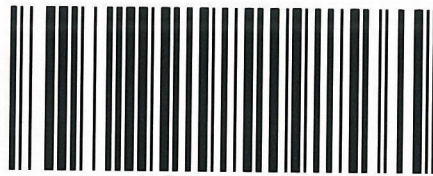


NOR-WEST CANINE ASSOCIATION INC
(Affiliated with Royal NSW Canine Association Ltd)
(Affiliated with Australian Flyball Association Inc)



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25/2/2016

Submission re Planning for Showground Station and North West Rail Line.
A submission from Norwest Thunderdogs Flyball Club.

Before making comment please allow me to introduce ourselves and provide some background material which will assist in making our comments meaningful.

Our Club is called the Norwest Thunderdogs and we are part of the Norwest Canine Association. We are the sporting dogs arm of Norwest Canine Association and our main focus is the dog sport of flyball.

Flyball is a National dog sport and consists of a relay race between two teams of four dogs. Each dog must jump over four hurdles, retrieve a ball by triggering a flyball box pedal and then return over the hurdles to the start/finish line.



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Flyball combines all the things a dog loves to do – run, jump, fetch, retrieve, compete and most of all: their desire to please their owners.

Any dog; regardless of breed, size, or shape can participate and join in on the fun. Competitions are run in performance based divisions. The fastest teams are put in Division 1 and slower divisions follow sequentially. This enables every team to be competitive in their division. At the annual National Championship there are normally 10 racing Divisions.

Our Club has been training at the Dog Complex at Castle Hill Showground for the past 15 years and we currently have 46 dogs in training and we have over 50 active human members.

The Club has an outstanding record of competition results – in the last 10 years we have won the 1st Division Australian National Championship nine times and have also won six other Division Championships. We currently hold the Australian National Record and have been voted Australian Flyball Club of the Year on six occasions in the last 10 years.

In large part our success results from our excellent training facilities at the Dog Complex at the Castle Hill Showground. Our Club, together with the other clubs using the Showground area, have contributed financially to the development of these facilities – indeed our existing Clubhouse and gear storage area was largely build via self-generated funds raised by the various dog clubs. Dog training in any discipline involves not only access to a suitable ground area but also access to equipment. Flyball requires jumps, flyball boxes, start lights, jumping aids all of which must be set up and stored close to the training area.

The above information brings me to the main point of our submission – which is the apparent lack of understanding of both the activity use level of the existing Dog Ground complex at Castle Hill and understanding of the requirement for facilities such as Club house, gear storage, toilets and adjacent parking for any dog training facility. The released concept plan shows a small ground area allocated as an Off Leash and dog training area in what we know as the Snake Pit area of the Showground complex. There is no indication of any adjacent building to function as a Club house/Gear storage facility and there does not seem to be any provision for parking close to the ground area.

The existing Dog complex is used by a number of dog clubs – far obedience training, for agility, for show dogs, for flyball (two flyball dog clubs actually train at the complex). The grounds are used every weeknight and on a large number of weekends throughout the year. During the day period the grounds are only lightly used by people doing individual training or simply giving their dog a run. The Dog complex area is the heaviest used land area at the Showground.

The Australian Veterinary Association web site shows that in Australia 39% of households own a dog – there were 19 dogs for every 100 people in Australia in the 2013 Statistics survey. Dogs are recognized for their health benefits – reduction in stress level, encouragement of outdoor activities and exercise, assisting in control of modern medical problems such as blood pressure and diabetes. A large part of the Hills Shire population owns a dog -yet the need for appropriate facilities to exercise and train these dogs seems to be overlooked in the planning for the Showground area.

Finally can I outline the facilities that are currently available for dogs at the Dog Complex at the Showground. There is a large, flat training area that will accommodate up to 6 Obedience rings or 3 flyball rings; there is an adjacent Club house (largely funded by donations from dog supporters) with kitchen and toilet facilities plus meeting rooms and gear storage areas, there is tap water outlets along the edge of the grounds and adjacent parking. These facilities are all floodlit so they can be used at night. Given that these are the existing facilities and they are well utilized why would the Department think that a lower level of amenity would be seen as acceptable by users?

We would respectfully request that the Department better recognise in its forward plans the needs for improved dog facilities taking into account what is currently available and the level of dog ownership in the Shire. We would welcome a visit from Department Officers – we train every Tuesday night from 6.30 pm to 9.30 pm at the Dog Complex and would love to showcase our sport to your staff if they are able to attend. If not then you can certainly watch videos of flyball on youtube simply by googling flyball on youtube.

Yours Faithfully



Brian Lindsay (for Norwest Thunderdogs).