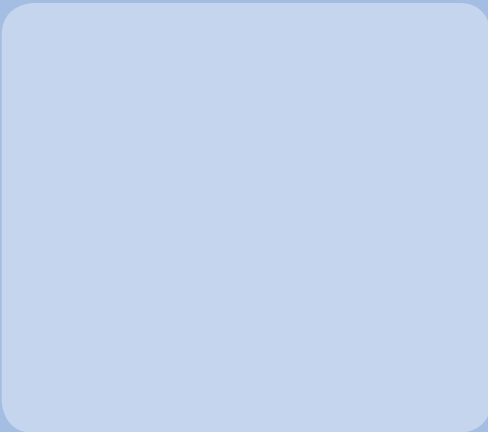


# RESEARCH PAPER

Horse riding trails and facilities in Terrey Hills & Duffys Forest  
Adopted December 2009





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# 1. Introduction

The suburbs of Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills are semi-rural in nature and horse riding is a popular activity in the area. There are a number of horse trails in Ku-ring-gai Chase and Garigal National Parks, as well as numerous private horse arenas and other equestrian facilities. Council manages four reserves in the area which provide a range of horse facilities including JJ Melbourne Hills, Rhoker, Kinka and Anembo. Council is also responsible for managing the Bridle Trail, a trail that runs from Terrey Hills to Duffys Forest.

This Paper acknowledges the unique qualities of the Terrey Hills / Duffys Forest area, and the special challenges faced by horse riders in this rural-urban fringe. It looks specifically at the Bridle trail and how it links with other trails in the National Parks and with the horse facilities within the reserves. The Paper considers the condition and status of the trail to ensure current issues are addressed and horse riding opportunities are improved.

Consultation has been undertaken with a number of horse riding groups as well as other key stakeholders including the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The most common issues in the Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest area in regard to trails and associated facilities have been grouped under the following topic areas:

## Trail routes

- Road crossings, linkages, proposed new routes
- Presence of threatened species

## Trail condition

- Maintenance of current trails, particularly the Bridle Trail
- Appropriate standard for trails
- Signage and available information
- Nature strip encroachments

## Facilities within the reserves

- Existing facilities
- Fees and charges

## Community involvement

- Horse associations and volunteers
- Education of riders

This Paper suggests a number of ways Council could improve overall equestrian amenity in the area. These include: investigating the safety and adequacy of horse access along nature strips; formalising commercial and community group use of equestrian facilities in Council reserves in accordance with Council policies and procedures; and including trail maintenance / renewal in Council's annual planning, budgeting and prioritisation process. The funding and prioritisation of any such works is subject to Council's annual planning and budgeting process and to the inclusion of relevant funding in the Strategic Community Plan.

Whilst this Paper addresses issues of note in the Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest area, many of the issues raised and the solutions and ideas discussed are generally applicable to managing horse riding throughout Warringah.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Horse riding in Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills**

During the equine influenza epidemic in 2007, Industry and Investment NSW reported that there were approximately 1000 to 1200 horses in Warringah. Most of these horses were located in Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest, with the majority of horses ridden in the Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills area also stabled in the area.

Results of a Residents Telephone Survey undertaken in 2008 during the revision of Warringah's Recreation Strategy indicated that 8% of residents surveyed from the Northern area of Warringah (including Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills) had used community horse riding facilities over the last 12 months.

Most horse riders using the trails in the area would be considered recreational or weekend riders. These riders are looking to exercise their horses and ride in attractive rural settings. The local clubs (North Shore Horse and Pony Association, Forest Hills Pony Club and Northside Riding Club) comprise of approximately 475 active members, many of whom compete in local events in the arenas at JJ Melbourne Hills Reserve and Frenchs Forest Showground.

### **2.2 Roadside Trails**

A 'trail' can be defined as a corridor, route or pathway with strong linkages with the natural environment, open space networks and cultural heritage (Government of SA 2005). There are a number of informal roadside 'trails' in Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills.

The main trail is the Bridle Trail, as shown on the Map. Current street directories (including Sydways and UBD) indicate that the trail runs from Booralie Road westwards to the end of Thuddungra Road. Sydways also shows equestrian trails alongside Anembo Road, Laitoki Road and Cooyong Road. In practice, the Bridle Trail extends to Anembo Reserve via Anembo Road in the south west. At its eastern end, riders commonly use Kallaroo and Cooyong Roads to access JJ Melbourne Hills Reserve via an underpass beneath Mona Vale Road. In total the Bridle Trail runs for approximately six kilometres, with another two to three kilometres of 'equestrian trails' marked on various street directories.

Some sections of the trail consist of a narrow track within the nature strip, between properties and the road, whereas other sections of the trail run along the road verge nearer to traffic. The condition of the trail varies along the route with some sections being reasonably clear and others overgrown and inaccessible. Warringah Council is responsible for the Bridle Trail as it is located on land managed by Council, which includes road reserves and nature strips.

The Bridle Trail would be considered an 'easy' trail which is most suitable for novices, social groups and others seeking a relatively short distance trail requiring a basic level of skill and horse and rider fitness. Easy trails are likely to be shared use and more frequent encounters can be expected with other users including cyclists, walkers and runners (Government of SA 2005).

In relation to horse riding on or beside a road, the NSW Road Rules 2008 state that horses can ride on footpaths and nature strips, but must give way to pedestrians. Horses can also ride single file on roads.

### **2.3 Bush Trails**

There are bush trails within the reserves that are managed by Council, including approximately 2 km of trails within Anembo Reserve, a 500 metre trail in JJ Melbourne Hills Reserve and a number of short access trails within Kinka Reserve. The Bushland Plan of Management for Rhoker Reserve proposes that the access trail through that reserve be reinstated.

There are 15 kilometres of authorised horse trails in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. The rest of the park is off limits to horses. Horse riding is authorised on the following trails as shown on the Map:

- Perimeter Trail
- Long Trail
- Wilkins Trail
- Terrey Hills Trail
- Cooyong / Neverfail Trail

Prior to 1987, horse riders used many other trails in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park as well as those listed above. The decision in 1987 to limit horse riding to the trails listed above was a very contentious issue at the time.

The Cullamine Trail (see Map) is approximately one kilometre long. It enables access to the Perimeter Trail, the longest trail (7km) permissible for horses in the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. Riders from Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills access the Cullamine Trail from Booralie Road. The trail itself is a formalised, gated fire trail and is suitable for horse use. It is on an unformed Crown road.

There are also a number of other trails that, while they are well used, are in fact on private property. The Namba Trail is an example of a trail on private property. There is also a trail extending from the end of the Cooyong / Neverfail Trail to St Ives Showground.

## 2.4 Arenas

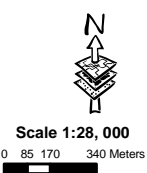
Council provides large arenas at both Anembo and JJ Melbourne Hills Reserves. There are also clubhouse facilities at JJ Melbourne Hills Reserve and a small horse riding area within Kinka Reserve. There are numerous smaller private arenas, riding schools and horse stables throughout the area, indicating a strong involvement in horses and riding in this area. In practice, most roadside verges are used to access these areas.













The arena at Anembo Reserve



Map 1 Existing and possible future horse trails in Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest



- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Council Trails                                 |  Horse Facility     |
|  National Park Trails                           |  Council Reserve    |
|  Other Trails                                   |  National Park      |
|  Additional Link Horse Trails for investigation |  Threatened species |
|  Potential Multi-use Trails                     |  LGA Boundary       |
- (Regional Multiple Use Trail Strategy 2007)

The publisher of and/or contributors to this map accept no responsibility for injury, loss or damage arising from its use or errors or omissions therein. While all care is taken to ensure a high degree of accuracy, users are invited to report any map discrepancies and should use this map with due care.

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### **3. Regional context - beyond Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills**

Beyond Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills, there are a further six kilometres of authorised trails in the Garigal National Park in the Davidson and Belrose area including the Cascades Track, Bare Creek Track, Lower Camborne Track and Heath Track. These trails generally head west from Davidson / Belrose towards St Ives.

There is also evidence of illegal horse riding on other trails in both Ku-ring-gai Chase and Garigal National Parks, extending from trails where horses are permitted into off-limit areas.

At Frenchs Forest, Council provides a number of horse facilities at the Frenchs Forest Showground, including a small arena and hitching posts. This facility is formally booked at least 8 times each year for gymkhana and dressage events by the Frenchs Forest Agriculture and Horticultural Society. Two of these events attract participants from across the state. The other 6 events are primarily catering for local riders and attract between 100 and 200 participants at each event. There is limited information regarding the use of this area by individuals and their horses outside of these events.

There are no formal horse trails provided by either Pittwater or Ku-ring-gai Councils outside of the designated tracks and trails in the National Parks within each local government area.

The St Ives Show Ground is a large sporting facility in the Ku-ring-gai Council area which is adjacent to the boundary of the Warringah local government area. The Princess Anne Horse Show Grounds are located at the Show Grounds and are a major regional horse facility with yards, camping area and warm up arena. This facility is the home base for a number of horse clubs and associations. There is a trail leading from Terrey Hills to the St Ives Show Ground, as shown on the Map.

The Manly Warringah Horse Grounds are located at North Narrabeen Reserve and include the equestrian field and the Manly Warringah Pony Clubhouse including canteen, toilets and six horse bays. The Avondale Pony Club venue is leased exclusively to the Club by Ku-Ring-Gai Council and includes a large arena, cross country course, flat show jumping arena, open riding area and club facilities and amenities.

Major facilities for horses elsewhere in Sydney include the Centennial Parklands Equestrian Park at Centennial Park; the Sydney Equestrian Centre in Dural; the Rural Sports Facility at Galston; and the Sydney International Equestrian Centre at Horsley Park. These are all large facilities providing a range of facilities and opportunities for riders and their horses. There are also numerous equestrian centres and horse trails in the north west of Sydney (Richmond, Windsor, Galston, Dural) and also in the south west of Sydney (Luddenham, Campbelltown, Camden, Picton).

## 4. Current issues

Consultation was undertaken during the preparation of this Paper with Northside Riding Club, Forest Hills Pony Club and North Shore Horse and Pony Association and other relevant stakeholders including NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Frenchs Forest Agricultural and Horticultural Society. A number of other groups were also invited to be involved but did not respond.

The results of consultation indicated that the main priority or concern was in regard to the safety of horses, riders and other users of the roads and trails. The safety of all users is affected by many factors including trail route and trail condition. In addition, the facilities within reserves and rider involvement / engagement were further areas of concern.

### 4.1 Trail Condition

#### 4.1.1 Maintenance

The majority of comments and complaints received regarding the trails related to the condition and lack of maintenance undertaken to keep trails safe and clear. It was noted that in some cases inadequate maintenance of the road verges forced riders onto the roads. There is a relatively steep section in the JJ Melbourne Hills reserve which is eroded and is causing some difficulties with the horses.

Council undertakes regular maintenance of the road side verges however there has been issues with road verges containing threatened species. There has been some maintenance of the off-road section of the Bridle trails over the years and there have been numerous working bees initiated by the North Shore Horse and Pony Association and other groups. The ongoing care and maintenance of the Bridle Trail have not been included in Council maintenance budgets and have therefore not been given a maintenance schedule or priority. As well, the maintenance responsibilities of individual services within Council have not previously been clearly defined. In some stretches of the Bridle Trail the appropriate action may be renewal rather than maintenance due to the current standard of the asset.

*To address these issues, Council should consider:*

- *Acknowledging the Bridle Trail as a community asset.*
- *Clarifying maintenance responsibilities within Council and including trail maintenance / renewal in the annual planning, budgeting and prioritisation process.*

The presence of threatened species has created a number of issues regarding maintenance requirements. The endangered Duffys Forest Ecological Community (DFEC) occurs at Kinka Reserve and on either side of Booralie Road for over a kilometre of the Bridle Trail as well as elsewhere throughout Duffys Forest and Terrey Hills. As well, the threatened species *Grevillea caleyi* also occurs in the area. Both *Grevillea caleyi* and DFEC are protected by State and /or Commonwealth legislation.

This means that Council needs to take particular care when undertaking maintenance on the Bridle Trail where it passes through areas with DFEC or *Grevillea caleyi*. It creates a much slower and more expensive process than maintaining other sections of the trail. For example, techniques such as hand pruning and brush cutting are required, as well as targeted weed control.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act requires that a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) be undertaken for works deemed to be an 'activity'. The provision of the Bridle Trail through sensitive bushland areas and the associated maintenance and pruning work have been determined to be an 'activity' and therefore require an Review of Environmental Factors. A Review of Environmental Factors specifies how the maintenance must be undertaken in sensitive bushland areas and threatened species locations.

*In sections of the trail where threatened species are found to be present, a Review of Environmental Factors should be undertaken to assess the removal of threatened vegetation.*

Regular maintenance on the trail should then be conducted in accordance with the specifications in the REF.



The Bridle Trail

#### 4.1.2 Trail standards

Unlike walking tracks there are currently no specific Australian standards for horse trails. There are a number of groups working on the development of standards, including HorseSA and Trails Australia.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service currently use standards derived from the USA. These include 2.1 metres vertical clearance, 2.7 metres horizontally, with a 1.2 metre tread width. Local horse groups have suggested that at least 1.5 metres width and a 3 metre vertical and horizontal clearance would be appropriate. From a bushland management perspective, a vertical clearance of 3 metres is appropriate to limit regrowth of vegetation.

At the 2008 Tracks and Trails Conference it was unanimously resolved to form a national alliance called 'Trails Australia'. The primary objective of this group will be to drive the national agenda in sustainable recreational and tourism trail development and to ensure a more strategic approach to trail investment. (<http://www.horsesa.asn.au/zeolite/zdocument/838> April 8 2009):

It would be expected that the establishment of standards for the various trails will assist Council in the ongoing development of the track and trail network system.

*It is considered important that Council maintain contact with relevant groups, and where appropriate, be involved in the development of trail standards and related issues. Where appropriate and subject to constraints Council will seek to apply the trail standards currently used by the National Parks NSW.*

#### 4.1.3. Signage and provision of information

There is limited up to date directional and safety signage along the trails, roads and within the reserves. There is no information regarding horse trails on Council's web site and the information in street directories is limited and at times misleading.

Warringah's Regional Multiple-Use Trails Strategy (2007) recommends that information and interpretation messages are focused, meaningful and applied consistently so they are readily

apparent to the users. This is especially important when public safety messages need to be communicated.

Council has delegated authority to erect sign W5-43 to indicate that a certain area may have horses and riders in the area (see figure 1). A number of these signs are needed along the Bridle Trail and elsewhere in the Duffys Forest / Terrey Hills area.

Consultation also indicated that there were some issues with the sharing of trails and concerns that there is conflict between different users. Trail etiquette signs are recommended by the Multiple-Use Trails Strategy to promote safe and responsible use. It may be appropriate to install signs which address this need in the future. Information that assists with the management and protection of the area may also be required to ensure that users of the trails do not adversely affect the environment and other users in the area.

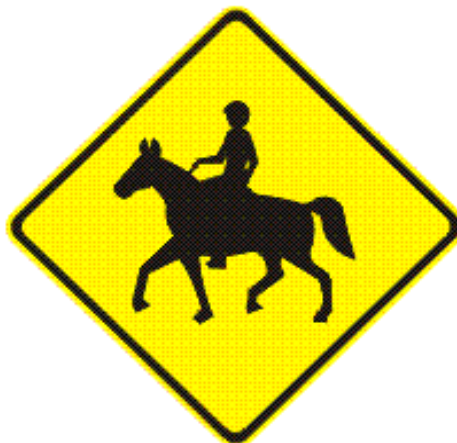


Figure 1 W5 – 43 Sign

*To address the above issues Council could consider:*

- *Installing appropriate safety and directional signage*
- *Facilitating the distribution of information relevant to the use of horse trails and facilities, including information which promotes awareness of facilities, enhances the safety of all users, and supports good management of the local environment*

#### **4.1.4 Nature strips and encroachments**

Council Policy GOV-PL 825 'Encroachments/ Constructions and Road Reserve Lease Policy' states that footways and road reserves are to be accessible to pedestrians and other users of the road. It is Council's intention through this policy to present clear and precise information to the public who have encroachments / constructions on nature strips. The Policy states that all encroachments are to be inspected and consideration is to be given to the effect on pedestrian access, alienation of public space and safety risk.

Landscaped areas and garden beds are considered a 'Type One' encroachment under the Policy, which means that they are considered unlikely to result in significant risk for Council. However this is not always the case, particularly along the Bridle Trail where some garden encroachments pose risks to both horses and riders. Type one encroachments must still be applied for under Section 138 of the Roads Act 1993.

There are major garden encroachments on the nature strip along Thuddungra Road and the type of planting (thick bushy and prickly) has affected access and use of this trail and in some cases the horses have been forced onto the road. In addition, driveways may present a hazard or barrier to horse riders along the Bridle Trail, depending on their design. Warringah Local Environment Plan 2000 contains a reference to minimising traffic and pedestrian conflicts at driveways and other access ways (clause 72). In the Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest area horse riders would be considered as pedestrians for the purposes of this clause and their safe access along the Bridle Trail should be considered in relation to new developments.

It is considered reasonable that Council investigate the safety and adequacy of horse (and other public) access along nature strips in the area and take appropriate action to address any significant issues – particularly as they relate to public safety.

## 4.2 Trail Routes

### 4.2.1 Routes

The Bridle trail is primarily a link trail for riders in the area to get to each of the Council reserves or to the National Park trails. It is currently located on either the road verge or the nature strips through the roads of Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest. There are a number of points along Booralie Road which are considered difficult or dangerous for horses, horse riders and traffic in the area. In addition, the Bridle Trail passes through threatened species of vegetation along Booralie Road between Kinka and Rhoker Reserves.

During consultation for the preparation of this Paper it had been suggested that it may be possible to avoid the most difficult parts of Booralie Road by re-routing the Bridle Trail. A possible alternative route (see Map) is to divert the Bridle Trail down Kinka, Weemala and Killawarra Roads (which is already used by horses) to Anembo Road, and to close and rehabilitate the trail along Booralie Road beyond Kinka Reserve. To maintain access to Booralie Road and the Cullamine trail consideration could be given to formalising a trail through the section of Weemala adjacent to the NSW Gun Club, although a safe road crossing would be required on Booralie Road. Notably, Weemala is a crown road and permission would need to be sought for any development and use. This section of Weemala Road is known as the 'Weemala Link', identified in Warringah's Multiple Use Trail Strategy. The unformed trail in Weemala Road appears to be used regularly by horses and is considerable erosion along the trail (see photo). This would require immediate rectification and ongoing maintenance if it is to be a safe and environmentally sustainable option.



Erosion along the trail in Weemala Road (Unformed Crown Road)

However the submissions received during the public exhibition period did not support this as it would restrict access to riders east and north of the Gun Club. However the development of the Weemala Link was seen as a possible new link to the Bridle Trail should the appropriate resources become available.

There are a number of other links (primarily on Crown Land) which could be considered to further enhance the Bridle Trail and develop a series of circuits linked to the National Park Trails and/or the proposed trails in the Multiple-Use Trails Strategy (2007). These have been included on the Map.

The development of any new route or link is dependant on the availability of the relevant resources to construct and maintain the link and entire route. Approval from the relevant land owner would also be required.

The Map also illustrates those potential new trails identified in the Multiple-Use Trails Strategy (2007) that could be suitable for use by horses.

### **4.2.3 Safe Crossings**

There are a number of points along the Bridle Trail where riders need to cross the road. The ACT government recommend that where major highways affect the trail system, provision should be made to cross the road safely, for example by means of an underpass. At lesser roads, sign posting and reduced speed limits should be sufficient (ACT Urban Services). An underpass was built in 1992 under Mona Vale Road as a joint project between the RTA and Council. However at this stage there is no signage at any of the crossings along the Bridle Trail.

Some roads are particularly dangerous to cross due to a combination of reduced visibility for either horse rider or driver, and vehicle speed. Care is needed in directing riders away from these spots when deciding on trail routes. The Booralie / Thuddungra / Joalah Roads intersection area is an example of a dangerous stretch of road to cross.

*Council should consider investigating the adequacy of current road crossings, particularly in terms of signage, and where necessary recommend further crossing opportunities to improve the safety of riders and others.*

### **4.2.4 Links**

There have been requests from a number of horse groups for additional formalised links to the Bridle Trail. The aim of the links is to enable safe passage of horses and their riders to the Bridle Trail. Most of the requests for links are simply requests for a formalised recognition of horse riding along roads such as Cooyong, Kallaroo and Weemala Roads. These have been shown on the Map.

Some links have been suggested that pass through private property. The Namba Trail is one of these. Members of the horse riding community are concerned that these trails may be lost when the land is sold or developed. Council cannot take into account the loss of access if an owner wants to develop a property and restrict or remove access that is otherwise illegal. However, it may be possible to seek an easement or other 'right of way' for this purpose.

The Multiple Use Trail Strategy proposes that there be a trail along Booralie Rd from Rhoker to Cullamine which would be suitable for horse riders as it would link the Cullamine Trail with the Bridle Trail.

### **4.2.5 Parking facilities**

Local stakeholders consulted during the preparation of this Paper suggest that the traffic in the area is increasing and that it is becoming more difficult to ride down a number of the roads which join the Bridle Trail due to the increase presence of cars and horse floats driving and parking on the roads. There is a limited amount of parking at trail heads, so typically horse floats are parked along roadsides, reducing visibility and increasing the danger to all road users (see photo).



Horse floats in Mallawa Road

It is noted that the parking of horse floats as indicated is not an illegal practice. *To address this issue however, Council should continue to monitor the roads and road verges for the increased presence of horse floats and traffic, identify any major issues including restriction of horse usage/access as well as dangers to other road users and, where appropriate, take further action to address public safety concerns.*

## **4.3 Facilities within Reserves**

### **4.3.1 Horse facilities at the reserves**

There are four reserves in the area that are used by horse riders. Each one has a Plan of Management with actions relating to a range of values. The main value of each of the reserves is the preservation of bushland. However they also cater for horse riding and other recreational uses.

At Kinka Reserve, Council maintains a cleared area for horses and a number of horse rails. There are also a number of trails leading from the Bridle Trail or Kinka Road to the cleared area. Actions in the Plan of Management relate to upgrading and stabilising certain trails to allow for horse riding and providing opportunities for continuing informal horse related activities on the cleared area of the site including the construction of hitching rails.

Anembo Reserve contains almost 2 km of trails suitable for horses, as well as a large fenced arena. The trails are maintained in conjunction with the Rural Fire Service. The arena is very popular with the public. Private tuition takes place there as well. Actions in the Plan of Management relate to rationalising access requirements at the entrance to the reserve; maintaining fire trails to Australian Standard; and determining future use and management of the arena considering level of use, safety and maintenance requirements.



Horses at JJ Melbourne Hills Reserve

JJ Melbourne Hill Reserve has an arena with a clubhouse for the Forest Hills Pony Club and associated infrastructure as well as jumps in the reserve. It is used almost every weekend of the year and on various week days. There is also a trail to the underpass. There are a number of actions in the Plan of Management that relate to the upgrading, relocation or maintenance of equestrian facilities. On the whole these actions are in hand.

The Plan of Management for Rhoker Reserve contains an action to reinstate the trail between Joalah and Booralie Roads, which will improve the safety of riders in this area.

### **4.3.2 Fees and charges**

Equestrian groups are not formally required to contribute financially to the provision of trails or facilities, although some of the facilities at JJ Melbourne Hills Reserve have been funded and constructed by the Forest Hills Pony Club. A number of community and private horse groups use some of these reserves on a regular basis, however they are not charged for use of these facilities.

Council levies a seasonal charge of \$7.00 per adult and \$5.00 per child for use of the sportsfields allocated by the Manly Warringah Pittwater Sporting Union. This fee is levied as a user-pays charge, to assist in paying for maintenance and upgrading. There may be justification for such a fee to be charged for users of other sporting facilities at reserves, to offset the cost of maintenance. At JJ Melbourne Hills Reserve, for example, annual grounds maintenance costs for the horse arena and its immediate surrounds are in the order of \$12,000. In addition, a further \$30,000 was spent in 2008 to resurface the arena.

There is also considerable use of JJ Melbourne Hills and Anembo reserves by commercial groups and private providers who are currently not charged. The current fee structure for commercial training would be \$35 per hour, based on 2008/2009 Annual fees and charges.

*It is considered appropriate that Council review the status of commercial activities and community sporting groups using Council reserves / equestrian facilities and formalise use in accordance with Council policies and procedures.*

### **4.3.3 Data Collection**

The 2009 Recreation Strategy notes that there is limited access to relevant and meaningful data regarding usage of Council assets. It has been recommended in the Recreation Strategy that effective systems be developed to collect and collate data which will assist in future decision making and identifying emerging issues.

*The collection of data regarding the usage of horse trails and facilities should be considered and given the interest of the local horse community it is recommended that this be done in collaboration with relevant groups.*

## **4.4 Community involvement**

### **4.4.1 Horse associations and volunteers**

The Warringah Community Directory list 6 community groups involved in horse riding and there are others who operate at facilities outside of this local government area but cater for Warringah residents. A number of the groups have worked voluntarily on maintaining sections of trails in Warringah themselves and as mentioned earlier, have also helped fund infrastructure upgrades. Overall the horse fraternity are active within their local communities and willing to participate in developing relevant facilities.

*Community horse groups in Warringah have expressed interest in working more closely with Warringah Council to better maintain and develop the horse trails and facilities, and Council should ensure these groups are engaged appropriately for future projects and programs.*

#### 4.4.2 Etiquette and education of riders

Ensuring that the people who ride horses do so in a responsible and safe manner is vital on urban trails such as those in Terrey Hills and Duffys Forest. There are many codes of conduct for horse riding. The following example is from the Government of South Australia (2005):

1. Ride only on designated trails
2. Taking short cuts or forming new trails is not friendly to the environment
3. When muddy or eroded avoid using trails
4. Comply with signage
5. Respect the rights of other users
6. Politely indicate to other trail users how to pass
7. Ride appropriately to suit terrain, visibility and possible interaction with other trail users
8. Minimise impact on plants and animals by staying on the trail
9. Remove all rubbish, manure and excess feed from the float parking areas
10. Let others know of this code

The Horse Riding in Ku-ring-gai Chase and Garigal National Park brochure (2003) also includes the following points:

- Keep trails open by setting a good example of environmentally sound and socially responsible horse riding. The Australian road rules apply to horse riders on roads.
- Horse riders and other recreational trail users utilise this facility at their own risk, horse riding involves risks and should be undertaken with care and regards to other persons and the environment at all times. The trail is subject to natural forces, varying weather conditions and it is highly recommended to wear Australian standards approved riding helmets and bright reflective clothing.

Most trail damage is caused when it is wet. There are also safety considerations associated with riders using the trails when they are wet, slippery or unstable. There may be some merit in closing certain trails in wet conditions. There are a number of factors to consider, including which trails to close, and how to notify riders (email system, wet weather line, etc).

*Regarding a rider code of conduct, Council may wish to consider developing and promoting a Warringah code in consultation with stakeholders that reflects best practice for riders and the environment.*

## 5. Implementation

Projects and actions identified in this Paper will be assessed against other priorities of Council as an ongoing element of Council's planning process. Commitment to implementing particular actions is given once these actions appear in Council's Strategic Community Plan and related business plans.

The listing of a recommendation in this Paper is not a guarantee that it will be implemented within the life of this document; however, the annual review during development of the Strategic Community Plan will ensure that actions are continually assessed and considered.

## **6. Conclusion**

This Paper acknowledges the unique qualities of the Terrey Hills / Duffys Forest area, and the special challenges faced by horse riders in this rural-urban fringe. It provides an overview of current facilities and the issues associated with Council managed trails and reserves in the area. It suggests a number of points for Council to consider that could result in improved facilities for horse riders now and in the future, thereby improving riders' safety and enjoyment. These include: investigating the safety and adequacy of horse access along nature strips; formalising commercial and community group use of equestrian facilities in Council reserves in accordance with Council policies and procedures; and including trail maintenance / renewal in Council's annual planning, budgeting and prioritisation process.

Any decisions made as a result of this Paper will need to be factored in to Council's future planning process and assessed against other priorities of Council.

## References

Tracks and Trails Conference (2008) [http://www.horsesa.asn.au/zeolite/zdocument/838\\_April\\_8\\_2009.7](http://www.horsesa.asn.au/zeolite/zdocument/838_April_8_2009.7)

Government of SA (2005) 'Code of Conduct for Horse Riding'

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## Appendices

- Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park brochure