

Allison Waddington

From: Michael Fox <dr.michaeljfox@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, 26 October 2018 10:04 PM
To: ner
Subject: North East Railway Corridor Inquiry

Dear Ms Natasha Exel

please find below my submission for the inquiry

The development of the North East Rail Trail has been rightly welcomed for the economic benefits it will bring to the North of Tasmania. As a GP, I would like to point out the social and health benefits that a trail suitable for many users will bring to local communities. On May 5 2017 The Examiner reported the recent findings of the Social Health Atlas of Australia. This disturbing data showed that Tasmanians are overweight and don't exercise enough and that we have the highest levels of obesity in Australia! Two out of three Tasmanian's reported doing little of no exercise during the week. These statistics are alarming for the long term effects on Tasmanians' health and the cost of treating diseases brought on by life style choices that include insufficient exercise.

The North East Rail Trail will provide a fantastic facility for walking and riding. The surface and gently slope will allow for all abilities to start and continue taking up exercise. The free access to the trail at multiple points will allow individuals and families to travel to the trail or use it in their own local community.

The following benefits have been documented as benefits for rail trails.

Easy access to trails enables people to improve their daily activities and reduce a range of health problems (obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease) due to ageing and inactivity (1). The closer people live to the trails the more likely they are to use them (2). In a West Virginia study, 60% of trail users report they had exercised more regularly since they began using trails, and 47% of trail users reported getting their recommended physical activity through trail use alone (3). At the same time trails in Missouri increased exercise in those most at risk of inactivity (4).

There are multiple mental health benefits, especially in the young, with rail trails. Exercise in a "green space" has even more benefit than exercise alone (5). Research over multiple trials shows outdoor exercise reduces levels of anger, tension and depression (6). In the UK 10 studies have found significant improvements in self-esteem and mood after participants exercised outside in parks, farmland, forests, waterside, and wilderness (7)

Rail trails reduce social isolation. Interactions with other people on the trail promote stronger community relations, ties to neighbours and personal relationships which contribute to positive health outcomes(8)

Two out of 3 Tasmanians are vitamin D deficient over winter - outdoor exercise promotes higher Vitamin D (9)

There have been multiple attempts to measure the savings in health care costs compared to the costs of building rail trails (10), (11), (12), (13) and (14). In general the benefits of reduced care costs outweigh the costs of construction (15).

Regards

Dr. Michael Fox

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