



## Annual Report

December 2017



## **Executive Summary**

Remount completed its first full year of operations in 2017 with success achieved on many levels.

Outcomes for the majority of our visiting Drivers has been exceptional. Feedback continues for many weeks after the program with life changing results occurring for some people. All visiting Drivers experienced a positive change in some way with the exception of one – who subsequently has returned to re-engage with the Remount team after follow up communications.

Support throughout the Veteran community, corporate networks, and the local community has been outstanding, with donations of funds and in-kind resources occurring in many different ways.

The volunteer base continues to grow with a continued focus on individual character qualities, selection and training. The people who give their time to Remount are key to the success of the programs. Whilst the environment, hospitality and horse quality are vital, the people who deliver and share in the personal experiences need to be of a certain maturity, nature, selflessness and resilience.

## **Program Delivery**

A total of eight programs have been completed with 35 Drivers attending in 2017.

The programs were delivered across a mix of 2, 3, and 4 days. The conclusion is that two days is enough time to reach positive outcomes for people who attend. The longer programs have the additional impact of adding extra physical challenge, which resulted in fatigue for many people. Without exception, all Drivers at the end of day 2 were in the best mental place they were going to achieve by attending. It is recommended that all programs in 2018 will be two full days as a result. This two day structure enhances the sustainability of volunteer's attendance who in 2017 took many annual leave days to attend.

One Driver disengaged from the horsemanship training though continued to work with the team on the ground. This individual has since expressed an interest in returning and mounting up again due to his overall positive experience. He has also been engaged through coffee catchups by one of the Remount team and is responding well to that connection.

Feedback has been both positive and supportive, and has come through social media, visitors book, follow up phone calls, emails and through the RSL and SoldierOn.

## **Marketing & Media**

Remount Facebook site has 1,382 followers, received eighteen 5-star reviews and continues to present a positive image in the community. Recent boosted promotions such as program updates, new photos or announcements typically reach between 2,000 - 14,000 people and result in over 1,000 post engagements.

<https://www.facebook.com/remount.org.au/>

The AWM launch was posted on the Lockheed Martin facebook. This post achieved their highest level of engagement for an outreach program.

<https://www.facebook.com/lockheedmartin/>

The Remount website has been upgraded allowing for recognition of sponsors and more up to date information.

[www.remount.org.au](http://www.remount.org.au)

Media links as are listed below;

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/remount-program-getting-army-veterans-suffering-ptsd-back-on-the-horse-after-falling-through-the-cracks/news-story/659d417de76b909521cbaa4bcd420cfb>

<http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/country-living/ptsd-ben-and-marina-maguire-remount-offers-droving-therapy/news-story/ec8289b3b593a3f7a70284fc5488f9b0>

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/boost-for-veterans-and-family-members-as-remount-gains-sponsorship-20170911-gyeupu.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/WINNewsCanberra/>

<http://www.abc.net.au/radio/canberra/programs/drive/remount/8893130>

## **Government & Corporate Relations**

Lockheed Martin donated \$35,000 to Remount in the second half of the year. An announcement of the support was launched at the Australian War Memorial on 11 September. On this date in 1915, the 13<sup>th</sup> Light Horse regiment landed at Lone Pine to man the trenches. The event was well attended by Remount volunteers, veterans, Government officials and media.

Yass Soldiers Club committed to sponsor \$5,000 per annum for four years.

Canberra Legacy has requested Remount provide one program per annum for Legatee's. There are 26 Legacy children in the ACT and the organisation would plan to chaperone a group of 6 people for a full Remount experience staying on farm.

Yass Rotary Club donated \$500 and will host a meeting on site at Remount in December to view operations.

Weeroona Fine Wool donated 8 Angus Barratt saddle pads and a first aid kit

Woden Valley RSL continue to promote Remount throughout their networks and have been a great support to the Program development over the year.

ACT RSL organised an open day at Remount as part of Veterans Health week. This was well attended and gave visitors the chance to see what Remount offers, and to meet the team. They followed up this visit with a donation of \$500.

Soldier On has become a formal source of referral. Since this referral process commenced, we now have 40 people on waitlist who remain in regular contact. Referrals are coming directly via phone calls or emails and are currently managed on a sustainable level.

Yass Pistol Club holds an annual fundraiser and chose Remount as the beneficiary this year. They generously donated \$800 to Remount in September.

A presentation was made to the Canberra Rotarians at a lunch in November. As a result of this presentation, the Rotary Club of Canberra donated \$1,000 to Remount.

RB Sellars continues to supply embroidered workshirts at cost price

The Hon Dan Tehan, Minister for Veterans Affairs met a delegation from Remount and follow up meetings were held with key Department staff to explore funding options for Remount.

Doug Kefford AO donated a horse truck in May which will enhance the ability to move horses and riders around the district to events and further experiences. The truck has been fully serviced, sign-written and is now in operation and available for volunteer use.



## Assets

Due to the sponsorship of Lockheed Martin, Remount was able to procure the following assets:

- 10 helmets
- 2 bridles
- 2 saddles
- horse brushes

Two horses have also been acquired as part of the Lockheed Martin support;

- Cedar Magic (Hunter) is an 8 year old Chestnut registered Quarter horse gelding purchased for \$4,500
- Rusty is a 13 yo Registered Australian Stock Horse and was purchased for \$5,000

Both horses have already proven they are the right temperament and training for Remount and have made recent programs more efficient to plan, and effective to deliver by their attendance. The two horses are billeted out locally as part of the Remount volunteer engagement strategy. This volunteer engagement strategy allows for Remount owned horses to be kept fit and trained at no cost to Remount, though at all times being made available for programs. Billeted Remount horses are then used by volunteers in the community when not being utilised in Programs.

## **Risk**

There was one minor fall with no injury occurring.

Two Drivers suffered finger injuries as a result of reins pulling through their hands.

One was immediately reported by the Drover, it was treated with first aid and they continued for the remainder of the program. After the program the Drover attended hospital and confirmed she had suffered a rotating fracture on the left hand ring finger. The Drover has remained in constant communication with a Remount Director and although it has delayed her deployment, she is making a full recovery and is very appreciative of the support provided. I am pleased to report Jacqui received clearance for her deployment and will travel this week.

The second finger injury was not reported at the time, as the Drover did not want to cause a fuss. We subsequently found out many weeks later that she had fractured a finger and received minor surgery.

One Drover had his foot stepped on by a horse resulting in a broken small toe. He received first aid treatment and then continued on with the remainder of the Program.

A “train the trainer” day was held mid-year with another one scheduled for December 2017. Particular focus will be applied at the training in areas of rein holding and horse handling whilst on the ground.

Remount Limited holds a \$20 million public Liability Insurance policy and made no claims against the policy in 2017.

## **2018**

Eight horsemanship programs will be delivered using the same format through 2018, with the following dates:

- 24-25 March
- 28-29 April
- 26-27 May
- 16-17 June
- 4-5 August
- 1-2 September
- 6-7 October
- 3-4 November

ACT Legacy will be given priority on one of these dates and book in six Drovers who will attend a weekend accompanied by a chaperone.

Two additional programs will be offered as follows:

1. Kookaburra Kids is a Canberra based organisation supporting children whose parents have served and are experiencing stress as a result of their service. Remount has agreed to host a group of these children for a day on the farm as an outreach activity. The proposed date for this is 5 October (TBC). Lockheed Martin has expressed an interest in attending this day also
2. A "Graduate" program will also be held for one week in the spring of 2018 catering for 6 Drovers who have shown a strong commitment to improving their horsemanship and cattle skills, and wish to explore a vocation in this area. Drovers will be based at the farm for the entire week, and have two days intensive training, followed by a four day experience as part of a mustering team in the local area. This graduate program supports Remounts ambition to provide vocational training for veterans. No date has been set for this program

There are many people on a waiting list who have expressed an interest in attending Remount. These people will be given first priority for 2018, then dates will be published through the website and on social media. It is expected all programs will be filled by the first quarter of 2018.

Rostering for the programs will require more discipline in 2018. During this year it worked to have as many keen Stockmen as we could to build capability, though I am certain the right number is no more than four for a program. I will ask for your patience and support to balance out the attendance of all volunteers.

## **Feedback**

Key themes have emerged from visiting Drovers providing feedback in person at the debrief session or in writing, and are summarised as follows;

- the absence of clinical, or formal mental health training at Remount has been acknowledged as a positive thing from our Drovers. Whilst Remount has protocols for emergency situations relating to mental health, the informal nature of all volunteers to simply provide a caring environment, and not an inquisitive “spectrum approach” has been a key part of the success of the programs
- Drovers acknowledged the selection process applied by Remount is welcoming and appeals to their human side without “triaging” their condition as a medical illness. Many Drovers commented that by simply sharing their story, is a very non-judgmental way of being accepted onto the program and when they arrive they are not formally assessed. This builds trust quickly and enhances the experience and sense of achievement for many of the Drovers
- Horse quality and a real sense of farm work is a highlight for Drovers and creates a sense of achievement
- The leatherwork sessions are also a highlight
- A recent program focused on Lady Drovers included Yoga and a wellness session which was well received

A sample of Drover feedback is listed below. These excerpts are intended to give the reader a sense of the impact Remount has had on visitors and their families. Names have been removed to remain confidential.

*“Heaven on Earth is at Remount. It is the finest run organization that I have ever had the privilege of working with. What makes it so special? The people! If you ever have the chance or opportunity to spend some time in Yass, NSW take it. Thank you to everyone for making me feel so special.”*

*“What an amazing place and what incredible people who make it what it is.. for two days I forgot everything except making myself smile. Such loving and warm people who give so much and expect nothing in return. I hope one day I can find a way to repay you, thanku x”*

*“Can't recommend Remount highly enough, what it has done for my Partner and his mates is priceless.” (written by the wife of a veteran who attended)*

*“great people providing an amazing experience. I felt a sense of peace and calm whilst learning horse riding skills, especially among veterans who had a happy time together. Remount is very professional, offering a special experience to those needing “time out” while learning horsemanship in a peace setting. Love your work”*

*“REMOUNT – a special program, expertly delivered by very special people for special folk. The professionalism of the entire Remount team is there in spades. The facilities at your property at Bowning are outstanding. The facilitation of the*

*program from go to whoa is nothing short of exceptional. More so however is the generosity, warmth and friendship from your entire team - the stockmen, the wonderful ringers and visiting volunteers - it is open, sincere and beautiful. Indeed, I happily share that the weekend I spent with you was one of the most moving activities I have experienced in many years. It took me some time to come down from a heart-in-the-mouth high."*

*"My experience at Remount was above and beyond expectation. I was challenged on a number of levels and also found some peace. I have thought about the experience often over these past weeks. I feel that my time at Remount was very short and it would be wonderful to come back. The peacefulness and serenity of the valley was a key for me to commencing to dislodge aspects of myself and coping mechanisms that no longer fit. I experienced a sense of relaxation and calm that I haven't felt in years and I now have a little place of calm that I can go to inside of myself which has replaced the sense of fear and panic. It would be wonderful to come back again next year if that's possible.*

*You can tell Adrian that I had a light bulb moment about my riding technique which he was helping me with. I was pulling on the reins and giving the poor old horse the wrong signals. It was frustrating for me and the horse. It's a bit of a metaphor for me in life. If I relax and let go the reins, the horse then has to wait to know what the next move will be. If I give a clear signal and horse doesn't respond then I just have to do it again. I'm the one who is in charge. Trauma can leave you feeling very disempowered, especially if that trauma involves situations where you had no control. So a person develops stress responses and the disempowerment can leave you both anxious and depressed. When you are so stressed out, no one around you likes you and they don't respond to help. You can try all sorts of ways (like pulling on the reins) to get things happening the way you want, but often people just don't want to deal with you. Letting go, having faith in yourself and your own agency and not worrying about the outcome so much is very freeing. So to take back control, you actually need to let go control. I hope that makes sense. And more importantly, it makes sense to me.*

*Many thanks again to you both and your wonderful team."*

*"The debrief was difficult yet rewarding in that it engaged a conversation that was insightful; illuminating the perspectives each of participants brought to the program. In a couples program it was interesting to note the isolation that non-military participants could feel in contrast to the fear that ex-military members can feel when re-engaging in a program that is saying "Thank you for your service and sacrifice". We thought about and discussed this for some time and felt it should be said that while our military service doesn't define our current worth post service; it has had a significant influence on who we have become and needs to be thoughtfully acknowledged while not dominating the contribution of others. We took away a positive in that there is great comfort realizing a respectful community exists outside the military that cares. It was humbling to know that others who are also facing hardships gave their time generously, opened their homes and hearts to strangers because they believe in community. Thank you."*

*“Each ringer brought with them a different approach and perspective to the program but all held a passion for encouraging achievements no matter how small or large and it was wonderful to observe the emergence of confidence in the drovers to trust their mounts, the ringers and start to enjoy, and I mean really enjoy the happiness others were able to experience even if this was simply talking about the day”*

*“I also wanted to tell you that you are doing such good work. Every time one of our Participants comes back from a weekend away with you, they are glowing, positive, proud of themselves and excited to tell us about the fantastic time they had. I had this experience again yesterday with (name withheld) coming to coffee catch up absolutely glowing with happiness and bubbling to tell us about her experience on the weekend” (from a referral service)*

*“I can't speak highly enough of the Remount team. Such professional, caring, supportive people with a real love of the country, horses and giving back to the community. My husband, myself and our kids will always remember the weekend spent at the property. We left feeling as though we are a part of the family”*

*“Nothing but respect for what the Remount family give to those who have been privileged to attend. Compassionate, courageous, respectful, professionals with an abundance of love to share. Nothing less than top notch”*

*“I cant thank the Remount team enough for the care and time given to veterans and their families. It's a beautiful, kind and most amazing concept that you have developed. I came here at a most fragile and raw time of my life and feel like I'm leaving with just some chaffing. Thank you for pairing me with the most beautiful, sensitive and intuitive Scorpio. He has given me my confidence and helped me open up to people.”*

*“throughout the weekend I experienced many emotions. I was triggered, I was moved, I experienced healing and confidence, and then fell again into self doubt and sadness. At every point, the team members were supportive and ready to talk if I wanted to share they walked with me in my journey of discovery and recovery and did not judge me for my moments of faltering confidence. I believe the way Remount work with the Drovers, helping us through horsemanship to learn to trust, to breathe again, and to rediscover our individual strengths is why this works. I feel I have only just begun to unravel my layers, to face my fears and to heal”*

*“this weekend has changed me. My focus, my confidence and my abilities have been reinforced, strengthened and solidified. I walk away from here with a smile and a spring in my step that I have missed over the past few years”*

*“simple words cannot express the return of a sense of accomplishment and extended moments of clarity and quietness that I experienced over the last two days, things which have been in short supply over the last three years.*