

## President's address | CMRT AGM 2021

### 10 December 2021

Members, Volunteers, Friends, and True Believers,

I say that because we ARE on the cusp of the sweetest victory of all.

15 months ago we began as a loose band of well-intentioned volunteers with a Zoom account, an email address and a backpack full of aspirations.

Now, we finish this calendar year as an incorporated association with more than 130 members, 4000 supporters, almost 30 registered volunteers, strong public recognition, solid cash flow, an eye-catching website and perhaps most important of all - the ear of the local councils and government.

"You have come from nowhere," one senior council official told us last week. "I hope you understand that what you've been able to achieve in a year simply isn't normal for a community group. It's why we're getting behind you and your idea," the council officer concluded purposefully.

We don't have a trail just yet. But the genuine prospect of it - through a partnership between the shires of Mt Alexander and Central Goldfields and the State and perhaps Federal Governments - is right there before us.

If we are willing to seize the opportunity.

The words of Scottish Mt Everest mountaineer William Murray comes to mind.

*Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.*

*Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans.*

*That the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves, too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred.*

We have all committed. By joining as members. By donating our time. By giving generously.

And Providence - in the form of exciting progress - is moving too.

We are:

- only about 3 months away from launching a compelling short documentary film that will bring the trail idea to life through the voices of local people (thanks to MDCB)
- only a couple of months away (we hope) from receiving approval to organise our first group walk along the trail

- only two months away delivering a new plan to bring excellence to our volunteer program (thanks to MASC)
- only weeks away from applying with our two shire councils for State Government tourism funding of up to \$100K for a feasibility study for the trail
- and now only half an hour away from electing a new Committee that can carry that work forward

Commitment also means organising for impact. And one of the reasons we've made an impact is because we got organised into small teams that focussed on:

- community outreach
- liaising with council and government liaison
- pitching for grants
- website and social media building
- engaging with our members and volunteers
- planning for the trail route and construction

For these and many milestones already reached over the past 15 months some thanks are in order.

- **Lou Citroen** our founding Secretary for catalysing us by appearing in the Midland Express more than 20 months ago calling for a Castlemaine - Guildford trail
- **Sponsors** - **Scott Rossiter** whose artwork continues to propel our brand, **James Mack** who built our website and **Neil and Heather Barrett** who gave us a home at The Hub - and **MDCB** who backed our vision for a documentary film and **MASC** who backed our volunteer grant when we were barely five months old
- **Volunteers** - including my hard-working colleagues on the Committee - without whom none of this would be possible
- **Partners**, chief among them Rail Trails Australia for their wise guidance, Volunteering Victoria who remind us that our volunteers are our most precious resource, and Landcare Victoria because they remind us that land use isn't just about this generation but the next

So, we now enter our second year full of promise - and with support for us growing steadily.

But we also face a significant challenge. We need to build up our capacity so that too much is no longer being done by too few.

Much has been done we can be proud of, but the risk of stalling and burnout is real. This trail is a long distance event, not a sprint. We need more fresh talent.

Of course, it is encouraging to see new faces appearing on the Committee.

But more will be needed - to help spread the load in areas like our digital marketing, community outreach, helping our volunteers, fund-raising and government liaison.

Over the course of the next few months, we need to persuade more talented and energetic people to step forward and get involved in the association's work.

The defining chapter of our social movement in 2021-22 will be written by those who choose to step forward. We remain hopeful our community will answer the call.

*John Carruthers*  
*President*  
*7 December 2021*