Darling Downs Residents Association (DDRA) Committee's Report 2022/2023

This has been an incredibly busy year, and the Darling Downs Residents Association has achieved many improvements. The volunteer work equates to more than 2,254 hours of effort in the 2022/23 Financial Year. Key achievements over the last year include:

- ✓ ***Safety fence on Comic Loop South Trail.*** In the past, some horses have escaped onto Thomas Road or fallen into the deep drain running alongside the bridle trail. A fence was needed to alleviate these safety risks. Through close collaboration between the DDRA and the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale (SoSJ), a safety fence was installed alongside the trail near Thomas Road. This fence was completed in April 2023, and it has successfully stopped the problems experienced earlier along this stretch of the trail network.



- ✓ ***Rest area.*** A comfortable rest area was created adjacent to the Evening Peal Court carpark. Many people have used this rest area. It has been particularly useful for the equine community, who can park their floats nearby and leave their horses in the adjacent day yards while using the rest area. The Committee would particularly like to thank Lotterywest, who was the major supporter of this project. Their grant paid for most of these facilities.



- ✓ ***Tree planting.*** There was a clear need for more plants in the Darling Downs Equestrian Park (DDEP) to replace dead vegetation and improve the area for users and native animals. Through the Metronet Thomas Road Over Rail project, the DDRA was able to source 2,100 trees and bushes for planting in the DDEP. Additionally, the Metronet project donated fertiliser and vegetation guards to protect the plants. Farm and Turf Equipment (FATE) *(who donated 200 fertiliser tree rings)* and Mineral Magic *(who donated an effective water retention product that helps to minimise the need for watering)* were also kind supporters. Because of our core team's thorough planning and a lot of preliminary work, the main planting day on 8 July 2023 was a great success. The DDRA Committee would like to thank the Metronet Project, the local businesses who donated products, and all of the volunteers who helped to ensure the success of this planting.



- ✓ ***Grass trial.*** Just to the east of the Evening Peal Court carpark is an area enclosed by trees *(see the map to the right)*. Sadly, this area was being underutilised as it was covered in veldt grass that made the ground uneven for horses. The DDRA collaborated with local businesses, who donated products, equipment and effort to remove the existing grasses and plant horse-friendly kikuyu. These organisations include Farm and Turf Equipment (WA) *(who provided time and equipment)*, Mineral Magic *(who donated and spread their product to help with water retention)*, Green Acres Turf Group *(who supplied and laid the kikuyu stolons)* and Seed & Feed Perth *(who contributed fertiliser)*. Additionally, to ensure the survival of the turf over the first long, hot summer, the DDRA and the SoSJ jointly funded the watering of the grass. This effort has allowed the kikuyu to establish itself. Once the grass becomes fully established, this will provide a wonderful area for working horses, which is well sheltered from prevailing winds.





- ✓ ***Implementing safety gates/chicanes.*** As another important safety measure, the DDRA has paid to install two additional gates/chicanes on the trail exits. These gates/chicanes will help to ensure that loose horses don't get out onto the adjoining roads.



- ✓ ***Additional safety fencing.*** Safety fences have also been installed over key crossovers to help reduce the risks to horses crossing them. Just one example is shown in the picture to the right.



- ✓ ***Trail refurbishment.*** Through our close collaboration with the SoSJ, State Government funding was allocated to refurbish many of the DDEP trails. As a result of this project, which was managed by the DDRA, about 14 kilometres of the trails were restored, and about 480 tonnes of trotting fines were laid to improve the quality of the riding surface. The Committee would like to thank Uky's Earthmoving, who provided a lot of extra effort at no cost, to help maximise the benefits for our user community. It is intended that other areas of the trails will be refurbished in future to bring the whole area up to an even better standard.



- ✓ ***Clearing numerous areas of the DDEP.*** Thanks to our volunteers' efforts, we have removed significant fire risks in many areas of the DDEP. This effort has involved removing tonnes of fallen and dead trees and vegetation. As a result of this work, the entire area is safer and more user-friendly.
- ✓ ***Responding quickly to problems.*** The DDRA has implemented a process for quickly responding to problems like fallen trees/branches that block trails. Over the last year, our volunteers have responded to numerous problems and quickly cleared the tracks so everyone can use them effectively.

All of this work would not have been achievable without the help of our numerous volunteers. In particular, the Committee would like to thank stalwarts such as Peter Benson, Brian Schupp, Pip Schupp, Pam Hilliard, Terry Mateljan, Pam Mateljan, Adam Kestel, Peter Cappendell, Sue Giblett, Eric Chabros, Ian Stanley, Jos Smit, Rodney Eden-Street, Carol Fawcett, Mal Fawcett, Matt Emery, Dave Emery, Andrew Smith, and Jerome Donders.

The Committee would also like to thank the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale for their continued support. Firstly, the DDRA could not assist the community without the funds provided by the SoSJ. Most importantly, the staff at the Shire make the biggest difference. They have been incredibly helpful in assisting the DDRA to meet our common goals and enhance the facilities in our community.

Many other projects have also been started over this period and should be completed in due course. These include implementing enhancements to the cross-country jumps, repairing other chairs/tables in the 70 Acres, creating more horse-friendly gates, upgrading mounting blocks in the area, widening another crossover on the trails, adding more safety fencing, refurbishing more of the trails, planting more trees, shrubs/wildflowers and implementing better trail signage.

The DDRA has also been gaining the support of various sponsors, who are advertising on the web page. This web page (https://www.ddra.org.au/business-directories) provides a useful place for people to find good local businesses. Just as importantly, the money provided by these sponsors is being invested in improvements and developments within the DDEP.

Bruce Hilliard
President, DDRA