



STROMLO HORSE RIDERS GROUP

FINAL DRAFT VARIATION TO THE TERRITORY PLAN # 281 MOLONGLO AND NORTH WESTON

SUBMISSION from

STROMLO HORSE RIDERS GROUP

What is the Stromlo Horse Riders Group?

The Stromlo Horse Riders Group (SHRG) was formed at a public meeting on Monday 23 January 2006 at the National Equestrian Centre at the National Equestrian Centre, Kerribee, on the Cotter Road. The purpose of the Group is to act as a focus for consultation with the ACT government in regard to access to Stromlo Forest Park for all horse riders who wish to use the Forest. The SHRG was formed because it had become clear that planning for the redevelopment of Stromlo Forest did not include any consideration of the needs of one group of its traditional users.

SHRG is a loose association of about 120 recreational equestrians who use the Canberra open space system to ride their horses. It is a lobby group rather than a sporting body. SHRG's negotiations with the government in regard to Stromlo Forest Park have been sufficiently successful for the Chief Minister to formally open a site of the designated equestrian trails at Stromlo and spend \$500, 000 in the Park on equestrian infrastructure.

Equestrian Use of the Molonglo Area

Equestrians have ridden their horses to the Equestrian Park at Curtin for Pony Club and through the Stromlo Forest for recreation and exercise since the commercial pine forest was opened to the public for recreational purposes in 1967. The government paddocks in the Weston Creek area (Yarralumla, Curtin and Illoura) have allowed local horse riders access since they were established in the 1960s

In the 1970s, as equestrian activities continued to grow in popularity, Forest Park Riding School at Curtin and Bibaringa Riding School (now Mt Stromlo Equestrian Centre), closer to Mount Stromlo, opened. Properties along the Cotter Road, such as 'Bulga Creek' (now the National Equestrian Centre) and 'Riverview' offered agistment to the many riders who wanted to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Forest.

As part of the celebration of the Australia's 200th birthday, Stromlo Forest was integrated into the Bicentennial National Trail (BNT) the longest marked non-motorised self-reliant multi-use trekking route in the world, stretching an extraordinary 5,330 kilometres from Cooktown in tropical North Queensland, to Healesville in Victoria. The BNT links up, through the proposed Molonglo development, with the ACT equestrian trail system to provide access from Stromlo to Equestrian Park at Curtin and other riding areas in north and south Canberra.

Issues with Planning for the Proposed Molonglo Development

Horse riding in this city is an affordable outdoor recreation for people of all ages. Horse riding is a sport that promotes independence, responsibility and healthy outdoor activity. It allows life-long participation and there are riders in their 70s still using the equestrian trails in Canberra. In January 2002 Wayne Gregson and Graeme Taylor estimated the equestrian contribution to the annual ACT gross state product to be **\$13.85 million¹**.

During all SHRG discussions with representatives of the Chief Minister's Department we were promised that any future developments in the Weston Creek area would maintain the connectivity, along the Cotter Road, through Stromlo, to the Equestrian Park at Curtin and on the government horse paddocks.

It is, therefore, of great concern to us that the planners responsible for the present Variation to the Territory Plan seem to be oblivious to the fact that you can't tie a horse to the back of your car and take it wherever you like, like a bicycle. Most recreational riders in this city do not own horse floats or 4WD vehicles to pull them.

While the Assessment documents that support the Variation refer frequently to existing equestrian use of the Molonglo area, there is no attempt to translate this in any way to a provision for continued use. This is not acceptable, when the ACT government seems to go out of its way to provide for cycling users of the same area.

Discussion with ACT planners makes it clear that they have taken no cognisance of existing equestrian infrastructure in the planning process. For instance the only eastern equestrian exit/entrance to Stromlo Forest Park is on Uriarra Road opposite the present Deek's Forest carpark. The Variation will render this entrance impossible to use by removing all access through to the Molonglo River on the opposite site of the Uriarra Road. The Uriarra/Cotter Road intersection is busy and there is no safe place for horses to cross.

This entrance is also part of the Bicentennial National Trail, which the Molonglo development will cut, making it impossible to travel through Canberra to the equestrian camping area at Curtin, as previously.

¹ David Hogg, "Strategic Development and Management Plan for Equestrian Sport and Recreation Facilities in the ACT", Vol 2, Phase 1 Discussion Paper, Appendix A.

The planners' response seems to be to move the Bicentennial National Trail across to the southern side of the Cotter Road where it has to negotiate power polls, guy wires, culverts and drainage channels. This is totally unacceptable to us.

The Stromlo Horse Riders Group want a commitment from the ACT Government to maintain the connectivity between agistment centres on the Cotter Road, through Stromlo Forest Park and on the government horse holding paddocks in Curtin and to Equestrian Park at Curtin.

The Stromlo Horse Riders Group want a commitment from the ACT Government to maintain the connection between Stromlo Forest Park and the Bicentennial National Trail.

The Stromlo Horse Riders Group want a commitment from the ACT Government to maintain sufficient public open space so that Canberra equestrians can continue to enjoy safe access to the Molonglo River.

Representatives of the Stromlo Horse Riders Group would be pleased to discuss these issues with members of the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment. The Stromlo Horse Riders Group is also interested in attending as a witness at one of the public hearings.

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Committee

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