

Northern Grampians Shire Council

Walkers Lake Advisory Group Minutes

The scheduled meeting 18 March 2025, 6.00 pm on site at Walkers Lake

Chair: Cr Karen Probst

Attendees: Cr Karen Probst, Cr Murray Emerson, Haviva Perkal, Steve Jesse, Carol Campbell, Chad Frost, Tony Hand, Tony Dark (NGSC),

Apologies: Rob Loats, Debra Meagher, Mark Costello, Andrew Borg, Austin Freeman, Russell Steel,

We acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which we individually met. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present

Minutes from previous meeting 3 December 2024. Moved that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting moved by Steve Jesse and seconded by Haviva Perkal

Action items from last meeting: Refer general business

1. General Business:

Item	Topic	Discussion	Action/ Outcome
1.2	Walkers Lake Report	<p>A report dated 12 March 2025 (circulated prior to the meeting by email) was prepared by Tony Dark and discussed with some of the following additions:</p> <p>Recent cancelled music event at Donald meant that many campers came to Walkers Lake. It was estimated that about 1000 people were here on Saturday night but not all were staying. It appeared that there were about 600 campers. Local farmers Colin Coates and Austin</p>	<p>Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Tony send invite to next meeting2. Tony send minutes and attachments to group3. Tony send calicivirus

	<p>Freeman visited and reported that the campers were well behaved and left the area very tidy utilising the skips provided. All campers were gone by Tuesday. Cr Emerson asked if the result of the weekend means that more people may stay at Walkers Lake in future, and we need to monitor this and future impacts.</p> <p>Monthly Inspections continue to be undertaken and copies of the most recent were circulated to the group for their reference.</p> <p>Pests and weed management was discussed and that the Espartillo gras has been sprayed and follow up site inspection for weeds will be undertaken by Tony in coming weeks. Following what was a good fumigation program last March the rabbit numbers appear to have increased. Tony mentioned that Project Platypus have calicivirus vials available and this will be considered for the next treatment. There were questions from the group about calicivirus and Tony will provide information.</p> <p>Water levels are currently at 1.8m and GWEM are topping up for easter. Discussed the safe levels for skiing is 1.5m which is in the middle of the lake. Annual top up is 300 megaliters of which 200 megs is delivered in about August and then the final 200 meg is delivered for Easter annually. Discussed the idea of the buoys to be considered as a swimming zone and to assist in managing speeding boats close to shore. It was mentioned that jet skis seem to be the ones that speed to most on the lake. Discussed the location of yellow buoys past the old boat ramp for this purpose for swimmers and could be located about 10 to 20 meters from the shore so as to provide the buffer for swimmers and not be a major issue for skiers. No decision made at this stage but it could become a trial.</p> <p>It was also discussed about water security and the new mineral sands mining at Banyena and how will that affect water supply. Cr Emerson said that Council usually meet with GWM twice per year so it may be a topic that is discussed.</p> <p>Carol mentioned the idea of a swimmers pontoon similar to the one at Woornook and this was discussed and considered a bit more</p>	<p>information to group</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Tony to organise boat ramp sign 5. Fence ladders to be installed at souths creek 6. Follow up landscape architect
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	<p>challenging for Walkers Lake given the state rules apply and a change of rules may be required to implement a swim area.</p> <p>Rob mentioned at last meeting that native yellowbelly will be released at some stage and we dont have a timeframe at this stage. Steve asked if they were native to the area and Tony will ask Rob for clarification. Discussed the presence of redfin (english perch) in the lake and not all new they were an introduced species with a more aggressive feeder that can impact the small local species however are very popular with anglers.</p> <p>Track work will commence on 31 March following an induction with Djaara. Council has started moving in gravel for the works which will finish before Easter.</p> <p>Flora and Fauna monitoring progress report provided to the group at the meeting (to be attached to minutes). Tony read out the general observations and recommendations for the group. A final report will be received around August.</p> <p>Fire prevention slashing will be completed later in the year. Slashing may contribute to the spread of weeds so Tony will monitor this.</p> <p>Signage was discussed and it was supported that we install another guidelines / rules sign (same as the one at the toilet) at the launching ramp.</p> <p>Trail cameras have been withdrawn to ensure privacy regulations are adhered to, Tony has recorded things such as numbers of vehicles and people (numbers only) so we have an idea of people visiting but the latest detail has yet to be recorded.</p> <p>Budget, as detailed in the report there is an operational budget of approximately \$20k for ongoing management such as water, toilet pump out and portable toilets etc. Council, in the last couple of years, has spent over \$100k on fencing, track work (to be completed), EPBC monitoring and surveys and Cultural Heritage Management Plan as detailed in the report.</p>	
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		<p>Fence ladders – There are two ladders to be installed and it was supported that we place them in the souths creek section. We can then see if we need a further ladder in the northern area that has the new fence.</p> <p>Landscape architect – Tony to follow up Teddington as per last meeting</p> <p>Portable toilets - Tony will organise toilets for the following public holidays including Anzac weekend.</p>	
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2. Other items discussed:

Carol's spreadsheet with numbers of campers was discussed and also an email from Carole was circulated about duck shooting. Discussed the fact that duck shooting season has been extended and starts 19 March, plus bag limits have been increased. From discussions no-one knew how often or how many duck shooters use the area and from experiences of the group there was a view that the lake was not overly popular for a high number of shooters given the depth of the lake and fact that ducks would leave the area very quickly so limited opportunities for shooters.

3. Close: 7.30pm

4. Next Meeting: 6pm 24 June 2025 - Online

Walkers Lake update – 12 March 2025

March Long Weekend

There was a high number of people at Walkers Lake for the long weekend and Tony attended on Friday 7 March to complete a monthly check, clean etc. At that stage we were made aware that the Donald music event was cancelled and there were approximately 100 people at Walkers Lake due to this cancellation. Tony spoke to some of the campers and they were made aware of the number of toilets (1 permanent and 2 portables), no fires and rubbish to be taken with them.

On Saturday (and over the weekend), Council had several calls from the community and to attempt to assist with the unknown number of campers, a skip was organised for rubbish however there was no access to more portable toilets. A second skip was organised to manage waste.

Police visited the site on several occasions and Tony spoke to them and they were happy with the way the campers were behaving.

Local farmer Colin Coates was also on site several times to top up water for the tank and assist campers where possible. Colin had conversations with many of the campers who were from overseas and interstate and he was impressed with the way they behaved and looked after the site.

Council had staff attend to provide extra toilet paper.

On Tuesday 12 March Council staff attended the site to clean up however campers had cleaned the area extremely well and the skip was filled for removal.

Toilet was pumped out and cleaned ready for future use.

Monthly Inspections

Monthly inspections continue to be undertaken to monitor the site and facilities, clean up any rubbish found and drive the tracks to look for any vandalism or maintenance requirements.

Copies of the last two checks are attached for your information.

Pest and Weed management

Rabbit numbers appear to be increasing so Council will organise fumigation or calicivirus management during March/April.

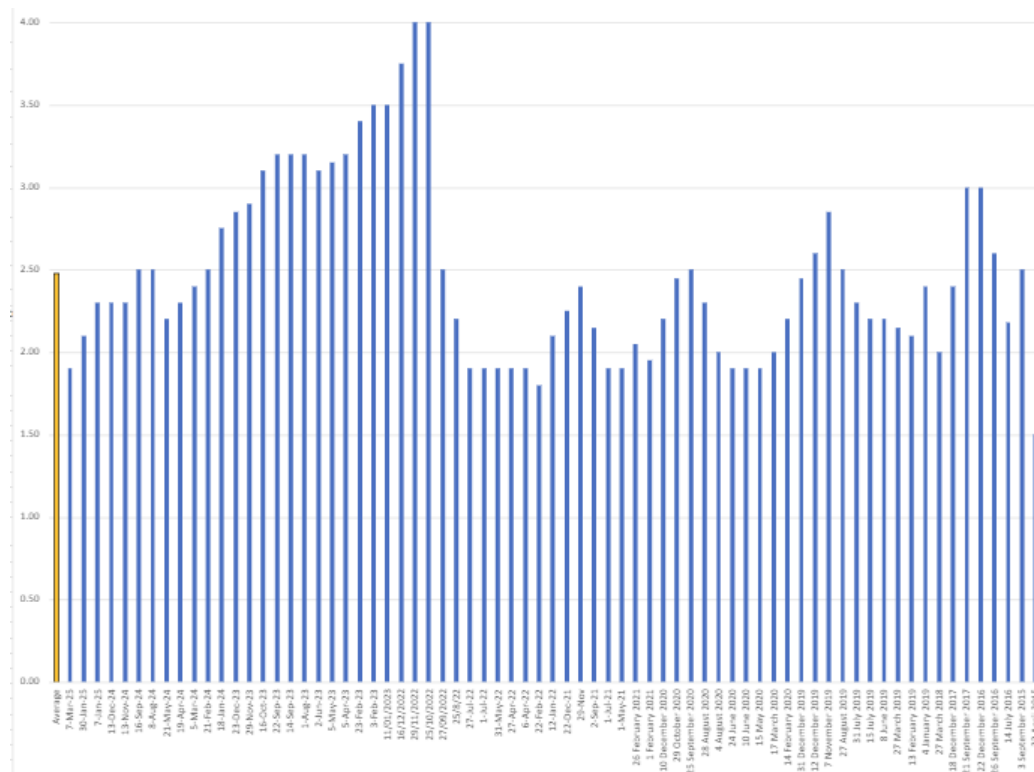
A review of current weed presence will be conducted on site by NGSC officers (Tony Dark and NGSC Pest and Weeds Officer James Gubby) at the end of March to assess next steps in management.

Portable Toilets

Portable toilets were located on site during long weekends and will again be provided at Easter this year.

Water Levels

Current water levels are recorded at 1.9m (December was 2.5m) so waters have receded through evaporation. The average levels since we started recording them after the lake was initially filled 3 September 2015 is at 2.48m.



No signs of Blue Green Algae have been present since 2024

Track conditions, fencing and proposed works

Cultural Heritage Management Plan process has been approved to enable some projects to be completed such and the track work will start 31 March 2025 and take approximately 1 week so will be ready by Easter.



Cultural Heritage

As mentioned in December we were working with Cooper heritage Management and Djaara to complete a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP). We had several meetings online and on site. Through site visits we located a Scarr tree, and a high volume of quartz located near the western fence (close to the old boat ramp):

Cultural sites – High volume of
quartz revealed





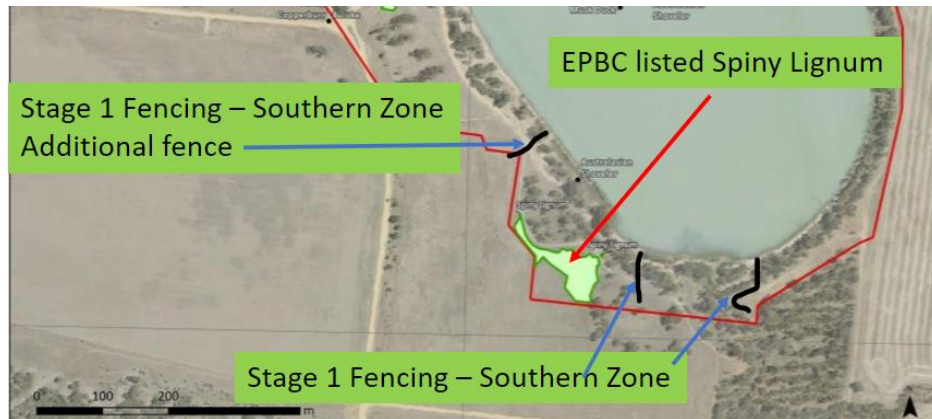
Northern fence with one gate, two pedestrian access points has been installed:

Northern Fence (replace existing fence)



Further to this, to alleviate some of the damage and to also protect the EPBC listed spiny lignum (located in the below map) we have added a section of fence near the old boat ramp that has firstly managed Council's requirements now and will secondly enable future flexibility to manage that lower section. Cultural sites (scatters of quartz as mentioned above) located on the southern side of the fence and will remain permanent allowing pedestrian access for

walking, fishing, birdwatching etc. Although pedestrian access is possible at the fence ends, two fence ladders have been ordered to improve access to the souths creek – southern zone area:



Flora and Fauna monitoring

The first annual monitoring actions of EPBC and FFA listed flora and fauna has been undertaken by Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare (BNGL) with an interim report has been received and final report due by August.

Reports have been received from Wetland Revival Trust for the Growling Grass Frog, Progress report by Paul Foreman of Blue Devil Consulting and report from BNGL

Fire Prevention

Annual slashing will be undertaken by the end of 2025 in line with the current arrangements and the following map of the area on site:



Signage

New rules sign (example of current sign at the toilet area) is yet to be installed at the boat ramp:



Development of signage for the values – **Recreation, Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage** as well as other historical information is yet to be developed but will be a priority moving forward with the advisory group input.

Trail Cameras

Trail cameras have been removed however data collected is yet to be collated.

Project and Operational Costs

Prue asked at our last meeting for spending associated with Walkers Lake and the following is a list of projects or expenses over the last 18 months:

Fencing Djandak and other contractors including native vegetation assessment \$30,000

Monitoring Plan and monitoring \$31,000

Cultural Heritage Management Plan and due diligence report for fencing \$32,000

Signage and sundries \$1,600

Fence Ladders \$3,700

Track work due 31 March including Djaara site induction \$25,000

Future costs to be incurred for fencing repairs, installation of fence ladders, signage, Cultural heritage monitors, fire pits, EPBC monitoring, tree audit, buoys and annual site clean-up etc is being reviewed by Tony Dark at the moment.

Other operational or recurrent expenses are as follows:

Portable toilets and pump out \$6,000 (2024/25)

Weed / Pest control \$1,800 (2024/25)

Water supply allocation of \$8,000 per year

Souths creek fence / gate will be repaired in coming months.



Example of a fence ladder and the group is to advise the best locations for these ladders (see example below):

