

ACT Equestrian Association Inc
Annual General Meeting
9 June 2016

President's Report

This is my eighth annual report to affiliates of the ACT Equestrian Association.

In 2015-16 we had 19 affiliates and 2 associates across a representative spread of disciplines from trail riding to dressage. ACTEA's strength is that is perceived by government to represent a broad range of equestrians so I want to thank affiliates for their continued support and remind them that there is power in numbers. When we make submissions to government on any issue it really matters that we can list the broad cross-section of the equestrian community that we represent. ACTEA provides local horse people with an opportunity to speak with one voice and we should not waste that power. Affiliation is incredibly cheap for what you get (this is the official view of Sport and Recreation Services) so please encourage clubs you know aren't members to join up and participate.

Workload

The President's monthly reports which appear on our website are the best reflection of the broad range of issues and activities with which ACTEA was involved in 2015-16. They cover everything from the never ending business of ensuring trails stay open, the hard work of negotiating new or replacement trails and less exciting but important involvement in departmental policy making that will have an impact on all equestrian infrastructure into the future. Generally a few big issues consume most of our time and energy each the year.

Over the last 12 months, on your behalf, members of the ACTEA Committee attended **53** meetings and site visits with politicians, government representatives and contractors. That works out at **one a week**. The Committee also made 38 representations and submissions, by telephone, email or in writing to government bodies or their consultants, including 6 formal submissions to a government public consultation processes – again that's roughly **one a week**. The meeting workload is very similar to last year, so although we seem to be making progress on highlighting horse related matters we also seem to be making much the same amount of work for ourselves. This is also reflected in the fact that the representations have gone up by about 25% and it has been a big year for submissions. The workload partly reflects the fact that the government and its contractors now come voluntarily to ACTEA on development and policy issues far more frequently than in the past.

So what has all the work been about?

Hang Overs from Last Year

I will first report on matters that are hangovers from the previous financial year. At this time last year

1. GPUG and ACTEA reps were meeting with a consultant engaged by the Economic Development Directorate to look at the long term future of horse paddocks in this city within the context of the undertaking in the MOU on equestrian infrastructure ACTEA signed with the Government in 2014 that

Every effort will be made to site additional paddocks to advantage the equestrian sector.

We have still to see the results of our efforts to cement horse paddocks as part of Canberra's equestrian infrastructure but we understand there is a final report with EDD. This will remain on our agenda in some form throughout 2017, I expect.

2. Last year RoadsACT and TAMS began updating their old infrastructure guidelines and developing Active Travel Guidelines that includes equestrian infrastructure. This is associated with the development of a new interactive Active Travel mapping tool based on satellite imagery which will include existing and notional horse trails alongside walking and cycle ways. This will be a huge step forward as far as planning for new and maintaining old equestrian trails is concerned but it is still 'just about to go live'. One unexpected outcome already is that after arguing for two years for the installation of the horse crossing at Streeton Drive and RoadsACT acting like they were having their throat cut if they installed it such crossings are now included in the design guidelines! So there could well be more.
3. The ongoing saga of signage on bike paths and around underpasses continues to drag on. Horse signs have appeared beside some shared paths in Weston Creek and RoadsACT have developed a suite of signs to be installed at high use underpasses at Hindmarsh Drive, William Hovell Drive, Waldock Street and Cotter Road into Equestrian Park. Parks and Conservation have also asked for similar signage at the Yamba Drive underpass at Isaacs. The actual installation of these signs is another matter and we are still waiting for most of them but we are promised they will come!
4. Discussions with the Riverview consortium about their proposed development in west Belconnen are ongoing and how this might impact on not only the BNT route but the Belconnen Pony Club and the local horse paddocks. The discussions have just extended to a proposed duplication of Drake Brockman Drive. Riverview have been quite good to deal with but there has been real effort by Beth, Lynda Folkard and Jenny Costin.
5. Last year the ACT Heritage Council placed the cross-country course of Equestrian Park on the provisional ACT Heritage Register on the spurious basis that it was landscaped specifically as a rural backdrop to the Yarralumla Woolshed. This had all sorts of potential implications for the future development of the course. We are pleased to report that due to a high profile publicity campaign and the participation of the local and international equestrian community that is no longer the case. The cross country course went on the Register with the Woolshed but the landscaping is now recognised as part of the design of our equestrian facility and the equestrian activities that take place there now and into the future are specifically recognised as having no impact on the values of the place.

Block 1201 contains an equestrian cross country course. This course does not form part of the heritage significance of the place, nor do its activities impact the heritage significance of the place. Surrounding equestrian activities are considered complementary to the heritage significance of the Woolshed and its Outbuildings.

This has been a significant victory for the current management of the Park but also the documentation now gives due recognition to the people who have worked since the 1960s to make the Park what it is today.
6. Work to establish an equestrian route under the Majura Parkway into designated equestrian trails into the much depleted Majura Pines has been completed.

Significant developments this year

1. Roads seem to have taken up a lot of our time this year:
 - the Majura Parkway and its impact on Majura Pines
 - Flemington Road and the impact of the Capital Metro tram depot and line on a traditional equestrian crossing between EPIC and Kaleen Horse Paddocks
 - the duplication of Horse Park Drive and its impact on equestrian linkages
 - making sure horses can get through the kangaroo fence along Tuggeranong Parkway
2. Work on the BNT is never ending and this last year we have had to negotiate a route around the most north westerly new suburb of Taylor which may not be operational for years.
3. On 26 August Minister Shane Rattenbury officially opened the horse yards at the Arboretum. Everyone was very pleased about the event. Only a few people knew that ACTEA had been nagging for their installation for 3 years. They seem to getting plenty of us and raise our profile in the Arboretum.
4. Since August last year ACTEA, with the support of Jane Hedges from GPUG and local riders, has done battle with PACS over their decision to 'upgrade' the illegal downhill bike tracks on the western face of Isaacs Ridge. They will now legally cross a designated equestrian trail that is already overlain by a stretch of the Centenary Trail. It has taken some effort to make them understand how dangerous this is. However, after 3 meetings, four on-site field trips and several representations including a letter to the Director of PACS we have achieved some things including
 - trail crossing design aimed at decreasing risk to horse riders
 - an additional trail at the northern end of the Ridge to create legal loop ride
 - a detour track to enable riders from the south to directly access the Yamba Drive underpasses horse signage at the underpasses
 - ongoing attempts to find a safe and enjoyable route around the eastern side of the Ridge.
5. This year we have had lengthy input into the revised Stromlo Forest Park Master Plan and are just starting positive discussions with them about a float Parking area on the Cotter Road next door to Stromlo Equestrian Centre to improve access and safety for equestrians wanting float their horses and to enable equestrian events to be held in the Park..
6. Also into the Molonglo River Corridor Management Plan ensuring there are as many equestrian links as possible including up Holdens Creek to Stromlo. The Plan should be out for public consultation sometime in July.
7. We have just begun early consultation with PACS regarding their review of the 1999 Canberra Mature Park Plan of Management. We are pushing for greater access for horses into the various reserves that abut the BNT and other designated equestrian trails through Canberra open space. We are not getting quite as strong a push back on this as we once did – so watch this space.
8. The other thing that has just scraped into the last year is the development of a Vision for the National Arboretum. Everyone seems to want a piece of the place and the only ones who seem to value you open spaces and dirt roads are us, the runners and the cyclists. ACTEA and the BNT coordinator have participated in a focus group and made a submission and we'll be keeping a close eye on the process in the coming year.

9. Our updated web site went live in July last year and I hope it has been a success for you. It has certainly been a lot easier for me to manage and the usage statistics are encouraging. We could do a lot more with the website but we need more human resources for that to happen.

Annual funding arrangements

Debbie Morrissey, our courageous treasurer, will talk about the financial audit and the convenor of the Equestrian Park management group is here tonight to talk about Equestrian Park specific issues but there is one big issue I will cover. While ACTEA has a broad and constant workload as a lobbyist on behalf of equestrians, the great bulk of our income and expenditure is funnelled through Equestrian Park. Generally the Committee manages on 25% of the annual operational funding provided by SRS. The rest is swallowed up by Equestrian Park. The rising cost of insurance and the increasing need for at least some paid labour at the Park led Wannabe Dotson and I to meet early in 2015 with Sport & Recreation Services to talk about the future. I reported to the last AGM that we had been offered an increase in annual funding to, \$10,000 in 2016-17 with an option to move us to triennial funding in 2017. This was supposed to provide not only better recognition of ACTEA's role, but lock in funding for three years and help with financial planning for Equestrian Park. We were happy. The new draft licence arrived and we had some practical problems with it relating primarily to the fact that SRS wanted us to pay for the mowing that they have done for the last 10 years and the impact of inflation on such an arrangement over 5 years. Without boring you with the detail of Annal's and my outstanding negotiating skills we can say we came away with an entirely different commitment to a new 5 year licence with an annual subsidy of \$34,000. This is not all play money. Around \$11,000 will go on essential mowing under the Bushfire Operations Plan and at least \$10,000 goes to top up income from Park Hire but it does mean we have some fat to use in looking toward employing contractors and long term improvements at the Park. All this mind changing has delayed finalisation of the Licence but we are now in signing mode and we have already received the first instalment of our subsidy. We have confidence we can continue to maintain the Park facilities to a high level despite the huge increase in use; we have a strategic plan for the development of the Cotter Plots and now we have possibilities of actually implementing that plan.

Speaking of the future.

Priorities for the coming year:

We continue to have a good profile within government and there appears to be a fair amount of good will there. Keeping a watching brief on maintaining equestrian infrastructure and the connections between them will remain a full time job. Continuing to meet regularly with a range of TAMS, ACTPLA and LDA agencies in the equestrian forum the Parks And Conservation in the Recreation Users Group and the new Active Recreation group which tries to put the recreation back into Sport & Recreation.

Keep locked in to the horse paddock review process;

Stay abreast of developments in planning and development such the Riverview development in west Belconnen and RoadsACT infrastructure reforms.

Stay involved in discussions about the proposed suburb of Thompson which will impact on the BNT.

Keep pushing to close the link between the Molonglo River corridor and Stromlo Forest Park

Engage in the review of the Lower Cotter Catchment Management Plan just started

The ACT Basin Project has announced the water quality works it will undertake in the coming couple of years and these include ponding on Dixon Drive where the current BNT route runs and reinforcement works on Yarralumla Creek near equestrian Park. We will be keeping an eye on these and also seeking your input into any other individual projects likely to impact equestrian routes.

And the usual stuff we never saw coming.

Thank you

I want to thank all the Committee members who contributed to making 2014-15 the success it has been, most particularly Beth Stone, who has personally carried a heavy workload this year.

I'd like to thank Debbie Morrissey, our treasurer, who has an ever growing task managing the finances for what is on the face of it quite a small organisation operating out of a mail box in Curtin shops but is in reality the equivalent of a small farming operation. I would also to acknowledge Kate MacKenzie, of NCHTA, who having taken on the responsibility of Park Bookings Officer last year has graduated to Equestrian Park Manager and is doing a sterling job.

We have lost a few Committee members during the year,

- Vice-President Gregory Calder has switched horses and now appears just as religiously at EPMG meetings as he used to Committee meeting,
- Judy Metusiewicz who was our Minute Secretary relocated to Adelaide during the year
- Ian Denman is not standing for re-election

I would like to thank them all for their contribution. Also Cathy Banwell who stepped up to be Vice-President in Gregory's place.

That leaves Julie Morris who has continued on the committee despite her move to Gundaroo which can't be easy.

I should acknowledge in particular Jane Hedges who's regular attendance has been interrupted by a really bad riding accident and her slow and difficult rehabilitation. We all, I'm sure, wish Jane all the best.

We are lucky that in general ACTEA Committee meetings are also attended by sufficient delegates making them general rather than mere Committee meetings. It is important to us that your clubs are involved in the decision making process. There are others who have given their time to provide feedback, turned up to field trips and meetings with officials, helped with particular issues or just gave encouragement.

Thank you to the incoming Committee whoever you are. When you, individually, becomes involved in issues of concern to you, you strengthen our profile in front of government, you learn techniques for dealing with bureaucrats and you understand better how government works – all powerful tools for you and your club. I strongly encourage all affiliates to become involved in growing the profile of our sport in the future.

Christine Lawrence
President
ACT Equestrian Association