

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 31/07/2013

Partially Confidential

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

31st July 2013

To The Hon Robert Borsak MLC Committee Chair,

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

As a New South Wales constituent, I would like to add my voice to the concerns that the Concord Community and residents have raised regarding Yaralla Estate. I echo the concerns and have added some further comments below.

I am a local resident of the Inner West of Sydney and have been visiting Yaralla and interacting with the horses on the estate for many years. I was extremely alarmed to learn of the government action to enforce the removal of the local horse community from the Yaralla Estate in Concord in favour of Police occupancy, effective 31 May 2013. As a resident of the local area/member of the extended community, I have experienced and witnessed first-hand the benefits provided to the community by local horses on the Yaralla Estate. The Yaralla Estate allows the public to experience and enjoy a little piece of country in our suburban sprawl.

Section 19B of the Walker Trusts Act 1938 clearly states the Yaralla Estate is to be leased or licensed for public hospital/public health, public open space or horse agistment purposes. The suggested changes do not have the support of the community, as shown by the sheer number of attendees at the public meeting at the Concord RSL, the Public Rally on the 29th March at the Arthur Reserve, and over 500 signatures on the parliamentary tabled petition opposing the removal of the community horses at Yaralla.

I have also learnt from the campaign that there is overwhelming evidence of SLHD failing in their duty of care as Trustees of the Yaralla estate. It is the government and the health department that has allowed one of the most historic and iconic crown land areas in Sydney Metropolitan to fall into the reported state of disrepair, yet SLHD and its bureaucrats have shirked any accountability for the lack of due care of the estate.

It should be noted the "independent" audit of the site was made by "Blue Vision". This company specialises in development projects, and this has given further fear to the community that the long term use of the Estate will not be one that meets the terms of the Walker Trust Act.

Please stop the coordinated and planned reduction of public access to the Yaralla Estate. It is hoped that the Select Committee on the Agistment of Horses at Yaralla Estate Legislative Council recommend reinstating community horses. 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. Please recognise that SLHD actions have been untrustworthy and improper 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 will eagerly wait 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.

I would like to be assured that Yaralla Estate will remain intact and in the state that Dame Eadith Walker bequeathed it to the People of NSW. Yaralla Estate is part of the heritage of NSW and an important historical legacy to everyone in Australia, residents and visitors alike. My family and I have taken many visitors to Yaralla Estate who have commented how wonderful it is to see an Edwardian estate within an urban environment and how conducive to health to have such a place close to the city.

It is important that Yaralla Estate remains open and accessible to local residents and the NSW populace as an example of an estate but also a working estate. It is far more pleasant (and safer) to walk or exercise through Yaralla Estate when there are horse owners on the property. The horse owners were there at all hours during daylight along with the caretakers AND they were familiar faces. As a long term resident of Concord West I would like to be assured that the local community has a strong say in the decisions that affect the area we reside in and not be subject to decisions that are made by faceless individuals who did not grow up here and have no interest in Concord West other than making some profit or helping one of their former school buddies or such ilk, make a career building decision. There needs to be more transparency.

Furthermore, it was a cruel, petty and spiteful act to remove elderly horses that had been agisted on the property for over twenty years. I fear that with people who made the decision effecting the horses removal, also in charge of decisions about New South Welshmen/women's health - well, can we, the NSW taxpayer, then expect same with our health care system if even the most vulnerable beings, elderly horses, are treated so shabbily?

I request that an arrangement be made with the local horseowners , the prior agistment holders for a return of the community horse agistment to Yaralla Estate.

No one in the area wishes to see Yaralla Estate broken up or developed into some kind of 'Breakfast Point version 3'. I would also be interested to know whether any political or government representatives have been approached by local or international building developers with regards to Yaralla Estate.

The site also holds natural significance due to the site's proximity to the wetlands of Homebush Bay that are home to a variety of bird and frog species and is therefore, also part of the travel corridor of their travel patterns when seeking food sources and migrating.

It appears that the 'change management' of the use of Yaralla Estate has been handled badly, particularly with regards to the local residents, the horse agistment lease holders, the former caretaker(s) who have been falsely maligned and generally, to the people of NSW who know and love Yaralla Estate just the way it is, with old horses and ponies roaming on it, local people in their trackies and shorts, taking leisurely walks or frantic runs with their energetic dogs; new Mums and Dads wheeling their toddlers and babies in prams down the long drive and pointing to horses and chooks; elderly residents talking and strolling through the heritage garden in the early afternoon; teenagers chatting in the sun on the sandy shore of Parramatta river after the historical Bamboo forest near Dame Eadith's grotto swimming pool during summer holidays. There are many reasons why some places in Sydney should stay the same and Yaralla Estate is one of them, the Rocks area, Vaucluse House and Elizabeth Farm are others. Why should history and legacy remain the exclusive right of the Eastern suburbs or the North Shore – the inner west should be able to retain it's history and links to the past.

Furthermore, I would like to raise that previous correspondence to NSW Health has been met with a derisory response from NSW Health. Obfuscation characterizes how NSW handled this matter and I am disappointed our elected representatives did not step in sooner. In response to correspondence, we were sent a card from NSW Health purporting to be a copy of an "advertisement", described as an open letter however, it was undated and unsigned, and there was no one named as taking responsibility for the communication. This is not acceptable from a Government office where communications need to be authorised. It was very shabby. In addition, the communication took a derisory tone, stating that "Yaralla Estate was not left to the people of Concord" and implying the community were "myth making". Let me remind you very clearly, that that people of Concord are the people of NSW. The intent of Thomas Walker and Dame Edith Walker was to leave the land to the people for benevolent and not religious purposes. Local action groups protested the attempts to change the Estate in the 70's and they will continue to protest if any changes are made today.

The Community horses were pleasant and it was a heavy handed move by NSW Health to remove them on the 31st May. They should have been left there until a proper fair review, until this committee had met and returned.

I would like the Yaralla Estate greenspace to remain as it was and the community horses returned to the agistment. As a local Council, Canada Bay has offered the oversight if needed. The Police can use the facilities at Olympic Park that were built for them and would be better placed for their security needs.

I look forward to the report from the inquiry and anticipate a response favourable to the community.

Yours faithfully,

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Please Note. I would like my address and contact details to remain confidential to the Committee.
Thank you.