

News from Steve Bracks and Labor

23 November 2006

LABOR COMMITS \$1.3 MILLION FOR ICONIC NORTH EAST RAIL TRAIL

Minister for State and Regional Development John Brumby today announced Labor would commit \$1.3 million towards a new High Country Rail Trail from Wodonga to Tallangatta.

During a visit to Wodonga today Mr Brumby joined Labor's candidate for Benambra Lisa Mahood to make the funding announcement.

"Bicycle touring has become one of the most popular past times for people of all ages," Mr Brumby said.

"And this stretch of former railway track between Wodonga and Tallangatta is one of the most picturesque in Victoria's regions.

"Labor will provide \$1.3 million towards the project which once completed will see 24 kilometres of trail sealed and build the iconic 594 metre long Sandy Creek Inlet bridge.

"This will result in 50 kms of off road, quality track for use by pedestrians and bicycle riders of all ages and deliver what is likely to be the most spectacular rail trail anywhere in Victoria."

Mr Brumby said as well as providing a vital link between the Wodonga and Tallangatta communities, the project would also upgrade key amenities in Ebden, Ludlows Reserve and Huon.

"This project has been a dream of local councils and communities as well as tourism and cycling groups for a number of years and this funding commitment means the project can now become a reality."

Ms Mahood said the new trail would provide a welcome boost for local communities and families and would also bring increased tourist numbers to the region.

"The north east already has a number of popular and picturesque rail trails. The High Country Trail will provide further attractions for visitors as well as present new opportunities for businesses and tourist providers in the region," Ms Mahood said.

"Facilities such as caravan parks at Ebden and Tallangatta along with several bed and breakfast accommodation facilities will also help to entice visitors to stay longer in the North East."

Mr Brumby said the Bracks Government had announced \$8 million for a *Provincial Pathways Program* to promote cycling and walking trails to attract people to regional areas.

"The *Provincial Pathways Program* is part of Moving Forward, the Government's \$502 million action plan to make Provincial Victoria the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family," he said.

Contact: ALP Campaign Media Unit
www.alpvictoria.com

Ph 9933 8539
Fax 9933 8563

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