

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

16 October 2012

Dear Member

I'm delighted to provide the fifth annual President's Report, outlining the activities and achievements of your Association over the past 12 months.

The RTRA continues to punch above its weight in terms of its effectiveness as an advocacy group and it's only when we take the time to compare what we have now with what we had (or didn't have!) five years ago that we truly appreciate how far we have come.

Our mission is to ensure a sustainable future for recreational trail and quad bike riding. To do that we need to ensure that we have land to ride on. We need to keep the land we've got and open up new areas to meet local demand.

We need to ensure that land managers recognise that not everyone wants to race motocross or compete in enduros. That not everyone wants to ride around and around in circles all day and that while some people see trail riding as something they do with their mates, others also see it as something they do with their families.

Most importantly we need to ensure that we trail riders are not just left with the dregs after the walkers and horse riders and mountain bikers have taken their pick of the best trails and areas.

So we've been working hard to educate land managers and regulators about the diversity of the trail riding experience. Of the health and economic benefits. Of the value that comes from providing our kids with a way of combining family time, outdoor activity, adventure and vehicle control skill building.

And we've also been working to educate riders about the critical role that riders play in looking after the environment so that we *can* continue to access our favourite trails and areas.

So what have we achieved over the past 12 months?

Membership

As of today we have 1,158 family memberships representing 2,351 riders.

While this is a useful number we have a long, long way to go. There are an estimated 50,000 trail and quad bikes in Western Australia, so the RTRA is working on behalf of many times the number of members it has.

I wish I could say that all of the members on our database were fully paid up - the additional revenue would make a huge difference to the work we can do. However as in previous years not all of these members are fully financial.

But even more important than the revenue is the additional lobbying power that more members gives us. So membership attraction and retention remains one of our most pressing management issues and will be receiving increasing attention in the year ahead.

Political Recognition

We continue to spread our influence in State Parliament by developing positive relationships with members of both sides of politics.

The members for Collie-Preston, Darling Range, Maylands, Murray and Kwinana are among those who have been vocal in their support for the State Trail Bike Strategy.

At the Ministerial level, the Hon Terry Waldron (Nat) and now the Treasurer, the Hon Troy Buswell (Lib) have pledged support.

With just a few months to go before the State Election we will be identifying those politicians who are most supportive of our cause - and those who are not.

We remain optimistic that we will see a major announcement coming from the government as part of pre-election campaigning.

Advocacy

Last year we were pleased to report that as a result of our advocacy work a key exclusion clause was dropped from the Lotterywest Trails Grant application documentation.

We reported that this cleared the way for motorised trails projects to apply for grant funding on an equal footing with other trails users.

This year we applied for grant funding to re-surface the Pinjar Family Trail - essential works to bring the trail in line with its 'green' (Novice level) trail designation.

After initially being advised that our application was unsuccessful we requested that the grants committee review the decision and we are now awaiting a decision due in November.

Our advocacy work has been boosted substantially by grant funding from the Department of Sport and Recreation which has been provided via Motorcycling WA.

The funding enabled us to employ a part time project officer to progress several projects related to rider education, community liaison, volunteer management and the instigation of an Industry Forum to engage motorcycle dealers and accessory retailers in the issues and develop an industry-wide forum.

The first meeting of the Offroad Motorcycle Industry Forum was held in August and those present were clearly impressed with what the RTRA has been able to achieve.

Trails and Riding Areas

Pinjar

The Pinjar Off Road Vehicle Area continues to grow in popularity. The eastern car park is now regularly at capacity on weekends and there is often a line of small-bike traffic on the PeeWee Trail.

The 6km 'Family Trail' remains unsuitable for its purpose, however this will be resurfaced as soon as funding is approved.

Work to construct the Western car park to service the intermediate / advanced precinct should commence shortly and may be finished by Christmas. The intention is to continue to develop the Pinjar area as a model for metropolitan riding facilities. We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Department of Environment and Conservation, and in particular Shawn Debono and Steve Turner from the Swan Coastal District for their commitment to this project.

Gnangara

The 'Lexia Loop' was funded by DSR and developed as an interim trail when it was thought that all the pines in the southern area of Gnangara would be clear-felled. This trail is showing signs of regular use. Generally, however, Gnangara remains a problem that will only be solved when the entire area is clear-felled and burnt to leave us with a clean slate to work with.

Metro Road

The 16km 'Pilot Trail' opened recently and the initial feedback has been very positive. More work has been done on this in early October to address the worst of the whoops and to bring the trail into line with its 'blue' (Intermediate) difficulty level.

There is very significant future potential for this area, so the Pilot Trail is an important project from which we will learn about sustainable methods of trail construction in the specific terrain conditions.

Our thanks go to Jamie Ridley and Paul Udinga from DEC Perth Hills District for their support of this project and also to our committee member Paul Neve from Three Chillis trail design.

Kwinana

The continuing lack of interest shown by the Town of Kwinana has resulted in no improvements to this area over the past twelve months. Investigations into a replacement site south of the river are continuing.

York

The RTRA has not had any direct involvement in the upgrading of the York Off Road Vehicle Area but I would like to record our appreciation, on behalf of the users of that facility, to the local Ranger, Matt Sharpe for his efforts.

Commercial Ride Parks

The RTRA acknowledges and supports the efforts of Western Australia's commercial ride park operators, West Coast Trail Bike Park, West MotoPark and Dir Riders' Heaven.

These operators provide facilities that could never be possible on public lands and they do so with private funding and an enormous amount of personal effort.

The RTRA encourages members to support these facilities.

Public Trails

Western Australia has a huge inventory of public trails that are open and available to registered bikes and licensed riders. The RTRA is committed to preserving our access to these trails by vigorously defending any attempts to exclude motorised access and by educating riders on minimal impact techniques to better protect the trails and the surrounding environment.

Member Communications

The RTRA Web Site and eNewsletter continue to keep riders up to date with the activities of the Association, and also with useful information and news of other influences that affect trail bike riding in WA.

Recently we launched our new Facebook page at www.rtra.asn.au/facebook and we anticipate that this form of communication will assume ever greater importance in the future.

Education, Awareness and Attitude Shift

To create a sustainable future for trail bike riding we must be effective in encouraging riders to take a responsible attitude to the environment and other trails users.

We also need to help non-riders understand what it is that we do and why we are so passionate about it.

Our Minimal Impact Riding Program continues to drip-feed positive messages to help riders understand how they can protect the environment without spoiling their fun.

We are also continuing to engage with community groups to present trail and quad bike riding in a positive light and to break down some of the negative stereotypes that still exist.

The Committee

We have had a few changes to our Committee this year, having welcomed Paul Neve, David Bylund and Henry Vurens van Es to the 2011 Committee.

Simon Mykolajenko took an extended leave of absence for his 'Wrong Way Round' world trip, Brett Soltoggio resigned from the Committee due to pressures of work and riding multi-day and interstate quad events, and we recruited Howard Hindley as new Treasurer, replacing founding Treasurer, George Lowry.

The remaining Committee members are all standing for re-nomination this year, with the exception of Brett Grandin and George Lowry. We thank them both for their contribution, especially George who was one of the founding Committee over five years ago and has been an active participant ever since.

The RTRA would not be able to operate without the input and enthusiasm of the Committee. On behalf of all members, and from my personal perspective, I thank you all for your contribution.

Key Challenges for the next 12 months

As always there are lots of challenges ahead. Here are the ones that I believe are the most significant:

- Ensuring that the State Trail Bike Strategy doesn't get watered down or the recommendations bastardised for political expediency
- Protecting areas like Pinjar from the unthinking, uncaring minority that could ruin things for everyone.
- Building on the encouraging start to the Off Road Motorcycle Industry Forum to secure real engagement with manufacturers and retailers
- Developing new project funding sources and ensuring that trail bike riders are considered on an equal basis with other trails users.
- Identify and commence planning work on an off-road vehicle area to service the southern suburbs
- Implement and manage our Volunteer Management program to better utilise the skills of our members
- Continue to attract new members and increase our proportion of renewals.

On a final note, after our first 5 years and the maturing of the RTRA - we thought it was time for a bit of a make over. The branding of the RTRA has had to balance the public perception (often negative) of trail bikes, with the need to attract rider members. We felt it was time for a logo that better represented who we are and what we do as riders.

So tonight we would like to unveil the new logo for the RTRA. In particular I would like to thank our committee member Dave Bylund who patiently worked through the process, viewed dozens of potential designs and translated our requirements for the designer. I am sure you agree with us that this is a great new design, that says the right things and we will gradually roll this out across our materials.



I would like to close by thanking all those members who have supported the Association by contributing to surveys and petitions, attending public meetings and workshops, contributing time to our initiatives and generally spreading the word to other riders about the work of the Association. Thank you all.

Your association is now receiving international recognition for the work that we do on behalf of recreational trail and quad bike riders. With the State Election looming the next 12 months could well be the most significant period yet.

