

## Northern Grampians Shire Council

### Walkers Lake Advisory Group

Meeting held at Midday on Tuesday 4 August 2020  
at Walkers Lake

#### Minutes

1. **Present** - Cr Tony Driscoll, Cr Kevin Erwin, Cr Murray Emerson (Mayor), Trevor Baldock, Austin Freeman, Steve Jesse, Rob Loats, Prue McAllister, Wayne Robbins, Tony Dark.
2. **Apologies** – Colin Coates, Chad Frost, Tony Hand
3. **Disclosures of Interest & Declarations of Conflict of Interest.** Nil
4. **Confirmation of Minutes from the previous meeting.** 20 November 2019 Accepted.  
moved Prue McAllister, seconded Trevor Baldock
5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes.**  
  
Covered in general business.
6. **General Business**

#### 1. Cultural Heritage report

Refer to the report attached to agenda and minutes.

The report details the input from a qualified cultural heritage advisor, Aboriginal Victoria and Dja Dja Wurrung in relation to the proposed activities and projects for the reserve.

- As per Tony Dark's email 5 September 2019, Due diligence assessment completed by a qualified Cultural Heritage Advisor.
- The assessment was required to provide professional advice in relation to possible future projects including track management, second toilet block, campfire structures etc to assist the approval process and guidance on suitability of sites. A preliminary report has been submitted but a full report is pending.
- Aboriginal Victoria have suggested entering into an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreement (ACHLMA) with Dja Dja Wurrung (DDWCAC) as an appropriate and prudent way of managing the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage (ACH) around Walkers Lake.
- Tony Dark met Dja Dja Wurrung representative John Marshallsay on site at Walkers Lake 24 June 2020 to tour the lake and discuss the best way forward. Gaining a full insight of the requirements of Council in terms of the compliance with artifact locations and implications of our activities is still in the process of being understood therefore next steps will be to seek consent for projects through DELWP as the first stage.

Current activities at the lake for recreational purposes etc are not impacted and the group discussed that if we did nothing that would trigger a Cultural Heritage Management Plan then we need to limit what we do. From the outset, the group and council have always maintained the stance that we minimise the footprint and not impact on the site in terms of infrastructure therefore the group members agreed that we look to reduce our risk by minimising our projects and manage through DELWP and Dja Dja Wurrung.

## 2. Voting for Decisions

Due to the time between meetings and the communication of minutes and other updates via email we need to set a clear understanding of decisions for activities, actions and follow up.

- The current process is to schedule a meeting, create minutes which are then distributed back to the group and any actions followed up.

Cr Emerson provided input in saying that it was important for members to get to meetings to vote on matters to make sure everyone has a say because that is the democratic way. With not all members available to attend we need to seek feedback on the best fit for the group and the following points were discussed:

- Attendance or non attendance at meetings - Outcome agreed that confirmation from members to be sent via email to Tony Dark or phone call/text as a minimum.
- Attendees at meetings vote on actions or recommendations and the expectation for confirmation of actions by non attendees. The group discussed the fact that the meetings be scheduled outside of harvest and key commitments of members so early October and March are the best times. If we set a schedule then this will give members the best chance to attend therefore gaining full participation at meetings and achieving the best outcome for voting and recommendations for the reserve.
- Zoom meetings are an option as all members present said they could manage this.
- All meeting requirements could be done on a case by case basis for venue, date and time.
- If matters required input from the members then that needed to be clear in the minutes and/or email advice so that everyone had an understanding of important matters.

**Action:** Tony Dark to set a schedule for meetings in early October and March.

## 3. Projects

### Second Toilet

In terms of minutes circulated from the group meeting in November 2019, the location was to be beside the existing toilet. The group discussed this decision which was based on advice that the location of the existing toilet and sugar gum area (old school site) are the most suitable in terms of accessibility and meeting approval/consent from authorities. If other locations are a priority, then we would be looking to include this project in an agreement with Dja Dja Wurrung.

Since this date and in recent feedback from some group members suggests this needs to be revisited based on the fact that members suggest that they have not seen a lineup at the existing toilet even in peak times so there is reservation about the need for a second toilet at this stage.

The group discussed the temporary toilets we often use in busy periods which have worked quite well; it was just the organising of the toilet to be picked up, emptied and returned. Trevor often camps and brings his own portable toilet which works for his group and we have seen campers bring their own camp toilet with a tent. The group discussed the need to stop bush toileting practices and has agreed that we need to hold off on the second permanent toilet and monitor.

**Action:** No action other than reminding the group prior to peak periods about requirements for portable toilets.

## Constructed Campfire Structures

The group discussed the use of fire sites in existence around the lake. Existing fire sites mapped against artifact sites. Council's original proposal was to install fireplaces in approved locations to cater for campers and assist fire management. The group discussed the wear and tear of sites and there were some differences in opinion to the fact that the number of fire sites had grown or not grown over recent years. The following motion was moved:

Trial the use of 4 portable fireplaces as an interim measure and to monitor results through feedback from the group.

Moved by Wayne Robbins Seconded by Trevor Baldock Carried

**Action:** Design of the proposed portable fireplace to be arranged and circulated to the group for confirmation.

## Day Visitor Space

The group discussed this idea that came from a suggestion from a GWM Water representative who have lakes with a designated area for day visitors to come without impacting on or being impacted by campers etc generally close to amenities, parking and accessible.

There was support for and against day visitor space at Walkers Lake. All agreed that if there was a space it would not be near the boat ramp. Some suggested further along the western side suitable for swimmers etc and others thought it not necessary as visitors generally find a space away from campers or near campers to mingle.

The majority consensus from the group was that a day visitor area is not required at Walkers Lake.

**Action:** No further action.

## Landcare Project

As per email 20 July 2020, Landcare proposed a plantout as per the map provided. Prue provided details explaining the project covering a small plantout in terms of the action in our management plan and a copy of proposed areas was sent via email. The 1000 plants will be a variety of small and tall options of local native species. There are 4 key areas for the plantout with the front fence line to provide a variety of tall and small, the left of the boat ramp in the area small plants will be located along the understory edge of the trees and then extended through the outlet area towards the first main camping area to the north, the third will be on the eastern side on lunette camp area that has been impacted by vehicle access and the fourth will be the inlet area biodiversity values of this space and councils plan to restrict access to this area due to the cultural heritage values.

Wayne advised he was disappointed that he found out a couple of days prior to the email and that the advisory group should have known well before any plans of this type of project. Wayne asked who had approved this and Tony Dark advised that there was discussion at the March 2019 meeting and from that he attended a meeting of the Landcare group to discuss their proposal for the lake. The group applied for a grant through the CMA and a letter of support was provided by council through its officer Tony Dark for the grant which included activities on a privately owned neighbouring piece of land.

The group was asked for feedback on the project and there was mixed support. There was clear objection to having a fence, explained as a single wire with signage or markers, which could cause a risk to visitors.

The consensus from the group was to not support the project in its proposed option. Tony Dark made a suggestion of alternatives in the north west of the reserve where past plantouts had appeared to have taken place however this was not supported. Prue was very disappointed and that this decision would go against the management plan objectives and the biodiversity for the site and also that the grant was a part of a larger project and that Council would need to explain this to the CMA. Prue also said that this would question the support from landcare to be represented on the advisory group. Prue expressed that she has not felt supported and believes that there needs to be more representation from female representatives in the group.

Plans for pests such as rabbits eg rabbit busters program was discussed and Steve Jesse believed that the 1080 program may be an option. Wayne Robbins was going to talk to his rabbit expert and get back to Tony Dark.

**Action:** Follow up for the rabbit management required through Steve Jesse and Wayne Robbins

### Signage

(Refer report attached) Examples of signage at regional lakes provided for review to understand what we want to see at Walkers Lake. Points for discussion:

- Content required such as Recreation activities, history of the site, cultural heritage values and rules

The group supports Tony Dark look at formatting the content on a sign similar to the Wooroonook example to include Recreation, Cultural and Biodiversity plus rules.

**Action:** Tony Dark to follow up the sign

4. **Toilet Cleaning** - Reminder to all members to monitor toilets for cleanliness when they visit. Advise Tony Dark for toilet paper supplies, tank requires emptying etc - Key access code is 3478.
5. **Advisory Group** - Resignation letter received from Michell Clark and all agreed to send a letter to Michelle thanking her for her service.  
Moved Wayne Robbins Seconded Austin Freeman Carried

**Action:** Vacancy will be available so advertising for a new member to be put in place.

### Other Items

8. **Next Meeting – Early October TBC**
9. **Meeting Closed - 2pm**

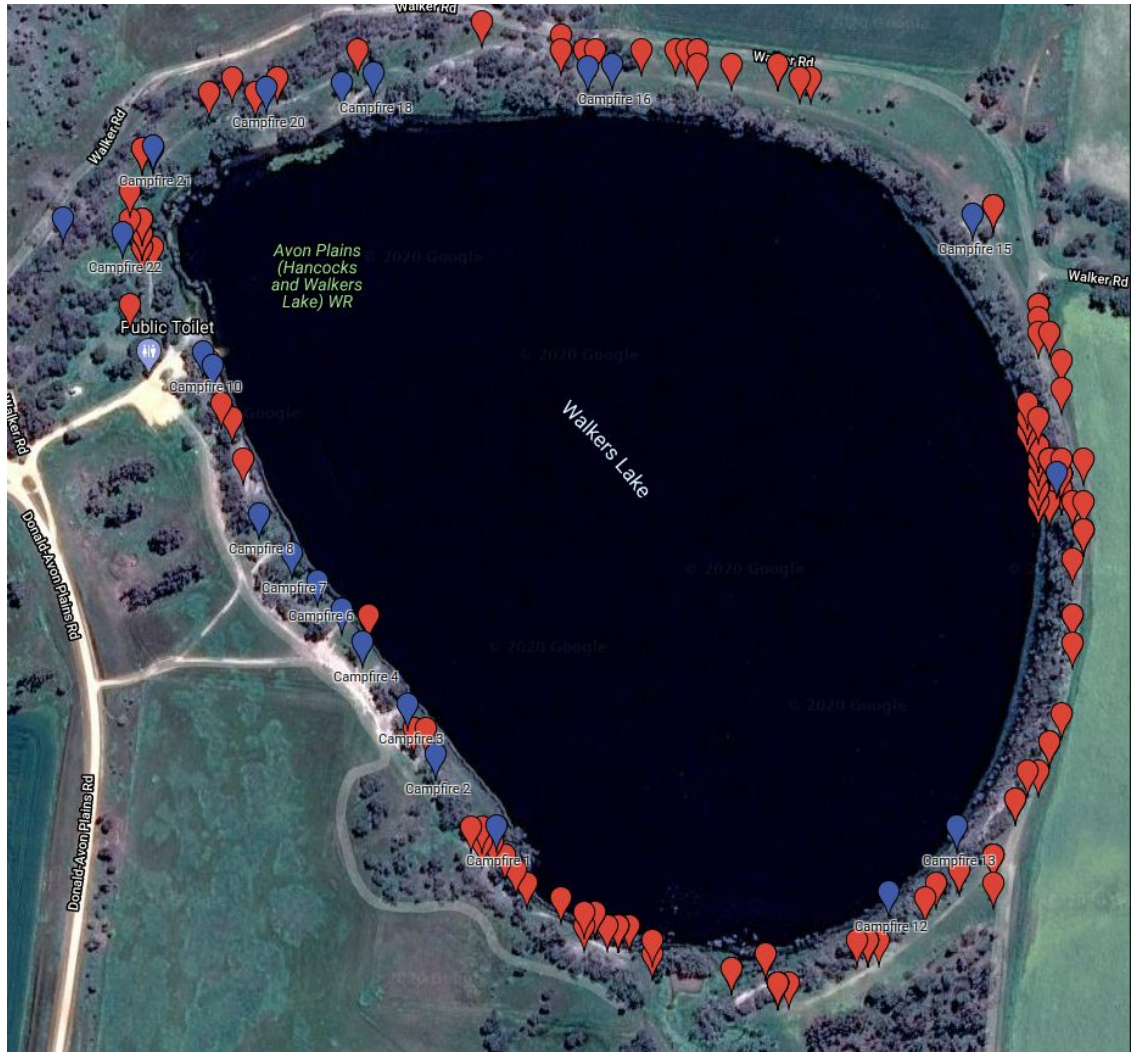
# Report for meeting 4 August 2020

## Cultural Heritage Due Diligence Assessment

- As per Tony Dark's email 5 September 2019, Due diligence assessment completed by Nicholas Clark of Clarkeology, a qualified Cultural Heritage Advisor as listed on the Public List of heritage Advisors.
- The assessment was required to provide professional advice in relation to future projects including track management, second toilet block, campfire structures etc to assist the approval process and guidance on suitability of sites. A preliminary report has been submitted but a full report is pending.

## Aboriginal Victoria (AV)

- In reference to Tony Dark's email 24 February 2020 stating "*Following our communications with Dja Dja Wurrung and Aboriginal Victoria we have received advice in relation to activities and projects proposed for the lake such as fireplaces, toilet, track resheeting, signage etc. We are preparing a response and will advise you the next steps in due course however at this stage no projects will be proceeding until we clarify all parties position in relation to permits and consents to proceed.*"
- AV are of the view that the Due Diligence report prepared by our heritage advisor may leave us exposed to the potential of harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage (ACH). Such reports do not provide any authorisation and expose council to risks if the activity progresses in areas where Aboriginal cultural heritage has been identified. As we are aware Aboriginal Cultural Heritage (ACH) has been identified the whole way around Walkers Lake.
- AV have suggested entering into an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreement (ACHLMA) with Dja Dja Wurrung (DDWCAC) as an appropriate and prudent way of managing the ACH around Walker Lake. Having said that, further discussion is required on some points as a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) may still be required. This view is also complicated in terms of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 which provides protection for all Aboriginal places, objects and human remains in Victoria, regardless of their inclusion in the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register or land tenure. The Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Act 2016 has made changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. Council is currently managing the differing opinions in relation to the interpretation of the Act in relation to the activities we propose including camp fires, resheeting roads/tracks and toilet facilities etc associated with camping or using the reserve for activities that are deemed high or low impact. Advice at this time is that Landcare initiatives are generally viewed as low impact activities.
- Prior to entering into an ACHLMA we need to determine if a CHMP is required so to proceed we require a legal opinion given the advice we have been provided and the differing interpretations of the ACT. Legal costs at this stage are between \$10k and \$20k for this determination of our projects (as low impact). We are seeking clarity about this path and likelihood of success in submission to AV to satisfy the ACT in relation to a low impact outcome.
- To understand the cost to complete a CHMP we have a quote of \$50,000 plus contingencies for future advice or assessments.
- An independent Site Inspection Report 2016 by Dja Dja Wurrung identified over 100 artifacts recorded and the map below shows the sites and the location of existing fire sites:



- Under section 27 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, it is an offence to knowingly, negligently or recklessly harm ACH. The table below lists the maximum penalties.

Section	Description	Penalty (2019-20)
27(1) and 27(2)	A person is guilty of an offence if the person by an act of omission harms Aboriginal cultural heritage and at the time of the act or omission was likely to harm Aboriginal cultural heritage	Person - \$297,396 Corporate Body - \$1,652,200
27(3) and 27 (4)	A person is guilty of an offence if the person by an act or omission harms Aboriginal cultural heritage and at the time of the act or omission the person was reckless as to whether the act or omission was likely to harm Aboriginal cultural heritage	Person - \$198,264 Corporate Body - \$991,320

27(5) and 27(6)	A person is guilty of an offence if the person by an act or omission harms Aboriginal cultural heritage and at the time of the act or omission the person was negligent as to whether the act or omission was likely to harm Aboriginal cultural heritage	Person - \$99,132 Corporate Body - \$495,660
-----------------	---	---

- Tony Dark met Dja Dja Wurrung representative John Marshallsay on site at Walkers Lake 24 June 2020 to tour the lake and discuss the best way forward. Gaining a full insight of the requirements of Council in terms of the compliance with artifact locations and implications of our activities is still in the process of being understood therefore next steps will be to seek consent for projects (as discussed with the Walkers Lake Advisory Group eg toilet, track resheeting, fireplaces etc) through DELWP as the first stage.
- Current activities at the lake for recreational purposes etc are not impacted.

## Signage

Review of what we need to see at the reserve and some examples of other lakes below and we need to consider Recreation, Cultural and Biodiversity Values and Rules:







# Lake Marma

(Aboriginal for Wild Duck)

A strong attraction to settlement and development of Murrumbidgee in the early 1870s, was the swampy waterhole known as Marma Swamp.

In 1930 the Murrumbidgee Association petitioned for the Lake Reserve to be gazetted as a Public Park and Gardens, and emerged as the developer of the park. The planning began, with various European trees and plants. The first plantings of sugar gums were in 1933-36.

From around 1980 the lake was used as the main waterhole under the control of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and its successors. With the Wimmera Mallee project completed in 2007 the lake was decommissioned as a reservoir and a locally based Committee of Management appointed.

Since then substantial development has taken place. The park and lake have become a focus for bird life and a focal point for many of the town's recreational activities.

Since then substantial development has taken place. The park and lake have become a focus for bird life and a focal point for many of the town's recreational activities.



# Rabl Park

Rabl Park was originally named Marma Swamp, (Marma - Aboriginal for Wild Duck) which existed from the earliest of times as a natural drainage basin.

In 1930 it was gazetted as a Green Park incorporating European and Copson varieties by the Murrumbidgee Association.

By the late 1920s the park had reverted largely to treeless swamp land. Most of the trees were subsequently removed and by the 1950s few remained.

In the early 1950s the Area Club of Murrumbidgee on the project to completely rehabilitate the area. The old waterways and swamps were bulldozed into a series of interconnected ponds and the whole area replanted. The 1920s railway pedestrian bridge was relocated to become an attraction spanning the swamps.

Rabl Park was named after Dr. Herbert and Mrs. Helen Rabl who were responsible for the original planning.



# Welcome to Walkers Lake

Northern Grampians Shire Council welcomes you to picturesque Walkers Lake. We hope you enjoy its many recreational and environmental values.

Walkers Lake is located approximately 26 kilometres from the township of Donald, 32 kilometres from St Arnaud and 40 kilometres from Minyip, and is part of the Avon Plains Lake system. These lakes are a key community and environmental asset and have been popular with both locals and visitors for decades.

Northern Grampians Shire Council took over management responsibility for Walkers Lake in 2014 and continues to maintain its purpose for public recreation. In addition to providing the local and visiting community with a tranquil location to enjoy a wide range of recreational activities, Council is committed to maintaining the natural attributes and values of the lake and ensuring the safety and welfare of everyone who visits.

## Things to do

- bird watching
- boating
- skiing
- sailing
- canoeing
- kayaking
- camping
- fishing
- hunting (in season)
- picnics
- swimming
- bush walking



## Important information

To help keep Walkers Lake in the best possible condition for the enjoyment of future generations, Council asks visitors to consider others and the environment.



The water is a shared environment. Swimmers, boaters and fishers are urged to be mindful of other users and observe Victorian boating rules and regulations.



Boats may only be launched from boat ramp. State boating rules apply.



The collection and removal of firewood within the reserve is strictly prohibited. Do not remove any limbs from trees or vegetation. Please bring your own firewood.



In relation to campfires, please observe all Victorian Fire restrictions and regulations (see over page).



Fish stocking is undertaken annually by Fisheries Victoria. Please observe Victorian fishing regulations.



Please maintain your campsite in a tidy manner and free from rubbish. Littering is an offence. Please ensure you have a suitable receptacle to store your rubbish and take it with you when you leave.



Please report suspicious or unlawful activity to Council (5358 8700) or Police (000)

## Historical Photos of Walkers Lake

(Courtesy of St Arnaud Historical Society, Donald Historical Society and Wayne Robbins)

### Avon Plains

With the influx of settlers in 1872, Avon Plains came into being, with a blacksmith's shop, post office, butcher, hotel, church and school being the main necessities. A creamery operated in the district when the farmers went into milk production after they stopped growing wheat. It closed in 1897.

The school opened in 1876 and served for 71 years. Its octagonal War Memorial shelter pavilion, erected at the State School and opened in 1919, is a memorial to the local soldiers of all wars, and is still maintained by the local community.

The Methodist church closed in 1954 after 78 years of service to the district, and the post office, which was run by the Walker family since 1907, closed in 1976.

Batyo Catyo and Walker's Lakes are popular boating, fishing, camping and swimming venues in the district and at Rich-Avon there exists an enthusiastic cricket club.



Avon Plains School 1900



School 1938





*Walker's Lake, Arvon Plains*





