



Home of The Downs Explorer

Christmas 2024 News Update



Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we wrap up 2024, we are thrilled to share exciting updates and plans for the year ahead and update you on our success in 2024. Your support and enthusiasm continue to drive us forward, and we can't wait to embark on this journey together in 2025.

2025 Tours in Summary

We are thrilled to announce a robust schedule of tours for 2025! Highlights include Roma - 4 day, Miles "Back to the Bush" Tour 3 day, Goondiwindi 3 day and the Toowoomba-to-Stanthorpe 3 day experience. These tours showcase Queensland's rich history, scenic landscapes, and vibrant local communities. Wallangarra remains a favourite destination and should be available from July, with added features for returning passengers.

Restoration Projects – C17 802 and New Carriage Addition

The restoration of our 1927 C17 802 steam locomotive is progressing slowly. In addition, we're excited to welcome a new Davidson carriage to our fleet hopefully later in 2025, further enhancing passenger comfort and capacity for our growing tour schedules.

Hamilton Street RV Park

Plans for the 20 site Hamilton Street RV Park are moving forward, offering a convenient, no administration based caravan park option in Warwick. It is currently held up due to very expensive environmental studies being asked for by the council. We are appealing!

Warwick Railway Station Updates



Our efforts at the Warwick Railway Station continue to gain momentum.

Restoration plans for the station include the establishment of a vibrant café and the development of an arts and cultural hub and weekend markets.

Negotiations are still underway to hopefully secure the Warwick Visitor Information Centre as an anchor tenant.

C17 971 Progress

C17 971 is still undergoing meticulous restoration.

Dedicated volunteers and specialists have made remarkable progress this year, and we're optimistic about seeing this locomotive back in operation early in 2025.



Ballandean Siding Upgrade and New Tour

This picturesque location will serve as a key stop for a brand-new range of tours launching in early 2025.

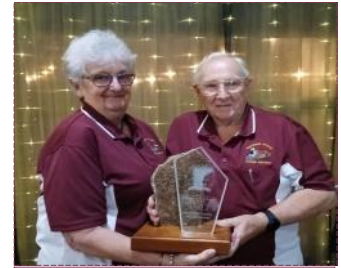


New Food Van for Warwick Railway Station (WRS)

Our new mobile food van will be stationed at the Warwick Railway Station (WRS) in 2025, offering delicious meals, snacks, and beverages. This initiative aligns with our goal to make the WRS a lively community hub.

Stanthorpe Tourism Awards

We are thrilled to announce that SDSR won the **Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality, Tours, Attractions, and Events** category at the 2024 Stanthorpe Tourism Awards. This recognition celebrates all of the work we do and our dedication to creating unforgettable experiences for visitors to the Southern Downs region.



Secretary, Kevin Patterson and Marlene Beattie accepting Stanthorpe Tourism Award

Wishing You a Safe and Festive Season

As 2024 ends, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all our supporters, volunteers, and passengers. Your encouragement fuels our mission to preserve and celebrate the region's heritage. Have a joyous and safe Festive Season, and we look forward to seeing you on the rails in 2025!

Warm regards
Kelvin Hutchinson



Museum Notes

Things are continuing to happen at the museum. I have started to refurbish the Cottonvale interior layout to improve readability of the pictorial displays. Two new glass display cabinets have been added and the display board in the centre has been removed. Jack, the High School work experience volunteer has done a great job of refurbishing a lot of display items for the goods shed display. Thank you Jack!! Your help is very appreciated.



The tearoom has been converted back to a tearoom after the completion of the office restoration. A grant has enabled us to purchase new outdoor furniture and heaters have been installed on the verandah ready for the next winter season. The air curtain for the doorway has been connected and other electrical work has been finished.

The mini train has had a new speed control lever fitted to improve driver comfort and safety. An annual service has been carried out and it is now ready for the Xmas Carols in the park on the evening of December 8 and the school holidays commencing on December 16. The mini train will not be running from Xmas day through to 5 January 2025 as Xmas falls mid week this year.



More big things are planned for the museum in 2025. We are hoping to have the museum open extra days commencing early 2025. Merry Xmas to all.

Kevin Patterson
Museum Curator





Breaking news!

 Queensland Rail

Media release

We are delighted to share the following press release regarding our operations past Stanthorpe next year. Once again you will be able to ride a steam hauled train across Quart Pot Creek bridge!

In a major milestone for heritage rail groups and tourism, Queensland Rail has completed restoration works at the Ballandean rail siding, paving the way for heritage train services to once again connect communities and attract visitors to the region.

This project reinstates a vital turnaround point for trains, allowing heritage groups like the Southern Downs Steam Railway (SDSR) to extend services between Toowoomba, Warwick and Stanthorpe all the way to Ballandean.

The Stanthorpe to Wallangarra line was closed late last year after severe fires ripped through the region and damaged infrastructure, and this marks a significant step in restoring heritage rail access and promoting tourism in the Granite Belt region.



Recently completed work at the former station site

Queensland Rail crews worked over several weeks to replace 135 sleepers and 68 turnout sleepers, as well as completing inspections and maintenance, ensuring the siding's seamless functionality.

This investment highlights Queensland Rail's commitment to preserving rail history and supporting local communities and volunteer-run heritage railways.

The renewed regional access to Ballandean brings exciting opportunities for heritage travel enthusiasts.

From February 2025 Stanthorpe and regional adventurers can enjoy the picturesque rail journey from Stanthorpe to Ballandean, with the added convenience from July 2025 of a short 15-minute bus ride from Ballandean to Wallangarra for guided tours of the station and for meals on the platform, as well as exploration through the Girraween National Park.



Ballandean station back in the days of regular rail services. The railway formed an important means of transporting stone fruit and other produce grown in the Granite Belt hills.

Southern Downs Steam Railway, preserving our railway heritage



Hero Employee — Lindsay Carlier

My current Events Co-ordinator role with the Southern Downs Steam Railway [SDSR] is to plan, organise and book passengers. I have been in this role for approximately 2 years having commenced at SDSR in early 2020. I originally volunteered with SDSR in various roles; however moved to my current role in 2022. I also plan all upcoming tours at least 12 months in advance and upload all tours and events onto the SDSR website and Eventbrite which is our self-service ticketing platform.

Before my move to Queensland, initially moving to Surfers Paradise and then to Warwick in early 2020, I volunteered at the Mornington Railway Preservation Society (MRPS) where my role was as secretary, as well as training officer. I also was on several boards. In 1984, the MRPS was formed as a not-for-profit organisation with a focus on heritage railroading through restoration, education and experience. Located at Moorooduc, the gateway to the Mornington Peninsula, the MRPS is a volunteer operated heritage railway that offers passengers a memorable journey on restored vintage passenger cars.

My working background was in finance where I worked for Westpac and Suncorp.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my role with SDSR ensuring passengers have a great time on each and every one of our tours. 2025 is to be both challenging and exciting at SDSR with 4 major tours to Goondiwindi, Roma, Stanthorpe “Snowflakes festival” and “Back to the Bush” festival at Miles.

Lindsay (left) is occasionally released from the office.
Today he seems to be helping hold up a pair of C17 driving wheels



Wishing all our members a wonderful Christmas and fabulous New Year from SDSR’s volunteer team.



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