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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Whole Region Needs to Get Behind Rail Trail - RDA

Regional Development Australia (RDA) – Northern Rivers has reaffirmed its strong support for the Rail Trail on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail corridor.

Chair of the RDA Northern Rivers, Don Page said a rail trail would attract valuable tourism to the region, increase employment and improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the region and its people.

“The Rail Trail is a low impact, environmentally friendly proposal that will generate many new jobs. It’s a top priority for RDA Northern Rivers” he said.

“The rail corridor has been the subject of a comprehensive train study (2011-12) and a Rail Trail feasibility study (2013-14).

“Trains in whatever combination were deemed not viable due to excessive cost (over \$950M) and in any case public transport needs would not be met because two of the three largest population areas (i.e. Ballina and Tweed Heads) would not be served.

“The Rail Trail, on the other hand, was shown to be both affordable, viable and a great job creator” Mr Page said.

“Both the State and Federal Governments have indicated they support the Rail Trail as an appropriate use of the disused corridor.

“Tweed Council currently have an application for \$13 M to fund the northern section [i.e. Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek) and Richmond Valley & Lismore Councils support a Rail Trail for the Casino to Eltham section.

“What’s missing is a clear statement of support for the middle section (Byron).

“Uncosted, unfunded, unrealistic proposals for trains, trams and a Rail Trail in the Byron Shire section of the corridor only jeopardises the Rail Trail project.

“If the Rail Trail does not proceed it is likely the corridor will be sold off.



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“This outcome will be a tragedy for the region and deprive the Northern Rivers of the opportunity to have one of the best Rail Trails in the world.

“The Northern Rivers region needs a united commitment to the Rail Trail uncontaminated by unrealistic ideas that will only ever serve to undermine a viable Rail Trail.

“If the region can’t agree to support the Rail Trail, its inevitable sections of the corridor will be sold off. It’s a case of use it or lose it!

“We need the region to unite behind the Rail Trail project and stop the spoiling tactics currently in force which seriously threatens a great opportunity to create jobs and income for our region.” Mr Page said.

Don Page RDA 0266 224011.