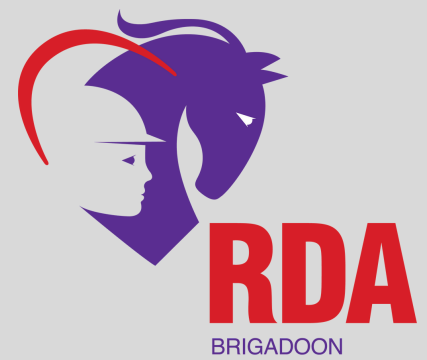


# RDA Brigadoon Annual Report 2024 – 2025

*Highlights and achievements of the year*



## Message from the President

This year, RDA Brigadoon proudly continued its mission to create a safe, inclusive, and empowering space for children and individuals with disabilities. Through therapeutic riding, community engagement, and compassionate care, we delivered programs that foster growth, confidence, and joy. Every ride, every volunteer hour, and every shared moment reflects our commitment to making a measurable difference—one stride at a time.



## Key Achievements

- Successfully launched 'Barnie' the Ecquizer.
- Enhanced our volunteer training program to improve the quality of our services.
- Collaborated with the EYES program, providing more opportunities for young people.

### Community Engagement

- Community events
- Awareness campaigns

We actively engaged with the local community through various initiatives, including participation in local events, to raise awareness about RDA Brigadoon, and targeted campaigns to promote inclusivity and understanding of disability. These efforts have helped us foster stronger connections and build a more supportive community for our participants.

## Program Impact

Our programs have had a significant positive impact on the lives of our participants, enhancing their physical, emotional, and social well-being. We have witnessed improvements in their confidence, communication skills, and overall quality of life. Here are a few quotes from our program participants:

- "Riding has helped me feel stronger and more independent."
- "I love coming to RDA Brigadoon – it's the best part of my week!"
- "My child has gained so much confidence since starting the program."

**73** participants aged between 7 to 68 engaged in **2,497** individual riding lessons of which **42** were children **and** teens.

**70%** of participants have with autism and/or developmental delay, with **6** non-verbal children, 1 First Nations rider, and several from CaLD backgrounds.

Riders showed improvements in balance, coordination, communication, and confidence, tracked via coach assessments and family feedback.

## What it takes to keep RDA Brigadoon Thriving

- **60 volunteers**, aged 12 to 75, contributed over **8,700 hours**—supporting riders, caring for horses, maintaining grounds, and fundraising
- We care for **14 horses**—10 owned, 4 leased—each requiring **\$3,000 annually**, excluding vet costs
- Operated by **1.6 FTE staff** and a dedicated committee of six
- **No government funding**—our programs are powered by community generosity, sponsorships, and volunteer dedication
- Every contribution helps us create a space where riders feel safe, supported, and celebrated

## Strategic Partnerships: EYES Program Collaboration

This year, RDA Brigadoon proudly strengthened its role as a key stakeholder in the Equestrian Youth Engagement Service (EYES) program—an initiative that supports highly at-risk young people, many of whom are involved in or at risk of entering the Youth Justice system.

Through our collaboration, RDA Brigadoon has extended its expertise in equestrian-assisted learning to a particularly vulnerable group, filling a long-standing gap in services. The EYES program uses equine-assisted learning to help young people move beyond challenging behaviours, improve mental

health, build trust, strengthen emotional regulation, and develop essential life, social, and employment skills.

At Brigadoon, these young participants are welcomed into a safe, structured, and compassionate environment, where they learn foundational horse-riding skills and experience the benefits of working with horses. The outcomes have been deeply encouraging—fostering resilience, confidence, and connection in young people who often face significant barriers.

Our partnership with EYES reflects the power of community collaboration in addressing complex social issues. It also highlights RDA Brigadoon's commitment to inclusive engagement, measurable impact, and empowering transformation—not just for people with disability, but for all who benefit from the healing presence of horses.

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this vital work and remain committed to expanding our reach through meaningful partnerships

## Volunteer Recognition

### The Heartbeat of Brigadoon

At RDA Brigadoon, our volunteers are more than helpers—they are mentors, companions, and changemakers. Their dedication, warmth, and consistency create the foundation for every transformative experience our riders enjoy.

In August, we joined the national celebration of Student Volunteer Week, spotlighting our incredible teen volunteers. Their energy, compassion, and enthusiasm uplift our Centre daily, bringing fresh perspectives and heartfelt connection to every session.

In December, we proudly celebrated International Volunteer Day, presenting certificates of appreciation signed by the Minister for Volunteering to every volunteer. It was a moment to formally acknowledge the tireless efforts of those who give so generously of their time and spirit.

To honour their commitment, we also offer discounted riding lessons to our dedicated volunteers—giving them the opportunity to learn, grow, and experience the joy of horsemanship firsthand.

Our volunteers are the heartbeat of Brigadoon. Through every act of kindness, every steady lead, and every shared smile, they help build a community rooted in inclusion, empowerment, and care.

## Community Engagement:

### Building Connection Through Inclusion

At RDA Brigadoon, community engagement is more than outreach—it's about creating meaningful connections, raising awareness, and celebrating the values that unite us.

- We ran targeted social media campaigns to boost visibility, attract new volunteers, and share the transformative impact of equestrian therapy with a wider audience
- In September, we held our first-ever Horse Tack Car Boot Sale—a sunny day filled with connection, learning, and fundraising. The event was generously supported by Bendigo Bank Community Bank Bullsbrook–Ellenbrook, and marked the beginning of a new tradition in community collaboration
- We also collaborated with Magic Millions to run their merchandise stall at the yearling sales, strengthening our ties with the broader equestrian industry and raising awareness of our programs among new audiences
- In December, we hosted a festive stall at the Bunnings Ellenbrook Christmas Night Market, where our beloved pony Emi stole the show—drawing crowds, sparking conversations, and helping us connect with families and potential supporters
- We proudly celebrated the International Day of People with Disability, promoting awareness, acceptance, and inclusion through storytelling and rider-focused messaging

## Fire Response at RDA Brigadoon:

### A Close Call, A Strong Community

Earlier this year, RDA Brigadoon narrowly avoided disaster when a fire erupted at the Centre. Thanks to the swift and courageous response of our local volunteer fire brigade, all horses remained unharmed, calm, and secure. Their quick action protected what matters most—our animals, our people, and our programs.

The fire, caused by a fallen tree branch striking power lines on Cathedral Avenue, resulted in damage to fencing in the arena, pony paddock, and our newly built Off-The-Track Obstacle Course. Thankfully, all buildings were spared, and Synergy worked quickly to restore power to both RDA Brigadoon and the State Equestrian Centre.

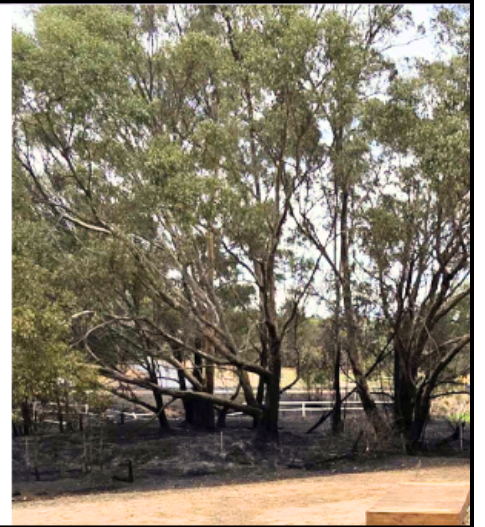
Lessons resumed promptly, with safety protocols in place. Riders with respiratory sensitivities were advised to consider the lingering smoke, and all clients and volunteers were asked to follow Coach instructions while affected areas remained off-limits.

It was a very close call, but we were fortunate to come away with minimal damage—a testament to the strength of our emergency planning, the dedication of our volunteers, and the resilience of our community.





## Fire at RDA Brigadoon



## Financial Overview

### Resilience Through Community Support

This year brought financial challenges, with rising **feed costs**, **insurance premiums**, and **wage pressures** impacting our operations. Yet through determination, creativity, and community spirit, the team at RDA Brigadoon worked tirelessly to secure the resources needed to sustain and grow our programs.

- The **Telethon grant** enabled the purchase of Barnie (our Equicizer) and program expansion, directly enhancing rider experience and safety
- A generous **\$20,000 grant from Commonwealth Bank** funded rider scholarships, ensuring access for families facing financial hardship
- **Off The Track WA** grant supported the development of our obstacle paddock, enriching horse engagement and therapeutic outcomes



- Additional funds were raised through community events, donations, sponsorships, and the unwavering support of our volunteers
- Maintenance and insurance costs were managed through internal protocols and hands-on volunteer contributions, reflecting our commitment to sustainability and stewardship

We remain committed to responsible financial stewardship, ensuring that every dollar is used effectively to maximize our impact and uphold the quality of our services. [Detailed financial statements are available upon request.]



## Community Gratitude

You Make It All Possible

At RDA Brigadoon, every achievement is shared—because behind every ride, every smile, and every moment of progress stands a generous and caring community. Whether you're a grant provider, sponsor, donor, volunteer, or even a collector of cans, you are part of the RDA Brigadoon family.

The pride we take in delivering inclusive, empowering programs to the WA community is only possible because of your belief in what we do. Your support—whether financial, in-kind, or through time and encouragement—has uplifted us and sustained our mission.

Over the past year, we've been surrounded by an incredible network of individuals, families, businesses, and organisations who have stood beside us. From donations and discounts to services and shared expertise, every contribution has helped us grow stronger and reach further.

Thank you for helping us make RDA Brigadoon a place of joy, connection, and transformation—one ride at a time.

## National Alignment with RDA Australia

As a proud affiliate of Riding for the Disabled Australia (RDAA), RDA Brigadoon is guided by the national body's commitment to safety, inclusion, and excellence. RDAA's leadership helps us uphold a consistent standard of care—ensuring that every rider, volunteer, and staff member experiences a program that is safe, enriching, and empowering.

Under the direction of RDAA Executive Officer, a bold and aspirational Strategic Plan (2024–2027) has been developed to strengthen the role of RDAA in supporting centres like ours. This national vision aligns with Brigadoon's values and includes:

- A full review and release of updated Safe Work Practices, enhancing safety and clarity across all activities
- A shift to electronic forms for coaches, riders, and volunteers, streamlining administration and improving accessibility
- Access to training via the Australian Sports Commission, supporting professional development and inclusive coaching
- A new incident reporting and hazard management platform to improve responsiveness and transparency
- Enhanced insurance reporting and broker support, ensuring centres are well-protected and well-informed
- A collaborative network with Equestrian Australia and Pony Club Australia, fostering shared learning and community
- National partnerships to amplify the mission of RDAA and affiliated centres across Australia
- Improved centralised data capture and reporting, helping centres like Brigadoon measure outcomes, manage risks, and celebrate impact

At RDA Brigadoon, we embrace this national direction with optimism and pride. It strengthens our ability to deliver high-quality, inclusive programs—and ensures that every ride continues to be a step toward confidence, connection, and transformation.

## Strategic Goals for 2025 - 2026

- Increase rider capacity by 30%
- Strengthen outcome measurement and reporting tools
- Secure further funding to ensure sustainability
- Continue building inclusive, empowering experiences for every rider

## Summary

This year has been a period of significant growth and achievement for RDA Brigadoon. With the help of our dedicated volunteers, staff, and community, we have been able to continue & diversify our programs, reach more participants, and make a positive impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities. We look forward to another year of serving our community and furthering our mission.

## Our Mission

RDA Brigadoon enables people with disabilities and volunteers to experience enjoyment, challenge and a sense of achievement through participation in recreational, and educational equestrian activities to improve their quality of life, attain personal goals and develop life skills.

## Our Vision

To be acknowledged in Western Australia as a leader in equine – assisted educational, recreational and sporting activities that expand the horizons of those with disabilities leading to the enrichment of their lives.