

Loxton Mardi Gras - 2024

Chris Sheahan Event Coordinator Notes

Overall Feedback

The overwhelming feedback from all participants that I spoke with is that the day was a great success. The perfect weather certainly added to this enjoyment.

Everyone loved the seating arrangements in the main marquee as well as Paul Kaesler's 'lunch tent'.

A new addition this year was to put tables and chairs under the shade trees on the West side of oval #2, This proved very convenient for many families and was well received.

Once again the parents of children in the school floats expressed their happiness with the 'reserved' school float parking area under the trees on the East side of oval #2.

The parade itself ran quite smoothly with few interruptions – although we were disappointed with the small number of RVCCC vehicles which led off the parade (only 10 vehicles).

We, again this year, led off near the start with all the school floats. I still believe this is the best position for these floats as it allows all the school children to view the majority of the parade.

A significant and successful improvement this year was the focus on the Hockey Club rooms as a reserved area for seniors and the disabled. We were able to make the most of the more inclusive area of oval#2 – with a flatter area and close by parking for those that need it.

Community Health Connect and Riverland Respite made the most of this area – as well as many seniors. I am very pleased with this outcome.

Another important addition this year was the use of 'volunteer grants' as a way of encouraging and securing the assistance of the two football clubs and the dirt kart club to provide us with enough volunteers when we needed them to assist us with the setup and pack up of marquees, tables and chairs, power cable etc. This was a huge help to us and I definitely want to see this continue in the future.

We definitely improved our task allocation for volunteer marshals this year with really great input from Meagan, Karen & Jenni. This will work better next year if we complete these documents say 3 to 4 months before the event and distribute to parking and parade marshal volunteers so that they have plenty of time to learn and understand the tasks for each roll – and why they must be adhered to in order to avoid unintended consequences.

The food vans and market stalls layout worked very well this year and I was happy with the combined areas and how they were close enough in proximity to provide a real 'carnival atmosphere'.

While the layout was good, I still believe there is room to improve this further. It was a definite success to have the stage back onto the grassed area – with the two large marquees facing it. This layout was 'locked in' early in the planning process. It was only after we had gone public with our layout that we decided to improve the focus on the Hockey Club for seniors and the disabled. This resulted in a bit of a split with 2 spectator areas. I believe we can successfully combine these two areas into one area next year and propose to develop this concept for review by the committee in the near future.

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Challenges

We had some 'localised rain' which in fact was that the automatic sprinkler system ran overnight unintentionally – it was supposed to have been turned off the previous weekend but there was some controller glitch. I first became aware of this at 6.00am on the Saturday morning when I became drenched in really cold water rescuing the trailer with all the power cables from the sprinklers.

This sprinkler issue, in turn, affected the parade when the MFC appliance became bogged in the soggy ground near the Hockey Club. It did provide a demonstration on how the CFS tender came to the rescue.

A key learning is that if we have a sprinkler issue again in the future then we must instruct all fire tender vehicles to park on the gravel track and to not go onto the grassed area.

Another challenge was that the power cables setup was minus a splitter that we needed to efficiently route the power cables. We also had to technically 'overload' the 30amp circuit as there was only the one working 3 phase outlet that I was aware of. Tony Hucks was very helpful with the power cabling setup. In subsequent discussions with Steve Schulz we have identified that there is another 3 phase outlet by the Hockey Club that we could use if we can resolve the issue of vehicles not being allowed to drive over the cables. Steve has offered his services to assist us from the next Mardi Gras to plan and better implement the power distribution system. I believe it to be a very worthwhile community project for us to encourage such improvements.

Entertainment

Entertainment wise, there were too many performers, leading to difficulties in managing the schedule effectively. Next year, appointing a dedicated coordinator for entertainment on the day could streamline scheduling and ensure adherence to timeframes, preventing disruptions to the program.

The abundance of entertainers led to difficulties in managing the schedule smoothly, resulting in an unfortunate situation where a band had to cut short their performance. To avoid such issues in the future, appointing a dedicated coordinator for entertainment can ensure adherence to schedules and optimize the audience's experience.

Publicity

We continue to enjoy a great relationship with the Murray Pioneer, ABC and 5RM and Riverland Life radio stations.

The live streaming of the parade event was hosted by Life FM and allowed people who were not able to attend to still see the parade and entertainment.

We ran the TV ad again this year –the commentary is generic and able to be used every year. This can be used on our Facebook page and website.

The A4 folded to A5 size flyer with the large map on the inside was well received. I recommend that we continue with this format.