



# **Don Page MP**

## **Minister for the North Coast**

## **Minister for Local Government**

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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013

#### **NSW GOVERNMENT TO FUND STUDY INTO A NORTHERN RIVERS RAIL TRAIL**

The Minister for the North Coast, Don Page MP, today announced State funding is available for a feasibility study into the development of a rail trail on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line.

Mr Page said rail trails are becoming extremely popular in Australia and overseas and are an excellent use of rail corridors for low impact, environmentally-friendly tourism mainly involving cycling and walking.

“This announcement of funding comes after the release of the Casino to Murwillumbah Train Study earlier this year, which found more than \$900 million would need to be invested to ensure the line met safety and operating standards for frequent and quick train services, and that even if that occurred, it wouldn’t meet the current or future public transport needs of the region because two of the three largest centres (Ballina and Tweed Heads) would not be served,” Mr Page said.

“I believe the establishment of a rail trail on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line has enormous potential for the Northern Rivers, and is worthy of investigation,” he said.

The feasibility study will assess the cost and benefits of developing a rail trail on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line including the staging of its development, the potential enhancement of the regional tourism industry, identify funding sources for the development and maintenance of a rail trail, stakeholder consultation and the preservation of the rail corridor in the event that rail services are re-introduced in the future, should a viable economic model become available.

“In the absence of the trains returning, we still have a magnificent asset in the rail corridor which links Casino to Murwillumbah via cities and towns including Lismore, Bangalow, Byron Bay, Mullumbimby and Billinudgel.

“The 130-kilometre line takes in some of the most impressive vistas in Northern NSW and a rail trail could result in a tourist attraction that could bring millions of dollars a year to the local economy,” Mr Page said.

This announcement is welcomed by North Coast MPs, Thomas George MP (Lismore), Geoff Provest MP (Tweed), Chris Gulaptis MP (Clarence), as well as the Federal Nationals Candidates Kevin Hogan (Page) and Matthew Fraser (Richmond).

Mr Page said rail trails in other parts of Australia, and New Zealand have been hugely successful, and it is sensible to investigate the tourism, economic, social and health benefits of a rail trail along the corridor.

“A rail trail would also ensure the rail corridor is maintained and preserved in case of the return of train services in the future.

“The Terms of Reference for the proposed feasibility study are currently being finalised, after which the Government will call for tenders for the feasibility study,” Mr Page said.

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