
TECHNICAL REPORT 2: COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS & COMMUNITY SURVEY

Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Marketing & Community Engagement Strategy August 2011

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND CONTEXT

QORF was appointed by the Department of Local Government and Planning (DLGP) (formerly Department of Infrastructure and Planning - DIP) and the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) Steering Committee to prepare a Marketing and Community Engagement Strategy for the BVRT.

The Strategy development was informed through a series of phases undertaken by QORF to gather 1) existing information on the BVRT, 2) information on similar trails in Australia and New Zealand and 3) insights from the local communities along the BVRT.

As the project brief was to develop a clear and concise Strategy, much of the background and context of the BVRT and its stakeholders have not been included in the Strategy document. Rather, this background and context constitutes three Technical Reports which act as implementation reference documents. The following report is the BVRT Technical Report 2: Community Workshops & Community Survey, and can be read in conjunction with:

- BVRT Technical Report 1: Information Review; and
- BVRT Technical Report 3: Review of Promotional Planning Strategies.

The findings from these Technical Reports have informed the Strategy development and QORF recommends that readers wishing to understand the context and scope of the research process used access the Technical Reports for further information. These can be obtained from the owners of the strategy, namely DLGP and the BVRT Steering Committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of Technical Report 2 is to present stakeholder insights across the local government areas of Ipswich City Council, South Burnett Regional Council and Somerset Regional Council. Stakeholders who participated in the community engagement included: regional council officers, Visitor Information Centre staff, BVRT Ambassadors, Brisbane Valley Heritage Trails (BVHTs) committee, local history groups, local business groups and operators, and a local Lions Club. All representatives were also residents of the local community.

The main findings from the community engagement included:

- There is strong community support from all local government areas for the idea of the BVRT for both physical activity and tourism opportunities;
- The incomplete status of the BVRT and recent flood damage that has seen sections of the BVRT closed is a major factor affecting local community engagement and potential engagement by local businesses;
- There are infrastructure and amenities needed along the BVRT to encourage the use of the BVRT by local residents and tourists of all ages and abilities;
- There is often ad hoc communication between stakeholders with regards to the BVRT, (including: the status of the BVRT; opportunities for, and responsibilities of, different stakeholders; connections between stakeholders along various sections of the BVRT);
- Some people appear to be using the BVRT regularly for walking and horseback riding, others are on the BVRT only a few times a year, and approximately half of the participants for both the community workshops and community survey report they have not been on the BVRT;
- A lack of signage along the BVRT has meant that people are in fact using the BVRT, but are not aware they are doing so;
- A major constraint to attracting more tourists to use the BVRT is the limited tourism infrastructure in the Brisbane Valley (including accommodation; tourists amenities and opening hours of some businesses during peak tourist times, and limited tourist attractions to complement the BVRT); and
- Stakeholders frequently expressed desires for more organised events and activities to be hosted on the BVRT to encourage use by local residents and tourists alike.

The major issues highlighted through the community engagement and consultation are highlighted in Table 1, at the end of this report, along with key priorities in the development and marketing of the BVRT to address the issues raised by communities.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Local Government and Planning (DLGP), and the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) Steering Committee commissioned Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF) to research and develop a Marketing and Community Engagement Strategy for the BVRT. As part of this strategy development, QORF undertook a series of community engagement workshops with local community representatives to gain their perspectives on the current and potential opportunities for recreation and tourism on the BVRT.

This Technical Report details the methodology used to carry out the community engagement and presents results from the community engagement. The report concludes with final comments and identifies several key priorities to consider in the development of the Marketing and Community Engagement Strategy.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

Three community workshops were held in June, 2011 in towns along the BVRT including Ipswich, Blackbutt and Esk to capture insights from the three local government areas of Ipswich City Council, South Burnett Regional Council and Somerset Regional Council. Participants were identified using the DLGP database from initial BVRT community consultation processes and were invited to attend the workshop most convenient to them. A snowballing approach was also used to increase the number of participants, where attendees were encouraged to invite others through their social networks.

Each of the workshops followed an informal agenda covering the following areas:

- Workshop Welcome & Introductions
- Overview and Parameters of Project
- BVRT & Your Community
- BVRT Marketing
- BVRT Website
- Other Considerations

The workshops were semi-structured, following a standard workshop schedule in which participants were able to direct the discussion in areas they thought were important.

2.2 COMMUNITY SURVEY

Following the community workshops, an online survey was established to gather insights by community members who were unable to attend the community workshops. Survey questions aimed to gather information on community usage of the BVRT as well as the current and future recreation and tourism opportunities available through the BVRT.

The survey link was forwarded in an email to community members who could not attend the community workshops. To increase the potential survey response a snowball technique was utilised. As such, community workshop attendees and non-attendees were asked to forward the survey on to

other community members through their social networks. The survey was open for responses from 30th June to 12th August, 2011.

3.0 FINDINGS

3.1 IPSWICH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Date:	27 June, 2011
Location:	Ipswich Jets Leagues Club Bistro, 15 Downs Street (Corner Lowry St), North Ipswich
Staff Member/s:	Donna Little, CEO Alana Thomson, Project Coordinator
Organisations Represented:	Ipswich City Council Somerset Regional Council Fernvale Futures Complex Esk Visitor Information Centre

3.1.1 BACKGROUND TO WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Workshop participants were very enthusiastic about the concept of the BVRT, but did highlight a number of concerns in terms of ensuring the BVRT is viable and sustainable now and in the long-term. The workshop highlighted the need for communities to understand these activities are not the responsibility of one single organisation. Rather, support for the BVRT needs to come from the all stakeholders, including all levels of government, the different Regional Councils along the BVRT, and various stakeholders and community groups, to make sure these outcomes occur. The workshop participants perceived the BVRT to provide positive opportunities for recreation and tourism in their communities. The BVRT is a safe place for recreation and commuting. Some of the participants were regular users of the BVRT, and some had not yet been on the BVRT. Most of the participants were not active in taking their visitors on the BVRT. All wanted to see the BVRT marketed more and wanted to see more people using the BVRT generally. Several issues were raised in relation to the use and marketing of the BVRT.

Word Cloud

A word cloud is illustrated in Figure 1 below, generated by running the Ipswich Community Workshop summary through computer software Wordle¹. The word cloud provides a graphic representation of the main concepts in the summary, and gives greater prominence to concepts that appear more frequently. Apart from frequent reference to the **BVRT**, the Ipswich Community Workshop made most reference to the ideas of **community** and the **sections along** the BVRT, and well as referring to **Ambassadors**, **users** and **signage**.

¹ <http://www.wordle.net/>

FIGURE 1: IPSWICH COMMUNITY WORKSHOP WORD CLOUD



3.1.2 TRAIL DESIGN, COMPLETION AND MAINTENANCE

It was acknowledged that the BVRT needs to cater for horse riders, mountain bikers and walkers of all abilities and varied interests. Interests include recreation, commuting and tourism. A comment was made that the stretches of flat grass lands in the Somerset Region were difficult to market as the nature of the geography means there are no scenic lookouts. The Otago Rail Trail (<http://www.otagorailtrail.co.nz/>) was referred to as an example where flat stretches of land, similar to that in the Somerset Region, have become a successful attraction.

Suggestions in terms of trail design and development included:

- Foremost, completion of the BVRT was a major issue;
- Tree planting for shade along long stretches of the BVRT, and basic amenities such as toilets, water stops and horse dismounts are important;
- Road crossings were a significant issue;
- Different parts of the BVRT could be targeted to different users. Sections of the BVRT nearest the towns should be designed for regular bouts of physical activity by residents, possibly with hard surfaces and markers for distances so people know they have walked so far and when they should turn around. It was suggested that some interesting sections for horses would be desirable and some sections should be marketed for their family friendly aspects;
- Interpretive signage is important, and the need to balance amounts of information with the experience of the natural environment was noted. It was suggested that signage could feature more prominently in the 5km spans outside of the towns, rather than along the longer stretches of the BVRT, where users are likely to seek a more natural experience. While the history of the rail line was considered highly important to connect the BVRT to the community and be appealing for tourists, it was suggested that the signage did not have to be all history-based, it could just be “This is what you are passing...”. The importance of memorabilia, rail carriages, and opening of old railway stations along the way was also considered important to celebrate the stories of the BVRT.

In terms of post-flood damage, it was suggested a trail audit was needed to determine the extent of damage and detail what is required to get the BVRT open again. Participants suggested this would assist in setting out whether issues need to be taken to Somerset Council, or alternatively whether the relevant communities may be able to conduct a working bee.

With regards to ongoing maintenance, the group indicated they were not aware of clear lines of communication of who to take maintenance issues to so they can be addressed. There was also limited consensus as to who should be responsible for managing and resourcing the BVRT. While some parts of the BVRT are seen to be well maintained, others were seen to be in poor condition with long grass and potholes. It was suggested these minor issues need to be addressed before the BVRT will be a marketable tourism product.

3.1.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MARKETING

The group raised concerns over the branding of the BVRT and suggested that at this point the objective needs to target increasing community awareness of the BVRT more so than community engagement. One participant suggested residents living in communities along the BVRT have large properties and ample space for recreation and therefore look to other opportunities for recreation, rather than the BVRT. In contrast, another participant commented that people may be using the BVRT without knowing it. The participant commented they had regularly been using the BVRT for several years, but had not known there was anything special about it until gates were installed. Another participant added to this saying it is possible to live right alongside the BVRT and not know that it is the BVRT.

There were also concerns that the marketing material for the 2011 Rail Trail Fun Run made no mention of the BVRT. One of the participants was also concerned that at large community events there was no promotion of the BVRT, e.g. Fernvale Markets on Sundays. It was also believed that the local tourism operators are not aware of the BVRT. Most participants were unaware that there was a BVRT website (<http://www.brisbanevalleyrailtrail.org.au/>), and no one knew there was a BVRT Facebook group (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=10908380426>).

The stories of the BVRT were considered an important factor in engaging the community. There needs to be elaboration of the stories of the railway, it is of historic significance, the community needs to be told the stories. It was also thought that better branding and signage would assist in community awareness of the BVRT. So many parts of the BVRT go along the road in the Somerset Region, there is a potential to have double sided signage, so people driving past know the BVRT is there and people on the BVRT know they are on it.

The establishment of an Ambassadors program for the middle and southern sections of the BVRT was suggested. The benefit of the Ambassadors in engaging the community in the northern sections of the BVRT was acknowledged. It was also considered important to have volunteers supporting the BVRT activities until the BVRT is commercially viable. While there was limited idea as to who might be responsible for establishing the Ambassadors program, one of the participants was keen to become an Ambassador.

3.1.4 LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

It was highlighted that the communities along the BVRT have trouble seeing the connection between the BVRT and economic benefits for the community. It was suggested that the target market of the BVRT is unclear to local businesses and communities, meaning that entrepreneurial activities to support the BVRT are unlikely at this point in time. This was also linked to the issues surrounding Trail Design, Completion and Maintenance, as the target market and users groups need to be better defined in order to cater for them. One of the participants wanted to see “dollars and numbers” regarding the opportunities of the BVRT, as well as best practice examples of businesses operating along other rail trails in similar contexts. The use of the BVRT website was also questioned – what are the usage statistics, are there benefits in linking other organisations?

Some participants believed there were definite business opportunities along the BVRT in terms of bike hire businesses for example, however, the legalities and processes to negotiate in setting up such a business were considered problematic. It was not clear who business owners should liaise with to set up such enterprises, and local government support was not believed to be appropriate. The overall consensus was that the “red tape” would need streamlining to encourage entrepreneurial business activities in relation to the BVRT, and there should be a set of policies and procedures around this. Participants highlighted the issue of users travelling from one point to another, and needing to get back to their starting point. While a shuttle service is desirable, participants believed there were not enough users to make such a service viable.

There was discussion regarding current events held on the BVRT, and the need to design them so tourists are encouraged to stay for longer in the communities and therefore maximise the economic benefit. Overnight stays are problematic as there is limited accommodation in the towns, this is an ongoing issue. There was also discussion of possible organisations to partner with in the future to offer events such as long bike rides that go through the towns and incorporate overnight stays that enable users to travel the length of the BVRT. Ideally, there would be something happening every weekend which would make it commercially viable.

One participant was concerned that the BVRT is in “bits at the moment, and that the collateral is about the bits... It’s full of places I’ve never heard of, it needs the big picture”. Another participant said you could see the BVRT in 3 distinct sections, the top section where the Ambassadors had been a big part of engaging the community, then there was the 80km of Somerset savannah, and at the bottom section of the BVRT in the Lowood region, the population is denser, making it easier to engage people on the BVRT. It was suggested that an Ambassador program in the middle and southern sections of the BVRT may assist in ensuring the BVRT maintains the status of a whole BVRT.

3.1.5 SUMMARY

The Ipswich Community Workshop was attended by a small group of interested individuals who could see the benefits of the BVRT, but also highlighted a number of barriers that exist before the BVRT will realise its full potential. The completion of the BVRT was considered the number one priority before the local community or tourism market would be fully engaged. There were detailed suggestions for the design and maintenance of the BVRT. There was also detailed discussion regarding the promotion of the BVRT, such as signage to enhance the awareness of the BVRT in the local community. The importance of connecting the community to the history of the BVRT as well as

3.2.2 BVRT AMBASSADORS

The BVRT Ambassadors group was established because the previous President of the BVHTs committee suggested to a key individual to set up an Ambassador group to support the Linville to Blackbutt section of the BVRT. The group now covers the BVRT from Moore to Blackbutt. The BVRT Ambassadors keep the BVHTs committee up to date with their activities. The Ambassadors have played a large role in harnessing community support for the BVRT and informing their local communities of the potential benefits of the BVRT.

The Ambassadors are dedicated to preserving the history of the BVRT, promoting the use of the BVRT, and where necessary, will volunteer their services to assist with groups who want to use the BVRT and need local expertise and/or support on the ground. The Ambassadors have worked with the local Pony Club on events they have had on the BVRT and are willing to work with any group on the BVRT. The Ambassadors are normally approached by members of the local community for their assistance with different events along the BVRT. While the BVRT is promoted well locally, the Ambassadors are keen to spread the word further, and are currently developing a website. As part of this, they want to “get ‘rail trail’ in everybody’s head” and would like to attract more people out of Brisbane to visit their area, and then surrounding areas.

One of the Ambassadors commented it has been disappointing not to see the support for the BVRT along the southern parts of the BVRT. Previously, efforts were made to start a group further down the BVRT, but it did not attract any applications at the time. The Ambassadors are important to make sure that the BVRT is supported and things can happen. It was believed that Ambassador groups need to be established and dedicated to small sections including Moore to Esk, Esk to Lowood-Fernvale, then there to Wulkuraka.

3.2.3 TRAIL DEVELOPMENTS

The BVRT has two recent developments in the South Burnett Region. First, the Ambassadors have taken the initiative to develop signage and they have liaised with the council to install the signage along the BVRT in the South Burnett section. Second, as part of the upcoming Blackbutt Festival, there is a sculpture competition where sculptures will be displayed along the BVRT. The winning sculpture will stay on the BVRT, and another sculpture, previously displayed in Roma St, Brisbane, has been gifted by the artist. This will also be placed along the BVRT. The intention is for these sculptures to attract tourists to look along the BVRT.

3.2.4 COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Pony Club has been on the BVRT, the local schools use it for their cross country events, and schools from outside the region have used it for different activities. Many of the workshop attendees use the BVRT with their families and most agreed the BVRT is well suited to family recreation as it caters for all abilities. Baby boomers, retirees and the over 55s were also considered an important target market.

The workshop attendees believe the local businesses have started to see the economic benefit from the BVRT. Anecdotes reflecting this include the number of bikes that are always outside of the local bakery - the café owners and B&B owners have positive comments. One of the local hotels has had a

few people book in, stay and walk the BVRT, and the local hotelier has organised to pick them up at the other end. This is not something that is promoted, it happens more by word of mouth.

There was a feeling that interest in the commercial opportunities of the BVRT has increased since the last workshops were held. Some landowners along the BVRT, who were not very supportive in the beginning, have now started to consider building cabins along the BVRT for people who want to stop along the way. A local outdoor education centre is also interested in exploring at how they can better utilise the BVRT in their program offerings. It was also suggested that an annual cycling or triathlon event that involves the local schools would be a great initiative for the long-term. There is awareness of the success of the services along the Otago Rail Trail, but at this point, the Ambassadors think the Moore to Blackbutt section is not long enough to justify such business. There are some people in the community who have started looking at hiring horses, but it is still in early stages. Another idea was to have a wagon on the BVRT so it is accessible for those who cannot walk or ride.

In terms of business opportunities related specifically to the BVRT, it was considered a chicken and an egg scenario, where businesses want to attract groups to the towns and on the BVRT, but there needs to be infrastructure in place to cater for these people and promote it. There was one couple in Linville that bought a shuttle bus for one-way BVRT users, however, it was believed they got started too early, the market just was not there and this was further reduced by the floods and BVRT damage. If they could see the demand, they would start it back up again. The Ambassadors have considered buying bikes for hire, but they do not think it is timely yet.

3.2.5 PROMOTION

The BVRT was on the Great South East TV show 2 years ago, but it was “too early” to make a difference in terms of promotion. There are Rail Trail pamphlet packs that are available in the Visitor Information Centres (VICs) and hotels.

The Ambassadors are creating a website to promote the BVRT. The BVHTs promote the BVRT with their other heritage trail promotions. The BVHTs promote the BVRT with their other heritage trail promotions. The BVRT is included on the BVHTs website, which is currently being updated. Images of the BVRT are also included in the digital postcard that the BVHTs produce and distribute through the VICs. The BVHTs also pays a subscription to Data Trax, an interactive display that is set up in VICs around Australia (<http://www.tourismtouchscreens.com/en/view.php?p=pages/ttscreens/advertisers.html>). The local Bunya Nut Café has photos of the BVRT in their shop. One of the BVHTs representatives also expressed a desire to develop an Arts Council program for the BVRT so schools can learn about the history of the BVRT.

3.2.6 MOVING FORWARD WITH THE BVRT

To move forward with the BVRT, it was agreed the best thing would be for the rest of the BVRT to be open, which should be the number one priority. All workshop participants agreed that the value of the BVRT was in the whole, not parts of the whole. It was acknowledged that having the southern parts of the BVRT completed would benefit the northern end.

To achieve this, communication and integration between all of the different Regional Councils (including Toowoomba) and stakeholders, such as the Ambassadors, were considered important. The Ambassadors were also interested to understand impressions from other community workshops. This indicates that communication and integration will not only contribute to efforts in completing the BVRT, it will also contribute to realising the opportunities provided by the BVRT and in ensure the sustainability of the BVRT in the long-term. The extensions of Ambassador programs and social networks beyond the top end of the BVRT were agreed as being important in facilitating this communication and coordinating the maintenance and marketing of the BVRT. The Ambassadors expressed their enthusiasm to work with other communities along the BVRT.

The long-term governance of the BVRT was highlighted as something to consider further. One of the workshop attendees referred to other similar long distance trails that were governed by Trusts, this was considered a positive structure to investigate.

3.2.7 SUMMARY

The Blackbutt Community Workshop was attended by a group of people who are passionate about the BVRT in their region. This group is equally passionate about encouraging communities along other sections of the BVRT to support and take ownership the BVRT as a way of seeing benefits both locally, as well as for the regions along the BVRT. The workshop provided an important background to the establishment, structure and activities of the Ambassador group for Moore to Blackbutt. The group outlined that as Ambassadors they have provided leadership for installation of signage and infrastructure along the BVRT to improve the usability and experiences. There are particular demographics using the BVRT, including pony club groups, school groups; families and over 55s groups. The group highlighted that the local businesses are starting to see the potential commercial opportunities of the BVRT. As a result, it is worth running another round of industry workshops to assist in developing the skills and capacity of local businesses to realise BVRT-related economic benefits as the BVRT is close to finalisation. There is a need for further promotion of the BVRT, which should be coordinated across stakeholders. Before this promotion happens, it would be worthwhile to encourage communication and integration between the Regional Councils and the stakeholders along the BVRT. The long-term governance of the BVRT must also be investigated.

3.3 ESK COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Date:	29 June, 2011
Location:	Esk Visitor Centre, Esk
Staff Member/s:	Donna Little, CEO Alana Thomson, Project Coordinator
Attendees:	Somerset Regional Council Officers for tourism and community; Policy Real Estate & Somerset Regional Business Alliance; President, Esk Lions; Somerset Regional Tourism Association; BVHTs

3.3.1 BACKGROUND TO WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Workshop participants were enthusiastic about the BVRT and the benefits it can bring to the Somerset Region. Several workshop participants know of, or have heard about, the positive developments that have occurred along the BVRT in the South Burnett region. There was acknowledgement that the Somerset Region has not always been “enthusiastic” in their support of the BVRT, and there is still some anger in the communities about the rail line being pulled up.

government and council to provide it. It was suggested that the ATHRA report might be a good starting point to compile this information. It was also highlighted that guidelines and safety information for the BVRT were not well known, including where people could camp, the use of camp fires, etc.

3.3.3 SUSTAINABILITY OF THE BVRT

It was highlighted that for the Council to invest in trail developments, the BVRT needs to be sustainable. It is good to have the social benefits of the BVRT, but it needs to be economically viable first and foremost. For that reason, the Council members need to clearly understand who they are providing for and therefore where they focus investment. For example, should the focus be on infrastructure along the whole 80kms, or should it be focused on the 5kms either side of townships?

Establishing Ambassador programs along sections of the BVRT in the Somerset Region was considered a positive goal. Having groups dedicated to looking after particular sections would mean that it was not such a mammoth task. However, it was also pointed out that such a program needs to be underpinned by the fact that as a tourism project, the BVRT needs to be available for people to use, not protected and kept from everyone. It was highlighted that the success of the program in the South Burnett was due to the involvement of key individuals from the community. It was acknowledged there are people in the Somerset Region within the existing community whose opinions are respected and they should be brought on board.

In terms of ongoing maintenance of the BVRT, it was suggested this could be taken up by existing local community groups, or that groups should be established that represent the local community and are not influenced by politics. Such an approach would need significant consideration of practical issues and ongoing sustainability.

3.3.4 PROMOTING THE BVRT

A major issue discussed in the workshop was the target market of the BVRT which did not seem to be very clear. It was seen that the potential market will be visitors from Brisbane. The general consensus was that the geography of the BVRT means it is not suited to totally adventurous people. It was considered that the section of the BVRT that runs through the Somerset Region is strengthened by the landscape heritage and stories of the BVRT. However, a criticism was made that these aspects have not been cared for or promoted. The history groups have photos and stories of the district, but they need means to communicate these stories. It does not matter so much whether people agree with the stories, the goal is to engage. The Esk Rail Station, leased and recently refurbished by the Esk Lions Club, is an important part of this heritage, with photos and WWI memorabilia.

One of the workshop participants commented that “everyone should be out and about on the trail all of the time”. One way of encouraging this was to work with the local schools, like the BVHTs has done in the South Burnett Region, as this encourages families to come along on the BVRT. Several participants wanted to see more sections of the BVRT used for regular events such as marathons and events that bring lots of people to the region. It was agreed that having more events and groups using the BVRT would attract interest by passers-by and more people may be motivated to use the BVRT. However it was also argued that such events can be resource intensive and if they are not

designed effectively, can bring limited benefit to the community, to the point where it costs the community to host the event and that cost is not recovered through new expenditure in the community. Instead, events need to be designed so there are ancillary events and activities that encourage people to stay overnight and spend money in the region. It was noted that accommodation options are limited in the region, so an audit of capacity is needed and solutions suggested.

A previous event was the ATHRA ride. Current events include the Lowood to Fernvale Fun Run² and the Donkey walk organised by The Donkey Society of Queensland Inc. For future events, it was suggested contacting ATHRA about other possible horse riding events. Sanctioned competitions were suggested an option because they have more predictable participant and audience numbers. These events need to have a coordinated stakeholder approach so that everyone is on board from the outset.

3.3.5 THE NEED FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

It was considered important to build better businesses in the Somerset Region, encouraging businesses to focus on the basics like good customer service. Some businesses were seen to be doing a great job, and as such should be acknowledged for their contributions to the Somerset Region. This could be done through a business logo or similar campaign. However, it was perceived there were also businesses not doing the best job in contributing to a positive image of Somerset Region. These businesses were seen as having bad customer service and unsatisfactory products. As a result it was agreed that ongoing business workshops and business mentoring are something the Regional Council should offer.

It was also considered important that businesses be encouraged to cooperate with other businesses in the region as well as outside the region. It needs to be communicated that businesses will gain benefits through being complementary and cooperative, rather than competitive. Other operational issues were raised in relation to business development. For example, it is important that businesses are open during times that visitors are in the towns, or passing through, such as at the weekends. It is also important that existing and potential businesses are aware of the public liability requirements and other administration requirements needed to undertake activities on the BVRT. It was also highlighted that future events along the BVRT will see value in proper legal advice and risk management procedures.

3.3.6 CREATING LINKS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

An issue was evident within the community regarding communication of information about the BVRT. It is believed that many local people do not know about the BVRT. In addition, one of the participants had been promoting the BVRT and was unaware that parts of it were not officially open post-floods. Further, one of the participants explained that flyers were distributed for The Donkey Society of Queensland Inc. event on the BVRT, but only one local person attended.

² The comment was made that the Fun Run was not named the BVRT Fun Run this year. The Council Officers explained they would like to promote the BVRT at the Fun Run, but did not have promotional resources, conversations took place during the meeting to secure banners and merchandise to display.

Workshop participants were extremely happy to hear that the Esk Lions have the lease for the Esk Rail Station and the members have spent a lot of time refurbishing the run-down building. The station is now equipped for the Lions Club to cater for groups. The importance of promoting this service within the community was emphasised, it was suggested that the Esk Lions Club erect a sign to advertise their efforts with the Rail Station.

The Esk Showgrounds, a State Government DERM reserve and entrusted to the Council, was identified as an important partner in developing working relationships with the local community for the BVRT. The Showgrounds are used for certain activities, but could potentially be used more to provide accommodation for other events. The BVRT was seen to offer an opportunity to engage with the community and form links around the BVRT and future opportunities.

3.3.7 CREATING LINKS WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

The Council Officers explained their activities in creating networks with surrounding Regional Councils. However, all workshop participants saw the need for greater collaboration between the different Regional Councils along the BVRT. Information sharing in general, as well as specific to BVRT initiatives is important to the effectiveness and sustainability of the BVRT. The Esk Lions Club has links with other like-minded organisations in the region and it was suggested the club could coordinate services for future events along the BVRT. The Esk Lions were encouraged to think how they might also promote their services to potential groups from outside the local community.

3.3.8 SUMMARY

The Esk Community Workshop was attended by a group of people who are passionate about encouraging the communities in the Somerset Region to support the BVRT to realise recreation opportunities for local residents as well as the tourism and related economic benefits of the BVRT. Several key issues were raised that need to be addressed to assist in this process, the most important of which were the completion of the BVRT and flood recovery. It was agreed that interaction across the levels of government and between the Regional Councils would encourage information and resource sharing and therefore help this along. There were also detailed discussions regarding infrastructure and amenities along the BVRT and how this should be approached. There were several ideas for the promotion of the BVRT including the need to tie the stories and history to the long stretches of BVRT and how events can be used strategically to benefit the host communities. Business development, creating links within the community and creating links with other communities were considered important aspects of tourism generally in the Somerset Region, and that the BVRT could play a part in addressing each of these important aspects of tourism in the Somerset Region.

3.4 COMMUNITY SURVEY

In all, 44 respondents started the survey and most completed the closed-response background questions at the beginning. Roughly half of the respondents provided answers to the open-ended questions in the latter part of the survey.

3.4.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

All 44 respondents provided answers to demographic questions. Female respondents accounted for almost two-thirds (63.6%) and male respondents just over a third (36.4%).

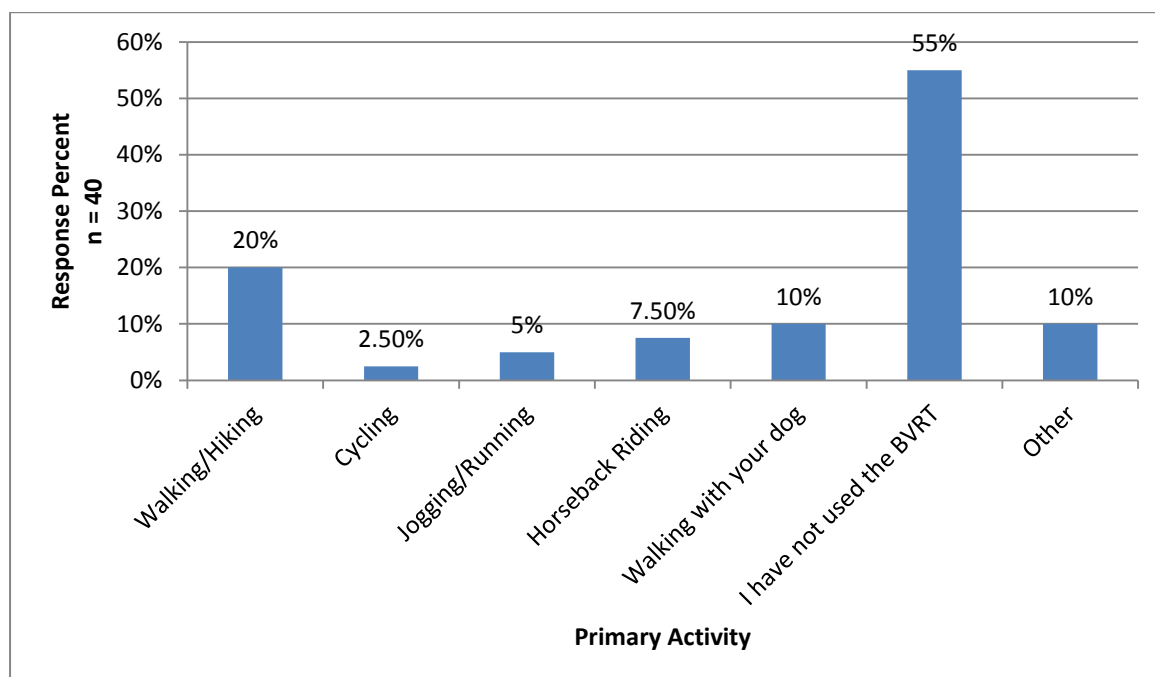
The largest age group represented was those aged 46-55 years (36.4%), followed by 56-65 years (27.3%) and 36-45 years (22.7%). The remainder of age groups represented included 26-35 years (9.1%), 66 years and older (4.5%) and 16-25 (2.3%, or one respondent). There were no responses provided by the age group 15 years and under.

In terms of suburb or town of residents, Ipswich had the largest representation (25%), followed by Fernvale (20.5%), Esk (6.8%), Toogoolawah (6.8%), Brassall (4.5%) and Lowood (4.5%). Other suburbs and towns that had single responses included: Blackbutt; Boonah; Coominya; Eight Mile Plains; Flinders View; Kholo; Minden; Moore; Mt Byron; Nanango; Pine Mountain; Raceview; Redbank Plains; and Scarborough.

3.4.2 BVRT USAGE

Respondents were asked to indicate their primary activity on the BVRT, 40 respondents answered this question with results illustrated in Figure 4 below. Over half of the respondents indicated they have not used the BVRT (55%). Those that used the BVRT were mainly doing so for Walking/Hiking (20%) and Walking with their dog (10%). Others used the BVRT for horseback Riding (7.5%), Jogging/Running (5%) and Cycling (2.5%, or one respondent). 4 respondents indicated other, and specified they used the BVRT for tourism and business related activities.

FIGURE 4: PRIMARY ACTIVITY ON THE BVRT



Respondents who indicated they used the BVRT were asked how often they used it, 29 respondents answered this question. The majority of respondents using the BVRT use it infrequently, with over half indicating they used the BVRT a few times a year (58.6%) and almost a quarter using it once to a

couple of times a month (24.1.%). Only a small proportion reported using the BVRT regularly with 13.8 per cent using it 1 to 2 times per week and only a single user reporting using the BVRT every day.

3.4.3 INTERESTS IN THE BVRT

Respondents were asked to explain **what their personal interests in the BVRT were**, 20 respondents answered this question, sometimes referring to a number of themes in a single response. The main interests by respondents in the BVRT included:

- Physical activity and recreation (16 references);
- Tourism and business-related (5 references);
- Safety for physical activity and commuting (4 references); and
- Social interaction with both family and the local community (3 references).

Remaining interests that could not be grouped above included appreciation of history (1 reference) and general ambivalence towards to BVRT (1 reference).

3.4.4 BVRT IN THE COMMUNITY

Respondents were asked to explain **what they think the BVRT is to their community**, 17 respondents answered this question, sometimes referring to a number of themes in a single response. The main themes for what respondents considered the BVRT to be for the community included:

- Inexpensive opportunity for healthy lifestyles and enjoyment of the outdoors (10 references);
- Opportunity for social interaction with both families and the local community (6 references);
- Opportunity to develop and promote tourism and business in the area (6 references);
- Incomplete, flood damaged, underdeveloped and in need of maintenance and amenities to attract more users (5 references); and
- Under-utilised and under promoted by the local community and visitors to the area (4 references).

Remaining themes that could not be grouped above included again the appreciation of history (1 reference) and general ambivalence towards to BVRT (1 reference).

3.4.5 VISIONS FOR THE BVRT

Respondents were asked to explain **what they thought the BVRT could be for the community**, 15 respondents answered this question, sometimes referring to a number of themes in a single response. The main themes for what respondents considered the BVRT could be for the community included:

- Enhanced as a tourist attraction to encourage development of tourism amenities, businesses and services in the region and to complement existing tourist activities (for example, skydiving in Toogoolawah) (11 references); and
- Enhanced and promoted for local community use, including physical activity and recreation and as a safe connection between towns for commuting (7 references).

3.4.6 CURRENT ACTIVITIES ON THE BVRT

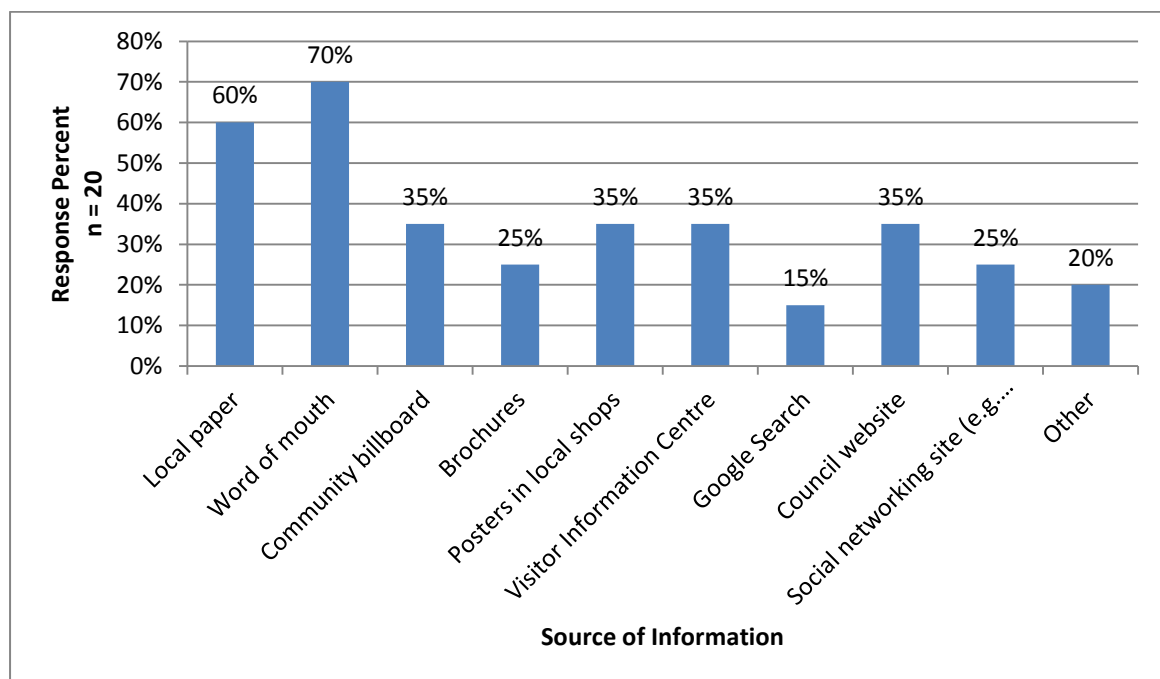
Respondents were asked to list current activities and events they knew of on the BVRT, 14 respondents answered this question, sometimes referring to a number of activities and events in a single response. The current activities and events compiled through this question included:

- Informal and unstructured activities including horse riding, jogging, dog walking (8 references), one respondent indicated these activities have been reduced since the floods;
- Fun run generally (5 references), and others referred specifically to the Lowood to Fernvale Fun Run (3 references); and
- Other activities with single references were the Bloomin’ Beautiful Blackbutt Festival; history talks about the rail at the Coominya school; Donkey Association Walks and Walk the Line Shuttle Service.

One respondent indicated they did not know what was currently happening on the BVRT.

Respondents were also asked how they hear about opportunities/festivals/events/resources in their local area, 20 respondents answered this question and could choose multiple options. The responses are illustrated in Figure 5 below. The majority of respondents find out about community happenings through Word of mouth (70%) and through the local paper (60%). Other methods of communication were less effective, this included responses for ‘Other’ where respondents indicated they received emails from tourism associations, and various levels of government.

FIGURE 5: SOURCE OF INFORMATION



3.4.7 FUTURE ACTIVITIES ON THE BVRT

Respondents were asked to **list activities that could take place on the BVRT in the future**, 14 respondents answered this question, sometimes referring to a number of activities and events in a single response. The future activities and events compiled through this question included:

- Major physical activity events (6 references), including fun runs (along other sections of the BVRT), marathons, half marathons, horse treks, endurance rides, cycling events, mountain bike challenges, and relay events;
- Opportunities to hire bikes, camels, horses, or engage in guided tours (4 references);
- Overnight events such as relays that go through the various towns (3 references);
- Markets and festivals hosted on the BVRT (2 references); and
- Other activities with single references were shade infrastructure and water/bbq facilities for the parachute club section of the BVRT; encouraging the local community sport and recreation clubs and emergency services to use the BVRT for their activities; encouraging local walking groups; accommodation infrastructure for camping; a nature corridor for wildlife; and dog obedience obstacles along the route.

Other comments were made throughout the surveys that fit with this topic. Some respondents saw the need for further development of the tourism industry in the Brisbane Valley to cater for future activities. Areas for tourism industry development included:

- Recovery of flood damaged sections of the BVRT;
- Coordination of operators along the BVRT to encourage users along the BVRT;
- In BVRT towns: tourist amenities such as accommodation, restaurants, bicycle and horse hire, displays in old railway stations; and
- Along the BVRT: toilet/shower facilities, camping and accommodation options placed/developed along the BVRT with a reasonable day's journey space between them to enable 2 - 4 night expeditions.

3.4.8 RESOURCES NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE BVRT

Respondents were asked to **identify resources and issues and opportunities that should be considered in the Marketing and Community Engagement Strategy** for the BVRT. Eleven (11) respondents answered this question, sometimes referring to a number of resources in a single response. The list of resources to consider in the strategy included:

- User information regarding: facilities, toilets, water, camping and accommodation, local contacts in case of emergency, communication facilities, bbqs, support vehicles, insurance issues, reporting in and out prior to going on the BVRT;
- Provide evidence of tourism and economic benefits of rail trails from other parts of Australia; and
- Provide a list of current operators along the BVRT including accommodation, tourist attractions, amenities, community recreation groups and interest groups (for example, birdwatchers).

The list of issues and opportunities to consider in the strategy included:

- Ongoing liaison with landowners adjacent to the BVRT;
- Ongoing maintenance of the BVRT;
- Potential links with Parachute Club property along the BVRT;
- The BVRT to be suitable to a range of ages and abilities;
- To consider the safety of individual users, (for example, woman using the BVRT alone);
- Council to be open to development opportunities along the BVRT;

- Consider how small businesses can be involved with community events and festivals without having to outlay large sums of money; and
- Consider/promote how sections of the BVRT appeal to specific users (for example, Lowood to Fernvale is suited to mountain bikes and walking, Blackbutt to Moore is suitable for horse riding and bike riding).

3.4.9 SUMMARY

The BVRT Marketing and Community Engagement Survey was completed by more women than men. The respondents were mostly aged 36 to 65 residing in towns along the BVRT. Only half of the respondents have used the BVRT, mainly for walking activities, and did so infrequently throughout the year. The respondents were mainly interested in the physical activity and recreation opportunities of the BVRT, but also recognise the potential for tourism development through the BVRT. Respondents understanding of what the BVRT means for the community reflected these interests; predominantly, the BVRT provides inexpensive and safe opportunities for healthy lifestyles and social interaction, but is also recognised for the tourism benefits that the towns could obtain in the long-term. The fact that the BVRT is incomplete and flood damaged was a concern for the respondents. Respondents felt that if the BVRT was enhanced, it could become a great tourist attraction, as well as providing for increased community use. Respondents knew of several activities taking place on the BVRT, these included informal unstructured uses as well as festivals and events that take place each year. The majority of respondents heard about community happenings through word of mouth and the local paper – for locals, the role of the internet in this role is limited. Respondents suggested several potential activities events for the BVRT including physical activity events and pursuits where visitors can hire bikes or horses and camp along the BVRT overnight. Several resources were highlighted to be considered in the Strategy, including trail user information, coordination of operators along the BVRT and implementation of amenities in the towns and on the BVRT.

4.0 FINAL COMMENTS AND PRIORITY AREAS FOR THE MARKETING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The community workshops were able to capture insights of stakeholders across the local government areas of Ipswich City Council, South Burnett Regional Council and Somerset Regional Council. Stakeholder views represented at the community workshops included regional council officers, Visitor Information Centre staff, BVRT Ambassadors, BVHTs committee, local history groups, local business groups and local business operators, and a local Lions Club. All representatives were also residents of the local community. The community survey was able to capture further views of local residents, who were interested in the physical activity opportunities of the BVRT, as well as the tourism potential of the BVRT.

Both methods for community engagement revealed there is strong support for the idea of the BVRT for both physical activity and tourism opportunities. However, the incomplete status of the BVRT and recent flood damage that has seen sections of the BVRT closed is a major factor affecting local community engagement and potential engagement by local businesses. In addition, local community usage of the BVRT has been variable. Some people appear to be using the BVRT regularly for walking

activities and horseback riding; others are on the BVRT only a few times a year. Approximately half of the participants for both the community workshops and community survey report they have not been on the BVRT. Discussions in the community workshops revealed that these observations need to be considered with caution, as the lack of signage along the BVRT has meant that people are in fact using the BVRT, but are not always aware they are doing so.

Table 1 below lists the main issues identified by the community and provides a list of key priorities in the development and marketing of the BVRT to address the issues raised through the community consultation.

TABLE 1: LIST OF ISSUES & KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING OF THE BVRT

Issues identified by the community	Key priorities for the development and marketing of the BVRT
Unfinished trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise Completion and Recovery of BVRT
Lack of amenities along sections of trail (shade, toilets, access to water, points of interest) and lack of awareness of operators along the trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance usability of BVRT for locals and tourists (tree planting, toilets and water points, interpretive signage and access to stories of the trail); • Compile a list of operators along the BVRT and make this publicly available
Lack of awareness of responsible persons for trail management, maintenance and reporting of issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide publicly available information of current governance; Encourage interaction between various interest groups along the various sections of the trail; • Consider the ongoing governance of the BVRT (Trust, Foundation, Committee of Management)
Lack of community awareness and usage of the BVRT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue activities to strengthen the brand of the BVRT (trail head signage, on-trail signage and guidelines for event use and promotion); • Promote the BVRT as a whole trail through marketing collateral; • Encourage establishment of Ambassador groups along the middle and southern sections of the trail; • Create and promote opportunities for community engagement with and on the BVRT; • Develop a calendar of events for the BVRT to contribute to the experiences of both the local community and tourists.
Lack of business awareness regarding the benefits of the trail and how to maximise economic opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define target markets of the BVRT; • Encourage product and service development to complement the BVRT and meet the needs of tourists