



- First 3km of **fernleigh** track (completed section)
- Proposed next section of **fernleigh** track
- Proposed total length of **fernleigh** track once project complete



# a regional treasure

The Fernleigh Track shared pathway is a joint project of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle City Councils. The former railway line stretches 15 kilometres from the southern suburb of Adamstown in Newcastle City to Belmont on the coastal side of Lake Macquarie.

Redevelopment of the first three kilometres of the track as a shared pathway is now complete, and was funded by both Councils and the NSW Government.



## Fernleigh - On the right track

I have been involved with the development of the Fernleigh Track since its inception, with the railway corridor being set aside, at my insistence, to ensure it would always be used as a transport corridor.

Now the tunnel has been transformed and a shared cycleway and walking path runs through the beautiful Glenrock State Recreation Area – one of the great projects with which I have been associated in my thirty years as a Member of State Parliament. The Fernleigh Track will provide a safe and efficient cycling and walking link for the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie community and visitors alike and will be known as one of the best cycleways anywhere in Australia.

I am pleased to say that the State Government's 50% contribution to the development and historical transformation of this area, will provide opportunities for the community to escape, learn and to reflect our cultural history.

### **The Hon J Richard Face MP**

Member for Charlestown

*Minister Assisting the Premier  
on Hunter Development*



I "discovered" the Fernleigh Track back in 1988 when reading the case for heritage listing of the then, "Colliery Line". It became a primary focus ever since.

Knowing of it was one thing – thinking of its potential was another, as I began to realise as I walked it from Whitebridge to Jewells. The vision of walkers, runners and cyclists, on a vehicle-free, accessible, picturesque link through scenic coastal lands from Belmont to Adamstown, was compelling.

It would provide a safe alternative to the Pacific Highway and could become a significant part of our tourist infrastructure.

When completed, the Fernleigh Track can become the beginning of an adventure trail that loops from Lake Macquarie to the wine country, across the Watagan Mountains, into the Hunter Valley, and reconnecting in Newcastle. This is a very exciting beginning for the Fernleigh Track and on behalf of the Fernleigh Track Committee, I would like to thank all those involved, past and present, in the rehabilitation and construction of the shared pathway.

### **Cr John Jenkins**

Chair Fernleigh Track Committee

*Lake Macquarie City Council*



The opening of the first stage of the Fernleigh Track represents an important step towards the achievement of a grand vision shared by Lake Macquarie City Council with Newcastle City Council and the NSW Government. The vision - to join the two cities with a recreation and transport link - brings back to life the old Adamstown–Belmont Railway Line. Formerly a well-used and scenic rail link, the railway is now a cycling and walking track. With an investment of \$2.2m for the first stage of this project, we now have a geographic connection to many communities and a link to the heritage of the cities.

The driving force behind this project is the Joint Committee, which includes elected and staff representatives from both Councils, the Newcastle Cycleways Movement, the Northern Parks Movement, and a community member from each City. The dedicated members have ensured that the project meets the needs of residents in both cities and keeps the process 'on track'.

### **Cr John Kilpatrick**

OAM, Mayor of Lake Macquarie



The Fernleigh Track is a unique recreational facility for cyclists and walkers in Lake Macquarie and Newcastle and like the Bathers Way, has great potential as a tourist attraction. It links the two major centres of the Hunter, provides access to Glenrock and crosses the popular Great North Walk. The track is not only beautiful, it has a fascinating industrial heritage and character of its own. The tunnel itself is a remarkable piece of architecture and its restoration is the result of many years of dedication and commitment from the community and members of the Fernleigh Track Committee.

With the completion of the first three kilometres of the track, we now look forward to further development of Fernleigh Track and hope to secure future funding for this remarkable project.

### **Cr John S Tate**

Lord Mayor of Newcastle



# Geography

## History

The former railway line that once snaked its way fifteen kilometres from Adamstown to Belmont was originally constructed in the late 1880's. It was used to transport coal from mines in the Lake Macquarie area to the Port of Newcastle. Evidence of some of the mines is still visible from the track.

The Adamstown to Belmont rail line helped contribute to the development of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. It has a rich history for the area and along with coal haulage, it was used as a passenger service between Belmont and Newcastle with stations at Kahibah, Whitebridge and Redhead.

The train trip took around an hour and was used frequently for weekend excursions. The cost of the passenger service was subsidised by the coal service and when coal transportation began to drop off so did servicing and maintenance of the line.

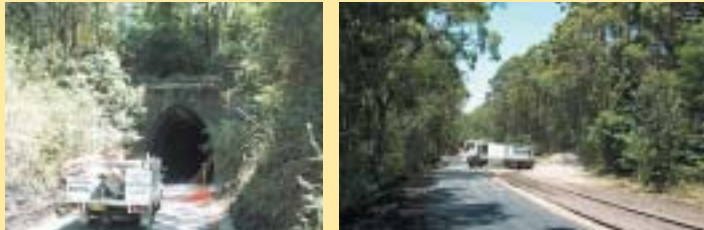
The last scheduled steam train ran in 1967 before switching to diesel and the last passenger train ran in 1971. During the 1980's coal mines along the corridor began to close down and the line ceased to be used in 1991 with the closure of the Lambton B Colliery.

The railway closed in 1991, and the two Councils completed the purchase of the corridor in 1994. Shortly after, the Fernleigh Tunnel (having survived two earthquakes in 1925 and 1989) was closed to public access following an assessment of its structural condition.

Some of the rail line has remained as part of the refurbishment of Fernleigh Track and serves as a reminder of the historic nature of the corridor.

In 1999 the Councils adopted an implementation plan which proposed the development of a shared cycle and walking pathway.

*right: emerging from the Fernleigh tunnel*



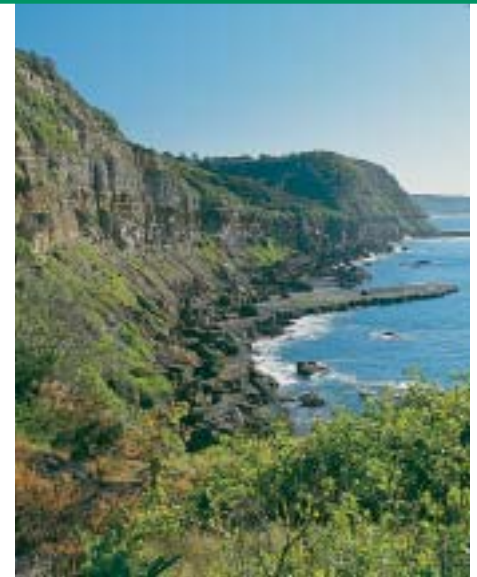
The route passes mainly through a range of bushland settings, with links along the way to adjoining residential communities.

From the main line station at Adamstown, it rises along the curved 180 metre long Fernleigh Tunnel to Kahibah, adjoining the open forests of the Glenrock State Recreation Area, managed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. At this point the corridor crosses the Great North Walk, a walking path between Sydney and Newcastle.

From Kahibah, the track continues to rise, but more gently to the highest elevation at Whitebridge.

From Whitebridge, it then falls with a constant grade through bushland with ocean views to the seaside suburb of Redhead.

From Redhead, south to Belmont, the corridor is virtually flat, passing through sandy heath, bushland and swamp.





# The Future

## A regional treasure

The Fernleigh Track is a unique regional resource for the following reasons:

### **The Fernleigh track is an easy, peaceful and safe transport route**

The track is long, direct, relatively continuous and flat. There are very few transport corridors like this left for non-motorised traffic in urban and suburban New South Wales.

### **The track links places and people**

The track is perceived as a central spine that links a range of natural and built attractions and other transport routes.



### **The track provides the opportunity for escape**

The track looks and feels different to a park or reserve. It's historical background is industrial yet romantic. It is built yet lacks conventional developments. It passes through semi-natural and natural environments and this is great for people who want to escape, discover and learn.

### **It reflects our cultural heritage.**

The track reflects changes in activities within the region and how the lifestyles of workers and nearby residents have changed over time.

The challenge to the NSW Government, and the two Councils, is to continue the vision for the development of the pathway through to Belmont and beyond.

Further developments of Fernleigh Track can provide a genuine new transport route to link the communities and provide a safe alternative for commuters currently using the Pacific Highway.

It will provide an opportunity for people to appreciate and participate in the longer term conservation of the heritage of the site, and the natural environment.



### **Involvement**

Development of the Fernleigh Track has taken a decade of work from many people. The following people are current committee members involved in the project.

### **Current Committee Members**

Cr Barry Scully

Cr Hans Tol

Cr Bill Hanley

Ms Janice Walsh

Cr John Jenkins

Cr Gordon Hughes

Cr Laurie Coghlan

Mr Ian Broadfoot

Mr Ian Taylor

Mr Doug Lithgow

Mr David Bennet

### **For further information about the Fernleigh Track please contact**

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Department 4921 0476

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Newcastle City Council 4974 2409

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