

Darling Downs Residents Association

(DDRA) Committee's Report - 2024/25



Over the period since the last Annual General Meeting (AGM), Darling Downs Residents Association (DDRA) volunteers have done a great deal of work. To achieve the tasks summarised in this report, DDRA volunteers provided more than 2,283 hours of effort during the 2024/25 Financial Year (FY) alone and many more hours in the current FY. The following points outline some of the key outcomes achieved from this effort.

- ✓ **Trails Maintenance.** Most of the slow track in the 70 Acres has been refurbished by adding more sand and carrying out other works to make the surface more usable and safer. In addition to this focus, volunteers have been progressively refurbishing eroded trail surfaces in the chicanes and crossovers. Most of these refurbishments have been done, and the remaining areas are expected to be completed during the current FY. Unfortunately, at the time of drafting this Annual Report, the funding commitment from the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale (SoSJ) to refurbish degraded trail surfaces in the 70 Acres and other key areas has not been forthcoming. It is hoped that the funding for these important refurbishments will be forthcoming in the very near future, as many sections of the trails will become increasingly expensive to repair if funding is further delayed.
- ✓ **Rest Areas.** The rest area table expansion and refurbishment project is ongoing. Over the period, new picnic tables have been fitted to plinths in the southwestern corner of Bernborough West trail and the northeastern corner of the Birrega Loop. These seats are provided to give users of the area pleasant places to take a break. Other tables will be fitted to the installed plinths as funds become available.
- ✓ **Vegetation Management.** DDRA team members have been busy during the year conducting mowing and clearing fallen/dead trees/bushes, and branches. In particular, many branches and trees came down last summer and during the rainy period in August. Our volunteers did a great job of quickly clearing the trails and making the Darling Downs Equestrian Park (DDEP) safe and usable again. For example, in many cases, trails were cleared within as little as an hour after the problem had been reported.
- ✓ **Native tree/bush planting.** In July 2024, volunteers planted 616 new native trees/bushes to help provide better noise barriers and enhance the area for native fauna. During the previous year, the Shire watered most of the new plants, which supported a survival rate of about 70%. However, over this last summer, the Shire did not have the resources available to water the new plants. This change in watering from the previous year meant that a little more than half of the new trees died. To help overcome this problem, the DDRA implemented another native planting event on 12 July 25. During this event, volunteers successfully planted another 1,164 native trees and shrubs. New planting techniques were also applied this year, which should improve the survival rate even without watering. The DDRA would like to thank MetCONNx for donating the plants, fertiliser and other equipment, and providing their employees' support, so the DDEP could be enhanced and made safer. The DDRA also want to thank Landcare SJ for their advice and support, and the many volunteers who worked hard to complete the planting despite some rain on the day.
- ✓ **Fence Repairs.** Many fences were repaired during the year. In particular, the DDRA would like to thank Matelan Pilgrim (Mates Rates Fencing), and (Vale) Rod Eden-Street and Chris Eden-Street for their support. They have done a great job of helping out with the ongoing repairs. In particular, one of the largest tasks entailed the replacement of the damaged fence on the eastern side of the 70 Acres. This fence had previously been cut in numerous places and was in poor condition. With funding provided



by the SoSJ, this fence was refurbished. Two gates were also installed, so these can be used in future to allow access to the 70 Acres from the eastern side. The repair of these fences helps to improve safety in the area.

- ✓ **Traffic Management Issues.** DDRA volunteers have been working with the SoSJ and Main Roads Western Australia (MRWA) to help address some key issues. These issues include the provision of speed signage on roads within the Darling Downs Equestrian Estate (DDEE), implementing a Pegasus crossing on Masters Road, and creating a noise/safety wall to separate the Comic Loop South trail from the expanded Thomas Road. Each of these measures will be important in ensuring safety for riders and drivers. However, MRWA has been unwilling to provide the requested support at this stage. As these matters will be very important for future safety in the area, the DDRA will continue to lobby stakeholders.
- ✓ **New Tractor.** The old DDRA tractor was becoming unsafe and could not support the wide range of necessary tasks. Consequently, in January 2025, the SoSJ provided the funding to purchase a new DDRA tractor. New implements (including a 4-in-1 bucket, mulch bucket, forks and grapple) were also sourced to make the tractor much more usable. Since its arrival, the new DDRA tractor has been used extensively to conduct earthworks, shift fallen trees/bushes/branches, refurbish jumps, repair trail surfaces, and many other tasks. The new tractor has, therefore, been invaluable in helping the DDRA achieve many of the other tasks listed in this Annual Report. The DDRA Committee would like to thank the SoSJ for funding the new tractor and implements so our volunteers can provide better service to the community.
- ✓ **Mulching.** A couple of years ago, a decision was made to limit the burning of dead/fallen vegetation in the DDEP. Since then, the SoSJ has been responsible for mulching the dead vegetation collected by the DDRA volunteers. As a result of this effort, many tonnes of mulch have been provided. DDRA volunteers continue to spread this to help reduce fire risks and optimise the growth of the new native trees and shrubs.
- ✓ **Facilities Maintenance and upgrades.** DDRA volunteers have also conducted maintenance of equipment, arenas, and facilities within the DDEP. This volunteer effort has helped minimise maintenance costs, so available funds can be applied to improve the area and facilities more effectively.
- ✓ **Cross-Country Jumps.** As a part of Workstream 10, our volunteers have been installing new jumps and refurbishing old ones. For example, at the time of writing this report, new roll-top jumps have been installed, the old box jump has been replaced (see the picture to the right), and the project to completely replace the tyre jump is nearly completed. The remaining jumps throughout the DDEP will be addressed as a part of this workstream. The DDRA would like to thank Sean Lowry for his design advice on the jumps. We would also like to thank Kevin Cox for his assistance in digging the tyre jump ditches (see this [Facebook Post](#)). Most importantly, the DDRA Committee thanks Ross Stewart and Tristan Merrick, from Merrick's Maintenance (see this [Facebook Post](#)), who have provided their expertise, time and equipment to help us create these jumps effectively.
- ✓ **Other Jumps.** The community demonstrated significant demand to provide additional jumps in the arenas. Consequently, the DDRA purchased and provided cavalettis. We also procured 16 jump wings (donated by Peter Benson), and Gosnells Riding and Pony Club also donated the required jump poles. The Committee would also like to thank Daryl Vale for his assistance in collecting and delivering the jump poles. These jump facilities are being deployed as part of the ongoing refurbishment of the 70 Acres arenas.
- ✓ **Upgrades of the DDRA shed.** A lot of work has been done in the DDRA shed to make it safer and more usable. These developments have included adding shelving that makes it easier for the different implements to be fitted on the front-end loader for the tractor.



- ✓ **New Information signage.** New information signage has been provided at key access points within the 70 Acres. These signs provide clear guidance on safety and usage issues. It is recommended that people using the area read this information carefully and apply it to make the area safer for everyone (see this [Facebook Post](#)).
- ✓ **Flooding and Drainage.** During the winter of 2024, significant flooding problems were identified in the eastern part of the DDEE, which were caused by changes to the drainage associated with the new rail line extension to Byford. The DDRA liaised with stakeholders to help identify solutions to this problem, and some steps were implemented. However, in August 2025, it was clear that the steps taken were insufficient to alleviate the flooding problems. The DDRA continues to liaise with pertinent parties to help ensure these problems can be addressed effectively.
- ✓ **Trail Signage.** Grant funding for the trail signage project outlined in the DDRA Strategic Development Plan (SDP) has been procured. Some of the funding has already been forthcoming from Bendigo Bank. However, at the time of writing this report, the funding from the State Government had yet to be received. Once the funding is received, Phases 1 and 2 of the project will be implemented, as outlined in the [project plan](#). The DDRA would like to thank Bendigo Bank and the State Government for supporting this important project. In particular, the Committee wish to thank Mr Hugh Jones (MLA), the Member for Darling Range, for his ongoing assistance.

All of this work would not have been achievable without the help of our wonderful volunteers. In particular, the Committee would like to thank stalwarts such as David Ransom, Eric Chabros, Peter Cappendell, Sue Gilbert, Pam Hilliard, Terry Mateljan, Adam Kestel, Eugenie Kestel, Ian Stanley, Wendy Stanley, Brian Vale, Robyn Vale, Charlotte Boyes, Emily Dagnall, Carol Fawcett, Mal Fawcett, Mark Taylor, Amanda Smith, Mal Smith, Matt Emery, Dave Emery, Andrew Smith, Phil Petricevich, and Jerome Donders. We would also like to thank the many other volunteers who have provided their support during the various busy bees. Without this type of community assistance, it would be impossible to maintain the DDEP effectively and make the area more usable for the many people who use these facilities.

The Committee would also like to thank the SoSJ for their ongoing support. Firstly, the DDRA could not assist the community without the funds provided by the SoSJ. More importantly, the supportive staff at the Shire help us achieve our common goals, as illustrated by the abovementioned examples.

The DDRA has also been gaining the support of various sponsors through advertising on the web page. This web page (<https://www.ddra.org.au/business-directories>) provides a useful place 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