

Rail Trails and Tourism Conference

6 - 7 NOVEMBER 2024

Somerset Civic Centre



Somerset
REGIONAL COUNCIL



Welcome to the inaugural Rail Trails and Tourism Conference 2024



A MESSAGE FROM MAYOR JASON WENDT, SOMERSET REGIONAL COUNCIL

Welcome to Somerset and thank you for joining us at the inaugural Rail Trails and Tourism Conference. Across

Australia, disused rail corridors are being repurposed as community recreation assets and tourism drawcards. In Somerset we are proud to be home to 76% of Australia's longest recreational rail trail, the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT). We value working alongside the Department of Transport and Main Roads, the Somerset community and our fellow trail custodians in Ipswich City, Toowoomba, and South Burnett Regional Councils. Together we join forces to nurture and grow this thriving trail that connects our communities.

Each year 35K visitors come to the Somerset region to experience the BVRT. These welcome visitors play a significant role in our regional economy and create a plethora of opportunities for new and existing local businesses. The BVRT has been a resounding success story for the "trail towns" along its length.

Like many other trails across Australia, its regional economic potential is yet to be fully realised. For this reason, Somerset Regional Council and Bicycle Queensland have partnered to initiate the inaugural Rail Trails and Tourism Conference 2024.

It is our hope that over the next two days tourism operators, local governments, community members and stakeholders will come together to exchange ideas that build resilience and maximise regional rail trail opportunities. On behalf of Somerset Regional Council, I wish you a pleasant and productive conference. I hope you leave filled with ideas and inspiration that lead to a trail with a brighter future.

Happy trailing,

Mayor Jason Wendt

A MESSAGE FROM ALTON TWINE, BICYCLE QUEENSLAND CEO

On behalf of Bicycle Queensland, welcome to the Rail Trails and Tourism Conference 2024. This great event is presented in conjunction with Somerset Regional Council and supported by the Queensland Government.

Rail Trails have been around for some time but are fast becoming the next 'big thing' for riding and walking in rural and regional communities across Australia.

It has been a slow burn. Some of these trails have been slowly developing over many years. Starting from humble beginnings in the 1990's, our very own Brisbane Valley Rail Trail has now become an impressive facility and an important economic and cultural driver for the region. Years of hard work by volunteers, Councils, TMR, communities and individuals have progressively made what was once a desolate rail line into the attraction that it is today, with constantly improving infrastructure and investment supporting this incredible asset.

Like the headlamp on one of the C17 steam engines that used to ply this route, the BVRT now lights the way ahead for communities across Queensland who want to take advantage of the opportunities that a rail trail can provide. We hope you enjoy this conference and take away ideas, knowledge and inspiration to support more trails across Queensland.

As you grow your trails with your communities, please let us know how we at BQ can continue to help you!

Alton Twine



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the country on which we meet. Further, we embrace and promote the Somerset region's heritage to incorporate all cultures, their beliefs and aspirations.

The Rail Trails and Tourism Conference 2024 is proudly presented by



Assistance is provided through the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) and Department of Transport and Main Roads.

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Introducing our Master of Ceremonies

Rowan Lamont ~ Trail Partner, Blue Sky Trails

Rowan is a strategic innovator who works closely with land managers, Councils and governments to create and manage trails. He has a passion for connecting people to nature. His work is based on an understanding of how recreational trails can foster wellbeing while transforming communities and regional economies. With a background in industrial design and project management, Rowan has a talent for communicating complex ideas clearly and simply.



Introducing our Keynote Speaker

Linda Tillman ~ Chief Tourism Visionary, Regional Cheerleader and Director, Tilma Group

Linda is a regional tourism strategist with a holistic suite of tourism and event expertise to support Councils, regional tourism organisations and tourism businesses. Linda's capabilities include destination and event development, strategic planning, industry training and mentoring, branding and marketing, and experience design. She enjoys joining the dots in tourism and events by connecting community values and aspirations with business and visitor economy opportunities to create vibrant and resilient destinations.



Day 1

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Please enjoy a complimentary coffee from the van located outside the Somerset Civic Centre from 8am - 11.30am.
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Session 1 / 9am

- Welcome ~ Rowan Lamont, Trail Partner of Blue Sky Trails
- Setting the Scene ~ Alton Twine, Chief Executive Officer of Bicycle Queensland
- BVRT Visitor Research ~ Professor David Solnet and Professor Pierre Benckendorff of University of Queensland

MORNING TEA / 10.25AM

Session 2 / 10.45am

- Regional Tourism ~ Peter Homan, Chief Executive Officer of Queensland Country Tourism
- Keynote Address: Designing Visitor Experiences ~ Linda Tillman, Managing Director of Tilma Group Consultancy

LUNCH / 12.30PM

Session 3 / 1.25pm

- Cycle Tourism ~ Dr Richard Buning, University of Queensland and Director of Bicycle Queensland
- Tourism Information Share ~ An interactive session hosted by Rowan Lamont
- Elite Cyclist Fireside Chat ~ Rowan Lamont hosts a panel of elite cyclists, featuring Anna Beck, Joris van der Tang, Chevonne Arrowsmith and Troy Szczurkowski.
- Reflections

CLOSE / 3.30PM

Please join us for a social networking event at the Esk Grand Hotel. Drinks and canapes will be served from 5pm. This event is proudly supported by



Day 2

Proudly brought to you by



Rise and Shine! Please join us for an early morning bike ride along the BVRT. Muster at the Somerset Civic Centre at 6:45am. A complimentary sausage sizzle will be waiting for you at the end of the ride. This ride is brought to you by



Please enjoy a complimentary coffee from the van located outside the Somerset Civic Centre from 8am-11:30am.

Proudly supported by



Session 1 / 9am

- Welcome ~ Alton Twine, Chief Executive Officer of Bicycle Queensland
- You Need a Vision ~ Desley O'Grady, President of Boyne Burnett Inland Rail Trail (BBIRT)
- Securing a Corridor ~ Craig England, Manager (Rail Corridor Management) of Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR)

MORNING TEA / 10.25AM

Session 2 / 10.45am

- Planning ~ Iain Lonsdale, Acting Manager - Building and Environmental Health, Tweed Shire Council
- Politics and Staged Development ~ Paul Heymans, Patron of Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Users Association (BVRTUA)
- Models of Operation ~ Rowan Lamont, Trail Partner at Blue Sky Trails and Andrew Demack, Director of Advocacy at Bicycle Queensland

LUNCH / 12.30PM

Session 3 / 1.15pm

- Events and Event Partnerships ~ Tiffany Stoddart, Manager Destination, Communication and Customer Experience of Tweed Shire Council
- Group workshop

AFTERNOON TEA / 3.45PM

Session 4 / 4pm

- Reflections and Farewell ~ Alton Twine, Chief Executive Officer of Bicycle Queensland

CLOSE

Thank you for joining us.

We wish you a safe and happy journey as you trail off on your next adventure.



Our Presenters

Alton Twine ~ Chief Executive Officer of Bicycle Queensland

Alton is a highly experienced former public servant with a long record of passionate and effective advocacy for cycling and sustainable transport. A previous member of the Australian Bicycle Council, he had substantial input into strategy, planning and implementation of cycling facilities and behaviour change programs at all levels of government delivering more bikeways, facilities and active travel programs. In 2009 he was awarded Cycling Professional of the Year. Alton's vision is to position BQ at the forefront of advocacy for cycling, and to improve the offering for members across the State, reinvigorating membership, insurance and events, as well as having meaningful input on behalf of members into proposals and projects that benefit cyclists.

Professor David Solnet ~ Professor of Service Management and Service Work, Business School, University of Queensland

David is recognised internationally for his research, teaching and consulting. He is a sought-after advisor to industry and government, specialising in business improvement, financial analysis, service quality and management development programs. David co-leads the workforce research team in the tourism group at the UQ Business School and has published over 50 academic journal articles. David recently co-led an expert team from the UQ Business School's Service Innovation Alliance to deliver the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Visitor Research Program.

Professor Pierre Benckendorff ~ Deputy Dean, Graduate School, University of Queensland

Pierre is an award-winning researcher specialising in visitor behaviour, technology enhanced learning, and tourism. He is and serves regularly as an external reviewer of Australian and international tourism programs. His research interests include visitor behaviour, tourism information technologies, and tourism education and training. He has authored over 80 publications in leading international journals and is co-editor of the Handbook of Teaching and Learning in Tourism. Pierre is a regular speaker at tourism research conferences and has served as a judge for the Queensland

and Australian Tourism Awards. Pierre recently co-led an expert team from the UQ Business School's Service Innovation Alliance to deliver the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Visitor Research Program.

Dr Richard Buning ~ Senior Lecturer, School of Business, University of Queensland

Richard is a Senior Lecturer within the tourism discipline in the UQ Business School. His research interests reside at the intersection of physical activity, travel, and events. Within this area, his research focuses on how tourists are physically active as both a driver of tourism behaviour and during visitation. His research works on active lifestyle sports closely mirrors his passions in active sport tourism for mountain biking, cycling, running, rock climbing, hiking, and more.

Peter Homan ~ Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Country Tourism

With over twenty years of experience across tourism, hospitality and not-for-profit industries, Peter has demonstrated the ability to deliver world-class services. He is a leader in business development, community engagement, marketing, communications, business transformation and operations. Peter uses research and analysis to find innovative and sustainable solutions to issues facing the tourism industry.

Craig England ~ Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads – Manager-Rail Corridor Management

Craig England has worked for the Department of Transport and Main Roads since 2007. Originally employed in human resources, Craig eventually made the transition into transport legislation before moving into his current role around 2013. His small team of property officers manage the state's network of open rail corridors from a subleasing perspective and are also responsible for the day-to-day management of the closed rail corridor network. Prior to TMR, Craig worked in the field of Justice in various tribunals servicing the racing, building and liquor industries. He has been a Royal Australian Engineer Officer in the Australian Army Reserve for over 14 years and is passionate about small communities and realising the economic and employment development opportunities that closed rail corridors can potentially bring to towns through rail trails and other tourist ventures.

Andrew Demack ~ Director of Advocacy, Bicycle Queensland

Andrew Demack is Bicycle Queensland's Director of Advocacy. His professional background is journalism and event management. He enjoys riding all sorts of trails, but he is happiest on a gravel road or a rail trail somewhere in the bush or descending some sweet single-track at Old Hidden Vale. He claims to have been one of the instigators of cyclocross in Queensland. Andrew has been riding his bike to work for more than 40 years – hopefully he gets there soon.

Paul Heymans ~ Patron, Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Users Association

Paul is president of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Users Association, a director of Bicycle Queensland, an I.T. professional, Brisbane Valley Rail Trail tourism operator and a small business owner. Cycling has been an integral part of his life for 70 years. He has cycled in several countries including the UK, USA, Italy, France, and Australia. Home is a rural property in the Somerset region close to Wivenhoe Dam,



where the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) is his local trail. He is passionate about the recreational sport of off-road cycling and usually rides two or three times a week on the rail trail, so he knows it intimately. Paul has 10 years of experience at the sharp end of rail trail advocacy in Australia since he became an activist for the BVRT in 2014. He is a member of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Steering Committee established by DTMR to act as an advisory group for the BVRT. Paul has a unique knowledge and understanding of the people, politics, construction, and history that makes the BVRT what it is today.

Iain Lonsdale ~ Acting Manager – Building and Environmental Health, Tweed Shire Council

Iain is the Acting Manager – Building and Environmental Health at Tweed Shire Council. He has extensive experience in local government working on major development applications for high rise mixed-use buildings, as well as a broad range of aquaculture, tourist, commercial and large-scale subdivision developments. Iain transferred his experience into land-use policy development and has dedicated over a decade to leading the strategic planning and urban design branch in Tweed Council. In 2018 Iain took on the role of Project Director for the Tweed Valley Rail Trail. This was a complex project that has regenerated an abandoned State asset to become a now highly valued public space. The project took over 5 years to complete and in the first five months, attracted over 70,000 visitors. The project has received industry recognition with three award winning nominations in key heritage, landscape and project management categories.

Tiffany Stoddart ~ Manager Destination, Communication and Customer Experience, Tweed Shire Council

Tiffany Stoddart is the Manager Destination, Communication and Customer Experience at Tweed Shire Council where she looks after a diverse team and portfolio of services including the Tweed section of the Northern Rivers Rail Trail (NRRT). Her career spans 25 years in state and local government including corporate communication and engagement, construction, destination placemaking, business development, sporting, and major events. Rail has been a constant in her careers, starting with the opening of the Australasia Railway from Adelaide to Darwin to freight and visitors, and now overseeing the operation and cross-Council partnerships to establish the NRRT as a sustainable commercial business operation with aspirations to be one of the best Rail Trail experiences in Australia.

Mike Blewitt ~ Director of Communications and Marketing, Bicycle Queensland

Mike's background spans cycling media and education, with a life lived on two-wheels. Mike enjoys all aspects of riding, with a long history of competitive mountain biking pursuits. But his best bike memories come from seeing the world, or just the valleys behind home, from the seat of a bike. Mike's goal while working with Bicycle Queensland is to see bike safety added to the national curriculum.

Desley O'Grady ~ President, Boyne Burnett Inland Rail Trail

Desley O'Grady is one of the founding members and current president of the Boyne Burnett Inland Rail Trail (BBIRT), where she previously served as patron for seven years. A passionate advocate for rail trails, Desley had been actively working on the BBIRT project

for three years before the BBIRT committee was formed. As the Central Queensland representative for Rail Trails Australia, she helps mentor and support seven rail trails in her region and was recently elected to the Fraser Coast Regional Council's Mary2Bay Rail Trail advisory group.

In addition to her work on rail trails, Desley is a life member of the Calliope Rodeo Association and a member of the Gladstone Regional Council's Philip Street Precinct Advisory committee. Soon, alongside her husband Craig, she will become the proud new owner of the Grand Hotel Many Peaks. Desley knows firsthand the positive impact rail trails can have on small communities, and she's committed to making a difference in the Boyne Valley.

Our Panel of Elite Cyclists

Troy Szczurkowski

Troy uses the BVRT for the safe, secluded and uninterrupted distance that it can offer year round for his race training - being the 1600km Iditarod Trail Invitational in Alaska. Troy has been riding the BVRT for over 16 years now, from back when it was very disjointed and you had to leave a deposit for the gate keys at the Linville store! Troy runs a small business, building and servicing custom adventure and race bikes, along with retailing bikepacking accessories at Daisy Hill, Brisbane.

Anna Beck

Anna discovered bikes while studying at Sydney university at age 20, and never looked back. From working in bike shops to racing the mountain bike national series, life on the bike led her overseas to race in the Australian stripes. More recently, she has been coaching athletes to do the same. She has been involved in cycling media for ten years and recently took up the post as editor of Australian Mountain Bike magazine. In her infrequent spare time she enjoys coffee, a good book, and discovering trails on foot or bike with her two children.

Joris van der Tang

Joris loves chasing physical challenges on his bike, and loves training, racing and adventures on his bicycle. That includes road, gravel, mountain bike or cyclocross. Joris has completed multiple BVRT return trips, plus a BVRT KKRT return strip, multiple Everests, 24 hour races and other silly long rides. He even currently holds the fastest time for a return trip on the BVRT (10 hr 36 min).

Chevonne Arrowsmith

Chevonne is a cycling enthusiast and advocate and also the creator of the Rail Trail Refuge in Linville. She has previously represented Australia at the World Championships for both Individual Time Trial and Gran Fondo, while also racing at a club to national level in Australia. These days, she rides for adventure - from the BVRT through to the Tour Aotearoa. Having setup the Rail Trail Refuge, Chevonne plays a role in lots of peoples adventures on the BVRT and surrounding areas.

Thank you

for joining us at the
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