



**The ACT Equestrian Association Incorporated**

ABN 47 674 025 536

All correspondence to:  
The Secretary, PO Box 4, Curtin ACT 2605  
Phone 02 6247 7843

[www.actea.asn.au](http://www.actea.asn.au)

## **The ACT equestrian community wants to hear from you! Feature on our website!**

Canberra has the highest population of recreational horses of any capital city in Australia. There are about 1,700 horses distributed across the ACT electorates. The ACT Equestrian Association (ACTEA) was established in 1970 to represent pony clubs, showjumpers, dressage, cross country and endurance riders as well as users of the 15 government horse holding paddocks and the many Canberrans for whom trail riding is a significant recreational activity.

The pleasure horse sector in Canberra supports

feed merchants	equine dentists
saddlers	farriers
horse and rider outfitters	horse masseuses and chiropractors
veterinarians	4x4 and horse float dealers

Based on Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation calculations the annual equestrian contribution to the ACT economy is around **\$20 million**. Horse riding promotes independence, responsibility and healthy outdoor activity. It appeals to sectors not attracted by team or contact sports., particularly women and young girls. It allows life-long participation and there are riders in their 70s using our local equestrian trails

For the coming election, ACTEA is keen to identify candidates who acknowledge the equestrian community's unique contribution to the character of this city and support the ongoing maintenance and development of equestrian infrastructure. Responses will be added to our website at [www.actea.asn.au](http://www.actea.asn.au) where they can be read by members of our affiliated clubs and the wider equestrian community.

We seek assurance that in government or opposition you will support the following:

- 1. Equestrian Park, Curtin, Canberra's elite community competition facility, will be maintained and supported.**

The Park is home to dressage, eventing and showjumping clubs as well as the Canberra Lakes Pony Club. The international standard cross-country course and high quality sand dressage arenas are booked for events on 80% of weekends during the year and used on a daily basis by individual riders

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for recreation and training. This is one of the very few elite facilities of its kind in Australia not privately owned. The Park is managed by an entirely volunteer workforce from the local equestrians community. Although the government's current annual contribution to running costs is \$34,000 the ongoing maintenance and development of this facility is reliant on income from the hire of the Park. In normal year around 3,000 horses compete at official competitions at the Park.

**2. The Bicentennial National Trail will remain open and safe at all times and will be integrated into any planning processes which might impact upon it.**

The BNT is the longest, marked, non-motorised, self-reliant, multi-use trekking route in the world – 5,330k from Cooktown in North Queensland to Healesville in Victoria – and in the ACT is the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding between ACTEA, the ACT government and the BNT National Board. The BNT in Canberra is in constant use by local riders as part of the local trail network. It is constantly under threat from unsympathetic planning decisions and more recently the issuing permits for one-off and permanent activities antithetical to the basic premise of a trail designed for horse riding.

**3. An overall concept plan will be supported that:**

- **links equestrian trails, safely, to existing facilities including the Bicentennial National Trail, Equestrian Park, pony club grounds, government horse paddocks and private agistment centres;**
- **closes the disconnect between the Molonglo River corridor and Stromlo Forest Park;**
- **provides for inclusion of equestrian access through or around new urban areas in Canberra; and**
- **includes specific provisions and infrastructure including signage to enable equestrians continued safe access through existing public open space and shared underpasses on major roads.**

As more land is surrendered to development it is important to us that our needs are integrated into the planning process, to allow our continued use of existing connecting infrastructure such as

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causeways, bridges and underpasses. To date this has been a site-by-site battle with planning and development agencies. Like everyone, horse riders want to enjoy peaceful and pleasant amenity and are happy to share open space with cyclists and walkers, if that space is designed to include them. Over 500k of equestrian trails connect the cities green spaces which should remain a characteristics of our bush capital (<https://www.cityservices.act.gov.au/pets-and-wildlife/domestic-animals/horses> )

**4. The overall existing government paddock space will be retained, including replacement where it becomes essential to convert paddock space to another use.**

Since 2006, when government horse paddocks consisted of 973 hectares, approximately 10% has been lost to commercial and industrial development. Presently there are 300 people on the waiting list for a space in a government paddock. Government paddocks are a special feature of the ACT and make it possible for women and families with young children to enjoy affordable equestrian activities. In these pandemic times Canberrans have discovered that horse paddocks are not just grass with attached horses; they are sustainably managed green spaces supporting their own ecosystems and providing opportunities for low impact recreational activities for their local communities. Horses are also efficient fire fuel management tools on the edges of our city.

The government is slow to recognise that land unsuitable or unavailable for housing or needed as bushfire asset protection zones can do double duty as horse paddocks. There are no government paddocks in Gungahlin for example, although there are many potential horse riders.

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ACTEA will post all responses from candidates on our website at [www.actea.asn.au](http://www.actea.asn.au)

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