

## **“ARMIDALE ADVENTURES”**

July 2023

### **Project Title:**

“**Armidale Adventures**” comprising the following three concepts (see attached concept plans):

- **Stage 1: Gungurru Gaitway** : an approx 6km combined cycling / walking circuit from Waterfall Way up Castledoye Road (2kms), down Dances Lane (stock route – walkers only) to Waterfall Way (1.5kms) and rejoining Castledoye Road (2.5kms) . Dedicated off-road cycle/walking track along Castledoye Road to extend to Mays Road intersection.
- **Stage 2: Imbota Mountain Bike Trail**: utilizing fire trails in the Imbota Nature Reserve for cycling recreation with access from Stage 1 via Mays Road and Long Swamp Road.
- **Stage 3: Wild Rivers Cycleway** : extending a shared cycleway / roadway on Castledoye Road beyond Mays Road to Imbota Nature Reserve and on to Oxley Wild Rivers National Park; thereby creating a linked set of cycling / walking assets from stages 1 and 2.

### **Preamble:**

In the mid 1990's Castledoye Road was then a rural road, with road traffic generated by minimal rural lifestyle blocks, normal New England agricultural truck activities and weekend traffic to the Blue Hole (now part of Oxley Wild Rivers National Park).

Jumping forward to 2023, the number of lifestyle blocks / developments along Castledoye Road corridor has escalated dramatically, two rural commercial ventures have been developed and subsequent traffic movements have increased significantly .

- There is now an identifiable peak period for east bound traffic along Castledoye Road in the window 6:00 AM to 8:00 AM to the commercial ventures, and residential going to work westbound traffic between 7:30 AM and 9:00 AM. There is a mirrored reversal of these peaks in the afternoon between 3:30pm and 6:00pm as workers return to their respective places of residence.
- The two commercial ventures described above are the ABC Can / ANTG medicinal cannabis operation (Australian Natural Therapeutics Group), and Red Jewel (Australia's largest importer of berry genetics).
  - ANTG is currently expanding and when completed will have around 80 employees; Red Jewel about the same during peak times but is more seasonal.
- The increased volume in traffic due to workers driving to and from work coincides with those times during the working week when Castledoye Road has some of its busiest cycling traffic: ie. before and after normal working hours as people go out for exercise and recreation.

Up until about two years ago, the 100KPH speed limit commenced roughly at the Mann St / Castledoye Road intersection. It is now limited to 80 KPH up to roughly 200m east of the Fosters Road intersection (about 10.5 kms from Waterfall Way).

- The reduced 80kph speed limit was presumably introduced in recognition of road safety concerns given the increased traffic flows; however the reduced speed limit is often ignored, so safety concerns persist.

Apparently a condition of the Gungurru Road rural/residential subdivision development was to construct a shared cycle path and horse path on the northern side of Castledoyle Road and approximately 500 metres west of the Gungurru Rd intersection, adjacent to the road, no offset. This was to be gravel only....no hardstand.

- However no such path exists other than by signage near the Gungurru Road intersection and refers only to the section between the hill crest and the Gungurru Road turn off (some 100 metres) where walkers / horse riders are forced to walk on the road shoulder.

It is our observation that the existing Castledoyle Road from Mays Road to Mann Street intersection...double no crossing traffic lines for the majority of the distance...is totally unfit for the purpose for cycling.

- The road is narrow, it has little or no shoulder for safety; it contains a blind corner (along the 80kph section); and there is a blind crest at around 1.4kms from the intersection with Waterfall Way.
- People often cycle that section, but it is an extremely intimidating and dangerous travel option.
- In fact, Castledoyle Road seems to be a preferred cycling route at weekends for road cycling, presumably with Oxley Wild Rivers National Park being a point of interest some 20kms from Waterfall Way.

### **Short Project Description**

We think the time has come to initiate the design and construction of a shared footpath and cycleway concept along Castledoyle Road, commencing at Waterfall Way, terminating at a point somewhere south east of the Mays Road intersection (Stage 1), where the cycleway becomes a shared cycle/roadway route.

- This could eventually be extended as a shared roadway lane to Oxley Wild Rivers National Park (Stage 3)
- Stage 1 could also link the pedestrian /cycle path via the existing stock route ("Dances Lane") to Waterfall Way as a walking track only. ("Gungurru Gaitway")
- Stage 2 could link the trail to Long Swamp Road via Mays Road and Imbota Nature Reserve ("Imbota Mountain Bike Trail").

Expressions of support will be sought from local residents as well as local clubs and organisations that may be organising walking / cycling groups, as well as existing cycling users of Castledoyle Road who would welcome any enhanced road safety.

## **Project Scope**

Construction of:

- **Stage 1: Gungurru Gaitway** : an approx 6km combined cycling / walking circuit from Waterfall Way up Castledoyle Road (2kms), down Dances Lane (stock route – walkers only) to Waterfall Way (1.5kms) and rejoining Castledoyle Road (2.5kms) . Dedicated off-road cycle/walking track along Castledoyle Road to extend to Mays Road intersection.
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Associated infrastructure including appropriate signage, safety bollards if necessary etc.

Engagement of professional consultants to ensure compliance with indigenous culture and environmental matters.

Negotiate stakeholder engagement, and other likely community groups that may benefit from this proposed project.

## **Project Location**

The proposed project is located in the Castledoyle Road “precinct”, between Waterall Way and Oxley Wild Rivers National Park (Blue Hole), south east of Armidale, and including Imbota Nature Reserve and other access via Mays Road and Long Swamp Road.

## **Community Support / Evidence**

Community support will be sought from adjoining residents of the proposed route as well as the wider Armidale community by way of information sessions , supplying documentation, and collecting signatures of support.

### Strategic Alignment:

This project is consistent with the following current plans relevant to the project.

- **ARC Bicycle Strategy 2012**

[https://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/227/0\\_12731\\_18Aug2017155539\\_Armidale%20Bicycle%20Strategy%202012.pdf.aspx](https://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/227/0_12731_18Aug2017155539_Armidale%20Bicycle%20Strategy%202012.pdf.aspx)

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The primary aim of this plan then is to provide a holistic and planned approach **to improving the pedestrian and cycling environment within the Armidale region** for its community and visitors to the region. Tasks that have been identified as being important in achieving this aim include:

- a. identifying opportunities for upgrading and **improving the existing network**,
- b. **identifying additional cycleway linkages** that:
  - i. support connectivity of existing cycleways and shared paths,
  - ii. **complement popular and high use routes**
- c. **identifying opportunities for cycling tourism**,
- d. identifying associated facilities and infrastructure that are required to support the network, and
- e. adopting a network that:
  - i. **encourages cycling and walking as an alternative to the motor vehicle**,
  - ii. integrates walking and cycling into the transport network, and
  - iii. (in conjunction with other access and mobility plans), **removes barriers to walking and cycling**, and improves access, to all members of the (ARC LGA) communities.

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The key elements of the Armidale Bicycle Strategy and Action Plan 2012 are:.....

- **Scenic, or Recreational routes, for safe and family-friendly cycling in the vicinity of parks and reserves,**

### Appendix 7:



## **ARC: Advancing our Region Community Plan 2022-2032**

<https://www.armidaleregional.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/267/Final%20Advancing%20our%20Region%20Community%20Plan%202022-2032.pdf.aspx>

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Goal 1: Quality infrastructure that makes it safe and easy to travel around our region - Strategies:

- Build and maintain quality, safe, and accessible road transport infrastructure including roads, footpaths, kerbs, bus stops and parking facilities.
- Support the implementation and usage of **active transport infrastructure across the region.**

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Connected Region:

Transport and Technology

We will provide and improve high quality connections within, and outside of the region.

What the community said it wants:

- Quality transport infrastructure including roads, footpaths, kerbs and **cycleways**.
- Excellent transport links to other regions, public transport and lifestyle infrastructure.

## **Project Benefits**

**Safety Enhancement:** One of the primary goals of this proposal is to ensure the safety of cyclists by providing them with a designated space to ride.

- Castledoye Road currently lacks any dedicated cycling infrastructure yet is used frequently by a wide range of cyclists on all days of the week.
- Tragically, our region has experienced cycling fatalities in past years. By proactively investing in cycling infrastructure, we can prevent future accidents and protect the lives of both residents and visitors.
  - A dedicated cycle track along the most dangerous section of the road will ensure the separation of cyclists from vehicular traffic, minimising the risk of collisions and fatalities.
  - This safety enhancement will also encourage more people to take up cycling as a viable and safe mode of transportation, commuting and recreation, especially from the lifestyle blocks along Castledoye Road / Mays Road.
- This initiative aligns with our community's commitment to road safety and supports the vision of a sustainable and healthy environment for all.

**Community / Youth Health Benefits:** Promoting physical activity among our youth is essential for their overall health and well-being.

- By constructing a dedicated cycle track, we can create a safe and attractive environment for young people to engage in outdoor activities.
- Encouraging cycling as a recreational and fitness pursuit will help combat sedentary lifestyles, childhood obesity, and related health issues.
- Moreover, the cycle track will serve as a platform to instil healthy habits and promote community engagement among our younger population.

**Economic Growth through tourism:** Armidale is at a critical stage in economic growth.

Manufacturing does not hold much prospect. Regional centres such as Tamworth, Dubbo, Coffs Harbour and Toowoomba are leaving Armidale in their wake in terms of economic growth. Tertiary education is under threat from on line education and the creation of other regional universities. Tourism visitation is essential for Armidale's economic survival.

This project has the potential to attract the expanding number of participants in the cycling tourism sector; members of which are affectionately referred to as "wallets on wheels".

- Fit, health conscious, well-funded mobile retirees are the low hanging fruit within this sector. E-bikes have massively increased cycling leisure uptake in this demographic.
- This proposed project would also be complementary with the proposed New England Rail Trail.

### **Project Outcomes**

- **Increased** recreational infrastructure / recreational activity.
- **Increased** cycling commuting.
- **Improved** road safety.
- **Improved** health outcomes / benefits: **Reduced** childhood obesity.
- **Enhanced attractiveness** for potential tree changers with young families.
- **Increased** tourism visitation and expenditure.

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