



**The ACT Equestrian Association Incorporated**

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**Submission by the ACT Equestrian Association on the Development Application for the Duplication of William Hovell Drive #DA-202138722)**

This submission has been developed jointly by the ACT Equestrian Association, the peak equestrian representative body in the ACT with 20 affiliates engaged in a range of equestrian sporting and recreational activities, and the Section 10 Co-ordinator for the National Trail on behalf of the National Trail Board. Together, these bodies are signatories to two Memoranda of Understanding with the ACT Government that specifically commit to the maintenance of the National Trail through the ACT.

The ACT Equestrian Association has been diligent in taking every opportunity to comment on this proposal since 2020 because it will significantly impact:

1. The safety of the existing route of the National Trail, and
2. the option, as discussed with ACT Parks and Conservation, to create an equestrian link from The Pinnacle Nature Reserve to Karma Nature Reserve.

We wish to make three points:

- A. We feel strongly that our safety concerns are not being taken seriously in regard to the Lands End Underpass,
- B. We are concerned that no arrangements have been made to provide access between The Pinnacle and Karma Reserves for anyone except cyclists, and
- C. We wish to ensure the safe equestrian route we have negotiated with Evoenergy around the Whitlam electricity substation is not impacted

## 1. Bicentennial Underpass at Lands End

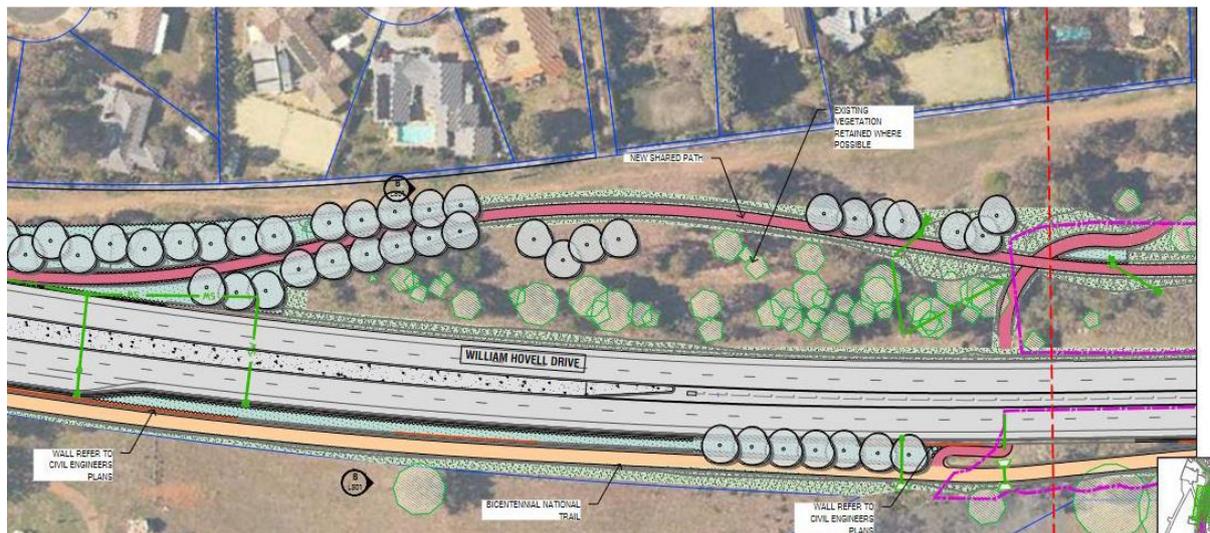
The original description of the William Hovell Duplication Project included the expressed objective to **improve and enhance the Bicentennial National Trail underpass and approaches to minimise conflict between users, particularly in areas where the BNT interacts with the shared path**<sup>1</sup>. To our dismay the underpass, rather than being improved, has been incrementally made more dangerous.

The original consultation document indicated that the National Trail would maintain its current alignment through the underpass between Lands End and the suburb of Hawker but:

- the proposed upgraded vehicle access to the Lands End Cemetery would encourage cyclists to use the underpass, currently only accessed by horse riders, walkers and a small number of mountain bikes, as a short cut. No ameliorating design features were on offer. See *Figure 1*.
- it would be intersected on the Hawker side by a shared path running north-south through the greenspace between the William Hovell Drive and the back of Hawker, and

*Figure 1 2021 Drawings for National Trail Underpass*

*In this drawing the upgraded cemetery access road is shown in orange and the existing National Trail route through the underpass is shown in the same red as is the proposed shared path on the eastern verge. It appears that from the outset the underpass was intended as a commuter path.*



The issues ACTEA and the NT Co-ordinator had with the proposed arrangement include:

- horses will have to mix with cars on the upgraded cemetery access with no verge and no speed mitigation arrangements. This is entirely inconsistent with *Active Travel Infrastructure Guideline Series 600*,
- the western approach to the underpass is a blind corner,

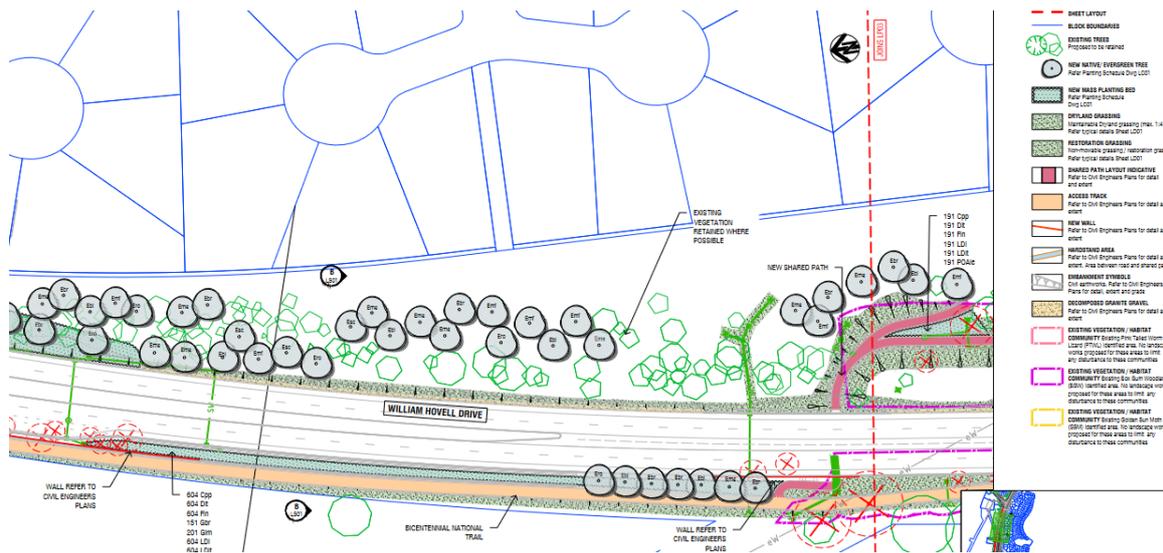
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<sup>1</sup> <https://yoursayconversations.act.gov.au/WHDUpgrade/WHD-details>

- the cemetery access road will be used as a rat run to the bike path on the other side of William Hovell Drive, and
- the eastern approach being very steep, fenced and concrete will make it extremely dangerous for any horse riders sharing the space with fast moving cyclists.

As a result of community consultation and objection by the residents of Hawker to a bike path through their dog off leash area, the shared path has now been entirely rerouted through the underpass – making it a certainty that fast-moving commuter bikes will be sharing a confined space with horses.

Figure 2 2022 Drawings for National Trail Underpass



The new drawings for this section of the shared path (Figure 2) are extremely disturbing. Not only do they still show a completely blind western approach to the underpass, but they show that the shared path on the Hawker approach will merge with the eastern approach to the underpass out of an incised path with no indication of any measures to slow cyclists. Horse riders coming up out of the underpass could easily meet cyclists coming downhill at them at speed.

In the Stakeholder Engagement Report<sup>2</sup> the project purports to address our concerns. ACTEA's responses are in red in the table below.

Table 1

ACT Equestrian Association expressed concern about the Bicentennial National Trail being disrupted by the shared	In order to deconflict the BNT with the shared user path, TCCS has commenced the process of relocating the BNT through the adjacent rural property to minimise interaction on the shared user path between equestrians and other users. There has
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<sup>2</sup> [http://203.9.249.10/e-registerfiles/pubnote/pdf/SUPP-202138722-S144C-STAKE\\_H-01.pdf](http://203.9.249.10/e-registerfiles/pubnote/pdf/SUPP-202138722-S144C-STAKE_H-01.pdf) Page 25

<p>path location.</p>	<p>been no detailed consultation with the BNT Coordinator about where this route will go, but the shortest route to the underpass is through the farmhouse curtilage itself. This is not an option because of privacy and, highly likely, farm dogs. ACTEA is acutely aware that Lands End has been purchased by the ACT Government as part of its development land bank and has no faith that any equestrian route in Lands End is protected. In any case there are NO drawings indicating how the National Trail will safely connect down an embankment and across the Cemetery Access Road into the underpass. The short section interaction on the shared zone, through the underpass, will be regulated with appropriate signage. The Project keeps suggesting that the underpass itself is the only problem with the routing of the shared path <u>which is not the case</u>. Signage is NOT an active approach to equestrian safety and there is no evidence that it ever has been.</p>
<p>The ACT Equestrian Association strongly objects to the shared path being routed through the Lands End underpass.</p>	<p>Mitigation measures are being incorporated into the Project to make the alignment safe for horse riders, horses, cyclists and pedestrians. ACTEA has heard of no mitigating measures that will reduce the risk to local riders and travellers using this lengthened underpass now shared by speeding bikes. Advisory signage will be installed to address these issues. ACTEA's experience elsewhere is that advisory signage is purely decorative as far as many cyclists are concerned.</p>
<p>ACT Equestrian Association and the local BNT Section Coordinator expressed strong concern about the lack of consideration given to the safety of horse riders, and even walkers, having to share the underpass and its approaches with fast moving bicycles.</p>	<p>Fencing adjacent to the path on the eastern approach to the underpass will be removed, as will some vegetation to improve sight lines into the underpass. Horse riders need to be able to GET OFF the steep eastern approach especially now the shared path will be entering from the east at the steepest point of the National Trail route. Issues will arise before horse even get to the underpass itself. Signage will be installed to instruct both horse riders and cyclists to dismount before crossing through the underpass. Who will be ensuring that cyclists coming at speed onto the eastern, concrete access lane will actually stop before they startle a horse, dismount, and walk through the underpass??? Not going to happen. If you make riders get off their horses, where will they be able to safely position their horses to remount after leaving the underpass? There is no approach to the underpass that does not leave the horses in the middle of the bike path at the mercy of the next speeding bike. Signage will also be installed to instruct pedestrians or cyclists to remain outside the underpass if it is already occupied by a horse. Again, ACTEA's experience in underpasses with similar signage elsewhere in Canberra is that it is purely decorative as far as many cyclists are concerned if they notice</p>

	<p>it at all. Safety mirrors will be installed at the bends in the path. These will only work if there is somewhere to get out of the way if a horse rider spots an oncoming bike. There is no drawings anywhere to explain how this will work at either end of the underpass where there is limited space to move off the path dedicated to cyclists.</p> <p>There is no attempt anywhere to force bikes to slow down. On rail trails used by horses in Victoria there are chicanes where the trail crosses every farm entry or road. Cyclist should have to dismount to get around the angle of two parallel metal bars spaced far apart enough to allow the passage of horses</p> 
<p>ACTEA requests that the shared path be moved in its entirety to the eastern verge of William Hovell Drive.</p>	<p>Due to the various constraints from different parts of the project, having the Shared Path on the western (we assume this is a typo!) side of WHD in this location is deemed the most appropriate. The proposed route of the shared path from the corner of Drake Brockman Drive through to the point at which it turns south behind Hawker is designed as a risk to the safety of horses and their riders using the National Trail. To pursue this objective is reckless in the extreme and inconsistent with the ACT Government's commitment to the maintenance of a safe National Trail.</p>

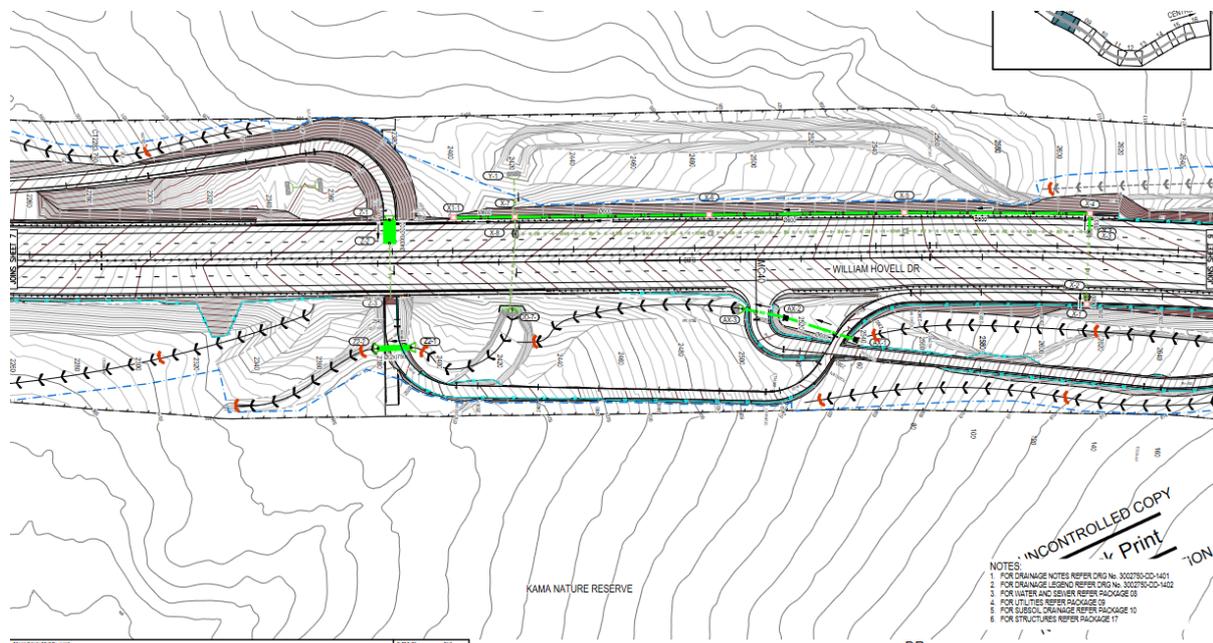
There is no question at all that should this route be made as unsafe as indicated very few travellers on the National Trail will be attempting to use it leading pack horses and very few local riders will risk their safety and that of their horses – **thereby effectively closing the National Trail.**

- The Cemetery Access Road should have a wide clear verge and speed humps to slow down vehicles
- The shared path should return to the eastern side of William Hovell Drive as originally proposed.
- Chicanes should be installed at a suitable distance from the underpass to slow down any fast-moving cyclists
- Horse mounting blocks should be provided on flat surfaces well away from the underpass.



In this drawing the stock access path is visible as background to the proposed shared path route linking the southern extension to The Pinnacle Nature Reserve to the north and Karma Nature Reserve to the south. There are existing stock gates in the fence lines of both Reserves. There appears to be no provision for safely moving stock onto the shared path and through the underpass.

Figure 5 Karma Stock Underpass 2022 Plan



From the above drawing it is plain that there has never been any intention of connecting the stock underpass to the gate in the fence of The Pinnacle Extension. If anything, the design of the bike path has made what is currently a slight slope into an unnavigable obstacle. If this design is implemented there will be no clear, safe way to get cattle, let alone horses, across William Hovell Drive at this point.

**As a management necessity for the movement of grazing animals into the Karma Reserve, a safe access route should be shown in the plans for this section of the shared path.**

### 3. Shared Path Link Between Coulter Drive and Bindubi Street

ACTEA has had one short field trip with the Project Management in regard to this addition to the William Hovell project. On the verge between Coulter Drive and Bindubi Street is a designated equestrian trail shown on the Transport Canberra and City Services official map of equestrian routes in the ACT<sup>3</sup>. ACTEA is very concerned that this new shared path is as far away as possible from the equestrian route and between it and the William Hovell carriage way.

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<https://actgov.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=4f9a0dc6b62c4d62b784d4f4d16f299b&folderid=164bb1a3ea574c01b643b0d9cf57dd23>

Figure 6 Design for the Whitlam Electricity Substation showing the access road in brown. The existing faint double lines parallel to William Hovell drive show the existing equestrian route.



Since 2017 ACTEA has been in consultation with Evoenergy regarding the part of this equestrian route which will be impacted by the Whitlam electricity substation on the corner of Coulter Drive. ACTEA is very happy with the arrangement for horses to share the vehicle access road to the substation and wish to avoid any situation in which the proposed shared path impinges on the safe connection of the equestrian route with this access road or with the cavaletti in the fence line to the east of the substation.

**ACTEA and the National Trail Co-ordinator have put a lot of time and energy into engaging with the consultation process for the William Hovell duplication. We do not feel that we have gained much for that effort to date. Forcing horses to share a long, low, narrow underpass with speeding bicycles is not an improved or enhanced outcome. There is no alternative route for the National Trail in this place. Making it impossible to connect the current National Trail route in the Pinnacle Nature Reserve to the Molonglo River Corridor lacks foresight.**

We think there has to be a better outcome.

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