

# HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT FERNHILL MULGOA PICNIC RACES 2014-2018 (5 YEARS)

FOR SIMON & BRENDA TRIPP

## BACKGROUND

This HIS accompanies a Development Application for the use of the Fernhill property, (listed on the State Heritage Register as Item No. 00054) for a picnic race event to be held annually to 2018, based around use of the existing racetrack on the property. The track has been inspected by Racing NSW and judged as suitable for holding race events, and has been licensed by Racing NSW for a period of five years from 2014 to 2018. The existing infrastructure around the racecourse – stables and holding areas for horses – with some additional temporary stalls, is also sufficient for the holding of Picnic Race events. The area around the racetrack is also suitable to accommodate the expected attendance at the events.

The first Picnic Race event was held on the property in November 2013. The impact of the November 2013 Picnic Races Event was carefully monitored in terms of set-up, operation and pack-down of the event, and the findings of that monitoring recorded in a December 2013 Condition Report prepared by Paul Davies Pty Ltd. These findings have now been incorporated into the future arrangements for the 2014-2018 Picnic Races events.

This HIS needs to be read in conjunction with other application documents containing the plans setting out the location of the event on the property, the traffic management report and the consideration of environmental and other planning matters that fall outside the heritage impact assessment. The CMP for the property, currently being reviewed by the NSW Heritage Council, should also be referred to.

This HIS is to support both a Section 60 application to the NSW Heritage Council and a Development Application to Penrith City Council.

We note that the Section 60 Approval for the 2013 Picnic Races event at Fernhill included an advisory note requesting a Master Plan to be prepared for the Fernhill estate to cover a range of future activities and events on the estate beyond the Picnic Races. A Development Application was subsequently submitted for a range of works including events which included a Master Plan, however this has since been withdrawn. A Master Plan is now not considered necessary, as the owners are not intending to hold events apart from the Picnic Races. This would be the estate's signature annual event reflecting the equestrian use of the property. The advisory note is therefore considered to have been superseded by a re-consideration of the future activities to be held on the estate.

## FERNHILL

Fernhill is a large estate with a core historic area of 385 hectares comprising three allotments: Lots 10 and 11, DP 615085 and Lot 2, DP 541825, which encompasses the heritage curtilage recognised in the State Heritage Register boundary, and reflects the original land grant.

The existing race track area is east of the house and garden and within the SHR curtilage boundary. The event occupies part of the area between the two entry driveways off Mulgoa Road, principally around the race track with some small encroachments for parking of horse floats in the southern paddock area.

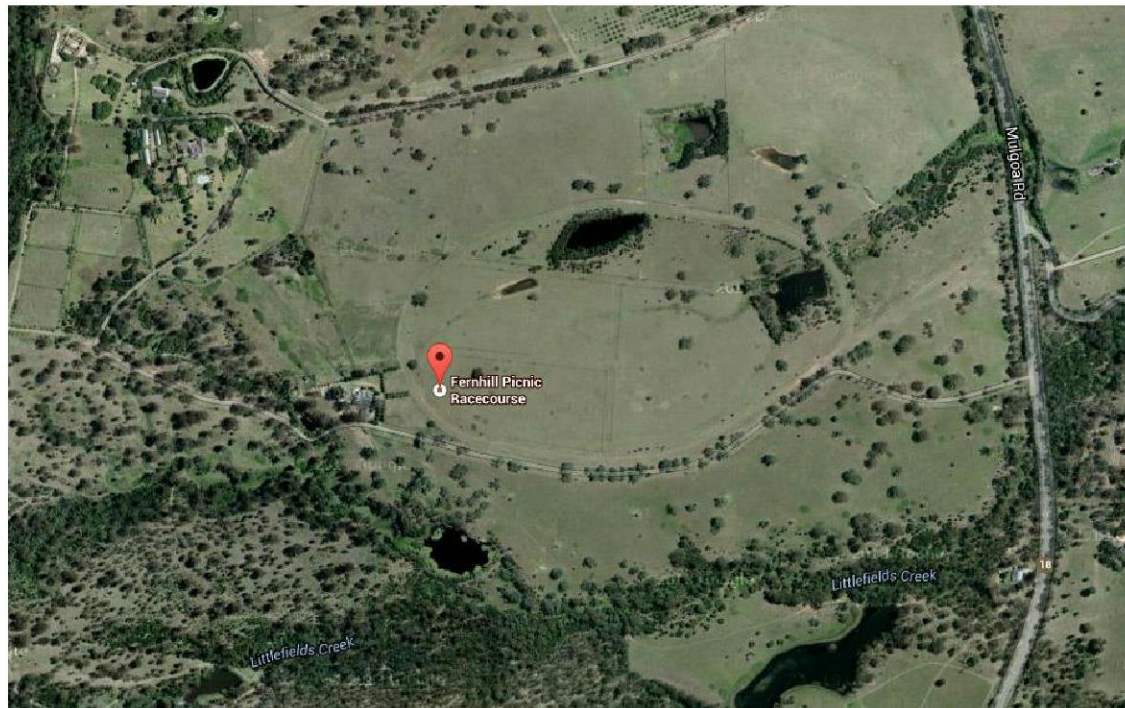


Figure 1: Existing race track area at Fernhill Mulgoa Source: Google maps

## DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT

The Picnic Race Event takes place over a day (10am to 10pm) and involves up to 5 days of set up and 4 days of pack-down and site restoration.

On the day spectators arriving after gates open at 11am are located within the area of the racetrack and all activities, services, and facilities are located within that area.

Access is across the racetrack on the western edge of the course and ticketing etc. takes place immediately beyond the track as indicated on the application drawings.

The areas to the north of the racetrack between the track and the service road will be used for parking and drop-off. Travel to the site has been arranged to provide parking for those arriving by car and for buses to collect spectators from the railway station at Penrith and other nominated locations.

The set up for the event involves temporary structures – tents, portable toilets, kitchen and scaffold based structures and fencing and temporary signage relating to access and parking arrangements, as outlined below.

Temporary structures proposed:

- Scaffold grandstand x 2
- Marquees for VIP guests and corporate guests

- Small tents approx. 99m x 3m x 3m
- Small scaffold observation posts around the track x 5
- 327 approx. portable toilets
- scaffold constructed stage area
- Tent entry area to west of track
- Umbrellas for shade
- Portable buildings for jockeys, media, broadcast, TAB, ticketing, communications
- 2 portable ticketing buildings
- Portable building control centre on hill above track
- Portable bar facilities
- Tents for concessions
- 48 temporary horse stalls
- Trucks with mounted screens for patrons to see the races
- Portable generators around the site to power equipment
- Temporary fencing to limit access
- Temporary signage relating to access and parking arrangements (to be mounted on fences)

The event itself comprises a series of races during the day and entertainment between 6pm and 9pm. Concessions and bar areas would remain open until 9pm and the gates close after patrons exit at 11pm.

The event will be packed down commencing the following day and the site will be clear of all elements related to the event within 5 days.

Access to the site is addressed in a traffic management plan, however several pertinent matters with regard to potential heritage impact are:

Competitors will use the main entry gate prior to the event and prior to public entry. They will unload horses and then park in the designated area to the south of the driveway stone wall. It is expected that approximately 20 horse float vehicles will be in attendance.

There will be no parking along the main entry driveway, for visual and wear and tear reasons. All staff parking will be in the general parking area.

There will be no vehicle access to the eastern end of the site around the main driveway in the location of the former entry driveway (a sensitive area in terms of heritage significance).

There is no public access to the southern area of the site beyond the racetrack area.

Private vehicles will arrive through the main entry gate area and all cars will be directed to parking. Roads are managed by staff, speeds are controlled and areas such as the bridges are protected through management and use of staff.

The parking areas for patrons are of sufficient size to provide for an overflow parking area and for parking to be spread on higher ground areas should weather be inclement.

## POTENTIAL HERITAGE IMPACTS OF THE EVENT

Potential heritage impacts fall into two categories:

- Physical impacts on the site and site features



- Impacts from the use of the site for the event.

The physical impacts will largely be those of wear and tear or accidental damage while the event is taking place.

The following points are relevant:

- This event does not require excavation or any ground disturbance
- All temporary services are above ground
- Temporary fences are located on the ground not set into it
- Temporary signage will be mounted onto fences using cable ties
- All structures are placed on the existing ground surface.

While there will be some wear of paddock surfaces, the short duration of the event and the nature of the soil in the paddocks allows quick recovery of grassed areas.

The specific elements area:

### The Main Entry Drive

The entry drive is a sealed road that follows the early road alignment. It is intended to bring horse floats and some of the setup vehicles along this alignment prior to the event and on the morning and evening of the event. This is a low volume use and similar to what currently occurs on the driveway. No parking will be allowed along this driveway and no access to the grass verges or areas of trees.

On the morning of the event traffic will enter the site using the main driveway, will circuit the site and enter the car parking areas from the west. In the later part of the day traffic will exit the site using the same route. This allows the sealed road surface to be used by traffic with only a small part of the access across un-sealed road surface.

There is no access to the former entry drive area on the east end of the current driveway.

The road entry is managed by staff to control the number of vehicles moving through the site and speed limits are imposed and will be enforced. Barriers and signs will be in place to direct vehicles.

The mature stand of trees along the drive are particularly significant remnant early plantings: no parking or vehicle movement will be allowed in close proximity to these trees.

Two small scaffold observation towers are to be built along the driveway against the racecourse fence: these are temporary structures and will leave no impact. They are located away from the trees.

### Service Drive

This driveway is only used for setup activities and access for staff. Apart from general wear from minor vehicle use there are no elements of heritage value that would be impacted by the event.

Note that, arising from the recommendations of the Condition Report following the November 2013 Picnic Races event, no parking is to occur on the grass verges of either the northern or southern driveways and traffic control will be improved to direct buses to appropriate drop-off and turning areas.

### Paddocks

A number of the paddock areas are to be used for parking and for parts of the event setup.

It is likely that some deterioration of paddock surface will occur as a result of the activity, however impact on paddock surfaces were minimal as a result of the previous event. It was noted in the

Condition Report following the previous event that in future if shipping containers or heavy refrigerated containers are required; they should be raised off the ground slightly on wooden planks and removed in a timely manner (weather permitting).

Trees will be protected within parking areas via temporary fencing barriers.

#### Scale of Use

The event is designed for up to 10,000 attendees and is capped at this number. The previous Picnic Race event held at Fernhill in November 2013 attracted approximately 8,000 attendees<sup>1</sup>. The November 2013 Picnic Races event at Fernhill has proven that the site can cope with attendances of this number, given appropriate event organization.

## DISCUSSION

The 2014 Fernhill Picnic Races event draws on the success of the previous 2013 Picnic Races event, and has incorporated the recommendations of the Condition Report completed after the 2013 event, to ensure that the already excellent organization of the event is further improved. The 2013 event has already proved that the site can hold such events without any long-term adverse heritage impact, and with only manageable temporary damage to paddock surfaces.

The event is managed by an experienced and professional event management company who have undertaken similar events of similar scale and understand the specific management needs of the activity.

The event draws on the recommendations of the Condition Report following the previous event to ensure that already excellent arrangements for the event are further improved to minimise potential heritage impacts.

The positive heritage impacts of the event are:

- The event provides for community participation and some supervised access to the Fernhill property. This is the only formal opportunity for the public to visit the site as other events are no being undertaken.
- The event provides income for the local area (as set out in other documents)
- The event brings income to the Fernhill property which assists the owners in offsetting funds already spent on conservation and maintenance of the property (approximately \$2 million in 2013). The event proceeds will in part be used towards ongoing conservation and maintenance of Fernhill.

## CONCLUSION

While the Fernhill Picnic Races 2014 is a large and significant event, it is manageable within the scope of activities that are appropriate for the property.

The approach taken to site management around the event in 2013 is a proven success in effectively minimizing potential heritage impacts, and the recommendations of the Condition Report prepared following the 2013 event have been adopted to ensure improved organization to further minimise potential heritage impacts for the 2014 event.

The Fernhill Picnic Races 2014 event will have positive heritage impacts for assisting the ongoing conservation and maintenance of the historic Fernhill Estate.

---

<sup>1</sup> Attendance figure from Fernhill Estate website [http://www.fernhillstate.net.au/\\_springracing](http://www.fernhillstate.net.au/_springracing)

