted for 83.7% of international visitors to NSW, 37.2% of domestic overnight visitors, and 22.9% of day trip visitors to NSW. NSW is also the largest recipient of Nature-Based tourists receiving 54.3% of international, 32.0% of domestic overnight, and 29.9% of day trip Nature-Based visitors to Australia in year ending 2017 (September quarter).

Outside of the Sydney region, the North Coast Region of NSW attracts the largest proportion of Nature-Based visitors. In the year-ending 2017 (September quarter), the Region attracted 9.7% of international Nature-Based visitors to NSW, 26% of domestic overnight visitors and 16% of domestic day trip visitors. The North Coast Region has dominated the destination of choice for domestic overnight Nature-Based visitors to NSW in the past 5 years (Destination NSW).

The Nature-Based tourism market is increasing in size and importance and is recognised by state and regional tourism bodies Destination NSW and Destination North Coast who have prioritised this market in their respective strategic plans. There is significant opportunity to attract a greater share of this market through the development of the NRRT, with visitors attracted to the spectacular scenery of the Trail and this unique outdoor open space experience.

Walking / Bushwalking Tourism

According to Bushwalking Australia, bushwalking is an Australian term; in other parts of the world it is known as hiking, tramping, hill walking, rambling or trekking (bushwalkingaustralia.org). Bushwalking includes walking experiences in natural or green areas, along a trail, through urban parks or forest, a full day walk, a camping trip to a national park or reserve, or a self-sufficient multi-day expedition (bushwalkingaustralia.org).

Destination NSW reports that in the year ended March quarter 2017, there were more than 4.3 million international and domestic overnight visitors to NSW who participated in a bushwalk or rainforest walk, an increase of 5.2% on the previous year (Destination NSW, 2017).

For the year ending September quarter 2017, a third of all international Nature-Based visitors to NSW participated in a bushwalk or rainforest walk. During the same period, for domestic overnight Nature-Based visitors to NSW, bush or rainforest walks were the second most popular activity (31.4%). For the domestic day trip market, just under a quarter (23.2%) of all domestic day trips involved a bushwalk or rainforest walk.

This visitor data is supported by a survey undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics which found that 286,000 Australian adults reported that they participated in a bushwalk at least once in the previous 12 months. Further, the survey found that more than 3.5 million people had participated in walking as a form of physical exercise at least once in the previous 12 months (Catalogue 4177.0, ABS, 2015).

Rail Trails provide the ideal format for attracting the walking/bushwalking market segment. As Rail Trails are constructed along the path of a previous rail line, there are no sharp inclines; instead Trails offer slight gradients and gentle curves ideally suited for walking (railtrails.org.au).

On completion, the NRRT will be amongst the first and longest Rail Trails established in NSW. There are many Rail Trails in other states within Australia and throughout the world, attracting the growing bushwalking market. The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will leverage this market, increasing visitation to the Richmond Valley and Lismore LGAs, and the broader Northern Rivers Region.



Destination NSW reports that in the year ended March quarter 2017, there were more than 4.3 million international and domestic overnight visitors to NSW who participated in a bushwalk or rainforest walk, an increase of 5.2% on the previous year (Destination NSW, 2017).

Cycling Tourism

Rail Trails are also a key attraction for the increasing cycling (including mountain biking) market and are an important component of the Nature-Based tourism segment. The gentle inclines and smooth paths of Rail Trails make them an excellent cycling option for the family cycling market, cyclists seeking a lower grade challenge, and endurance cycling.

A report prepared by the TRC Group recognised that generally cycle tourists desire easy multi-day trips with good supporting services or events. These visitors value experiences that showcase a region's landscape, natural environment, and culture. Additionally, cycle tourists and recreational riders are not primarily focused on cycling, but on the broader visitor experience (Monaro Rail Trail Pre-Feasibility Study, TRC, 2018).

Tourism Research Australia in partnership with Tourism Victoria commissioned research to improve the understanding of motivators and barriers of cycling tourism in Australia and its potential for growth in Victoria. Key report areas included levels of engagement, market dynamic, awareness and knowledge, and Victoria's positioning as a cycling tourism destination.

This research provides valuable insights into the cycling market and the market segment for the Casino to Eltham Stage. The results indicate:

- Cyclists often take multiple trips each year and are highly engaged;
- Cyclists often travel to regional areas;
- Many respondents would undertake cycling holidays each year; and
- Online presence can generate awareness and educate the market on cycling destinations.

The top activities undertaken by those participating in cycling were sightseeing (41%), and cycling on the foreshore, river or lake (35%). The top reasons for participating were for health reasons (50%), being outdoors (42%), or for relaxation (42%) (Cycling Tourism Australia, Tourism Research Australia, 2015)



In Australia and across the World, domestic and international holiday-makers are becoming increasingly focused on travel experiences that involve adventure and maintain a healthy lifestyle. This attitudinal and behavioural shift has resulted in a growth in cycling tourism. (Cycling Tourism Australia, Tourism Research Australia, 2015).

The flow on economic benefits to a region from the cycling market are widespread and includes employment generation as well as benefits for transport, retail, bike hire, food and accommodation businesses (Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges MTB Destination, 2015). A Rail Trail provides the ideal environment to capture increased expenditure from the cycling market segment, by attracting visitors to less known areas, such as the small villages and communities located along the Trail.

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project will provide the opportunity to attract cycling tourism visitors to the Northern Rivers Region. The spectacular natural environment surrounding the gently undulating Trail will provide the backdrop for the visitors to explore the small villages and communities and inject much needed expenditure into the region.

Heritage Tourism


Destination NSW defines the market segment Cultural and Heritage Tourism as “a niche market segment with a focus on heritage and the arts”.

In the year ending December 2017, Destination NSW reports that there were 12.6 million international and domestic cultural and heritage visitors to NSW. Of these, 22% were international visitors, 38% domestic overnight visitors, and 40% domestic day-trippers. This was an increase of 3 million visitors compared with the year ending December 2016, representing a growth of 2% and demonstrating the importance and value of the heritage market segment.

The proposed NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage is rich in history and heritage, both European and Aboriginal. The rail line constructed in 1905 provides a unique heritage experience for visitors as they cycle, walk and ride along the Trail. The Destination North Coast DMP identifies ‘Arts, Heritage and Aboriginal Tourism’ as one of the seven ‘Experience Platforms’ that will drive and coordinate tourism product and experience development across the North Coast Region.

The conversion of the disused historic rail line into a Nature-Based tourism attraction aligns with the ‘Experience Platform’ and supports the overarching goal to develop Nature-Based experiences. The Plan identifies,

“There is also opportunity to encourage public and private sector investment to support the key strengths of the region including nature-based tourism, Aboriginal tourism, food and agri-tourism (cellar door, farm gate and food trails), arts (galleries and arts trails), heritage (history trails and interpretation), health and well-being, business events, events, and family attractions including educational experiences” (DNC, Destination Management Plan)



The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will showcase the Northern Rivers Region spectacular scenery and attract the growing Cycling market.

Interpretive signage located along the Rail Trail will highlight the historical aspects from the original rail line such as bridges, crossings, tunnels, and station buildings. This will enable visitors to enjoy the historic aspects of the region whilst experiencing a Nature-Based tourism attraction and recreational space.

Case studies from around the world show that Rail Trails attract significant numbers of visitors to a region. Research indicates the cycling market will undertake more experiences while on holiday when compared with other visitors, and the historic homes, buildings and museums located within the region will be promoted to visitors utilising the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT.

Accessible Tourism

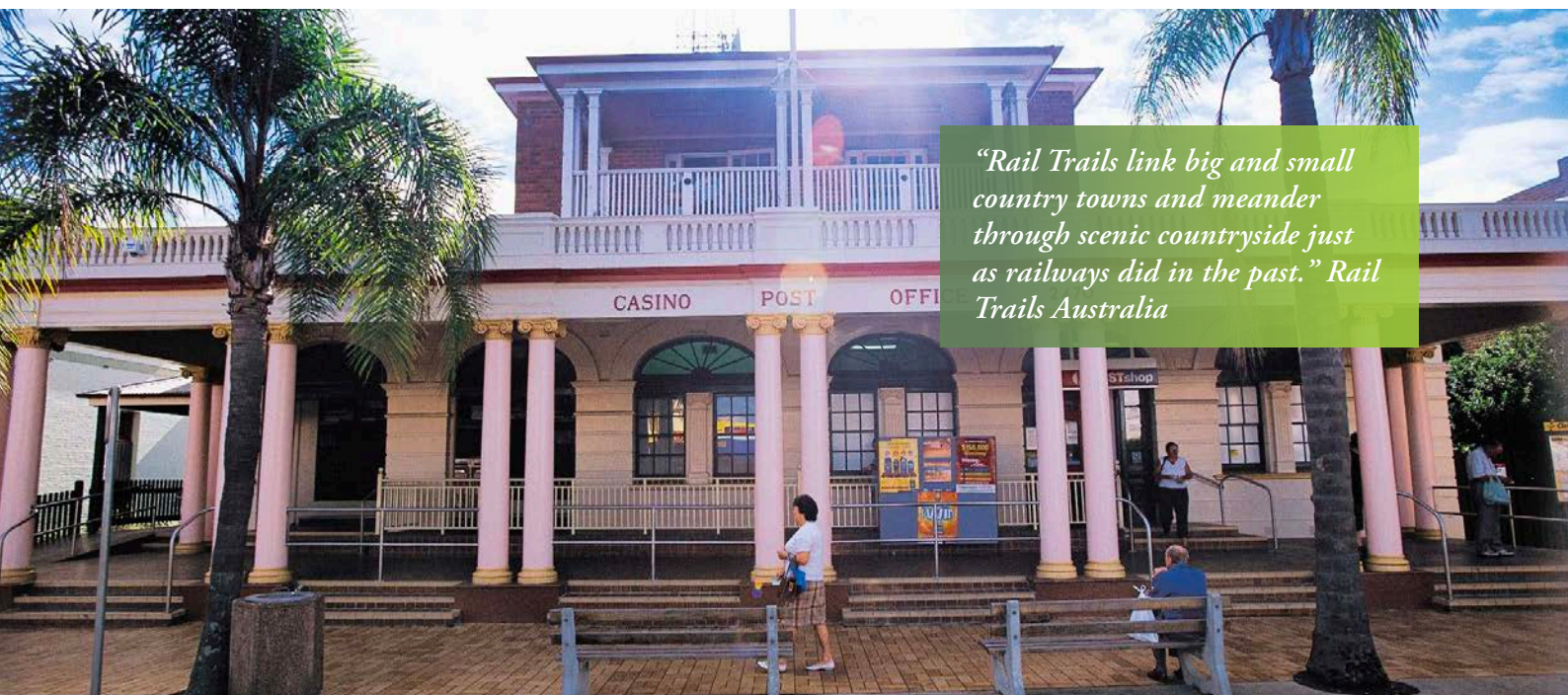
Improving accessible tourism products and providing recreational activities to cater for those with a disability in the Northern Rivers Region will have both social and economic benefits. There is a growing and diverse range of travellers with accessible needs, particularly for those with mobility issues.

Rail Trails appeal to a broad range of markets including the Accessible tourism market. A key advantage of Rail Trail construction is that most rail lines have a gradient of less than three degrees, which encourages use by almost all population groups, regardless of age. Rail Trails provide excellent recreational opportunities for people with mobility disabilities, including wheelchair users, special cycles, walking with support, and sight/ hearing impediments (Monaro Rail Trail, Pre-Feasibility Study, TRC, 2018).

The Accessible tourism market is a significant contributor to the Australian economy and research undertaken by MyTravelResearch determined the current value of the market, the latent demand and the key barriers preventing travel for people with a disability. Travelability notes,

“The value of the domestic accessible market is approximately \$8 billion, when added to the estimated inbound market for accessible tourism of \$2.8 billion the contribution of accessible tourism to the Australian visitor economy is \$10.8 billion. That is greater than the \$9.1 billion spend by Chinese tourists inbound to Australia” (Travelability, 2018)

Furthermore, the research noted that over 88% of people with a disability take a holiday each year, accounting for more than 8.2 million overnight trips in 2017. Mobility issues are the most common type of disability identified in the research, with 55% of respondents reporting difficulty with mobility in some way.



“Rail Trails link big and small country towns and meander through scenic countryside just as railways did in the past.” Rail Trails Australia

There is an inadequate supply of accessible recreational infrastructure within the Northern Rivers Region which has been identified in the local and regional planning documents. The draft Lismore Sport and Recreation Plan identifies the lack of accessible facilities noting, “Barriers to participation include accessibility of facilities and spaces for people with a disability, public transport, perceptions of safety, and lack of public toilets.”

Furthermore ‘Access and Equity’ is identified as a guiding principle within the community developed Sport and Recreation Plan (currently in draft format):

“Council will aim to provide a variety of formal and informal sport and recreation opportunities that are appropriate to urban, village and rural settings. Council will work towards ensuring all members of the community have access to sport and recreation opportunities regardless of age, gender, physical ability, socioeconomic status, or cultural identity” (Draft Lismore City Council Sport and Recreation Plan to 2024).

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage will deliver a tourism product that is accessible for all visitors including those with a disability, families with prams, and the aged. The Trail will have access points suited to users with mobility issues, and the smooth surfaces and low gradients will allow access for those with wheelchairs, mobility cycles and other mobility aids.

2.3.3 PROVIDE AN ACTIVE AND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT ROUTE

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will provide an alternative transport route for those located in the Casino and Lismore suburbs and outlying rural communities by offering users an alternative, safe and level route for active transport (walking and cycling).

The Rail Trail will connect the smaller rural communities located alongside or adjacent to Trail to the main urban centres of Lismore and Casino including recreational areas and retail and industrial precincts. Importantly, the Rail Trail will provide an alternative transport route for residents to cycle or walk to work or school.

Limited Public Transport Options

Evidence indicates that public transport represents an important component of an efficient and integrated transport network. The Trail will provide alternative transport options for residents travelling to places of employment within the main retail and industrial precincts which is currently primarily accessed by private vehicle due to the limited public transport system with the Lismore and Richmond Valley LGAs.

2016 Census data demonstrates that in Lismore, 69.6% of employed people aged 15 years and over travelled to work by car and 0.7% by public transport. In Richmond Valley LGA, 73.6% of employed people aged 15 years and over travelled to work by car and nil persons travelled by public transport. By comparison, in NSW, 57.8% travelled to work by car and almost 16% used public transport.

This reliance on private vehicle transport reflects either the lack of public transport available for key trips, such as the journey to work, and/or its acceptance by the community as a convenient, accessible and feasible form of transport.

Lismore City

The main forms of public transport servicing Lismore City are the school bus services and the Lismore town bus services. The town bus service is operated by Kirklands Coaches and the routes service destinations in the main service area including the CBD, Lismore Square, Southern Cross University, major hospitals, and main schools.

The Lismore Growth Strategy 2014 – 2034 identified that it is unlikely that the current public transport system will be expanded to service residents in the outlying communities of Lismore LGA.

“With respect to the rural villages and other rural communities, it appears that outlying villages will not economically support a full schedule public transport service. The best option is likely to be a modified school bus system allowing fare-paying passengers to share school trips. These services could be augmented by additional round-trip services at specified times for minimal additional costs. Until such services are expanded and the community takes advantage of them, most journeys will be dominated by private vehicle.” (Lismore Growth Strategy, 2014-2034)

Through the provision of an alternative route, the Rail Trail will also assist in activating the retail precinct of South Lismore providing linkages to the Lismore CBD. Additionally, the Trail will provide access to key educational facilities including South Lismore Public School, Richmond River High School, and St Johns College located at Woodlawn.

Richmond Valley Council

With limited public transport services available throughout the Richmond Valley, the Trail will provide a critical link to the town centre for the rural outlying suburbs of Casino and communities within the Richmond Valley. The Trail will link the new residential development areas at North Casino located six kilometres from Casino. With a population close to 1000 residents and 25% in the 0-15 year’s age group, the Rail Trail will provide a viable transport link for residents for recreational or work purposes.

The Trail will also provide a strategic link with Casino Christian School, a coeducational combined school located at Naughtons Gap, servicing kindergarten to year 12. The Trail will link directly with Richmond Valley Council’s strategic path and cycleways infrastructure including the new Johnston Street intersection. This new section will give a direct cycle and walkway link to Casino town centre, including the main parks and sporting grounds and the recently upgraded Casino Drill Hall Precinct. The Precinct is a \$3.3 million leisure and tourism space which will also assist to define the entry to Casino from the south.

The Trail will also provide linkages with existing recreational facilities such as the Casino Golf Club, and provide supporting transport infrastructure for events held in the City. As an example, the Trail will directly connect visitors and residents to the site of Primex, an iconic agricultural and commercial exhibition which attracts more than 25,000 visitors across the three-day event each year. The Rail Trail will provide an alternative transport option and assist in relieving road congestion to and from the site during the event.

Evidence suggests that Rail Trails, both within Australia and in other countries around the world, not only attract visitors to a region, but also provide an active transport option for local residents. The Trail will provide the perfect recreational space for residents to exercise, relax and enjoy the natural environment in which they live while also providing an alternative transport route to work or school.

The Rail Trail will support the NSW Government’s commitment to working with councils to make walking and cycling a more convenient, safe, and enjoyable transport option. Encouraging people to walk and cycle in areas where mostly short trips occur results in reduced congestion on roads and improved health for participants. It is important to recognise that maximising access to employment is a key objective of economic development strategies in regional areas including the Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Strategy for Lismore and Richmond Valley Councils.

2.3.4 IMPROVE CYCLIST AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

In addition to reducing congestion on roads and improving community health outcomes, the active transport linkages created by the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will also assist to improve safety outcomes for pedestrians and cyclists.

The NSW Government's Road Safety Plan 2021 sets out priority areas to address recent increases in the road toll to assist in achieving the NSW Government's State Priority Target of reducing fatalities by 30% by 2021. The aspirational long-term goal is zero trauma on the NSW road network.

The State Road Safety Plan 2021 identifies six priority areas:

- Saving lives on country roads;
- Liveable and safe urban communities;
- Using the roads safely;
- Building a safer community culture;
- New and proven vehicle technology; and
- Building a safe future.

Road Safety Transport statistics reflect the lack of safe cycling and pedestrian infrastructure in the Region. In the five-year period between 2011 and 2016, 149 pedestrians and 126 pedal cyclists sustained serious injuries. Additionally, there were 26 pedestrian and 1 cyclist fatalities recorded (Transport NSW, 2017).

The Bruxner Highway is the main road from Casino to Lismore and is deemed unsuitable for cyclists due to the high volume of vehicles and lack of road shoulders for safe travel. The Lismore to Bangalow Road Draft Corridor Strategy Report undertaken by the NSW Government in 2016 identified the specific challenge as "inadequate road alignment and narrow shoulders to accommodate active transport along the corridor".



"The NSW Government is committed to working with councils to make walking and cycling a more convenient, safer and enjoyable transport option that benefits everyone."
Roads and Maritime Service,
NSW Government

The Richmond Valley Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley Made, recognises the importance for residents to travel safely in and around the Shire which in turn contributes to a more productive community. The Community Strategic Plan identifies the need to advocate for and provide safe and integrated traffic, bicycle and pedestrian movement.

Similarly, the Lismore Community Strategic Plan, Imagine Lismore, identifies the need for a connected and convenient community. A key strategy identified to achieve this outcome is the provision footpaths, cycle ways, and pedestrian access that are both safe and serviceable for residents and visitors.

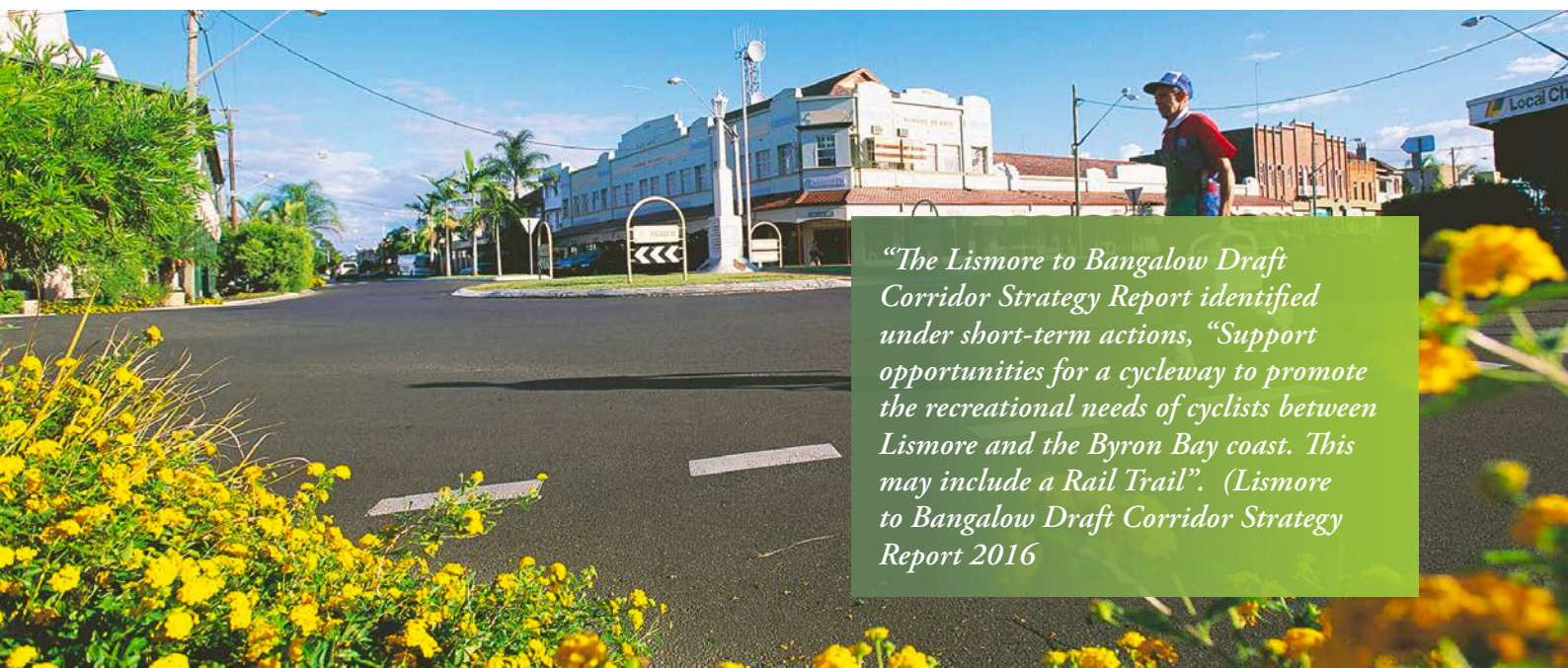
The local strategic plans are supported by NSW Government programs and strategies to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety. The Active Transport (Walking and Cycling) Program aims to make walking and cycling a more convenient, safer and enjoyable transport option that benefits everyone, and the NRRT will assist in meeting the program objectives in the Northern Rivers Region.

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage will provide an alternative and safe route, which will decrease cyclist activity on major transport routes therefore lowering the risk of injury. Additionally, the provision of a safe walking and cycling trail for recreational use will assist to move residents off roads, improving the safety of both pedestrians and drivers.

2.3.5 PRESERVATION OF RAIL HERITAGE

The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage has a unique and highly significant historic preservation component associated with the adaptive reuse of the bridges and associated infrastructure, and the heritage value of the rail line itself. The proposed Casino to Eltham Stage features a number of precincts and individual items that are listed variously within the heritage schedules of the Richmond Valley, Lismore City and Byron Shire Local Environmental Plans (LEP's); the heritage and conservation registers of government authorities (s170 registers); and/or on the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR).

A report was commissioned by the NRRT Association to identify any historic heritage considerations of the proposed Trail between the Old Casino and Bangalow stations. The report details the historic places (precincts and individual items) located along the route, including a number of assets deemed as of State-level heritage significance and listed on the State Heritage Register, State Heritage Inventory and Local Government Heritage Registers (Table 2.3.5).



“The Lismore to Bangalow Draft Corridor Strategy Report identified under short-term actions, “Support opportunities for a cycleway to promote the recreational needs of cyclists between Lismore and the Byron Bay coast. This may include a Rail Trail”. (Lismore to Bangalow Draft Corridor Strategy Report 2016

TABLE 2.3.5 IDENTIFIED HERITAGE ITEMS LOCATED IN THE CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE OF THE NRRT

ITEM	AUTHORITY	SIGNIFICANCE
Old Casino Railway Station (Richmond Valley LGA)	State Heritage Registry #01216 Richmond Valley Council Heritage Schedules	The Old Casino site is significant as the first railway station in the area opening in 1903. It was named Old Casino with the opening of new facilities at Casino when the main line to Brisbane was opened in 1930. It is a good example of a pioneer building. The crane is a rare and preserved example of this type of early timber and steel structure.
Old Casino Railway Crane (Richmond Valley LGA)	Richmond Valley LEP	This type of tripod crane is technically significant. It is also historically significant for its association with the building of the Casino - Tenterfield (Casino - Bonalbo) line, a line to the adjacent Old Casino Railway Station complex which was never completed. It is also one of several items that tell the importance of railways to Casino and district.
Naughtons Gap Railway Tunnel (Richmond Valley LGA)	Richmond Valley LEP	The Naughtons Gap Tunnel is historically significant for its association with the development of the North Coast railway, particularly the development of stage 2 between Lismore and Grafton. It is representative of nine tunnels that were built on the line east of Casino.
Lismore, Leycester Creek Underbridge and Approaches (Lismore LGA)	State Heritage Registry #S170 item number 4280247, Lismore LEP	<p>The Leycester Creek Underbridge at Lismore was constructed at the inception of the Lismore to Murwillumbah Railway in 1894. It is one of five steel railway trusses on the Lismore to Murwillumbah Railway, the first section of the original North Coast Railway.</p> <p>The bridge is a good example of the late 19th Century American-style steel Pratt truss, introduced to NSW in the late 1890s. The steel Pratt truss is a prominent structure at Lismore and the bridge retains a high level of intactness. The timber approach viaducts and plate web girders date back to the inception of the Murwillumbah Line (originally the Lismore to Murwillumbah Railway), providing an example of the use of different materials for bridge construction in the 1890s and the introduction of technically sophisticated methods for the time.</p>
Eltham Railway Cottage (Lismore LGA)	State Heritage Inventory	This rare type of Gatekeeper's Cottage was built by Albert Scouller in 1894. Its simple design provided a very basic accommodation for staff. The cottage was built adjacent to the level crossing as it needed to be handy to both the level crossing gates and the busy station.
Lismore Railway Station Group including South Lismore Railway Shed, Straight Carriage Shed, Railway Viaduct at North Lismore (Lismore LGA)	State Heritage Registry #01180 Lismore Heritage Schedule	This grouping includes rare surviving examples of railway technology including railway buildings, railway equipment, railway wharf, and road viaducts as well as buildings of architectural and aesthetic interest. Examples of workers' housing are of social and historical interest and viaducts are significant elements in the cultural landscape. The important local relationship between rail and water transport is expressed by proximity of line to river, and linkage by the former wharf. The items are of regional significance to local themes of transport and communications, and State themes of transport and technology.
Lismore Railway Underbridges (Lismore LGA)	State Heritage Registry #01044	The Lismore bridges and viaducts are a fine set of bridges all in one location demonstrating the problems of building railways in the flood prone area. These bridges date back to 1894.

TABLE 2.3.5 IDENTIFIED HERITAGE ITEMS LOCATED IN THE CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE OF THE NRRT

Underbridges	Listed on various LGA schedules	<p>There are four underbridges identified in the Casino to Eltham Stage. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pearce's Creek Underbridge (Booyong – Byron Bay LGA) 2. Coopers Creek Underbridge (Woodlawn – Lismore LGA) 3. Wilsons Creek Underbridge (Eltham – Lismore LGA) 4. Pratt Truss Underbridge (North Lismore – Lismore LGA) <p>The steel railway trusses in the Casino to Eltham stage were the first major application of American bridge technology to NSW railways and are highly significant in two heritage criteria:</p> <p>(a) They are part of the historic 1894 Lismore to Tweed (Murwillumbah) Railway, the first section of a North Coast Railway, albeit bypassed in 1932; and</p> <p>(b) They confirmed the changeover to American bridge technology for railways (and later for major road bridges) in NSW.</p> <p>They retain their original fabric and are a landmark group of bridges that are nearly all originals. This excellent example of late-colonial bridge engineering set the standard for the next 30 years.</p>
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Source: NRRT Historic Heritage Considerations – Casino to Bangalow (2018)

The NRRT Historic Heritage Considerations – Casino to Bangalow (2018) Report identifies several opportunities associated with heritage assets located on the NRRT Casino to Eltham Stags. The Report notes the importance of retaining the heritage items noting,

“While alterations to heritage items enroute is likely to be a significant procedural consideration with design and cost implications, the construction of the NRRT is also likely to have a number of high heritage-positive outcomes that are likely to ameliorate development impacts.”

The report identifies the opportunities for heritage integration into the Rail Trail, including:

- Sympathetic, adaptive reuse of a disused, historic thoroughfare.
- Conservation of significant historic features enroute, notably the metal truss bridges, which will be scenic and historic highlights for users.
- Opportunities to interpret the historic rail line and its history in promotional material at strategic nodes along the route, and at significant historic items and resting places.
- Reconnection, revitalisation and promotion of once prominent heritage localities along the Rail Trail route such as Old Casino and Eltham).

The report further recommends, with respect to the proposed NRRT, that:

- Adaptive reuse of a heritage item is generally preferable to a ‘do nothing’ or minimal maintenance approach.
- Adaptive reuse, promotion, and interpretation of the Trail will likely aid in conservation of the route overall, as it will highlight the significance of heritage items en-route and convey to trail users and the broader public that they are valued as part of the regional landscape.
- Use of the route as a Rail Trail will ensure the survival of the rail corridor, which will potentially allow for future reuse as a public transport thoroughfare should this option become viable/desirable.

Where aged and disused infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and requires replacement as part of the Project, plans are in place to reuse elements wherever possible along the Rail Trail route. An example will be the reuse of timber from the structural bridge supports. The bridges identified for replacement with steel for improved structural performance and lower maintenance costs will be re-purposed into signs, lookouts and other features along the Trail. These features can act as conservation and educational tools for future generations, preserving the heritage and cultural significance of the Trail.

2.3.6 REVITALISATION OF DECLINING CBD AREAS

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will assist in the urban renewal of declining areas within Lismore and Casino as well as assist in activating the retail centres, driving economic and social outcomes.

Lismore City

The Rail Trail traverses through the main town of Lismore connecting recreational and retail areas and providing opportunities to drive tourism expenditure into the heart of the City.

The Project aligns with and will assist on delivering the Lismore Growth Project, Lismore City Council’s economic development strategy for reactivation of key areas within the City. The Growth Project identifies four key precincts which will assist drive economic growth and activate the urban centre. These are identified as,

- The Riverside Precinct;
- City Centre Precinct;
- Sport and Recreation Precinct; and
- Health Precinct.

Figure 2.2.6 Lismore Activation Precinct



The Rail Trail directly links to the Riverside Precinct, which is strongly connected to the other precincts as a key recreational open space in Lismore. A key destination for Rail Trail users will be Lismore Railway Station, located in South Lismore. The Lismore City Council Bridge to Bridge Strategy identifies South Lismore as an area for rejuvenation.

The South Lismore Train Station is situated in a highly visible location on the riverside, however it is currently in a state of disrepair. The community vision for the South Lismore Train Station is identified as “Core to civic life, the station is bustling once again with new community-focused and leisure uses that acknowledge and celebrate the creative and industrial nature of South Lismore.” As a result of the Project, the current railway infrastructure liabilities will be converted into valuable working heritage assets with the preservation of historic bridges, tunnels and station buildings resulting in new heritage tourism products for visitors to experience. The location of the Rail Trail will be of particular interest to the cycling market that has a preference for riverside rides (Cycling Tourism Australia, Tourism Research Australia, 2015).

The Rail Trail will also link directly with the Lismore Parklands Project, a \$24 million revitalisation project located in the heart of the Lismore CBD, adjacent to the main shopping precinct, in the Sport and Recreation Precinct. The objective of the Lismore Parklands Project is to strengthen and grow Lismore’s community assets, by transforming the existing under-utilised but strategically located open space of Lismore Park into modern, vibrant community parklands. The Parklands area will accommodate major special events, community and sporting events as well as regular community activities. The Rail Trail will assist drive visitation to the events by providing a direct access route to the area.

The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will drive visitation directly into the Precinct areas, assisting with the urban renewal of Lismore by providing opportunities for vibrant public spaces, new community facilities, events, and transport links, and employment generation.



2.3.7 CAPITALISE ON EXTERNAL INVESTMENT IN THE REGION

The Project will capitalise on and encourage further capital investment occurring within the Northern Rivers Region. There has been considerable public and private sector investment in the region due to various factors such as demand associated with population growth, entrepreneurial vision and the need for regional job stimulation to support existing residents and industry.

This strong investor confidence is demonstrated by the NSW Government, through the Stronger Country Communities Fund. The NSW Government is investing \$200 million over a two-year period with the goal to make the North Coast Region a more vibrant place to live and work. “The fund will help boost productivity and make the region a more attractive place for individuals and businesses looking to re-locate.” (NSW Government, 2018)

Major infrastructure projects currently funded in the region (but are not limited to) are outlined in Table 2.3.7.

TABLE 2.3.7 MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN THE NORTHERN RIVERS REGION	
PROJECT	PROJECT PUBLIC FUNDING
Pacific Highway upgrade between Woolgoolga and Ballina by 2020	\$4.35 billion
Ballina Byron Gateway Airport Stage 2	\$4.5 million
Lismore Airport airside and lighting upgrade	\$1.6 million
Lismore Southern Cross University Science and Engineering Precinct and a new Learning Centre at the Lismore campus	\$38 million
Lismore Oakes and Crozier Oval Precinct	\$4.5 million
Lismore Basketball Stadium	\$254k
Lismore Park Amenities and Club Facilities	\$488k
Lismore Standard Mountain Bike Facility	\$268k
Lismore Hospital	\$80 million
Redevelop Netball Lismore Netball Complex	\$240k
Regional Hockey Centre	\$154k
New Mobile Towers	>\$1m
Lismore Rugby Club	\$1.8 million
Casino Drill Hall Site Development	\$1.95 million
Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange Upgrades Stage 1 and Stage 2	\$14 million

The Rail Trail provides an opportunity for public sector investment, which will assist in delivering key recreational infrastructure and a public open space corridor for the Region. The provision of publicly funded tourism infrastructure can lead to additional investment by the private sector in complementary products and services and other associated visitor infrastructure.

An investment in the creation of an iconic tourism product and Rail Trail infrastructure will demonstrate confidence in the region and subsequently drive further public and private investment.

A Submission to Productivity Commission Research Project on Australia’s International Tourism Industry notes the significance of whole-of-government approach to invest in specific tourism product infrastructure that is underpinned by research and development. The Rail Trail has been extensively planned over a five-year period, including the assessment and evaluation of other active Rail Trails located throughout Australia and internationally.

The Productivity Commission Submission notes the importance of continued Government support in projects such as the Rail Trail to ensure visitor demands are met and new visitation opportunities are maximised,

“Australian tourism requires Government cooperation and consideration to maintain and build on current tourism infrastructure to continue to meet visitor demands, and to attract new visitation. Governments at all levels are also owners of tourism infrastructure in Australia.” (Productivity Commission)

The Project will provide a unique opportunity for Local, State and Federal Governments to partner and revitalise the disused and poorly maintained transport infrastructure into a significant active, recreational open space and tourism asset.

2.3.8 IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR NORTHERN RIVERS RESIDENTS

The Northern Rivers Region residents experience poorer health than NSW population overall (healthstats.nsw.gov.au), and research from around the world indicates a direct correlation between physical exercise and health.

In the Region, 49% of adults do not get enough physical activity and 57% are overweight or obese (Northern NSW Local Health District, 2018). A rising incidence in obesity and those overweight has significant public health implications. People who have obesity, compared to those with a normal or healthy weight, are at increased risk for many serious diseases and health conditions. These health conditions include:

- All-causes of death (mortality)
- High blood pressure (Hypertension)
- High LDL cholesterol, low HDL cholesterol, or high levels of triglycerides (Dyslipidemia)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis (a breakdown of cartilage and bone within a joint)
- Sleep apnoea and breathing problems
- Some cancers (endometrial, breast, colon, kidney, gallbladder, and liver)
- Low quality of life
- Mental illness such as clinical depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders
- Body pain and difficulty with physical functioning

Australian Bureau of Statistics data on participation in sport and physical recreation finds that the percentage of people who are physically active is in decline (ABS Release No. 4177.0) and a consequential rise in the rates of obesity and overweight people in the population (Weighing the Cost of Obesity, PWC, 2015). There has been a 5.7% decline in the overall national physical exercise participation rates between 2005 and 2015 (65.9% to 60.2%). This includes a large decline in the 25 – 34 age range of 11.2% (ABS Release No. 4177.0).

This is also reflected at the LGA level with the Lismore City Sport and Recreation Plan to 2024 identifying that the LGA:

- Has high rates of physical inactivity and obesity;
- Is a suicide hotspot with record numbers of suicides occurring in the few previous years highlighting the need for improved mental health services;
- Considers mental health the top health concern; and
- Considers the need to create opportunities around incidental exercise and active transport a high priority.

Community consultation undertaken during the development of the Sport and Recreation Plan noted lower levels of community satisfaction with recreation opportunities compared to sports fields, and a demand for improved active recreation opportunities around parks, rivers and outdoors. The Plan also supports that improved physical activity and access to nature will result in improved physical and mental health outcomes for the LGA.

The Richmond Valley LGA also has higher statistical rates of self-harm, obesity and overweight, cardiovascular disease and coronary heart disease than the NSW population overall (healthstats.nsw.gov.au). The Richmond Valley Community Strategic Plan identifies a Strategic Goal to ‘Create happy and healthy communities where community members enjoy living and working together’. This Plan notes that this will be achieved by undertaking the following actions:

- Provide clean and well-maintained public recreational and sporting facilities and outdoor spaces that are accessible and safe for everyone.
- Create and promote community places and spaces that encourage the community to participate in healthy and active lifestyles.

Both Lismore and Richmond Valley LGAs have significantly higher proportions of Aboriginal people compared to NSW at 2.9%, with 5% and 7.2% respectively (NSW Education Aboriginal Affairs). The Australian Human Rights Commission identifies there is a significant and unacceptably wide gap in health status between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This is reflected in health statistical data for the Northern Rivers Region, which shows higher rates of communicable diseases, obesity, diabetes, circulatory disease, respiratory disease, asthma, mental health, and general hospital admissions for Indigenous residents (Northern NSW Local Health District – Aboriginal Population Health Fact Sheet, 2015).

“We know that our Aboriginal community members often experience poorer health than non-Aboriginal people; these inequities are unacceptable. We recognise that improvement relies on effective cross sectoral partnerships and leadership of Aboriginal organisations and communities.” Primary Health Care North Coast, 2019

Studies have shown that increased exercise contributes to better health outcomes, which in turn, provide direct economic benefit to community and government. A key benefit of the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will be Trail usage by approximately 28,250 local cyclists, bushwalkers, walkers, and runners annually (Economic Assessment of Northern Rivers Rail Trail – Casino to Eltham Stage, Lawrence Consulting, 2018).

Researchers from the University of Michigan, in partnership with universities in England, observed members of England’s Walking for Health program on different trails and found that group nature walks are linked with significantly lower depression, less perceived stress, and enhanced mental health and well-being (thetrailmaster.com).

The Project will provide a high quality, accessible, well maintained public recreational and outdoor space for the Richmond Valley and Lismore communities. Local sporting groups and community organisations are supportive of the Project as it will encourage residents to participate in physical activity (walk, run and cycle) along the Rail Trail and assist in improving health outcomes for the Region. The Trail will allow for the development of sporting and physical exercise programs targeting Aboriginal people in the Region and assist in improving health outcomes for all community members.

2.4 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT aligns with a broad range of Federal and NSW Government strategies, plans and policies relating to the areas of health, tourism, sport and recreation, economic development, transport, conservation and disability. The Project also aligns with and supports numerous local and regional strategies and goals. A range of these Plans are summarised in the Section below and identified in Table 2.4.

TABLE 2.4 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH FEDERAL, NSW, REGIONAL AND LOCAL STRATEGIES AND PLANS

FEDERAL	NSW	REGIONAL AND LOCAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Strategic Framework for Rural and Remote Health Australia’s Strategy for Nature 2018-2030: Australia’s Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Inventory Sport 2030 – National Sport Plan National Disability Strategy Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW Government Premier’s Priorities Visitor Economy Action Plan 2030 Regional Development for NSW – Making it Happen in the Regions Road Safety Plan 2021 Lismore to Bangalow Road Draft Corridor Strategy 2016 NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2018–2038 The Office of Sport - Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Economic Vision for Regional NSW NSW Koala Strategy NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Coast Regional Plan 2036 Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) 2018-2022 North Coast Destination Management Plan 2018-2021 Tweed Shire Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) 2018-2022 Lismore Sport and Recreation Plan to 2024 Imagine Lismore - Long Term Community Strategic Plan Imagine Lismore - Combined Delivery Program 2017-2021 Richmond Valley Long Term Community Strategic Plan Lismore Growth Management Strategy 2015-2035 Lismore Biodiversity Management Strategy 2015-2035 Bridge to Bridge Report (Lismore) Richmond Valley Tourism Development Plan Destination Byron Shire Destination Management Plan 2014-2020

2.4.1 NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

The National Strategic Framework for Rural and Remote Health presents a national strategic vision for health care for Australians living in regional, rural, and remote areas. “The Framework recognises the unique challenges of providing health care in rural and remote Australia, and the importance to all Australians of providing timely access to quality and safe health care services, no matter where they live.”

Vision

People in rural and remote Australia are as healthy as other Australians.

The NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage will assist the Commonwealth Government in meeting Outcome Areas 2, 4 and 5 as identified in Table 2.4.1. A key objective of the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage is to improve the health outcomes of residents in the Northern Rivers Region by developing a key recreational asset that will be cost effective and easily accessible for both residents and visitors.

The Project has been developed in collaboration and with input and support from health representatives, organisations and community groups in the Region. The Strategy notes,

“Stronger partnerships help promote a more effective use of available resources, improve the transition of patients between health services, and help to coordinate action to improve patient access and outcomes or address the social determinants of health.”

The Lismore City and Richmond Valley Councils are classified RA2 – Inner Regional Australia under the Australia Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Classification and located within the Northern NSW Local Area Health District (Northern NSW LHD) for research purposes and state health delivery.

Northern NSW LHD region health related issues that are higher than the NSW average include:

- Higher rates of smoking-attributable hospitalisations in both males and females.
- 16% of mothers smoked during pregnancy.
- Male alcohol related hospitalisations were 13% higher than the state average.
- Overall, the rate of alcohol related hospitalisations per 100,000 were significantly higher (7%) than the NSW average.
- Increased incidence and mortality due to cancer.
- The NSW Cancer Institute reports that the incidence of cancer in Northern NSW is projected to increase by 44% between 2006 and 2021.
- 12% of residents aged 16 years and over experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress in the month prior to being surveyed.
- The 2013-14 self-harm hospitalisation rate of 249/100,000 was higher than the NSW average (143/100,000 in NSW).
- The hospitalisation rate (38,946/100,000) was significantly higher than the NSW rate (36,726/100,000).

- Rate of 'Potentially Preventable Hospitalisations (7% of all hospitalisations) is significantly higher than the NSW rate.
- Reported hospitalisations of Aboriginal residents are significantly higher than non-Aboriginal residents, and are also significantly higher than Aboriginal people across NSW.
- The 'all-cause' death rate for males and females is significantly higher than the NSW average.
- In 2010-2011, the leading cause of death in the region was circulatory disease, which was significantly higher than for all NSW.
- The 2011-2012 rate of potentially avoidable deaths (129/100,000) was significantly higher than the NSW rate (108/100,000). In particular, Richmond Valley has a significantly higher potentially avoidable mortality ratio.

On completion, the Project will assist in improving and reducing the risk of many of the aforementioned adverse health outcomes present in the Northern NSW Region. Participation in physical exercise and therefore preventative health care will be delivered by health groups and organisations in the region.

The health benefits of physical activity undertaken on the Rail Trail will be experienced by children and adolescents, young and middle-aged adults, older adults, women and men, people of different races and ethnicities, and people with disabilities and chronic conditions within the Northern Rivers Region.

The Project will be of particular benefit to the socially disadvantaged and Indigenous peoples who are considered at risk of poorer physical and mental health. The Northern NSW LHD has 13,660 persons identified as Aboriginal (4.7% of the total population), with Lismore and Richmond Valley LGAs having 5% and 7.2% respectively as a percentage of their total population. The Aboriginal population has a lower life expectancy and poorer health when compared to the non-Aboriginal population within the Region. This includes hospitalisation rates, child mortality rates, chronic conditions and communicable diseases. Mental health issues for the Aboriginal population within the region is significant with Aboriginal residents 2.9 times more likely to be hospitalised for mental and behavioural disorders than the non-Aboriginal residents.

The Project will present an opportunity to share data collected from users/groups that utilise the Trail in terms of physical and mental health outcomes, demographics and preventative care measures. This will assist health organisations improve the quality and consistency of data collection that reflects the socioeconomic features of the Northern Rivers communities especially the Richmond Valley and Lismore Local Government Areas.

TABLE 2.4.1 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

OUTCOME/GOAL	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY
Outcome Area 2: Service models and models of care. Goal 2: Effective, appropriate and sustainable health care service delivery	2.4: Improved capacity for health promotion and disease prevention	Support the development of integrated, coordinated and appropriate health promotion and prevention activities that target key health priorities and target groups in rural and remote communities.
Outcome Area 4: Collaborative partnerships and planning Goal 4: Collaborative health service planning and policy development in rural and remote Australia	4.3: Improved health service planning within and beyond the health service sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement collaborative partnerships in health service planning, policy development and funding that involve services across the health care sector including public, private, not-for-profit, and community managed services. Foster partnerships and cooperation with different levels of government (local, state and Commonwealth) and with other relevant sectors, including education, housing, employment, industry, and regional development.
Outcome Area 5: Strong leadership, governance, transparency and performance Goal 4: Collaborative health service planning and policy development in rural and remote Australia Outcome Area 5: Strong leadership, governance, transparency and performance	5.2: Enhanced availability and use of data for planning and decision making 5.3: Increased accountability and transparency in the delivery of rural and remote services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and make available local health services data to enhance local health service planning. Promote the use of high-quality, local population health data in planning and decision-making, and identify gaps or areas for improving data collection. Support research that evaluates the impact of new and emerging governance and management structures, and provide an authoritative evidence base for future design. Establish reporting arrangements that maximise the use of existing indicators and data collection, and avoid unnecessary administrative burden on health services.

2.4.2 AUSTRALIA’S STRATEGY FOR NATURE 2018–2030: AUSTRALIA’S BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION STRATEGY AND ACTION INVENTORY (DRAFT)

Australia’s Biodiversity Conservation Strategy describes the vision, shared goals and objectives in managing nature in both urban and non-urban settings, and sets a framework for government, non-government, and community action to care for nature in all environments.

Vision

Australia’s nature, now and into the future, is healthy and resilient to threats, and valued both in its own right and for its essential contribution to our health, wellbeing, prosperity and quality of life.

The Strategy has three priority focus areas, or goals, underpinned by twelve objectives which are supported by an action inventory. The Strategy recognises the important link of nature to tourism, noting,

“For tourism, in the year ending June 2017, 69% (or 5.4 million) of international visitors engaged in some form of nature-based activity. The grandeur of Australia’s land and sea, our wildlife and clean, green cities, food, water and air attract visitors from around the world and are a major contributor to the economy”

TABLE 2.4.2 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH AUSTRALIA’S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

GOAL	OBJECTIVE
Connect all Australians with nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect all Australians with nature • Encourage Australians to get out into nature • Empower Australians to be active stewards of nature • Increase Australians’ understanding of the value of nature • Respect and maintain traditional ecological knowledge and stewardship of nature
Care for nature in all its diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve conservation management of Australia’s landscapes, seascapes and aquatic environments • Maximise the number of species secured in nature • Reduce threats to nature and build resilience • Use and develop natural resources in an ecologically sustainable way • Enrich cities and towns with nature
Build and share knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase knowledge about nature to make better decisions • Share and use information effectively • Effective measurement to demonstrate our collective efforts

The NRRT will create a natural habitat corridor protecting the region’s biodiversity and assisting in maintaining and restoring the natural ecosystem within the rail corridor. The disused rail line will be rehabilitated to its natural corridor, providing a habitat and safe haven to protect threatened or vulnerable species and reconnecting remnant ecosystems.

The Project will assist in increasing awareness and understanding of nature’s role and benefits to approximately 54,000 local users and visitors annually. Educational awareness will occur through various activities held on the Rail Trail including involvement by Landcare, other environmental groups, and rehabilitators in the Region. The Project will provide opportunities for volunteer nature-based activities and stewardship programs will be initiated on completion of the Trail.

On completion, the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will provide opportunities for partnerships between businesses, governments, academia, non-government organisations, landowners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander custodians, and the general community to capacity-build nature management through a shared sense of stewardship.

Opportunities for research and data collection to measure the corridor’s natural capital and ecosystem will be provided through the Project. The Rail Trail will provide Landcare, environmental groups, and Government organisations with over 200 hectares to collectively monitor and report on environmental outcomes for the flora and fauna found along in the Trail corridor.

2.4.3 NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY 2010-2020

The National Disability Strategy outlines a ten-year national plan for improving life for Australians with a disability, their families, and carers. The shared vision is for an inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfill their potential as equal citizens. The Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments developed the Strategy in partnership under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

The Strategy covers six policy or outcome areas:

1. Inclusive and accessible communities: the physical environment including public transport; parks, buildings and housing; digital information and communications technologies; civic life including social, sporting, recreational and cultural life.
2. Rights protection, justice and legislation: statutory protections such as anti-discrimination measures, complaints mechanisms, advocacy, the electoral and justice systems.
3. Economic security: jobs, business opportunities, financial independence, adequate income support for those not able to work, and housing.
4. Personal and community support: inclusion and participation in the community, person-centered care and support provided by specialist disability services and mainstream services; informal care and support.
5. Learning and skills: early childhood education and care, schools, further education, vocational education; transitions from education to employment; life-long learning.
6. Health and wellbeing: health services, health promotion and the interaction between health and disability systems; wellbeing and enjoyment of life.

The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will cater and appeal to those with a disability, in particular those with a mobility issue and the Aboriginal residents with a disability. The low gradients and smooth surfaces will provide opportunities for disabled people, families with prams, and the aged unrestricted access to experience the natural environment, culture and history of the Region. A universal design approach will be undertaken where possible on the Trail, including the numerous heritage assets located along the Trail such as rail stations and associated infrastructure.

The Rail Trail will be a public asset that is freely available to all members and cultures of the Northern Rivers community including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents and visitors.

“By any measure, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability are among the most disadvantaged members of the Australian community. They often face multiple barriers to meaningful participation in their own communities as well as the wider community, facing double disadvantage because of discrimination on the basis of their Aboriginality as well as their disability.” (National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020)

The Project will encourage increased participation of people with disability, their families and carers in the community life of the Northern Rivers Region. The various community activities and events will support the development of strong social networks for those with a disability and increase awareness and acceptance of the rights of people with a disability.

The Rail Trail will assist in improving health outcomes for those with a disability, their carers, and families through the provision of equitable and easily accessible recreational infrastructure. The Strategy notes “people with a long-term disability are among the most disadvantaged and invisible groups in our community, with comparatively poor health status and a health system that often fails to meet their need”.

Opportunities for collaboration to undertake disability research will be provided through the Project. Data collection on areas such as the health of users with a disability utilising the Trail will contribute to a sound evidence base to inform and measure national disability strategies and associated outcomes. Research opportunities will be provided to capture the diversity of people with disability and other factors such as gender, age, and Indigenous and cultural backgrounds.

2.4.4 ABORIGINAL OUTCOMES STRATEGY 2017-2021

The Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy (AOS), endorsed by the Family and Community Services (FACS) Executive Board, represents a bold new approach to delivering better outcomes for Aboriginal people. The Strategy, to be implemented from 2017 to 2021, aims to ensure transparency and accountability on the efforts and positive difference FACS makes to the lives of Aboriginal people in NSW.

The AOS is focused on reversing the poor outcomes experienced by Aboriginal clients by setting clear expectations and specifying priorities, goals, targets, timeframes and accountability. The Strategy aims to provide a transparent and cohesive response to FACS' efforts to deliver better outcomes and client experience for Aboriginal children, families, and communities.

FACS has committed to organisational targets across five key priority focus areas from 2017 to 2021, identified as:

1. Increase access to early intervention for Aboriginal families.
2. Reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home-care.
3. Improve economic and social outcomes for Aboriginal social housing clients.
4. Increase the number of Aboriginal staff in FACS.
5. Increase engagement with disability services.

The Project will encourage increased active participation in Northern Rivers Region community life. The various community activities and events will help to support strong social networks for Aboriginal Australians, and provide an opportunity to share indigenous history and culture.



The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will encourage increased participation in sport and recreation and assist build social networks for Aboriginal people in the region.

The Rail Trail will assist in improving health outcomes for Aboriginal people by promoting an active lifestyle that will help to reduce the gap in health status between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Trail will allow for sporting and physical exercise programs to be developed that target Aboriginal people in the Region and address their health concerns.

2.4.5 SPORT 2030 – NATIONAL SPORT PLAN

The recently released Sport 2030 is the National Strategy for Sport and Recreation in Australia.

Vision
Australia is the world’s most active, healthy sporting nation, known for its integrity and excellence.

Sport 2030 has four key priority areas that when fully implemented, will create a platform for sporting success through to 2030 and beyond. The priorities are:

1. Build a more active Australia: More Australians, more active, more often;
2. Achieving sporting excellence: National pride, inspiration and motivation through international sporting success;
3. Safeguarding the integrity of sport: A fair, safe and strong sport sector free from corruption; and
4. Strengthening Australia’s sport industry: A thriving Australian sport and recreation industry.

The diagram below outlines the Strategy’s priority areas and associated identified target outcomes.



The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will provide a recreational asset that is widely accessible to residents in the Northern Rivers as well as visitors and assist the Federal Government’s aim of reducing inactivity amongst Australians by 15% by 2030. Economic analysis undertaken on the Project indicates the Trail will be utilised by over 28,000 local residents and 23,000 visitors annually.

The 45km of Trail will provide open space for users to undertake physical activity whether it be walking, cycling, running or other forms of exercise. The Trail will assist in reducing the barriers to physical exercise such as access, time and cost as the recreational infrastructure will be accessible 24 hours a day/7 days per week, be of no charge to users and accessible from multiple locations from Casino to Eltham.

The infrastructure will be utilised by the numerous sporting groups, organisations and groups within the Region and new programs will be developed that encourage inactive people to participate in more physical activity such as walking. The Trail will be accessible to the socially disadvantaged, such as the disabled, culturally diverse, low-median house income earners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and women and girls.

The Project will strengthen the region’s communities through improved social cohesion and by reducing the effects of social isolation. The Trail will create an alternative pathway linking eight smaller communities to the major centres of Casino and Lismore, connecting residents in the region to each other.

With a significantly ageing population in the Northern Rivers Region, the Trail will encourage the 65 years and older age group to adopt and incorporate physical activity into their everyday lives. This will result in positive health outcomes by preventing and reducing the impact of chronic conditions, reducing the risks associated with falls, and increasing overall physical and mental health.

The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will also assist in growing the Northern Rivers, NSW, and Australian economies. Approximately 23,200 visitors are conservatively expected to use the NRRT Casino to Eltham Project annually, and of these, approximately 8,100 visitors are expected to travel from interstate or overseas. These visitors will inject approximately \$1.9 million per year into the economy, which will support an additional 15 direct jobs across the region.

At a local and regional level, the Rail Trail will provide opportunities to create and host sporting events, generating vital tourism and small business revenue.

*“The Australian Government will play a key role — alongside state, territory and local governments — in funding infrastructure that meets the ever-changing needs of Australian communities.”
Sport 2030*

2.4.6 NSW PREMIER’S PRIORITIES

The NSW Premier’s Priorities reflect a commitment to whole-of-government approach to tackling important issues for the people of NSW. The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage aligns directly with the following priorities.

Creating Jobs including supporting businesses and supporting regional development. The Project is expected to create 62 jobs directly and 127 jobs indirectly during construction. A further 15 direct on-going jobs per annum will be created through increased visitor expenditure (\$1.8 million annually) in the Northern Rivers Region once operational.

Supporting Infrastructure including regional infrastructure projects and ensuring that the regions have the infrastructure they need to support a vibrant and productive economy. The Rail Trail will assist in building NSW's capacity to provide key tourism infrastructure to attract new and emerging markets and grow the Northern Rivers economy. The Rail Trail Project will deliver infrastructure to increase employment and drive the local economy.

Tackling Childhood Obesity. Children who are above a healthy weight can experience psychological, social and health issues. Immediate health problems can include asthma, bone and joint complications, sleep disturbance, early onset of diabetes, and heart disease. The Project will support NSW Government initiatives to encourage increased activity in children through the provision of an easily accessible and cost effective recreational asset.

The Trail will provide an active transport route for local residents and children, encouraging them to walk and cycle along the Rail Trail. Local sporting organisations have embraced the Project and will introduce programs that encourage participation by children and adults across the region.

Evidence suggests 49% of adults in the region do not get enough physical activity and 57% are overweight or obese and at a risk of developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, many forms of cancer, type 2 diabetes, and osteoporosis. The Rail Trail will provide opportunities for local health groups, schools and organisations to organise various group-related activities that encourage physical activity in an affordable and social setting.

“Once the Rail Trail is established, it will be the ideal place for our Health Promotion team to coordinate volunteer-led walking groups. These can target older people, new mothers with strollers and people at risk of chronic disease and will give them access to free physical activity and support social interactions.” Northern NSW Local Health District.

2.4.7 VISITOR ECONOMY INDUSTRY ACTION PLAN 2030 (VEIAP)

In 2012, the NSW Government appointed an independent Visitor Economy Taskforce to develop a strategy to achieve the goal of doubling overnight visitor expenditure in NSW by 2020. At this time, the visitor economy was growing at a rate of just over 2% per annum. In order to address this, the NSW Government developed the 2012 Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan (VEIAP).

The 2012 VEIAP outlined 167 actions and 48 recommendations, with the overarching aim of doubling the overnight visitor expenditure from \$18.3 billion in 2009 to \$36.6 billion by 2020. In September 2017, the NSW Government established an industry-led taskforce to conduct a mid-term review of the 2012 VEIAP and provide recommendations and actions to achieve the 2020 targets. The review found since that time that overnight visitor expenditure has increased from \$20.3 billion to \$29.1 billion per year.

In August 2018, the NSW Government released the Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan 2030 (VEIAP) which notes,

“VEIAP 2030 supports the Commonwealth Government’s ambition to develop Australia’s visitor economy industry to a top tier sector and will complement the Commonwealth’s 2030 strategy” (VEIAP 2030).

From 34 actions and recommendations presented to the NSW Government by the Taskforce’s Independent Review, six key Focus Areas aimed at growing the visitor economy beyond 2020 were developed.

These Focus Areas are identified as:

- 1.Listen. Understand. Act.
- 2.Support regional decisions. Back regional NSW.
- 3.Put the visitor first.
- 4.Support, bolster and encourage the visitor economy.
- 5.Invest in infrastructure.
- 6.Make opportunities to support growth.

The Casino to Eltham Project aligns with all Focus Areas outlined in VEIAP 2030 with a particularly close alignment with Focus Areas 3 and 6.

Focus 3: Put the visitor first: Focus Area 3 states that great expectations should be exceeded by even greater experiences, noting,

“The visitor experience underpins each and every visit to NSW. Every visit should be an unforgettable one that inspires and encourages visitors to keep exploring and returning to our state.”

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will further develop the North Coast as the Rail Trail hub of NSW, building on the substantial planning and development of Stage 1 – Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. This will provide visitors with the opportunity to extend length of stay and encourage repeat visitation to the Northern Rivers Region in order to experience the full extent of the region’s attractions and experiences.

Focus 6: Make opportunities to support growth: Focus Area 6 states that new strategies will reflect the identified priorities for the sector, such as growing the regional visitor economy and emerging markets. The Focus Area states that a Nature-Based tourism strategy will be developed. The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage is a Nature-Based tourism product that will attract visitors to enjoy the spectacular scenery of the Northern Rivers Region of NSW. Direct and indirect visitor expenditure will support jobs growth and drive the local, regional and NSW economy.

2.4.8 NSW STATE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY 2018–2038

The NSW State Infrastructure Strategy is a 20-year strategy that outlines Infrastructure NSW’s independent advice on the current state of NSW’s infrastructure, including the needs and priorities over the next 20 years. The Strategy identifies policies and strategies required to provide infrastructure that meets the needs of a growing NSW population and economy.

The Strategy sets six cross-sectoral strategic directions, each designed to achieve ‘more with less’ and embed good practice across the infrastructure lifecycle.

These six directions are identified as:

1. Continuously improve the integration of land and infrastructure planning;
2. Plan, prioritise and deliver an infrastructure program that represents the best possible investment and use of public funds;
3. Optimise the management, performance and use of the State's assets;
4. Ensure NSW's existing and future infrastructure is resilient to natural hazards and human-related threats;
5. Improve state-wide connectivity and realise the benefits of technology; and
6. Drive high quality consumer-centric services and expand innovative service delivery models in infrastructure sectors.

The Strategy recognises that different areas of NSW face different opportunities and needs. Infrastructure NSW's recommendations reflect this diversity by setting geographic directions for infrastructure planning, investment and policy. Infrastructure NSW supports moving to a 'hub and spoke' model that focuses major investment in regional centres that can then support the communities that surround them. Building on these strategic and geographic directions, the Strategy outlines policy and investment options across the key infrastructure sectors. These include transport, energy, water, health, education, justice and culture, sport, and tourism.

As part of the overall strategy, a number of individual regional plans have been developed. For the Northern Rivers Region, these include the North Coast Regional Plan 2036, the Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Strategy and the Tweed Economic Development Strategy.

2.4.9 NSW STATE HEALTH PLAN 2018–2019

The NSW State Health Plan provides the strategic framework which draws together NSW Health's existing plans, programs and policies and sets priorities across the system for the delivery of 'the right care, in the right place, at the right time' for NSW residents.

The NSW State Health Plan has three key Strategic Directions. The Project aligns with Strategic Direction 1: Keeping People Healthy. This Strategic Direction aims to support people to live healthier, more active lives and reduce the burden of chronic disease.

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will deliver an active transport link and a recreational asset for the residents of the Northern Rivers Region of NSW including the main centres of Casino and Lismore. The creation of this recreational infrastructure will encourage people to walk and cycle along the Trail route, increasing their opportunities to participate in physical activity. It will also provide opportunities for local health groups, schools and organisations to organise various group-related activities that encourage physical activity. These benefits will lead to a healthier lifestyle for users, subsequently reducing costs to the NSW Government and increasing workplace productivity for employers.

2.4.10 THE OFFICE OF SPORT - STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 - 2022

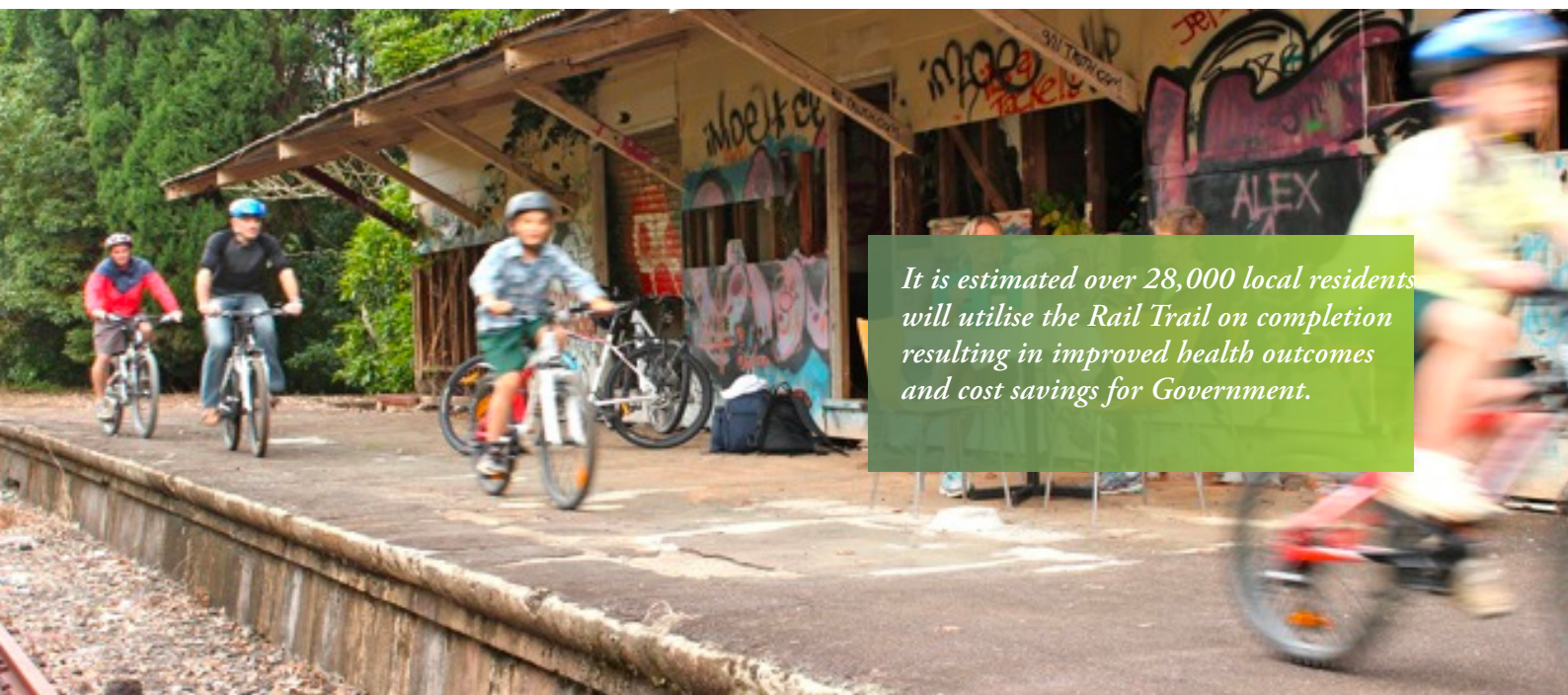
The NSW Office of Sport released the Department's Strategic Plan in December 2017 noting the importance of sport and active recreation to the health, economy, social wellbeing and the liveability of cities and communities in NSW. A key goal of the Strategic Plan is to increase participation in sport and active recreation. The Strategy notes that participation in organised sport, active recreation, and physical activity is becoming increasingly important to health in all life stages.

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will build on the Tweed Stage of the Rail Trail by developing the recreational infrastructure in the region and providing opportunities for residents of the Northern Rivers Region to participate in an active lifestyle. The Rail Trail will be freely available for walking, cycling and running and many local sporting organisations already have plans in place to encourage and support local usage of the trail.

The Economic Assessment undertaken on the Casino to Eltham Stage provides a conservative estimate for the initial level of local participation possible for the NRRT Casino to Eltham, noting that the same residents may use the Trail frequently or rarely, or conduct different activities (e.g. cycle, walk or run).

The total local usage of the proposed NRRT Casino to Eltham Project is estimated at 28,250 visits per annum initially upon project completion. Local usage in various recreational activities is identified as:

- Cycling: 8,207
- Walking: 15,642
- Bushwalking: 738
- Running: 3,665



It is estimated over 28,000 local residents will utilise the Rail Trail on completion resulting in improved health outcomes and cost savings for Government.

2.4.11 NSW HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING STRATEGY

The NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2013-2018 provides a whole of government framework to promote and support healthy eating and active living in NSW and to reduce the impact of lifestyle-related chronic disease.

The Strategy aims to encourage and support the community to make healthy lifestyle changes at a personal level and create an environment that supports healthier living through better planning, built environments, and transport solutions.

The NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage will deliver active transport infrastructure that will link communities and provide a safe, alternative transport option for residents of the region. The Project will encourage people to walk, cycle and run along the Trail leading to a healthier lifestyle and result in benefits in terms of preventative health care and cost savings for the NSW Government.

2.4.12 ROAD SAFETY PLAN 2021

The Road Safety Plan 2021 outlines how the NSW Government will work towards the State Priority Target of reducing fatalities by 30% by 2021 (compared to average annual fatalities over 2008–2010). The Plan also aligns with the Towards Zero vision (Future Transport 2056), which aims to have a NSW transport network with zero trauma by 2056.

The Plan has six priority areas for the NSW Government to deliver by 2021. These include:

1. Deliver a new Saving Lives Program on country roads.
2. Develop a new NSW Police enforcement strategy for regional and metropolitan NSW to target high risk behaviour.
3. Tackle drink and drug driving behaviour by strengthening penalties and enhancing enforcement.
4. Work with the heavy vehicle industry to develop a new heavy vehicle strategy to improve operational safety and increase the uptake of safety technology.
5. Enhance the NSW Government vehicle fleet policy.
6. Implement legislative changes to allow camera-based technology to enforce mobile phone use offence, and further analyse the role of distraction on the road toll.

The Plan notes that over two thirds of all fatalities occur on country roads. Under the Road Safety Plan, there are separate strategies for different modes of transport and for different regions. The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT is located within the Northern Region of NSW. In the five-year period between 2011 and 2016, 149 pedestrians and 126 cyclists sustained serious injuries, and there were 26 pedestrian and 1 cyclist fatalities.

The Project will provide residents with a safe, alternative transport route between major population centres and encourage recreational walkers and cyclists off the roads to therefore assist in reducing the risk of injuries and fatalities. This objective directly supports the Road Safety Plan and will result in improved safety outcomes for the Northern Rivers Region of NSW.

2.4.13 NSW GOVERNMENT'S KOALA STRATEGY

The NSW Government has set the ambitious goal of securing threatened species in the wild for the next 100 years. The NSW Koala Strategy's objective of stabilising and increasing koala numbers over the long-term will ensure genetically diverse and viable populations across NSW. In NSW, most koalas are located on the Central and North Coasts.

With regards to Koala Habitat Conservation, the Strategy notes,

“Koala habitat will also be protected on other types of public land, for example on crown land and travelling stock reserves. Agencies will work together to develop a process for assessing the koala habitat values on government land. This will help inform if the land should be permanently reserved or have protections in place.”

On completion, the Project will create a significant wildlife corridor and foster an increased connection between conservation and tourism as well as promote the protection of nearby environmentally sensitive areas including those with koala populations. In addition, the Trail corridor will link existing koala habitat areas in the Region and support koala rehabilitators, such as the Northern Rivers Wildlife Carers and Friends of Koalas organisations located in Lismore. The Project will help achieve the NSW Government objective of building knowledge about koalas and their habitat by providing opportunities to monitor and collect data, and improving the management of public land.

2.4.14 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR NSW – MAKING IT HAPPEN IN THE REGIONS

The Regional Development Framework for NSW is based on a model of investment in regional NSW that:

- Provides quality services and infrastructure in regional NSW, ensuring a baseline set of services;
- Aligns efforts to support growing regional centres, acknowledging the needs of areas with strong growth in population, jobs, or both; and
- Identifies and activates economic potential by looking across regional NSW for opportunities to change the economic outlook and activate local economies.

The Northern Rivers Region is identified as a key growth region in the NSW 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW. The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will support population growth by investing in a project that will deliver 62 direct jobs during construction and a further 15 direct on-going jobs per annum through increased visitor expenditure in the Northern Rivers Region.

The Project will stimulate the regional economy and assist in achieving regional economic development objectives by drawing visitors away from the traditional coastal tourism environment and into the hinterlands. This Stage of the NRRT will connect and stimulate smaller local communities by attracting a significant number of visitors each year and providing the opportunity to activate these local economies whilst 'smoothing' out visitation levels over a 12-month period.

2.4.15 LISMORE TO BANGALOW ROAD DRAFT CORRIDOR STRATEGY 2016

The Lismore to Bangalow Road Draft Corridor Strategy sets out the NSW Government's 20-year plan to manage and guide the development of the road corridor to improve safety, traffic efficiency, and sustainability.

The vision for the Lismore to Bangalow Road has been developed to explain what actions should be achieved over the next 20 years in order to improve the performance of the road and meet the specific corridor objectives. The vision for the Lismore to Bangalow Road Corridor is:

- To support Lismore to Bangalow Road as a general access route travelling north south between Lismore, Bangalow and Byron Bay, while complementing the Bruxner Highway as a principal freight route.
- To enhance road safety outcomes for all road users over the length of the corridor through implementation of the safe system approach in the planning, development and delivery of improvement and maintenance works.
- To manage the impacts of recurrent flooding events of the Wilsons River between Lismore and Bexhill.
- To continue to progressively improve poor pavement condition, road alignment and road width along the corridor.
- To have a sufficient number of overtaking opportunities in both directions to maintain a safe and efficient level of service.
- To maintain the local amenity of Bexhill, Clunes, Binna Burra and Bangalow villages.
- To support the active transport needs of cyclists and pedestrians within towns and villages.
- To support the needs of public transport users through appropriate facilities and infrastructure along the corridor, in particular by improving regional bus travel.

The Strategy specifically identifies under Short Term Actions,

“Support opportunities for a cycleway to promote recreational travel needs of cyclists between Lismore and the Byron Bay coast. This may include a Rail Trail.”

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will also achieve the Strategy's vision of supporting the active transport needs of cyclists and pedestrians within towns and villages through the provision of an active transport corridor.

2.4.16 ECONOMIC VISION FOR REGIONAL NSW

The 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW aims to ensure regional NSW is poised to take advantage of future opportunities for growth. The Northern Rivers Region has been identified as a 'Growth Centre' within NSW. Growth Centres are characterised by populations that are rapidly increasing as people migrate to regional areas attracted by lifestyles and employment industries.

The Tourism and Hospitality sector was identified as one of the industries that will drive regional NSW economies over the next 20 years. The Economic Vision for Regional NSW noted that,

“A growing international tourist market from Asia and beyond will visit NSW looking for different travel experiences. Regional NSW’s diverse and natural beauty will continue to draw domestic and overseas visitors, with opportunities growing for niche and personalised travel experiences championed by small and medium-sized businesses”.

The Northern Rivers Region is already established as an international tourism destination. The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will seek to maximise opportunities from international visitor growth into the Gold Coast airport with these visitors drawn to the spectacular scenery and attractions of the Gold Coast and NSW Hinterlands.

The Project will assist to diversify the tourism product of the region, drawing visitors away from the traditional coastal areas associated with the North Coast to the regional hinterlands, encouraging visitors to explore the National Parks and small villages located along the Rail Trail.

2.4.17 NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLAN 2036

The North Coast Regional Plan 2036 was released in 2016 by the NSW Department of Planning. The Plan is a blueprint for the next two decades that reflects community and stakeholder aspirations and opportunities that will leverage the North Coast’s position between two of the fastest growing population corridors in the nation.

The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage aligns with a number of strategic goals and directions identified within the North Coast Regional Plan 2036. These are outlined below.

Goal 2: A thriving, interconnected economy:

Direction 5: Strengthen communities of interest and cross-regional relationships. This Strategic Direction notes that “The North Coast has growing and dynamic relationships across local government and state boundaries. These relationships are building broader communities of interest based on unique social and economic linkages and are creating a more vibrant and diverse economy.” The NRRT Association is the key driver behind the Rail Trail Project with the support of 5 local Councils and over 4,000 supporters. It is comprised of local philanthropists, community volunteers, local government councillors and staff, and leaders within the tourism industry. The Project will provide an array of economic benefits for the communities within the Northern Rivers Region, boosting the economy and creating new employment opportunities.

Direction 8: Promote the growth of tourism. This Strategic Direction highlights that over 12 million people visit the North Coast annually and that there is an opportunity to expand Nature-Based tourism and heritage attractions, including crown reserves and forests. In particular, this Direction notes that enhanced walking and cycling trails will improve opportunities to enjoy the spectacular and diverse Northern Rivers environment. The Casino to Eltham stage of the NRRT will build on the significant work already undertaken within the Tweed region to deliver the longest Rail Trail in NSW. This will present a unique opportunity to attract visitors to walk and cycle along the trail, whilst enjoying some of the most picturesque natural environments within NSW. The ability to present an alternate tourism product from traditional beach related activities associated with the Region will assist in diversifying the tourism offering and grow the visitor economy.

Goal 3: Vibrant and engaged communities:

Direction 14: Provide great places to live and work. This Strategic Direction notes that the North Coast has communities with a distinct character and this is a significant drawcard for visitors and new residents to the Region. The Casino to Eltham stage of the NRRT alone is projected to attract more than 23,000 visitors annually, generating tourism expenditure and driving the regional economy. The Project will also assist in connecting local villages and communities and will provide the opportunity to develop localised economic plans to leverage this visitation.

Direction 15: Develop healthy, safe, socially engaged and well-connected communities. This Strategic Direction notes that North Coast communities enjoy the great outdoors and being active. It is critical that urban environments continue to enjoy this lifestyle and expanding on the recreational walking and cycling trails that already exist will allow more people to experience the region's villages and wonderful natural areas. Stage 2 of the NRRT will provide the residents from Casino to Eltham with access to an active transport link that will connect towns, villages and the natural environment of the region.

2.4.18 NORTHERN RIVERS REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (REDS) 2018 - 2022

The NSW Government has assisted Local Government Authorities and their communities to develop 37 Regional Economic Development Strategies across regional NSW. Each Strategy is designed around one or more Local Government Areas that form a functional economic region as defined by economic data and community input.

The Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) includes the five Local Government Areas of Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Lismore, Byron and Ballina. The REDS has been developed to facilitate economic growth across the Northern Rivers Region - a widely diversified lifestyle, production and creative services hub.

The Northern Rivers REDS identified key specialisations which include:

1. Agriculture, food manufacturing, and logistics chain workers in the western hinterland;
2. Health, human services, and retail in the regional hub of Lismore; and
3. Tourism, creative professionals, and traditional business enabling services in coastal areas.

'Growing Tourism Opportunities across the Region' was identified as a strategic imperative within the Northern Rivers REDS and the Rail Trail was listed as one of the "Candidate Projects".

'Develop tourism opportunities in the Northern Rivers', focusing on coastal and inland World-Heritage sites, food and creative industries, was also listed as one of the Early Stage Actions in the Strategy. The Rail Trail Project will deliver a large-scale tourism asset for the inland areas within the Northern Region, attracting visitors away from the coastal fringe and supporting local business in the smaller villages.

On completion, the Project will assist in building on key specialisations whilst strengthening the region's existing industry base including the tourism sector.

2.4.19 NORTH COAST DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018- 2021

The North Coast Destination Management Plan (DMP) was developed for the sustainable management, development and marketing of tourism for the North Coast of NSW to 2021. The NRRT is identified as a key priority and catalyst project within the DMP: “Advocating for flagship tourism experiences in the region including the Northern Rivers Rail Trail.”

The DMP identified seven Experience Platforms to drive and coordinate the tourism product and experience development across the North Coast to 2021. Developing nature experiences was a key focus as it was identified that nature has close links with the other six Experience Platforms. Development of these nature experiences will differentiate the North Coast from other coastal destinations.

The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage is a key Nature-Based tourism project as it is expected to attract more than 23,000 visitors annually to the Northern Rivers region to experience the spectacular natural environment of the national parks and hinterlands. The Economic Assessment notes that of these 23,000 visitors, more than 8,100 will be international or interstate visitors.

‘Arts and Heritage’ was another Experience Platform identified in the DMP, with strategies to develop and promote distinctive arts, cultural and heritage experiences across the North Coast. The Project will revitalise a number of disused rail stations and preserve and incorporate historical assets such as significant bridges into the trails, allowing visitors to experience the history and heritage of the region.

2.4.20 IMAGINE LISMORE - COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2027

The Lismore City Council Community Strategic Plan forms the Lismore community’s vision to the year 2027. The Plan was developed following extensive community consultation with individuals, community groups, government agencies and businesses.

The community consultation indicated that encouraging new businesses and development of the tourism sector were two important community issues. The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage alone will attract an estimated 23,000 visitors to the Northern Rivers Region each year which will support new business development and provide opportunities for expansion and diversification for existing tourism businesses. Further, the Casino to Eltham Stage will pass through smaller villages along its route providing these communities with an opportunity for business expansion and attraction.

Imagine Lismore has five key Priority Areas, each of which has a series of Actions. The Project aligns with the following Priority Areas and Actions:

Priority Area 1: An inclusive and healthy community. Action A3: Our sporting facilities and recreational spaces encourage active and passive community participation. The Project will deliver an active transport link that will encourage residents to walk and cycle increasing the overall health of the community.

Priority Area 2: A prosperous and vibrant city. Action B1: Our community has diverse business and industry, as well as opportunities for investment and growth. The Casino to Eltham Stage will attract approximately 23,000 visitors to the region each year presenting opportunities for business growth and stimulate further investment.

Action B4: Our community is connected and convenient. The Project will connect many communities along its route, linking the rural areas surrounding Lismore and Casino to the town centres. Over 22,000 visitors will be dispersed throughout the City, assisting in the urban renewal of South Lismore, activation of the City Centre, and driving further public and private investment into the region.

Priority Area 3: Our natural environment. Action C4: Our diverse natural environment is protected and enhanced. The Project will encourage the protection of nearby environmentally sensitive areas and form a natural habitat corridor for a diverse array of flora and fauna. The Trail corridor has undergone significant environmental assessment, which will enable the proper maintenance and land management. The Trail will assist to link natural rehabilitation and Landcare groups within the region and result in positive environmental and conservation outcomes.

2.4.21 IMAGINE LISMORE - COMBINED DELIVERY PROGRAM 2017-2021

The Imagine Lismore Delivery Program and Operational Plan takes the strategic goals outlined by the community in the Imagine Lismore Community Strategic Plan and delivers measurable actions against them. This document specifically references the NRRT Project:

“B4.4 Investigate a Rail Trail for the Northern Rivers” is listed as being delivered by Lismore City and Richmond Valley Councils, and supports the work undertaken by the NRRT Association in commissioning studies and reports into the proposed Casino-Lismore Stage of the NRRT.

2.4.22 LISMORE SPORT AND RECREATION PLAN TO 2024

The Lismore Sport and Recreation Plan to 2024, currently under development, will provide a framework for sport and recreation and strategies for the future use and development of sport and recreation facilities, services and programs for the Lismore Local Government Area. A key objective of the Plan is to prioritise current and future needs of residents until 2024.

Vision

Lismore City Council will foster a diverse range of sustainable sport and recreation opportunities which respond to identified community needs and provide economic benefits where possible by capitalising on the unique strengths of the region.

The Plan identifies several principles to provide guidance for Council actions on sport and recreation. These include:

1. Contribute to Economic Development
2. Access and Equity
3. Diversity of Opportunity
4. Strategic Alignment
5. Sustainability
6. Partnerships
7. Support Active Lifestyles

The Plan identifies 10 priority actions for the region with Priority 5 identified as: ‘Pursue the development of the Rail Trail and outdoor/adventure activities for economic and local participation benefit.’

The NRRT Casino to Eltham stage is strategically aligned and will assist Lismore City Council to deliver on the many of themes and actions identified in the Strategy outlined in the Table 2.4.22.

TABLE 2.4.22 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH LISMORE SPORT AND RECREATION PLAN

FEDERAL	NSW	REGIONAL AND LOCAL
Theme 1: Enhance Our Communities Deliver sport and recreation facilities and services which enhance our diverse communities.	Action 1.1: Ensure that infrastructure development for sport and recreation is sustainable (capital and operational) and decision-making is evidence based. Action 1.5: Consistent with the key themes of 2015 Community Plans prepared through Community Panels, investigate and deliver projects that enhance sport and active recreation opportunities within villages.	Development of Economic Assessment and Business Case which provides the robust evidence to prove the feasibility of the NRRT. The Project will facilitate and encourage walking and cycling within, around and between villages for both local participation and economic benefit.
Theme 2: Activate Our People - Enable residents to be physically active	Action 2.1: Prioritise the planning and development of walking and cycling networks to encourage more walking and cycling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an integrated Walking and Cycling Strategy which considers recreational, commuter connectedness cycling, and forms of provision in urban, village and rural environments. • Support the planning and subsequent development of Rail Trails in the region as a priority, subject to the outcome of the Business Case currently underway. • Continue planning and development of the Bridge to Bridge walking loop. • Consider investigating the development of a special rate to support implementation of walking and cycling opportunities in the region. 	The Project will provide the necessary infrastructure that local residents and community groups can access freely and at no costs This strategic recreational asset will support existing local strategies and result in improved health outcomes for the Lismore Shire.
	Action 2.3: Continue to deliver active infrastructure in public spaces including exercise equipment, playgrounds, walk/cycle networks (refer to action 2.1).	The Rail Trail will be an active recreational public space easily and readily accessible by all ages, groups, abilities, and cultures within the shire.
Theme 3: Grow Our Economy – Seek opportunities to use sport and recreation as a tool to contribute to the economic growth of the Lismore region.	Action 3.1: Continue to support Rail Trail planning and development in the region as a high priority for economic development and regional participation in walking and cycling. Action 3.2: In cooperation with other stakeholders (e.g. Richmond Valley Council and Northern Rivers Rail Trail Inc.) examine national and overseas best practice for the maintenance and operation of trails. Action 3.4: Capitalise on the region’s natural characteristics by encouraging access to outdoor recreation opportunities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Bridge to Bridge development project. • Investigate launch points and trail heads for paddle sports. 	The investment in the pre-planning stages by Lismore City Council directly actions and supports this theme. Lismore City Council has collaborated with Richmond Valley Council, Tweed Shire Council, Byron Shire Council and Ballina Shire Council to facilitate the extensive research that underpins the feasibility of the NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage. The Project supports and strengthens the region’s natural endowments and existing regional strategies such as the Bridge to Bridge Strategy.
	Action 3.5: Capitalise on the region’s natural characteristics by encouraging access to outdoor recreation opportunities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Mountain Bike Strategy and Trails Master Plan to explore the potential for positioning the Northern Rivers as a mountain bike hub for events, tourism, and recreational riding. The strategy should consider opportunities to align mountain bike routes with rail trail development. Major trail developments targeting tourism/ major events should be subject to additional feasibility analysis. • Encourage commercial recreation possibilities in natural areas. 	On completion, the NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage will provide the opportunity for collaboration between leading tourism bodies, tourism groups and operators to develop and form relationships to support the ongoing marketing and promotion of the Trail. Relevant strategies to encourage visitation will be developed to position the Northern Rivers Region as a cycling/mountain bike hub and also explore synergies and cross promotional campaigns to drive international visitation with other Rail Trail Hubs, such as Queenstown in New Zealand. The Trail will create new commercial opportunities such as tourism support businesses, e.g. bike hire and repair and food related businesses.

TABLE 2.4.22 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH LISMORE SPORT AND RECREATION PLAN

<p>Theme 4: Maximise Our Resources - make evidence-based decisions which maximise the financial, physical and human resources available to deliver quality sport and recreation opportunities within our community.</p>	<p>Action 4.1: Ensure that infrastructure development for sport and recreation is sustainable (capital and operational) and decision-making is evidence based, determined by rigorous feasibility analysis, and prioritised against other community sport and recreation.</p> <hr/> <p>Action 4.8: Pursue an ongoing leveraging approach to the management and delivery of sport and recreation in order to use resources to their maximum advantage, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devising creative funding strategies and partnerships with other agencies, and special levies, crowd-funding, public-private partnerships; • Creating partnerships to create and deliver opportunities e.g. physical activity programming; • Community capacity building; • Multi-use of facilities, including facilitating community access to non-Council facilities and spaces. 	<p>Extensive planning and analysis has been conducted to prove the feasibility of the NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental and biodiversity reporting; • Review and analysis of heritage elements and assets; • Community engagement and stakeholder analysis; • Engineering and construction reviews and planning; and • Economic Impact Assessment. <hr/> <p>The NRRT Committee has utilised a range of techniques to raise funds to progress and prove the feasibility of the Project. These techniques include crowd funding (\$75k), donations, fundraising through specialised events and sponsorship. These funds have reduced the reliance on the LGAs involved and also demonstrate the broad and overwhelming support for the Project.</p>
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2.4.23 LISMORE GROWTH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015-2035

The Lismore Growth Management Strategy 2015-2035 (GMS), adopted by Lismore City Council in 2015, brings together the community’s aspirations for growth and identifies land that will support population and economic growth until 2035.

The GMS identifies land suitable for future housing, commercial, and industrial development. The Strategy aims to ensure that development is planned and located in areas that have minimal constraints and can be serviced with necessary and appropriate infrastructure. The Lismore Growth Management Strategy anticipates an increase in Lismore’s population of close to 5,900 people over 20 years.

The key goals of the GMS are:

- Prevention of the spread of coastal development and encourage the development of non-coastal centres (those west of the Pacific Highway).
- Protection of koala habitat and protection, extension, and linking of urban and rural green spaces and wildlife corridors.
- Maintain the integrity of the rural landscape by, for example, keeping village expansion close to villages, being aware of the impact of expansion along ridgelines, and maintaining buffers and green spaces between centres.

The Project directly supports the goals of the Growth Management Strategy through the provision of key recreational assets that will meet the expectations of current residents and assist in attracting new residents to the region. The Project will also provide critical transport linkages from rural areas and connect with Lismore’s strategic path networks.

2.4.24 LISMORE BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015-2035

The Lismore Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS) was developed in direct response to the community’s request for Council to provide environmental leadership, as expressed in the Imagine Lismore community consultation process. The BMS covers the Lismore LGA and provides a pathway for Council to build partnerships with the community to protect and enhance biodiversity on public and private land in both urban and rural landscapes.

The Strategy notes,

“The greater aim is to restore native vegetation across all land in the Lismore LGA from the rainforests of the Nightcap Range through our urban and village centres right down to the Richmond River floodplain. The BMS promotes vegetation connectivity throughout the LGA as the basis for biodiversity management.” (Lismore City Council)

The objectives of the BMS are:

- To maintain or increase biodiversity and sustain ecological processes by developing a greater understanding of the flora and fauna, habitats, and ecological processes of the Lismore LGA and improving community awareness of biodiversity through education.
- To foster partnerships with, and develop opportunity for rural landholders, industry, Indigenous and community groups to improve the management of biodiversity across the Lismore LGA.
- To promote a landscape connectivity approach as the basis for managing biodiversity and building landscape resilience to climate change.
- To contribute to the identification and mitigation of the pressures on biodiversity values.
- To provide a framework of targeted management priorities to maintain and improve biodiversity in the Lismore LGA.
- To build capacity and increase opportunities for landholders and community groups to enhance and manage biodiversity values on their land across all land tenures in the Lismore LGA.
- To provide for ecologically sustainable development.

A number of actions and strategies from the BMS align with the Casino-Lismore Project.

Action 34: Review of Section 94 Contributions Plan: Identify future opportunities under the Section 94 Contributions Plan, and provide input and comment where necessary. This may include the inclusion of bushland tracks associated with the implementation of a Trails Strategy within the Lismore Sport and Recreation Strategy.

Action 54: Community participation in biodiversity: Promote community health and well-being associated with biodiversity and green spaces, including:

(b) Input into the LCC's Sport and Recreation Strategy to:

- i. Develop or restore, and connect, walking tracks in the Lismore bushland reserve system and in the Lismore urban area, to encourage safe, low impact recreational opportunities for the community.
- ii. Promote the appreciation of urban biodiversity values.
- iii. Develop a Trails Strategy to incorporate the above points. Development of this Strategy will involve a feasibility study to identify priority areas including their cost and benefits

These actions directly support the development of the Rail Trail within the Lismore region. The Trail will enhance and showcase the regions unique biodiversity and encourage residents and the broader community to engage with the environment through the development of the Rail Trail.

2.4.25 WILSONS RIVER BRIDGE TO BRIDGE VISION REPORT

The Bridge to Bridge area refers to the section of the Wilsons River and land that stretches directly adjacent to the river to Molesworth Street (Lismore CBD) and Union Street (South Lismore) between the two bridges to the south and north sides of Lismore. This area consists of a network of parks (Riverside Park, Heritage Park, Spinks Park), buildings and land (occupied by businesses and community organisations), NORPA and surrounding City Hall parkland and sporting facilities (Bowls Club, Croquet Club, Public Pool, Canoe Club and Skate Park).

Vision

Reconnecting Lismore to river life; community, recreation and natural habitats.

Consistent themes arose from the community and stakeholder engagement undertaken during the development of the Report, including the revitalisation of South Lismore which is consistent with the outcomes and objectives of the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage.

The following list is based on the outcomes from the community engagement process and details the most prominent community aspirations for the Wilson River Bridge to Bridge area:

- Raising local awareness of river through view lines, access, recreation and food.
- Balancing social uses with environmental protection.
- A walking and cycling circuit.
- Water based activities and tourism.
- Increasing the sense of safety.
- Social services and activities.

- Markets and café on wharf.
- An Aboriginal cultural centre.
- A pedestrian bridge linking the CBD with South Lismore.
- Interpretive signage.
- Creative industries and residential development potential for Hurford site.
- NORPA as the visual gateway to Lismore.
- Water or nature play elements in Heritage Park.

The report outlines four key principles:

- Valuing and celebrating our natural habitat and identity as a 'River City'.
- Connecting and activating the River Precinct.
- Celebrating culture and community life.
- Bringing Lismore stories to life.

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT traverses through the area identified in the Bridge to Bridge Plan with a potential of over 54,000 visitors to pass between the bridges annually. Many of these visitors will have direct expenditure in the area generating an economic boost and reactivating a declining area of Lismore.

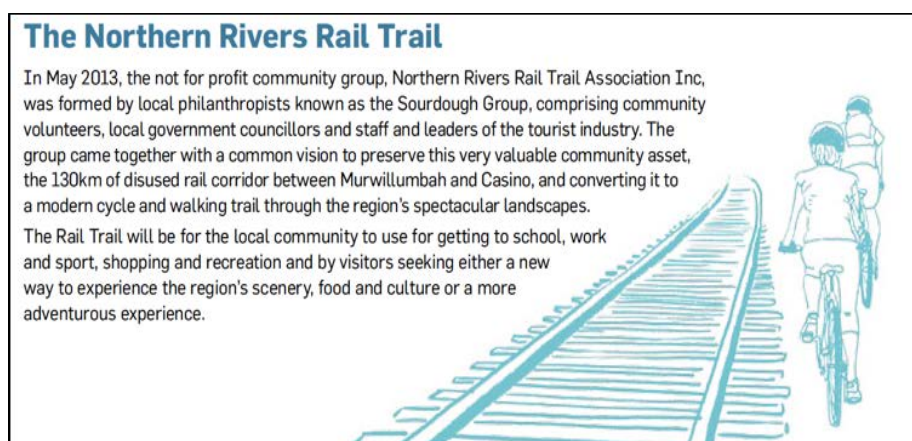


Wilsons River at Lismore

2.4.26 RICHMOND VALLEY MADE 2030 (COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN)

The Richmond Valley Made 2030 Community Strategic Plan (CSP) was released in 2017 and outlines the community aspirations and Council plans until 2030. The document was based on 18 months of community consultation and planning and contains a number of signature projects that are planned for the Richmond Valley that will improve the lives of the community and were highlighted as a priority during the consultations.

The Northern Rivers Rail Trail was referred to as a signature project within the Richmond Valley Community Strategic Plan.



Richmond Valley Made 2032 has four key priority areas, each of which has a series of Strategic Goals and Actions. The Project aligns with the following Priority Areas and Actions:

TABLE 2.4.26 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH RICHMOND VALLEY MADE 2030

AREA	OBJECTIVE	ALIGNMENT
Connecting People and Places: Fresh and Vibrant Communities	An outcome within this Priority Area was to create happy and healthy communities where community members enjoy living and working together. Key strategies to achieve this outcome were listed as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clean and well-maintained public recreational and sporting facilities, and outdoor spaces that are accessible and safe for everyone. Create and promote community places and spaces that encourage the community to participate in healthy and active lifestyles. Provide attractive, vibrant and clean town centres that residents and visitors enjoy. 	The Northern Rivers Rail Trail was listed as a key project within this Priority Area.
Getting Around	1. Getting Around An outcome within this Priority Area was to provide a safe and accessible transport network. Key strategies to achieve this outcome were listed as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure adequate maintenance and renewal of roads, footpaths and cycle ways. Advocate for and provide a safe and integrated traffic, bicycle and pedestrian movement. 	The Northern Rivers Rail Trail was listed as a key project within this Priority Area.

TABLE 2.4.26 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH RICHMOND VALLEY MADE 2030

<p>Driving Our Economy: Driving Economic Growth</p>	<p>An outcome within this Priority Area was to significantly grow the Richmond Valley’s economy. Key strategies to achieve this outcome were listed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the growth of a diverse regional economy. • Create more job opportunities. • Increase tourism in the Richmond Valley showcasing the best attractions of our region for visitors and residents. • Increase visitors to the Richmond Valley. • Increase visitors who stay overnight in the Richmond Valley. 	<p>The Casino to Eltham Stage forms the Southern Trail Head, located at Casino. A key outcome of the Project will be increased visitation and expenditure in the Region.</p>
<p>Looking After Our Environment: Promoting the Protection of the Environment</p>	<p>An outcome within this Priority Area was to protect and enhance the Richmond Valley’s beautiful environment. Key strategies to achieve this outcome were listed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead and engage the community to increase awareness and improve sustainable management of the environment. • Minimise environmental harm through Council’s own environmental management practices. 	<p>The 45km Trail traverse through the Richmond Valley and will showcase the beauty and natural appeal of the Northern Rivers landscape. Interpretive signage and land management practices will assist inform visitors and residents of the high conservation value of the regions fauna and flora.</p>

2.4.27 RICHMOND VALLEY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Richmond Valley Tourism Development Plan was identified as an important priority following the establishment of a renewed strategic focus on the management of tourism for towns and villages across the Richmond Valley region.

The Tourism Development Plan identifies important approaches to improve the visitor economy, such as:

- The establishment of working groups to assist with industry development and engagement, accommodation development, and development of a new agri-based tourism strategy.
- Development of strategies for product development, the Pacific Highway bypass, visitor road signage, Richmond Valley events, Richmond Valley Visitor Information Services, as well as annual marketing plans.
- Continuing to work with Richmond Valley Council’s Assets team to determine the feasibility of new infrastructure, such as Casino Riverside Amphitheatre and Drill Hall Project, and the Woodburn Riverside Rejuvenation Project, as well as the enhancement of existing infrastructure, such as the Casino Civic Hall.
- Supporting operators to develop new products that focus on distinctive leisure, nature-based, regional food, and arts and culture experiences.
- Establishing a Richmond Valley Destination Research Program to regularly monitor visitor markets, profiles and satisfaction.

The Rail Trail is identified as a key opportunity within the Tourism Development Plan. The NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project will support the key experiences identified within the Tourism Development Plan including:

- Natural experiences;
- Heritage and cultural experiences; and
- Agricultural experiences.

2.4.28 DESTINATION BYRON SHIRE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014-2020

The Destination Byron Shire Destination Management Plan has been developed to address the Shire's core challenges which also represents an opportunity and growth zone for the future. The Byron Shire borders the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage and the Management Plan interlinks with the rationale and expected outcomes of the Project.

There are seven strategic directions that form the basis of the Plan:

- Leadership, management and coordination.
- Marketing, communication and education.
- Visitor services.
- Research.
- Product development.
- Events.
- Destination management.


Each strategic direction is supported by a guiding objective and a set of comprehensive implementation actions and tactical responses. The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will assist in delivering on the following key actions identified the Destination Byron Action Plan:

- Work with other government agencies to develop and enhance existing Nature-Based and cultural tourism experiences; and
- Continually facilitate the development and promotion of additional tourism product and visitor experiences to complement the brand and image of the Shire that will extend the length of stay and improve yield and provide visitor dispersal.

2.4.29 TWEED SHIRE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (REDS) 2018-2022

The NSW Government has assisted local Councils and their communities to develop 37 Regional Economic Development Strategies across regional NSW. Each strategy is designed around one or more LGAs that form a functional economic region as defined by economic data and community input.

The Tweed Shire 2018-2022 Regional Economic Development Strategy has been developed to facilitate economic growth opportunities across the Tweed Shire as a tourism destination, lifestyle, and population centre. The local government area was identified as a hub for tourism activity due to the quality of its diverse natural settings. The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage supports this advantage by attracting visitors to the natural environment and assets of the hinterlands therefore enhancing the visitor economy within the region. The Casino to Eltham Project will build on the Tweed Stage of the NRRT and encourage further visitation and dispersal within the Region.



The Tweed segment is seen as a core components of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail as it will connect the regional centre of Murwillumbah with the villages of Stokers Siding, Burringbar, Mooball and Crabbes Creek.

2.5 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Investment from a partnership between Federal, State and Local Governments has ensured the development of Stage 1 – Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek the Northern Trail Head. The Casino to Eltham Stage will deliver the critical Southern Trail Head for the overarching Northern Rivers Rail Trail, a length of some 45 kms connecting over 9 communities and Casino to Lismore.

On completion, the Project will result in a raft of economic, environmental and social benefits for the two Local Government Areas of Lismore and Richmond Valley and the broader Northern Rivers Region, NSW, and Australia.

Table 2.5 provides the key objectives, summary of rationale and expected outcomes demonstrating the need for investment in the NRRT- Casino to Eltham Stage.

TABLE 2.5 EXPECTED OUTCOMES NRRT - CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE

KEY AREA	DETAILS
Project Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the NRRT as a demand driver for the region to encourage visitor dispersal to regional areas and distributing tourism dollars inland to revitalise towns and villages; • Diversify the regional economy; • Increase visitation and length of stay to the Northern Rivers region by leveraging key market segments; • Assist to differentiate and brand the Northern Rivers region for tourism marketing purposes; • Provide a safe, active transport route for residents within the region; • Provide accessible infrastructure for those with a disability, families with prams, and the aged; • Provide key recreational infrastructure to support population growth; • Preserve key heritage infrastructure including the corridor for future generations; • Revitalise and repurpose disused infrastructure; • Enhance village life by converting railyards into public spaces; • Encourage social interaction and participation to build community connectivity and wellbeing; and • Provide a natural habitat corridor for wildlife and reconnect remnant forest sections.
Rationale for Investment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revitalise a disused rail line into a tourism demand driver 2. Diversify the regional economy 3. Diversify the regional tourism product 4. Attract and grow the key tourism markets including Nature-Based tourism, cycling, walking, heritage, and accessible tourism. 5. Provide a safe, active and alternative transport route 6. Improve cyclist and pedestrian safety 7. Improve health outcomes for Northern River Region residents 8. Preservation of rail heritage 9. Revitalise declining CBD areas 10. Capitalise on external investments in the region
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish NSW position in the Rail Trail market • Increase visitation to NSW and the Northern Rivers Region • Creation of employment opportunities • Creation of natural wildlife corridor • Strengthen the connection between Conservation and Tourism • Provision of an Accessible tourism product • Improvement in the health outcomes for the residents of the Northern Rivers Region • Support population growth • Strengthen and connect rural communities

2.5.1 ESTABLISH NSW POSITION IN THE RAIL TRAIL MARKET

Rail Trails are located throughout the world with significant Trails located in New Zealand, North America and Europe and the number of Trails increasing each year. The growth in the Rail Trail market is largely due to Trails being accessible to a broad and diverse range of people. Visitors can walk, cycle, run, ride, horse ride or use a wheelchair or other mobility devices on the gentle sloping, relatively smooth paths as they pass through spectacular natural environments.

Nature-Based tourism accounts for approximately 20% of total international travel and continues to grow, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2015). In 2017, Nature-Based visitors accounted for 83.7% of international visitors, 37.2% of domestic overnight visitors and 22.9% of day trip visitors to NSW (Destination NSW).

Bushwalking is a key component of the Nature-Based tourism experience in NSW (Destination NSW). Walking for recreation and fitness has the highest level of participation in Australia and cycling and mountain biking continue to grow in popularity in Australia and globally.

Rails Trails have captured some of the Nature-Based, walking and cycling market in other parts of the world and other states of Australia. However, to date, NSW is under developed when compared with other Australian states and territories with only 59 kilometres of operating Rail Trail.

The NRRT presents a unique opportunity for all tiers of Government to support the residents, groups, and private operators who share a united vision to develop the disused Rail Line into a global, iconic tourist attraction and establish NSW's market share of Rail Trail users. Victoria, Queensland and other states have a large number of Rail Trails in operation that have seen considerable success since operation. These states also support the development of Rail Trails through strategic planning and grant specific funding programs which are outlined in Table 2.5.1.

TABLE 2.5.1: RAIL TRAILS LOCATED IN AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA

Of the states, Victoria has the most developed Rail Trails (26 in 2014) and a growing number currently under development. Of the Trails managed by Local Government and Committees of Management, approximately 800 km are Rail Trails. Victoria is recognised for its range of Rail Trails that provide opportunities for recreational walking, cycling and horse riding. Rail Trails also provide a transport function for local commuters moving between work and home, while others, such as the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail, are tourism attractions in their own right.

The Victorian Government is a strong supporter of Rail Trails and as such, has developed a Trails Strategy that promotes all walking, cycling and Rail Trails within the State. The Strategy notes, "Victoria's Trails Strategy 2014-2024 presents an exciting opportunity for State and local government agencies, community groups and investors to work together to realise the immense economic, social and environmental potential of our picturesque trail network. Improvement, maintenance and promotion of Victoria's trails, as well as the creation of trail-based businesses, will provide local communities with valuable social and recreation hubs and generate tourism, business and employment opportunities."

Rail Trails of Victoria (2016) e-book is a downloadable electronic publication in pdf format published by the Victorian Government to support and promote Rail Trails. The promotional e-book features easy-to-follow route notes and maps, railway and natural history, and tips to help Rail Trail users plan and enjoy their walk or ride. This book is written by people who know and love Rail Trails.

TRAIL	KM	TRAIL	KM
Bellarine Rail Trail	32	Great Victorian Rail Trail	134
Bass Coast Rail Trail	23	Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail	116
Castlemaine to Maldon Trail	18	East Gippsland Rail Trail	94
Gippsland Lakes Discovery Trail	17	High Country Rail Trail	65

TABLE 2.5.1: RAIL TRAILS LOCATED IN AUSTRALIA

Outer Circle Rail Trail	15	Ballarat - Skipton Rail Trail	57
Grand Ridge Rail Trail	13	Gippsland Plains Rail Trail	63
Belgrave Railway Trail	12	O'Keefe Rail Trail	50
Tyers Junction Rail Trail	11	Old Beechy Rail Trail	50
Grampians Rail Trail	11	Lilydale to Warburton (Yarra Valley) Rail Trail	40
Murchison to Rushworth Rail Trail	10	Camperdown to Timboon	40
Moe - Yallourn Rail Trail	8.5	Lilydale to Warburton (Yarra Valley) Rail Trail	40
Rosstown Railway Heritage Trail	7	Camperdown to Timboon	40
Birregurra - Forrest 'Tiger' Rail Trail	7	Dookie Rail Trail	5
Walhalla Goldfields Rail Trail	7	Rokeby to Crossover Rail Trail	5
Red Hill Rail Trail	6.5	Goldfields Track Rail Trail	4
The Domino Rail Trail	6	Inner Circle Rail Trail	4
Sandridge Railway Trail	5	Noojee Trestle Bridge Rail Trail	3
Dookie Rail Trail	5	Hawthorn to Kew Rail Trail	1
		The Bunny Rail Trail	1

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Northern Territory has two Rail Trails that are both part of the former Northern Australian Railway. Some other railway stations have survived including Pine Creek and Adelaide River. It is possible to walk along the old right of way at these locations.

TRAIL	KM	TRAIL	KM
Darwin Rail Trail	25	Katherine Rail Trail	6

QUEENSLAND

Rail Trails started in Queensland in the early 2000's with a short urban section in Hervey Bay and a short section of the now Brisbane Valley Rail Trail. As a supporter of Rail Trails, the Queensland Government assists in funding Trail development and also promotion. The Queensland Government Department of Transport notes, "Developing Rail Trails on disused railway corridors allows local communities and visitors to use them for walking, bike riding and/or horse riding. Rail trails support active, healthy lifestyles and contribute to environmental preservation and management. They also create diversity in local economies and encourage the growth and creation of small businesses in hospitality and tourism sectors."

The Queensland Government is investing up to \$14 million over 4 years between 2017-18 and 2020-21 to support local government to plan, design and construct Rail Trails. The Department of Transport and Main Roads is responsible for administering the Rail Trail Local Government Grants program on behalf of the Queensland Government.

The program is a response to the community feedback received during development of the Queensland Cycling Strategy 2017-2027 highlighting the opportunity provided by Rail Trails to increase cycling participation, encourage tourism and boost regional economies. The program is listed as Action 4.1 in the Queensland Cycling Action Plan 2017-19. Rail Trails are also promoted through a dedicated Government website <https://qorf.org.au/queensland-rail-trail-news/>

TRAIL	KM	TRAIL	KM
Brisbane Valley Rail Trail	161	Capricorn Coast Pineapple Rail Trail	4.5
Kilkivan - Kingaroy Rail Trail	89	Watawa Recreation Trail	3.4
Mt Garnet to Lappa Junction	55	Dularcha National Park Rail Trail	3.2
Atherton Tablelands Rail Trail	20.5	Boolboonda Rail Trail and Tunnel	3
Mary to the Bay Rail Trail	18	Wulkuraka - Brassall Rail Trail	3
Irvinebank to Boonmoo Rail trail	17.5	Buderim Tramway Heritage Trail	2
Caboolture - Wamuran and Loop Rail Trail	6	Canungra Tramway Tunnel	1
Fassifern Rail Trail	6		
Ferny Grove Rail Trail	5		

TABLE 2.5.1: RAIL TRAILS LOCATED IN AUSTRALIA

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

There are a growing number of Rail Trails in South Australia. The South Australian Government are supportive of Rail Trails and Trail development and have implemented the South Australian 10 Year Recreational Masterplan 2015-2025.

“The purpose of the Master Plan is to unify trail development and provision across the state of SA, setting the stage for a united, enthusiastic and common effort toward the goals and benefits mentioned above. By uniting leadership with users and governments and community interests around a common beautiful picture of a common plan, the many benefits to this success can be quickly realized through these united, efficient and effectively designed movements. Benefits of this state-wide Trails Plan include community pride, improved health, lifestyle, and appreciation of precious and fragile places, and carry with them a vast array of benefits to local economies, public health and the environment. It is essential therefore that there is clarity about the key outcomes desired when it comes to developing new trails or assessing existing trails.” (South Australian 10 Year Recreational Masterplan). The South Australian Government promotes Rail Trails through a dedicated website, <http://www.southaustraliantrails.com>.

The Government has developed a range of resources for communities, Councils and organisations developing and managing Trails within the State. These include:

- Trail Design Guidelines
- Mountain Bike Rating System
- Horse Riding Rating System
- Trail Check Action Planner
- Sustainable Trail Guide
- Directions for Recreational Trails in South Australia

TRAIL	KM	TRAIL	KM
The Riesling and Rattler Trail	54	The Barossa Trail	10
Coast to Vines Rail Trail	37	Westside Bike Path	9
Southern Flinders Rail Trail	34.5	Mike Turtur Bikeway	9
Adelaide Hills Amy Gillett Rail Trail	16	Mount Gambier Rail Trail	5.4
Nurragi Conservation Reserve	12		

TASMANIA

In 2016, the Tasmanian Government introduced new legislation that enables non-operational railway lines to be used for a range of recreational uses other than rail, including as cycle and walking tracks, horse riding, and running. Aiming to support recreational and tourism initiatives across the State, particularly in regional Tasmania, the legislation has been widely welcomed because of its potential to drive economic development in regional areas.

Retaining the non-operational rail corridors in public hands for possible future development options is known as “rail banking”. The legislation allows the Tasmanian Government to consider alternative uses of non-operational corridors where there is no foreseeable need for rail services, where the alternative use has a demonstrated community benefit and does not preclude future rail use. An example of alternative use is the North East Rail Trail project that will utilise the non-operational North East rail corridor. Originally, most of Tasmania’s Rail Trails were on former very narrow gauge bush railways that were mostly suited to walkers. However, there are now several former Tasmania Railway corridors being converted that are suitable for mountain bikes.

Tasmania’s West Coast had a lot of railways serving the mines of the area that have now been converted to trails. Hobart and Devonport each have high quality cycleways running parallel to operating railway lines.

TRAIL	KM	TRAIL	KM
North East Tasmania Rail Trail	26	Wietangta Tramway Trail	6.5
Montezuma Falls Rail Trail	19	Nieka Pipeline Track	6

TABLE 2.5.1: RAIL TRAILS LOCATED IN AUSTRALIA

Magnet Mine Rail Trail	16	Spray Tunnel and Comstock Tramways	6
Hobart Intercity Rail Trail	15.6	Rocherlea Rail Trail	4
Railton to Sheffield Rail Trail	12	Lake Margaret Tramway Trail	3.5
North Mount Lyell Rail Trail	12	Strahan to Regatta Point Rail Trail	3.5
Melba Falls to Zeehan Rail Trail	9	Mystery Creek Rail Trail	2
Don to Devonport Rail Trail	7.5	+ A further 5 known to be under development	

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

There are a growing number of Rail Trails in Western Australia that are strongly supported by the WA Government. Grant funding for planning, construction and promotion is available on an ongoing basis through a partnership with Lotterywest and the WA Department of Sport and Recreation. The Western Australian Government and Lotterywest promote a website for Rail Trail grant funding at <http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/funding/trails>.

TRAIL	KM	TRAIL	KM
Munda Biddi Trail	1060	Jarrahdale Balmoral Trail	12
Railway Reserves Rail Trail	82	Kalmuda Railway Heritage Track	8
Collie -Darkan Rail Trail	62	Torbay to Elleker Rail Trail	8
Denmark to Nornalup	54	Jarrahdale 1872 Timber Tramway	8
Hopetoun to Ravensthorpe Railway Heritage Walk	39	Ten Mile Brook Trail	7.5
Siding Rail Trail	26	Mundaring Weir Rail Trail	7
Wadandi Track Rail Trail	23	Gloucester Tree to Cascades Tramway Walk	6
Old Timberline Trail	22	Carnarvon Tramway	3
Farming Heritage Trail	18	Kalamunda Zig Zag Trail	3

The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will build on the extensive research and planning that has been undertaken to develop the iconic NRRT for NSW. The NRRT – Tweed Stage is in pre-development, having received funding to commence construction and is due for completion in 2020.

The Project will also build on the extensive work undertaken by other organisations in the region to develop the Northern Rivers as a year-round Nature-Based tourism destination. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has developed a number of walks, mountain bike trails and Nature-Based tourism products in the adjacent Wollumbin and Nightcap National Parks. The Casino to Eltham Stage will complement the NSW Governments funding commitment to infrastructure improvements at a numerous National Parks throughout the state as well as key visitor economy objectives by encouraging higher visitation and extending the length of stay of visitors in the region.

2.5.2 INCREASED VISITATION IN THE NORTHERN RIVERS REGION

A key outcome of the Project will be increased visitation to the Northern Rivers Region which will drive the visitor economy. The current tourism industry contributes \$2.8 billion to the North Coast economy (2015/2016) accounting for 12% of the region's Gross Regional Product. The Region attracted 5.1 million overnight domestic visitors, and 345,000 international visitors in the same period (Destination North Coast, DMP, 2018). The Rail Trail will provide opportunities to build upon these visitation levels by increasing the international and interstate markets.

The Local Government Areas of Richmond Valley and Lismore attracts approximately one million visitors combined annually, whilst the wider catchment area adjacent to the NRRT - Casino to Eltham stage, including the Ballina and Byron LGAs, has an estimated 3.6 million visitors per annum.

Based on the profile of visitors to other Rail Trails identified above, a highly conservative proportion of 1.8% has been applied to estimate the annual visitation levels from the Richmond Valley and Lismore LGAs. A lower proportion has been applied to visitors to the Byron and Ballina LGAs and the assessment also factored in the nature of visitation to the catchment region.

An independent Economic Impact Assessment commissioned by the NRRT Association on the Casino to Eltham Stage itself has projected the visitation levels once operational. Whilst an estimation of annual visitors to the proposed NRRT – Casino to Eltham Project is difficult, the method adopted during the completion of the Economic Impact Assessment reviewed participation rates for other significant Rail Trails across Australia and New Zealand where visitor numbers are measured. These include:

- Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (Queensland)
- Murray to the Mountains Rail Trail (Victoria)
- Lilydale Warburton Rail Trail Victoria
- Otago Central Rail Trail (NZ)
- Hauraki Rail Trail (NZ)

Accordingly, approximately 23,200 visitors are conservatively expected to use the NRRT- Casino to Eltham Project annually upon completion based on comparison with benchmarks for other similar Rail Trails across Australia and New Zealand. In addition, the Economic Impact Assessment identifies that over 8,100 international and interstate visitors will utilise the Casino to Eltham section annually.

Increased visitation to the Northern Rivers Region by visitors experiencing the Rail Trail is anticipated to drive more than \$1.9 million into the economy annually through expenditure on items such as accommodation and food purchases. Importantly, there will be flow-on benefits across the region with visitors passing through as well as stopping in the surrounding region, with tourism operators and other businesses all benefiting from a rise in visitation from the Rail Trail.

2.5.3 CREATION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

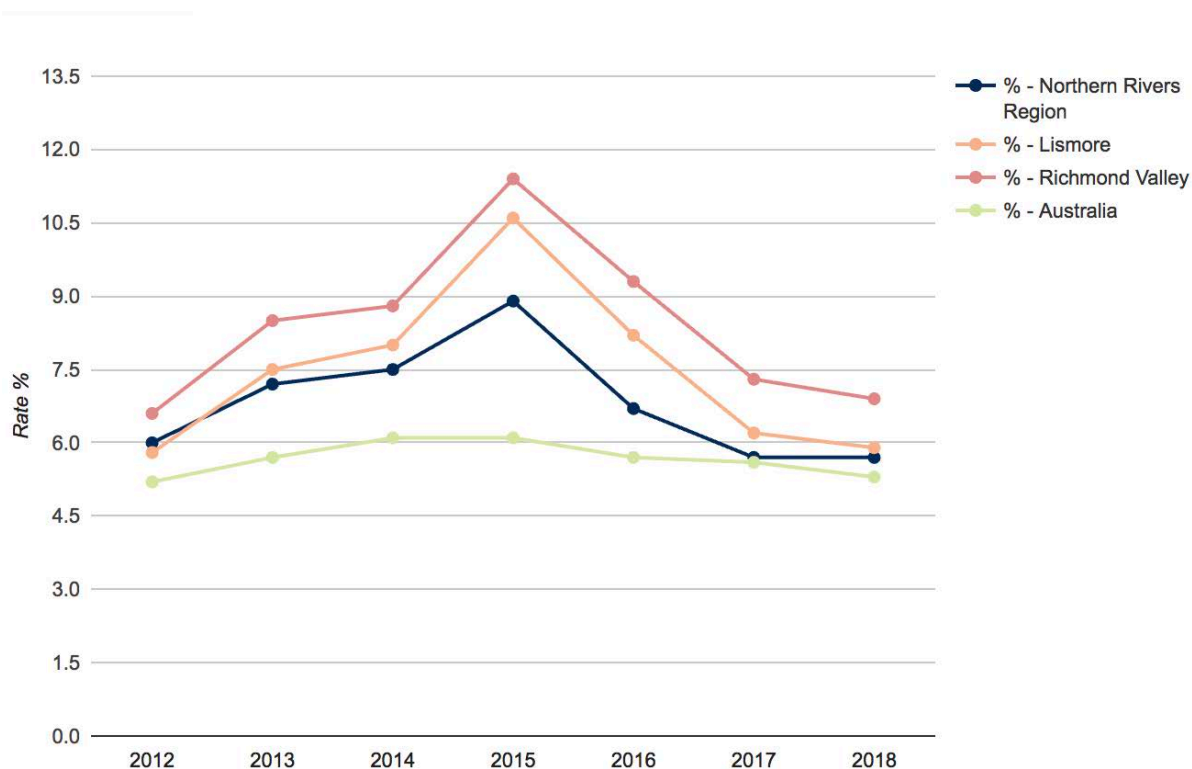
The visitor economy considers broader economic activity than that which has historically been defined as ‘tourism and events’. It includes the direct and indirect impacts resulting from a visitor travelling outside their usual environment for a holiday, leisure, events, business, conventions and exhibitions, retail, education, to visit friends and relatives, or for short-term employment in NSW (NSW Government).

The visitor economy encompasses tourism sectors that directly service and engage with visitors, including attractions, airlines or hotels. Visitor expenditure creates flow-on benefits to the broader economy through employment, investment, infrastructure development, export growth, and multiculturalism (NSW Government).

Figure 2.5.3 shows the unemployment rates for NSW, the Northern Rivers Region, as well as the Richmond Valley and Lismore City LGAs. The Northern Rivers Region includes the LGAs of Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore City, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire.

The Northern Rivers Region has historically recorded higher unemployment rates than NSW overall. However, over the last two years, the gap in unemployment rates has lessened and the region is now level with NSW. On average, Richmond Valley and Lismore City LGAs have consistently higher unemployment rates than NSW and the Northern Rivers Region, highlighting the need for job creation through the development of projects such as the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage.

Figure 2.5.3 Northern Rivers Region Unemployment Rates




Source: Small Area Labour Markets, Australian Government as per REMPLAN economy

The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Project will create employment during and post construction. The conversion of the disused Rail Line into a recreational asset will employ local tradespeople over a 2-year development period. Economic modelling indicates approximately 62 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) employment positions will be generated during the construction period, with an estimated additional 127 employment positions supported indirectly through other industries.

The Project will provide opportunities for commercial operators and businesses to develop new tourism products and visitor experiences in support of the Rail Trail. This will create employment in the regional tourism sector.

Once operating, it is estimated that the indirect visitor expenditure will create approximately 14.8 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) employment positions, with an estimated additional 14 employment positions supported indirectly through other industries, and household consumption for a total employment generation of 28.8 full time positions.

The Project will also present opportunities for additional touring route development to showcase the offerings of the Region, such as other Nature-Based attractions including Border Ranges, Nightcap, Toonumbar, and Wollumbin National Parks. This can attract new visitors to the region and extend the length of stay, supporting the local visitor economy. This will also facilitate new business and partnership opportunities to develop package tours and products to enhance the visitor experience.



The Rail Trail will provide a holistic Nature-Based activity to attract visitors to the Region and will encourage exploration of the adjoining nature reserves, national parks, and other areas of historic and cultural significance.

2.5.4 CREATION OF A NATURAL WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

On completion, the Rail Trail will create a natural wildlife corridor joining neighbouring nature reserves and link with surrounding National Parks. The Rail Trail will form a natural wildlife corridor for flora and fauna in the region, providing significant environmental outcomes.

The entire Northern Rivers Rail Trail corridor occupies a total area of 590 hectares. The 45 kilometres of proposed Rail Trail between Casino to Eltham occupies a corridor that averages 50 metres wide and covers over 200 hectares.

The Trail itself will create a significant natural corridor for the regions wildlife enhancing the conservation value of the area and providing positive environmental outcomes.

Nature reserves and wildlife corridors are important, as they are areas that are predominantly untouched, in natural condition, and have a high conservation value. National Parks define the primary purpose of Nature Reserves to “Protect and conserve their outstanding, unique or representative ecosystems and Australian native plants and animals.”

“Wildlife corridors are one of the most effective tools available for conserving biodiversity and preparing landscapes for climate change. They can help insure against climatic uncertainty through the conservation of a diversity of species and provision of alternative pathways for species’ movement and adaptation.” (NSW Government National Wildlife Corridors Plan, 2012)

The NRRT Committee has undertaken a substantial review of the Rail Trail corridor, including the proposed Casino and Eltham Stage. A Biodiversity Assessment undertaken by Geolink in 2018 identified relevant biodiversity matters to the development of the NRRT, including:

- Impacts to native vegetation;
- Requirements to remove weeds and non-native regrowth (including weed species listed in the Biosecurity Act 2015);
- Impacts on fauna habitat;



“The Big Scrub rainforest remnants require ongoing care and maintenance. Their condition has steadily deteriorated over the years due to the impact of many damaging weed species that spread rapidly throughout the remnant. These vigorously growing weeds smother native plants, seriously degrading the forest structure and arresting the potential for natural regeneration. Without effective weed control the remnant’s health and viability will decline and future regeneration works will increase exponentially.” (Rainforest Rescue; 2019)

- Impacts to koala habitat (as per State Environmental Planning Policy [SEPP] 44 – Koala Habitat Protection);
- Impacts to habitat for threatened species (flora and fauna) or communities listed in the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (BC Act); and
- Impacts to threatened species or communities listed in the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

The Trail will preserve and conserve areas of importance for wildlife, flora and fauna, as well as features of geological or other special interest to provide special opportunities for study and research. The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will increase and showcase the conservation value of the local biodiversity, and assist in raising awareness to users on the native flora and fauna species in the region. The Trail will also link to areas of high biodiversity value within the Lismore and Richmond Valley LGAs.

The Lismore and Richmond Valley Local Government Areas contain areas of high biodiversity value that are not conserved within the NSW National Parks including remnants in riparian areas, the Big Scrub rainforest remnants, and the Richmond River floodplains and its tributaries.

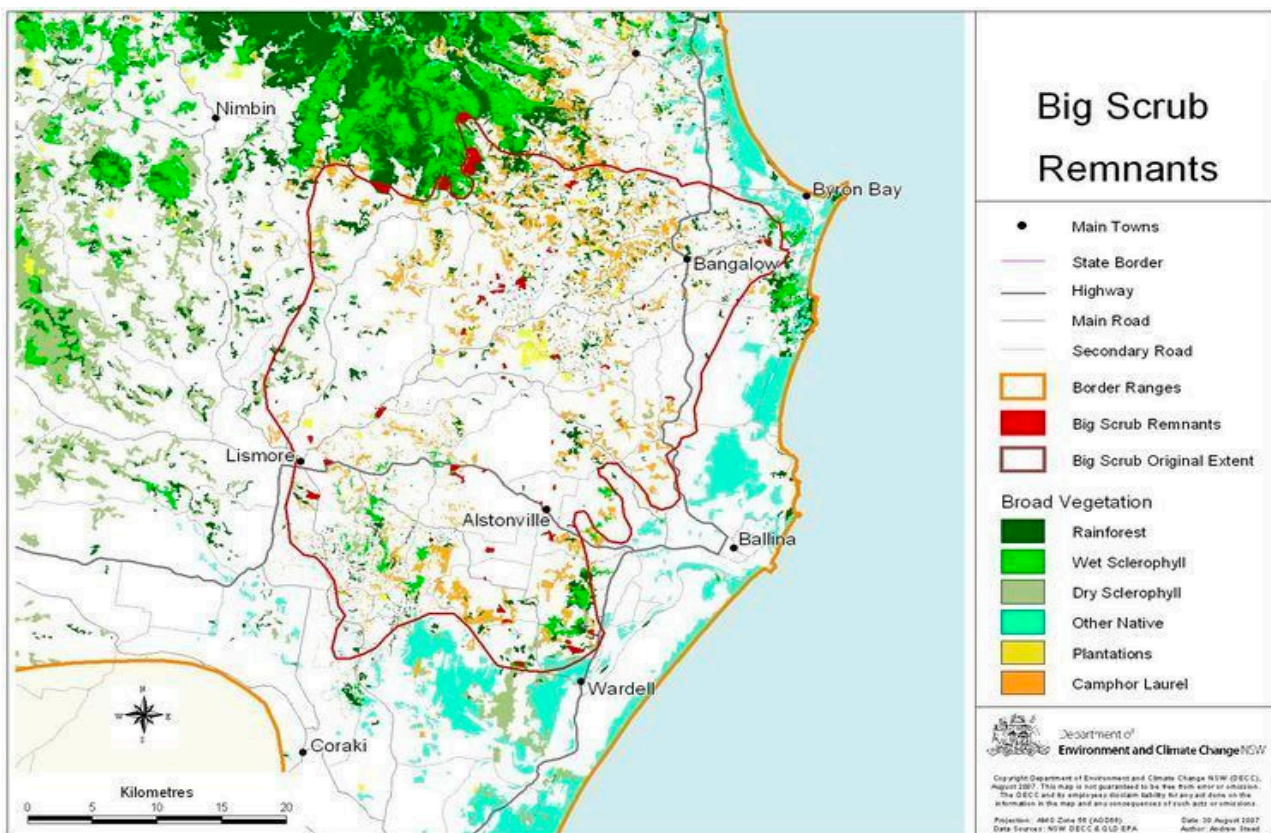
“Biodiversity hotspots are areas that support large numbers of endemic native species not, or only rarely, found in other areas. Such hotspots also sustain relatively unaltered natural ecosystems in which associated native species and habitats are well represented. In most of the Lismore LGA, only fragments of the ecosystems and habitat that existed before European settlement remain.”
(Lismore Biodiversity Management Plan)

The Big Scrub remnants contain a rich diversity of flora and fauna, supporting more than 300 species of trees and shrubs including 38 threatened species of flora and 61 species of fauna. Their high conservation value is reflected in the inclusion of the thirty-two largest remnants in the Register of the National Estate, “the places we should keep”.

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will assist in conserving the Big Scrub remnants, ensuring ongoing care and maintenance through a developed program that collaborates with local environmental groups and rejuvenators to facilitate natural regeneration of the rainforest located within the corridor.

The Lismore and Richmond Valley LGAs are located within the Border Ranges Rainforest Region, as delineated in the Border Ranges Rainforest Biodiversity Management Plan-NSW and by the Department of Environment and Climate Change in Queensland. The Region has been recognised by the Australian Government as one of 15 Australian National Biodiversity Hotspots (Department of Environment; 2014). The Border Ranges Hotspot is one of Australia’s most biologically diverse, and is the most diverse hotspots in NSW.

Figure 2.5.4 Regional Map of the Big Scrub Area



The Lismore and Richmond Valley LGAs are located within the Border Ranges Rainforest Region, as delineated in the Border Ranges Rainforest Biodiversity Management Plan-NSW and by the Department of Environment and Climate Change in Queensland. The Region has been recognised by the Australian Government as one of 15 Australian National Biodiversity Hotspots (Department of Environment; 2014). The Border Ranges Hotspot is one of Australia’s most biologically diverse and is the most diverse hotspots in NSW.

The Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will generate a highly valued conservation area covering 200 hectares, and provide opportunities for environmental protection by individuals, groups, and environmental organisations. The corridor will assist in raising environmental awareness on the conservation value of the area, including the Big Scrub remnants and biodiverse features and areas located adjacent to the Rail Trail. Interpretive signage will educate Trail user groups (including residents and visitors) on the endangered ecological communities and threatened flora and fauna species located within the corridor.

2.5.5 STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CONSERVATION AND TOURISM

Tourism can be an effective tool for the management of conversation and wildlife areas (IUCN, 2002). The existing rail line is currently overgrown in areas with dense vegetation. The Rail Trail presents a unique opportunity to showcase ecologically sustainable tourism with the primary focus on experiencing natural areas to foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation, and conservation.

“Well-managed tourism can generate the financial and political support needed to sustain the values of protected areas. It can also increase understanding of our reserves and their environmental and cultural values and contribute to enriching visitor experiences.” (Department of Energy and the Environment.)

The Project will ensure the ongoing protection of the natural, cultural and historic heritage of the Region and it is important to note, that these same elements also attract visitors to Nature-Based tourism products and experiences. The Rail Trail will showcase these elements to provide transformational trail experiences that will expand each visitor’s awareness, understanding and advocacy, thereby strengthening the connection between conservation and tourism.

The Project will provide linkages and opportunities to partner with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to promote other nature reserves and National Parks in the region, including Boatharbour Nature Reserve and Nightcap National Park, as well as the Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetlands.

Boatharbour Reserve flanks the Wilsons River and is located approximately 200 metres from the rail corridor. The Reserve covers 24 hectares and is environmentally significant as it forms part of The Big Scrub, which was once the largest continuous tract of sub-tropical rainforest in Australia, covering 75,000 hectares of the rich basalt soils to the east and north of Lismore.

“Today only about 100 hectares remains as isolated patches. Six significant remnants, Boatharbour, Victoria Park, Davis Scrub, Andrew Johnston Big Scrub and Wilson, are nature reserves dedicated under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.” (NPWS)

Nightcap National Park, occupying 8,019 hectares, is located 25 kilometres from Lismore and forms part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area. The Park features ancient rainforests, magical waterways and spectacular views. It is also a safe haven for an array of rare and threatened animal species including the newly discovered Nightcap Oak, Albert’s Lyrebird, and Fleay’s Barred Frog, which takes shelter in the lush rainforest. With easy access from the Lismore section of the Rail Trail, visitors will be able to enjoy a picnic, bushwalk or overnight camping trip amid the park’s escarpments, waterfalls and crystal-clear creeks, and enjoy incredible views of the 20 million year-old Wollumbin shield volcano.

The Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetlands is located within walking distance of the Trail Head at Casino, situated adjacent to the Casino Golf Club on Queensland Road. The Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetlands, developed in 1988, is a natural habitat area providing a sanctuary for over 130 native birds including the Jabiru Stork, Black Swans and many other water birds.

The Wetlands is a public facility for recreational and educational pursuits with picnic areas, observation points and maintained walkways. The Jabiru Geneebeinga Wetlands also incorporates a mini railway which conducts train rides every Sunday, traversing through the wetlands and to the Old Casino Station Museum, which provides an important link with the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT.

Importantly the Rail Trail will provide opportunities to engage in partnerships with Aboriginal people in the region to protect, share, and celebrate their cultural heritage. The Office of Environment and Heritage notes,

“The wellbeing of Aboriginal people is intimately connected to the health of the environment and the degree to which they can be involved in actively caring for it. As stated by Aboriginal peoples: ‘traditional lands, sea and the Aboriginal people are all parts of an integral whole.’”

The area is home to the Bundjalung Nation as traditional custodians of the land. The Rail Trail will provide opportunities to showcase Indigenous stories of the land through the diversity of the landscapes users will experience. Through partnerships with local Aboriginal Land Councils and Aboriginal groups and organisations, advice on the best way of respecting the Trail corridor’s spiritual and cultural values will be developed and implemented along the Trail. In addition, engagement with these groups during the planning stages allows for opportunities to be involved with the Trail’s environmental management and protection decisions, and conservation activities.

2.5.6 PROVISION OF AN ACCESSIBLE TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL PRODUCT

Rail Trails provide an accessible tourism product and recreational facility for people with mobility issues due to the low gradients and smooth surface of the Trail. The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage will create new opportunities to attract the accessible tourism market as well as catering for the region’s senior age groups, families with prams, and those with a disability. Greater inclusion and social opportunities will be provided through the Rail Trail which will assist to reduce disadvantage, isolation, and discrimination, and will positively impact the aged and disabled residents and visitors of the Northern Rivers Region.

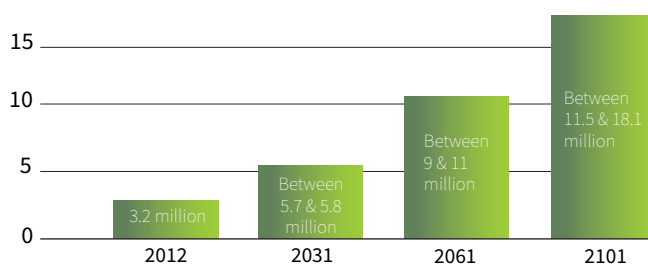
Tourism Australia defines Accessible Tourism as,

“...the ongoing endeavour to ensure tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age”.

Ageing Community

The Rail Trail will cater for the growing ageing population in the Northern Rivers Region. According to demographic forecasts, there will be a significant increase in the proportion of people aged 65 years and over in Australia in the next 20 to 50 years. The proportion of the population aged 65 years and over is projected to increase from 15% in 2016 to 24% in 2066 (Australian Bureau of Statistics).

Figure 2.5.6 Population Projections Aged 65 Years



Source: ABS Cat 3222.0, Population Projections, 2012 (Series C)

The Northern Rivers Region has a significant ageing population, with 31% of residents forecast to be aged above 65 by 2036. Both Lismore City and Richmond Valley LGAs also have significant growth forecasts in the senior age groups 65 years and older (Refer to Section 2.7.8). This data suggests that there will be a growing demand for experiences and recreation infrastructure activities that cater for an ageing community.

The Disabled

National statistics reveal that in 2015 almost one in five Australians lived with disability, being approximately 4.3 million people or 18.3% of the population. There is also a direct correlation between ageing and disability with around half (50.7%) of older people having a disability in 2015 (ABS, 2015).

Research illustrates that the Aboriginal community experience disability at a greater rate than non-Indigenous people. AbSec notes that,

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have higher rates of disability than non-Indigenous people across all age groups. Our kids under the age of 14 are more than twice as likely to have a disability, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 35–54 are 2.7 times as likely to have a disability as non-Indigenous people of the same age.” (AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation)

Accessible Tourism Market

The Rail Trail will provide an accessible tourism product that will attract the growing accessible tourism market. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Population Projections indicate that in Australia, over 40% of people will have some form of disability by the time they are 70 years old, and forecasts based on ‘population statistics of age acquired disabilities’ indicate that the total expenditure of this group in the tourism sector is likely to exceed 22% in ten years’ time (FACS, n.d.).

People with a disability are avid travellers and form part of the growing and lucrative accessible tourism market. Tourism Australia notes that the size of the current accessible tourism sector for overnight and/or day trip travel is around 1.3 million individuals, or 7% of the total Australian adult population. “However, as many people with a disability travel with others, especially when they need to travel with a carer, a multiplier of 2.45 (overnight) or 2.62 (day trips) needs to be applied. By this measure, 14% of the Australian population (an estimated 3.4 million people) has need of accessible tourism experiences and services for an overnight and/or day trip.” (Tourism Australia’ 2018)

An estimate of annual expenditure by tourists with a disability (both overnight and day) based on National Visitor Survey data is approximately \$3.2 billion annually (of which \$2.7 billion is overnight spend and \$546 million is day trip spend). Again, the multiplier of those travelling with a person with a disability means the true value of the sector could be as high as \$8.0 billion.

The NSW Department of Families and Community Services notes that,

“...all tiers of government play an important role in ensuring community and public spaces and transport are accessible for people with disability and facilitate tourism and recreational activities.”

Social Outcomes

The National Disability Strategy notes that people with a disability and the aged are more likely to experience relatively poor health, lower levels of participation in education, training and employment, lack of access to goods, services and facilities and ongoing discrimination than other groups in the community. These groups also face a range of difficulties and challenges including isolation, social exclusion and inequality.

The Project will deliver, where possible, accessible trail areas including gentle sloping gradients and smooth surfaces, therefore encouraging equitable access for the aged and disabled residents and visitors to the region.

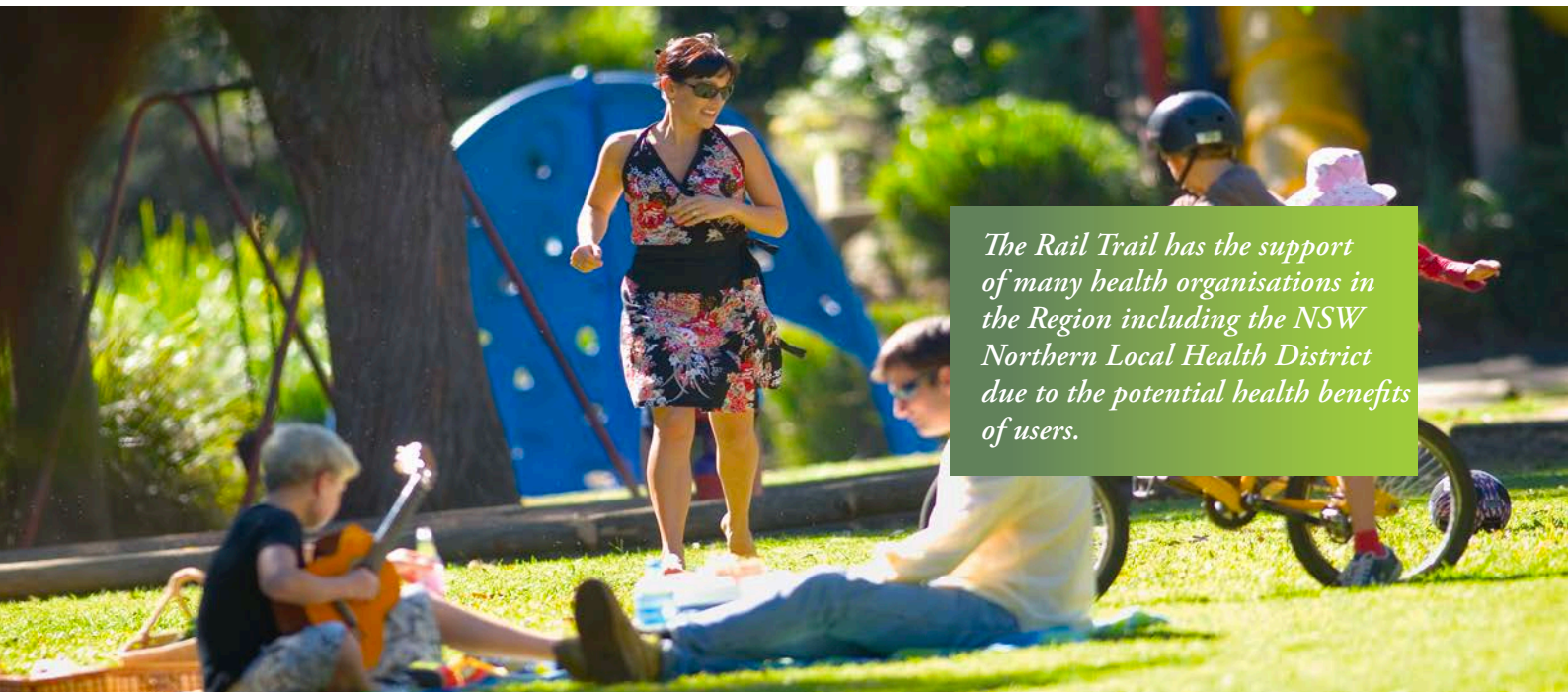
The Trail will provide opportunities for social inclusion and engagement with the community through individual or group participation by reducing the barriers in recreational infrastructure. Increasing social inclusion can assist in reduce disadvantage and isolation,

*“Enabling social connections, interactions and active participation in tourist and recreational activities is crucial in supporting the physical health and mental wellbeing of all individuals.”
(Final Accessible Tourism Positioning Paper, FACS)*

Improved Health Outcomes

Residents of the Richmond Valley and Lismore LGAs have identified the need for high quality, accessible, well maintained public recreation and outdoor space to encourage physical activity and therefore improve the health outcomes of the region. In addition to improved health for the individual, increased physical activity and lower levels of overweight and obesity in the community have significant cost savings for governments.

The increased burden of weight-related diseases increases the cost of public health in Australia. Research undertaken by Price Waterhouse and Cooper in 2015 found that in Australia, obesity had significant direct impacts on the cost of healthcare. These direct costs (including items such as general practice services, allied health services, specialist services, and hospital care) were found to be in the order of \$3.8 billion dollars annually. On a per capita basis, this figure translates into \$160 per person in healthcare costs (Weighing the cost of obesity, PWC; 2015).



The Rail Trail has the support of many health organisations in the Region including the NSW Northern Local Health District due to the potential health benefits of users.

The NSW Office of Sport notes that sport and active recreation is important, and contributes significantly to the health, economy, social wellbeing, and the liveability of NSW cities and communities. The key benefits of sport and active recreation can be broken down into the areas of economic, health and social outcomes as identified in Table 2.5.6.

TABLE 2.5.6 KEY BENEFITS OF SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION

OUTCOME	BENEFIT
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of jobs and opportunities for investment and innovation. • Events attract visitors which are significant drivers for the visitor economy. • An active population leads to improved productivity and addresses preventative health costs facing governments.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular physical activity improves physical and mental health. • Reduces the risk of obesity and lifestyle-related illnesses across life stages and improves general wellbeing. • Improves productivity and performance at work or school.
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings people and communities together which contributes to a stronger, more socially inclusive society. • A vibrant sport and active recreation sector contributes to the liveability of cities and regions.

The Australian Sports Commission released a report in 2018, into the value of community sports infrastructure. The report, prepared by KPMG, quantified the benefits of community sports infrastructure in Australia. Whilst the report did not include activity such as walking and running along a Rail Trail, the estimates provide an indication of the importance of physical activity and recreational assets.

The report found that community sports infrastructure provided \$16.2 billion worth of benefits. Of these, \$4.9 billion were health benefits as a result of improved physical health for those who were less likely to experience a range of poor health conditions due to inactivity. Approximately \$6.3 billion was in economic activity, including increased productivity by those who were more physically active. In addition, \$5.1 billion was found to be in social benefits due to social interactions and access to green space.

LETTER OF SUPPORT: NSW NORTHERN LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT



Rail trails create healthy recreation and transportation opportunities by providing people of all ages with accessible, attractive and safe places to cycle, walk or jog. Rail trails help people incorporate exercise into their daily routine by connecting them with places they want or need to go, away from cars. The rail trail is an ideal alternative that will be useful for parents to walk their school children to school, for people to use for recreation and exercise and for tourists to access our beautiful countryside. It will also offer great opportunities for fun runs, overnight hikes and training for marathon runners and cyclists.

Once the rail trail is established, it will be the ideal place for our Health Promotion team to coordinate volunteered walking groups. These can target older people, new mothers with strollers and people at risk of chronic disease and will give them access to free physical activity and support social interactions.

Physical activity also helps keep people mentally healthy. Rail trails can increase a sense of village pride and connectedness to history and to the natural environment that can improve psychological health. Getting more people out of cars and on to trails also increases casual interactions, socialisation and can reduce crime. Old train stations can become community hubs as opportunities rise for redevelopment into cafes, playgrounds, community gardens or just an attractive place to sit and watch the passing parade.

Whilst it is difficult to estimate the specific areas or economic value of the improvement in health outcomes as a result of the Project, it can be assumed that the completion of the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT will increase physical activity amongst the population of Richmond Valley and Lismore LGAs and visitors utilising the Trail. Therefore, the increased physical activity will improve physical and mental health outcomes of the local residents and visitors, presenting significant economic, health, and social benefits to Government.

2.5.7 SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE POPULATION GROWTH

The Northern Rivers Region is defined by the NSW Government as the areas of Ballina Shire, Byron Shire, Kyogle Shire, Lismore City and Richmond Valley Councils. The region is home to just over 150,000 people and the overall population increased by 8% between 2001 and 2016, which is below the growth rates for NSW and regional NSW. The Rail Trail will provide recreational infrastructure, which will assist in meeting the needs of a growing population and also help to attract new residents to the Region.

By 2036, the Northern Rivers population is forecast to be approximately 171,000 people, 15% above 2016 levels or 20,000 new residents (NSW Department of Planning and Environment). The region is home to an ageing population, with 31% of residents forecast to be aged above 65 by 2036. New services and recreational facilities will be required to meet demand from the senior age groups, presenting opportunities for employment growth to support this emerging market.

More than 14% of the Northern River’s 2016 residents lived elsewhere five years previously, reflecting substantial migration into the region over time. “Demographic analysis shows the Northern Rivers is particularly successful in attracting residents from Victoria, Queensland and overseas.” (REDS; 2018)

Data analysis demonstrates that of the people relocating into the Northern Rivers Region, most are in young or prime working age groups, representing approximately 11,500 people from 2011-2016. However, a significant share of these new residents is of late working age or older, generating greater demand for age-related services. The population of Richmond Valley LGA grew 10.9% from 2001 to 2016, with Lismore growing by 3.9% in the same period, due to the strong economy, location, and access to major centres.

The Northern Rivers Regional Economic Development Strategy notes,

“The composition of the region’s demographic profile from the 2016 Census reflects a relatively high number of dependents in the Northern Rivers compared to the NSW community. An older, more dependent profile implies greater demands on the local working age population relative to NSW as a whole, especially in providing late-in-life services like health.”

Lismore Population Projections

In May 2014 the Department of Planning and Environment released its final 20-year population projections for the State and Local Government Areas. These projections show that by 2031 Lismore’s population is projected to grow to 50,200 and will increase at a higher rate in the 10 years from 2011 to 2021 than the years following to 2031. The projections are demonstrated in Table 2.5.7a.

TABLE 2.5.7a: LISMORE POPULATION PROJECTIONS

YEAR	POPULATION	% GROWTH PA	EXTRA PERSONS P.A
2011	44,350		
2016	46,200	0.8	1,850
2021	47,850	0.7	1,650
2026	49,350	0.6	1500
2031	50,700	0.5	1,300
2036	51,750	0.4	1,100

Source: Department of Planning and Environment, 2014

The Lismore Growth Management Strategy notes,

“It is predicted that the rates of growth will increase due to expanding employment and business opportunities associated with Lismore City’s role as a regional employment centre and the expansion of the Base Hospital and Southern Cross University. Growth is also anticipated as a result of people relocating from nearby coastal areas where the cost of housing is becoming less affordable for some.”

The Age Group Population Projections for the Lismore LGA show a significant increase in older age groups and lone person and couple only households in comparison to other age groups and households (Table 2.5.7b). These age groups create demand for recreational infrastructure and associated support services.

TABLE 2.5.7b: LISMORE AGE GROUP POPULATION PROJECTIONS

AGE GROUP	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036
0-4	2,700	2,750	2,850	2,850	2,850	2,800
5-9	2,900	2,850	2,900	3,000	3,000	3,000
10-14	3,100	3,000	3,000	3,100	3,150	3,200
15-19	3,150	3,200	3,100	3,150	3,200	3,250
20-24	2,900	2,950	2,900	2,750	2,800	2,850
25-29	2,300	2,600	2,600	2,500	2,450	2,450
30-34	2,400	2,550	2,800	2,750	2,650	2,600
35-39	2,700	2,650	2,850	3,050	2,950	2,900
40-44	2,950	2,900	2,850	3,050	3,250	3,150
45-49	3,300	3,100	3,050	2,950	3,250	3,400
50-54	3,550	3,300	3,150	3,050	3,000	3,300
55-59	3,300	3,550	3,350	3,200	3,150	3,100
60-64	2,700	3,150	3,400	3,200	3,100	3,050
65-69	1,900	2,550	2,950	3,200	3,050	2,950
70-74	1,450	1,750	2,350	2,700	2,950	2,850
75-79	1,100	1,300	1,550	2,100	2,450	2,700
80-84	1,000	900	1,100	1,350	1,800	2,100
85+	850	1,100	1,200	1,350	1,700	2,250

Source: Department of Planning and Environment, 2014



By 2031 the Richmond Valley and Lismore City LGAs will have a combined population of over 75,000 residents (Department of Environment and Planning, 2014)

Richmond Valley Population Projections

The Department of Planning and Environment population projections demonstrate that by 2031 the Richmond Valley LGA population is projected to grow to 25,047, representing an average annual growth rate of 0.4%. The projections are demonstrated in Table 2.5.7c below.

TABLE 2.5.7c RICHMOND VALLEY POPULATION PROJECTIONS			
YEAR	POPULATION	% GROWTH PA	EXTRA PERSONS P.A
2016	23,550	0.7	850
2021	24,300	0.6	700
2026	24,850	0.5	600
2031	25,350	0.4	450
2036	25,650	0.2	300
2036	51,750	0.4	1,100

Source: Department of Planning and Environment, 2014

According to medium population forecasts, the average age of the Richmond Valley resident is expected to increase by 5.3 years to 45.7 years by 2036, significantly older than the New South Wales average of 41.3 years. Between 2011 and 2036, there will be an anticipated increase in the total population share of the Richmond Valley in all age brackets from 65 years and older.

TABLE 2.5.7d: RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL AGE GROUP PROJECTIONS						
AGE GROUP	2011	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036
0-4	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,450	1,450
5-9	1,550	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,550
10-14	1,650	1,600	1,650	1,650	1,650	1,650
15-19	1,500	1,500	1,450	1,450	1,450	1,450
20-24	1,150	1,150	1,100	1,000	1,000	1,000
25-29	1,000	1,150	1,100	1,050	950	950
30-34	1,100	1,200	1,250	1,200	1,150	1,100
35-39	1,250	1,200	1,300	1,350	1,300	1,250
40-44	1,300	1,300	1,250	1,350	1,400	1,350
45-49	1,550	1,300	1,300	1,250	1,350	1,400
50-54	1,600	1,600	1,400	1,400	1,350	1,450
55-59	1,650	1,650	1,650	1,450	1,450	1,400
60-64	1,500	1,700	1,750	1,700	1,550	1,550
65-69	1,300	1,550	1,750	1,800	1,800	1,650
70-74	1,050	1,300	1,550	1,750	1,850	1,800
75-79	850	950	1,200	1,450	1,650	1,750
80-84	650	700	750	1,000	1,200	1,400
85+	550	700	750	900	1,100	1,400

Source: Department of Planning and Environment, 2014

The Rail Trail will provide a significant recreation asset to meet the needs of the growing population forecast for Lismore and Richmond LGAs. The Trail will assist in diversifying the current recreational facilities located within these LGAs and appeal to a broad range of age groups, including the aged, through the provision of infrastructure catering to more informal and passive recreational activities such as walking and cycling.

2.5.8 STRENGTHEN AND CONNECT RURAL COMMUNITIES

The Rail Trail will assist in strengthening community networks, enhance social cohesion, facilitate employment and provide educational outcomes through the creation of a physical connection between the smaller regional communities located along the NRRT and the urban centres of Lismore and Casino.

The Rail Trail will assist in connecting the outlying suburbs, towns and villages of North Casino, Naughtons Gap, Eltham, Bexhill, Woodlawn, Tullera, North Lismore, and the urban area of South Lismore which has a combined population of 4,700 residents (Table 2.5.8).

TABLE 2.5.8 RURAL COMMUNITIES LOCATED ALONG THE NRRT – CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE

LGA	TOWN/LOCALITY	POPULATION (2016) ABS
Richmond Valley	North Casino	941
	Naughtons Gap	72
Lismore City	Eltham	338
	Bexhill	497
	Woodlawn	42
	Tullera	282
	North Lismore	772
	South Lismore	1873

The Rail Trail will provide a range of social benefits for the broader region and the smaller communities located along and adjacent to the Trail, through fostering a sense of community and ownership of the Rail Trail. Rural communities, such as those located along the Trail, often face multiple challenges due to the physical isolation from major service centres. Regional Development Australia cites,

“While there are many positives to living in rural and isolated areas, many of these communities do not have the same access to further education, employment or services and amenities that urban areas do. In addition to this, declining populations in rural and isolated areas has resulted in decreased service delivery in these areas.” (Regional Development Australia cited in Tasmania, Regional Plan 2012-13).

The Trail will provide an open public space for residents to form and participate in new active groups, such as walking groups, providing opportunities for social inclusion and fostering community pride. The National Sport and Recreation Plan - Sport 2030 notes,

“We know sport and recreation activities have the ability to bring people and communities together and provide opportunities for inclusion, as they have the ability to inspire and motivate individuals while also fostering community pride.”

The Rail Trail will create opportunities for the revitalisation of heritage assets such as the Railway Cottage at Eltham. Community members will be able to be actively involved in forming new visions for the use of the rail buildings to attract user groups and provide an asset to be utilised by the community.

In addition, the Trail will also provide opportunities for the creation of local events which will have positive social outcomes for the host communities, including improved social cohesion, enhanced community spirit, and fostering a sense of place and pride amongst residents.

2.6 STAKEHOLDER & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Extensive consultation has been undertaken since the inception of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail, including engagement and feedback on the Casino to Eltham Stage. Stakeholder engagement is viewed as critical to the development and implementation of the Project and the community engagement process has allowed the overarching body, Northern Rivers Rail Trail Association, to gain a better understanding of critical issues and attitudes from key stakeholders, residents, and potential visitors to the Trail.

The Northern Rivers Rail Trail Incorporated (referred to as the NRRT Association), is a not for profit community group formed in 2013 by a local philanthropist group (known as the Sourdough Group), community volunteers, local government councillors and staff, and leaders in the tourism industry. These representatives dedicate their time free of charge to drive the vision of Rail Trail become a reality.

The NRRT Association manages the overall advancement of the Rail Trail and has a board structure. The Association meets nine times per year and specialised committee members manage the areas of interest reporting directly to a designated Executive Committee.

2.6.1 COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT GOVERNANCE

The communications, marketing, and engagement elements of the NRRT are directly managed by the NRRT Executive Committee, which is comprised of:

- A representative from Lismore City, Richmond Valley, Byron Bay and Tweed Shire Councils
- Skilled and qualified Civil Engineers
- Experienced Media Relations Officer
- Experienced Tourism Industry Representative
- Relevant engaged consultants (when required)
- Experienced Planner of cycling/walking paths
- Community representatives

Local Councils and over 4,000 individuals support the NRRT Association, the key driver behind the Rail Trail. The Association is comprised of local philanthropists, community volunteers, local government councillors and staff, and leaders of the tourism industry.

The NRRT engagement objectives were developed from both key stakeholder and community perspectives. The objectives of the community and stakeholder engagement objectives are identified as:

- To identify and consider the diverse range of views of potential users and internal and external stakeholders, including industry and the community in the Northern Rivers Region, NSW, and Australia in developing the Rail Trail;
- To educate the community and stakeholders about the potential benefits of the Rail Trail, timing to development, ongoing management and governance models;
- To strengthen new and established stakeholder relationships as a foundation for the Rail Trail, and as a consultative mechanism on and during the Trail's development;
- Assist in identifying new opportunities that will benefit the users of the Trail;
- Identify and mitigate risks involved during the development of the Project, including concept development, preplanning, construction, and post construction stages; and
- To lobby for funding for construction of the Rail Trail.

2.6.2 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

A key focus for the Rail Trail's development has been to identification of stakeholders for engagement and the most relevant approach to capture issues, ideas and gauge the level of support for the Project.

The NRRT has identified a broad range of the types of stakeholders including:

- Elected representative (State, Federal and Local Governments)
- NSW Government Departments
- Federal Government Departments



“The group came together with a common vision to preserve this very valuable community asset, the 130km of disused rail corridor between Murwillumbah and Casino, and converting it to a modern cycle and walking trail through the region’s spectacular landscapes.”
(NorthernRiversRailTrail.org.au)

- Local Government Departments
- Regulatory authorities
- Peak bodies, community organisations and advocacy groups
- Landowners adjacent to the Rail Trail
- Lessees of crown land
- Businesses
- Lismore City, Richmond Valley, Byron Bay Shire, and Ballina Shire Councils
- Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs)
- Regional and local communities enroute
- Local schools
- Sporting bodies
- National Rail Trail Advocacy Groups
- Media

Table 2.6.2 outlines the Stakeholder Analysis undertaken on the Project including stakeholder, key messages, engagement methods, frequency, and responsibility.



TABLE 2.6.2 NRRT CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

WHO (Stakeholder)	WHAT NEEDS TO BE COMMUNICATED	HOW (Engagement Methods)	WHEN (Frequency)
State Government – Destination NSW	Key Messages	Face-to-face presentations	Letter of Support by CEO DNSW
Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers Region	Confirm support for project and opportunity to expand tourism shoulder and low seasons, and future marketing and promotion	Mail out (letter/flyer), email, and phone	Key project milestones presentations to CEO DNSW by NRRT Association once funding received
Destination Northern Rivers	Confirm support for project and opportunity to expand tourism shoulder and low seasons, and future marketing and promotion	Mail out (letter/flyer), email, and phone	Letter of support for project received, then as a stakeholder at meetings by NRRT Committee/Councils on approval of the project
Lismore City, Richmond Valley, and Byron Bay Shire Councils and associated Tourism groups	Confirm support for project and opportunity to expand tourism shoulder and low seasons, future marketing and promotion, increased ratepayer satisfaction, economic benefits, governance, and project management	Face-to-face meetings, phone, email - direct consultation with Council Tourism Officers and Economic Development staff	Letter of support for project received, then as a stakeholder at meetings by NRRT Committee/Councils on approval of the project
Northern Rivers Tourism Groups	Confirm support for project and opportunity to expand tourism shoulder and low seasons	Inclusion on Steering Committee	Concept stage and Business Case Development
Local accommodation business owners and tour operators	Tourism product diversification, funding support, concept opportunities, and timeframes	Face-to-face meetings - direct consultation with business owners, tourism operators and business Chambers in the Region.	Funding stage through to construction
Adjacent land owners	Seek support for project, potential increase in revenue, additional business opportunities to expand tourism in the area, cooperative marketing opportunities	Mail out (letter/flyer), email, and phone	Letter of support for project received, then as a stakeholder at meetings by NRRT Committee/Councils on approval of the project
Northern Rivers Region Joint Organisation of Council	Seek support for project	Mail out (letter/flyer), email, and phone	On approval of the project
	Seek support for project	Mail out (letter/flyer), email, and phone	Letter of support for project received, then as a stakeholder at meetings by NRRT Committee/Councils on approval of the project
Aboriginal communities (Local Aboriginal Land Councils)	Seek support for project, identify opportunities to develop new tourism products and raise cultural awareness	Face to face meetings - direct consultation with local Aboriginal Land Councils and Elder Groups	Letter of support for project received, then as a stakeholder at meetings by NRRT Committee/Councils on approval of the project,
Other existing operating Rail Trails	Seek support for project, opportunities for tourism product development/marketing opportunities, develop a deeper understanding of risks, obstacles, benefits, estimated visitor numbers, governance models, funding, construction methods, and project management	Mail out (letter/flyer), email, and phone	Newsletter updates

2.6.3 COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The community and stakeholder engagement approach has been driven from the engagement objectives of the NRRT Project. For consistency this has been applied at a local level during the development of the Casino to Eltham Stage to clearly and openly articulate how this input and feedback may be used to support decisions on the Rail Trail during pre-development and construction stages. This feedback has helped inform the priority stages, identify key issues, gain feedback, and manage expectations.

Importantly, the engagement process has assisted to identify and mitigate risks involved during the development of the Project and ensure all stakeholders are informed. The engagement process has included a wide range of interactions from formalised meetings to collaborative planned promotional activities.

The NRRT has also utilised the outcomes from community and stakeholder engagement undertaken during the development of Lismore and Richmond Valley Council's various strategic planning documents, including the Sport and Recreation Management Plans and Community Long Term Strategic Plans, which are developed as part of the NSW Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting Policy.

“Respectful and meaningful engagement can help responsible persons understand different perspectives and manage risk. Done well, it can also generate useful insights into how a site is used and enjoyed which can inform decision making and support better local outcomes.” (NSW Crown Lands)

The NRRT Association has utilised the Public Participation Spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) to develop the engagement process for the NRRT. The Spectrum identifies five approaches to engagement that result in varying levels of influence by the community and internal and external stakeholders.

These five approaches to engagement are:

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

Table 2.6.3 details the engagement activities and approach undertaken by the NRRT Association since its inception, and how they align to the Spectrum.

TABLE 2.6.3 NRRT ENGAGEMENT APPROACH, ACTIVITY AND DETAILS

APPROACHES	ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY	DETAILS	
Inform	Community information event	Byron Bay Community Centre	
	Newsletters	Over 2820 on Newsletter database	
Consult	Briefing papers	December and January 2018	
	Local signage	Poster campaign “Eye on you”	
	Online petition	7030	
	Merchandise	T-shirts, stickers, teardrop banners	
	Promotional material	Brochures and flyers	
	Survey	One survey has been undertaken	
	Facebook Pages	NRRT Supporters (3.5k Likes)	
		Tweed Valley Rail Trail Facebook Page (881 Likes)	
	Rail Trails Australia and Rail Trails for NSW	Advice on construction, funding, ongoing operational costs	
	Stalls	Cycle for Life	
Casino Beef Week			
BBQ and Bluegrass Festival			
Brisbane Expo			
Living Earth Festival			
Involve	Targeted meetings	Over 100 meetings held	
	Workshops	One workshop held	
	Farmers markets	Over 80 attendances at Bangalow, Murbah, Mullumbimby, Murwillumbah, Byron Bay, Lismore, Uki, Casino Multi-cultural, Lennox Head, Stokers Siding, Channon, New Brighton, Eltham Pantry markets.	
		NRRT Association meetings	Over 50 meetings held
	Executive Committee meetings	Over 20 meetings held	
	Surveys	One survey has been undertaken	
	Fundraising events	Over ten separate fundraising events have been held raising in excess of \$100,000 towards the planning of the NRRT	
Collaborate	Collaboration between NRRT Association and Tweed Shire Council	Regular meetings, advice and support during development of Tweed stage, feedback during refinement of project management, community consultation, TSC represented on the board of the NRRT	
	Collaboration between Tweed Shire Council, Lismore City Council, Richmond Valley Council, Byron Shire Council, and Ballina Shire Council	Councils represented on the NRRT Executive Committee.	
	Richmond Valley and Lismore City Councils assisting with funding the NRRT Business Case and Economic Impact Assessment	Councils represented on the NRRT Executive Committee. Input into the Business Case development and review.	
	Meetings and feedback session with Chamber of Commerce representing local businesses within the region	Bangalow Chamber of Commerce, Ballina Chamber of Commerce	
	Regional Councils	Regular meetings held with surrounding Councils, including the Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils	
	Regional and State Sporting Associations	Byron Bay Community Centre	

2.6.4 FUNDRAISING AND SUPPORT

The level of support for the Project can be demonstrated by the significant funds raised to contribute towards the planning of the NRRT. Numerous events have been held by the NRRT Association to raise funding ranging from film nights to crowd fundraising. Funds raised to date are in excess of \$100,000 and have been utilised in the preparation of a complete Economic Impact Assessment of the Rail Trail (Casino to Eltham and Casino to Crabbes Creek), a Business Case for Stage 2 of the Trail, and other planning areas including Heritage and Biodiversity Assessments.

Table 2.6.4 demonstrates the support to progress the Rail Trail including date, event, attendees and funds raised.

TABLE 2.6.4 NRRT FUNDRAISING			
DATE	EVENT	ATTENDEES	FUNDS RAISED (\$)
May 2014	Film night Bangalow	210	754
May 2014	Circus Arts Byron Bay	220	3,000
Aug 2014	BBQ and Blue Grass	2300	10,400
Apr 2015	Bangalow Bowling Club	500	6,500
2016/17	WWW Foundation donations		20,000
Jul 2017	Crowd Funding	772 donators	75,600
Jul 2018	End of term concert Tropicapella	150	300
Nov 2018	Stone and Wood fundraiser	Numerous customers	3,750
Oct 2018	Bunnings barbecue	Steady stream all day	1,577
	Donations received via website		7,000
Total			\$128,881

2.6.5 LETTERS OF SUPPORT

A wide range of letters of support have been received from local, regional and state organisations, as well as tourism operators, business owners and key stakeholders located along the route or have an interest in the development of the NRRT, including the Casino to Eltham Stage. Table 2.6.5 outlines the various stakeholders, type and location, demonstrating the wide support for the Project.

TABLE 2.6.5 NRRT LETTERS OF SUPPORT		
NAME OF BUSINESS/ORGANISATION	TYPE	TOWN
Billinudgel Hotel	Accommodation and food	Billinudgel
Heart and Home	Homewares and gifts	Lismore
Health Insights	Eco tourism	Binna Burra
Armsign	Signage for the trail	Wollongbar
A Room at the Carrington	Bed and Breakfast	Bangalow
Quarter Apartments	Accommodation	Byron
Macadamia Castle	Tourist activities	Knockrow
Quadracon	Building/Construction Co.	Byron
Transition Cycles	Bike shop	Ballina
Just Ride Cycles	Bike shop	Lismore
Mt Warning Adventures	Adventure company	Murwillumbah

TABLE 2.6.5 NRRT LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Outdoor Adventures	Adventure company	Tweed
Hosanna Farmstay	Farm holidays	Stokers Siding
Byron Bay Farmstay	Accommodation and bike track	Byron
Go-Alliance	Efficient transport	Sydney
Bangalow Chamber of Commerce	Business community, executive	Bangalow
The Lions Club	Community group	Bangalow
Northern NSW Local Health District	Health Department	Northern NSW
Paradise Lost Orienteers	Trail maps	S.E. Queensland
Ballina Chamber of Commerce	Business community	Ballina
Lismore City Council	Council	Lismore
Tweed Shire Council	Council recommendation	Tweed
Northern Rivers Bushwalking Club	Adventure club	Lismore
Kyogle Mountain Bike Development	Mountain biking	Kyogle
The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones MLC	Member of Parliament	Sydney
The Bicycle Emporium	Bike shop	Ballina
Byron Bay Cycling Club	Cycle club	Byron
True Wheel Bike Shop	Bike shop	Mullumbimby
The Arts Yard	Art Space, organic gardens	Bangalow
Steve and Peter Plummer	Bike hire, taxi/shuttle	Byron
Outdoorism	Camping/outdoor store	Murwillumbah
Nortec	Small business support	Byron
Cherry Jackson-Saw	On behalf of ATHRA and Tweed Valley Riders	Tweed
Envite	Environmental management	Lismore
Martin Fitzsimons permaculture	Permaculture farm and equipment hire	Billinudgel
Gynea retreat and spa	Eco retreat	Uki
Bangalow Chamber of Commerce	Members	Bangalow
Acoustiguide business	Audio guide	Como
Circus Arts	Entertainment centre	Byron
Tom O'Reilly	Brewery	Byron
NOROC	Northern Rivers Region of Councils	Lismore
Byron Shire Council	Resolution	Byron
Gabriel Rosati	The Arts Yard art studios	Bangalow
Jaquelina Wills	Community arts worker	Mullumbimby
Ballina Shire Council	Council	Ballina
Queenstown Trails Trust	Queenstown cycle path	New Zealand
Tweed Shire Council	Council Mayor	Tweed
Byron Shire Council	Notice of Motion 9/10/14	Byron
The Balcony	Restaurant	Byron
Pegasus	Horse riding school	Bangalow

TABLE 2.6.5 NRRT LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Anthony Steinfort	Electric bikes	Australia
Landcare	Wetland care	Ballina
Bench and Banter	Gourmet café	Mullumbimby
Ballina Byron Gateway Airport	Letter to come	Ballina
Uki residents group	Uki residents	Uki
Stokers Siding business community	Stokers community	Stokers Siding



The community of Eltham will be one of the many communities to benefit from the establishment of the Rail Trail.



3. ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSAL



3. ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 OBJECTIVES & INDICATORS

The objectives and indicators of the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage are outlined in Table 3.1. The indicators are ways of measuring the progress being achieved against the aims and objectives of the Project. The indicators have been developed to measure physical and visible (measurable) outcomes, and provide valuable insights into the attitudes and behaviour of users of the Rail Trail.

TABLE 3.1 NRRT - CASINO to ELTHAM STAGE OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

ISSUE	OBJECTIVE	KEY INDICATOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher regional unemployment rates especially in the youth age group Creation of jobs to meet growing population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the NRRT as a demand driver for the region to encourage visitor dispersal to regional areas and distribute tourism dollars inland to revitalise towns and villages Diversify the regional economy Increase visitation and length of stay to the Northern Rivers region by leveraging key market segments Help differentiate and brand the Northern Rivers Region for tourism marketing purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of new jobs during and post construction Increased visitor numbers (23,000 by year 3) Number of new businesses created by year Revitalise existing business especially in villages Increased Nature-Based tourism product
Lack of safe walking/cycling infrastructure in the Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a safe, active transport route for residents within the region Provide key recreational infrastructure to support population growth Enhance village life by converting railyards into public spaces Encourage social interaction and participation to build community connectivity and wellbeing 	Percentage of local usage to be measured in years 1, 3 and 5
Lack of recreational facilities for the movement impaired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide accessible infrastructure for those with a disability, including families with prams and the aged 	Rate of mobility-impaired usage (e.g. by wheelchairs, prams, other mobility aids)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deterioration and disrepair of State and Local Heritage items including bridge infrastructure and vandalism of rail heritage buildings. Loss of regional and state heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve key heritage infrastructure including the corridor for future generations Revitalise and repurpose disused infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local and State Heritage assets restored and maintained The preservation of the Rail Corridor as a public space Increased community pride
Increased health issues in the Northern Rivers Region, including increased rates of depression and childhood obesity	Provide a safe, active transport route for residents within the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200 volunteers by year 3, increasing by 2% thereafter User profiles undertaken annually Monitor regional health rates
Rail corridor overgrown with weed species including Camphor, Lantana and potential encroachment to private adjoining property	Management of open land and public space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual weed maintenance program scheduled and undertaken Weed Management Plan developed and implemented
Lack of connection in area for native and endangered habitat including koalas	Provide a natural habitat corridor for wildlife and reconnect remnant forest sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased numbers of koalas 200ha of remnant forest connected Data collation and research

3.2 OPTIONS ASSESSMENT

Prior to commencing the options identification and analysis process, a range of documentation was reviewed to provide context, including localised, regional and state planning documents and strategies. Importantly, the comprehensive engagement on the entire NRRT and the Casino to Eltham Stage provides an insight into community and key stakeholder aspirations and also assists in the issue identification process.

Consideration was given to consistency with wider NSW strategic policies and ensuring alignment with the Project through the following inputs:

- Alignment to strategic government policies and frameworks (as discussed in Section 2.4).
- The objectives identified for the overall NRRT (as discussed in section 3.1).
- The identified options for the development of the NRRT and Casino to Eltham Stage (as discussed in this section).

The following sections details the comparative analysis undertaken for the three shortlisted options.

3.2.1 OPTION 1: DO NOTHING APPROACH

Option 1 is the Do Nothing approach, that the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage not be undertaken. The rail line would remain underutilised with the NSW Government funding the cost to maintain the infrastructure at no return for their investment.

The impact of the Casino to Eltham stage not proceeding would be detrimental to the region and a major lost opportunity for NSW. There would be significant stakeholder impacts due to the support for the Rail Trail from a wide range of users. Other key impacts include:

- Visitor, community and stakeholder pressure will increase to meet the expectation for demand drivers in the region
- Loss of delivery momentum
- Increased health and safety issues for residents and visitors
- Inability for community's to connect, develop events and assist in localised economic development strategies
- Increased poor health outcomes for residents in the region resulting in costs to Government
- Fewer additional visitors to the region and lost opportunity to increase length of stay.
- Increasing weed management issues and loss of biodiversity and decreased conservation value in the region
- Lost new business opportunities and collaboration between business owners.
- Reduced employment opportunities

- Weakened positioning for the Northern Region Tourism brand
- Lost opportunity to capitalise on the significant capital investment in the region
- Heritage places (items and places) continue to fall into a state of disrepair
- Increased concern from residents for the lack of accessible recreational facilities in the region

Given the considerable support for the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT and the comprehensive planning and assessment that has been undertaken, the NRRT Association and Richmond Valley and Lismore City Council the ongoing 'Do Nothing' approach is not considered feasible.

3.2.2. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Two other strategic options have been considered in addition to Option 1 - Do Nothing. The Strategic Options are summarised as follows:

Option 2 Casino to Eltham (PREFERRED OPTION)

Option 2 Casino to Eltham is the preferred strategic option based on an analysis of factors including time, money and resources. Much investigations have been conducted into the development of the Southern Trail Head as Stage 2 of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail.

The identified key benefits include:

- Broad community and stakeholder support from Local Government, residents, business owners, business and tourism organisations, groups and individuals in the region
- Value for money in terms of construction costs
- Heritage considerations and review undertaken
- Environmental Assessment undertaken
- Economic Impact Assessment completed
- Economic stimulation through increased visitation to the region
- Assist in smoothing out the visitation periods in the region
- Provide an alternative, active route for residents to travel to work or school
- Assist in the revitalisation of declining areas in South Lismore and Casino
- Provide key recreational infrastructure to meet the demand from an increasing population
- Provide a natural habitat corridor of some 200 hectares
- Preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage elements associated with the rail infrastructure.

- Opportunities for revenue raising to fund ongoing maintenance costs
- Improved health outcomes for the residents in the region resulting in cost savings for Government
- Appreciate and support the work undertaken by the NRRT Association in driving the Project for the betterment of the Northern Rivers Region and NSW
- Establish NSW as a Rail Trail Hub with a spectacular and scenic Rail Trail distinct from other operating Trails in Australia
- Grow NSW share of Nature Based, cycling, walking and accessible tourism markets.
- Capture the growing Asian market entering through the Gold Coast Airport

At a construction cost of \$33.4 million and a cost benefit ratio of 1.66 the Project represents a positive return on investment.

Option 3 Casino to Crabbes Creek

This Option would see the construction of the southern Trail Head to meet with the Northern Trail Head at Crabbes Creek, a length of 105 kilometres. Essentially this represents the total length of the disused Rail Line. The Trail will traverse through the major towns of Casino, Lismore and Byron Bay connecting many smaller communities at a construction cost estimated at \$75 million.

Due to the Tweed Stage currently under pre-development it is recommended that this length of Trail be broken into two stages being:

- Casino to Eltham
- Eltham to Crabbes Creek - with potential to stage this construction.

Byron Shire is currently undertaking strategic planning into the areas vision for sport and recreation undertaking a Bike Plan and Pedestrian Strategy. To maintain the momentum and build upon the Tweed Stage it is recommended that the smaller length be undertaken (Option 2)

TABLE 3.2.1.1 NRRT OPTIONS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

ANALYSIS	OPTION 1 DO NOTHING	OPTION 2 CASINO – ELTHAM	OPTION 3 CASINO TO CRABBES CREEK
BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No initial construction costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revitalise a disused state asset into an iconic tourism and recreational asset Increase in economic benefits to the region and NSW Increased visitor satisfaction Improvement to health and safety for users Meet needs of aged and people with a disability Achieve LGA strategic community and recreation goals ‘Future proofing’ in the realm of large-scale tourism demand drivers for the region Forms Trail Head in the south, supporting Tweed Stage of the Trail Revitalisation of key areas in Lismore Supportive Local Government Areas Project Management by Richmond Valley Council Strong stakeholder support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in economic benefits to the region and NSW Increased visitor satisfaction Improvement to health and safety for the visitors and local markets Increased revenue and improved financial sustainability for local business Meet needs of aged and people with a disability Achieve LGA strategic community and recreation goals ‘Future proofing’ in the realm of large-scale tourism demand drivers for the region Alignment to strategic objectives
OBSTACLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not improving the health and safety of the visitors and local users Loss of community pride and stakeholder support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtaining funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtaining funding Two current studies in Byron Shire unfinalised: Multi-purpose use of corridor between Bangalow and Crabbes Creek, and Bike Plan and Pedestrian Strategy
COSTS	Annual maintenance and safety costs	\$33.3 million	\$75 million
RISK CATEGORIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Safety Leadership and Management Reputation Legal Political Time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Planning Environmental Time Financial Health and Safety Political Leadership and Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Planning Environmental Time Financial Health and Safety

TABLE 3.2.1 NRRT OPTIONS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost opportunity for leadership and management among stakeholders in the community • Loss of both direct and indirect economic benefits to regional economy and NSW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for collaboration through joint strategic planning and marketing • Collaboration opportunities to attract a larger share of international and interstate visitation • Connect urban and rural residential areas to main business areas of Casino and Lismore • Provision of a safe, active transport route • Increased sustainability of private tourism operators and business within the Region • Increased new business opportunities • Preservation of Local and State Heritage Assets • Increased participation levels in recreational activities • Improved health of residents within the Lismore City and Richmond Valley Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning and maximising marketing opportunities • Increased collaboration opportunities to attract a larger share of international and interstate visitation • Link and connect rural areas to main retail centres • Provision of a safe, active transport route • Increased participation levels in recreational activities • Increased sustainability of private tourism operators and business within the Region • Increased new business opportunities • Preservation of Local and State Heritage Assets • Improved health of residents within the Lismore, Richmond Valley and Byron Bay Local Government Areas
<p>STAKEHOLDER IMPACT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor, community and stakeholder pressure will increase to meet the expectation for demand drivers in the region • Loss of delivery momentum • Increased health and safety issues for residents and visitors • Loss of support from smaller communities located along the route • Continued weed management issues and potential encroachment onto private land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a positive impact to stakeholders with shared vision • Opportunities for collaboration through regional strategic planning and joint marketing • Increased community pride • Promote Government collaboration • Ability to learn from Stage 1 Tweed • Increased opportunity for revenue raising to fund ongoing maintenance costs • Decreased ongoing funds from NSW Government • Demonstrated support for residents vision for all tiers of Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a positive impact to stakeholders with shared vision • Strategic planning and marketing opportunities • Increased community pride • Promote Government collaboration

3.3 PROJECTED COSTS

3.3.1 PROJECTED CAPITAL COSTS

The NRRT Association, has undertaken extensive planning on the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage to ensure the Project is sustainable beyond the construction period. The Association has raised over \$100,000 to progress the planning stages of the Rail Trail which has been instrumental in funding critical studies to inform the Project, including a detailed Heritage Report and Biodiversity Study. In addition, significant in-kind contributions include engineering technical advice and management, stakeholder consultation and reporting valued at over \$100,000.

The costs for Stage 2 have been developed based on the extensive research undertaken by Tweed Shire Council in the preparation of Stage 1 of the NRRT, Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek, with construction and ongoing maintenance inputs from suitably qualified engineers.

Richmond Valley Council, as Project Sponsor, is requesting \$33.3 million in funding for the Project. Lismore City and Richmond Valley Councils have committed over \$100,000 towards the Project through the provision of in-kind technical expertise and project coordination support. These works include project management and supervisory roles, planning and permit preparation, project direction and community engagement.

Table 3.3.1a details the costing for the projected capital costs (inclusive of contingency) for the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage. Table 3.3.1b details the projected capital costs by project stage.

TABLE 3.3.1a CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE PROJECTED CAPITAL COSTS

STAGE	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	FUTURE YEARS	TOTAL (M)
Base cost estimate	0.8	1.5	11.3	12.8	0.7	0	27.1
Contingency	0.2	0.3	2.6	2.9	0.2	0	6.2
Escalation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nominal cost	1.0	1.8	13.9	15.7	0.9	0	33.3

TABLE 3.3.1B NRRT - CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE CAPITAL COSTS BY PHASE

STAGE	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	FUTURE YEARS	TOTAL (M)
Prior to Construction	1.0	1.1	-	-	-	2.1	27.1
Casino-Lismore	-	0.7	13.0	0.7		14.4	6.2
Lismore-Eltham	-	-	0.9	15.0	0.9	16.8	0
Nominal Cost	1.0	1.8	13.9	15.7	0.9	33.3	33.3

3.3.2 PROJECTED ONGOING COSTS

The NRRT Association has undertaken extensive planning to ensure the assets created as a result of the Project can be maintained over a 30-year period. These costs include trail-side vegetation management, paving repairs including reseals, bridge inspection and reporting, and bridge and culvert/table-drain maintenance.

Costs incurred for marketing, promotion, and insurances will be covered by the overarching NRRT governance body. Table 3.3.2 details the forecast operational and maintenance costs associated with the Casino to Eltham Stage.

TABLE 3.3.2: ONGOING OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE COSTS (\$'000's)

PROJECT ELEMENT	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10	TOTAL (OVER 30 YEARS)
Maintenance expense on project assets	43	176	176	176	176	218	176	176	210	229	8,620
Total	43	176	176	176	176	218	176	176	210	229	8,620

3.4 ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The NRRT Association commissioned an independent Economic Impact Assessment to be undertaken on the Casino to Eltham Stage of the Rail Trail. The Assessment outlines the significant benefits of the Casino to Eltham Project and demonstrates the efficient allocation of any public funding received for the Project.

The scope of the Economic Impact Assessment includes:

- An evaluation of the direct costs and benefits to the community resulting from the proposed Project; and
- An evaluation of the potential wider economic impacts as a result of the Project.

3.4.1 COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The purpose of the cost-benefit analysis is to determine whether the community will enjoy a net benefit as a result of completion of the proposed NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project, and to ensure efficient allocation of public resources. The cost-benefit analysis has taken into account:

- The potential direct benefits and costs that would not otherwise occur in the absence of the proposed Project; and
- The costs of construction and ongoing maintenance of the proposed Project.

The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the relevant guidelines for cost-benefit analysis, specifically, the New South Wales Treasury Guidelines for Economic Appraisal. Where these guidelines do not cover specific methodologies required to estimate benefits of the project, for example estimating wider impacts, other benefit guidance has been sought from domestic and international literature and guidelines.

Costs

The cost-benefit analysis incorporates the following economic costs relevant to the construction and ongoing maintenance of the Project:

- Fixed infrastructure costs, including earthworks, drainage and other infrastructure;
- Systems infrastructure;
- Other construction costs such as investigation, design, and project management costs;
- Planned construction and operation risk; and
- Recurrent costs, such as scheduled maintenance and operating costs.

The proposed NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project has a capital expenditure component of approximately \$33.3 million during the construction phase of two years. This is broken down into:

- Casino to Lismore – 29.7 kilometres at a cost of \$15,442,980 (excluding GST)
- Lismore to Eltham – 15.5 kilometres at a cost of \$17,825,425 (excluding GST)

Ongoing maintenance costs were provided by the NRRT Association and are estimated at approximately \$176,000 per annum for the first ten years following construction. Depreciation expense has been calculated based upon a 55-year life with residual value of 25% and is calculated at approximately \$453,660 per annum.

Benefits

The direct and indirect incremental benefits of the proposed NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project considered as part of the cost-benefit analysis include:

- An increase in value added to the regional economy (i.e. supply chain and consumption effects) associated with the construction of the proposed NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project;
- Revenue from lease payments, currently being negotiated but estimated to be approximately \$215,650 per annum initially following the construction of the Project;
- Net economic benefits flowing from visitation and spending impacts associated with visitors to the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project;
- Consumer surplus associated with community users of the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project, particularly where there is either no direct fee or reduced/subsidised charges involved with personal use, participation, or attendance in organised events or programs; and
- The residual value or scrap value of the Project asset at year 30, given its operational life has been assessed as 55 years with 25% residual.

Results

Based on the previous assumptions, the results of the cost-benefit analysis are outlined in Table 3.4.1 below. The results are expressed in terms of Net Present Value (NPV) in \$ million and the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) at each of the real discount rates of 3%, 7% and 10%.

TABLE 3.4.1: COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED NRRT – CASINO TO ELTHAM STAGE		
DISCOUNT RATE	NPV (MILLION)	BENEFIT COST RATIO (%)
3%	\$53.71	2.45
7%	\$21.54	1.66
10%	\$9.96	1.32

Overall, the NPV analysis suggests substantial net benefits of approximately \$21.5 million flowing from the proposed NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project, with a BCR of 1.66, and internal rate of return (IRR) of 15%, indicating that the Project offers significant societal benefits well in excess of costs. This also takes into account timing differences between the earlier recurrence of costs and ongoing receipt of facility users, and other benefits over the evaluation period.

Using the central discount rate of 7%, the Project is estimated to generate a Net Present Value of approximately \$21.5 million with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 1.66. As the Benefit Cost Ratio is greater than 1 and the Net Present Value is positive, the Project can be deemed an efficient use of funds.

Other Benefits

In addition to the quantifiable benefits, the development of a Rail Trail has the potential to contribute to a range of benefits that are not easily measured. Other indirect incremental benefits of the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project that were not considered as part of the cost-benefit analysis include:

- Potential revenue generated from sales of materials recovered from decommissioned bridges and other structures along the Rail Trail, once appropriate governance structures for operation of the NRRT have been established;
- Public health cost savings from an elevated level of participation in active sport by a community;
- Non-use benefits derived from non-users of cultural, environmental and recreational facilities who are often willing to pay for the facilities because they value the option to use the facility in the future; the fact that other members of the community can use it; and the fact that future generations will enjoy the endowment left to them in the facility;
- Increased visitation to existing and the creation of new events and attraction of visitors;
- Increase in land value and property prices and therefore increased property stamp duty revenue generated through the enhancement of open space and recreational amenity; and
- Any stimulus to additional private and public sector investment in the region.

3.4.2 ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The economic impact of the proposed NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage has been assessed in terms of the impact of the construction of the Rail Trail and the indirect tourism expenditure associated with additional visitors to the region.

The Economic Impact Assessment measures the potential direct and flow-on impacts that will affect the local community in terms of employment, household income and gross regional product. Impacts on the NSW and Australian economy have also been prepared and are included in the Assessment.

Economic Impact of Construction

The proposed NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage has associated construction costs of approximately \$33.3 million during the development phase. After assumed displacement and leakages are taken into account, the gross stimulus for the regional economy will be approximately \$26.6 million. The net regional economic impact as a result of the construction activity is summarised below:

- \$14.7 million contribution to GRP, comprising of \$8.6 million from direct effects, with a further flow on impact of \$6.0 million through other industries. An additional \$8.7 million in GRP can be attributed to consumption-induced effects.
- Estimated direct income (wages and salaries) of \$2.8 million, with \$2.8 million in additional income generated through flow on effects in other industries, and a further \$4.3 million from household spending; and
- Approximately 62.4 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) employment positions during the whole construction period, with an estimated additional 126.9 employment positions supported indirectly through other industries and household consumption for a total employment impact of 189.3 FTEs.

Economic Impact of Indirect Visitor Expenditure

It is difficult to estimate the number of annual visitors to the proposed NRRT- Casino to Eltham Stage, however, the method adopted has reviewed participation rates for other significant rail trails across Australia and New Zealand where visitor numbers have been measured.

The LGAs of Richmond Valley and Lismore attract approximately 1.0 million visitors combined annually, whilst the wider catchment adjacent to the NRRT Casino to Eltham stage – including the Ballina and Byron LGAs – has an estimated 3.6 million visitors per annum.

Based on the profile of visitors to other Rail Trails, a highly conservative proportion of 1.8% has been applied to estimate the annual visitation levels from the Richmond Valley and Lismore LGAs, with a lower proportion applied to visitors to the Byron and Ballina LGAs, also factoring in the nature of visitation to the catchment region. Therefore, it has been assumed that approximately 23,200 visitors are expected to use the NRRT- Casino to Eltham Project annually upon completion, based on benchmark comparison with other similar rail trails across Australia and New Zealand. Of these 23,200 visitors, approximately 8,100 are expected to travel from interstate or overseas.

Taking into account regional length of stay, visitor origin, and expenditure patterns, the gross annual stimulus to the Northern Rivers economy associated with the expected total visitor numbers to the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage is estimated at \$1.9 million.

The economic impacts of the indirect tourism expenditure associated with additional visitors to the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage on the Northern Rivers Region are summarised below:

- \$1.5 million in GRP comprising of \$0.9 million from direct effects, with a further flow on impact of \$0.6 million through other industries. An additional \$1.1 million in GRP can be attributed to consumption-induced effects.
- Estimated direct income (wages and salaries) of \$0.5 million, with \$0.2 million in additional income generated through flow on effects in other industries, and a further \$0.5 million from household spending; and
- Approximately 14.8 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) employment positions, with an estimated additional 14.0 employment positions supported indirectly through other industries and household consumption for a total employment impact of 28.8 FTEs.

Summary

The proposed NRRT Casino to Eltham Project will become an iconic attraction for both local residents and visitors to the Northern Rivers region. The key economic outcomes from the proposed NRRT - Casino to Eltham Project are:

- During the construction phase, the \$33.3 million project will generate 62 cumulative direct local jobs and support \$24.4 million in additional spending in the community and a further 127 indirect jobs;
- The NRRT Casino to Eltham Project is conservatively forecast to attract over 51,400 persons per annum initially, including 28,250 local users and 23,200 visitors to the Northern Rivers region. The direct spending associated with these visitors is approximately \$1.9 million per year, which will support an additional 15 direct jobs across the region; and
- Over the next 30 years, the NRRT Casino to Eltham will deliver a net present value of \$21.5 million, with almost \$1.70 in benefits to the community created for every dollar spent in construction and maintenance of the recreation and tourism asset.





4. IMPLEMENTATION CASE



4. IMPLEMENTATION CASE

4.1 PROGRAM AND MILESTONES

The NRRT Association has put considerable effort into planning the NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage. Table 4.1 below outlines the expected dates for the completion of the key milestones of the Project. A detailed Gantt chart will be developed on securing funding for the Project that details the works schedule in further detail.

TABLE 4.1: PROGRAM AND MILESTONES				
ITEM	PROJECT ELEMENT	START	FINISH	RESPONSIBILITY
1	Pre-construction Activities			
1.1	Project team establishment	Sept 19	Nov 19	Steering Committee
1.2	Concept design	Nov 19	Mar 20	Project team
1.3	Biosecurity plan	Mar 20	June 20	Project team
1.4	Heritage assessment	Feb 20	June 20	Project team
1.5	Planning application and approval	Apr 20	Sept 20	Project team
1.6	Detailed survey and design	Jul 20	Nov 20	Project team
1.7	Community consultation	Feb 20	Jul 20	Project team
1.8	Detailed estimates, update business case	Oct 20	Jan 21	Project team
2	Rail Trail Governance			
2.1	Construction grant approved	Jan 21	Mar 21	NSW/Commonwealth Governments
2.2	Legislation Casino/Lismore/Eltham corridor	Mar 21	Jul 21	NSW Government
2.3	Extend scope Land Manager C/L/E corridor	Sept 21	Feb 22	NSW Government
3	Construction Casino/Lismore			
3.1	Tendering Casino/Lismore	Mar 21	Jul 21	Project team
3.2	Construction Casino Lismore	Jul 21	Aug 22	Project team
3.3	Opening Casino/Lismore	Sept 22		Government/Councils
4	Construction Lismore/Eltham			
4.1	Tendering Lismore/Eltham	Feb 22	Jun 22	Project team
4.2	Construction Lismore/Eltham	Jun 22	Jul 23	Project team
4.3	Opening Lismore/Eltham	Aug 23		Government/Councils
5	Finalisation			
5.1	Project Closure Report and Financial Project Budgeting Close	Sept 23	Oct 23	Project team

4.2 SCOPE OF WORKS

The following table outlines the scope of works for the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage.

TABLE 4.2 SCOPE OF WORKS	
ITEM	PROJECT ELEMENT
Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of undergrowth, weeds and trees on the top of railway formation (within a five metres wide corridor) Cleaning out and repair of longitudinal and transverse drains-culverts Removal and disposal (or recycling) of existing railway lines and sleepers Trim spreading and compacting of existing ballast Importation, spreading, compaction and trimming of road base material (150 mm thick; 3.5 metres wide) over the ballast to create the rail trail path pavement Bitumen sealing of the rail trail path surface (three metres wide)
Bridges	<p>Steel bridges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface protection works as required to stabilise structures, halting existing corrosion and providing protection from further corrosion Removal and disposal (or recycling) of existing railway lines and transoms (sleepers) Supply, placement and fixing of precast reinforced concrete decks (with galvanised steel balustrades) onto existing steel bridge cross girders. Anticipated width will be 2.5 metres between the indented top rails of the balustrades, with a 3.3 metre outside deck width <hr/> <p>Existing railway bridges with timber superstructure on concrete blade piers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal and disposal (or recycling) of existing railway lines and transoms (sleepers) Remove and disposal (or recycling) of existing timber superstructure (girders and corbels) Supply and placement of galvanised steel girders (designed to accommodate pedestrian/ bicycle loads) on/between existing concrete blade piers Supply, placement and fixing of precast, reinforced concrete decks with galvanised steel balustrades onto new galvanised steel girders (with dimensions as for the steel bridges) <hr/> <p>Existing railway bridges with timber trestle piers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal and disposal (or recycling) of existing railway lines and transoms (sleepers) Remove and disposal (or recycling) of existing timber superstructure (girders and corbels) Remove and disposal (or recycling) of existing timber trestle piers (columns, headstocks, bottom wales and cross bracing) Supply, erection and fixing of new galvanised steel trestle piers on existing concrete pier sills Supply, placement and fixing of new galvanised steel girders (designed for pedestrian/ bicycle loads) on/between new galvanised steel trestle piers Supply, placement and fixing of precast, reinforced concrete decks with galvanised steel balustrades onto new galvanised steel girders (with dimensions as for the steel bridges) <hr/> <p>Bridge bypass:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In locations where high-level bridge replacement costs are found to be excessive, low level bypass paths will be provided
Railway station and associated infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where multiple railway tracks exist, it is intended to retain the track work (rails, sleepers, ballast etc.) that is not used for rail trail alignment, as demonstrable, in situ examples of the historical railway line Retain railway track adjacent to approaching/departing railway stations as preserved examples of the historical railway line Detail-design the rail trail path alignment to avoid any impact on historical relics or heritage items within the rail trail corridor

4.3 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage Project will be undertaken in three key stages identified as pre-construction activities, construction of the Casino to Lismore section, followed by the construction of the Lismore to Eltham section.

TABLE 4.3 PROJECT ACTIVITIES

STAGE	INCLUSIONS	COSTS
Stage B1	Pre-construction Costs	\$2,056,259
Stage B2	Construction Casino to Lismore (29.7km)	\$14,478,372
Stage B3	Construction Lismore to Eltham	\$16,736,849
Total		\$33,271,480

The following table details each Stage of the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Project, including all Project Elements and costings.

TABLE 4.3.1 STAGE PROJECT COSTINGS

PHASE	ITEMS	COSTS (\$)
B1.1	Detailed environmental and heritage assessment	82,515
B1.2	Assess condition and restoration treatments steel truss and other heritage items	175,000
B1.3	Biosecurity and management plan	20,000
B1.4	Community Consultation	50,000
B1.5	Detailed Survey and design	1,523,744
B1.6	Prepare staged cost estimates (Casino to Eltham)	25,000
B1.7	Prepare and submit planning and heritage applications (Casino to Eltham)	100,000
B1.8	Tendering Construction Stage 1, Casino to Lismore	40,000
B1.9	Tendering Construction Stage 2, Lismore to Eltham	40,000
Total B1		2,056,259

STAGE B2 - CONSTRUCTION, CASINO TO LISMORE
Total distance 29.7km

PHASE	ITEMS	QUANTITY	UNIT	RATE \$	COST \$
B2	Preliminaries				
B2.1	Site Establishment	1	No	15,000	15,000
B2.2	Clearance of Vegetation	29.7	Km	8,450	250,965
B2.3	Removal of Rubbish	1	Nom	18,000	18,000
B2.4	Erosion and Sediment Control	29.7	Km	750	22,275
B2.5	Remove Rails and Sleepers	29.7	Km	20,833	618,740
B2.6	Dispose of Unusable Sleepers	1	Nom	350,000	350,000
				Sub-Total	1,274,980

STAGE B2 - CONSTRUCTION, CASINO TO LISMORE
Total distance 29.7km

PHASE	ITEMS	QUANTITY	UNIT	RATE \$	COST \$
Bridges, Tunnels and Culverts					
B2.7	Naughtons Gap Tunnel bypass	1	No	198,600	198,600
B2.8	Timber Bridge Replacement, Steel Refurbish	See UB Estimates Sheet			4,761,624
B2.9	Drainage	29.7	Km	10,000	297,000
				Sub-Total	5,257,224
Pavement					
B2.10	Provision for Traffic Control	65	Days	600	39,000
B2.11	Power Line Observer	35	Days	240	8,400
B2.12	Grade off Ballast, Prepare Subgrade	29.7	Km	15,000	445,500
B2.13	Supply/Place/Compact Basecourse Pavement	29.7	Km	50,000	1,485,000
B2.14	Final trim	29.7	Km	10,000	297,000
B2.15	Two-Coat Spray Seal	29.7	Km	46,000	1,366,200
B2.16	Connecting Adjacent Concrete Shared Paths	2,000	m2	71	142,000
				Sub-Total	3,783,100
Trail Furniture					
B2.17	Fencing New	29.7	Km	14,000	415,800
B2.18	Fencing Repair	14.9	Km	9,000	133,650
B2.19	Signage and Line Marking	29.7	Km	2,400	71,280
B2.20	Handrails	1,500	m	160	240,000
B2.21	Road Crossings	10	No	5,500	55,000
B2.22	Provide Toilet, Bentley			LS	50,000

STAGE B2 - CONSTRUCTION, CASINO TO LISMORE
Total distance 29.7km

B2.23	Renovation, Old Casino Station	LS	490,000
			Sub-Total 1,455,730
			Sub-Total B2 Elements 11,771,034
	Survey and Design	In Stage B1	
B2.23	Contract OH, P and contingency	23%	2,707,338
			TOTAL B2 \$14,478,372
			<i>Construction cost per km</i> \$487,487

STAGE B3 - CONSTRUCTION, LISMORE TO ELTHAM
Total distance 15.5 km, All Lismore City Council Area

PHASE	ITEMS	QUANTITY	UNIT	RATE \$	COST \$
Preliminaries					
B3.1	Site Establishment	1	No	10,000	10,000
B3.2	Clearance of Vegetation	15.5	Km	8,450	130,975
B3.3	Removal of Rubbish	1	Nom	12,000	12,000
B3.4	Erosion and Sediment Control	15.5	Km	750	11,625
B3.5	Remove Rails and Sleepers	15.5	Km	20,833	322,912
B3.6	Dispose of Unusable Sleepers	1	Nom	180,000	180,000
					Sub-Total 667,512
Bridges, Tunnels and Culverts					
B3.7	Tunnel Refurbishment	0	No	198,600	0
B3.8	Timber Bridge Replacement, Steel Refurbish		See UB Estimates Sheet		10,183,933
B3.9	Drainage	15.5	Km	10,000	155,000
					Sub-Total 10,338,933
Pavement					
B3.10	Provision for Traffic Control	35	Days	600	21,000
B3.11	Power Line Observer	20	Days	240	4,800
B3.12	Grade off Ballast, Prepare Subgrade	15.5	Km	15,000	232,500
B3.13	Supply/Place/Compact Basecourse Pavement	15.5	Km	50,000	775,000
B3.14	Final trim	15.5	Km	10,000	155,000
B3.15	Two-Coat Spray Seal	15.5	Km	46,000	713,000
B3.16	Connecting Adjacent Concrete Shared Paths	1,000	m2	71	71,000
					Sub-Total 1,972,300
Trail Furniture					
B3.17	Fencing New	15.5	Km	14,000	217,000
B3.18	Fencing Repair	7.8	Km	9,000	69,750

STAGE B3 - CONSTRUCTION, LISMORE TO ELTHAM
Total distance 15.5 km, All Lismore City Council Area

B3.19	Signage and Line-marking	15.5	Km	2,400	37,200
B3.20	Handrails	1,800	m	160	288,000
B3.21	Road Crossings	3	No	5,500	16,500
Sub-Total					628,450
Sub-Total B3 Elements					13,607,195
	Survey and Design	In Stage B1			
B3.22	Contract OH, P and contingency	23%			3,129,655
TOTAL B3					\$16,736,849
<i>Construction cost per km</i>					<i>\$1,079,797</i>

4.4 PROJECT DELIVERY

The program of delivery for the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage builds upon the work being completed for Stage 1 Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. However, unlike the process in Tweed, the proposed program will provide for a pre-construction phase consisting of detailed survey, investigation and design from Casino to Eltham. The Project will then be constructed in two separate construction phases for Casino to Lismore followed by Lismore to Eltham.

This process is proposed, rather than a combined design/construct contract as used for the Tweed Section, for the following reasons:

- The pre-construction phase enables heritage conservation, bridge design, alignment issues (particularly through North Lismore), detailed design, and detailed estimates to be fully assessed and finalised prior to commitment to time constrained construction contracts.
- The large number of bridges involved lends itself to development of low-cost standardised bridge designs in modern materials that can be partly manufactured off site. These designs and construction systems need some time to be developed and finalised prior to constraint by fixed time construction contracts.
- The cash flows for a pre-construction phase followed by split construction phases are more easily accommodated within government grant funding limitations.
- The Casino to Lismore section (29.7 km/\$14.48M) is relatively straight forward in terms of heritage, bridge replacement, alignment and construction issues and has a significantly lower cost per km than the Lismore to Eltham section (15.5 km/\$16.74M).
- Prioritising the Casino to Lismore section facilitates more efficient early expenditure and provides a significant length of Rail Trail, joining two major centres in the first construction phase.
- This approach provides flexibility if there are delays in obtaining approvals for the proposed adaptive reuse of State heritage-listed structures within the Lismore to Eltham section. It also gives the opportunity to attract additional funds, if required, from sources such as heritage, economic development, sponsorship, and the Federal Government.

4.4.1 PROJECT STAGES

The Project evolves from the initial project planning phase to a capital construction phase and finally an operational phase.

1. Planning:

The NRRT Association in conjunction with Lismore City and Richmond Valley Councils has undertaken extensive planning for the Project. The initial planning stages of the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage has been well scoped and includes a complete comprehensive review of the disused rail line and the commissioning of various studies including a Biodiversity Study, Heritage Assessment, construction and ongoing maintenance costs, and a comprehensive asset review. Stakeholder engagement has been a critical step during this stage.

2. Management of Grants and Capital Works:

Richmond Valley Council as Project Sponsor will apply for government grants and funding for the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT. A Steering Committee representing both Councils will act as Project Client with Richmond Valley Council providing project management and oversight of the process for both Casino to Lismore and Lismore to Eltham sections.

3. Ongoing Operations:

It is anticipated that during the construction period of Stage one - Tweed Stage, the governance structure for the ongoing management post construction stage will be formalised.

The preferred management structure is for the whole Casino to Murwillumbah corridor (Northern Rivers Rail Trail) to be constituted as a Crown Reserve and managed by a single Land Manager Board. Whilst Councils may have some representation as board members, it is proposed that Councils have no direct responsibility for ongoing operations of the Rail Trail or its corridor. Further details of the proposed ongoing operations governance structure are provided in Section 4.5.

4.4.2 PROJECT GOVERNANCE DURING CONSTRUCTION

Steering Committee (Project Client)

The Steering Committee, with representatives and appropriate delegations from each Council (Richmond Valley and Lismore City) will act as the Project Client. The Committee will provide guidance, advice and assistance to the Project Management Team to optimise the Project outcomes and oversee the Project in terms of expenditure, resourcing and scheduling. The Steering Committee may assist with conflict resolution, promote acceptance of the Project and outcomes, and sign off on approvals to proceed to each succeeding Project phase. The Project Management Team will be managed by the Project Manager with reporting delegations to the Steering Committee.

Following strict management guidelines for the Project will ensure that work practices and project delivery are undertaken effectively and efficiently within an underlying philosophy of continual improvement and quality assurance.

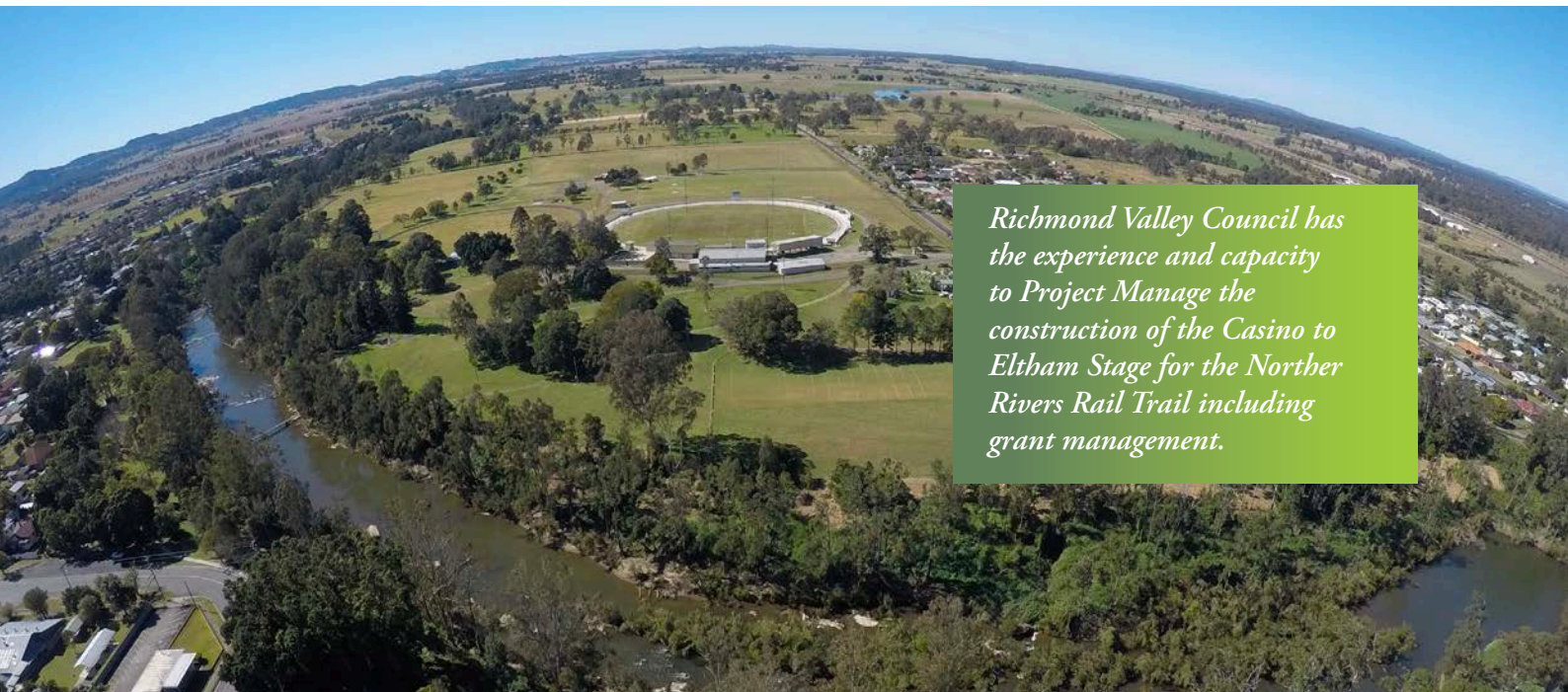
4.4.3 PROJECT SPONSOR AND PROJECT MANAGER

Richmond Valley Council is well recognised as a leader in project management and community service and will be the Project Sponsor of the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage. Council will manage Stage 2 of construction delivery. Council has committed to manage the design and construction of the Rail Trail and maintain the Trail until such time as a central governance body is in place.

Richmond Valley Council has the experience and capacity to project manage the delivery of the NRRT Casino to Eltham stage of the Rail Trail. The Council currently manages a \$50 million annual operating budget and is experienced in managing and acquitting State and Federal Government grants.

Major infrastructure projects recently completed or currently being managed by Richmond Valley are:

- Stage One Upgrade of Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange (NRLX) - \$7 million
- Stage Two Upgrade of NRLX - \$7 million
- Casino Drill Hall Site Redevelopment Stage One - \$1.95 million
- Broadwater Youth Space and Shared Pathway - \$1.5 million
- Stage One and Stage Two of Woodburn Riverside Precinct Upgrade - \$2.16 million
- Stage One and Stage Two of Woodburn-Coraki Road Upgrade - \$2.4 million



Richmond Valley Council has the experience and capacity to Project Manage the construction of the Casino to Eltham Stage for the Northern Rivers Rail Trail including grant management.

4.4.4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

A Project Management Team will be established by Richmond Valley Council that will report to an overarching Steering Committee consisting of experienced representatives from the NRRT Association, and representatives from Lismore City and Richmond Valley Councils. Depending on Council's project commitments at the time, a dedicated Project Manager to lead the team will be appointed from either existing council professional staff or seconded from an expert provider such as NSW Public Works Advisory (PWA), as done with the NRRT - Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek Stage.

The Project Management Team will be responsible to the Steering Committee for the core management components including integration, scope, time and cost, quality, human resource, communications, risk, and procurement, and supported by expert consultants for specialist professional services. The responsibilities of the Project Management Team are outlined in Table 4.4.4 below.

TABLE 4.4.4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

PROJECT AREA	DETAILS
Project Integration Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate project planning, execution and control. Initiate and manage procurement of pre-construction and construction tasks. Ensure the Project and associated tasks are consistent with probity standards. Prepare Project Management Plan for approval of the Steering Committee. Throughout Project, submit any proposed scope changes for approval by the Steering Committee.
Project Scope Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concisely define the work scope. Monitor alignment of Project scope with budget allocations at key project milestones. Report significant misalignments to the Steering Committee for direction.
Project Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a detailed Project gantt chart to program the Project tasks and submit to the Steering Committee for approval. Ensure timely project and project stage, execution and completion in accordance with the approved program. Monitor and control project time-lines and report deviations to the Steering Committee. Initiate appropriate actions to where possible realign project with the approved program or submit a revised gantt chart program for Steering Committee approval.
Project Cost Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare initial Project budgets based on grant allocations and conditions. Modify and adjust budgets at completion of detailed design and estimates milestone, and prior to letting construction contracts. Submit revised budgets for Steering Committee approval prior to proceeding beyond these milestones. Monitor and control budgets throughout the project and report deviations to the Steering Committee. Manage and deliver grant acquittals and associated documentation to funding bodies.
Project Quality Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a Project Quality Plan. Monitor and control Project quality to ensure Project output satisfies needs. Report deviations from the Project Quality Plan to the Steering Committee.
Project Human Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively recruit and utilise Project team members.
Project Communications Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key Project stakeholders. Prepare Project Communications Plan and submit to Steering Committee for approval. Ensure timely and appropriate generation, collection, distribution, storage of Project documentation/information. Effectively engage with and respond to stakeholders.
Project Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, analyse and respond to Project risk. Prepare Project Risk Management Plan including Risk Register. Regularly maintain and record newly identified risks in the Risk Register. The Risk Register is to provide risk identification, risk assessment and mitigation plan.

TABLE 4.4.4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Project Procurement Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure procurement of goods, services and contracts for the Project provide best value for money, are consistent with Project scope and quality requirements.• Ensure procurement is in accordance with Lismore City/Richmond Valley Council procurement policies and the Local Government Act 1993.
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4.4.5 PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Project Management Plan defines the preferred implementation approach for the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage. A detailed Project Management Plan that complies with Richmond Valley Council’s Project Management Framework will be developed by key Project personnel to standardise project management related to the Project across the organisation. This Framework ensures all projects are managed consistently and incorporates three levels of complexity: Simple, Standard and Complex. Following these procedures and controls will ensure the Project is well planned, managed appropriately, delivered within timeframes and on budget.

The development of the Casino to Eltham Project Management Plan is an important process in the planning and development of the Rail Trail. It is envisaged that the Management Plan will be developed following securing of funding to progress the Trail and confirmation of governance structures.

The NRRT Association views the Project Management Plan as essential to setting both the long-term and day-to-day management objectives for the Trail and will provide a framework against which a range of decisions can be made. Such a document, as with all Management Plans, should be both flexible and responsive to change, yet set a clear management framework for future directions and priorities. The Project Management Plan will assist in defining the delivery against grant funding milestones and reporting requirements.

Key elements the NRRT Management Plan should include are:

- A statement of guiding principles
- Protection Policy
- Management Policies (usage and key issues)

The benefits of the Richmond Valley Council’s dedicated Project Management Framework include:

- Alignment of projects and programs to strategic goals and government priorities;
- Accountability and transparency;
- Visibility to monitor progress and enable executive decision-making risk identification and management;
- Budget and schedule performance of projects and programs; and
- Project and program benefits realised and reviewed against strategic investment decisions to assess value for money.

4.5 OPERATIONAL GOVERNANCE OF THE RAIL TRAIL

The NRRT Association firmly supports that the whole Northern Rivers Rail Trail (Casino to Murwillumbah) corridor needs to be branded, operated, marketed and managed as a single facility, and it is recommended that:

- A single authority is appointed to effectively promote and efficiently manage the Rail Trail across four separate local government areas.
- Rail Trail management is not part of council core business.
- The local councils should not be responsible for the long-term maintenance of the Rail Trail.
- The councils have representation on the single Land Manager Board, which is considered an appropriate vehicle for continued council involvement in the Rail Trails future.

Although the Rail Trail will be constructed in stages, it is recommended that the complete NRRT extending from Casino to Murwillumbah be progressively constituted as a single Crown Reserve, managed by one authority - a dedicated Land Manager Board. This will ensure the efficient and effective management and ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure, and relieve the infrastructure burden from the four local government areas in which the entire Northern Rivers Rail Trail is located.

Lismore City and Richmond Valley Councils are committed to the development the Rail Trail, and support ongoing representation via board membership for continued Council involvement post the construction period, when operations commence and the Rail Trail is established.

The composition of board membership of the Land Manager over time is likely to reflect the expanding scope of the Rail Trail corridor. The Land Manager Board will be initially responsible for the first stages of the Rail Trail (NRRT – Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek Stage), followed by the second stage, Casino to Eltham. At a later date, the Eltham to Crabbes Creek remaining section will follow, therefore uniting the Northern Rivers Rail Trail under one management authority body.

The NRRT Land Manager will be responsible for the management structure for operation, maintenance, financial control, and promotion of the NRRT, as well as operations structure including permanent staff, contractors, and volunteers etc. to conduct the ongoing operations of the Trail.

As manager of the corridor, the Land Manager Board will have opportunities to generate income from leases, licenses, sponsorship, grants, donations, and volunteer (friends of the Rail Trail) activities. Key expenditure items will include governance/financial management, corridor maintenance and marketing/promotional activities.

4.5.1 TENURE OF CORRIDOR

It is proposed that the Casino - Murwillumbah railway corridor be reconstituted as a Crown Reserve to enable repurposing and operation as a Rail Trail. Any lands or buildings located along the corridor can then be made available to the Rail Trail Land Manager for lease and licensing to provide ongoing income for the Trails ongoing operation, maintenance, promotion, environmental or heritage restoration, and further capital works. Any existing long-term lease or license income due to NSW Transport will become the property of the Land Manager once the Crown Reserve is created. It is then anticipated that NSW Transport will have no liabilities for the rail corridor beyond that time.

It is also proposed that Transport NSW retain a permanent option over tenure of the corridor to repossess part or all of the corridor for public railway or other public transport purposes, if deemed required in the public interest at any future time.

TABLE 4.5 NORTHERN RIVERS RAIL TRAIL (NRRT) - PROPOSED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE SUMMARY (ALL STAGES OF THE NRRT - CASINO TO MURWILLUMBAH)

ITEM	PRE-CONSTRUCTION			PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION	CONSTRUCTION	COMMISSIONING	OPERATION PHASE
	Grant Process	Concept Design	Tendering				
Body Activity							
Local Government Initially Tweed Shire then Richmond Valley/Lismore City Council and finally Byron Bay Shire Council	Council applies and receives grant for staged RT Construction	Managed by Council		Tender accepted	Construction by Contract, Council as Principal	Commission and hand over to NRRT Land Manager	No formal role
NSW Government	Provision of Grant through NSW Government funding	Decides on legislation and governance structure		Appoint Council as Land Manager (construction only)	Oversee grant acquittal process and milestones	Appoint single independent Board (Max. 7 members) as NRRT (Non-Council) Land Manager for Tweed section and then progressively for all commissioned sections of NRRT	Lands oversees NRRT Land Manager Board
Legislation (railway closure)		Legislation drafted and submitted to Parliament		Legislation proclaimed, corridor reconstituted as crown reserve	Legislation to require corridor and capable of being returned to NSW Transport at any future time if required for public railway purposes.		
Commonwealth	Provision of Grant through Federal Government funding				Oversee grant acquittal		
Corridor ownership management	Transport NSW			Lands Crown Reserve Tenure, Council Land Manager for Construction phase only.		NRRT (Non-Council) Land Manager appointed to manage and operate NRRT	NRRT (Non-Council) Land Manager.
Capital	NRRT construction funded by Federal/State grant funding					Completed	
Operation Income Expenditure	Corridor lease income and corridor maintenance retained by NSW		Corridor lease income and maintenance expenditure transferred to Land Manager Board			Corridor lease income and maintenance expenditure transferred to NRRT Land Manager	Income from leases, licenses, sponsorship, volunteer support groups
NRRT Land Manager Board		Negotiations with NSW Lands regarding membership (government, council, community representatives) of NRRT Land Manager Board.				Members of Board appointed Board establishes management and workforce structure Adopt ongoing Operations Management Plan	Manage operations, maintenance and promotion of NRRT

4.6 KEY RISKS

The NRRT Executive Committee has undertaken an analysis of the key risks associated with the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage. Table 4.6 below outlines the overarching risks that have been identified as part of the pre-development stage of the Rail Trail. A detailed analysis, including the development of a Risk Management Plan, will be undertaken in accordance with Richmond Valley Council's Risk Management policy and procedures prior to commencement of the Project.

As Tweed Shire Council is project managing Stage 1 Tweed (Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek) of the NRRT, Richmond Valley Council will seek advice on any relative risks as this stage progresses in construction. Tweed Shire Council has a well-developed Risk Management Plan that can be utilised to assist in the development of the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage. Localised risks will be identified and addressed during the development of the Plan.

TABLE 4.6 KEY RISKS					
RISK	PROPOSED MITIGATION	RISK RATING AFTER MITIGATION			
		Consequence	Likelihood	Rating	
FINANCIAL					
Construction funding is not obtained	Identify and apply for all possible schemes that could provide the funding. Lobby state and federal ministers.	Extreme	Possible	Serious	
Heritage requirements for selected bridges too onerous for budget funding	Bypass selected bridges.	Major	Possible	Medium	
Design and construction funding is insufficient	Carry out a cost estimate before the design has commenced. Apply a reasonable contingency to cover unforeseen costs. Undertake a more thorough cost estimate at the 90% stage to confirm the funding is adequate. Identify scope changes during design and assess its financial impact on the project before accepting.	Extreme	Possible	Low	
Significant design changes towards the end of the project (program and budget over-run)	Develop concept designs and an Issues Register. Discuss with all relevant stakeholders in a pre-design meeting to obtain an approved concept to base the detailed design on. Provide 3 design submissions for review (e.g. 50%, 90% and 100%).	Major	Possible	Medium	
DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION					
Design not compliant to standards	Project to be designed to current legislation, including pre-empting any potential changes in legislation.	Major	Unlikely	Low	
Environmental and ecological constraints	Design to minimise environmental impacts. If necessary, sensitive ecological areas can be bypassed.	Major	Possible	Medium	
Failure to obtain planning approval	Resubmit reconfigured, compliant project for approval.	Major	Possible	Medium	
Adverse weather conditions	Allow for inclement weather in construction program.	Moderate	Possible	Low	
Adverse ground conditions	Undertake geotechnical investigations to determine the existing ground conditions.	Major	Possible	Medium	
Delays in design documentation	Ensure accurate programming from outset and if delays arise, have rectification methods ready.	Moderate	Possible	Low	

TABLE 4.6 KEY RISKS

RISK	PROPOSED MITIGATION	RISK RATING AFTER MITIGATION		
		Consequence	Likelihood	Rating
Over specification	Ensure design team is aware of budget and is designing to necessary specifications and not more. Prepare and agree on a detailed scope of works before the commencement of design	Moderate	Possible	Low
Failure to understand and manage staff and client expectations	Formal priority setting, and effective communication flow between staff, client and design team. Allow for regular team meetings to track progress.	Moderate	Possible	Low
Failure to deliver project on schedule	Ensure appropriate risk management and contract management processes are being undertaken as well as initiating a monitoring and reporting regime. Consider outsourcing the construction if necessary.	Moderate	Unlikely	Low
Delays in subcontractors providing their services	Discuss procurement requirements early in the design stage to provide early warning to suppliers. Engage sub-contractors at the appropriate time to meet the program.	Major	Unlikely	Low
High tender prices due to economic instability	Accurate cost planning including, if required, allowance for current market conditions.	Major	Possible	Medium
Services relocation	Surveys and investigation to be completed prior to commencement of construction. Engage the sub-contractors early in the design stage to minimise potential delays.	Major	Possible	Medium
Inability to secure labour	Have strategy in place to source labour from other areas.	Major	Possible	Medium
Damage or disturbance to an Aboriginal heritage site	Works only to occur within the areas approved in the REF.	Major	Possible	Medium
GOVERNANCE				
Railway closure legislation not in place	Lobby State Government	Extreme	Possible	Serious
Appropriate (Non-Council) Land Manager structure not provided for operational phase	Lobby State Government.	Extreme	Possible	Serious
Adjacent landowner issues	Include landowner consultation in all planning phases, provide biosecurity plan, renew boundary fencing where required.	Major	Possible	Medium
Incorrect procurement method in place	Implement procurement processes in accordance with NPWS procurement requirements as outlined in the project Procurement Management Plan.	Major	Unlikely	Low
Non-compliance with environmental, planning, or development consent requirements	Active project management, superintendence, environmental, WHS systems.	Possible	Unlikely	Medium
Delay with procurement	Phase project appropriately.	Major	Unlikely	Medium
Approval or other planning issues	Ensure adequate co-ordination with services providers (e.g. Essential Energy, Telstra and APA) to prevent design approval delays. Engage the service providers early to allow sufficient time.	Minor	Unlikely	Low
Environmental	Environmental management and controls are ongoing during construction. Engage accredited contractors to maintain environmental responsibilities.	Minor	Unlikely	Low

TABLE 4.6 KEY RISKS

'Whole of life' safety	Undertake a safety in design workshop in the early stages of the design process to identify and mitigate potential safety issues for the whole of life of the project.	Major	Unlikely	Low
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4.7 LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY ISSUES IDENTIFIED OR APPROVALS

Apart from NSW legislation to close the railway being in place, and the NSW Government providing Crown Reserve Tenure managed by a Land Manager, the Project Scope of Works is not the subject of any outstanding legislative or regulatory issues or approvals required beyond compliance with relevant Acts, regulations and standards including:

- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act;
- Heritage impacts;
- Review of environmental factors;
- Reserve Plan of Management; or
- Construction Assessment (including BCA and Australian Standards).

4.8 PROPOSED MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

4.8.1 RISK MANAGEMENT

Richmond Valley Council understands project risk management is a fundamental element of successful project management. Council operates its activities in context of a Risk Management Policy. The policy highlights that Council's preference is to minimise risk, and wherever possible, identified risks will be transferred or mitigated against to minimise exposure to high-risk activities.

In essence, Council's policy provides a risk framework for the organisation that identifies:

- Council's commitment to the management of risk across all of its departments, functions, and activities;
- A need to apply consistent, proactive, and systematic risk management practices;
- A commitment to best practice in controlling risks;
- Continually reviewing and maintaining risk management systems and standards;
- Ensuring staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware and continually considering and implementing appropriate risk management strategies;

- Incorporating risk management into business planning, operations and management; and
- A pro-active approach to reducing, mitigating, transferring, or eliminating threats.

The Risk Management Framework for the NRRT – Casino to Eltham Stage provides a logical and systematic process grounded in accordance with Australian Standards and best practice guidelines. It aims to achieve an appropriate balance between realising opportunities while minimising potential losses.

Richmond Valley Shire Council manages risks via a framework that includes a Risk Management Policy and Enterprise Risk Register which ensures risks are appropriately assessed, controls are documented, and action plans are in place to eliminate or minimise the organisation’s risk.

Richmond Valley Council recognises it is responsible for managing the risk associated with its operations and therefore, the Casino to Eltham Stage of the NRRT. The Risk Management Plan addresses the risk management process, namely:

- Identification of potential risk;
- Analysis of likely frequency and consequences;
- Establishment of the level of risk;
- Determination of the strategies to manage or reduce the risk;
- Determination of the most appropriate method to manage risk; and
- Monitoring the effectiveness of Risk Management.

4.8.2 PROJECT APPROACH

As with all Richmond Valley Council projects, including for the design and construction of the NRRT - Casino to Eltham Stage are the general principles of AS/NZS ISO 31000.

These principles seek to:

- Create and protect value: Good risk management contributes to the achievement of projector facility objectives through the continuous review of its processes and systems;
- Be an integral part of organisational processes: Risk management needs to be integrated with a facility’s governance framework and become a part of its planning processes, at both the operational and strategic level;
- Be part of decision making: The process of risk management assists decision makers to make informed choices, identify priorities and select the most appropriate action;
- Explicitly address uncertainty: By identifying potential risks, a facility can implement controls and treatments to maximise the chance of gain while minimising the chance of loss;
- Be systematic, structured and timely: the process of risk management should be consistent across a facility and project to ensure efficiency, consistency and the reliability of results;

- Be based on the best available information: To effectively manage risk it is important to understand and consider all available information relevant to a project or activity and to be aware that there may be limitations on that information. It is then important to understand how all this information informs the risk management process;
- Be tailored: A project or facility's risk management framework needs to include its risk profile, as well as take into consideration its internal and external operating environment;
- Take into account human and cultural factors: Risk management needs to recognise the contribution that people and culture have on achieving a project or facility's objectives;
- Be transparent and inclusive: Engaging stakeholders, both internal and external, throughout the risk management process recognises that communication and consultation is key to identifying, analysing and monitoring risk;
- Be dynamic, iterative and responsive to change: The process of managing risk needs to be flexible. The environment that the project and organisation operates in requires consideration of the management context as well as continuing to identify new risks that emerge, and make allowances for those risks that no longer exist; and
- Facilitate the continual improvement of organisations - Organisations with a mature risk management culture are those that have invested resources over time and are able to demonstrate the continual achievement of their objectives.

The NRRT Casino to Eltham Stage Risk Management Plan will provide the outcomes of applying these principles, and be informed with Richmond Valley Council's knowledge and experience in the risks of undertaking their activities and programs.

CONTACT DETAILS

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL

BEN ZELLER
Manager Projects and Performance
Phone: 02 6660 0271
Email: ben.zeller@richmondvalley.nsw.gov.au

NORTHERN RIVERS RAIL TRAIL ASSOCIATION

GEOFF MEERS
Secretary
Phone: 0409 455 378
Email: nrrtgeoff@gmail.com

