



Rail Trails - Politics and Staged Development

- Reading the political landscape
- Active and passive paths to success
- Being prepared for staged delivery

Prerequisites for Success

- A disused railway corridor with clear title
- Proximity of large population, transport and pre-existing tourism assets
- Community activists to initiate and sustain interest
- Marketing and promotion
- Building Community Support and overcoming resistance
- A feasibility study
- Local Government support
- State and Federal Government Funding Support
- Resilience to overcome setbacks
- A management structure



How did this work out for the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail?

It's a long story...

22 years in the making.



A disused railway corridor with clear title

- Brisbane Valley rail line ceased operations in 1993 and crucially, the Queensland Government retained ownership of the railway corridor.
- If parts of the old railway corridor had been sold off, as with the Caboolture to Kilcoy line, the chances of getting them back are next to zero.



Proximity of large population and transport

The Brisbane Valley line corridor is adjacent to the major population areas in SE Queensland, easily accessible from Brisbane, the north and south coastal towns, Ipswich and Toowoomba. In addition, there is reasonable proximity to Brisbane Airport and a train service to the southern end at Wulkuraka Station.



Activists to initiate and sustain interest in the rail trail project

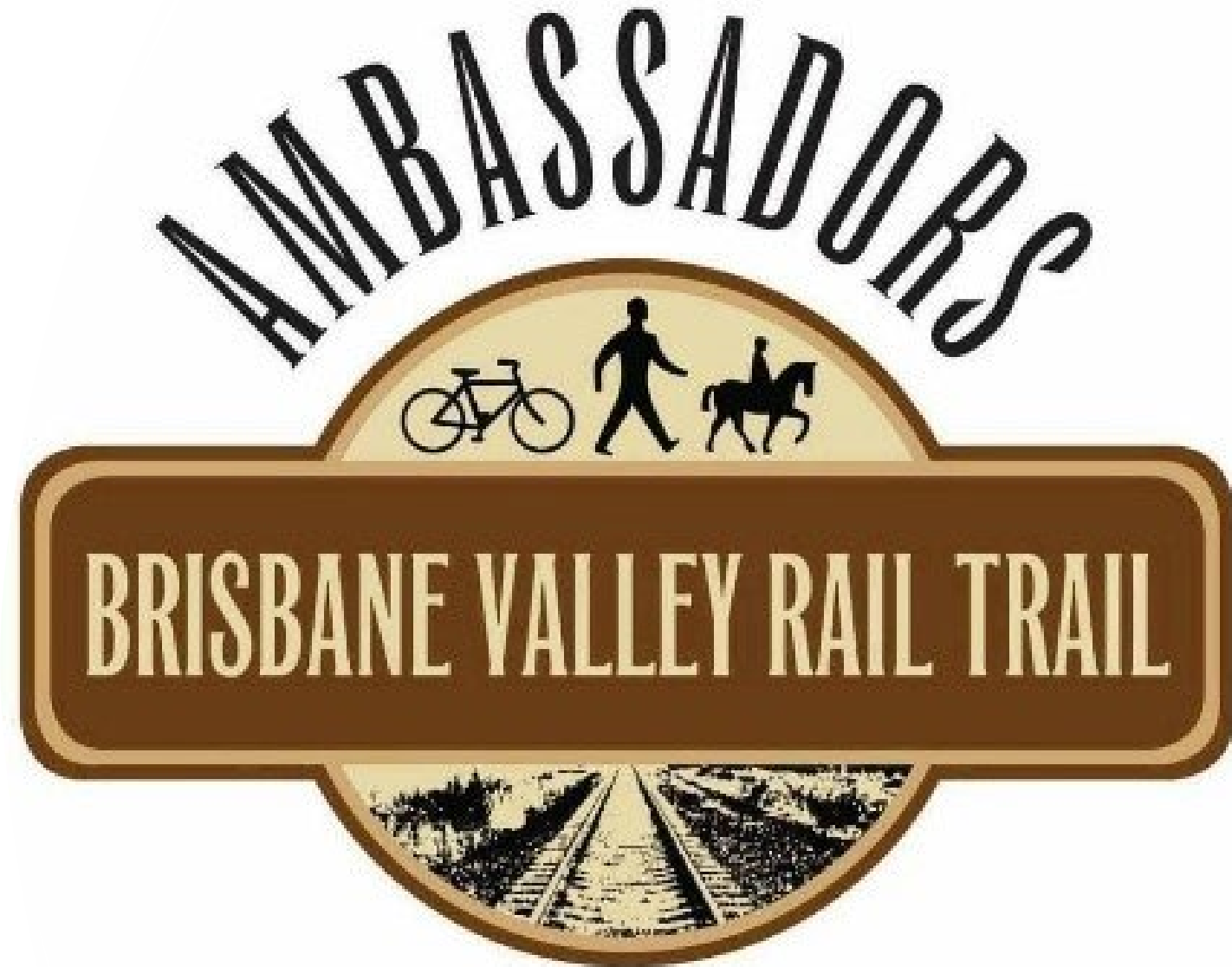
- The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail has a long history of community activism.
- As early as 1996, former Nanango Shire Councillors Mayor Reg McCallum and Cr Kevin Allery first proposed converting the closed railway line into a rail trail and maintained their interest in the rail trail for the remainder of their lives.



Kevin Allery at Jesse's Well, 2000

1. Ambassadors for the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail

The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) Ambassadors, consisting mostly of community members from the north of the region, were formed in 2006. They were the first real community activist group for the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, and they still manage the section from Moore through to Nukku.



MOORE - LINVILLE - BENARKIN - BLACKBUTT

2. Friends of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail

Friends of Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) Inc is a grassroots community-based group of “long-term passionate volunteers” for the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail who promote the trail on social media, at markets and exhibitions, and provide information to the public. They also offer support and assistance to hikers.



3. Paul Heymans – accidental rail trail activist

In June 2015, I initiated a Change.org petition combined with a social media campaign calling on Somerset Regional Council to apply for funding to complete the section from Toogoolawah to Moore. The final total was 1156 signatures, far more than expected.



4. Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Users Association Inc

- On 2 June 2016, the community activists campaigning for the rail trail to be completed formed the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Users Association (BVRTUA) to work with State and Local Government and the community to complete, develop and enhance the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail for the enjoyment of all users and for the benefit of the communities the Trail passes through.
- We organise a variety of events on the rail trail, including an annual BVRT Festival of Cycling, night rides, gourmet experience rides, art rides, and adventure rides exploring the BVRT region. Profits from our events are invested in murals and landscaping to enhance the rail trail experience.

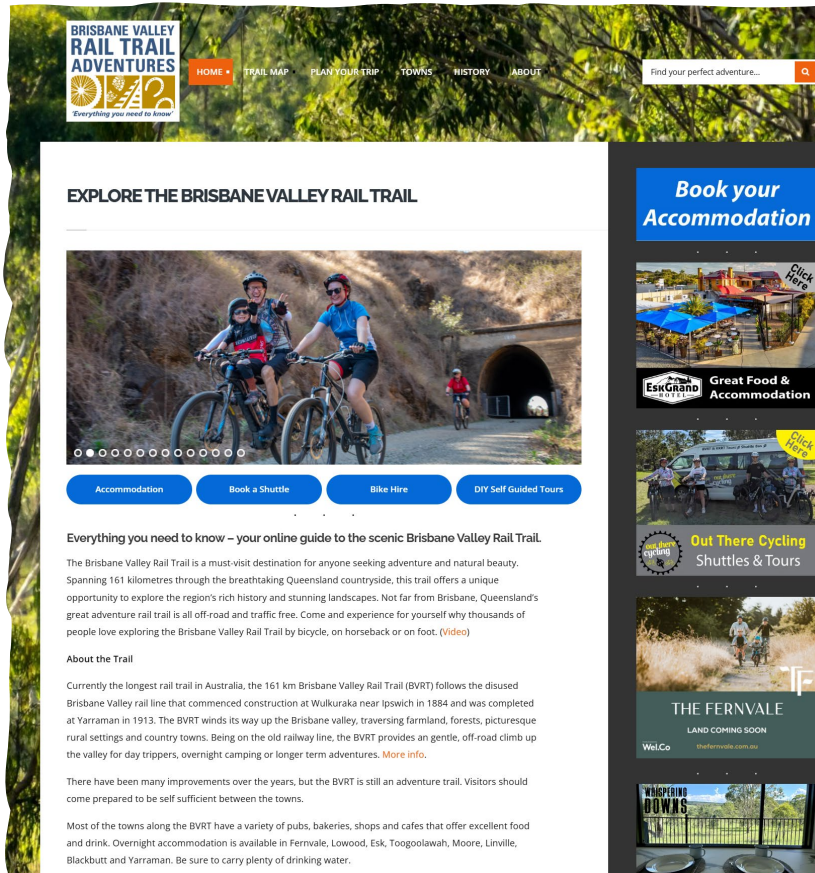


Building Community Support and Overcoming Resistance

- Whilst there was considerable enthusiasm for the project in the former Nanango Shire Council to the north, there was deep rooted resistance to the proposal in the former Esk Shire Council in the south, where the old railway corridor crossed land owned by sitting Councillors.
- They raised concerns about crime, loss of privacy, impact on farming activities, bushfire risks, biosecurity, effects on livestock, litter, toilet waste, unauthorized trail users, and ongoing costs to ratepayers.



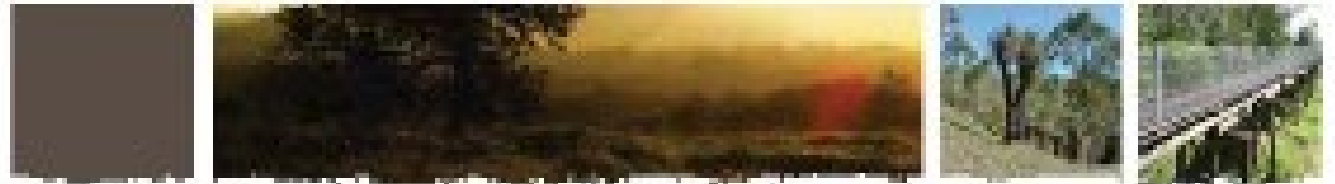
Marketing and promotion



- Social media is tailor made for rail trail activists – it's free and if done well, has a far greater reach than virtually anything else. BVRT Users Association currently has over 37,000 members and followers on our two Facebook platforms.
- Developing a website should be high on your list of priorities. When I first started out, there was only a small and amateurish website that was no longer maintained. I spent a happy year gathering material to develop a website that now has in the region of 13,000 unique visitors per month. In the process, I learned a lot about the rail trail and the local tourism operators.
- We made a number of videos, including commissioning two professionally made videos with sponsorship from local businesses.
- Also, Radio interviews and TV holiday program features.

A Feasibility Study

In September 2007, the Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP) commissioned Mike Halliburton Associates as lead planning consultants for the preparation of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Plan, resulting in a document known colloquially as ‘the Halliburton report’, which is a great template for rail trails.



Brisbane Valley
Rail Trail Plan

Local Government Support

- Despite opposition by the majority of Esk Shire councillors, the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail project was supported by former Esk Shire Mayor Jean Bray and Economic Development Officer Warren Oxnam. In 2003, under the guise of developing a green space corridor, they managed to persuade Council to develop the Fernvale to Lowood section, which was the first section of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail to be developed.
- In 2006, the Nanango Shire Council developed and opened the Linville to Blackbutt section, which was then the second section of the rail trail to be developed.
- However, Esk Shire Council and subsequently Somerset Regional Council remained opposed to the project.

State and Federal Government Support

- During the 2006 Queensland State elections, the Queensland Labor Party made an election commitment to promote healthier lifestyles through recreation trails.
- On 22 January 2007, the Queensland Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure, Anna Bligh, announced \$3.6m for the development of a recreational Brisbane Valley Rail Trail from Ipswich to Blackbutt on the disused Brisbane Valley Line railway corridor.
- The project was now well under way, or so it was thought.
- Between 2007 and 2010, further sections of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail were progressively developed and opened:
 - 2007 - Linville to Moore (2007)
 - 2009 - Esk to Fernvale and Esk to Toogoolawah
 - 2010 - Blackbutt to Nukku and Nukku to Yarraman

Overcoming Challenges and Setbacks

- In 2011, Significant flooding caused severe damage.
- None of the sections had been developed to a high standard. Surface quality was poor, there were over 80 gates, creek gully crossings were rudimentary, and two critical sections from Ipswich to Wanora and Toogoolawah to Moore were missing.
- The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail was pretty much dead in the water. No-one knew about it, traffic was very low, marketing was lacklustre, it was more the preserve of a few adventurous mountain bikers and intrepid horse riders than recreational cyclists, and the 80 plus gates that had to be opened and closed were a bit of a challenge.



Was this the end of the BVRT?

- In 2012, all further development and maintenance was halted under the Queensland Government led by Campbell Newman as part of their austerity measures.
- In the words of the local member, “We’d all like nice things, but with the current debt situation, we cannot afford rail trails”.

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Queensland Times, Ipswich QLD
07 Sep 2012, by Geoff Egan Geoffegan@Qtcomau

General News, page 16 - 206.00 cm²
Regional - circulation 9,290 (MTWTFSS-)

State can't afford rail trail funds

Popular attraction mothballed

GEOFF EGAN
geoff.egan@qt.com.au

Queensland Times, 7 September 2012, page 16

FUNDING for one of the Somerset's premier tourist attractions has been cut by the State Government.

The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail has been “mothballed” in the latest round of government cost cutting.

The cuts mean the government

but with the debt situation we can't afford them all,” he said.

“Unfortunately the rail trail is something we can't afford at the moment.

“It is disappointing. I'm disappointed.”

Despite the State Government wielding the axe on the rail trail

“This Brisbane Valley Rail Trail connects all these communities. It is vital to tourism and economic development.

“For some of the smaller towns in the area the trail is one of their only tourist attractions.”

Somerset Mayor Graeme Lehmann said he hadn't been

“Funding boost for Queensland’s Rail Trails”

- Then in 2014, there was a complete reversal on the part of the Newman Government. As part of their strategy to build the Queensland economy, they announced a \$3.5 Million Recreation Rail Trail Fund in their 2014 Budget.
- I was tipped off by our Local State member, Deb Frecklington, that the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail was on their radar.
- There was just one significant impediment – the grant funding could only be applied for by local government and Somerset Regional Council was still opposed to having anything to do with the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail.



How I accidentally become a rail trail activist

- In 2014, I used to write a weekly op-ed column for the local paper that was widely read by the Somerset community. I saw the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail project as an opportunity to engage community interest in a good cause....and generate some material for my column.
- I initiated a Change.org petition combined with a social media campaign calling on Somerset Regional Council to apply for funding to complete the section from Toogoolawah to Moore. I was expecting perhaps a couple of hundred signatures, but the petition took off and the final total was 1156 signatures.

To apply for grant funding to complete the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail



Started 15 June 2014
Petition to Somerset Regional Council

Why this petition matters

Started by [Paul Heymans](#)

[Media inquiries](#)

The Queensland Government made available \$3.5 million grant funding specifically for Rail Trails in the 2014 Budget. At present, the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) is incomplete with two critical sections unfinished (see dotted lines on map above).

In the past, Somerset Regional Council has been reluctant to take on financial responsibility for the BVRT out of concerns that maintenance costs will blow out.

The \$3.5 million grant funding set aside by the Queensland Government is a once in a lifetime opportunity to get this great project completed. Only Councils can apply for the funding.

If the BVRT is completed, it will be a Tourism Gold Mine for the Somerset region generating millions of dollars from visitors wishing to undertake the

Victory

This petition made change with 1,156 supporters!

[To apply for grant funding to complete the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail](#)

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The start of my 10-year love affair with the rail trail

- I actually knew very little about the rail trail, so I decided to ride all the open sections over the next few weeks and blog about them in my weekly column.
- I advertised my intention on social media. It started with just a couple of friends, and then it snowballed. By the time the ride on the final section from Yarraman to Moore was organised, a supporter's group had formed that later evolved into the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Users Association.





Brisbane Valley Rail Trail : Moore to Toogoolawah

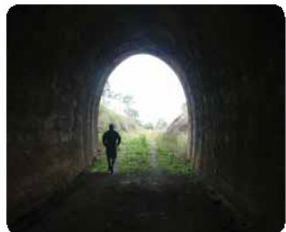
By-pass route in place until Rail Trail is officially open.



www.brisbanevalleyrailtrail.com.au



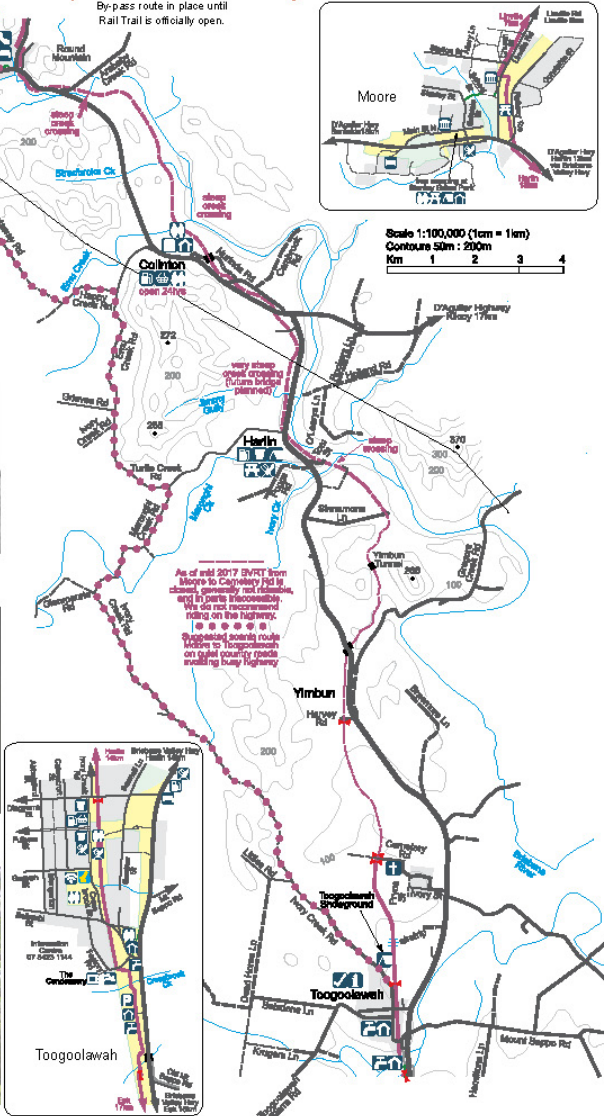
PHOTO OF YIMBUN STATION TAKEN IN 1964



Yimbun Tunnel opened in 1910



St Andrew's Anglican Church, Toogoolawah



Where to Mountain Bike
in South East Queensland

From the Fifth Edition of the best-selling book available online at www.organisedgrime.com.au and from shops throughout SE QLD

Mapping of detour route

In 2017, in partnership with Mark Roberts, Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Users Association mapped and waymarked a very scenic detour route using minor roads and a stock route to connect Toogoolawah with Moore, so effectively it became feasible to do the whole trail.

Opening up the potential of doing the whole rail trail was a game changer.

One step
forwards,
two steps
backwards.

- Eventually, in response to the petition and community support, but somewhat reluctantly, Somerset Regional Council passed a motion to apply for the funding early in 2014, “subject to the terms and conditions”, which looked a lot like a ‘get out’ clause.
- However, it was never put to the test. An early election was called and 31 January 2015 there was a change of Queensland Government, and the funding was no longer available. Far from being a disaster, this turned out to be a stroke of good fortune for the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail.
- We launched a new Change.org petition and campaign, this time calling on the Palaszczuk Government to fund completion. The campaign focussed on the economic benefits to the local rural economies of the regions it passes through. The petition was signed by 1183 supporters and presented to the Queensland Parliament by State members Jim Madden and Deb Frecklington on 16 September 2015. Our events had demonstrated that the Rail Trail was viable.



Deputy Premier
Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
and Minister for Trade and Investment

Our ref: MC15/5325

12 JAN 2016



E-MAILED

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Email deputy.premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Mr Paul Heymans
paul@paulcomputers.com.au

Dear Mr Heymans

Thank you for your email of 2 October 2015 to the Honourable Jackie Trad MP, Deputy Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning and Minister for Trade and Investment regarding the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT). The Deputy Premier has asked that I respond on her behalf. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I understand you have a passionate interest in the BVRT and I commend you for your enthusiasm and the hard work you do to promote the BVRT.

I am pleased to advise the Queensland Government recently approved funding to complete the BVRT between Toogoolawah and Moore. Completion of this section will result in a continuous 140 km rail trail between Wanora and Yarraman, with further plans to complete the remaining section between Wanora and Wulkuraka in collaboration with the Somerset Regional and Ipswich City Councils. This announcement is the result of collaborative efforts between the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning (the Department), the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Ipswich, Somerset, South Burnett and Toowoomba local governments over many years to maintain and progressively develop the BVRT.

If you require further information, I encourage you to contact Mr Simon Banfield, Project Director, Economic Development Queensland, in the Department on 3452 7884 or by email at Simon.Banfield@dilgp.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

MATT COLLINS
CHIEF OF STAFF

I nearly fell off my chair

On 12 January 2016, in response to the grassroots campaign led by our local community activists, funding to develop the remaining closed sections of the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail was announced by the Queensland Government in a letter addressed directly to me.

Seymours Toyota TOYOTA

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Brisbane Valley's Newspaper

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MAYOR

Kirsten MORIARTY
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MORIARTY DROPS BOMBSHELL ON MAYOR

EXPLOSIVE REVELATIONS PAGE 5

Picture: Candidate for Somerset Mayor Kirsten Moriarty is a keen sky-diving enthusiast in the Somerset and she drops a 'bombshell' on the Mayor Graeme Lehmann, CEO Bob Bain and opposition and predecessors of the last Somerset Regional Council. Full details Page 5.

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Local elections provided the key

- At the time, it felt like we were winning battles, but not the war. Wulkuraka to Wanora was being progressed by Ipswich City Council and TMR, but Toogoolawah to Moore remained a major challenge.
- Somerset Council had been resistant to the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail for so long that it was ingrained into their culture. To make meaningful progress, we needed to shake things up a bit.
- The opportunity presented itself at the 2016 Queensland Local Council elections when a sitting councillor decided to stand for mayor against the sitting mayor, Graeme Lehmann. From the early days, it was clear she was going to run what might best be described as a Trump style campaign against him. She accused him of bullying, she accused him of corruption, none of it was true, but you name it, she accused him of it.

Democracy can be a game changer

- I had my column, I had a lot of support in the community, so I was in a position to support Graeme Lehmann on the understanding he'd get the rail trail done if elected.
- At times the muck-raking local election campaign that followed seemed more like a street fight than a mature exchange of ideas. I used my column to support the mayor and six individual candidates who were pro-rail trail, and they were all elected.
- We then had a Council that was pro-rail trail. Somerset Council even went above and beyond. Under the project management of Somerset Council engineer, Andrew Johnson (now CEO of Somerset Council), they took the funding available from the Queensland Government and doubled it with a grant from the Australian Government so they could construct the section to a higher standard.



Victory

Project works commenced in November 2017 and by July 2018 the final section of the 161 km Brisbane Valley Rail Trail from Toogoolawah to Moore was officially opened to the public.



But it didn't stop there...

- A few months later, as the icing on the cake, the heritage listed Lockyer Creek Bridge was renovated by DTMR at a cost of \$3.5 million and opened to the public just in time for Christmas 2018.
- In the intervening years, approx. \$40 million has been invested in the rail trail – 3 more bridges, surface improvements, grids at all the gates and flood repairs.





Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Strategic Plan – DRAFT

DRAFT



Management Structure

- In 2021 DTMR commissioned a five-year Strategic Plan for the BVRT that provides a blueprint for the future development and management of the rail trail with a focus on identifying tourism and marketing initiatives.
- The strategic plan recommended an advisory management structure for the BVRT consisting of two committees – an overarching Advisory Committee consisting of senior executives from the four local councils and TMR, and a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from the four local councils, not-for profit community organisations, and people with relevant expertise.

And finally

They go largely unrecognized, and many of rail trail users may not even be aware of their existence, but we owe a huge vote of thanks to the State and local Council staff who have worked miracles behind the scenes to make the BVRT what it is today.

THANK YOU 🙏



Events are a useful source of funding for community groups.

The BVRT Festival of Cycling attracted 351 participants.

Raised \$20,000 for mural projects to enhance the BVRT experience.



Murals and Landscaping

We use profits from our events to fund murals and landscaping projects to enhance the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Experience.

We're currently working on a \$15,000 mural project to enhance a shed in Harlin.

