

30 September, 2009

OLD TRAIN TRACKS TO BETTER SERVE COMMUNITIES

Minister for Lands, Tony Kelly today said the NSW Government was working toward changing the laws around disused rural rail lines to benefit the community.

Mr Kelly said legislation would go to Parliament this year to make it possible for old train lines to be converted into walking or cycling tracks to improve community usage.

“We can create community benefits from the 3,000 kilometres of disused railway lines, some of which stopped running trains over 30 years ago,” Mr Kelly said.

“These lines are dormant, and cannot be used for any other purposes unless they are officially closed by an act of Parliament. There have also been reports of the theft of trains and sleepers in disused rail corridors.

“If these changes are made communities will be to devise what use of the corridor best suits them,” Mr Kelly said.

“In some cases the land might be sold, but in the case of rail trails, the Government would retain ownership, so that there would no impediment if the Government subsequently decided to re-open the rail line to trains.

“We’re keen to hear from the community prior to making any changes.

“We’ve seen the tourism and recreational benefits rail trains bring to rural communities in other states including Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania, and we want to tap that potential for NSW towns.

“There are a number of rail trail proposals on the table and the proposed legislative changes will remove the legal restrictions which currently hinder their development.

Mr Kelly said legislation would go to Parliament this year.

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