

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
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ICONIC GIPPSLAND RAIL TRAIL TO EXTEND THROUGH TO ALBERTON

Gippsland's iconic Great Southern Rail Trail will be extended to include a section between Welshpool and Alberton, thanks to support from the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas today announced \$6 million in funding for the project through the *Regional Infrastructure Fund – Stimulus Round*, which will create a continuous trail of 99 kilometres from Leongatha through to Yarram.

The trail currently runs from Leongatha to Welshpool and is popular among locals and visitors, with more than 40,000 walkers, joggers and cyclists using it each year.

The project will enable the Wellington and South Gippsland Shire Councils to construct a new 21-kilometre trail between Welshpool and Alberton. The project will include bridges and water crossings and will utilise the former rail corridors across both shires.

This extension builds on the Labor Government's \$1.3 million investment to support two additional extensions of the trail, including a 21-kilometre section from Nyora to Korumburra, and a 15-kilometre section from Korumburra to Leongatha, which are both under construction.

Once these new sections of trail have been completed it will deliver a continuous length of 135 kilometres from Nyora through to Yarram – which will meet the Gippsland Shire's long-term vision of transforming the Great Southern Rail Trail into one of Australia's longest rail trails.

The *Regional Infrastructure Fund* is part of the Labor Government's flagship \$156 million *Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund*, helping businesses create more jobs in regional Victoria, supporting community projects and backing councils to build the infrastructure that locals and visitors need.

The stimulus round will boost local economies as they recover from the effects of the pandemic and create jobs while improving tourism and community infrastructure.

The fund is part of the Labor Government's almost \$30 billion investment in regional and rural Victoria.

The second round of the Fund's 2020/21 program opened for applications on 16 June. Under this competitive round, local regional and rural councils will be invited to apply for grants. Information and guidelines for the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund can be found at rdv.vic.gov.au/rjif.

Quote attributable Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

"We are pleased to back this exciting project that will boost tourism to the Gippsland region and support a smooth road to recovery, enabling the community to thrive into the future."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Jane Garrett

"Projects like the Great Southern Rail Trail extension will make Gippsland an even better place to live, work, visit and invest."