

**Submission  
No 8**

**INQUIRY INTO AGISTMENT OF HORSES AT YARALLA  
ESTATE**

**Name:** Ms Jacqueline Puz

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Jacqueline Puz

19<sup>th</sup> July, 2013

The Director, Select Committee on the Agistment  
of Horses at Yaralla Estate Legislative Council.  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000

To The Hon Robert Borsak MLC Committee Chair,

**RE: CURRENT AND FUTURE AGISTMENT OF HORSES ON THE YARALLA ESTATE**

I am a resident of Concord West for 27 years and I regularly visit the Dame Edith Walker Estate (Yaralla) as a means of escaping the city for some “country” respite. The Walker Estates is a rare gem in Sydney; indeed it is believed to be the last intact Edwardian estate in Australia.

I am writing to voice my concerns about both the long and short term plans of the Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) for the Yaralla Estate. The department has demonstrated to the community that it cannot be trusted in its behaviour regarding the Estate. To date SLHD has operated with stealth in neglecting to notify the community of their decision to restore the house to a health facility, evict the community horses and install the Mounted Police horses. It was only *after* the contract was signed with Mounted Police that SLHD held a formal meeting with the community to advise of their activities. In response to community outrage SLHD said they would tear up the contract with the Mounted Police and put the agistment licence out to tender. However the community believes that this is just a motion to quell public anger, and the tender will nonetheless be geared in favour of the Mounted Police.

To justify the removal of community horses SLHD commissioned an audit of the land by an unsuitably qualified company, Blue Visions, which specialises in development projects. This company is known to have financial ties to the current state government. Hence the final report was compromised on two counts; it was not produced by an independent authority and the company was not suitably qualified to issue such a report. Unsurprisingly, the recommendations in the report conveniently satisfies the agenda as set out by SLHD.

The Walker Trusts Act states that the land is to be dedicated to *public* health purposes, *public* open space or horse agistment. It is my belief that the process of removing community horses and installing Mounted Police horses in the paddocks is not only contrary to the spirit of the Will, but also the first step in removing public access to the estate. Despite assurances by SLHD that public access would remain unchanged, it is obvious to residents that Mounted Police horses would require increased security which would directly impact on public access both to the horses and to the estate in general. New signs have already been erected warning the public of fines if they park on the grounds, and an electronic gate is to be installed at the second gate to stop public car access.

I have always enjoyed walking down to the estate, patting and talking to the community horses, wandering around the rose garden and grounds in general. To show my appreciation of having access to such a wonderful slice of Sydney I have personally cleaned up the mangroves on the estate

as a community service, and every fortnight I go down to the mangroves to maintain the current state of cleanliness. However, the bags of rubbish that I collect can be quite heavy and so I park on the estate behind the squash court to reduce the distance I need to walk when carrying my load. This will not be possible for me once the electronic gate is installed.

Over time I fear access will continue to be eroded due to various 'security' issues (real or imagined) with Mounted Police horses, until finally all public access to the estate is denied. Once the community have been locked out of the estate it will only be a matter of time before privatisation will occur.

I request that you put a halt to the coordinated and planned reduction of public access to the Yaralla Estate. Further, I request that the Select Committee on the Agistment of Horses at Yaralla Estate Legislative Council recommend reinstating the community horses, which were cruelly and unnecessarily evicted on the word of a dubious report. The Yaralla Estate needs the Legislative Council's support and advocacy for agistment of community horses owned by ordinary community members to continue for generations to come. I believe the actions of SLHD have proven to be underhanded, dishonest and untrustworthy, and alludes to the larger plan for development. Please advocate that the Yaralla Estate remains as it has been used for the last 65 years and fight for the people of NSW maintaining our current and continued access to, and enjoyment of Yaralla.

I eagerly await to hear of the Legislative Council's recommendations in addressing this very important community issue and look forward to a positive and just outcome for the entire community's benefit.

Yours faithfully,

JACQUELINE PUZ