



CANOBOLAS CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

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## CANOBOLAS CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

### MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 4

July 2022

This fourth of a series of occasional newsletters for members of the Canobolas Conservation Alliance Inc. (CCA), provides an update of activities over the last few months.

The Committee appreciates any feedback and involvement from the wider CCA community; please feel free to email your concerns or comments.

Our campaign to ensure that the network of mountain biking trails, proposed by Orange City Council (OCC) is not constructed within the SCA, continues.

#### Orange City Council Activities

Since the release of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARS) earlier this year, OCC has still not released renewed plans to the public re: their pursuit of the Mt Canobolas Mountain Bike Project. The new Council has however recently been presented with a series of documents which touched on this issue. Following an earlier community survey, a Draft **Community Strategic Plan** (CSP) with associated Delivery and Operational Plans was adopted by Council at their June meeting. As a draft document, the CSP attracted a significant number of public submissions (many from CCA Members – thank you!), including some 32 out of 34 specifically opposing funding for the Mt Canobolas mountain bike proposal. That opposition generally related to cultural, environmental and biodiversity protection. Note that comments and submissions to OCC's CSP/Budget can be accessed in their meeting agenda at

[https://orange.infocouncil.biz/Open/2022/06/CCL\\_23062022\\_AGN\\_13873\\_AT.PDF](https://orange.infocouncil.biz/Open/2022/06/CCL_23062022_AGN_13873_AT.PDF) (pp. 69-72 & 86-90).

The forward projections in the Council Budget papers for a commitment of \$1.5m to the project in 2023/24 was also identified and questioned. CEO David Waddell has since stated that the project is still in the "assessment phase", being one of 3 unfunded projects that are part of Council's forward planning. Further discussion is set to be held in September as part of a proposed 'mini-budget'. While Mayor Hamling is touting consultation and community engagement, it was noted that the majority of the current Council have not yet been "part of the conversation".

The other document of current concern is the Draft **Orange Region Destination Management Plan 2022-2026**, which contains indications under the Theme of "Nature, Cycling & Recreation" that Mt Canobolas remains a target for development. This is a joint proposal prepared for OCC, Cabonne & Blayney Shires by Urban Enterprise, placed on public exhibition on July 1<sup>st</sup> with

submissions due by 29<sup>th</sup> July. Indications are that members of all 3 Councils are not happy with the current draft and the speed at which it is being presented. A workshop to further discuss the plan and a strategy to progress changes is expected in Cabonne Council at least, based on Council meeting records. Feedback from the public exhibition is expected to be collated by OCC for review at the August Council meetings.

CCA members are once again encouraged to become actively engaged in addressing, in particular, the details under “Theme 7: Nature, Cycling & Recreation” of the Destination Plan. Initiatives in the Plan currently target “Activating the Canobolas Precinct as a hero nature-based tourism asset” to link the Mountain and the Lake, including a Skyway to the summit and summit redevelopment, with NPWS identified as a key stakeholder with whom to develop an ‘Activation Plan’. The terms used (“activation”, “hero”, etc.) are commonly seen in proposals for private development of National Parks, and particularly those for mountain bike trail networks. So despite community concerns about these developments, the Destination Plan is yet another document that forecasts a development agenda for our Mountain, and needs to be brought into line with community expectations. It is for this reason that we urge you to make a submission to any of the 3 Councils, however online submissions can be done via OCC’s website (<https://yoursay.orange.nsw.gov.au/orange-region-destination-management-plan>), and collated for all Councils. Individual submissions carry more weight in these processes. Arguments in opposition to these plans haven’t changed from the previous CSP submissions, so please use these arguments again when you make a submission.

## Recent CCA Activities

- The Committee has met twice since our last newsletter to ensure we keep abreast of developments with OCC. Rosemary and Andrew continue their close involvement with the Gaanhabula Action Group who remain opposed to the bike developments in the SCA and wider Mt Canobolas cultural landscape.
- There has been some media generated from our submissions, including a CWD article (Monday 27 July) questioning OCC Councilors on the Mountain Bike Proposal. It was clear that there is a split in opinions (4 for, 4 against, 4 undecided), and most Councilors called for more information and more consultation.
- Other media includes a Press Release on the new “Trail of Awesomeness” in Glenwood State Forest, where we re-iterated the point that the State Forests are the best place for these types of developments. This Release generated an ABC Radio interview (AR), and an article in Orange City Life.
- Thanks again to Tony Caine who has continued to manage the CCA [website](#), and load the various media items that continue to appear. Note that by joining the email list on the website you will receive notifications of this material as it’s added.
- There has been no news to date regarding the fate of the *Draft NPWS Biking Policy, Strategy and Guidelines for Implementation*. However, we’ve noted that yet another National Park is being threatened with bike trail development, all too similar to our situation, in Victoria’s Yarra Ranges. Similarly, there is a new Review of Environmental Factors for the Illawarra Escarpment Mountain Bike Trail Plan, which has serious flaws similar to those generated by OCC’s consultants for the Mt Canobolas proposal.

- The need to hold a full public forum sometime in the next few months is still being seriously considered, especially knowing that OCC will be looking at a “mini-budget” in September and will presumably be addressing the mountain bike project’s future at that time.

### **Mt Canobolas updates from other Groups**

- NPWS is continuing carpark and amenities renewal work at the summit of Mount Canobolas with their job made more difficult by recent weather conditions.
- There have been no developments for the listing of the SCA as an Area of Outstanding Biodiversity Value (AOBV), with public exhibition being the ‘next phase of the process” and no dates yet advised.
- NPWS have funded initial field work to survey Gliders in the SCA, with the first survey already completed and a report imminent. Two Greater Gliders and several Ringtail and Brushtail Possums were recorded, plus a Powerful Owl. Most importantly three transects have now been established which can be re-surveyed in future to monitor trends.
- On behalf of OFNCS a Bryophyte survey has also been conducted with visiting scientists collecting over 100 samples, with appropriate approvals from NPWS, from four general sites in May. Twenty new records of mosses, liverworts and one hornwort were recorded for the SCA; the report on lichen specimens collected is still to come. There was considerable media attention about this successful survey, and thanks should go to Dr Dick Medd (OFNCS and CCA member) for all his work on this. A follow-up visit during this coming spring is being planned.
- A member of ECCO recently reported that he is currently pursuing the feasibility of having a weather station installed on the summit of Mt Canobolas. This would be an aid to tracking climate change, particularly in a diminishing sub-alpine environment.



*Greater gliders in the SCA photographed by Nigel Hobden*



*The world of bryophytes at the Walls, Mt Canobolas. Photograph by Rosemary Stapleton*

### **Did you know?**

Although Mt Canobolas has great cultural significance for the Wiradjuri People and a long history of association which is still being documented, prior to NPWS becoming custodians of the Conservation Area the mountain landscape was subjected to all manner of colonial activity.

- In 1867 Surveyor Isaiah Rowland cleared the top of the main peak - a plateau of about 10 acres of timber & the county boundaries of Ashburnham, Wellington & Gordon were defined by “clay cuts and pegs”.
- In 1876 the summit was described as “a rounded eminence, almost devoid of trees, on which surveyors have placed a pile of stones & a landmark for trigonometrical surveys”.
- A ski run was opened on the south-western edge in 1938 -- apparently located 150 yds from the summit, 100 yds wide & half a mile long - which would have involved some clearing of vegetation. Does anyone know just where it was located?
- The same year Country Broadcasting Services was granted their lease on the summit, although the first broadcast didn't occur until 1962.
- The Park Trust was first formed in 1945, but no history of activity appears to be in the public domain. If anyone can help fill in some of the story from those times, we'd love to hear from you.
- 1954 saw construction of Communications towers / Civil aviation station. Photos in the Central West Libraries Recollect collection show some serious excavators at work around that time.
- In 1956 the Direction plinth was unveiled on what appears to be a very bare mountain top.
- Much of the summit has been carved up by portions of Crown or leased land and over time further clearing was conducted to safeguard the infrastructure on the summit from wildfire. Fortunately, under NPWS, the cultural heritage that remains is protected, for the moment at least, although threats of further proposed developments keep surfacing.

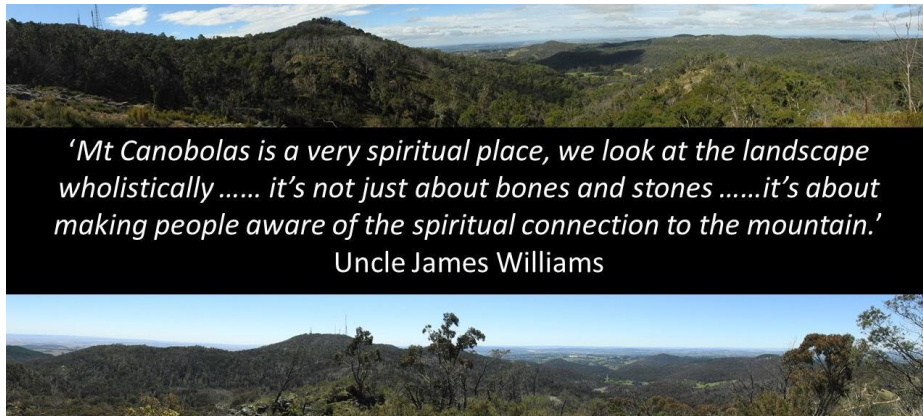


*A CWD Negative collection photograph,  
copyright Orange & District Historical Society.  
Unveiling of the Plinth on Mt Canobolas,  
23/5/1956*



*A CWD Negative Collection photograph,  
copyright the Orange & District Historical Society.  
Work on the ABC transmitter on Mt Canobolas,  
2/2/1962.*

While what occurred on the mountain in the past gave no consideration to environmental, historical or cultural values, we cannot ignore that heritage in this day and age. We have a duty to preserve / protect / conserve / respect what remains and to prevent short-sighted, un-warranted development proposals that would impact that heritage.



*'Mt Canobolas is a very spiritual place, we look at the landscape  
wholistically ..... it's not just about bones and stones .....it's about  
making people aware of the spiritual connection to the mountain.'*  
Uncle James Williams

*CCA acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, including the people of the Wiradjuri Nation,  
and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.*

Newsletter compiled by Jenny Medd on behalf of the CCA Committee.