

# **GOLDEN VALLEY TREE PARK**

## **ANNUAL REPORT JULY 2023 TO JUNE 2024**

### **Governance**

The Management Committee of Golden Valley Tree Park Incorporated held monthly meetings for each month throughout the year. The Annual General Meeting was held on 9 August 2023. Minutes from all meetings are stored on Dropbox.

The committee at year end were: Robin Wright (Chair), Yulia Novokova (Vice Chair), Garry Middle (Secretary), Kevin Haig (Treasurer), Andrew Thamo (Curator World Collection), Natasha Moore (Curator Australian Collection), Ania Boltuc, Stuart Walls, Rob Mann, Stelle Evangelista (DBCA Representative). Andrew Sandri (DBCA) retired from the committee and his contribution over many years was suitably acknowledged. Stelle Evangelista was welcomed to the committee as his replacement.

A review of actuals vs budget for the 2023 / 2024 year revealed that income and expenditure were both significantly less than expected but that income exceeded expenditure by a small margin. Thereby accumulated assets for GVTP Inc. increased slightly in the financial year. A new budget has been prepared for the 2024 / 2025 year.

### **Partnerships**

As joint manager of the Tree Park, a good working relationship was maintained with the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). DBCA has continued with their usual activities to maintain a high standard of upkeep at the Tree Park. Fundamental tasks include spraying, grass management and general maintenance as well as 2 ranger visits per week to the toilet blocks.

In recognition of the value of the Tree Park to the local community, The Balingup Progress Association provided a funding contribution for track improvement works in the Australian Collection, further details of which are provided later in this report.

Unfortunately, a threat to the unique ambience of the Tree Park was revealed in the issuing of a draft planning strategy in April 2024 by the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup. In this document it is proposed to change the zoning of land adjacent to the Tree Park to allow for housing development. This has caused considerable concern in the community as evidenced by two public meetings in May and many submissions to the Shire regarding the draft document. There were 164 public submissions covering the whole of the Shire of which 141 related to the Golden Valley Tree Park area. At this stage it is unclear as to how the Shire will respond to this obvious significant concern.

Noteworthy was the passing of David Wordsworth in July 2024 who in 1980 as Minister for Forests made the serendipitous decision to allocate the land that is now Golden Valley Tree Park for the purposes of an arboretum. His intervention had been required to resolve a

dispute between the local community about bringing pine plantations right up to the edge of Balingup township.

Further, at local request, he made the enlightened caveat that this arboretum be a joint project between the Department and the local community. Such a formal collaboration as this was unprecedented and, it must be said caused some consternation within the Department. However it proved successful and the concept has evolved to the point where the successor Department now relies heavily on partners and volunteers to be able to adequately pursue its mission.



### **Visitations**

The Golden Valley Tree Park continues to be a very popular attraction for local residents and tourists, particularly in the April to June period when the leaves on many trees are turning to their autumn colours.

The Tree Park Brochure that is available at the Tourist Office and Information Shelters has been in great demand. It was decided to revise and improve the brochure and a new colour version was printed and made available from May 2024.

### **Volunteering and Events**

The volunteer hours expended in the Park are a testament to its popularity.

A “Busy Bee” was held September 2023 weeding around the previous year’s tree plantings, weeding doublegees and collecting and burning tree branches. A further “busy bee” was held in June 2024 when a number of volunteers assisted with more tree planting.

The “Merry Men” continue to be active in undertaking a number of activities including mowing and clearing fallen twigs and branches.

The annual “Spring Picnic” was held in October and seemed to be enjoyed by all that attended.

## Trees

New plantings are an important part of maintaining an appropriate age structure for trees in the Tree Park into the future. More planting was done to extend the avenue of trees from the Desert Ash towards Yungerup Spring. Nine pears (*Pyrus spp*) were planted. These are first cross seedlings from a collection of trees that had been grown from wild collected seed from diverse “Near Eastern” populations. Also two Cape Ebony (*Euclea pseudebenus*) were planted. This is a very drought tolerant tough small tree from South Africa. More new accessions will be planted in the next few weeks.

One Simon’s Poplar had to be removed from the World Collection car park and also a graceful Evergreen Alder which shaded the walk track connecting the Homestead and the World Collection car park. Both were planted in 1984.

The project to extend the labelling of trees in the World Collection has also continued. Besides adding new posts and labels to existing trees and new plantings, posts that have become rotten are being replaced and missing labels are also being replaced.



## Maintenance

Routine maintenance of fences, firebreaks, gates and paths continued throughout the year with the assistance of the Park Steward.

To help contain sheep movement, the cattle grid on Olwyns Avenue was removed, dug out and replaced. There was also work done on the drainage around the cattle grid to try to prevent it silting up again.

A steep section of walk track on the side of the hill in the Australian Collection was improved by benching it and laying gravel. This section of track was notoriously slippery in the winter and these improvement works should make it safer for walkers.



Many of the trail markers, particularly in the World Collection, had become sun damaged and faded. New markers have been sourced and the most damaged ones replaced.



Soil movement because of historically low soil moisture levels has placed stresses on the watering reticulation for the trees and livestock. This caused several leaks which compounded the work of keeping water up to the 2022 plantings.

The dry conditions meant that above average clean-up of fallen branches was required at several stages during the year.

### **Fund raising**

Donations are a major source of funding for the Tree Park. Collection boxes at the World Collection and Australian Collection have suffered from vandalism in the past and have

repeatedly been repaired. Cashless donation through the use of a QR code is now available. Small magnetic postcards with a QR code were attached to the existing donation boxes and at other strategic locations in the Tree Park. In the first full year of operations (financial year 2034/24) the QR code method raised \$801.62, with donations ranging from \$5 to \$100, with the most common donations being \$10 and \$20, with a total of 51 donations being made.

The latest count shows that the donations through the QR code now equal the donations in cash in collection boxes.

A new type of collection box is being trialled at the World Collection car park. This is a perspex box such that the cash donation can be readily seen thereby perhaps encouraging more donation. Being prone to damage, the approach being adopted is to use it on popular visitor days and empty it each evening.

Hiring of Tree Park facilities over the course of the year raised \$636.

### **Sponsorships**

The tree sponsorship program at the park is an important part of raising much needed funds for our budget. There are many reasons for people to take up tree sponsorship, the most important one is a very personal one, the acknowledgement of a loved one resulting in a donation to the park.

This year the number of sponsorships was down in comparison to the previous year, perhaps due to the cost of living pressures being experienced by many. In total 8 trees were sponsored, 4 in the World Collection and 4 in the Australian Collection of the Tree Park, amounting to \$4704 in funds raised.

### **Homestead and Workers Cottage**

Conservation Management Strategies for both the homestead and workers cottage have been completed along with an engineers report for both buildings. A list of tasks in order of priority are contained within these reports. Most urgent tasks include roof and gutter repairs to the homestead, removal of garden beds from immediately around the house, underfloor heritage excavation of the workers cottage and then floor and chimney restoration, improve soil drainage around the workers cottage.

DBCA, as the owner of these assets, is progressing with the tasks arising from the Conservation Management Strategies although it is recognised that there is limited funding available. An asbestos survey has been completed for the homestead and gutter repairs are planned. During there year some minor works were carried out on the cottage, notably earthworks to prevent surface water drainage entering the cottage.

Discussions have been held with the Community Liaison staff at Talison to see if grant funding could be provided to carry out restoration works on the workers cottage. These discussions are on-going.

**Social Media**

The Golden Valley Tree Park continues to be popular on social media. Committee members and others regularly post on our pages on Instagram and Facebook. The Facebook site has in excess of 3,000 followers.