

**From:** [Alex Watson](#)  
**To:** [Health and Community Services Committee](#)  
**Date:** Friday, 13 September 2013 7:17:55 PM  
**Attachments:** HORSE RIDING IN QLD - SUBMISSION TO DR JOHN GLAISTER DG - NATIONAL PARKS RECREATION  
SPORT AND RACING - 11 July 2012 FINAL.pdf

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Please find our submission regarding the Nature Conservation Act attached.

Regards,

Alex Watson  
Triple Olympian  
Managing Director  
EQUATHON Holdings  
[REDACTED] Noosa Heads, QLD 4567, Australia

T. [REDACTED]  
F. [REDACTED]  
M. [REDACTED]  
E [REDACTED]  
[www.equathon.com.au](http://www.equathon.com.au)



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# HORSE RIDING IN QUEENSLAND

SUBMISSION TO  
DR. JOHN GLAISTER, DIRECTOR GENERAL –  
DEPT. OF NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, SPORT AND RACING

JULY 2012



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This submission is prepared by key representatives of the horse riding community in Queensland comprising the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation (QORF) the, Australian Trail Horse Riders Association (ATHRA), the Queensland Horse Council (QHC) and the horse riding tourism industry via operator, Equathon (2011 QLD Adventure Tourism Operator of the Year).

The submission has been prepared to provide an aggregate view on the status of recreational, sporting and tourism horse riding in conservation areas within Queensland and to outline how opportunities for horse riding may be developed.

Across the broad range of horse pursuits from children at pony club, mums and dads and their families out trail riding, through to the significant number of horse sports, professional and Olympic riders, Queensland is a powerhouse of equestrian activity. As an example the 2013 Tom Quilty Endurance Ride and the Australian Campdrafting Championships will be held in Queensland.

Horse riding plays a leading role in our state history and culture, inclusive of our indigenous culture, through colourful themes of pioneering, Cobb & Co, the outback and stock work. Put simply, horse riding is a strong fit and a great image for Queensland as a key outdoor recreation and ecotourism (adventure) activity.

Today, horse riding is globally recognised as a responsible ecotourism activity with large regional markets. For example, there are some 20 million active horse riders in North America alone which represents a similar participation figure to golf with approximately 24 million active golfers in the US. Queensland equine tourism operators such as Equathon are affiliated at the highest level of accreditation – Advanced - and regularly attract horse riding tourists from North America, the UK, Europe, Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong and New Zealand who see Queensland as an attractive and safe horse riding destination.

Unfortunately, over the past fifteen years opportunities for the enhancement of nature based recreational, sporting and tourism horse riding have been largely ignored and in many cases directly thwarted by state government policies. The Queensland horse riding community feel that the momentum and direction of these policies has been hijacked by influential minority interest groups comprising environmental activists philosophically opposed to horse riding in conservation areas. To justify decisions to limit or ban horse riding in conservation areas previous state governments and their various departments have attached questionable scientific data to justify decisions and legislation and in many cases removed the horse riding community from effective participation in the formulation of policy and legislation.

In direct response to the recent commitments made by the Premier, Campbell Newman and senior Ministers of the LNP Government at the Destination Q Forum held in Cairns on 25 & 26 June, 2012 to “open” conservation areas to allow for more responsible outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities the Queensland horse riding community request the key actions outlined in section 3 be implemented.

## 2. NEED

In national surveys the horse industry (including horse racing) rates around 8<sup>th</sup> in importance to the Australian economy contributing between \$6.2 - \$8 billion a year to the national economy (2007 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation survey data).

The Australian Government, Australian Sports Commission, Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey Annual Report (2010) (ERSSA, 2010) outlines that:

- More people participate frequently in horse riding at a rate of 1.2 times per week, compared to Australian rules football and rugby league where participation is at least once per week.
- Horse riding, as a club activity, attracts as many participants as outdoor cricket and basketball.
- The number of horse riding activity events has doubled since 1997.
- The number of people participating in horse riding in Queensland is greater than those participating in sailing, water skiing/power boating, scuba diving and rock climbing. The most popular outdoor recreation activity in Queensland is walking (other than bush) followed by cycling and running, walking (in the bush), fishing, canoeing/kayaking and then horse riding.
- Although activity events increased significantly for horse riding, *the “nowhere to go” constraint increased markedly for current participants but it appears not to have led to a decrease in frequency-*



*of-participation rates. This indicates that **participants still went horse riding but were limited to fewer places where they could ride.** Use of very natural and somewhat natural settings increased while use of totally natural setting declined.*

Note these figures do not include those involved with the horse racing industry and extracts from the ERSSA 2010 report are provided at Attachment A.

A report prepared by Synergies Economic Consulting for the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation titled Measuring the Contribution of the Outdoor Recreation Sector in Qld (2012), indicates that:

- the economic contribution and benefits delivered by the Outdoor Recreation sector, which includes horse riders, to the Gross State Product is at least \$2 billion.
- Outdoor recreation contributes to reducing the cost of health to the Queensland community
- There are a wide range of benefits attributable to outdoor recreation in the areas of individual and community health, the environment and education
- *High quality recreation opportunities are a major attractor of tourists to Queensland (eg fishing, camping, surfing, scuba diving, bushwalking etc)*

### 3. PROPOSED KEY ACTIONS

- **ESTABLISH** ongoing access to land in Queensland for responsible horse riding activity.
- **AMEND** the state Nature Conservation Act that limits access for horse riders to conservation areas including National Parks.
- **CREATE** a state horse trail network utilising existing trails which can be promoted to support recreation, adventure and eco-tourism activity based on Queensland being a desirable horse riding destination.
- **MONITOR** the impact on the environment of horse riding in conservation areas with the input and involvement of the Queensland horse riding community.

### 4. IMPLEMENTATION

To develop nature-based horse riding further within Qld the following steps, as a foundation frame-work, would need to be undertaken. The majority of tasks are relatively low cost with significant economic benefits anticipated as no other state in Australia has attempted to market and promote horse riding in such a way.

An added benefit of undertaking these tasks would be to ensure that horse riding is a long-term feasible outdoor recreation activity for all Queenslanders.

#### 3.1 **ESTABLISH Ongoing Access to land**

- Approved horse riding trails dissecting recently gazetted National Parks that are still in a holding tenure, i.e. Forest Reserve, be transferred, at the earliest opportunity, to their new tenure which can accommodate horses riding.
- Retention of access to existing horse trails in all State Forests where the tenure is being transferred under the Nature Conservation Act.
- Retention of access to all forest tracks under the management of HQ Plantations Pty Ltd except during active forest harvest operations.
- Expansion of access where required, i.e. permit access to trails currently excluded from the existing state horse trail network where modification is warranted for specific reasons including, but not limited to:

- vital linkage.
- accommodates a circuit or circuits.
- horse access is not available elsewhere in the immediate area.
- proximity to horse camping facilities/tourist accommodation/tour operator/s.

Careful consideration needs to be given as to how this review of the horse trail maps is undertaken. A current example of how best outcomes for communities can be side-tracked is the impasse between the local community group together with local horse riders in the Eumundi, Yandina Creek area and the regional QPWS office over access to the Eumundi Conservation Park.

Despite several years of active local community group representation and support (via meetings, fund-raising and written submissions) the local QPWS staff have advised the local community, contrary to the local community group wishes, that horse riding will not be permitted within this conservation park. The local community are extremely frustrated at this impasse. The parks management plan is able to be amended however local QPWS staff are not willing to do so as the trails requested are not included within the SEQ Horse Riding Trail Network. It was found that two trails within the Eumundi Conservation Park were on gazetted road so these have been permitted by the QPWS staff however they are long one way tracks and do not provide the opportunity for trail circuits which when combined with existing forestry tracks are possible and great to ride.

- Tour Operators: Enable responsible accredited tour operators to utilise the network to promote adventure and eco-tourism.

### **3.2 AMEND Nature Conservation Act**

- To eliminate the need, in the long term, to change the tenure of those tracks within Forest Reserve being transferred to National Park etc to accommodate horse riders, amend the Nature Conservation Act to permit horses in National Parks. A working group is needed to make reference to the specific sections of the act and outline exactly what amendments are being requested.

### **3.3 CREATE a state horse trail network**

#### *A Vision For Queensland*

The Queensland horse riding community represented by the authors of this submission believe that the state government have a real opportunity to establish Queensland as a world-leading destination for sustainable nature based horse riding with strands encompassing-

- Recreation and fitness
- Horse sports and events
- Tourism – adventure and eco

These objectives could be achieved by the creation of a **Queensland Trail Network (QTN)** encompassing the existing **Bicentennial National Trail (BNT)**, the **SEQ Horse Trail Network**, and existing **local horse trail networks** e.g. Wyaralong Dam trails, Noosa Trail Network, Boonah to Ipswich and rail trails.

As a micro example of this opportunity the established and successful Noosa Trail Network has been a community led and Council administrated initiative to promote outdoor recreation and tourism for horse riding, mountain biking and walking/running across 8 trail routes within the Noosa region. With the formation of the Sunshine Coast Council the trail network has been expanded to include some 14 trails across the Sunshine Coast region.

The establishment of a QTN could be an everlasting and relatively low-cost outdoor recreation and tourism landmark initiative of the LNP Government with the direct involvement and broad-based support of the people of Queensland.

#### *Plan*

- Complete planning of the state horse trail network within Qld
- Identify/map all existing trail head facilities (float parking, toilets, information signage, and camping opportunities) along the QTN.
- Identify those state horse trails where no trail head facilities are available.

*Utilise existing opportunities*

Complete signage of the mapped state horse trail network in SEQ including the provision of information signs not just directional arrows in accordance with action A35, A36 and A37 of the SEQ Horse Riding Trail Network Management Plan 2011. A copy of the document can be downloaded from:

[http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks\\_and\\_forests/activities\\_in\\_parks\\_and\\_forests/seq\\_horse\\_riding\\_trail\\_network/index.html](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks_and_forests/activities_in_parks_and_forests/seq_horse_riding_trail_network/index.html)

- Complete the Boonah to Ipswich section with accessible links to the Wyaralong Dam
- Completion of unopened sections of the BVRT; Toogoolawah-Moore, Wulkuraka – Fernvale and flood repairs to Coominya – Esk in accordance with the Active Trails Strategy – A Strategy for Regional Trails in South East Queensland, 2007.
- Identify other uncompleted opportunities

*Promote*

- Promote the QTN as an opportunity for holidaying makers in Queensland from the following markets - intrastate, interstate and international visitors for both riders with their own horses and those visitors seeking the services of accredited equestrian tourism operators and sports associations. Utilisation of advertisements in appropriate horse magazines and websites is encouraged.
- Downloadable trail maps to be made available via the appropriate state government departments, Tourism Qld and other regional tourism organisations. In this regard the current SEQ horse riding trail maps are difficult to locate within the depths of the department web site and provide limited information for trail users, refer to:  
[http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks\\_and\\_forests/activities\\_in\\_parks\\_and\\_forests/seq\\_horse\\_riding\\_trail\\_network/index.html](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks_and_forests/activities_in_parks_and_forests/seq_horse_riding_trail_network/index.html)

The local Sunshine Coast Council has tried to rectify this problem locally by developing its own brochure and web information, refer to:

<http://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/sitePage.cfm?code=horse-riding>

- Events and Activities: Actively seek to attract more endurance events, trail ride events, trail clubs and association gatherings for Queensland.

### **3.4 MONITOR the impact on the environment**

- The 20-year state wide scientific study examining the impacts of horse riding on Queensland conservation areas and National Parks (being undertaken by Dr. John Neldner) continues to ensure that in the long term future accurate information is available to decision makers regarding the impact of horse riding on the environment.

Thus continuation of the study in accordance with A45 and A50 of the SEQ Horse Riding Trail Network Management Plan 2011 is supported. A copy of the management plan can be downloaded from the derm web page link provided above.

- Communicate the outcomes of the monitoring program to the Queensland horse riding community, in accordance with A84 of the SEQ Horse Riding Trail Network Management Plan 2011. (Please note: To date this has not occurred).
- It is requested the results of the study are made publically available every two years.

- Identify new eco-tourism opportunities with accredited equine tourism operators including the possible establishment of commercial infrastructure or commercial leases in conservation areas throughout the state for the purpose of promoting viable adventure and eco-tourism experiences.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Development and promotion of high quality horse riding opportunities throughout Queensland will provide significant long term benefits to the Queensland community and economy.

Queensland's horse riding community looks forward to working with the state to progress these opportunities.

*Anne Wilson*  
QORF



*Claire Bourke*  
ATHRA  
QHC



*Alex Watson*  
Equathon



Last updated: July 11, 2012



## ATTACHMENT A

### Extracts from the participation in Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey 2010 Annual Report

Extracts from the participation in Exercise Recreation and Sport Survey 2010 Annual Report (ERSS 2010) are provided below and highlight that:

- More people participate frequently in horse riding at a rate of 1.2 times per week, compared to Australian rules football and rugby league where participation is at least once per week.

...ing were ...

- martial arts (
- horseriding/e

Gymnastics, dan  
aquarobics, netb  
at least once per

- Horse riding, as a club activity, attracts as many participants as outdoor cricket and basketball.

(0.5%) (Figure  
activity in a cl

- The other club  
were Australia  
netball (0.3%)

- The number of horse riding activity events has doubled since 1997

Horse Riding
Participation
Frequency
Activity-Events

- Although activity events increased significantly for horse riding, *the “nowhere to go” constraint increased markedly for current participants but it appears not to have led to a decrease in frequency-of-participation rates. This indicates that **participants still went horse riding but were limited to fewer places where they could ride.** Use of very natural and somewhat natural settings increased while use of totally natural setting declined.*

Driving 4WD Vehicle:  
Driving other Vehicle  
Riding on Non-Motor  
Watercraft  
Abseiling/Rock-climb

- The number of people participating in horse riding in Queensland is greater than those participating in sailing, water skiing/power boating, scuba diving and rock climbing. The most popular outdoor recreation activity in Queensland is walking (other than bush) followed by cycling and running, walking (in the bush), fishing, canoeing/kayaking and then horse riding.

A report prepared by Synergies Economic Consulting for the Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation titled Measuring the contribution of the Outdoor Recreation Sector in Qld, contained the following table providing the Queensland participation rates for selected outdoor recreation activities in 2010 utilising data from the ERSS 2010.

Sailing  
Waterskiing/power  
Scuba diving  
Rockclimbing

Note: \* indicates data  
Source: Australian Sp