



The Riesling Trail

Every season, another reason

Riesling Trail Management Committee Chairman's report, AGM, 12 November, 2015

I present my Chairman's report for the past year with a great deal of pride. I am proud of what this Committee and volunteers have achieved in the last 12 months, but am also very proud of the many positive responses we get about the Trail.

As I have reported previously – the number of users of the Riesling Trail continues to grow – total Traker readings are now set to exceed 50,000 this year for the first time up from 44,000 three years ago. This equates to approx. 25,000 users a year. Of these we estimate half are visitors to the district. Hence, the Trail is of great economic and social value to the region.

As somewhat of a surprise, we have had 3 very special mentions this year. The first was an Award of Excellence from Trip Advisor, based on the very high percentage of positive comments about the Trail. The second was the number 1 ranking by the Qantas Australia Way magazine for the best regional attractions “off the beaten track”. The third was making the list of the top 10 bike-friendly wine trails in the world, by the UK Guardian newspaper. I should be quick to say that we did not apply for or lobby for any of these awards. Such recognition is the result of the great work of many dedicated people who help to make the Riesling Trail such an iconic attraction. This includes of course the Management Committee and volunteers but also the wider Clare Valley community who provide accommodation and other facilities to our many visitors as well as the South Australian Government, through the Office for Recreation and Sport who provide on-going financial support. Our aim must be to continue to maintain, or where necessary, improve the Riesling Trail for all users.

Management Committee

As mentioned in previous AGMs much of the activities of the Committee are at the sub-committee level. These subcommittees also include other people not on the main Committee. The two main subcommittees are Marketing and Maintenance. The other subcommittees (Amenities & signage, Art & Loops) meet less often.

Marketing and membership

The Marketing subcommittee (led by Mark Hill and with administrative support from Monica Trengove) has greatly improved our income as well as publicity of the Trail. We now have a five tiered membership structure:

- **Business Partners:** These businesses provide a significant annual contribution (of \$500/year) and receive recognition in Newsletters, at the Lennon Street Trailhead and on signs along the Trail. These signs provide useful information to visitors about the location, opening hours and contact details for

these supporting businesses. There are currently 21 businesses who are Business Partners.

- Business Friends: These businesses provide an annual contribution (of \$150/year) and receive recognition at the Lennon Street Trailhead. Currently, there are 49 Business friends.
- Honorary Business Friends: These businesses have donated significant time or facilities to projects on the Riesling Trail. These are also listed at the Lennon Street Trailhead.
- Friends of the Riesling Trail: There is now a life membership option (Friends Forever) for \$400 for anyone not wanting to renew their subscription each year. Of the 70 Riesling Trail Friends, 30 are Friends Forever.
- Honorary Friends Forever: These are life memberships in recognition of outstanding service to the Riesling Trail.

We thank all these businesses and individuals for their financial support for the Riesling Trail. We need, however, to continue to build our membership numbers, especially Riesling Trail Friends. This gives us a strong base for any project work and on-going management of the Riesling Trail.

There is no doubt that the increase in Trail users is due in part to the increase in the publicity about the Riesling Trail by Monica Trengove. This includes the website and Facebook as well as four Newsletters a year. The latest count is that we have reached 800 Facebook friends!

The paving brick fund raising project has been very successful and over many working bees, the pavers were put in place. Special thanks must go to Murph Sims who voluntarily supervised the brick paving. We have since received orders for another 25 paving bricks, which we put in place last weekend.

Another fundraiser this year is the "I've sampled the Riesling Trail" stickers. So far 2,000 of these have been distributed through local community outlets.

Maintenance

As mentioned previously, maintaining the Trail surface and immediate environment in a very good condition is critical to the on-going popularity of the Trail. There are many hundreds of hours put in by volunteers for work such as pruning, minor repairs and leaf litter clean-ups. Larger jobs, such as Trail or bridge repairs, done by contractors, is funded from an annual grant from the Office for Recreation and Sport. A 600m section of the Trail from Greenwood Park Road to Mulkiri Road was rebuilt this year by Gary Sims of Clare Quarry. Gary also graded the edges of the Trail all the way from Greenwood Park Road back to Clare, improving greatly the drainage along the edge of the Trail.

You may have heard that we were successful in getting a major grant (of \$189,000) from the SA Government for an upgrade of the Trail, from Auburn to Clare. As well, the Riesling Trail Committee will contribute \$20,000, and the Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council \$11,000 (for drainage pipes). This work will be done by Clare Quarry and will start in autumn next year and will be completed in spring 2017.

Amenities and signage

We have put in extra signs to direct people to the Trail and also to other facilities, such as toilets. As well, the Trail head signs (showing the Trail and nearby

attractions and amenities) at Auburn, Watervale, Sevenhill and Clare have been updated. On our list of projects for the next 12 months is to install detailed town maps next to the Trail at Auburn, Watervale and Clare.

The picnic table at the Lennon Street park in Clare now has a very solid roof as a welcome shelter from the rain or sun. The material for this shelter was paid for from Riesling Trail funds and the installation generously donated by SJM Carpentry.

A photographic history of the railway from Auburn to Clare is near completion. This will be installed on metal panels at the Lennon Street park. Special thanks to Sara Twigg-Patterson and Helen Perry for putting this together.

Loops

At long last I am pleased to report that the original plan to start the Riesling Trail at Mt Horrocks winery in Auburn and connect onto the existing Trail north of Auburn has some momentum. This includes building a bridge across the Wakefield River, on the site of the previous bridge. This will make it much safer and less confusing for people to get onto the Riesling Trail from Auburn than at present.

I must especially thank Jeffrey Grosset for his support for this project. This will be a major project and a significant cost, but the end result will be great for the Trail and an icon for the region.

Art along the Riesling Trail

We regularly get comments that the Barinia end “needs something”. These ideas need to be developed further so what we put there is appealing, doesn’t need a lot of on-going maintenance and has local support.

Also, we currently have \$4,000 in our account from the Clare Valley Winemakers for an artwork. This project needs a concept, leader and location (Watervale?).

Acknowledgements

There are many I need to thank for support over the past 12 months. In particular

- Peter Wood for his great work as Treasurer and for willing assistance with any job (never too big or too small) for the Trail.
- Mark Hill for his great leadership with the Marketing Subcommittee and wise guidance throughout the year.
- To our very capable Secretary, Chris Cootes, and the Management Committee for their work during the year. I would especially like to thank Ryves Hawker for his valuable contribution over many years.
- To Monica Trengove for her great work in publicising the Trail and managing memberships and helping with fundraising projects.
- To Brenton Hall and others at the Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council for excellent cooperation with projects along the Trail.
- To Kate Matchett and Anthony Nitschke with the Dept. of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure and also Office for Recreation & Sport for on-going support.
- To the many volunteers and local businesses who have willingly helped with Riesling Trail projects. In particular, Sam McDonald (SJM Carpentry) for putting up the Lennon Street shelter, and also Andrew Boylan (Mid North Pest & Weed Control) for volunteering to control weeds along the northern section and Andre Sabeeney (Crop Care) for supplying chemicals for this work.
- To Riesling Trail Friends for their on-going support for the Trail.

Allan Mayfield, Chairman, Riesling Trail Management Committee