

Plenty of benefits

IN RESPONSE to Mr McKay's letter (*McIvor Times*, February 10).

The real 'tangible' benefit to the communities of Axedale, Heathcote, Bendigo (and all the locations in between—from the recently completed O'Keefe Rail Trail extension is the importance of creating public space that encourages our communities to be more active.

Whether that be cycling, running, walking or even riding a horse.

One does not have to be a tourist to embrace the benefits and access the trail.

Though judging by the numbers of visiting cyclists passing through our township, stopping for a well-deserved break, a drink and a meal at our town's tavern, it seems the "build it and they will come" theory is most certainly working.

The rising rates of obesity and related chronic disease cannot be ignored.

Having safe and accessible spaces to use for all abilities is what makes living in our communities great.

I see this every day in Axedale, members of our community making the most of being able to use a safe path, off main roads, through beautiful bush land and open fields.

The O'Keefe Rail Trail has given them a reason to be active, made it easier to not just sit on the couch, encouraging us to get outside in the fresh air and improve our wellbeing.

Community groups in Axedale and Heathcote should be applauded for creatively making the best of our proximities to the O'Keefe Rail Trail.

This year the Heathcote Community Games is hosting the first fun run and marathon event along the trail, what an opportunity to not only promote healthy lifestyle to our residents but this will certainly attract state-wide if not interstate visitation.

I value my rates contributing to this sort of infrastructure, because if the health of our communities does not improve, the burden of future chronic disease will be far more devastating on our tax and rate paying dollar.

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