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ESTABLISHING GREENWAYS  
& TRANSFERRING CROWN RESERVES TO COUNCIL CONTROL

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Green Light By Council for First Stage of Geary's  
Gap/Wamboin Corridor Reserves

LINK TO  
LEP

On the 24th of November, The Yarrawlumba Shire Council approved a recommendation by its Director of Environment and Development, that may eventually lead to the creation of corridor reserves for the Geary's Gap and Wamboin communities. The Yarrawlumba Shire Council will now apply to the NSW Government for the dedication of certain Crown Roads as recreational reserves.

DEV  
PROTECTION  
STATUS

This is the first stage of a pilot scheme that may lead to the development of a network of corridor reserves across the Shire as a whole. The Geary's Gap and Wamboin area virtually selected itself for the pilot study due to the enthusiasm of a dedicated group of volunteers including Councillor Suzanne Ridley. In addition, this part of the Shire has experienced a high degree of population increase and therefore the demand for this amenity is particularly high. The fact that this issue has been widely canvassed and developed in the community over the last seven to ten years is also a factor.

Councillor Ridley and the two community association representatives for the area, Julian Thompson (Geary's Gap and author of this article) and Paul Griffin (Wamboin) on-the Council's "Trails Committee" have been asked to document the guidelines for the establishment and management of corridor reserves. The purpose of the balance of this article is to outline for the local community the various issues involved in the creation of corridor reserves including background, costs, support and concerns in the community, proposed policy for the Council and possible management plans for corridor reserves.

It must be stressed that the views in this article are those of the author and proposals included have not been adopted by Council but are placed before the community for the purposes of discussion and debate.

#### The Issue

A major benefit for Shire residents of their lifestyle has been access to the countryside. However as the original ribbon development along major roads has been filled in, access to the countryside has been diminishing. This has threatened the widely used informal network of corridors based on Crown Road Reserves. An immediate objective has been to seek long term protection for these crown reserves through the conversion from road reserves status to protected recreational and environmental reserve status.

Benefits to the local community are obvious and are well supported. The horse riding fraternity is very keen to be able to ride through the country side. Children can avoid the increasingly dangerous main roads and safely use

corridor reserves to get about the neighbourhood They are pleasant walks for adults and perform a valuable environmental service as corridors for wildlife. Many Crown reserves are undisturbed bush. Undisturbed, by being on Crown land that escaped from much of the ring-barking that occurred in the 1930s.

The groups currently using corridor reserves are varied and include equestrians, which is not only the largest sport in the district but it also a significant small industry. However use by other groups, principally walkers and children is important. Corridor reserves greatly increase the amenity of the district, a fact recognized by practice in many other communities. The ACT, adjacent to the Shire, has 57 km of these reserves. The value of reserves is increasingly being recognized as an important factor in enhancing the value of properties. Developers in the Yass and Yarrowlumla Shires are now advertising corridor reserves as a feature of their subdivision. For the less community minded, corridor reserves actually add to re-sale value.

#### Background

#### *History*

Public demand for trails in the Geary's Gap district has been long-standing since the early eighties. In 1985, the Council established a working party to develop a Shire wide approach to corridor reserves which resulted in the Shire of Yarrowlumla adopting 'Access to the Countryside' as their Bicentennial Theme and dedicated certain portions of Crown Reserve for trails in 1988. In 1989, the Geary's Gap Community Association detailed the exact requirements for a section of corridor reserve including identification of all obstructions, the work required to remove them and held a public meeting to gauge public support. This survey was completed and the results presented to a public meeting held on the 27th April 1989. The meeting also addressed the concerns of some residents. These included the issues of trail bikes, use by non-residents, loss of amenity/privacy or resumption of private property (which is not an issue).

Since then working parties have undertaken clearing of verges and installation of gates and fences, demonstrating the real demand by the local community for these reserves. The Geary's Gap Community Association has consistently pursued the issue with Councillors and Council staff. As a consequence a Council grant of \$5,000 was obtained in November 1990 from the Section 94 funding, for the implementation of the first stage of the long standing trails plan.


In 1991, the Yarrowlumla Shire Council established a Steering Committee for the purposes formulating a Recreational Trails Plan in the Wamboin/Bywong area. The Committee, to have a life of three months, was to recommend a network and to advise on the impact on general land use, fencing and costs. Part of that

Committee's work involved advising all adjoining landholders of the proposal and seeking their views. A consequence of that survey was another public meeting held in the Wamboin community. Further, the role of the Committee was expanded to include representatives from the whole Shire. The work of that Committee has led to the Council deciding to support a pilot scheme in the Geary's Gap and Wamboin communities.

#### Proposed Policy Being Suggested Council

Demand for corridor reserves is a consequence of increasing population density and disappearing open country under the encroachment of sub-divisions. Therefore the demand for trails is not uniform but emerges as a response to local needs. Attempts to develop trails in the absence of community support will fail through an inability to maintain them. It is suggested that Council should adopt a policy towards corridors that will facilitate their implementation once the demand is there whilst preserving the option for their eventual creation at every possible opportunity. Trails are a community facility that are notoriously difficult to put in place after development but are easily implemented prior to development. Community facilities in low density population areas will be, of necessity, less common than in built up areas. However, by any standard, recreational facilities in semi-rural areas are limited to a few community grounds, most totally dependent on volunteers. As a consequence, there is almost a shortage of youth facilities in an area with a substantial and developing youth population. The object of a recreational corridor program is to provide access to the countryside for children and adults.

This proposal envisages using Crown Road reserves as the basis of a corridor reserve network and incorporate other reserves such as stock routes, fire trails, road verges, lanes, national parks, national trail, state forests and railways to form networks. Road design should specify verge tracks where alternatives are not available. Corridor reserves should perform a scenic and network function. Council should set by-laws to govern the use of these corridors which should have a declared status. Council should encourage developers to include trails and prescribe development that is sympathetic to the concept of access to the country-side in the Shire Environmental Plan. Where necessary, Council should use Section 94 grants of land or funds for this purpose. An Open Space Section 94 category should be implemented with trails providing the means to access this open space, the countryside in general and recreational reserves in particular. Council should seek trustee management rights to Crown reserves to preserve future options for trail development and allow full control. The principle of conversion of unused Crown land to community use, should be incorporated into the Local Environment Plan.



Council should adopt design and construction standards for corridor reserves and a methodology for the implementation and maintenance of the network by local community groups. Implementation of trails would be by local community groups which would have to establish community support, propose trails, undertake construction and manage and maintain the trails.

Establishment of trails will be welcomed by such groups as the following as walkers, equestrians, joggers, Guides/Scouts/Brownies, children, nature-lovers and wildlife (non-human kind). Residents with concerns about loss of amenity or resumption of land can be reassured. The intention is to seek a change of status from road reserves to dedicated environment corridors for community use. This enhanced status gives greater protection from intrusion into privacy, such as trail bikes, than is currently the case. It may not be appreciated that these reserves can be used by licensed riders/drivers with registered vehicles. Protection would be of two types: ||

(i) firstly physical protection through gates and fencing

(ii) secondly through legal means in transferring ownership to the Shire and thus imposing legal constraints (by-laws) on use.

Controls on use are important. It would be necessary to set conditions for their use and preserve the ability to restrict access to non-responsible elements. Where corridors meet public access, it may be necessary that they should be protected with locked gates and/or cavelettis. For instance, there is a view that the existence of the trails should be not advertised except to local residents and others who undertake to meet the conditions of use. Except where explicitly created for the purpose, use by trail bikes would not be compatible with other corridor users or local residents and would therefore be excluded. A draft conditions of use is to be incorporated in the local management plan.

Costs are not major issue. The object is not to develop corridors but ensure that they remain as they are. The transfer of existing Crown Reserves at no cost to the Shire will require the support of the relevant State Minister and our local State Member, Mr Cochrane. Ongoing maintenance is low and is within the capability of the local residents. Additional insurance costs need to be recognized if they do eventuate. The view of one insurance broker is that Council will in fact lower its risk by providing this facility. No additional claims are being made against future developers as it is expected that existing reserves can be utilized or offset against more appropriate sites. In any case, it is clear from the development proposals before Council, that developers already recognize the attraction of trails and are incorporating trail reserves within their plans and advertising this as a feature of the property. Reserves add value to both the amenity of the district and the

see  
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LOCAL  
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Reserves  
add  
value

price of adjacent properties. Planning, implementation and maintenance effort would be supplied by local residents on a voluntary basis. at at no cost to the general ratepayer.

Local Community Groups would be required to undertake most aspects of trail development under the overarching implementation policy detailed above. There would be three phases of development , progression to the next stage would be dependent on Council approval, action and/or funding.

The first stage would be the planning stage and would include residents working under existing community to identify the demand/need for corridor reserves. They would need to examine options and resources available. Community views would need to be sought and a submission prepared for Council who would view the proposal in terms of community benefits and costs.

Types of trails could include the following classification:

Those put in place for the preservation of flora and fauna

Those located in environmentally sensitive areas and as a consequence their use should be limited.

Those catering for a wide variety of uses excluding motorised vehicles.

Those catering for general use including motorised vehicles.

Those catering for general use and being verge tracks adjacent to existing roads.

The next stage would be to implement their plan. A detailed plan of the reserve would be required and a survey may be necessary in some cases. A construction plan detailing gates, cavelittis, other works and protection of special features should be completed. Finally, a management plan for the trail should be developed addressing the management issues involved such as any special environmental, concerns, controls on use, management committee structure and membership, user education, maintenance and access. This detailed plan would be submitted to Council for approval.

Generally, most management plans will be similar and vary only to take into account issues unique to the particular reserve. As a consequence, management plans will conform to the following State & Shire rules.

#### Principles of Crown Land Management

\* The principles of Crown land management as stated in the Act are as follows:

(a) the environmental protection principles be observed in relation to the management and administration of Crown land;

(b) that the natural resources of Crown land (including water, soil, flora, fauna and scenic quality) be conserved wherever possible;

(c) that public use and enjoyment of Crown land be encouraged;

(d) that, where appropriate Crown, multiple use of Crown land be encouraged;

(e) that, where appropriate, Crown land be used and managed in such a way that both the land and its resources are sustained in perpetuity; and

(f) that Crown land be occupied, used, leased licensed or otherwise dealt with in the best interests of the State consistent with above principles.

#### Objectives of the Management Plan

Maintain the amenity of the area for users and adjacent residents.

Control soil erosion

Minimise grazing and trampling impact

Control the introduction and spread of noxious plants

Protection of waterways

Protection of significant and environmentally sensitive areas

Protection of Aboriginal and historic sites

Minimise conflict with other park users

Provide methods to help achieve the above while allowing for users to enjoy the corridors.

#### Code of Ethics/ Draft Rules

- (1) Keep noise to a minimum, no amplified music, etc
- (2) No shooting nor carriage of firearms
- (3) No litter not even little bits
- (4) Close and where necessary lock gates
- (5) Do not interfere with livestock or plantings
- (6) No camping except with permission
- (7) No lighting of fires
- 8) No marking of trails
- (9) Get proper maps of the trails and stay off private property
- (10) No collecting of firewood/mossy rocks.
- (11) Promote adherence to this code by other users and report all problems to the management committee

#### Functions of the Management Committee/Trust

Assist with the maintenance of recreational corridors.

Assist with the development of facilities.


Manage a permit system for local residents

Provide a user education scheme

Offer voluntary assistance to Shire Council staff in ensuring users adhere to the Code of Use

Serve on Council advisory bodies as requested.

**Extent of Proposed Trails Network in the Geary's  
Gap/Wamboin district.**

 Long term Objective

The basic objective would be to join the Sutton community/Wamboin (Pony Club and Community Hall)/Geary's Gap (Les Reardon Reserve)/Bungendore (including the Showground)/ and to provide a link into the Cowan Forest (and ACT trail network via Mount Majura) and a link to the National Trail/Lake George escapement.

|| In addition, where existing Crown reserves have protected original environment or is acting as a wildlife corridor, the area should be protected as an environmental asset

The basic network would augmented by corridors in new sub-divisions as they become available connecting to the core network, especially the Lake George escapement and along Brooks Creek.

Current Proposal

Implement existing reserve known as Pony trail A.:

Linking Newington Road, Harriot Road, Les Reardon Reserve, Denley Drive, Majors Close and Worona Drive.

In addition: To Clare Estate from Denley Drive, Verge Tracks from Wamboin Pony Club to entry on Worona Drive

by JULIAN THOMPSON