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MEDIA RELEASE

The 2013 Simpson Desert Racing Carnival is off and racing

The countdown is on for the country's most lucrative desert racing carnival – and the champagne is already flowing!

The Diamantina Shire's celebration of outback racing – the Simpson Desert Racing Carnival – was officially launched at the Birdsville Hotel on Thursday, August 15. The event, which kicks off in the ghost town of Betoota on 30 August, saw more two dozen locals and travellers gather to welcome the 16 days of racing and glamour to the Shire.

Showcasing three unique race meets – the Betoota (30 & 31 August), Birdsville (6 & 7 September) and Bedourie Races (13 & 14 September) – the Simpson Desert Racing Carnival attracts thousands of spectators and visitors from around the country and pours millions of dollars into the local economy.

Diamantina Shire Council Tourism and Community Manager Steven Baldwin said the grouping of the Shire's three main races under the umbrella of the Simpson Desert Racing Carnival encourages visitors to come earlier and stay longer, thus increasing the economic benefit for the Shire.

"We've recently had the Campervan and Motorhome Association of Australia in Birdsville this week and they have confirmed there will be 55 Winnebago's and Motorhomes coming to for the Birdsville Races this year passing through Betoota and then heading to Bedourie the week afterwards spending between seven and 10 days in the Shire"

Birdsville Race Club President Mr David Brook added that while the race clubs had long worked in unison it has always been a challenge to attract visitors to the individual race meets.

"One of the great things about having the Council supporting our races and creating the Simpson Desert Racing Carnival means we [the three race clubs] don't have to spend as much money on advertising and getting the message out to the punters, rather we can put our meager funds into improving our facilities and increase the prize money at the races which will in turn attract more horse trainers, owners and jockeys," Mr Brook said.

Along with the President of the Bedourie Race Club, Mr Garth Tully, and the Secretary of the Betoota Races, Mrs Bev Morton, Mr Brook helped unveil one of the new Shire boundary banners promoting the Carnival and then raised a toast to the 2013 season of the Simpson Desert Racing Carnival.

For more images of the launch, please contact the Diamantina Shire Council Events Coordinator, Kim Wildman, on (07) 4656 3050 or email: kim.wildman@diamantina.qld.gov.au.

August 16, 2013

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