



GOLDEN VALLEY TREE PARK
— B A L I N G U P —

2016-17 ANNUAL REPORT

I proudly present my second and the 37th Annual Report, to a hard-working Golden Valley Tree Park Management Committee and have pleasure in reporting that we have had another very busy and successful year. I am glad to say that all members have made a wonderful personal and solid commitment in the past year and I thank you for this great effort. I can gladly say that you have all upheld the efforts of previous Management Committees that continue to assist Golden Valley Tree Park be a key tourism magnet for visitors to the South West.

Our popularity with the general public or visitors (our clients) has also seen a further three Facebook sites created (besides our own official site), and they tend to showcase beautiful photographs of what the Park portrays to those individuals. Who knows – we may end up with another few Facebook sites as we become known to the many visitors that come our way. The efforts of the Balingup Visitors Centre in directing tourists to the Tree Park, is acknowledged as we know that visitation to the Tree Park increases exponentially each year. According to Dept. of Parks & Wildlife (DPaW) the road counter on Olwyn's Avenue recorded about 44,199 vehicles past this point to the end of May 2017. The busiest period for spring was recorded in September 2016 (7,070). However, May (7,654) and April (5,439) are indicative of the popularity of Golden Valley and the World Collection with its showpiece of autumn colours. In fact, these two months accounted for 30% of the total visitors for the year. All visitor numbers totalling 13,093.

Again, I report that this figure is conservative as we do not count the visitors to the Australian Collection. If we are to monitor this part of the Tree Park to reflect true visitation numbers, we need further counters, either walk or vehicle types. Also, given the recent additions, I would expect numbers will increase there. Andy is currently investigating this for us.

The issue here is that we may end up by doubling our visitation numbers to the Park, as they may also go to the WC at the same time, therefore making it a tough one for DPaW to accurately count.

It is pleasing to report that the picnic area, toilets, roading, parking and landscaping have almost been completed in the Australian Collection carpark. These facilities are a great improvement for visitors to this section of the Tree Park and with the addition of the shelter, a wonderful asset. Mr Terry Leseberg has done a really good job with his construction of the shelter and toilet block. A special thanks to Pete Hicks who worked closely with Andy Sandri of Dept. of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) and Terry to complete these jobs in good time. Terry has also currently re-roofed the Gazebo in the World Collection from funds obtained by the Royalties for Region funding.

These works are all part of our Five-Year Plan that aims to improve infrastructure within our Park. We always need to stop and look to the future as to where we are heading. Are we on track to fulfilling our Tree Park objectives? Let us not lose sight of our key focus – the trees and the people interaction activities here. It is the trees and their ambient setting that bring people to the Tree Park and this should remind us of our primary function here as custodians for DPaW and the public.

Peripheral side issues always seem to take us away from this focus at our meetings, but as reported later we have identified overdue tree management issues that will be addressed in next twelve months.

I am indebted to our Local Coordinator, Chrissy Sharp, who has again worked tirelessly for the Tree Park and has made my job so much easier with her finger on the pulse, locally. Our Committee Minutes record the many jobs that Chrissy undertakes and her reports indicate how diverse and busy her job is here. She regularly attends many local community meetings representing the Tree Park, and spends many hours working out here watering the previous plantings over summer, hoeing thistles or weeding. Chrissy has also met with Lotterywest to discuss potential funding of the barbeque shelter in the World Collection. And your lovely morning teas at busy bees is worth coming over for. For another mighty effort, Chrissy, I thank you. I thought I was meant to save you some time taking over the Chair, but you seem to fill those gaps with your own busy life.

Of course, Chrissy is assisted by Andrew Thamo, who spends many hours doing the jobs others cannot do or unavailable to carry them out, such as overseeing the job on the Gazebo.

Andrew and Chrissy's lifelong commitment to the Tree Park are something special – again a wonderful effort which I recognise and thank wholeheartedly. This year volunteers contributed about 2078 hours to the Tree Park comprising at least 57 people. Our Management Committee were responsible for 1071 hours.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of our Secretary, Wendy Kurz. Wendy's Minutes are very well documented and one could not complain about

the “true and correct record” aspect of each meeting. I have also appreciated being able to run ideas past her at different times and welcome a different angle to my own thoughts. Wendy has also been a valuable member of our Management Plan sub-committee as well and assisted Chrissy with funding submissions. She has also been keeping a watching brief on the Dept. of Commerce requirements, as we need to comply with recent legislative requirements for incorporated community groups. Stay tuned on this aspect when we sort out our Management Plan and Constitution. Thank you for your efforts Wendy.

To our dedicated Treasurer, Ron Bullard, who has carried out this role for the past seven years and four of them since his illness. Thank you for a great job Ron - your legacy leaves us with a sound financial position that helps us move forward into the future.

We are indebted to your time with us Ron, and as such are happy to recognise your efforts with a donated tree in the World Collection. The Committee were unanimous in their decision to recognise your efforts in this way, testament to your efficiency, dedication and work here. Best wishes for your future mate.

Two of our main purchases in March this year were a Cox mower for \$8,500 and a heavy-duty whipper snipper for \$800. These were purchased from funds obtained from thinning the pines in 2014. The mower is only to be used by volunteers at the Park.

Mr Fizzy Vitali (a resident at the Homestead) has kindly offered to maintain the mower and keep the hours used so that servicing is kept up to date. He is also keeping the grounds of the Homestead in excellent condition so housing the mower nearby is a good move and we also record his voluntary hours as a contribution to the Park.

Both items (mower and whipper snipper) are necessary for ongoing maintenance around the Park, principally by the Merry Men.

On this note, may I commend the leadership of Pete in organising the 11 Merry Men on Wednesday evenings doing those odd jobs of fence removal, clean-ups, burning heaps or whipper snipping around the Chinampa – a job that requires regular attention. Thank you, Pete and the regular guys who assist us. Their voluntary contribution to the Tree Park amounted to about 534 hours.

Brian Martin has also put in many hours with Pete doing much of the overdue tree maintenance work in a paid capacity and their efforts with this work is much appreciated and acknowledged.

We have come to realise that we need to keep our focus and priorities on the trees – as this is what brings people to the Park. As such, tree maintenance or arboriculture will always be an ongoing job for this Committee in future. With the thinning of the eastern block of pines in 2014, we were fortunate to

accumulate funds which we dedicated to providing overdue arboriculture work in both the World and Australian Collections.

Tree audits were carried out in April (World Collection) and May (Australian Collection) to prioritise arboriculture works. This audit identified 19 urgent jobs to trees in the World Collection and 9 trees in the Australian Collection.

We identified a total of 6 jobs that were urgently required to be carried out by professional arborists (included in above).

As well, Andy, Gil and I, inspected the flooded gums (*E. rudis*) along walk tracks in the World Collection. Many trees had dead crowns caused by defoliation from insects over time and posed a serious hazard to Park users.

Arborists were quick to repair these trees, and some were removed completely. Thank you, Andy for your quick response in resolving this issue and for DPaW meeting these expenses.

One of the tasks identified in the tree audit at the Australian Collection was the clearfelling of the oil mallees, regenerated eucalypts or acacias and some thinning of the old eucalypts along Dearle's Drive. A commercial biomass market may be forthcoming from the local company WA Plantation Resources and I am meeting with Company reps in the near future. Hopefully this will provide a small income stream as well as overall improvement to these sections of the Tree Park.

We still await the formal land tenure gazettal issue with DPaW. Under the CALM Act, the gazettal aims to place us under a Reserve listed under Section s (5)(i)(h). Local staff have been most efficient in setting this up for us, but this approval presently remains bogged in head office with no outcome to date. This has been ongoing now for many years.

It has been our privilege to again work with our key partners at the Tree Park, DPaW.

We are fortunate to have Andy Sandri on our Committee to represent our interests and react to our many demands with utmost efficiency. Andy's diligence has assisted us with many of our infrastructural improvements such as the Australian Collection toilets and landscaping.

DPaW Regional Manager, Mr Bob Hagan, is thanked for recognising our request for these facilities and providing funding.

It has been a pleasure to work with Andy again this year and I offer my sincere thanks.

DPaW Ranger, Ken Ninnette, has regularly maintained the toilets in good nick and kept the rubbish bins emptied on a regular basis.

We have also had Senior Ranger, Gil Stockman attending our meetings in Andy's absence, which we appreciate as well. It is important that a DPaW rep

be present at our meetings, if possible, and I am happy to report, this has occurred this year.

Our Committee trust that we can continue with this important DPaW partnership in what appears to be difficult times for the agency, both funding and priority wise.

In regard to funding I note the following points:

1. The Balingup Small Farm Field Day Committee continues to support us with small grants and have added another \$5,000 to assist us build the shelter in the Australian Collection. We acknowledge this generous contribution.
2. There is approximately \$10,000 available to spend on arboriculture works in the Tree Park as identified by the tree audits. Hopefully this work can be achieved in the next twelve months and the Trust Account funds are spent.
3. We await the Lotterywest grant to assist with the much-needed shelter over the barbeques in the World Collection picnic site
4. We have been promised \$25,000 from our local member, Hon Mick Murray, prior to the State election, and this promise has been followed up with a letter from his office in June. I feel that Committee need to brainstorm what and how, we can use these funds for. Whether it is for paid work around the park, infrastructural improvements or moving ahead with our Five-Year Plan serious planning should ensure a successful bid for this Regional Funding source. This item will be discussed further today.
5. The Medieval Carnival raised \$1000 towards the construction of a Treehouse. Due to other priorities, we have put this back temporarily for further discussion.

The Spring Picnic was held on 15th October on a wet cold day and disappointingly a lower than normal crowd attended. This Picnic was organised by a sub-committee led by Lara and Jeremy Bos with a group of local helpers. They did an excellent job with the organisation, so to be confronted by terrible weather was not a good outcome for all involved. A total of \$3099.71 was raised which was a great outcome considering, and given the poor weather. Our Committee opted out of running the Picnic last year due to our busy work programme.

I would like to thank Lara, Jeremy and their sub-committee for a job well done.

Our patron, Mr Brian De Garis, has assisted us by providing the Sunday Times with an excellent story on the Tree Park during the year, which was a great bit of publicity for us. Thank you, Brian.

During the year it was necessary to contact our sheep manager, ‘Rooster’ Meagher. It was apparent that there were not enough sheep on the Park to keep the weeds at bay so a meeting with him aimed to increase stock numbers with the added bonus of being a bit more strategic where stock grazed. This is particularly pertinent in the Australian Collection where regeneration of weedy acacias tends to spread. This discussion also led to some areas of fencing being removed as they restricted stock access. Sheep also tend to damage the older style of gates, necessitating further maintenance issues.

There were 6 Tree sponsorships during the year to the value of \$1400, which is down on previous years. Chrissy has kindly offered to take over looking after sponsorships. We now include sponsors as Friends of the Park for twelve months.

On this note I would like to thank Wendy Ayers for her continued role of looking after the Friends of the Park (see attached list of F of P). We have adopted a streamlined system of recording new Friends of the Park, which will hopefully assist Wendy and the Treasurer in future years by having all the data on a spreadsheet. It is also important that we capture and record email addresses of Friends so that they become closer involved in Park activities such as working bees etc.

Wendy’s personal donation of postage costs in mailing out Newsletters is also acknowledged with thanks.

The Padbury Rd Dam continues to take up our time at meetings. Chrissy has been doing some wonderful liaison and much time with Water Corp, Main Roads and DPaW. I believe that we need to take a whole of government approach to assist us solve this issue. Mr Mike King and recently, Mr Don Cooper have provided us with technical knowledge to move forward. However, we need to involve our local member, Hon Mick Murray to help us. Our objective is to prevent the decommissioning of the dam so that regular water releases can be made during dry spring, summer or autumn periods and provide much needed water to assist drought proof the World Collection. To date, there is no solution yet so I will be happy to see some outcome within the next twelve months.

Our website is diligently maintained by Pam Williamson and we are often asking her for updating this. I also recognise and thank Pam for her continued assistance with this task and it typifies the commitment of Balingup volunteers that support the Tree Park.

The following species were added to the Australian Collection in 2016:

- 2 x *Ficus macrophylla* (Moreton Bay figs)
- 2 x *Backhousia citriodora* (lemon myrtle)

- 5 x *Szygium leuhmanni* (riberry)
- 5 x *Grevillea robusta* (silky oak)
- Plus, some infill planting in the Rainforest area

Thinning and pruning of the mallet section in the Australian Collection was carried out with a good turnout for the busy bee. This is starting to look great with some extra input under the watchful eye of our A/C Curator, Wayne O'Sullivan. Wayne has diligently been working away in this part of the Park for many years now and it is looking great. The regeneration of weedy species continues to be our challenge there.

During the year we had three resignations from Committee members Michelle Phillpott, Doreen Shorter and Ron Bullard. Michelle's work commitments made it difficult to get to our meetings but she brought to us the value of Facebook as a modern media source. I thank them for their interest and involvement in our Tree Park.

I also record the sad passing of Sally Vitalli one of the Tree Park Friends, a former Committee member and resident of the Homestead.

Our busy schedule has meant that we have yet to complete the Management Plan of the Tree Park. Although it is in near final draft stage, we have yet to finalise this document. I aim to have this completed in the next 12 months before I hand over the Chair to a willing recipient.

I also welcome two new members to our Committee who will bring some experience that will benefit our work here. So, welcome to Jan Helsham and Garry Hodge – I trust you have a long and enjoyable time with us.

To conclude, as we enter another year at the Tree Park, there is still a lot of work to do, and I would like to move forward on our Five-Year Plan and complete all works listed on the tree audit.

I also look forward to working with you all and think we have another busy year ahead of us.

Thank you again for your ongoing commitment to our wonderful Tree Park.

Bob Hingston
Chairman
Golden Valley Tree Park Inc.
7th July 2017.