

Locals pull out all the stops to get Jack back home
Ieva Tomsons

Three-year-old Border Collie Jack's disappearance on December 21 triggered a massive community response to help a recently arrived family find their much-loved pet.

The Poletti's had relocated their Bedfordale horse-training business to Berry Road Gidgegannup seven weeks before Jack disappeared into the dense bush on John Ffarington's 4047ha (10,000 acre) property.

"I've never met a community like this; people came out of the woodwork to help us," said Bethany Poletti who embarked on a punishing eight-day search for Jack.

On the evening of Jack's disappearance Bethany searched well into the night, resuming at 4am on foot before attending to the horses for a few hours before resuming the search until 8pm.

"It wasn't just me; Holly Taylor our horse-breaker/track rider went riding, searching," said Bethany who was joined by friends and family who clocked up 10-12 hours a day in the hunt for Jack.

Six hundred flyers and a Facebook post on the Gidgegannup community page had alerted the district that Jack was missing and on December 23 Utah Road resident Sally advised that Jack had been spotted but had disappeared back into Ffarington's bush.

There were no other sightings until December 28 when two motorists reported trying to get Jack into their car at Utah and Toodyay Roads.

"Fifty people came out to help us – walkers, motorists, old and young; everybody," said Bethany.

Michael Antony, Claire Webster and Josh Cesery-Hopkins sent up drones, Ernie Holmes provided a fox trap to catch Jack and Berry Road neighbours Karen and Daneika Andrich tentatively offered to locate the dog using their water-divining skills.

"My brother (who can also divine) used to play a game of hide-and seek using his daughter's hair to find her," said Karen who trialled the technique before approaching the Polettis.

"We didn't want to pin people's hopes on it, but we practised using the hair and wire and it worked."

Bethany provided a clump of Jack's fur to the Andrichs and they drove to Utah Road where Jack had been seen on 28 December.

Earlier that week, following the advice of Search and Rescue, Bethany had placed Jack's bed with sausages and water at the entrance to Ffarington's on Utah Road.

Before the diviners arrived, the items had been moved along the road by Bethany's daughter Alyce King who had heard that Jack might be on another property, Crimson Park. The Andrichs didn't find Jack, but the fur and diving rod led them straight to the dog's relocated items.

The diviners then moved to Bailup Road where they received strong 'pulls' and where, after eight long days, Jack was finally found.

The sun was setting and Bethany decided to walk a little further up Bailup Road for one last look after he was seen in the area by Kate Saunders. Bethany was talking to her daughter on the phone and Jack popped up in a nearby paddock, leapt the fence and jumped into Bethany's arms. He was covered in ticks and burrs, foot sore and 7kg lighter.

"We couldn't have done it without the community. So many eyes looking out for Jack," said Bethany who is still overwhelmed by the support they received from district locals that they did not know.