

**Submission
No 26**

INQUIRY INTO AGISTMENT OF HORSES AT YARALLA ESTATE

Organisation: Heritage Council of NSW

Date received: 30/07/2013



Ms. Teresa McMichael
Director
Legislative Council Select Committee
on the Agistment of Horses at Yaralla Estate
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

c/o mail:
yarallaestateinquiry@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Attention: Ms. Vanessa Viaggio

Dear Ms. McMichael

Re: Legislative Council Inquiry: Agistment of Horses at Yaralla, Concord West

I write to provide a submission from the Heritage Council of NSW to this inquiry. I understand the deadline is 31st of July.

Yaralla, or the Dame Eadith Walker Convalescent Hospital, is listed in its entirety on the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR) under the *Heritage Act 1977* (NSW). Thus the Heritage Council of NSW is a statutory consent authority for development or alterations to the estate.

The estate's listing and significance includes its rarity and completeness as a self-supporting Edwardian rural estate, now nationally rare so close to a modern city. Part of that significance includes the survival and use of paddocks, grazing, stables and the like.

This submission relates to term of reference (d) – *any other related matter*.

The Heritage Council supports the continued use of the property and its key paddocks for horse grazing as an effective link to the original use of the property. **Attachment A** provides detailed assessment of the values of the grounds surrounding the main built elements of the site and their former historic uses and values. The information supports the centrality of grazing paddocks as an integral part of this estate, i.e. the grazing use plays an active role in maintaining and interpreting Yaralla's heritage values, now and in the future.

I trust this information may be of some assistance to the inquiry. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact myself on 9873 8575 or Mr. Stuart Read at the Heritage Division, Office of Environment and Heritage, on telephone 9873 8554.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Smith 25 July 2013
Deputy Director (Heritage Branch)
Heritage Division
Office of Environment and Heritage
As Delegate of the Heritage Council of NSW



Yaralla Estate (Dame Eadith Walker Convalescent Hospital)

Heritage Significance:

A principal reason for the property's heritage listings is that Yaralla is:

...a unique complex of 19th and early 20th century buildings in an essentially rural landscape setting.... as an exceptionally rare complete example of a large Edwardian private residential estate in Australia and one in close proximity to the city... The estate contains an exceptional group of late 19th century buildings... which clearly demonstrate the workings of a farm of this period... of great significance for its landscape, as an intact estate on the Parramatta River...

The full statement is online – accessible by searching for Yaralla at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/heritagesearch.aspx>:

Significance of Yaralla's paddocks:

With regard to its paddocks, specific references to their heritage significance are made in the 1996 document by Rod Howard & David White Architects in association with D.M. Taylor Landscape Architects, *Dame Eadith Walker Hospital (Yaralla Estate) Conservation and Open Space Management Plan*. Several relevant excerpts follow focussing on the paddocks' values and management.

Landscape Precinct 5 in the above-noted plan is the 'Paddock West' (of Yaralla's drive) and Landscape Precinct 6 is the 'Paddock East'. The historical notes for these units say:

The paddocks formed an important part of The Estate's rural function in providing a grazing area for the cattle and horses in the farm activities. Cattle was (sic: were) shown at the Royal Easter Show and provided milk for The Estate and area for the horses used when buggys (sic: buggies) were the major form of transportation. The eastern section of the western paddock has been used for housing.

The heritage significance of Paddock West (cf. that of the whole Estate) is identified as:

Paddock West is an integral part of The Estate, the paddocks provide a strong contrast in form and visual quality to the surrounding suburban development. The Precinct has aesthetic value as a cultural landscape which forms a rare land use in inner urban areas, with intentional and intact design and continual use as a grazing area from the establishment of The Estate (NB: its founder Isaac Nicholls established the estate pre-1819, selling to his better-remembered successor, Thomas Walker, in 1840).

The heritage significance of Paddock East is identified as equal to that of Paddock West.

Purpose-built elements reinforcing how central farming was as a part of the estate include:

- Stables complex, 1893-8, ranked grade 1 significance – *rare and important example of a late 19th century stable architecture (with six horse stalls);*
- Small stable, undated, ranked grade 1 significance – *aesthetic value, important in the context of the farming component of Yaralla...;*
- Dairy (former stables), undated, ranked grade 1 significance – *... important component of farm providing clear evidence of past farming practices;*
- Weatherboard stable – demolished;
- Stable buildings – demolished;
- 8 other estate cottages for employees, some of whom worked the farm. Not all of these survive.

Management of the estate & paddocks:

Constraints and requirements for the estate's landscape components include:

- *The essential spatial relationships between buildings and the landscape elements of major significance on The Estate should not be compromised;*
- *No actions or activities should occur which detract from the important historic and visual qualities of (various building ensembles) and their landscaped setting;*
- *The evidence of past use in the built and other fabric should be retained;*
- *The current area of The Estate (which incorporates an early land grant) should remain whole and not*

be further subdivided. It should remain under one ownership and management.

The Conservation Policy for the estate includes:

- All works carried out on The Estate should facilitate and not obscure, confuse or detract from the interpretation of the place as a largely intact Edwardian estate having considerable integrity and cultural significance. The former function of the estate as a working farm, and its survival as an estate should be recognised as having major importance in regard to its cultural significance;
- Detailed landscape conservation and management plans should be prepared for all landscape precincts (see below). These should include provision for maintenance, rejuvenation and restoration as outlined in section 10 of this study...

Conservation recommendations for the Paddocks include:

- Further investigation required (including) assessment of fencing requirements;
- Conservation works required: it is essential that the area remain as the present open space quality. The continual use of the precinct by grazing animals is integral to the rural quality of The Estate. Repair and replace fences where necessary;
- Ongoing maintenance works required: (include) fertilise and improve pasture; water regime and points to be established.
- Master Plan principles: (include) maintain paddocks as open space; maintain visual access to houses (from Nullawarra Avenue and Yaralla's drive); restore planting to outer drive...
- Existing compatible uses: (include) use of the paddocks for agistment of horses – the grazing paddocks are generally in poor condition with many weed species, restricted watering points and an inflexible system for the movement of fencing through the area. The paddocks require upgrading, with the pasture improved, fences upgraded and an adequate watering system installed;
- The horses require areas for exercise and we suggest the potential for riding tracks along the foreshore or other areas linking in with The Estate be investigated;
- Potential Future Uses: (include) The distinctive rural atmosphere of The Estate (which forms part of its significance) is achieved through the qualities of physical and visual isolation. Given the size of The Estate and its diverse precincts, there is ample scope for a range of activities on the site which could include: ...
 - model farm.
- The rural quality of The Estate with its purpose-built farm buildings combined with The Estate's regional location close to the centre of Sydney's metropolitan region provides a potential facility for a model farm. This could be used as an educational resource and by school groups throughout the metropolitan region, a local, regional and international tourist attraction. The model farm could be marketed with 'Yaralla brand' fruit, vegetables, etc. The area surrounding the Dairy and related farm buildings provides the most suitable location.

***The significance of the whole estate includes:**

- (historic value): ... demonstrates a continuous progression, from Colonial farm to Victorian estate, then self-contained Edwardian estate and finally a State-run institution...(and retains) evidence of all the stages of the evolving European occupation of the place.
- (aesthetic value): ... derives partly from its important, isolated landscape setting, which is related to the Parramatta River and the adjacent Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital, as well as its rural and picturesque qualities;
- (social value): ... potential to provide an invaluable recreational and educational resource for the community. By virtue of its accessibility, setting, integrity and other attributes, the place facilitates public education through on-site interpretation.

A 2011 Conservation Management Plan Review by Godden Mackay Logan includes:

- Significance – landscape elements – High/Medium (p.71)
Exceptional: relationship of main building to its landscaped setting and wider surroundings (including key views to and from the building, Yaralla's curtilage including all major landscape and garden features – approach drive, trees, terraces, pathways, etc).
- Conservation Principles (pp.112-13):
6.3.4 – Setting Components
Policy 16 – site roads and front drive (including...) should be retained and maintained in their current layout and character pending further detailed research.