

Draft

# A SUBMISSION TO YARROWLUMLA SHIRE COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECREATIONAL CORRIDORS

## (1) BACKGROUND

(1.1) Public demand for trails has been long-standing since the early eighties. In 1985, the Council established a working party to develop a Shire wide approach to recreational trails. This resulted in the Shire of Yarrowlumla adopted 'Access to the Countryside' as their Bicentennial Theme and dedicated certain portions of Crown Reserve for trails in 1988. Lack of any progress resulted in further representations to the Shire. In 1989, Councillor Greenwood recommended that the local community association detail the exact requirements for trails including identification of all obstructions, the work required to remove them and hold 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. That meeting passed the following motion by a margin of twenty-six to one, "That this meeting urge the Yarrowlumla Shire Council to support the establishment of linked walking/riding trails using existing road reserves and in particular trails identified in the Geary's Gap Community Association submission". 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.

(1.2) Working parties have undertaken clearing of verges and installation of gates and fences, demonstrating a real demand by the local community for these trails. 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 95 funding, for the implementation of the first stage of the long standing trails plan. This section is a trail from the Yass River to Harriott Road via Major's Close and the Les Reardon Reserve. Lands Department approval has been obtained for the transfer of the Crown Reserve.

(1.3) Following Council elections 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 of trails, to advise on the impact on general land use, fencing and costs. That Committee never finalised their recommendations. That Committee was replaced by another Committee to look at recreational corridors on a Shire basis. This submission contains the recommendations of this Committee.

## (2.0) THE ISSUE

(2.1) 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 trails based on Crown Road Reserves. An immediate objective is to seek long term protection for these crown reserves through the conversion to protected recreational and environmental corridor status.

(2.2) 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 trails 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.

(2.3) The groups currently using trails are predominantly equestrian which is not only a major past-time of a significant percentage of the district but it also the only significant small industry in the area. However use by other groups, principally walkers and children is significant. The level of enthusiasm can be gauged from the strategic study which identified establishment of trails as a priority for local residents.

(2.4) Trails 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 trails. The value of trails is increasingly being recognized as an important factor in enhancing the value of properties. Developers in the Yass and Yarrowlunla Shires are now advertising trails as a feature of their sub-division. For the less community minded, trails actually add to re-sale value.

### (3.0) POLICY

#### (3.1.) Introduction

(3.1.1) It is recommended that Council should implement a recreational corridor policy and program. Council should adopt a policy that encourages and facilitates the creation of recreational corridors that explicitly cater for the local lifestyle demands and then proceed to plan for and develop a network of trails in conjunction with and under the maintenance of the local community. This policy should be included in the Shire Environmental Plan and the Development Control Plan. This policy is directly supportive of the Council's Corporate goal and strategic directions "Providing & Planning for the Best in Rural Living"

(3.1.2) Demand for trails 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. Equally, any attempt to identify the full measure of the requirement will also fail as this is dependent on many factors and decisions not yet made.** The correct policy for Council to adopt towards trails is to encourage 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 these low density population areas will be of necessity, less common than in built up areas. However, by any standard, recreational facilities are limited to a few community grounds and locally developed facilities. There is almost a complete absence of youth facilities in an area with a substantial and developing youth population. The object of a recreational corridor program is not to increase the amount of open space in Shire but to provide access to the countryside for residents.

#### (3.2) Proposed Policy

(3.2.1) The essential feature of this policy is establish trails as a recreational facility in keeping with a rural lifestyle and access to the countryside.

(3.2.2) Council should use the existing Crown Road reserves for the basis of a trails network and incorporate other reserves, 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. Recreational corridors should perform a scenic and network function.

(3.2.3) Council should adopt a set of by-laws to govern the use of these corridors which should have a declared status.

(3.2.4) 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.

(3.2.5) 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.

(3.2.6) Council should seek ownership of 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 Planning Guide-lines.

(3.2.7) Council should adopt design and construction standards for trails and a methodology for the implementation and maintenance of a trail network by local community groups.

(3.2.8) 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.

#### (4.0) Public Reaction

(4.1) Establishment of trails will be welcomed by such groups as the following:

(3)

Walkers  
Equestrians  
Joggers  
Guides/Scouts  
Children  
Nature Lovers  
Wildlife (Non-Human kind)

(4.2) Residents with concerns about loss of amenity or resumption of land can be reassured. The ultimate intention is to seek a change the 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 quite legally be used by licensed riders/drivers with registered vehicles.

(4.3) 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.

(4.3.1) 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 would be capable of being protected with locked gates and/or cavelettis.

(4.4) The object is not to "open up" trails but preserve, primarily for use by local residents, the network of Crown reserves already in existence but under threat of "development".

(4.5) It is not envisaged that the existence of the trails would be advertised except to local residents and others who undertake to meet the conditions of use.

(4.6) Use by trail bikes would not be compatible with other corridor users or local residents and would therefore be excluded.

(4.7) A draft conditions of use is to be incorporated in the local management plan. See Section 7.

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## (5.0) THE COSTS

(5.1) Costs are not major issue. The object is not to develop corridors but ensure that they remain as they are.

(5.2) Transfer of existing Crown Reserves at nominal cost to the Shire will require a submission to the Minister for Lands and the Environment through our local State Member, Mr Cochrane. This advice is from the Manager, Land and Resources, of the above Department, Mr Rex Bowen. Long term protection dictates transfer of administration from the Lands Department, and dedicating it for specific use and thus excluding activities not compatible with preserving the amenity and environment of the area.

(5.3) Ongoing maintenance is low and is within the capability of the local residents.

(5.4) Additional insurance costs need to be recognized if they do eventuate.

(5.5) 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 trails within their plans and advertising this as a feature of the property. Trails add value to both the amenity of the district and the price of adjacent properties. However where a developer does not provide this amenity, the Council should insist upon it through planning regulations.

(5. ) One hectare will provide 10 kilometres of trails.

(5.6) Lockable gates will be required to limit access to the network to approved users. Within the trail network, cavelettis should be used in preference to gates.

(5.7) There would be no necessity to fence off the corridor to establish or maintain the trail. However residents could avoid the need to have gates inserted into their boundary fences if they were to fence off the reserve. Whilst this may appear an imposition on landholders they should be reminded that they are not entitled to occupy crown land without a lease and a condition of such a lease is that access must not be obstructed.

(5.8) The local community has already established a willingness and capacity to undertake these works and materials only would be required.

(5.9) Potential residents adjacent to trails reserves should be advised of the above.

(5.10) Planning, implementation and maintenance effort would be supplied by local residents on a voluntary basis..

## (6.0) Implementation of Trails

(6.1) 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.

(6.2)The first stage would the planning stage and would include the following components.

(6.2.1) Identify demand/need.

Residents would be encouraged to work under existing community associations or form specific groups to implement their proposals. As a first stage, they would be required to identify the demand/need for their specific proposal.

(2) Identify trail options.

The next stage would be to examine the resources and alternatives possible to achieve their aim.

(3) Identify community views

The next stage would be to consult the local community on their proposal.

(4) Prepare submission

The final phase of the planning stage would be to present the proposal to Council for in-principle approval to proceed. Council would view the proposal in terms of its community benefits and costs and timing.

(6.2.2) The next stage is to implement their plan.

A detailed plan of the trail 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.

(7.0) Management Plans

→ 5. Summ

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

Principles of Crown Land Management

(6)

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.

(7.2) Objectives of the Management Plan

(7)

The aims of the code are:

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.

(7.3) Code of Ethics:

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- (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

(7.4) Functions of the Management Committee/Trust

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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.

## Attachment I

### Overview of Equestrian Activities in the District

Wamboin Pony Club  
Geary's Gap Pony Club  
Bungendore Show Society  
Bungendore Rodeo Society  
Bungendore Pony Club  
Bungendore Trail Riders  
Bungendore Horse Drawn Vehicle Club  
Bungendore Polocrosse Club  
Sutton Pony Club  
Polo Club

#### Wyoming Road

Of fourteen blocks, at least eight have horses including Champion Stock Horse Stallion (Canberra & District). One resident operates a carriage supplies business.

#### Millynn Road

Of approximately fourteen blocks, nine have horses including Champion Galloway Hack (Sydney & Canberra) Residents include a EFA Level I Instructor and a former Zone Chief Instructor.

#### Brooks Road

Of approximately sixteen blocks, nine have horses including prize winning quarter horses.

#### Creekeborough Road

Of ten blocks, six have horses. Residents include the President of the ACT Jockey Club and NSW Publicity Officer for The Australian Driving Society.

#### Summerhill Road

Of approximately eleven blocks, nine have horses including successful race horses. Residents include NSW and National Endurance Riding champion, NSW Dressage champion and a Chief Instructor Pony Club.

#### Gunderoo Road to Macs Reef Road

Of approximately 24 blocks, sixteen have horses including a Hackney & Driving Champion (Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra), a hark and harness champion and several successful eventers.

**Attachment 1A**

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

**Objective**

A basic core of the network 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.

**First Stage**

Implement existing reserve known as Pony trail A.

Linking Newington Road, Harriot Road, Les Reardon Reserve, Woruna Drive, Majors Close and Yass River.

**Second Stage**

Include spur to Birchman's Grove, to Clare Estate via Reardon's, to Clare Estate from Denley Drive, Boma Lane.

Open reserve to Cowan Forest.

Verge Tracks from Wamboin Pony Club

**Third Stage**

Include spur to Bungendore Showground and spur to Sutton Road from Newington Road.

See attached plan