

Darling Downs Residents Association (DDRA) Committee's Report - 2023/24



The Darling Downs Residents Association has implemented many improvements over the last year, so this has been another busy period for our volunteers. The volunteer work required to achieve these outcomes equates to more than 2,161 hours of effort in the 2023/24 Financial Year (FY). Key achievements over the last year include:

- ✓ **Trails Maintenance.** A lot of work has been done over the last year to maintain and improve the trails. For example, thin surface areas on the slow track were significantly refurbished by adding more sand to make this track safer and more usable. This task is ongoing. Additionally, the DDRA developed a business case for the Shire to refurbish trails in the 70 Acres and other important sections of the Darling Downs Equestrian Park (DDEP) network. This work should be completed during the 24/25 FY.

- ✓ **Rest area.** Old and unusable tables and seating in the DDEP are being replaced with new ones. During this FY, six new cement plinths were installed to fit the new picnic tables. The first pair of new tables is expected to be fitted early in the 24/25 FY. Therefore, a new table will be placed on the plinths near the southern and northern arenas. Refurbished wooden tables will also be installed on the plinths at the northeastern corner of Birriga Loop and the southwestern corner of the Bernborough trails. The DDRA Committee would like to thank the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale (SoSJ) for their assistance in achieving these objectives. Further tables will be sourced once funding is available.

- ✓ **Native tree/bushes planting.** Early in this last FY, 2,100 native trees and bushes were planted to help replace dead vegetation and fill important gaps in foliage barriers within the DDEP. Unfortunately, many trees and bushes have died over the last hot/dry summer. The problem would have been worse if the SoSJ had not watered the new plants. The DDRA Committee would, therefore, like to thank the SoSJ for this effort. As so many trees and bushes had died during the summer, the DDRA approached MetCONNx and asked them to provide more native plants, fertiliser and Mineral Magic. The Mineral Magic has been used to reduce the need for watering. Thanks to the generosity of MetCONNx, a further 616 native trees and bushes were planted on 13 July 2024. MetCONNx volunteers also helped with the planting and provided a wonderful barbeque to thank the volunteers. The Committee thanks MetCONNx for their assistance on behalf of our user community. This planting makes the area more usable for everyone and helps ensure the environment is better for native fauna.


- ✓ **Maintaining the Area.** Volunteers have provided hundreds of hours of support to keep the DDEP clear of fallen trees/branches and by mowing the grass. The DDRA Committee would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this effort. Your support is very much appreciated. You are helping to make the area safer and more usable for everyone.

- ✓ **Rapid Response to Problems.** The DDRA has implemented a system to quickly respond to problems like fallen trees/branches blocking trails. By applying this approach our volunteers have been able to respond quickly to clear the tracks so everyone can use them. The key is that people report problems quickly through the DDRA Facebook group so our volunteers can address the issues in appropriately short timeframes.


- ✓ **Widening Crossovers.** After the problem was brought to their attention by the DDRA, Shire staff widened two key crossovers in the DDEP. These crossovers are located on the northeastern corner of Comic Loop and at the northern junction of the Gloaming trail. If you are unsure where these are located, a map of the DDEP is provided at this link: [Bridle Trails -Walking, Running, Cycling | DDRA](#). Many thanks to the Shire staff, who have made these crossovers much safer for riders and authorised vehicles.



- ✓ **Expanding the area under management.** During the 2023/24 FY, the DDRA took more areas of the trail network under management. For example, the Kentucky Access and most of the Thomas West trails have now been cleared and are under more consistent maintenance.



- ✓ **Facilities Maintenance and upgrades.** DDRA volunteers have spent a great deal of time over the year maintaining and repairing fences, gates and other facilities. In particular, the work in the southern arena and the fitment of gates there is designed to make the arena safer to use, and easier to maintain, in the future.

- ✓ **Rider-friendly gates and mounting blocks.** The DDRA has fitted many gates in the DDEP with rider-friendly latches so that people can remain mounted while going through the gates. New mounting blocks were also purchased and distributed to the most needed areas.



- ✓ **New jumps.** The DDRA purchased new cavalettis and roll-top jumps for use in the 70 Acres. This purchase forms a part of a larger project to refurbish many of the jumps in the DDEP. This work will be ongoing during the 2024/25 FY.

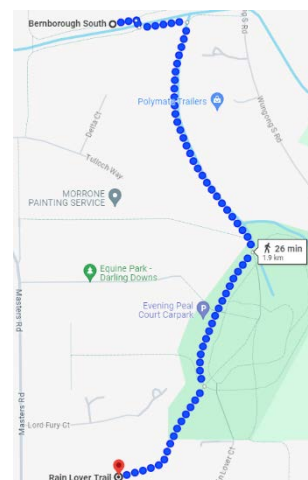


- ✓ **Upgrade of the shed.** The DDRA shed had a new cement floor installed, thanks to funding provided by the SoSJ. Additionally, our volunteers did a lot of work to make the shed more usable and safer. These upgrades mean the DDRA equipment can be maintained and utilised more effectively.

- ✓ **New Safety signage.** In line with recommendations provided by the DDRA, new safety signage has been installed in key locations within the DDEP. These signs will help to ensure that unauthorised motor vehicles and motorcycles do not enter the area and create dangers for horses and riders. Clear guidance on the use of the area has also been provided on the information sign in the Evening Peal carpark, and it is expected that this advisory signage will also be fitted in other areas of the DDEP over the forthcoming FY.



- ✓ **Trail Names in Mapping Tools.** To help people navigate the trail network more effectively, DDRA volunteers have amended Google Maps and Apple Maps so the trail names are shown. You can use this information to find your location on the trails by GPS and also use these to plan your route to your destination by using the trails (as shown in the example to the right).



- ✓ **Trail Signage.** DDRA volunteers are well-advanced in a project to provide clear trail signage. As the planning for this project is mostly completed, a comprehensive network of trail signs is expected to be implemented during the 2024/25FY.

- ✓ **Responding to the Thomas Road Upgrade.** DDRA representatives have been liaising with Main Roads and Mr Hugh Jones, MLA, Member for Darling Range, to try to reduce the negative impact of the Thomas Road upgrade on the DDEP and the Darling Downs area. Additional information on the issues is provided at this link: <https://www.ddra.org.au/proposed-noise-wall>.

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, Amanda Smith, Pip Schupp, Pam Hilliard, Terry Mateljan, Pam Mateljan, Peter Cappendell, Sue Giblett, Eric Chabros, Ian Stanley, Penny Ellis, Wendy Stanley, Rodney Eden-Street, Carol Fawcett, Mal Smith, Matt Emery, Dave Emery, Andrew Smith, and Jerome Donders.

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

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 or removing other chairs/tables in the 70 Acres, creating more horse-friendly gates, adding more safety fencing, fitting a drip watering system for the new trees/bushes, providing a visual barrier on the eastern side of the slow track, adding a water jump/crossover on the Birriga drain, refurbishing more of the trails, planting more native vegetation, 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 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