

# Marburg and District Residents Association

## Horse Precinct Issues

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*'The residents of Marburg will not have a future imposed on them, they are creating their own future which will meet their specific needs and expectations.'* (Lorraine See, Tidy Towns judge's report, 2008)

### Marburg Community Plan

The Marburg Community Plan was developed in September, 2007 and was endorsed by Council earlier this year. It describes a 'preferred future' for Marburg based on what residents value about the community and identify as assets, and what they see as opportunities and challenges facing it. Parts of the Community Plan which are especially relevant to the proposed horse precinct are:

#### Values

The aspects of what people valued about the community were as follows:

*Lifestyle* – the rural setting, friendly 'country' lifestyle and quiet surroundings.

*Environment* – the maintenance of biodiversity and vegetation in the town and district as well as amenity of the town and scenic value of the rural landscape.

*Opportunity* – the opportunity to plan change, to 'have a say' in local issues and the future of the community, and the opportunity to be involved in community activity.

#### Challenges

Some key challenges are:

##### *Maintaining Values*

A major challenge is to maintain the rural lifestyle and nature of the community with growing demand for rural residential living and peri-urban development. Residents strongly felt that they wanted economic, social and residential development in an appropriate way that preserved the landscape and community values of the district. They did not want to become 'another Ripley Valley' and were passionate about being involved in development and planning decisions.

##### *Community Involvement*

A challenge was for the community to be more genuinely engaged in decisions and policies that affected the community. Many residents wanted the community to be able to be informed better and able to negotiate with Ipswich City Council and Queensland Government agencies about the future of the community. Several people felt that this started with being more actively aware of who was responsible for decisions such as town planning.

#### Preferred Future

The preferred future for Marburg is a community with involved and enthusiastic citizens living in town with a village atmosphere and rural lifestyle. The surrounding rural district must maintain its scenic amenity and allow access to a range of recreation opportunities while maintaining the privacy and lifestyle of landowners. ....Community members would have good knowledge of planning and development decision-making and would be engaged in decisions affecting the values and lifestyle of the community.

#### Strategy 2

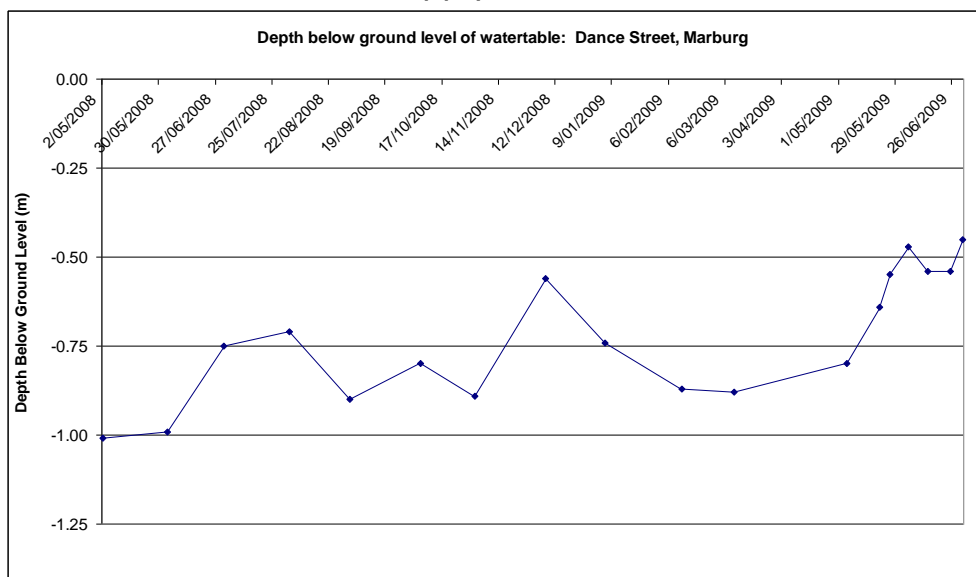
The Community Plan identifies 12 strategies to achieve the 'preferred future'. One of the 'Actions' listed in Strategy 2 'Managing Development' is "Development of a specific town plan for Marburg and district based on the values identified in this community plan."

## Environmental Issues

### High watertable

Marburg sits on a very shallow watertable. The depth to the watertable in Dance Street opposite Marburg Motors has ranged between 1.01 and 0.45 m below ground level over the last year (see chart). The permanent waterhole at Sirois Bridge is a 'window' to the water table. This high watertable is in part a consequence of Marburg having a reticulated water supply and not being sewered. Every flushing of a toilet in Marburg adds to the height of the watertable.

Further development upstream of Marburg will aggravate this problem, especially if it has a reticulated water supply.



### Saline watertable

The shallow groundwater in Marburg is quite salty. The limited observations available indicate that it has an electrical conductivity of around 8 dS/m. This level of salinity makes the water unsuitable for irrigation of all but the most salt tolerant plant species (e.g. saltbush) and unsuitable for drinking by livestock. It also degrades concrete and metal structures reducing their life. Evidence of this can be seen on the northern wall of the Marburg General Store and the Warrego Highway bridge over Black Snake Creek.

Further development upstream of Marburg is likely to aggravate this problem.

### Biological safety of groundwater

Given that Marburg is not sewered, it is possible (likely) that the groundwater contains biological contaminants (e.g. coliforms). There is no knowledge of this having been monitored. Council should undertake this. A distinct septic system like odour is also obvious on many mornings along Black Snake Creek in the Marburg town area.

Further development upstream of Marburg will aggravate this problem.

### Sediment

Sediment and nutrients in our waterways are a major problem. It is estimated that more than 315 000 tonnes of sediment is discharged to Moreton Bay each year from various sources across South East Queensland. The SEQ Healthy Waterways Partnership is currently coordinating an \$8 million project over four years in local catchments focusing on ways to reduce sediments and nutrients entering our waterways locally and in the Bay.

Run off from pastures grazed by horses is typically much greater than from pastures grazed by cattle. Horses graze pastures differently than other species and are able to degrade them very quickly. Sound grazing management practices maintain adequate groundcover (> 70%) all year round, ensure sustainable pasture utilisation (use no more than 20–40% of pasture by weight) and aim to maintain dominance (> 60–70%) of tall and medium tussock grasses within native pastures.

One of the predictions for climate change in eastern Queensland is that rainfall events will become less frequent but more intense. Thus, the unusual rainfall events of November 2008 and April and May 2009 are likely to become more common. The effect of this is greater peak run off and subsequent sediment movement especially from heavily grazed pastures.

Development of a horse precinct on the alluvium and uplands in the Investigation Area will aggravate this problem. Urine and manure production from horses stabled intensively will add to the nutrient loading in Black Snake Creek.

### Endangered Ecosystems

Most of the original vegetation in the Investigation Area has long been cleared. However, some areas of remnant remain. These are protected from clearing. This limits the area available for development.

### Soils

Soils of the Black Snake Creek catchment have been thoroughly mapped and described (Ellis, MD & Bigwood, RC (2005) *Landscape and Salinity Assessment of the Black Snake Creek Catchment, South East Queensland*, Department of Natural Resources and Water). Two geological types (with their associated soils) make up most of the Investigation Area – Alluvium and Walloon Coal Measures. There is a small area of Koukandowie Formation. None of these soils are particularly suitable for intensive grazing and housing of horses. Some features of these soils are:

#### *Alluvium*

'Alluvial areas of the Black Snake Creek and many of the tributaries to the south of the catchment have a heavy basaltic influence and are comprised of fine materials such as silt and clay, forming deep grey or brown cracking clay soils.'

'The alluvial soils are generally slowly permeable and imperfectly drained.'

Some of these soils have extreme salinity problems

#### *Walloon Coal Measures*

'Very deep, imperfectly drained strongly sodic grey Vertosols can occur on the mid and lower slopes. The soils of the Walloon Coal Measures are typically slowly permeable.'

These are regarded as the 'good scrub soils'.

#### *Koukandowie Formation*

These are the 'bastard scrub soils'. They are very prone to surface erosion and, because of their sodic subsoils, also to tunnel erosion. They are typically only slowly permeable on the mid and lower slopes.

## Other issues

- Visual amenity – The hills surrounding Marburg provide valley scenery that has few equals in southeast Queensland. Development of small acreage allotments in this area will create a suburban effect that is contrary to the rural setting. This is contrary to the intentions of the South East Queensland Regional Plan which seeks to preserve the scenic amenity of the area. Further, there is a poor record of this type of development where rural areas have been subdivided into small acreage lots and animals, especially horses, have been grazed intensively.
- Development of the district equestrian centre in Rosewood that was purchased by Council means that the broader equestrian activities will be in Rosewood with no development of the equestrian activities in Marburg other than pacing. Pacing appears to be the main focus of this development. This industry does not require the level of development proposed.
- Good Quality Agricultural Land – The Investigation Area contains a significant area (approx 160 ha) of good quality agricultural land, a scarce resource. State government policy is to prevent the reduction of good quality agricultural land (State Planning Policy 1/92: Development and Conservation of Agricultural Land <<http://www.nrw.qld.gov.au/land/planning/agricultural.html>>). This policy recognises that 'the best and most versatile farming land is a valuable resource that should, in general, be protected from irreversible development. It should not be built on unless there is an overriding public benefit, and no other site is suitable for the particular purpose.'

The horse precinct proposal is contrary to this policy.

- Community health issues – The associated planning guideline to SPP 1/92 (Planning Guidelines: Separating Agricultural and Residential Land Uses) recognises that there may be conflicts between existing residential land use and that proposed for the horse precinct. Typical of these are those of flies, dust, odours and possibly noise. Marburg residents are anxious about the detrimental effects of these on their health, wellbeing and enjoyment of their current lifestyle. The Planning Guideline recommends adequately designed buffers of up to 500 m between residential and agricultural land use (including intensive animal housing).

Other nearby local governments (Brisbane, Redlands) have recognised the many problems associated with high density stabling of horses and are restricting the ability to stable horses on small parcels of land.

- Competent advice should be obtained from sources external to Council who have the confidence of the Marburg community.  
We recommend that Jane Myers be consulted on matters relating to managing horses on small properties <[www.equiculture.com.au](http://www.equiculture.com.au)>.
- Alternative models of horse precincts should be considered, e.g. Springhill, Tamworth <<http://www.springhilltamworth.com.au/>>

- If the horse precinct does not proceed, what then?