

Media Release

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Lack of Support for Wagga Rail Trail Support Ride

Perfect bike riding conditions on a sunny long weekend failed to inspire support for the proposed Wagga to Tumbarumba Rail Trail according to the NSW Farmers' Association.

NSW Farmers' Association Vice President Alan Brown said the disappointing turnout should be ringing warning bells that the proposal isn't the best option.

"We hope that that the supporters who gathered in Wagga enjoyed a lovely ride on Saturday morning, however the lack of significant numbers of supporters should indicate that the proposed rail trail doesn't have the support it needs in the community," Alan Brown said

After a week of intense advertising in the media and a major letterbox campaign, Mr Brown said the response to the Rail Trail Support Ride has to be seen as disappointing.

"The ride showed a lack of local interest with fewer than 100 combined walkers and riders participating," Mr Brown said

Mr Brown said the small turnout highlights the shortcomings of the feasibility study commissioned by the Riverina Highlands Rail Trail Committee, which estimated the track would attract between 70,000 to 640,000 annual visits.

"It is hard to imagine anything nearing the proposed usage when less than 60 cyclists turn up for a 4 kilometre ride to support the concept," Mr Brown said.

"NSW Farmers' Association fully supports improving tourism opportunities in rural areas – in fact we are one of the biggest campaigners for country communities," Mr Brown said.

"But as we have said time and time again, the Wagga to Tumbarumba proposal isn't the best option," Mr Brown said.

'If it proceeds, the proposal will cut through dozens of prime agricultural properties, as well as lifestyle blocks. The two corridors would split paddocks in half and potentially leave stock without access to water – making day to day tasks on farms extremely difficult.

"Farming aside, this route doesn't provide the ideal tourism experience, with an obvious lack of shops, towns or tourist stops along the way.

"As we have seen with popular rail trails in Victoria, cyclists enjoy stopping along the journey to see what the area has to offer. This proposal doesn't highlight the best our area has to offer," Mr Brown said.

Under the current proposal, the rail trail will stretch for more than 130 kilometres, with the start and finish points in completely different areas.

“So if tourists jump on their bikes and head off on the rail trail, no matter where they finish, they will end up kilometres from where they started,” Mr Brown concluded.

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- *Fast Fact:* Standard ABS multipliers show that a \$1 million drop in agricultural output leads to a consequential loss of 13 jobs across the non-agricultural economy