



# Loddon Mallee Trails Strategy

SUMMER / AUTUMN 2010



## First Round of Public Consultations Completed

During October and November 2009, interested community members, existing trail users, business owners and government representatives attended forums aimed to identify potential walking, cycling, mountain biking, canoeing and horse riding trails of regional significance that will attract domestic and

international tourists to the Loddon Mallee region. The information obtained from these forums has been extremely useful in identifying:

- ◆ existing and planned trails;
- ◆ opportunities to further value add or enhance existing trails to increase

sustainability; and potential for new trails to be developed.

It is expected that two additional public forums will be conducted in March or April to provide feedback on those trails selected for further development as premier trails for the region.

### Audits of Potential Trails Undertaken

The list of suggested trails identified through community forums and workshops has been analysed, using a combination of physical assessments and the development of an assessment tool which gives each existing or potential trail a rating. This rating considers likely appeal to potential trail users, potential benefits to communities and trail users, planning issues, level of support by communities, landscape amenity, supporting infrastructure, etc. This rating system will then be used to prioritise which trails should be further developed.

### Potential Trails that have been Assessed

The following trails have been assessed by the project team for possible consideration in the final plan:

- ◆ Murray River Trail featuring enhanced Chaffey Trail in Mildura; new Nyah / Vinifera Forest Trail near Swan Hill; new trails on Gunbower Island
- ◆ Goldfields Track, featuring upgrade to existing trail; new mountain bike loop at Mt Alexander; new rail trail between Castlemaine and Maldon
- ◆ Box Iron Bark Trail from Rushworth to Heathcote via Whroo Forest
- ◆ O'Keefe Rail Trail, featuring an extension to Heathcote
- ◆ Wombat State Forest Mountain Bike Trails
- ◆ Goldfields to Murray Trail
- ◆ Dunolly Mountain Bike Trail
- ◆ Hanging Rock Trail
- ◆ Melville Caves Trail
- ◆ Bendigo Bushland Trail
- ◆ Horse riding opportunities in Central Goldfields / Avoca area.



# Results of Trail User Surveys

Of the 71 people from all over Australia who completed our detailed questionnaire about their trail needs, the key motivation for using trails is to enjoy scenery, wildlife and culture along the way.

Interestingly, most people surveyed travelled to the location specifically to use the trail, generally with a small group of friends or family members. Most people stayed four or more days in the area, generally at camp sites or hotels / motels and typically spent money on items such as meals, groceries, accommodation, personal products and fuel.

More than half of the trail users surveyed also visited other local attractions whilst in the area.

According to survey respondents, the five most important features on a trail are:

- ◆ Trail markers and directional signage
- ◆ Printed maps / brochures
- ◆ Information on the internet
- ◆ Drinking water along the trail
- ◆ Well maintained trails

When asked to identify features along trails of most interest, survey respondents had a strong preference for rivers, lakes and wetlands; as well as forests and bush land.

Strong support was received for:

- ◆ the further enhancement of the Goldfields Track (formerly known as the Great Dividing Trail);
- ◆ the development of a Murray River Trail; and
- ◆ the development of a trail through the Box Iron Bark forest areas of Central Victoria.



## Project Partners

- ◆ Victorian Government
- ◆ Campaspe Shire Council
- ◆ Central Goldfields Shire Council
- ◆ Gannawarra Shire Council
- ◆ Greater Bendigo City Council
- ◆ Loddon Shire Council
- ◆ Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- ◆ Mildura Rural City Council
- ◆ Mt Alexander Shire Council
- ◆ Swan Hill Rural City Council

## Where to From Here?

Each of the existing or potential trails identified as having the qualities of a significant trail that will attract users from other locations around the state, nationally or even internationally, will be described in detail and mapped. Indicative costings for works will be developed by P.T. Tomkinson & Associates. A description of the social, environmental and economic benefits of each trail will also be articulated, along with the identification of further improvements to enhance long term sustainability.

Once a draft plan has been prepared, it is proposed that two more public forums be held to seek feedback on the recommendations contained within the plan. Following the receipt of feedback, a final plan will be developed and presented to the Loddon Mallee Regional Manager's Forum for endorsement, implementation and ongoing evaluation.

For more information please contact Wendy Holland at communityvibe on Ph: 0438 433 555 or via email: [wendy@communityvibe.com.au](mailto:wendy@communityvibe.com.au).



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## Our Vision

Our vision is that the Loddon Mallee Region will become renowned for its diversity of sustainable trails that provide quality experiences; showcase the unique aspects of our region; and provide benefits to our local community and trail users.