



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

27 October 2015

Dear Member

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

The past year has been a busy one, and we've been juggling quite a wide range of projects. Some of those projects have had visible outcomes, while others are laying groundwork and building support for future initiatives.

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 the growing demand.

Trail riding is about the freedom to explore, but with that comes a responsibility to look after the land on which we ride. So our advocacy work has to be as much aimed at the riders we represent as it is towards land managers and regulators.

We're now at a really interesting point in this journey. While mountain bikes continue to get the most attention, there appears to be a sense of entitlement creeping in amongst some mountain bike riders, and we are starting to hear some grumbings from land managers and trail users about 'those bloody mountain bikes'.

So it's more important than ever that we trail and quad bike riders be conscious to be good ambassadors for our activity. Nothing is more gratifying than hearing a good report from a walker or a horse rider who has had a positive encounter with trail bike riders.

This positive shift in attitudes towards trail bike riders is what the RTRA and its predecessor has been working towards for over ten years now. But the Association is just the catalyst. It's the riders like you who are delivering that message, by being respectful of the environment and courteous to other trail users. The message is clearly spreading, and I'm sure that as riders feel more welcome out there they are responding with a wave that involves more than one finger!

So what have we achieved over the past 12 months?

## Advocacy

Our first advocacy effort this year was to tackle the proposed City of Swan guidelines for riding on private property. The RTRA jumped in on this issue, calling a meeting with City of Swan to express our concerns and following up with a survey of riders that delivered around 200 responses. We used this information to prepare a detailed submission calling for major changes to the regulations.

The result was a positive one, with the City of Swan deleting several of the more onerous provisions of the guidelines such as the stipulation that only one bike at a time can be ridden, and the ban on riding bikes other than those owned by residents of the subject property.

They also changed the guidelines to reinforce that they are only applicable if noise exceeds the



EPA Guidelines and committed that they won't be used unless complaints are received.

While we can't class this one a total victory, the outcome was certainly very much better than it would have been without the RTRA's intervention.

In July we jumped in to squash a petition that had been circulated online by a disgruntled Kwinana resident. The petition called on the State Government to either close the Kwinana off road vehicle or make the RTRA accountable for maintaining the site and policing its members. After a strongly worded letter pointing out the inaccurate and defamatory statements, the author of the petition removed the references to the RTRA and stopped promoting it. The petition ended up with a grand total of eighteen signatures and nothing further was heard.

Meanwhile we have been communicating on a regular basis with the Minister for Local Government, calling on him to take action in the southern suburbs where there is such an obvious and urgent need for a facility like Pinjar. The Minister has recently contacted the CEO of the City of Kwinana and we will keep up the pressure until we get some action.

Our ongoing dialogue with the Minister's office is covering an ever broader agenda. The composition of the Off Road Vehicle Advisory Committee, and the application of funds from the Off Road Vehicles Trust account are two of the main discussion points.

We continue to have a voice on the Trails Reference Group where high level strategic decisions about trails are made, and we remain active in our involvement with Outdoors WA and the Outdoors October campaign. For the first time video of typical recreational trail bike riding was incorporated into a rolling video of outdoor activities which featured at the recent State Trails and Outdoors Conference.

Last week we had a positive meeting with the Director of Policy at the Department of Local Government. We put it that if we can form a more collaborative relationship with the Department, such as we enjoy with Parks and Wildlife and Sport and Recreation, we can achieve some positive outcomes together. It's too early to predict how this will translate into action within the Department but we're confident that if we can change the attitudes at the top then the officers further down the chain who have been less than cooperative will take a fresh look at things.

## Trails and Riding Areas

There's been plenty of action around trails and riding areas. Here's a quick rundown:

### Pinjar

The Pinjar Motorcycle Area is going from strength to strength. The car park, especially on the eastern or 'Family' side is often at capacity on weekends and the comments from parents are extremely positive.

We are still working to get a more frequent maintenance regime going, but the work undertaken over the past few weeks has been very significant.

The Short n Curly practice MX track was ripped with a D6 dozer, then most of the loose rocks were swept off before a generous serving of prime quality clay was laid down. The entire track was then shaped by our trail building artisan and RTRA Committee member Paul Neve. The result is a vastly improved ride and a more durable surface.

The PeeWee Trail also got attention, with more drainage sumps on the insides of corners to help



alleviate the puddle problem. Maybe the kids won't appreciate the difference, but the parents who have to wash their muddy riding gear probably will!

And just last week the Family Trail got its turn, with more quality clay being used to fill the holes and more scraping and shaping by Paul to bring this green rated trail up to primo condition.

DPaW will be installing signage shelters soon, with more information for people new to the area. And we are working on creating a 'Welcome to Pinjar' video to help people understand how things work around here – including the need to go slow on the car park roads (or preferably use the connector loop instead).

Our Pinjar Maintenance Mornings continue to be successful. There are always people willing to help pick up litter and handing out some BBQ snaggers is a great way for the RTRA and DPaW to talk to parents and riders about the area.

We will shortly commence the process of requesting an expansion of the area. The triangle of land bounded by Hopkins and Wesco Roads has been in our sights for some time, and with plans progressing to expand Barbagallo Raceway which would remove part of the South Loop, the time is right to crank this up.

We will be looking for input from riders as to what type of riding experience best suits this new area, so if you want to have a say you can register your interest on the Pinjar page of the RTRA web site.

Another idea we have is to create a little circuit for absolute beginners. We see little kids going around that first loop of the PeeWee trail, but there are usually other riders on the trail, which can be intimidating for the newbies and not ideal if dad wants to run in front or behind.

Pinjar is our proof that the concept of free, permanently open, public areas can work. I'd like to thank everyone who uses the area responsibly and especially those people who take an active role in caring for the area. And we would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognise the ongoing commitment from DPaW - both financially and operationally. Without this great partnership we would not have gotten very far at all. A successful Pinjar makes it a whole lot easier to get more such areas.

## **York**

Another success story, but not one that the RTRA can claim as its own. We were able to get involved this year, following an approach by an RTRA member who lives locally and wanted to see improvements made.

We were pleased to be able to support Michael Jongen in his approach to the York Council, meeting on site with the Council's Works Manager and arranging for immediate maintenance works. Again, Paul Neve's trail artistry was combined with heavier machinery provided by the Council and the result was a much improved circuit.

The next stage will be to seek funding to develop a Master Plan for the area so that the potential of this facility can be realised.

## **Gnangara**

The roadworks on Gnangara Road will make the entry and exit a lot safer, and a short term bonus is a limestone-sealed parking area. No further development work has happened at Gnangara and



we have no immediate plans for the area.

### **Metro Road**

We've had one cleanup day at Metro Road since the last AGM and it seems that most of the riders who use the area are cleaning up after themselves – and probably cleaning up for others as well.

The Pilot Trail is holding up well – particularly the new sections of single-trail that were created. All signage was replaced in January this year.

The big news here is that Parks and Wildlife have provided us with funding to go towards the development of a Master Plan for the area. We are currently looking to raise the balance and have put together a steering committee to guide the development of the Master Plan.

The Shire of Beverley have provided a letter of support and we are in discussions with the Shires of Brookton and Wandering for their support as well.

With a total potential area of around 30,000 Ha, there is a great opportunity to create something incredible in this area. We will keep members up to date with progress and opportunities to have input into the concept plans.

### **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.

The area bounded by Office Road and Mandurah Road still looks like an attractive option but all attempts to use this future industrial land, even temporarily, have been unsuccessful. Meanwhile it continues to be used extensively in an unmanaged way.

As mentioned earlier, we are turning up the heat with the Minister and local councils in the area. I know we've said this in previous years but we remain optimistic about an eventual solution in this area.

### **Serpentine-Jarrahdale**

Earlier this year we were approached to participate in a project, initiated by the Shire Ranger, to identify an area within the Serpentine-Jarrahdale Shire. A relatively small parcel of land has been identified as suitable for a venue that is larger than York but smaller than Pinjar. The good news is that the S-J Shire is now supportive of this and negotiations with DPaW are continuing.

### **Bancell Brook**

This is an area within newly de-proclaimed water catchment that has been identified as having potential for the development of trail bike trails. Its proximity to Logue Brook could make it attractive for a camping / riding combination, but it would be restricted to road registered vehicles.

### **Manjimup**

Manjimup has long been on our radar and we have had a few exploratory conversations with local



stakeholders. The approach by Manjimup Council to explore the opportunity of being Australia's first Trail Bike Trail Hub really got us excited, and when Collin Jennings and I presented to the Council we were delighted by the positive response. The idea of a trail hub is a town or centre that is positively welcoming of the activity and provides services to entice people to visit and spend time there while enjoying their trail-based activity.

The potential for Manjimup is for a network of trails of different styles, including family-oriented trails, plus trail bike friendly accommodation and other related services.

Manjimup Council has allocated funding for the first stage of a Master Plan, and we are currently negotiating with the Department of Local Government for the balance of the funding needed. We have other funding options if necessary, so we are very confident that we will be able to proceed to the next stage.

### **Commercial Ride Parks**

While our focus has been on creating more free, public areas in or close to the metropolitan area, the RTRA also acknowledges and supports the efforts of Western Australia's commercial ride park operators, West Coast Trail Bike Park, West MotoPark, the Duck's Nuts and Dirt Riders' Heaven.

These operators provide facilities such as camping and a level of track maintenance that could never be possible on public land. 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.

## **Membership**

As of today we have attracted nearly 1,400 families to join the RTRA representing around 2,500 riders.

While this is a useful number we have a long, long way to go. We are still only talking to a small proportion of the estimated 50,000 trail and quad bikes in Western Australia, so we're actually working on behalf of many times the number of members we have.

The number of members on our database who are currently financial has declined slightly since this time last year. This is a concern, as we could use the additional revenue that financial membership brings and we feel we have demonstrated real value to Western Australian riders. Our retailer support program should help drive new membership, and we have not yet progressed the membership drive in the southern suburbs. Both of these initiatives should both increase our membership base and give us the additional lobbying power we need to get things happening south of the river.



## 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.

Our Facebook page at [www.rtra.asn.au/facebook](http://www.rtra.asn.au/facebook) now has over 3,400 'Likes', ranking it ahead of the Munda Bidli (2,550), Bibbulmun Track (3,227) and WAMBA (2,800) pages. We will continue to develop this page, but will always give advanced notice to financial RTRA members!

The dedicated Pinjar Motorcycle Area Facebook page has over 2,900 'Likes'

## 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 has been drip-feeding positive messages to help riders understand how they can protect the environment without spoiling their fun. This program is about to get ratcheted up another notch. The recent Environment Survey attracted 345 responses, and we will be following up with focus groups to refine the messages. The key themes of the program have been defined as Fire, Erosion, Noise and Dieback (FEND).

We have continued the marketing of our 'So Where Can I Ride' booklet to local councils. The booklets have been very well received and we are now getting repeat orders from original customers..

Later this week we will again be exhibiting at the Perth Motorcycle Show. We have a double size booth and we'll be talking with interested riders and families, signing up new members and distributing hundreds of booklets, ride park brochures, information kits and stickers.

## Ride Leaders Forum

Ride leaders have a special responsibility to the following riders and to the environment. A good ride leader can make the difference between a great rider and a disaster, and with so much of our riding done in remote areas there is real value in building the skills of those who take on the ride leader role.

The proposed RTRA Ride Leaders' forum will enable experienced leaders to pass on tips and tales to new or would-be leaders, and will enable us to target sessions on Wilderness First Aid, risk management and incident response best practices. We'll have more information on this program soon.

## Retailer Support Program

After having this on our to-do list we have now developed a program that targets motorcycle retailers and accessory vendors, providing them with information kits and free 12 month membership to purchasers of new offroad motorcycles.



The program was off to a good start, but unfortunately the program coordinator, Simon Mykolajenko, was unable to continue with the engagement of retailers due to a serious heart problem (which I am happy to report has responded to surgery).

This highlights the ongoing issue of resourcing of the various RTRA projects. We are ambitious in our planning and certainly punch well above our weight, but can be vulnerable to the limitation of the number of people who are willing and available to assist.

Despite this setback we have received positive feedback from the dealers involved so we will continue to roll out this program as fast as possible.

## The Committee

And on the subject of the people who are willing and able... our Committee.

This year we welcomed Troy Speers and Angel Uruchima to the committee. They joined our Treasurer, Henry van Es, Secretary, Valerie Pretzel, Stacey Pike, Peter Otley, Simon Mykolajenko, Paul Neve and Paul Knight.

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.

I would particularly like to mention Simon Mykolajenko who has temporarily resigned from the Committee while he recovers from heart surgery. Simon was instrumental in getting the RTRA's predecessor, WATARC, off the ground over ten years ago and has been a significant contributor to the management committee over the past five years. Simon is passionate, knowledgeable and personable and we all wish him a speedy recovery and hope he will re-join us soon.

## 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:

- Master Planning for the Metro Road Regional Trail bike precinct
- Secure funding and complete Manjimup Trails Hub planning Stage 1
- Identifying one or more suitable locations for a Pinjar style family-friendly facility south of the river
- Stay close to the mountain bike master planning process in the South West and ensure that trail bike riders have adequate voice in the planning process.
- Building on the encouraging start to the Retailer Supporter Program to secure real engagement with manufacturers and retailers
- Continue to attract new members and increase our proportion of renewals.
- Get a precedent project with access to funding from both Lottery West trails grants and the Off Road Vehicles Account.
- MIRP

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



Your association continues to receive recognition for the work that we do on behalf of recreational trail and quad bike riders. We have some excellent runs on the board and we aim to step up our momentum in the year ahead.