

Blayney Showground and Equestrian Sports Facilities Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Endorsed by Blayney Shire Council 17 February 2020 (Resolution No 2002/009)

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Background

In May 2016, Blayney Shire Council endorsed the Blayney Showground Equestrian Sports Facilities Upgrade Plan. This included a list of new and upgrade projects that would realise the full potential for each sport and user group to host regular regional competition and events. Some of these projects have now been completed or are in progress; namely the construction of two outdoor Dressage Arenas, refurbishment of the Pavilion Dining Room and Bar area and the Concourse seating upgrade. In progress is the Central West Equestrian and Livestock Centre funded by both NSW and Federal Governments.

The 2016 Plan was developed specifically for the area in the north eastern corner of the Showground, including some ancillary facilities and amenities in other shared space being the camping, eastern access and stable/tie up yards area. The direction and planning undertaken stimulated significant collaboration between the various horse sports and user groups.

Showground infrastructure refurbishment projects totalling \$494,044 have been undertaken over the past 5 years supported by both Federal, NSW Government, user group fundraising and Blayney Shire Council includes;

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| • Amenities Block | \$17,326 |
| • Irrigation to Main Arena | \$126,337 |
| • Main Arena Fencing | \$81,677 |
| • New Catering Kitchen | \$63,710 |
| • Construction 2 Dressage Arenas | \$83,975 |
| • Concourse area and seating | \$47,168 |
| • Pavilion Dining Room and Bar | \$50,000 |

The above investments do not include the contribution by the A&P and others for the infrastructure improvements such as the Cattle Shed and yards, Pony Club Yards, storage facilities, Pony Club Sand Arena and equipment.

The 2016 Plan was reviewed by user groups in July 2019 and the Blayney Showground and Equestrian Sports Facilities Strategic Plan 2020-2025 provides the direction that user groups and Council aspire for the next 5 years and beyond.

Blayney Showground

The Blayney Showground is a public facility, located on NSW Crown Land, managed by Blayney Shire Council as Trustee. The land is classified as Community Land is for Recreational Purposes. The primary user groups of the Blayney Showground include Central West Dressage, Blayney Agricultural and Pastoral Association (A&P), Carcoar and District Pony Club, the Orange Equestrian Club and the recently formed Blayney Shire Horse Sports Association. Secondary users include the Blayney Trotting Association, which have interests in the stables and general areas of the Pavilion and trotting track. The facility is open to the public upon application and execution of individual User Agreements.

The Blayney Soccer Club and Millthorpe Junior Rugby Club hire the Main Showground Internal Arena during winter for senior and junior soccer competition and junior rugby carnivals.

Our show and equestrian sporting groups are all volunteers, and have a history and experience, in organising and conducting regular training days and prestige events. These events have the potential to attract significant number of visitors to the Blayney area and contribute to the regional economy, by way of purchasing fuel, meals and accommodation.

The user groups are diverse and their members have a range of backgrounds, practical knowledge and professional skills, with many recognised by Equestrian Australia or International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI); as national level qualified instructors, accredited course designers, judges or competitors.

Council relies on these volunteer committees to contribute to the planning for future development, work on common goals and to support each other to attain grant funding for the large infrastructure projects. The success of the ongoing management, sharing of equipment, booking, scheduling and any enhancement of the facility depends on working collaboratively together.

Each group has contributed volunteer time and finances to build assets that are a feature of the Showground. This in the past has been achieved without much Council involvement. In order for clubs to grow their membership base they need to be reassured that the facility meets their individual requirements for hosting programs whilst being safe and accessible.

Vision

The Blayney Showground will be a centre of excellence, a regional hub for promoting agricultural production; providing a safe, functional, equitable and accessible facility for local community groups to conduct quality multidisciplinary equestrian sports and associated activities, hosting high calibre regional, state and in some cases national events.

As an equestrian precinct for the Central West region, Blayney Showground will be a premier location that will be an asset encouraging people to relocate and visit. Increase tourism, visitors and competitors who will provide positive commercial benefits to local businesses whilst raising the profile of Blayney and its attributes.

We wish to build on and take advantage of our Strengths

- The Showground is on a large parcel of land, is community owned and under the care and control of Blayney Shire Council. With significant investment by user groups, NSW Government and Council over the past 5 years; improving the whole precinct, it now has a solid foundation for future growth to activate the delivery of many equestrian disciplines.
- Whilst collecting user fees and charges, they are nominal and affordable for regular licenced user groups
- Success builds success and the Equestrian and Livestock Centre project has generated interest and stimulated new user groups to get involved. The facility accommodates a wide range of equestrian sports that provides encouragement and is inclusive of all ages and skill levels, participating and competing.
- Our user groups are financially viable and have seen growth in their membership base over the past 5 years. They are well managed, and have a broad base of dedicated volunteers with demonstrated runs on the board coordinating events and bringing both recreational and equestrian enthusiasts to the region.
- The user group's commitment to their respective sport has been evidenced by the number of members with national accreditation and official qualifications attained. This enables them to conduct events to the standard and expertise required to meet rules and guidelines from their respective governing body. They also have a wide network of supporting judges and trainers who regularly visit Blayney from interstate and out of region.
- The Carcoar and District Pony Club has been a longstanding partner with the community for many decades, and is a grassroots club for many people who live or have lived in the shire. The Pony Club constructed the original Sand Arena, and cross country jumps. They own the portable yards and over the years have accumulated a range of equipment to assist with activities.
- Central West Dressage Club provided the funding for the outdoor dressage arenas, and through their networks have contributed to the surface maintenance equipment and ancillary facilities that are shared between user groups.
- The Orange Equestrian Club contributed to the facility by sharing the costs on diverse equipment needed to hold an event including Show-jumps; timing gear and education and training of members and volunteers including to a national and international level. OEC has invested in a valuable set of Show-jumps which are utilised by the Blayney Show and many other small shows and clubs across the district.
- All of the groups are affiliated with their governing body; Pony Club NSW, Dressage NSW, Showjumping NSW, Australian Bushmans Campdraft and Rodeo Association, Royal Agricultural Society NSW, Harness Racing NSW

and Equestrian Australia which provides their rules, event guidelines, insurance, governance, qualification for instructors and competition framework from local, regional, state to national and international level.\

- The existing clubs all work cooperatively, sharing equipment, workloads and providing support for conducting each other's events. The Showground main arena is used by soccer and football codes during winter, with all equestrian and livestock activities provided with access to the arena on Blayney Show Day only. When events clash, equestrian groups and trotting trainers seek to reschedule their programs.
- Improvement projects that are coordinated in the strategic plan are shared wherever practicable to avoid duplication, complement existing activities and increase utilisation.

We need to address our Weaknesses

- There are currently no Day Yards or Overnight Stables of the size, quality and standard to be deemed safe and provide for the welfare of horses, riders and bystanders. This is a significant limiting factor detracting people from travelling a distances and staying overnight.
- The weather in Blayney in winter is the main external hindering factor in further developing the consistency and quality of events.
- The quality of the Showjumping Surface is the main limitation to hosting and expanding the calibre of events conducted.
- Council budget is limited, and any additional staff required to maintain or prepare the surface must be done on a fee for service basis, without a subsidy from rate payers.
- Having invested in the construction of fixed infrastructure eg. Sand Arenas, Portable Yards and the Clubhouse; current user groups have justifiably ownership of these assets. This means however, user groups who hire the Showground are not able to access and utilise these facilities.
- Blayney Shire Council provides this sporting and recreational facility to the community and there is limited opportunity to achieving full cost recovery via hire fees income from current user groups.

We must tackle the Threats together

- If all disciplines and groups fail to work together for a common goal to deliver a high standard facility for all users, we will have an untenable situation. Factions and unwillingness to make compromises, by insisting that niche events are worth more than others will result in limited opportunity for the vision of the Blayney Showground users.
- Misuse and poor management adds to the risk of a safety incident, irreparable damage to the surface or premature degradation of the infrastructure.

Unsatisfactory surface management will result in users not being happy, there will be reputational damage and we will end up with an unusable facility.

- Booking conflicts, communication or working relationship breakdowns between user groups and/or Council may lead to missed opportunities to host events and poor attendance.
- Failure to lock up, turn off or be vigilant about water points, noticing unauthorised use will increase the opportunity for vandalism or theft to occur. This affects everyone, Council's insurance premiums, access and the user groups capacity to recover financially to replace items damaged or stolen.
- Building an indoor facility that is not fit for purpose, with a restricted internal arena size and not recommended surface specification will limit use and suitability for any number of user group activities.
- The projects that remain on the wish list remain aspirational, cost a lot of money and are reliant on external grants.
- If the maintenance cost or facility hire charge becomes out of reach for non profit community groups, the facility will not be used. Where fees cannot be covered by event entry fees, sponsorship or membership fees the facility will not be adequately utilised.
- Showjumping and cattle sports or unrestrained cattle within the indoor arena will impact on the surface condition if manure is not collected or if cutting, turning speeds and intensity cause damage to the subsurface.
- A sub surface that is clay based, without sufficient cross fall (1%) to drain will create a risk to the longevity and increased costs of preparation of the surface.
- An incident caused by misuse or poor management could result in life altering injury or even a fatality, so risk assessments and implementation of risk mitigation is essential. Not only has Council a responsibility in providing a safe and accessible facility, each user group must accept their role in managing risks.
- Equipment purchased by individual user groups has been a significant expense, and sharing of this equipment comes with a risk of damage through lack of maintenance, misuse or unskilled users.
- The condition of security fencing, boundary paddock fencing and gates is not adequate for ensuring the facility is safe and secure.

Ensure that we create Opportunities and make them a reality

- A soft sand based surface the right depth will provide a very safe option for younger riders, in addition to preventing injuries to horses, will add to the appeal of the facility.

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- The social and health benefits equestrian and livestock sports growing in popularity in the Blayney shire for all generations and families.
- Development of a User Management Plan and Procedures for scheduling events and facility hiring will ensure user groups and rate payers are aware of costs, who shares what expenses, recognise the contribution made by user group volunteers and demonstrate long-term sustainability of the facilities.
- The Management Plan will include safety and emergency management protocols, rules for use, maintenance of the surface, exclusions, fees and booking priority.
- User groups could nominate particular people to be inducted as volunteers and authorised to operate the surface preparation machinery and watering systems during weekends or after hours to assist with reducing financial constraints.
- Lighting will provide an opportunity for user groups to host twilight competitions and events, in the cooler summer evenings.
- The facility and improvements that are progressively made will increase the interest in equestrian sports, attract high calibre coaching clinics, regional events, sponsorship, spectators and competitors visiting the town and more equestrian families moving to the region.
- The list of infrastructure improvement projects that will enhance the facility and enable user groups to achieve the potential identified.
- The potential for other uses of the facility such as an entertainment venue will diversify income source and access
- There will be significant economic benefits to local accommodation, fuel, food services and agricultural businesses with additional events being hosted in Blayney.
- With the support of the user groups, individual projects can be identified, scoped and planned properly and future grant funding sought.
- Income generation from one off large special events will provide Blayney Shire Council with reserves for maintenance and ongoing improvements, opportunity for additional grant funding and completion of projects identified in this Strategic Plan

Action Plan

Recommendations/Action Items	By Whom	When
Any new infrastructure construction will be considered a shared asset owned by Blayney Shire Council enabling any user group access, subject to purpose, execution of Licence Agreement and payment of User Hire Fee	All User Groups	December 2019
User Groups and Council commit to consulting with all users prior to undertaking planning, funding applications and implementation	All User Groups	December 2019
A Showground Map is developed to identify proposed projects and User Groups engaged to determine how their location fits in with the existing infrastructure and assets	Council	January 2020
User Management Plan and Protocols (Rules and Guidelines for user groups access (eg. permissible activities, insurances, licence agreements) sharing protocols, scheduling events and facility hiring be drafted in consultation with User Groups	Council	February 2020
User Groups which 'own' and have the primary interest in existing infrastructure will be provided a Council Template to develop a Policy for Shared Access detailing rules and limitations of use of these assets and equipment for Council Records	All User Groups	December 2020
Council facilitate a Showground User Group meeting every quarter to review operations, project priorities, User Fees and Charges, funding applications and facility hiring to external groups	Council	February May August November
The annual Calendar of Events will be open to current User Groups in November for 2 months prior to being made available for other external organisations from January each year	Council	November

Projects

All of the projects listed will require planning, external grant funding, voluntary labour, financial contributions from user groups or future budget allocations.

It is anticipated that by collaborating with stakeholders and working together, that each project will be achieved in the long term.

Depending on the size and scale, Council will provide the project management expertise required and a commitment has been made so that as each project is funded and ready to proceed, that a small working group with representation from stakeholders would be included in the design and implementation phase.

Project	Project Description
Short Term - within the next 12 months	
CWLEC Storage Shed	Shed for storage of all equipment, rakes, hoses, wheel barrows, sprinklers, etc
Waste Disposal	Construction of at least 3 concrete walled (1m high) waste bays for manure collection in accessible locations
Storage Facilities	Further investigation with stakeholders to install temporary solution or build new multipurpose 3 bay shared storage shed
Carpark / Internal Traffic / Eastern Access Upgrade	Construction of an all weather road to facilitate horse and livestock transport access from the eastern entry. Design and improve drainage to open space along eastern entry to facilitate parking for horse and livestock transport and unpowered camping sites and install 4 watering points along fenceline
Permanent Yards	Permanent yards for safe and secure handling of livestock for Shows, Sales and Horse Sports, and Equestrian activities with a ramp and stock water access to be constructed near Cattle Pavilion
Fencing	Boundary fencing upgrade, install new gates where needed, and replaced fencing moved for construction

Project	Project Description
Medium Term – from 12 months to within 5 years	
Stables or Covered Day Yards	Demolish existing stabling facilities or built new stables to accommodate 40-50 overnight stables to safely stable larger horses that can be modified to provide 80 Tie Up Bays for Trotters
Refurbishment of the Pony Club Sand Arena	Drainage works on both sides as recommended to divert water away, drill holes into rubber walls, topfill with sand or woodchip and build up entrance at northern end
Undercover Spectator Seating	Accessible spectator seating for CWLEC
Seating	Transportable seating and tables with shelters around the Showground and Equestrian facility
Cross Country jumps Upgrade	Purchase of new safe and easy to move portable cross country jumps to accommodate events and training for various grades from Beginner to Advanced Level competition
Signage	A large changeable sign with Events / What's On at Showground at the Marshalls Lane entrance from Highway
PA and Sound system	Extension of the PA Sound System with capacity to reach specific areas depending on the event to include eastern parking areas, Equestrian Sports Ground and Stables/Camping Ground space

Project	Project Description
Long Term - from 5 years to 10 years	
Cattle Pavilion Extension	Extension of Cattle Showing Pavillion to accommodate demand for show
Camping Facilities	Development of a Power Plan for camping and amenities
Showers, Toilets, Change Rooms	Accessible Showers (3x3) to be located near existing pavilion or Public Toilet Block
New Equestrian Clubhouse/Canteen	Canteen and Clubhouse with storage, office and canteen facilities, on the eastern end of CWLEC, overlooking open space
Camp Draft Arena	A large open fenced space with a sand surface to accommodate Camp Drafting

Summary of Usage

Amenity/Facility	CWD	OEC	Pony Club	A&P	BHRC	BSHS	General Use
Washbays	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tie Up Stables	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓
Loading Ramp	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Camping	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Water and Electricity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Showers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Toilets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pony Club Canteen	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Pony Club Sand Arena	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Pony Club Yards	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x
Cross Country Jumps	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	x
Grassed Flat Open Spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Show Society Wool and Poultry Sheds	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	x
Cattle Pavilion	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Storage shed	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x
Shipping Container	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x
Dressage Arenas	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x
CWLEC (Indoor Arena)	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Inner Arena (Main Ground)	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
Trotting Track	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓
Pavilion Hall Space	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Secretaries Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kitchen/Dining Hall	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bar and Covered Tote Area	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓