

Mansfield Shire Council & Friends of The Rail Trail

Memorandum of Understanding – Great Victorian Rail Trail

| 2024-28



Mansfield Shire

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Parties

The parties to this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) are:

1. Mansfield Shire Council (“**MSC**”)
2. Friends of the Great Victorian Rail Trail (“**Friends Group**”)

Background

The Great Victorian Rail Trail (“**GVRT**”) is a recreational riding trail that travels through Mansfield Shire, Murrindindi Shire and Mitchell Shire formerly known as “The Goulburn River High Country Rail Trail.” The GVRT is one of Australia’s longest continuous rail trails, with Victoria’s longest rail trail tunnel at Cheviot. The trail spans 134 kilometres from Tallarook to Mansfield via, Trawool, Yea, Yarck and Bonnie Doon with a branch line from Cathkin to Alexandra. Located less than one hour from Melbourne, the picturesque trail travels from Tallarook to Trawool and Yea through the heritage listed Goulburn River Valley, classified by the National Trust for its scenic beauty.

Trail Management

1. A GVRT Working Group is in place and meet monthly, consisting of:
 - ▶ One economic development or tourism representative from each Council.
2. A GVRT Management Committee is in place and meet formally twice a year, consisting of:
 - ▶ Three representatives from each Council comprising the CEO/Director or Senior Manager, one economic development or tourism representative and one asset management representative.
3. GVRT Industry Group meetings to be held twice a year before the GVRT Management Committee meetings to provide general feedback and operational insights for the GVRT Management Committee to consider.
4. GVRT Industry Group meetings will comprise of businesses, user groups and relevant trail friends groups associated with the GVRT. Industry groups will be hosted and facilitated by the GVRT Management Committee to assure industry and interested parties are updated and engaged in the trail.

Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is to specify the Roles and Responsibilities of the Friends group towards the continuing development and ongoing maintenance of the GVRT along with MSC.

The MoU will be binding on each party for that period and shall be revised prior to June 2028. The MoU may also be revised if the GVRT receives major development funding or significant increases in use because of major improvements. Review of the MoU shall be undertaken by MSC and may be at the instigation of any of the parties to the MoU.

Spirit of the Memorandum of Understanding

All of the parties to this agreement anticipate that, through the MoU, they will work jointly on a range of projects for the development and marketing of the GVRT to continue to deliver the asset as a thriving community and tourism experience that delivers positive outcomes for all destinations, business and communities associated with it. In all dealings, the Parties agree to act with the spirit of understanding and adopt the following principles:

Mansfield Shire Council & Friends of the Rail Trail - Memorandum of Understanding

- ▶ Honesty, transparency and decisiveness in all dealings;
- ▶ Respect for each other's objectives;
- ▶ Sharing of information, expertise and resources;
- ▶ Encouragement and support;
- ▶ Provision of timely and accurate information; and
- ▶ Recognition of team work and co-operation in achieving goals.

Mission - To Work Together

- ▶ To provide a safe environment in which community members can pursue a range of recreational opportunities.
- ▶ To create a trail which provides a multi-use recreational, environmental, heritage and tourist resource; and
- ▶ To respect and preserve naturally, culturally and historically valuable areas whilst maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders.
- ▶ Both parties engage in regular 6 monthly meetings and regular officer-level communication on a project basis, ensuring that planning and decision-making reflect both MSC's strategic priorities and the community insights of Friends of GVRT.
- ▶ Joint marketing efforts, guided by the GVRT Style Guide, ensure consistent and effective promotion of the trail, leveraging MSC's reach and the Friends Group's community engagement and grass-roots marketing.
- ▶ Develop processes to collect and share data that helps improve GVRT usage and experience, including volunteer hours, user/counter data, QR code statistics.
- ▶ Track data over time and develop joint actions to leverage information from that data.

Summary of Roles & Responsibilities

Mansfield Shire Council

- ▶ To be part of the GVRT Working group and to represent and advocate for Mansfield, user groups and businesses within our region
- ▶ Maintaining the sections of the Trail that sits within our municipal boundaries. This includes assuming financial responsibility for the costs associated with the labour, materials and supplies required to maintain the Trail and associated access, rest areas, toilets, art installations and signage. Trail maintenance should be in accordance with the GVRT Management Plan, including regular inspections
- ▶ The Council is also responsible for carrying any works that arise as a result of health and safety concerns and to handle any complaints or feedback on maintenance of the GVRT
- ▶ The Council shall also, from time to time, carry out more intensive works, aimed at improving the GVRT. Where possible, the Council shall give notice to the friends of any such works
- ▶ Council shall offer guidance and advice for any events or additional projects the Friends Group wish to undertake
- ▶ Provide insurance (public liability and volunteer accident) for the GVRT corridor

Mansfield Shire Council & Friends of the Rail Trail - Memorandum of Understanding

Friends Group

- ▶ To provide input related to the ongoing management, development and promotion of the Trail from a user perspective and feedback received
- ▶ Acting as advocate for the improvements to the asset and apply for funding
- ▶ Undertaking volunteer activities towards upkeep and promotion of the rail trail
- ▶ Acting as contact point and conduit to council for various stakeholders with common interest in the GVRT and ensure all feedback received is passed onto the relevant council members
- ▶ Deliver functions such as, planting, bedding out, weeding, litter picking and basic maintenance, subject to the prior approval of the MSC with minimum of 14 days notice of works to the Manager Field Services

Summary table below

Mansfield Council - roles and value	Friends of the GVRT – roles and value
<p>Trail Maintenance and Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ MSC is responsible for the physical upkeep of the trail within its municipal boundaries, including labour and materials for maintenance and improvements like rest areas, toilets, and signage. This ensures a safe and enjoyable environment for all users. <p>Safety and Compliance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Addresses any health and safety concerns promptly and manages feedback or complaints regarding trail maintenance, ensuring the trail's safety and compliance with relevant standards. <p>Advisory and Supportive Role for Events and Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Offers guidance to the Friends Group on events and special projects, ensuring alignment with council regulations and strategic objectives. <p>Insurance Provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provides necessary insurance coverage for the trail corridor, ensuring legal and financial protection for both parties involved in the trail's management and promotion. 	<p>Community Engagement and Advocacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Acts as a liaison between trail users, the broader community, and the MSC, providing essential feedback and advocating for improvements, which enhances the trail's relevance and responsiveness to community needs. <p>Volunteer Activities and Trail Promotion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Undertakes volunteer activities for trail enhancement and promotion, including planting, weeding, and litter picking, directly contributing to the trail's aesthetic and environmental quality. <p>Funding and Resource Mobilisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Applies for funding and mobilises resources for trail improvement projects, events, promotions, expanding the financial and material resources available for trail enhancements. <p>Project Initiatives and Feedback Conduit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Initiates special projects with MSC approval, ensuring that projects align with the trail's vision and management plan. ▶ Provides a conduit for stakeholder feedback, enhancing communication and responsiveness to user needs. ▶ Delivers initiatives for MSC that use and leverage the strengths of the Friends of the GVRT (especially trail knowledge and experience) (eg audit)

Mansfield Shire Council & Friends of the Rail Trail - Memorandum of Understanding

Special Projects

These are projects where the scope of works requires more than existing resources can support. Examples of such work may include installation of new structures, art, signage or paths. If the Friends Group are generating such projects then they must get prior approval from the Council to ensure that -

- ▶ They are appropriate to the setting
- ▶ That there is sufficient funding to cover the cost
- ▶ That any ongoing maintenance costs can be contained within existing budgets.

Binding Documents

All parties are bound by the following documents regarding relevant areas and must adhere to the protocols contained within. These documents will be provided to the Friends Group and if updated by the working group, new copies must be provided within 14 days of finalization to the friends group -

- ▶ GVRT Style Guide - for any marketing of the GVRT the style guide must be adhered to, this ensures that the product is represented by one brand across all parties
- ▶ GVRT Management Plan – Outlines requirements and guidelines for maintenance and works to ensure a safe and enjoyable user experience.
- ▶ MoU – This document outlines our shared goals and how we will work together to achieve these.

The MOU and associated documents provide a living framework for collaboration, subject to regular review and adaptation to meet evolving needs and opportunities.

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EXECUTED AS A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON _____

Signed for and on behalf of **Mansfield Shire Council** ABN 74 566 834 923:

Signature of CEO

Name of CEO (BLOCK LETTERS)

Date:

Signed for and on behalf of **Friends of the Great Victorian Rail Trail**:

Signature of President Friends of the Great Victorian Rail Trail

Name of President (BLOCK LETTERS)

Date:

