

# Railway at Risk!

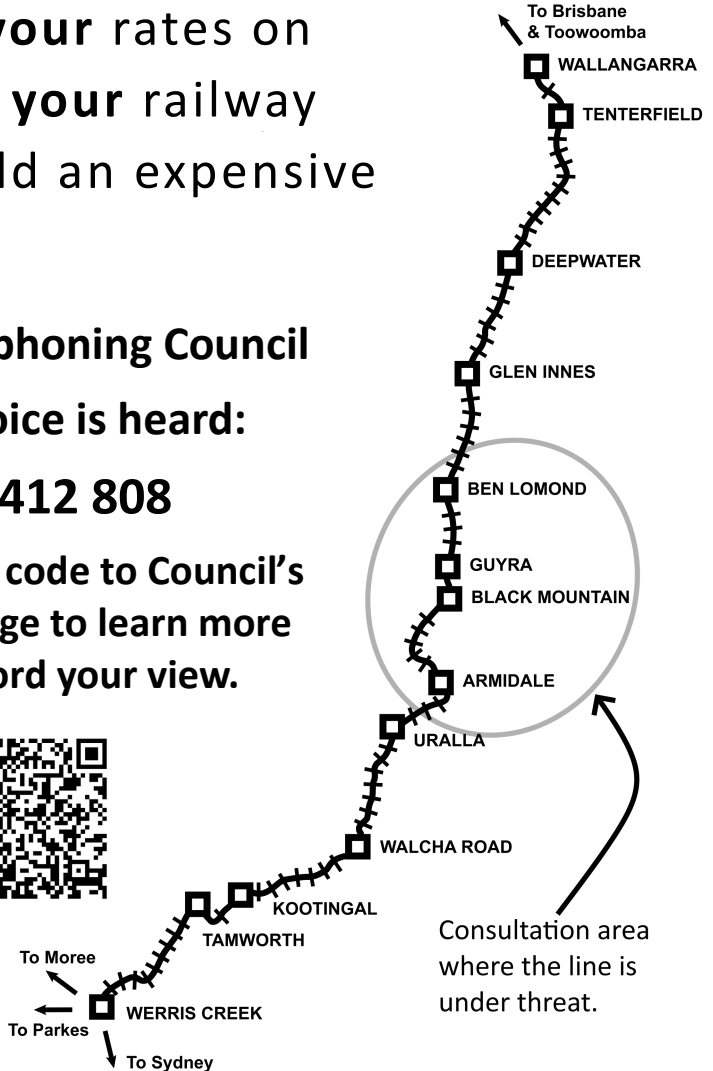


Should **your** Council be spending **your** rates on ripping up **your** railway line to build an expensive bike path?

Say “No” by phoning Council so your voice is heard:

**1800 412 808**

Follow the QR code to Council’s “Your Say” page to learn more and to record your view.



Consultation area where the line is under threat.

# The Main North Line

## A Railway for the Future

The huge potential of the Main North Line railway, linking Armidale to Queensland, has been denied by two local councils over the past decade. Running north from Armidale to Queensland and disused for 25 years, indeed for 36 years north of Glen Innes, the line has been given biased consideration by Armidale Regional Council, which has spent a mere \$7,000 investigating the prospect of reactivating the line, via a minimal discussion paper in 2018 with negative conclusions. By contrast the Council had already spent perhaps \$200,000 pursuing the so-called "Rail Trail" before last year's massive budget allocation, proposed as \$1.5 million for 2026/2027. Much of this funding comes from the rates paid by us all. This unequal investment, loaded against the potential future of freight and passenger train services for New England, would see the track destroyed from Armidale to Ben Lomond and the corridor maintenance costs shifted from the NSW Government to local ratepayers.

Whilst Glen Innes Severn Council has not been such a big spender, both Councils have made the same dismissive assertions about the railway with little supporting evidence. Misleadingly, we have been told that there is no prospect of trains running north of Armidale for decades to come because the NSW Government has no current plans for reactivation.

Contrary to the pseudo-engineering insults that have been levelled at the line, the 47 kg/m steel rails are useable, deteriorated timber sleepers can be replaced

and the ballast can be maintained and replenished. Dilapidated bridges can be repaired or rebuilt.

Perhaps the most unhelpful advice from the bicycle-path-promoting Councils is the assertion that we have only two choices: either leaving the railway in idle decay or turning it into a rail trail, the so called "bikes or blackberries" dilemma. This is simply untrue.

At Guyra a rural-industrial development is proposed that would use the railway for freight. The New England Railway group, in partnership with the Northern Regional Railway Company, are advancing their application for an operating licence on the line. The successful intermodal rail-road depot operated by Qube at Tamworth shows what ambitious Councils could be promoting on the Tablelands, as recommended in the Charlston Report to Council of 2004.

Most important is the rapidly changing situation with transport and energy planning together with the need to reduce carbon emissions. Inland Rail is cancelled north of Parkes; the diesel fuel supply crisis has caused widespread panic; there is much agonising over how to achieve fuel and energy security for the nation. As rail can make an effective contribution to solving these problems, more so with electrification of lines, this is no time to be destroying our railway track and denying Armidale and the Northern Tablelands the opportunity to participate in a transport revolution.

Please turn this page and help to start a new era for our railway in 2026.