

DUNGOG SHOWGROUND

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION AND

MANAGEMENT

STRATEGY

Adopted by Council 18 March 2003

1 INTRODUCTION

Background

The Dungog Showground ('the Showground'), comprises sections 38 and 41 of the town of Dungog (which includes a closed portion of Myles Street). It consists of 8.701 hectares of land with 26 separate buildings (Figure One) located on the western edge of the built up area of the town of Dungog (Figure Two), about 900 metres southwest of the heart of the town.

The land of the Showground was reserved to the Crown in 1878 (section 38) and 1888 (section 39 and the closed road, now section 41) and has been dedicated for recreational uses since then, with the whole being rededicated for Public recreation and Showground use since 1973 (as Reserve 61007).

The reserve is under the authority the NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation but it has been administered by Trustees since its initial reservations. Since 1981 control of the Showground has been devolved to Dungog Shire Council ('Council') as Trustee, which currently delegates its day-to-day administrative responsibilities to its Dungog Showground and Recreation Reserve Committee ('the Showground Committee') constituted under s355 of the NSW *Local Government Act 1999*.

The Showground with its highly visible buildings and the largest single area of open space within the town of Dungog has often been the venue for commercial as well as for civic and community activities other than ones directly related to public recreation and showground uses. The Showground is thus of considerable significance to Dungog as a public asset and it is also a place of heritage significance to the community for its long contribution to the town's history.

In recent decades the Showground has been the subject of various proposals for its further development. Some of these proposals have been for new buildings on the site and the last forty years have led to the construction on or relocation to the site of nine buildings. Other proposals have been for the establishment of new regular uses in existing buildings, such as by the Dungog Preschool Kindergarten.

In the past new uses and buildings were established without proposals going through any official process of approval. Since 1981 most new proposals have been subjected to a formal scrutiny by Council, more particularly since the *Dungog Local Environment Plan 1990* ('the LEP') and since the tightening up of planning and building regulation in NSW by the *Local Government Act 1993* and the 1997 amendments to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Most of the more recent proposals considered by Council have been approved but one, an application by Fosseys Limited in 1992 to hold periodic markets in an existing exhibition pavilion (Development Application, DA171/92) was refused on the grounds that the proposed use was not permissible under the LEP. Clause 46 of the LEP in fact allows Council to permit any use on the Showground because this place is a *heritage item*.

In 1995 and 1996 the Showground was examined in some detail by the EJE Group as part of its *Review of the Hunter Regional Environmental Plan (Heritage) 1989* for the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (1995) and by Jennifer McMonies in her *Showgrounds of NSW* study for the National Trust of Australia (NSW) (1996). The reports of these studies established that the *physical fabric* (buildings and works) on the Showground was of considerably greater heritage significance than had been previously recognised.

In light of this heritage significance Council has been taking a cautious approach to more recent proposals for development of the Showground. These proposals have included ones for demolition of an old pavilion to make way for a new toilet block (DA23/00), for reconstruction of the Grandstand roof, for relocation to the Showground or new construction of a Girl Guides' 'hut' and for construction of a State Emergency Services shed. Council has been reluctant to approve any of these developments in the absence of a planning framework that will ensure that new developments are *in sympathy with* (ie do not visually distract from) heritage-significant built fabric.

FIGURE ONE: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND GROUND PLAN

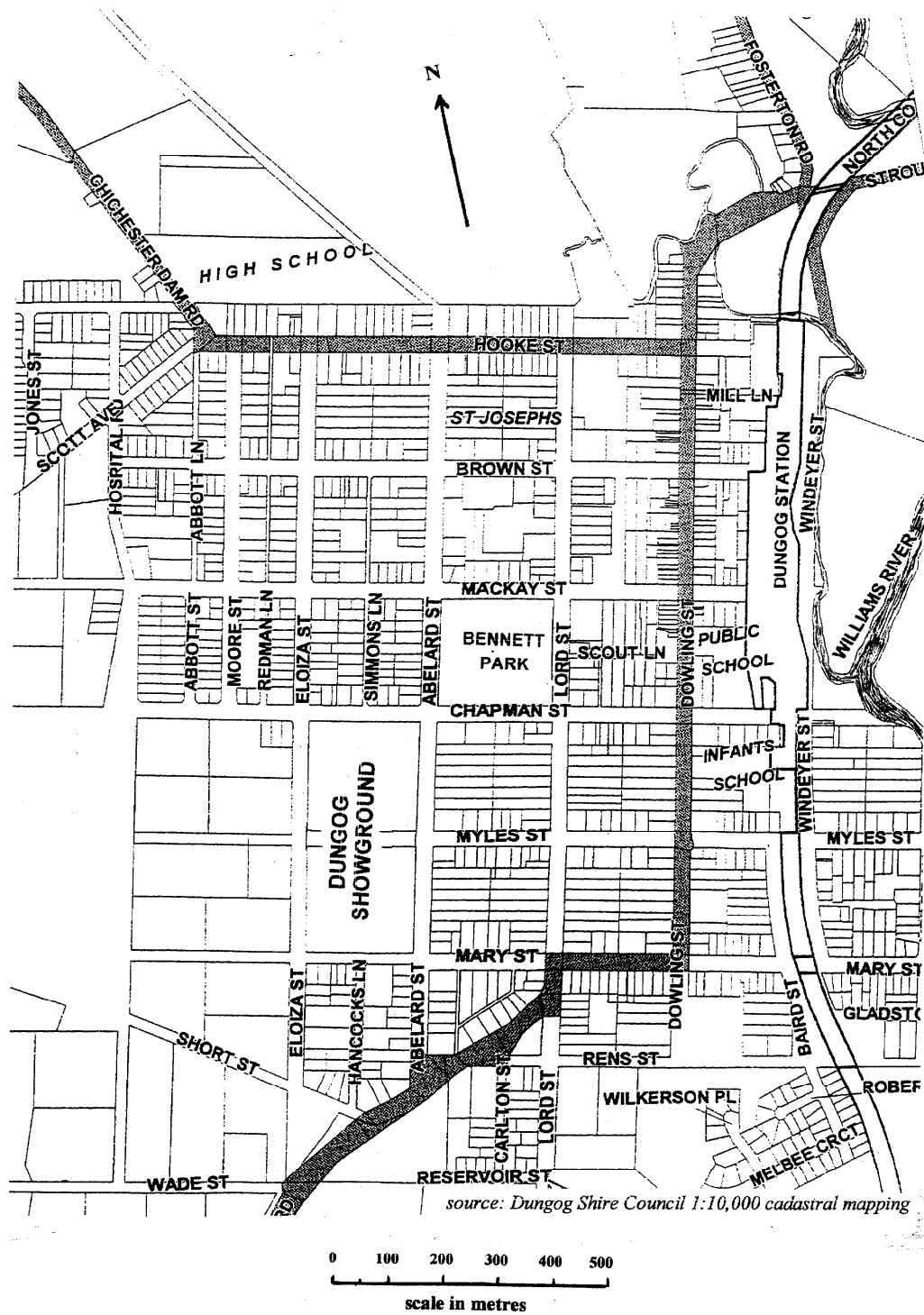
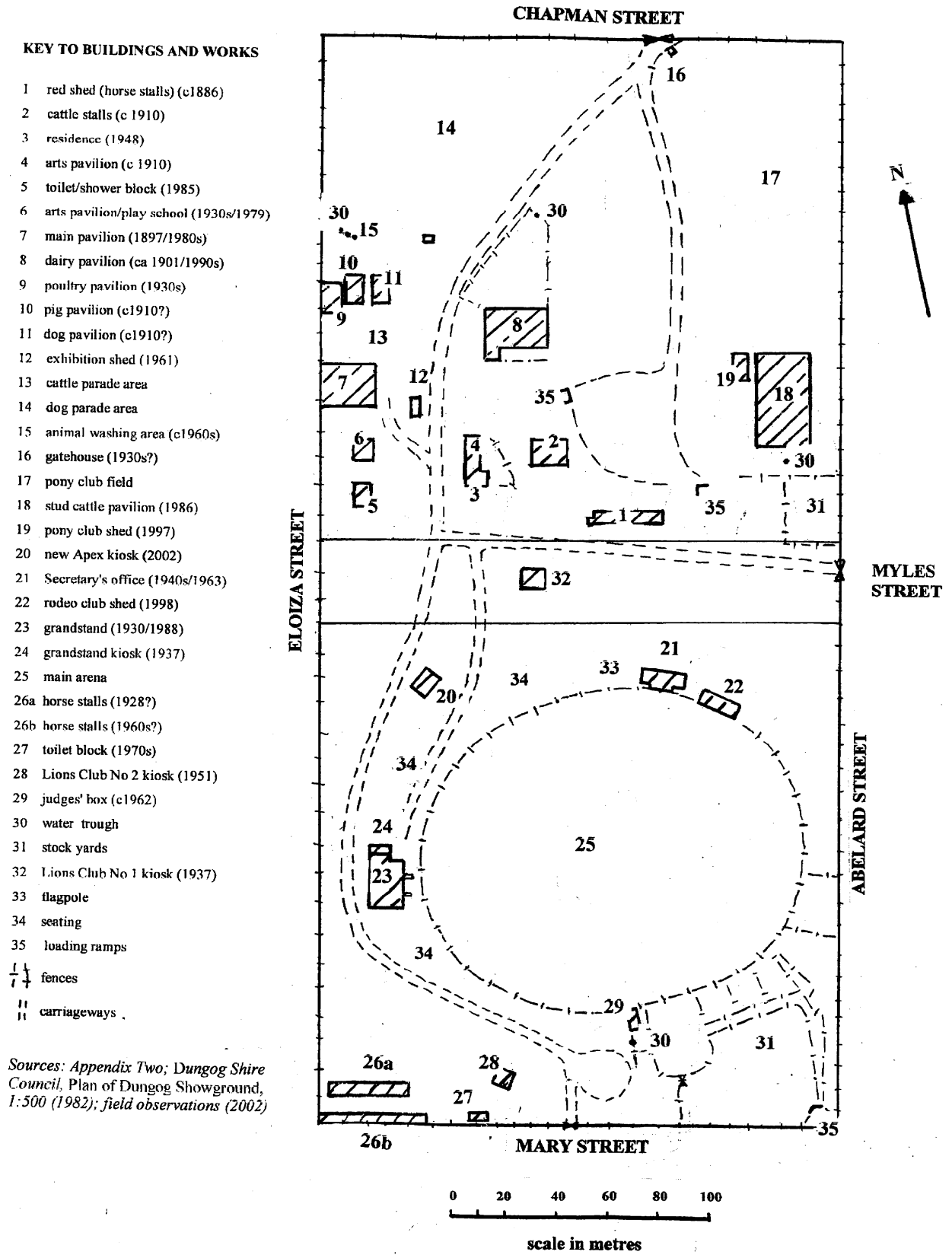


FIGURE TWO: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND LOCATION



Since 1993 local councils have been obliged under the NSW *Local Government Act 1993* to prepare Plans of Management for their *community lands*. Where they relate to *devolved reserves* such as the Showground these plans of management need the concurrence of the Minister for Crown Lands. These plans are essentially documents to guide the day-to-day management of the assets on community lands and need to be prepared in line with guidance from the Departments of Local Government and of Land and Water Conservation (Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1996. *Succeeding with Plans of Management*, NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation, Sydney). Council prepared a draft Plan of Management for the Showground in 2001 (Dungog Shire Council, 2001, *Draft Plan of Management for Dungog Showground*, the Council, Dungog)

Plans of Management for community lands do not necessarily address planning issues in depth. This is particularly so where the lands in question are subject to development pressures or when the lands in question are of heritage significance with particular heritage conservation needs. In the latter case plans of management need to address heritage issues in accordance with guidelines issued by the NSW Heritage Office (NSW Heritage Office, 1996, *Heritage Manual*, Heritage Office and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Sydney)

In the case of the Showground development pressures need to be accommodated in a place that is of considerable heritage significance and where many built structures are in need of active conservation. These are matters that could not be addressed in any depth in Council's Plan of Management for the Showground. Recognising this, Council resolved to fund preparation of a comprehensive strategy to tackle conservation and development issues on the Showground.

This Conservation and Management Strategy

The Aim of this conservation and management strategy ('this Strategy') is, as set out in the brief (see Appendix One) as:

- to provide a set of principles to guide future development and a summary of works that are or may be needed.

Within this Aim the Objectives are:

- To document the evolution of the Showground and its buildings, other works and uses
- To make a formal assessment of what contributes to the heritage significance of the place
- To identify strengths, weaknesses, constraints and opportunities for its future development
- To make practical recommendations as to what should or may need to be done to support the future use of the Showground

Broadly the objectives reflect the methodology recommended by the NSW Heritage Office for Conservation Management Plans (see Figure Three) but this Strategy ventures beyond simply the matter of managing what is of heritage significance on the site. It addresses a number of major issues for the Showground in a long term perspective, providing a policy framework for implementing Council's Showground Plan of Management. The Plan of Management may be reviewed and revised from time to time in light of questions raised and recommendations put forward in the Strategy.

FIGURE THREE: THE PROCESS OF HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

Step 1: Investigate Significance



Step 2: Assess Significance



Step 3: Manage Significance

Source: NSW Heritage Office, 1996. 'Heritage Assessment', in NSW Heritage Office, *Heritage Manual*, NSW Heritage Office and NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Sydney.

Work on the Strategy has involved three consultants. A 'Historical Overview' which substantially meets the first Objective was prepared by a historical research consultant, Mrs Cynthia Hunter. A 'Building Fabric Analysis' which substantially meets the second Objective and which contributes to meeting the third was prepared by another heritage consultant, Mrs Andrea Humphreys. The remainder of the work has been carried out by an environmental (ie town and country) planner who also works as a heritage consultant, Mr Ian Bowie.

Because the reports by Mrs Humphreys and Mrs Hunter were prepared at different times from and in different formats to the substantive Strategy these reports have been included as Appendix Two and Appendix Three of this Strategy. Because the substantive Strategy rests however to a considerable extent on the information and analyses contained in the historical overview and the building fabric analysis Appendices Two and Three should be read as integral parts of this Strategy document.

The field work and office research for this Strategy was carried out in late 2001 and early 2002. Most of the historical research was completed in 2001, but most of the field work and office research for built fabric analysis and the substantive Strategy was carried out in 2002. The later work has benefited from insights gained following the violent storm of 13 December 2001 ('the December 13 storm') which caused extensive damage on the Showground site.

Throughout this preparatory work Mr Bowie as principal consultant reported periodically to Ms Lisa Schiff Council's Planning Manager and other members of Council's staff. He also met with members of Council's Showground Committee in November 2001, January 2002 (with Mrs Humphreys), April 2002 and July 2002 as part of ongoing consultations with interested parties.

The preparation of this Strategy involved approximately 150 hours of work by the principal consultant and further time by the two sub-consultants and was undertaken for a fee of \$10,000.

2 THE SHOWGROUND

Location and Site

Dungog Showground lies on the western edge of the built up area of the Town of Dungog. It is within easy walking distance (approximately 900 metres) of Dungog Railway Station and services in the heart of the town.

The present Showground site has evolved from three parcels of land separately reserved in 1878 for public recreation (section 39, now pt Lot 1 DP 668270, known earlier as Victoria Park), in 1888 for a showground (section 41, now Lot 1 DP 758366, to the north) and for a road reserve (now Lot 7020, DP 752457, the western extension of Myles Street between the two sections). The dedication of these portions as a single reserve for public recreation and showground use dates from 1924. This evolution and related developments are described in detail in Appendix Two.

The site lies within what is substantially a residential precinct. Only 12 of the 29 houses which face the Showground were shown on Crathie's sewerage plans for Council (1938) although the urban allotments to the east, north and south of the Showground were surveyed much earlier. The steeper land to the west of the Showground comprises more recent rural residential developments.

Natural features

The Showground is on the lower slopes of hills that drop into the Williams River. Its slopes naturally were mainly gentle to moderate, with relatively steep land (above 12°) only along the western (Eloiza Street) boundary and for the most part slopes (see Figure Four). Over time most of the two stream channels that drain through the site and northeast to Bennett Park and beyond have been covered over and the ground above has been extensively levelled to produce flat and gentle slopes in the areas of the main and the dog parading area and pony club ground.

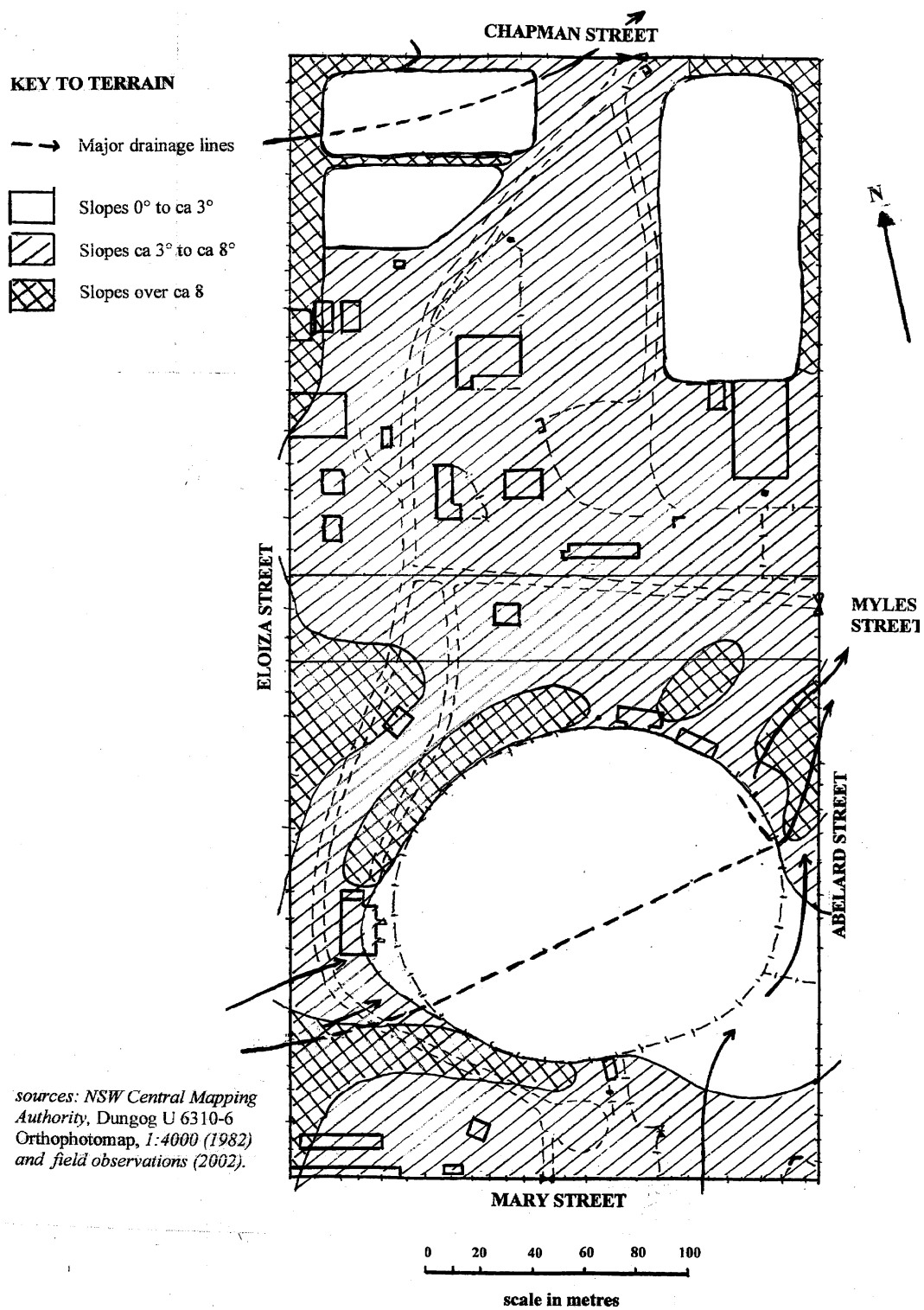
The site is generally well drained (apart from low-lying land along Abelard Street) and is capable of cultivation or building. However most of the soils are skeletal, developed on weathered, shaley siltstones which are droughty and impoverished, which limits any agricultural potential and renders them prone to sheet erosion and some gullyng. Erosion is exacerbated by a thin grass cover and by heavy traffic in some areas.

Because the site is fairly extensive and sloping it has open sightlines both toward the Showground from the east and northeast and eastward from the Showground over Dungog and the Williams River valley. Early photographs (eg Dungog Rodeo Committee, 2002. *Dungog Rodeo* [program], the Committee, Dungog. See also Appendix Two) suggest that open sightlines have been characteristic of the site for as long as it has been used for recreational and showground purposes. The natural tree cover on the site - probably *Eucalyptus* woodland (the word 'Dungog' is reported in Council's draft Plan of Management (p 5) as deriving from an aboriginal word meaning 'place of thinly wooded hills') - appears to have been cleared well before the reservation of the site.

Cultural features

It has been reported that aboriginal people were on the Showground site when the Dungog area was first visited by white men but there is no surviving evidence of this or of subsequent clearing of natural vegetation by white men. The cultural features of the site are the results therefore of early cultivation, the levelling and drainage referred to above, plantings mainly of shade trees, development of infrastructure and establishment of buildings. Much of this cultural development of the site is chronicled in Appendix Two, although precise dates cannot be established for many of the 'improvements' on the site.

FIGURE FOUR: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND TERRAIN



Grading of slopes

Extensive cultivation, and levelling to allow the ‘football’ and ‘showground’ ovals shown in Dunlop’s 1923 survey plan for the NSW Land Board, were carried out before the three land parcels of the site were amalgamated. This work has continued under the management of the Showground by both the Williams River Agricultural and Horticultural Association

(WRA&H Association) and Dungog Shire Council. Since Council assumed its responsibility the main oval has been enlarged and its under-ground stormwater drainage upgraded, while terracing of the dog parade area and further levelling of the pony club ground involving enclosure of the stream channel there was also to have been carried out since 1981, the year of air photography for the NSW Central Mapping Authority's *Dungog 1:4000 orthophotomap* (see Figure Five).

It might be noted that none of the levelled areas are particularly large. Even the main oval, which is 150m long and 120m wide is not large enough for a first class cricket or an Australian Rules oval (which require at least 137x152 and 165 x 137 metres, respectively) and it is barely large enough for first class soccer, rugby or hockey fields (requiring 120x90, 100x69 and 91x55 metres, respectively according to Microsoft 1997, *Encarta 97 Encyclopedia*). The perimeter of the main oval (about 500m) does not safely allow for racing tracks other than for athletics.

Plantings

Extensive planting of trees for the shade and shelter much needed on the site has taken place over the past century though without great success. Almost certainly the two mature Queensland Hoop Pines (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) in the northeastern part of the site are survivors of the trees planted in 1897 to commemorate the sixtieth year of the reign of Queen Victoria. Otherwise likely survivors of early planting programs in 1897 and 1951 appear to be the mature *Eucalyptus* of various species along the northern end of Eloiza Street, in the vicinity of the now demolished Apex kiosk, adjacent to the general stock yards and along the western end of Mary Street, which are shown in Figure Eight. About twenty of these were removed on the advice of an arborist after the storm damage of 13 December 2001.

A further program of tree plantings was undertaken in 1988 on the initiative of the WRA&H Association. Initially nearly 600 trees were to have been planted but in the event the number planted was greatly reduced and not according to plan (a plan of *Dungog Showground Tree Planting Scheme* at a scale of 1:880 appears to have been drawn in Council about 1986). Except for Lemon Scented Gums (*Eucalyptus citriodora*) planted around the dairy cattle parade area and Cadagi (*E torrelliana*) behind the Secretary's office few of the screen and avenue plantings have prospered, through lack of water and damage by horses and humans (Keith Lober, *personal communication*).

River Red Gums (*E camaldulensis*) and a stand of Silver Poplar (*Populus alba*) in low-lying land along Abelard Street south of the Myles Street entrance and smaller trees and shrubs have been widely planted also as green landscaping.

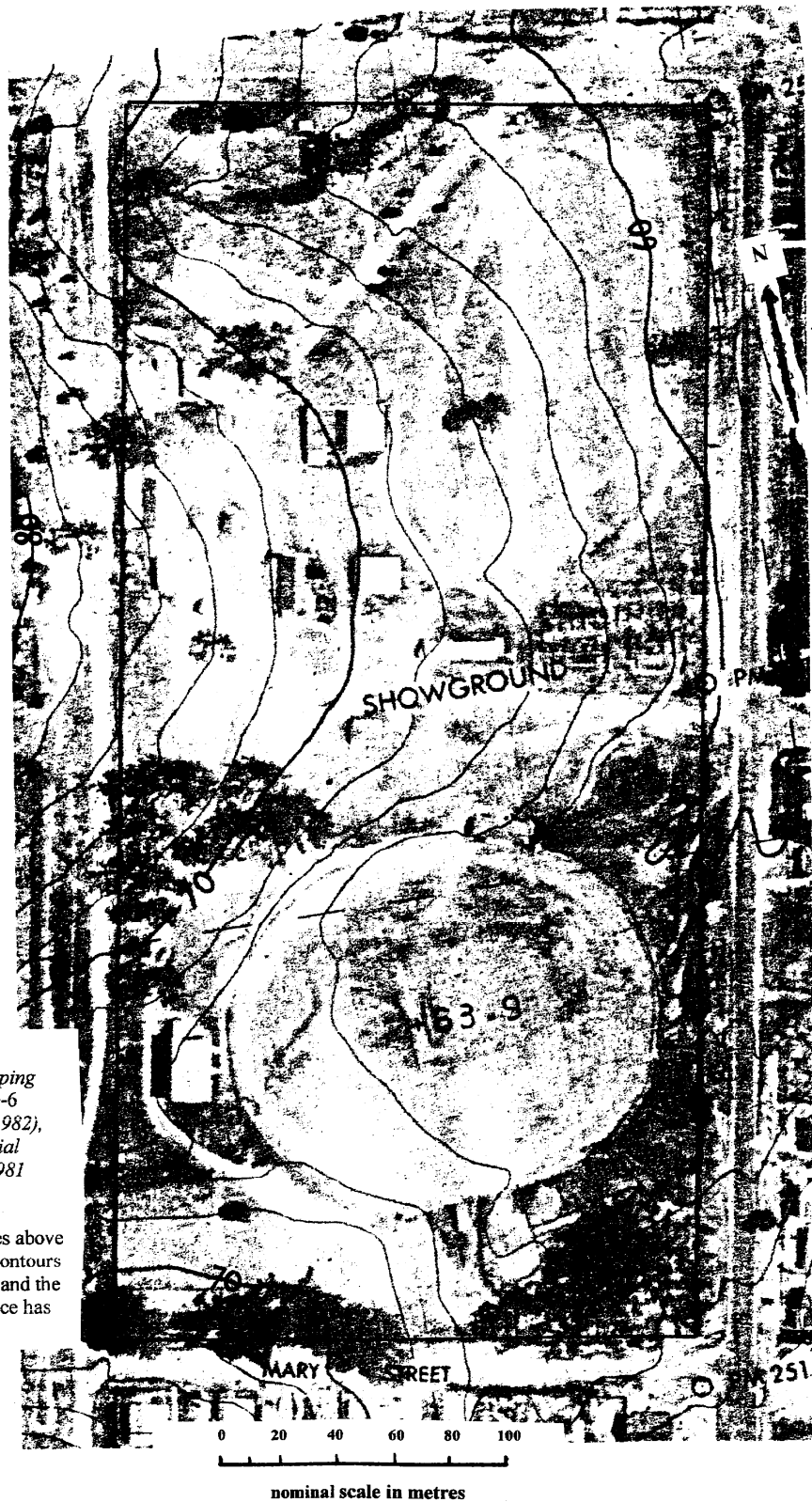
Infrastructure

The development of clean water, storm water, sewerage, electric power, lighting, foot and carriage ways and vehicular parking, seating, fencing and yards on the site has occurred incrementally over many years and few formal records of this infrastructure are available particularly in plan forms that can readily be accessed for the purposes of maintenance, repair and further development.

Clean water is piped from metres on Abelard, Mary and Eloiza Streets and distributed to buildings and outside areas as shown in Figure Six. Most of the water piping has been renewed in recent years but concrete troughs for stock watering and the animal washing area are older though in sound condition.

Surface stormwater runs mainly to low lying land to the east but two major stormwater drains, which have been upgraded in the past two decades, run under the main oval surface to Aberlard Street and under the dog parade area to Chapman Street, also as shown in Figure Nine. There appears to be some debate currently as to whether subsurface drainage is adequate under the main oval which becomes . Sewer mains similarly run under ground from toilet blocks and kiosks to Council lines in Mary and Myles Streets as shown in Figure Six.

FIGURE FIVE: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND TOPOGRAPHY



source: NSW Central Mapping Authority, Dungog U 6310-6 Orthophotomap, 1:4000 (1982), based on high-altitude aerial photography in January 1981

Notes: heights are in metres above Australian height datum; contours are at two metre intervals; and the Showground boundary fence has been highlighted

Electric power lines run under-ground from a meter on Eloiza Street mainly to pavilion buildings and the Grandstand, to power boards for itinerant users, to lighting of the carriageway from the Chapman Street entrance to the Grandstand and to arena lighting for the main oval (Figure seven). The under-grounding of electric power, installation of power boards to increase safety and the number of outlets, improvement of street lighting for pedestrian safety and the progressive upgrading of arena lighting have all been carried during the last decade.

Carriage ways run sealed from formal entrances in Chapman and Abelard (Myles) Streets to south of the Grandstand and unsealed from a gateway on Mary Street, south from Chapman Street towards pavilions and loading ramps and beside the former Apex kiosk to the Grandstand (see Figure One). Carriageways, especially those with sealed surfaces, are narrow but they are in good repair. There are also many informal pedestrian ways and there is a gateway access to a loading ramp on Mary Street near Abelard Street.

There are 88 graded and numbered car parking spaces to the north and southeast of the Grandstand but no other formal provision for vehicular parking. Some spectator seating and picnic tables are located near to the numbered car parks but there is little seating elsewhere on the site.

Within the Showground few areas are now fenced. The main oval is ringed by wire mesh fencing that dates from before the 1980s. The two cattle yards are built of split timber posts and railings that date from the 1930s and 1950s respectively and which are in fair condition. Some other areas also have post and rail fencing (eg the fence between the pony club field and adjacent carriageway) which defines rather than secures these areas and which is not suitable for use for instance as hitching rails. Elsewhere there are remnants of old post and rail fencing

The perimeter fencing of the Showground comprises tall wire mesh fencing, with galvanised iron pipe gates at the Chapman entrance, all of which have replaced earlier galvanised iron sheeting. The perimeter fencing is generally secure and in good condition.

Buildings

There are 26 separate buildings on the Showground site. These buildings are major assets on the site and many of them provide tangible and important links to the evolution and history of the place. Most of these buildings have been purpose built for Showground uses. The location and current use(s) of these buildings is shown in Figure One. Table One below summarises features of this building stock. Much of the information in the table derives mainly from the analysis of buildings and other built fabric contained in Appendix Three.

FIGURE SIX: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND PIPED WATER, SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE

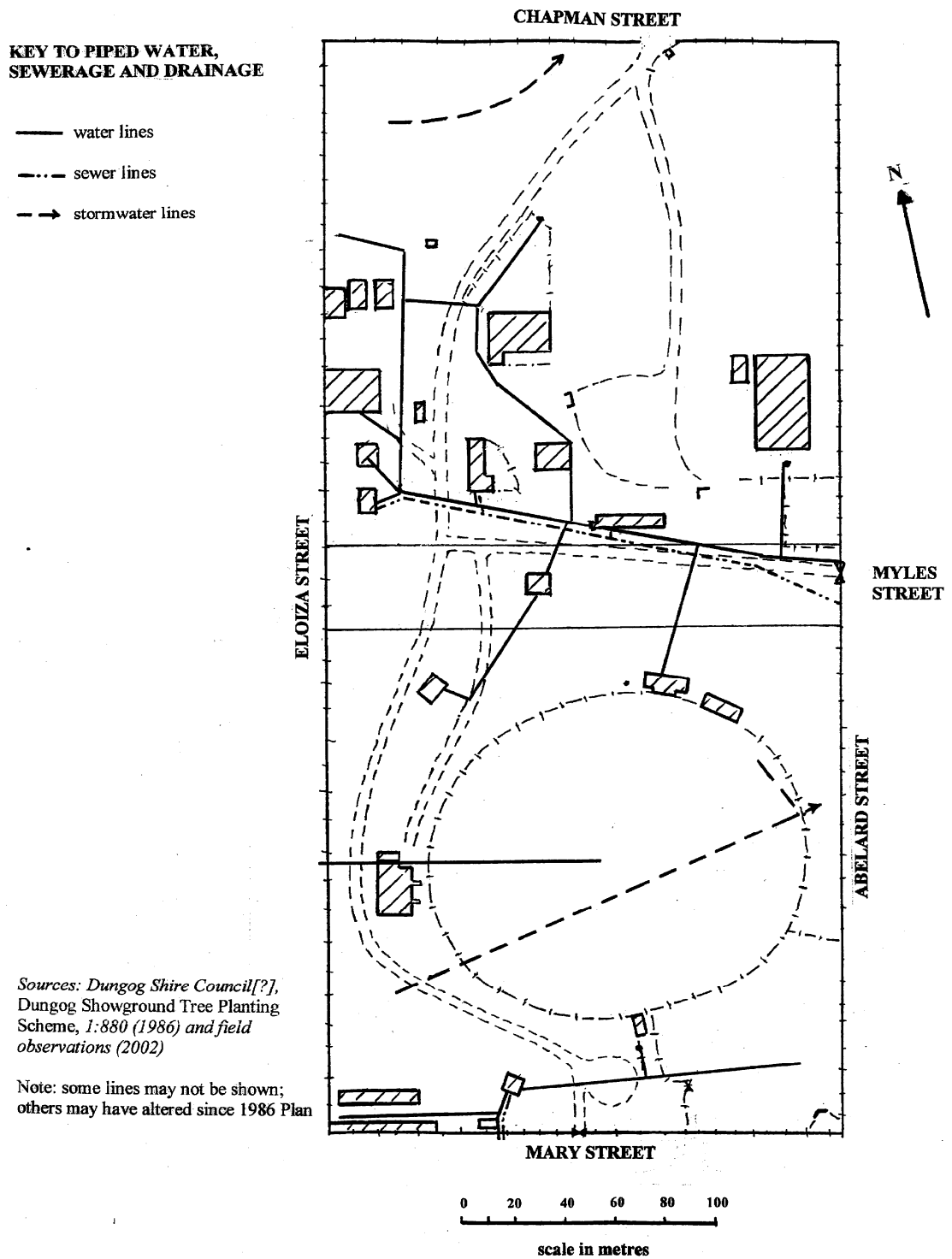


FIGURE SEVEN: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND POWER RETICULATION

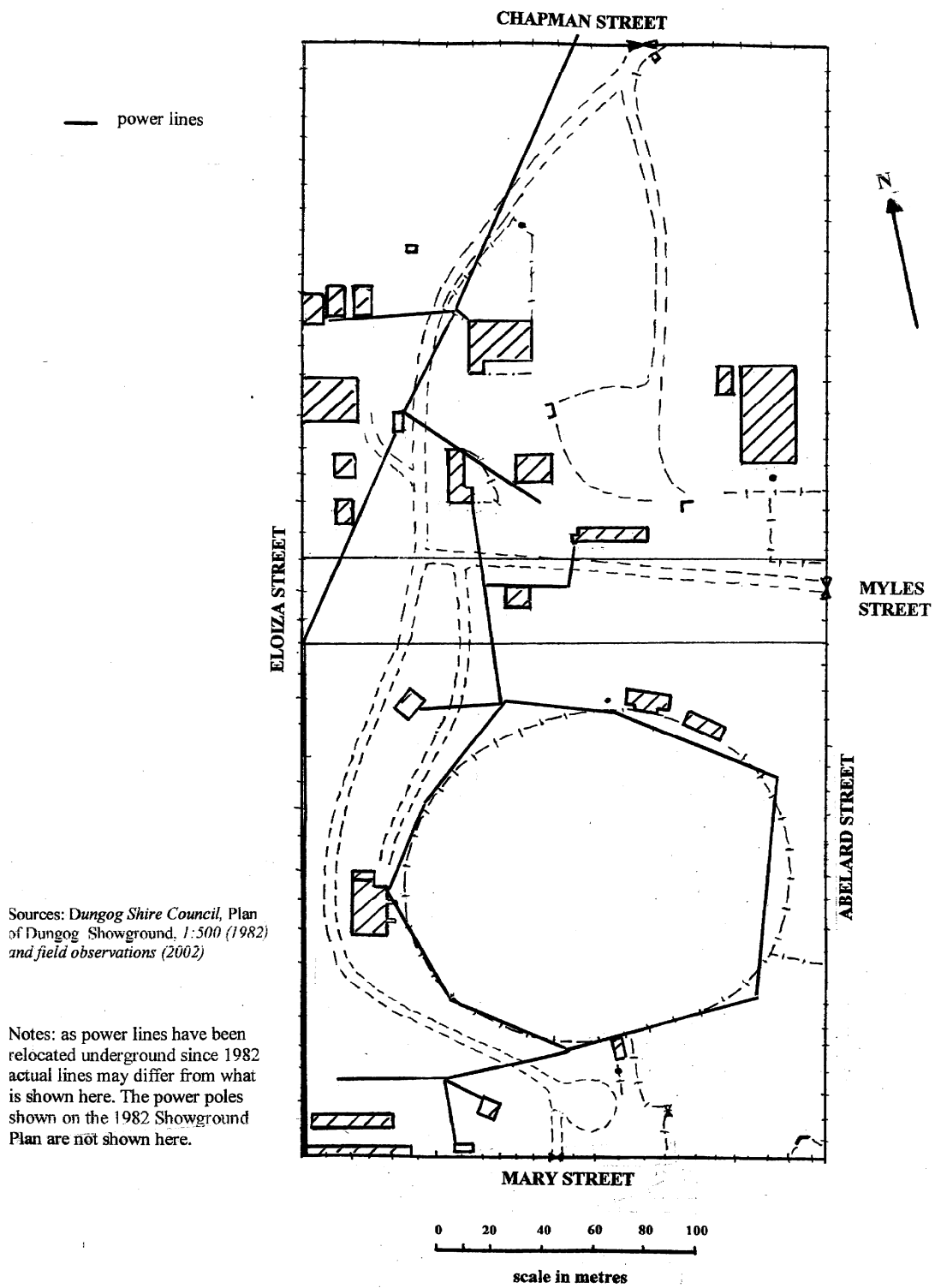


TABLE ONE: THE BUILDINGS OF DUNGOG SHOWGROUND (January 2002)

		Condition	Maintenance	Insurance	Approval?
1	red shed (horse stalls) (c1886)	P	U	Y	O
2	cattle stalls (c 1910)	U	U	N	O
3/4	residence (1948) and arts pavilion (c 1910)	F	L	Y	X
5	toilet/shower block (1985)	G	L	Y	N
6	arts pavilion/play school (1950s/1979)	G	L	Y	N
7	main pavilion (1897/1980s)	F	M	Y	X
8	dairy pavilion (ca 1901/1990s)	P	U	Y	X
9	poultry pavilion (1930s)	P	M	N	O
10	pig pavilion (c1910?)	P	M	N	O
11	dog pavilion (c1910?)	F	M	N	O
12	exhibition shed (1961)	F	L	N	N
16b	gatehouse (1930s?)	F	O	N	O
18	stud cattle pavilion (1986)	G	L	Y	Y
19	pony club shed (1997)	G	L	Y	Y
20	Apex kiosk (1980s)	U	U	N	N
21	Secretary's office (1940s/1963)	F	M	Y	N
22	rodeo club shed (1998)	G	L	Y	Y
23	grandstand (1930/1988)	F	H	Y	Y
24	grandstand kiosk (1937)	F	L	Y	O
26a	horse stalls (1928?)	P	M	N	N
26b	horse stalls (1960s?)	F	M	N	O
27	toilet block (1970s)	P	M	Y	N
28	Lions Club No 2 kiosk (1951)	U	H	N	N
29	judge' box (c1962)	F	L	N	N
32	Lions Club No 1 kiosk (1937)	F	L	Y	O
37	storage shed (1960s?)	G	L	N	N

Key to Notations: apparent *condition* of fabric: G=good; F=fair; P=poor; O=unusable
 priority for *maintenance*: U=urgent; H=high; M=medium; L=low
 current state of building *insurance*: Y=yes; N=no
 state of development consent Y=yes; N=no; O=not applicable; X= predates
 building control but more recent alterations do
 not have building/development consent

Sources: site inspections; Appendices Two and Three; Dungog Shire Council Assets Register; Dungog Shire Council
 Dungog Showground (TPA file 347)

Age

Most of the buildings on the site are more than fifty years old. Broadly speaking the buildings as they were in January 2002 belong to five distinct periods:

- nine pavilions and stalls date from before the first world war. These were built in a *vernacular* manner with timber frames, often rough sawn, and galvanised iron roofing (and wall cladding where the pavilions have been fully or partly enclosed), generally painted in red. Three of these pavilions (the main pavilion, the residence/junior arts pavilion and 'the red shed') have been fully or partly lined inside. Several have been extended and/or renovated since their original construction.
- the Grandstand and four other buildings are 'interwar'. The Grandstand was built in a *freestyle* manner in 1930. It has timber frames, galvanised iron roofing, asbestos fibro walls, a seating capacity of over 400, and an enclosed and lined function area underneath. When it was extensively renovated in 1988 a toilet block was incorporated into it. The other pre-war buildings are a galvanised iron pavilion, partly enclosed by windows, a brick and galvanised iron gatehouse and two weatherboard and galvanised iron kiosks, including one attached to the Grandstand.
- two buildings were built during or after the second world war and have been relocated to the Showground since then, the weatherboard and corrugated asbestos roofed Secretary's office and the weatherboard and galvanised iron roofed arts pavilion/play school
- five other buildings were constructed before Council trusteeship, two galvanised iron sheds, the weatherboard and galvanised iron broadcasting box and now demolished second kiosk and a brick walled/galvanised iron roofed toilet block
- five further buildings are essentially 'modern', a steel-framed and metal-clad cattle pavilion and two sheds, a brick and galvanised iron toilet block and a concrete block and a concrete block and galvanised iron roofed which was damaged in the December 13 storm and has since been demolished).

It is somewhat remarkable that many of the earlier buildings have survived, because the early pavilions in particular are lightly framed and lightly clad, often in recycled materials. Many of the buildings are well past the end of the economic life assessed in strict accounting terms. The fact that these buildings have been maintained, and patched where necessary, by voluntary labourers who often provided materials is a key to the survival of these early buildings.

Condition

The physical condition of many of the buildings was assessed during site inspections for the present Strategy as 'fair' or 'poor' and for three of the buildings as 'unusable'. The assessments were made on the basis of surface inspections. They relate mainly to the physical condition of external cladding (roof and walls), fenestration, other external details, floors, internal lining and other internal details and do not necessarily apply to the structural integrity of the buildings. Recommendations have been made in Appendix Three for inspections by engineers or builders for buildings such as the Grandstand (for its roof) and buildings 2, 9, 10.

These assessments reflected the physical integrity of buildings and ability to function safely and effectively, rather than cosmetic features such as in the Grandstand the age of fittings or the quality of finishes. It should be noted that the assessments of condition reflect the consequences of the 13 December storm which led to two kiosks being seriously damaged, with the Grandstand and buildings 1, 2, 8 and 21 also suffering structural damage and others receiving more superficial damage.

Maintenance and repair needs

A number of major needs for maintenance, restoration and reconstruction) were identified during site inspections in early 2002 on the basis of needs to protect the functional values of for Showground operations as well as to conserve heritage values. These needs as they were reassessed in July 2002 are set out in Table Two.

Reconstruction of the Apex Club kiosk is considered to be 'urgent' because of the central (and highly visible) location and importance for the success of major events of this refreshment both. Repairs to other buildings that suffered structural damage in the 13 December storm and which are also essential for the safe and efficient functioning of major events.

'High' priorities for maintenance have been assessed for internal and external repairs to and renovation of the Grandstand and reconstruction of the damaged Lions Club kiosk, again because of the importance of both to the Showground both as heritage items and for Showground operations.

In the case of the Grandstand some roofing iron is rusting to the point where it must be replaced, which means that a complete re-roofing is needed to minimise the costs of scaffolding and maintenance problems that can arise from mixing old and new materials here. As well, some exposed seating and flooring (and possibly galvanised iron under these) are in need of replacement, electric wiring may be nearing the end of its safe life and internal timbers and the lining of the supper room appear to be in need of replacement.

Medium' priorities have been assessed for needs for specific works that would make buildings more usable and closer to their original forms. The most significant of these are for stabilisation of the 1920s horse stables, by correcting its lean to the west, and for alterations to the main pavilion to reinstate the original form of the building and to make internal spaces more usable. Replacement of the asbestos roof sheeting over the Secretary's office is a medium priority but could become urgent in the event that the sheeting became in need of repair.

In addition to these major maintenance needs there are widespread needs for more cosmetic maintenance works such as paint work to protect rusting galvanised iron and exposed timbers, repairs to external claddings and internal linings and finishes and, perhaps, new fit outs in some buildings

TABLE TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS TO BUILDINGS¹

- Remove iron sheeting over weatherboards, building #1
- Repair iron roof sheeting, building #1 (urgent)
- Replace roof timbers and iron sheeting , building #2 (urgent)
- Assess structural stability of building #2 (urgent)
- Remove lining and sheeting over northern windows , building #7
- Remodel skillion roofed extension of building #7
- Refix/replace iron roof sheeting, building #8
- Repair iron roof sheeting, building #9
- Assess structure and repair, building #9
- Replace iron roof sheeting, building #10
- Assess structural integrity of building #10
- Resite and rebuild building # 20 in a sympathetic manner (urgent)
- Replace asbestos roof sheeting , building #21 (medium priority)
- Renovate wiring and internal lining of Grandstand
- Repair/replace iron sheeting subject to assessment of roof of Grandstand (high priority)

- Weatherproof and repair seating area of Grandstand
- Stabilise (using steel stanchions and cables) and repair building #26a
- Rebuild building #28 in a sympathetic manner (high priority)

¹ Other identified needs for maintenance and repairs include, repairs to yards, rectification of stormwater runoff and drainage problems particularly in the main oval and improved stockyard and pavilion sullage.

Based on field inspections by Andrea Humphreys and Ian Bowie, January 2002

Insurance

Insurance of buildings and of other works on the Showground has become a matter of concern since the 13 December storm because in the aftermath of that storm it became clear that many buildings were not insured for reinstatement at a time when the costs of insurance premiums were soaring. Because the costs of insuring for the reinstatement of all buildings and other works on the Showground would be prohibitive Council has had to make some very difficult judgements about what of these might be considered 'expendable' which might be considered most 'at risk'.

Prior to the storm only six buildings were covered for their reinstatement by insurance. Since the storm ten further buildings have been covered but many of the older, smaller and less 'improved' buildings - ones with lesser reinstatement values though ones that might be more 'at risk' - remain uninsured. It is unlikely that Council would be able to replace these in the event of loss or severe damage.

Approvals

Most of the buildings on the site were constructed before Council assumed effective regulation of new building works. For this reason there appear to be no extant plans or other detailed documentation (such as photographs) of the built fabric of the Showground from before 1986 the year of the Rodd & Hay Associates plans for the 'restoration' – which was not fully carried out - of the Grandstand.

It is probable that most of the earlier buildings do not fully comply with the current *Building Code of Australia (NSW)* (BCA). Similarly, because most of these buildings were constructed before Council implemented the heritage provisions of the *Dungog LEP* it is probable that some of the more recent buildings would not have been allowed in their present locations or with their present forms or materials.

Non-compliance with the BCA in itself does not prevent an existing building from being occupied and it does not in any way imply that a building is unsafe or unusable. Most older buildings in Australia do not comply fully with the BCA. However, to the extent that a building is non-compliant, this may limit new uses, may inhibit alterations and may suggest needs for rectification in the future.

Noncompliance with the intent of the heritage provisions of the LEP also does not prevent an existing building from being used, particularly where Council has given its formal consent. However, where an existing building is not in sympathy with what makes for the heritage significance of a place, this could pose difficulties for future building, works and uses of the building. This could have implications for repairs to and reinstatement of buildings damaged in the 13 December storm and this will be discussed further below.

Uses

The Showground, or parts of it, has been used in the past for a wide range of commercial, civic and community activities. Over the past two years bookings recorded by the Caretaker and/or by the Committee have included:

- Commercial uses: occasional furniture auctions and a children's 'swap' day using the main pavilion and a market in the open (earlier uses have included in 1992 a daily market)
- Civic activities: a Council function and some meetings of Showground users (there have also been commemorative events in the past)
- Outdoor Entertainments: the Grandstand and main oval have been used as spaces for outdoor performances (earlier events have also included circuses)
- Community uses: kindergartens in the Play School pavilion; occasional wedding receptions, family reunion and other functions in the Grandstand supper room
- Agricultural events: annual Agricultural and Horticultural Shows which use the whole site, occasional poultry shows in pavilions and a sheep dog trials
- Active Recreation: junior and senior cricket in some weekends from October to March, a football match and a school sports carnival, all on the main oval (the main oval was regularly used as a football oval until the 1980s) and many equine events
- Overnight Camping (including parking of caravans and mobile homes) by tourists (including participants in RTA *Big Bike Rides* and annual Dungog Peddleffests), workers temporarily in Dungog and by participants in equine events.

In relation to the records it may be observed that they are of bookings and not of the actual use of the Showground . While they are reasonably comprehensive records of 'events' held on the Showground the records do not give a true picture of the use of the Showground. For examples they do not record use by many regular uses such as the Play School and the Pony Club.

More importantly they do not record the numbers of people using the Showground either for events or as a 'primitive community camping facility' These numbers are large and they have implications both for monitoring the 'performance' of the Showground as a community asset and for helping to determine maintenance needs and management policies.

While it is known that the largest users of the Showground are the Agricultural and Horticultural Society during its annual Show and the Rodeo and Campdrafting Associations during their equine events there is no way presently of measuring the extent of their use, which may involve every building and every area on the site. Nor is there any way comparing these uses with the more frequent uses of just parts of the site by smaller users such as the Play School, Pony Club or Cricket Club.

On visitor numbers it has been reported (Dungog Shire Council, 2001. *Dungog Showground, Draft Plan of Management*) that 3800 people (members, participants and spectators) visit the Showground on an 'average Show Day') and similar numbers are likely during Rodeos. Smaller numbers are involved in other events and in attending Play School but a number of these uses are more frequent. There is also an unknown number of people who visit the Showground to walk or to look at the Showground or views over Dungog . The total number of day visitors to the Showground must run to several tens of thousands annually.

In regard to overnight camping, rough records are kept of the numbers of parties (and people) who stay overnight (and up to several weeks in the case of some temporary workers in Dungog) because these campers pay fees to Council. However, no records are available of the very much larger numbers staying overnight during equine events, Shows and some other events such as Pedalfests and it is likely that the number of visitor nights spent on the Showground runs into thousands.

Reliable data on the usage of the Showground is badly needed, both to establish needs and to monitor trends in these. In the absence of such data it is difficult to secure and to determine priorities for spending resources both for maintenance and for new amenities and user facilities and it is difficult also to resolve inherent conflicts between certain uses (eg

between equine events and field sports on the main oval and between regular uses and occasional car parking in areas such as the pony club field and dog training area). In this situation all facilities get neglected and all users experience the ongoing problems of traffic management, inadequate parking (with needs for up to 500 cars) and haphazard camping (especially by large mobile homes) during major events.

Management

Day-to-day management of the Showground is currently the responsibility of the Dungog Showground and Recreation Reserve Committee, a committee to which Council has delegated responsibilities under s355 of the *NSW Local Government Act 1993*. Membership of the Committee currently comprises Councillors (currently three) representing the local community and a representative of each of the major regular user groups of the Showground, ie

- Dungog Agricultural and Horticultural Association,
- Dungog A& H Association Ladies' Auxiliary,
- Dungog and District Campdraft Association,
- Dungog Horse Trials Committee,
- Dungog and District Bushmen's Rodeo Association,
- Dungog and District Pony Club,
- Dungog and District Cattle Dog Workers Association,
- Dungog Senior Cricket Club,
- Dungog Junior Cricket Club,
- Dungog Playgroup,
- Dungog Apex Club,
- Dungog Lions Club,

A resident has caretaker has attended meetings of the Committee until recently.

The precise role of the Committee is not clear because formal terms of reference for the committee are not available. Perhaps because of this many of the major user groups on the Showground, and Council as well, make decisions and carry out actions affecting the Showground without involving the Committee. For examples, Council determines policies and carries out maintenance without formal consultation with Committee, while user groups collect fees and charges and carry out their own works without reference to the Committee.

This situation is a legacy of the past when Council did not have a clear role in relation to the Showground, user groups did not necessarily liaise one with another and individual groups had a free reign in getting and spending funds on 'their' parts of the Showground. Since its inception the Committee has had considerable success both in getting it recognised that Council has overall management responsibility for the Showground and in coordinating the activities of individual user groups, including voluntary working bees.

Table Three is an attempt to set out the income and expenditure over the last three completed years of the Committee. It should be noted that these accounts are not strictly comparable because different bases were used in each of the years for reporting data. Nevertheless, several observations can be made:

- Compared with some user groups the Committee has a small budget. The inclusion (for whatever reason) of accounts for a campdrafting event in 2000 doubled its normal budget
- Most of the Committee's income is 'recurrent' income from user fees, charges and contributions, although the Committee does receive occasional capital grants
- While most of the recurrent income is paid by regular users camping fees from occasional visitors have provided and significant and growing part of this income.

- While recurrent income appears to more or less cover the day-to-day running expenses of the Showground there is little left over for maintenance, repairs or new capital works.
- The Committee's accounts do not include expenditure on a number of costs that are carried by Council on other accounts (eg insurances, water supplies and maintenance)
- The accounts also do not show the costs of routine grounds maintenance and repairs that have been done in the past by the resident caretaker.

The resident caretaker's 'position' has been a curious one. In the absence of any job description and formal conditions of appointment the caretaker has taken bookings and maintained a watching brief over the Showground as well as mowing grass and carrying out minor repairs (As well, the caretaker has also done cleaning and other duties during major events but has been paid for these by user groups). In return the, caretaker occupied the on-site residence on what appears to be essentially a 'grace-and-favour' basis. It is not known whether the caretaker received any wage or other benefits - such as insurance cover - from Council.

The caretaker's 'position' has now been abolished. Because the costs - or costs in kind - of work done by the caretaker are not known it is not possible to judge the implications of this abolition on the Committee's (or Council's) accounts.

As to the quantum of expenditure on the Showground and of the in-kind value of work and materials donated two examples will illustrate. The cost to Council of insuring nominated buildings and works (for reinstatement, not public liability) will come to more than \$3600 in the 2002/2003 year while the costs to users of each top dressing after equine events may be equivalent to between \$1500 and \$2000. As well, user groups are reported to spend considerable sums on their own particular Showground needs.

The net effect of all of this is that major needs for maintenance, repairs and new capital works are not being addressed. This raises questions as to whether user groups are making sufficient contributions toward paying for these and about the ability of some user groups to make further contributions towards them. These questions cannot be answered until priorities for expenditures on the Showground are determined.

**TABLE THREE: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND AND RECREATION
RESERVE COMMITTEE, RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS, 1999-2001**

	1999 \$	2000 \$	2001 \$
Receipts			
User group fees	2959.50	3240.00	4450.00
Maintenance contributions	0	250.00	1161.50
Energy contributions	1490.44	346.78	n/a
Camping fees	1825.00	2568.00	3583.00
User charges	930.00	1982.09	1186.96
Caretaker Payments	370.32	1290.15	1182.60
Camp draft income	0	17096.58	0
Interest	1.97	64.48	150.88
GST refund	0	0	269.76
Council contribution	0	1000.00	0
TOTAL income	7577.20	27838.08	13241.05
Expenditure			
Bank fees & charges	0	70.94	
Energy costs	2802.00	3430.28	3,680.00
Ring maintenance	1552.50	1594.01	1,921.82
Amenities maintenance	202.90	429.09	611.88
Postage	0	0	8.27
Telephone	672.30	435.40	384.68
Camp draft expenditure	0	7561.20	0
Other expenses	0	304.32	425.00
TOTAL expenditure	5229.70	13825.24	7,069.33
<u>Net Operating Result before Capital items</u>	2347.53	14012.84	\$6171.72
Capital Revenue			
Grant Funds	0	0	10,000.00
Capital Expenditure			
Electrical Upgrade	0	0	18,308.75
<u>Net Cash Surplus (Cash Deficit)</u>	2347.53	14012.84	(2137.03)

Source: Dungog Showground and Recreation Reserve Committee

3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SHOWGROUND

Economic and social values

Because the Showground is reserved to the Crown it does not have a market value that can be calculated in money terms other perhaps its land value which is not substantial. However the site is of considerable economic value to the town of Dungog even if a price cannot readily be put on this value.

During 'events' significant income is generated from entry charges levied by user groups and much of this flows into the economy of the town to pay for materials and personnel required both during events and for maintenance and other works. Events also attract visitors in large numbers who also contribute to Dungog's economy through their spending in the town.

At other times the Showground is available as an area of open space which provides for both active recreation (such as organised sports and walking) and passive recreation (including picnicking and tourist visits for views over Dungog and of the built heritage of the Showground). These may not generate much income but they bring significant unpriced benefits for the community.

Replacement Values

Most conventional measures of assets values – such as depreciated and otherwise written down values and historical (monetary) costs - give little indication of the real value of public investments to a community. Estimated costs of replacement or reinstatement of 'improvements' give a better indication, because they are 'measures' of what a community stands to lose in the case of a particular asset.

Replacement and reinstatement costs of buildings and other works on the Showground are recorded for insurance and other purposes in Council's *Assets Register*. For the most part they are based on valuations of individual buildings and works which were prepared for Council in 1995 by the Australian Valuation Office. The bases of the valuations are not known and, particularly because a number of 'vernacular' buildings are involved, should be regarded as having a wide margin for error.

The 1995 reinstatement values, with year 2001 written down values for items not included in the 1995 valuation are set out in Table Four. The total of the 1995 reinstatement values was \$1838,770, not including \$23,000 for the 'unimproved' land value. Allowing for the improvements not assessed in 1995 and a more than 30% increase since 1995 in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' price indices for building materials this suggests that the 2002 total for reinstatement values of all improvements on the Showground may be around 2½ million dollars.

This represents a considerable investment to be neglected or overlooked.

Heritage significance

Heritage significance is the intrinsic value of a thing or a place which as defined in the NSW *Heritage Act 1977* may be derived from any historical, scientific, cultural social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic features or associations that make the thing or place meaningful to particular people or communities.

TABLE FOUR: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND VALUES OF BUILT IMPROVEMENTS

		Significance	Asset Value¹
1	red shed (horse stalls) (c1886)	H	\$44,300
2	cattle stalls (c 1910)	H	note 2
¾	residence (1948)/ arts pavilion (c 1910)	H	\$76,200
5	toilet/shower block (1985)	O	\$96,100
6	arts pavilion/play school (1930s/1979)	L	\$95,500
7	main pavilion (1897/1980s)	H	note 3
8	dairy pavilion (ca 1901/1990s)	H	note 3
9	poultry pavilion (1930s)	M	note 3
10	pig pavilion (c1910?)	M	note 3
11	dog pavilion (c1910?)	M	note 3
12	exhibition shed (1961)	O	note 3
13	cattle parade railings (1930s?)	M	see item #36
14	dog parade area	M	\$1200 ¹
15	animal washing area (c1960s)	M	note 4
16	gatehouse (1930s?)	?M	note 4
17	pony club field	?O	note 4
18	stud cattle pavilion (1986)	O	note 2
19	pony club shed (1997)	O	\$9,281 ¹
20	Apex kiosk (1980s)	X	\$33,400
21	Secretary's office (1940s/1963)	H	\$57,400
22	rodeo club shed (1998)	O	note 4
23	grandstand (1930/1988)	H	(\$321,500)
24	grandstand kiosk (1937)	H	
25	main arena fencing (1980s?)	H	see item #36
26a	horse stalls (1928?)	M	(\$77,300)
26b	horse stalls (1960s?)	L	
27	toilet block (1970s)	O	\$52,200
28	Lions Club No 2 kiosk (1951)	?O	note 5
29	judge' box (c1962)	M	\$18,000
30a	memorial water trough (1970s?)	M	note 4
30b	dairy water trough (1930s?)	O	note 4
30c	beef cattle water trough (c1960s)	O	note 4
31a	general stock yards (1958?)	H	(\$38,100)
31b	fat cattle yards	H	
32	Lions Club No 1 kiosk (1937)	?O	note 5
33	flagpole (1988)	?L	note 4
34	seating	?L	\$17,300
35	loading ramps	?L	note 4
36a	internal fencing	?O	\$118,000
36b	boundary fencing	?O	\$60,600
37	storage shed (1960s?)	O	note 4
38a	car parking	?O	note 4
38b	general lighting	L	(\$227, 000)
38a	arena lighting	O	
38c	underground wiring	?O	note 4
38d	storm water drainage	?O	(\$78,589 ¹)
38e	sewerage	?O	
38f	water piping	?O	note 4
39	plantings	?L	note 4
40a	sealed carriageways	?O	\$110,800
40b	unsealed ways		note 4

key to notations contribution to:
heritage significance

H=high; M=medium; L=low; O=none X=intrusive
(source: *Appendix Three*)

asset values:

1 these are Australian Valuation Office 1995
reinstatement values for insurance purposes
except for items 14, 19 and 38d (which are
written down values in 2001)

- 2 the total given for 1995 by the AVO for all 'cattle pens' is \$51,000
- 3 the total given for 1995 by the AVO for 'pavilions' is \$242,000
- 4 No value is recorded for these items on the *Assets Register*
- 5 the total for given for 1995 by the AVO for 'kiosk/bar' is \$13,000

(Source: *Dungog Shire Council Asset Register, 2001*)

In the case of the Showground the heritage significance of the place is for communities beyond just those of Dungog and its Shire. As set out in the formal *Statement of Significance* which has been developed from the detailed analysis in Appendix Three (see Appendix Four),

the Dungog Showground is primarily of significance for its continuous usage as an agricultural showground since 1886....its association with various voluntary and professional organisations associated with agriculture and industry in the Hunter region....for its fine collection of largely vernacular buildings dating from the 19th century to the present [and as] an intact and highly cohesive precinct demonstrating the development of a small regional showground over a long period of time.

(source: *NSW State Heritage Inventory form for Dungog Showground*)

This significance has been recognised in a number of recent studies notably the *Dungog Shire Heritage Study* (Perumal Murphy Ltd for Dungog Shire Council, 1988), the *Review of the Hunter Regional Environmental Plan (Heritage) 1989* (the EJE Group for the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 1995) and *Showgrounds of NSW* (Jennifer McMonies for the National Trust of Australia (NSW), 1996).

In a scheme in which levels of significance range from *national* to *local* the Showground has been rated as being of *regional* significance, ie of significance to a region that extends beyond Dungog, by both the EJE Group and Appendix Three. For the purposes of *NSW Heritage Act 1977* as amended which recognises only *state* and *local* significance this suggest that the Showground should be regarded as being of *state* heritage significance.

Heritage conservation

By implication heritage significance is a value that, as with monetary values, should be conserved to the extent possible. Heritage conservation of physical *fabric* can take place in four main ways:

- **Maintenance.** Periodic maintenance, to ensure that a thing doesn't fall into disrepair as the result of neglect or of aging, is the most important task in conservation. Often, this is all that is needed to keep what is significant about a thing.
- **Restoration** (including reconstruction and repair). These may become necessary when the physical *fabric* of something that has *significance* has been allowed to deteriorate. It can sometimes be difficult to carry out properly when things such as materials have changed.
- **Preservation.** This includes stabilising things that are in danger, providing protection against the elements and placing legal restrictions on how people may use a thing. It can be expensive and inconvenient should be avoided by carrying out periodic maintenance.
- **Adaption.** Sometimes the only practical way of keeping what is significant about a thing is to physically alter it or give it a new use. A minimalist approach should always be taken to adaption so as to avoid the irreversible loss of what is significant about a thing.

Heritage conservation may involve more than conservation of physical fabric. While conserving physical features is the most obvious way for retaining a sense of associations conservation of knowledge about and understanding of a place is also important, particularly for educating people about a place and promoting it to them.

To date little active heritage conservation has been carried out on the Showground. There have been conservative outcomes from maintenance and restoration carried to protect assets but as indicated above periodic maintenance and more serious restoration are not carried out regularly on the Showground. The main conservative action has been by Council, to place the 'Showground pavilions' on a schedule of heritage items to be protected by provisions in the *Dungog LEP 1990*.

There has been some doubt as to the efficacy of these protections. Firstly it has not easy to interpret the LEP provisions (which in any event apply only when proposals for new developments are being assessed). Secondly it has not been clear precisely what physical fabric is to be protected on the Showground.

The *Dungog Shire Heritage Study* on which the current schedule of heritage items is based refers to only five pavilions on its Inventory form. The *Review of the Hunter REP1989 (Heritage)*, although it shows the older buildings on a sketch map on its Inventory form' for the 'Showground pavilions' refers explicitly to some only of these (including the Grandstand). However the National Trust's separate listing of the 'Dungog Agricultural Showground' and 'Dungog Showground Grandstand' is more explicit and the detail in both Appendices Two and Three of this Strategy confirms that it is indeed the whole of the Showground that warrants statutory protection.

Implications of Statutory Protection

Statutory protection of heritage items under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* applies only where new developments of a heritage item or in its vicinity are being assessed. Only in extreme cases, such as demolition by neglect, can bodies such as Council use other statutory powers to protect heritage items. Existing built fabric is generally conserved by maintenance and repair, sometimes with reinstatements, reconstructions, and new work to reinforce what is significant.

In relation to new development it is important to understand what 'protection' statutory means. It does not mean that alterations to existing physical fabric cannot proceed; nor does it mean that completely new developments cannot happen. It means that significant alterations of the physical *fabric* of things that contribute to the heritage significance of a place and significant alterations to the appearance of the setting of these things should be must be avoided to the fullest extent possible.

In order to ensure that this happens the NSW Heritage Office has developed *Heritage Model Provisions*, which local Councils in NSW are expected to incorporate into their LEPs. Extracts from the latest (year 2000) version of these setting out matters that should be considered are reproduced in the box below. Because the Showground is a precinct that contains much significant built fabric the considerations for *heritage conservation areas* as well as *heritage items* should be applied to the Showground.

For new development on the Showground this means, broadly, that:

- Alterations to internal features of existing buildings will be acceptable except where particular features have been identified as important parts of the fabric.
- Alterations to external features of existing buildings may be acceptable so long as existing forms, details, materials and colours are maintained (or restored)
- New developments in the vicinity of existing buildings may be acceptable where forms, details, materials and colours are similar to those of significant parts of the fabric.

- New developments are unlikely to be acceptable where they intrude on what can be seen of existing buildings individually or as they are clustered.

The significances of physical features that are considered to make important contributions to the heritage significance of the Showground (as summarised in the *Statement of Significance*) are described in detail in Appendix Three, with a summary in Table Four. It might be noted that these significances do not necessarily reflect the age, appearance, scale or physical condition of these features. Thus both the Grandstand, which is imposing and attractive and several of the cluster of pavilions which are even older than the Grandstand but less impressive and rather down at heel, have been rated as of high significance.

It should be noted that a number of buildings have been rated either as having no significance or as being intrusive. These ratings express the facts that the buildings in question

- are visually not in sympathy with the forms, materials details or colours of significant buildings that are in the vicinity and/or
- intrude into vistas and sightlines in which include clusters of significant buildings are viewed as a collection of heritage items

Buildings that are visually intrusive include the former Apex Club kiosk (which intrudes into sightlines between the Grandstand and the cluster of old pavilions and the Pony Club and Rodeo Sheds and 1986 cattle pavilion (which have modern forms and materials that clash with the forms and material of adjacent old pavilions particularly as viewed from both the east and the west).

Of course, as an amenity value, heritage significance is only one value that needs to be taken into account in planning for the future use of a place. It does not override functional or other amenity values. But it is a value of physical features that can be imitated but can never be replaced and, for this reason it should be noted, it can be used as a justification for relaxing the statutory requirements of both environmental planning instruments and the *Building Code of Australia (NSW)*.

Matters to be considered by a local Council when assessing development applications that may impact on heritage items or heritage conservation areas (extracts from *Heritage Model provisions*)

3 Protection of Heritage items and heritage Conservation Areas....

- (a) for development that would affect a heritage item:
- (i) the heritage significance of the item as part of the environmental heritage of the local government area and
 - (ii) the impact that the proposed development will have on the heritage significance of the item and its setting, including any landscape or horticultural features, and
 - (iii) the measures proposed to conserve the heritage significance of the item and its setting, and
 - (iv) whether any archaeological site or potential archaeological site would be adversely affected by the proposed development....
- (b) for development that would be carried out in a heritage conservation area:
- (i) the heritage significance of the heritage conservation area and the contribution which any building, work, relic, tree or place makes to this heritage significance, and
 - (ii) the impact that the proposed development would have on the heritage significance of the heritage conservation area, and
 - (iii) the compatibility of the proposed development with nearby original building/s and the character of the heritage conservation area, taking into account the size, form, scale, orientation, setbacks, materials and detailing of the proposed development, and
 - (iv) the measures proposed to conserve the significance of the heritage conservation area and its setting, and

- (v) *whether any identified landscape or horticultural features would be affected by the proposed development, and*
- (vi) *whether any archaeological site or potential archaeological site would be affected by the proposed development....*

10 Development in Heritage Conservation Areas

- (1) *Before granting consent for the erection of a building within a heritage conservation area the consent authority must be satisfied that the features of the proposed building will be compatible with the heritage significance of the heritage conservation area, having regard to the form of, and materials used in, buildings that contribute to the significance of the heritage conservation area*
- (2) *In satisfying itself about those features the consent authority must have regard to at least the following (but is not limited to having regard for these features):*
 - (a) *the pitch and form of the roof (if any), and*
 - (b) *the style, size, proportion and position of the openings for windows or doors (if any), and*
 - (c) *the colour, texture, style, size and type of finish of the materials to be used on the exterior of the building....*

source: NSW Heritage Office 2002. Local Government Heritage Guidelines, Appendix 8.2

4 MAJOR PLANNING ISSUES

Several of the major planning issues which need to be addressed in this Strategy - the issues of future development, heritage conservation, maintenance and repair, funding and management arrangements - have been mentioned already. Others have been identified during the course of site inspections or in the course of discussions with Council officers, members of the Showground Committee and representatives of user groups.

The purpose of this section is to elaborate on these issues as background to the policy framework in the next section.

Future Development

The catalyst for this Strategy was a need to identify sites (ie building envelopes) on which new building and works might occur. Because much of the Showground consists of fairly level areas that are essential for use during major events and other areas which are occupied by buildings of heritage significance it was considered important to identify the areas that would be most suitable for any acceptable new developments that might be proposed.

It was considered important at that time also to spell out limits on possible use and adaptive reuse of existing building fabric. In the past uses either have been proposed or have taken place which may not have been appropriate for the place, particularly as a place of heritage significance, or which were considered not to have been permissible under Dungog LEP 1990.

Subsequently, other questions about future development have arisen. One question asked as early as 1948 has been whether the land of the Showground would not be better used for other uses, such as residential development. This question can probably be dismissed. Firstly it seems unlikely that Dungog has a need for say eighty new residential allotments and secondly it begs a further question about whether, if a Showground is needed by Dungog, there is a better suited site and the funds needed to develop it. In any event the question is for the owner, ie the NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation, rather than the manager, ie Council.

Another question has a more direct bearing on future development: what uses should be favoured in future development? There appears to be little potential for increased usage by organised sports, either on a regular basis or for events, because alternative venues are available. However, there do appear to be opportunities for promoting further use of the as an alternative to the Tabbil Creek ground for equine events, possibly including dressage and polocrosse as well as camp drafting.

This raises a question about the likelihood of conflicts between future uses, such as between organised sports which require rolled and mown turf and equine events which need softer and unturfed surfaces. Also, to the extent that the Showground may increasingly be used for 'events' (equine and other), there are questions about liability and other issues if regular users are admitted when the whole Showground is licensed to a particular user for an event.

The issue of preferred uses raises a question about tenure for user groups. While the Showground is unlikely ever to be leased to a particular user group the whole site, or parts of it, can be licensed for exclusive use all the time or for events. As a number of regular users groups have spent money on their special needs, including for storage and because built improvements, these are in effect the property of the trustee. These groups need reassurance both about their long-term tenure and about the security of 'their' improvements during times when the whole ground is being used for events.

Heritage Conservation

A main reason for needing to identify potential building envelopes for future development was to ensure that new buildings and adaptive reuse of existing buildings were both in sympathy with more significant buildings and not intrusive on vistas and sightlines which included these buildings.

As suggested above conservation of built fabric is a major issue on the site, not just because of the heritage significance of many buildings but also because of their growing needs for maintenance and repair (see below). The issue is complicated because many of the older buildings need to be altered if they are to function effectively for the Showground.

Many buildings have been purpose built for an earlier age and their interior finishes and/or fittings (such as the fitouts of pavilions for stabling and the cladding of the Grandstand function room) are not entirely suitable for modern use. Generally speaking however building interiors on the Showground have not been identified as having particular heritage significance.

A further heritage conservation issue is the question of how to promote a wider awareness and understanding of the heritage significance of the Showground.

Works needed

Needs for routine maintenance and extensive repairs, as well as possible restoration and new works have been discussed above. It is apparent that there is a backlog of routine maintenance on the site which is leading to growing needs for repairs and some more serious restoration works. The longer these works are deferred the more considerable they will become, with growing threats to the stability of the fabric and the safety of users as well as to the functioning of the Showground.

The 13 December storm exacerbated this situation, leaving the Showground with only half of its kiosks able to be used and with other buildings and stockyards in advanced states of disrepair. That storm damage impacted directly on the ability of the Showground to cater for users (both participants and spectators) during major events as well as putting heritage conservation at risk.

In addition to needs for maintenance, repairs, reconstruction and better security, a number of needs for new works have been identified by users. Wish lists for new works include infrastructure items such as improved water and sewerage for camping, weatherproofing of the Grandstand, further upgrades of electrical supplies, improved arena and other lighting, hitching rails throughout the Showground, a dressage arena, new stables and toilets and a girl guides' hut.

Funding issues

The problems of funding routine maintenance, repairs and other restoration work not to mention new capital works have also been discussed above. If the backlog in maintenance leads to further needs for repairs then the viability of the Showground may be at risk.

This raises again the questions of how much is currently being spent by Council, its management Committee and user groups on the Showground and of, to the extent that the costs of running the Showground are not being covered by users, how much of these costs should be carried by Council and by grant funding bodies.

Management arrangements

There has been some discussion above of the existing management arrangements which give Council's Showground Committee overall management responsibilities but without clear

terms of reference or clear lines of reporting and authority, with limited resources to carry out works and with little control over work that is done on the Showground by other groups that include Council itself.

In the aftermath of the 13 December storm it appears also that lines of communication between Council, its Committee and user groups may not be as open or clear as desirable for there has been uncertainty about what each was doing in the aftermath of the storm and a considerable lack of shared knowledge about questions on insurance claims and insurance cover.

In addition and particularly since the resident caretaker's position has been abolished there are a number of essentially administrative issues that need to be resolved, including arrangements for booking venues and camping sites, recording visitor and other usage data and monitoring the condition of facilities and amenities and the impacts of different users.

Traffic, parking and camping

For most of the year the road network and land of the Showground is more than capable of accommodating its vehicular traffic, parking needs and overnight campers and caravanners. During major events such as the annual agricultural show and Rodeo and, to a lesser extent, the more frequent camp draft musters, things can become chaotic. This has been the case also during occasional events such as the RTA's Peddlefest overnight stay in 2000.

With no clearly designated camping areas and little level land except in the ovals and dog trial area camping occurs randomly in areas near to water, power boards and unlocked toilets. Random use of land means wasted space and there is a growing problem of accommodating mobile homes and mobile stables as these become larger and more difficult to park. Although power boards have been upgraded long leads and multiple adaptors remain a safety hazard and there are risks of overloading circuits.

Apart from the designated and numbered car parking spaces adjacent to the main oval there is no regulated vehicular parking, although efforts are made to direct vehicles to the pony club field and dog trial area during major events. Drivers seek to park near the action and cars and transports are often parked randomly during events, again causing ineffective use of space and sometimes damage on sloping and ill-drained land.

The traffic problems stem from the fact that Showground traffic, other than traffic loading and unloading at ramps in Mary and Abelard Streets, generally enters and leaves from the Chapman Street entrance and may have to travel the length of the main drive for instance to make deliveries in the general area of the Grandstand and Myles Street extension or, in the absence of direction, may cruise the length of the main drive to find camping and parking areas again in the general area of the Grandstand and Myles Street extension. The main drive way is sealed but is not wide enough for safe two-way traffic. Congestion is one result.

The dangers that arise from this congestion are exacerbated by the facts that pedestrians and horses move along the main drive in the absence of footpaths and that people mill about in the area where the Myles Street extension intersects with the main drive (in the sideshow area), adjacent to the Apex Club and Grandstand kiosks and at the southwest corner of the Grandstand.

The dangers appear to be particularly severe at this corner of the Grandstand where vehicular, equine and pedestrian traffic is funnelled by terrain into a narrow single-laned defile, which happens also to be a blind corner. Although no counts have been made of traffic in this area casual observations suggest that a serious accident is waiting to happen in this area.

User amenities

Two kinds of amenity issues have been identified: ones relating to comfort and ones relating to facilities. Again these issues are of concern mainly during events when all amenities are under severe pressures giving rise to conditions that are unacceptable to many patrons.

Needs for shelter (from wind and rain) and shade are the principal issues relating to comfort. These needs have long been recognised and attempts have been made in the past to plant shade and shelter trees as discussed above. Those attempts have not been particularly successful and the lack of trees on the site has been exacerbated by the recent removal of 21 trees which were damaged by the 13 December storm and/or were reported subsequently to be seriously termite damaged.

Needs for other amenities - notably for showers and toilets, refreshment kiosks, seating and picnic facilities - have been progressively addressed in recent years but remain as issues both as older amenities (notably toilet facilities) are running down with over use and because of the demolition of two refreshment kiosks (out of four) which were damaged by the 13 December storm.

5 A POLICY FRAMEWORK

1 An overarching Principle

Policies for the future conservation and management of the Showground require an agreed philosophy for the future of the Showground. This philosophy needs to reflect the core objectives that have been defined for the place for the purposes of ss36E to 36N of the NSW *Local Government Act 1993*. It should take into account the fact that the Showground has a very considerable built fabric which is both of heritage significance and an asset that would be very expensive to replace.

Four directions seem possible for the future of the Showground:

- Continue to function pretty much as it does now (ie keeping the *status quo*)
- Closure and disposal of the land for other uses
- Keeping it as a reserve but with different uses
- Further development as a Showground

From the discussion above it seems likely that there will be no certain future in keeping the *status quo*. Mounting needs for maintenance and repair, as well for new works, foreshadow costs that are not likely to be within the financial capacity of Council, users groups or grant funding bodies. The Showground cannot continue as it does now.

The second option is not desirable for users or Dungog. Both would stand to lose a space that is well suited to their needs for active and passive recreation and a place that is of considerable heritage significance. And, as it has been suggested above, it is not possible to see other uses that would make better use of the land.

The third option implies that the Showground could be turned over exclusively to uses such as organised sports and/or passive recreation. This would ensure continuing use of the level areas and infrastructure on the site but it would not make much use of the built fabric, including the Grandstand because Dungog has few sporting or entertainment events that need it. This option is not likely to generate the income needed to maintain built fabric.

This suggests that the future for the Showground lies only in continuing showground and recreational uses on the Showground, including all present uses if possible but giving priority to uses that will generate income for maintenance and the further development of infrastructure and built fabric.

In its continuing to be a Showground, accommodating all its existing uses if possible but giving priority to uses that will generate income for maintaining and the further development of infrastructure and built fabric. Continuing Showground uses will continue the historical ties of the site, ensure full use of existing infrastructure and built fabric and offer the best prospects for increasing income to maintain and repair fabric on the site.

To state this formally, the guiding principle for the future conservation and management of the Showground should be:

to retain the Showground for all of its traditional showground and recreational uses and to expand this usage to the fullest extent that is allowed by its infrastructure and that is consistent with conserving its built fabric

2 Future development

2.1 Explore ways of increasing usage of the Showground

Except during events the numbers of people who pass through the gates are small. In consequence most spaces and buildings are not greatly used. Increased usage would help

to provide a justification for carrying out maintenance and repairs needed as well of any new works. Increased paid usage via events would appear to be the most likely way of defraying the costs of works.

2.2 *Ensure that usage remains within the capacity of the built fabric*

Much of the built fabric is becoming fragile in its present state of maintenance and repair and unable to support heavy usage. Some facilities which include toilets, stabling, fences uses as hitching rails and the interiors of the Grandstand function room and the main pavilion are of a standard that may discourage some potential users. Many facilities, which range from toilets and car parking to power boards and camping sites are under heavy stress during events.

2.3 *Give preference to uses that will be to the benefit of the Showground*

Increased usage carries the risk that uses may come into conflict one with another or with the character of the Showground. For instance more equine use, particularly for events, could cause problems for organised sporting uses. Some commercial uses, otherwise permissible under clause 46 of the Dungog LEP, could have implications - signage might be an example -that may not to the benefit of the place.

3 Maintenance and repairs

3.1 *Carry out routine maintenance to a single schedule*

With maintenance being done variously by the resident caretaker, by the management Committee, by Council and by user groups much routine maintenance such as paint work is not being done. There has been no single schedule of maintenance work that is needed regularly or as funds permit and the present situation could be exacerbated with no resident caretaker to carry out routine maintenance.

3.2 *Establish a single set of priorities for repairs and new works*

Again, with repairs and new works being carried out by various parties, works on the Showground - as distinct from works that are specific to user needs - are not being carried to any plan and there is no clear understanding of the scope of works that are needed. In consequence new works have sometimes been given priority over repair work, repair work has sometimes been left to the point where built fabric has become unsafe or insecure, and both repairs and new works have happened in a random manner as demands have arisen or funds have materialised.

Priorities for repairs and new works need to be established (1) to conserve what is of heritage significance, (2) to protect the value of capital investments, (3) to ensure the proper function (including safety) of the Showground and (4) to reflect the quantum of available funds. Establishing priorities may involve tradeoffs between these when they are potentially in conflict. Professional advice may need to be taken on some of the structural matters discussed above.

3.3 *Establish clear protocols for maintenance and repair*

While much maintenance and repair will be guided by common practices, including those set by the *Building Code of Australia (NSW) (BCA)*, common practices are not always appropriate. When special protocols are developed for the Showground they should be recorded in writing. An example is set out on the box below. Further guidance is set out in the next section.

Mechanical weeding (eg using whipper snippers) should not be done near the bases of seedling trees and shrubs that are not protected by metal stakes or tree guards

4 Heritage Conservation

4.1 *conserve what makes for the heritage significance of the Showground to the fullest extent possible*

As indicated in section 4 above heritage conservation of physical fabric may involve any or all of maintenance, restoration, preservation and adaptive re-use. Maintenance is the preferred approach because it is usually the cheapest and most effective way of keeping original fabric. Repair and reconstruction become necessary when periodic maintenance is not carried out. Protection, by physical means or by controls on what people do, is dependent on co-operation, which cannot always be compelled. Adaptive re-use is regarded as a last resort.

4.2 *in both maintenance and restoration of built fabric of heritage significance materials and finishes should be as similar as possible to what is now in place*

One of the features that gives significance to much built fabric on the Showground is the widespread use of recycled materials on building exteriors. It is important for maintaining the built character of the stockyards and the older pavilions that this use of recycled materials is continued where possible. A general guide as to what is appropriate is given in Table Five but when works are being planned it is always desirable to check for photographic and other evidence of the original work.

There should be no sense of shame in using recycled materials, particularly to patch up the older pavilions. There, as well as using recycled materials it may be appropriate sometimes to take measures to extend the life of materials. For example, corrugated galvanised iron sheeting which has superficial rust or damage can often be turned and holes soldered.

When new materials are used for renovation they should be the same as existing materials when these are still available (for instance galvanised iron is still available commercially) and similar to the existing, otherwise. It is always preferable to avoid introducing new kinds of materials where these might change the external appearance of a building or where, as by mixing galvanised iron and zincalume, corrosion or other decay may be hastened.

It is not good practice to use zincalume in place of galvanised iron in roofing and wall cladding, or dressed or treated pine in place of split hardwood posts. Similarly it is best to use traditional galvanised screws to fix corrugated metal sheeting, though grey tech screws are an acceptable alternative. Also, it is desirable that polythene conduits eg for power and stormwater drainage should not be used above ground unless they are in the colours of the background wall or other materials.

TABLE FIVE: APPROPRIATE MATERIALS FOR BUILT FABRIC

Item #	Approved materials	Recycled (R) or New (N)
1	Timber posts and beams; timber framing; corrugated iron sheeting; corrugated steel sheeting; dirt floors; timber weatherboards (to existing profile only).	R only except for structural work.
2	Timber posts and beams; timber framing; corrugated iron sheeting; galvanised iron sheeting; dirt floors.	R only except for structural work.
3/4	Timber framing; timber (floors); corrugated iron sheeting; corrugated steel sheeting; lightweight partitioning; timber window framing and doors.	R & N
5	No constraints although new work should be sensitive to adjacent buildings.	R & N
6	Timber framing; Colourbond sheeting; corrugated iron sheeting; weatherboards; timber floors preferred.	R or N
7	Timber framing; corrugated iron sheeting; timber floors.	R only except for structural work.
8	Timber framing; timber posts and beams; corrugated iron sheeting; dirt floors only; Colourbond sheeting; timber slats.	R only except for structural work.
9	Timber framing; corrugated iron sheeting (walls and roof); timber floors only; timber sashed windows only; timber slats.	R preferred for repair; N for replacement
10	Timber framing; corrugated iron sheeting (walls and roof); dirt floors only; timber rails.	R preferred for repair; N for replacement
11	Timber framing; corrugated iron sheeting (walls and roof); dirt floors only; timber rails.	R preferred for repair; N for replacement
12	Galvanised steel sheeting.	R or N
13	Timber rails only.	R preferred
14	Not applicable, although the area should be kept cleared for its present use.	N/A
16	Not applicable except to post and rail fencing, which should be conserved.	N/A
20	Replacement building: timber framing; weatherboard cladding; corrugated iron; Colourbond; concrete (floors only).	R or N
21	Timber framing; weatherboards; timber floors only; corrugated iron; Colourbond.	R or N
23	Timber framing; timber trusses; timber seating; corrugated iron; weatherboard cladding; concrete floors (interior only).	R except for structural work.
25	Timber picket fencing to main arena only.	R or N
26	Timber posts and beams; corrugated iron; dirt floors only; timber rails.	R preferred
27	Galvanized steel poles; corrugated iron; dirt floors only; timber rails; timber framing.	R preferred
28	Replacement building: timber framing; corrugated iron; weatherboard cladding; concrete (floors only); timber posts; Colourbond.	R or N
29	Timber framing; weatherboard cladding; corrugated iron; Colourbond; timber posts; timber stairs; timber sashed windows.	R or N
31	Timber post and rail fencing only.	R preferred

Source: Appendix Three

When existing physical fabric is replaced the colours of paints and other finishes should be 'in style'. Existing colours need not be slavishly repeated but new fabric should be painted where the present fabric is painted. As the current colours may not always be the original ones evidence of earlier colours should be sought. Table Six provides general guidance on colours that may be appropriate to significant buildings on the site.

However, there are times when modern materials may be used. For examples, metal primers and antioxidant paints modern paints may be used to protect timber or metal, Bioguard bandages or similar materials may be used to protect in-ground stumps (in preference to postshoes set in concrete) and sisalation or insulation may be installed inside walls and roof cavities. In certain cases such as where traditional lead-based paints or asbestos sheeting was previously used modern materials must be used for renovations, for safety reasons. Modern materials are quite acceptable in interiors that have no heritage significance unless genuine restorations are contemplated.

TABLE SIX: HERITAGE COLOURS SUITABLE FOR EXTERIORS IN THE SHOWGROUND

Edwardian, 1900-1915

This is the period during which most of the early pavilions were constructed.

Typically where corrugated iron was used for roofing or walls it was painted Deep Indian red as was face brick and other masonry surfaces.

External timbers were often painted in shades of green or shades of cream to buff, with window frames in cream with red oxide or forest green doors and frames. A combination of mid-buff and beige was also common.

Exposed rafters and large areas of timber were usually painted in a lighter colour with smaller areas and framing timbers such as small items of trim moulding and barge boards having a darker shade.

Verandah brackets were sometimes picked out in off-white. Gutters and downpipes were often painted in a darker shade of paint in the colour scheme.

Interwar 1915-1940

This is the period during which the Grandstand and at least one kiosk were constructed.

Exterior colour schemes were restrained and usually consisted of no more than two colours. Typical schemes had mid Brunswick green contrasted with Apple green, pale cream or red oxide in joinery. Masonry and fibro walls were often painted in a light cream.

Window sashes and frames were often painted cream and sometimes the external storm mould was painted in a darker shade. Doors and frames were normally painted in a darker shade with Mission Green was a common colour.

Posts and trim were painted in the darker shade of the chosen colour scheme and rafters, fascia boards, barge boards, soffits and panels were all painted in the lighter colour.

These colours were often used into the 1950s in non-metropolitan areas.

Source: Colour Schemes for Old Australian Houses (I Evans, C Lucas and I Stapleton, 1984)

4.3 alterations to built fabric of heritage significance should be in sympathy with the existing forms scale, details, materials and finishes of this fabric

Significant built fabric should remain unaltered so far as possible. However, although the soon-to-be-introduced performance-based new *Building Code of Australia (NSW)* will permit considerable flexibility in these regards, alterations may become necessary for reasons of safety and security or to ensure stability, or to improve functionality or even to restore built fabric to an earlier form.

In each case the visual outcome of an alternation should respect and reflect the built character of significant heritage. This does not mean that the new work should be identical in form, details, materials or finishes. Generally the new work should be similar in its overall character but, sometimes in the case of a large addition, it can be desirable for new work to be 'read' as new work.

4.4 any new buildings should be sited outside the precinct which contains the significant buildings and so as to avoiding intruding on sightlines and vistas that include clusters of significant buildings

Much of the significance of the Showground derives from the fact that it has a 'collection' of individually significant buildings. New buildings should be sited so that the collection can be viewed as a collection and not as a set of unrelated old buildings.

4.5 where any works may involve disturbing the ground surface the possibility of archaeological relics should be kept in mind.

The Showground site has been in use for centuries. It is unlikely that any aboriginal relics remain. However, it is possible that footings and evidence of former fence lines and other works remain underground. Although this will not restrict future development but the possibility of evidence of former buildings and uses such as in the 1923 plan contained in Appendix Two (attachment D) should be kept in mind when the ground is disturbed.

4.6 documentation of the physical fabric and of any changes to this should be kept

Documenting information about and understandings of a place is an important facet of heritage conservation and it may be of value for education about and promotion of the Showground. Documentation is of especial importance where physical fabric is of a wasting nature or is to be demolished and a photographic and planimetric record including any archaeological findings should be made when built fabric is to be lost. When physical fabric is demolished the materials should be stored on site, for recycling.

4.7 Promotion and education

Opportunities should be taken both on and off the site to promote the Showground as a significant place within Dungog and to inform the general public about what is significant about this place.

5 New works (including alterations)

5.1 *new works normally should not be carried out when there is a backlog of needs routine maintenance and repairs awaiting attention.*

From the discussion above it will be clear that there are many needs for both maintenance and repairs to built fabric and grounds awaiting attention. To some extent this backlog is a result of lack of funding and there may be circumstances in which new works can be justified on the grounds that they will help generate or justify funds for maintenance and repairs. There may also be some cases where lack of maintenance and repairs may mean that an existing work should be abandoned. However, as a general proposition limited funds should not be allocated to new works when existing works are not getting proper maintenance or repairs.

5.2 *new works should be carried out in accordance with an agreed list of approved projects and their priorities*

The *ad hoc* development of the past should not continue. Because funds for any future Showground development will remain limited they should be allocated to works that are of the highest priority (though, sometimes, small projects of a lower priority may be allowed when funds are not sufficient for larger, higher priority projects).

As in the cases of maintenance and repairs priorities will involve tradeoffs between needs (1) to conserve what is of heritage significance, (2) to protect the value of past investments, (3) to ensure the proper function (including safety) of the Showground and (4) to reflect the quantum of available funds (and other constraints on what may be feasible)

5.3 *new works should be approved only when existing works cannot provide for existing or intended uses.*

Because the Showground has a large collection of buildings and considerable inherited investment in infrastructure and user amenities, all of which are under-used for most of the year, existing built fabric should be adapted for new uses where-ever possible on the grounds of both heritage conservation and protecting investments. Broadly speaking, new works should not be undertaken where there is under-used existing built fabric that could be adapted for new uses.

However, adaptive reuse may not always be appropriate for particular user needs and existing built fabric may not have sufficient capacity to meet users needs particularly during events. In such cases consideration should always be given to possibilities for extending and upgrading existing built fabric in preference to new works that might lead to existing fabric being abandoned.

5.4 *preference should be given to new works that support existing Showground uses*

The site has been reserved for showground and recreation uses. Other uses, including community unrelated to Showground uses that are permissible under the NSW *Local Government Act 1993*, should be ones that can serve the Showground, for example by being available for use during events or helping to strengthen the Showground's balance sheet.

5.5 *other new works should be compatible with existing Showground uses*

New uses not related to existing ones need to be compatible with existing uses. This means that they should not get in the way of existing uses (eg by restricting access or complicating traffic movements during events) and they should not introduce new built elements that are out of sympathy with the present built character of the site.

5.6 subject to site constraints new buildings should be near to users and near to existing infrastructure.

In order to limit traffic movements on site users should not have to walk (or drive) far to amenity buildings or to buildings that are related to particular uses. Similarly, in order to make effective use of existing infrastructure (roading, power, water, sewerage, etc) available within or adjacent to the boundaries of the site buildings should be as close as possible to this infrastructure.

In addition the siting of new buildings needs to reflect both physical constraints (which include steep slopes along Eloiza Street, poor drainage along Abelard Street and the few remaining tall trees mainly near the Apex kiosk and cattle yards), the problems of traffic congestion during events and the need for new buildings to avoid intruding into sightlines and vistas that include buildings of heritage significance.

5.7 The integrity of the Showground as a single parcel of community land should not be compromised by excisions of land for new buildings

The Showground is not a potential site for any old development and its integrity as a single parcel of land - as well as its internal security - should not be compromised by explicit or implicit excisions of land for new buildings (or uses). All new buildings should potentially be available for some if not all Showground events (eg a Girl Guides hut should be available as a pavilion during Shows) and their primary access should always be from internal ways.

Where buildings are located adjacent to the boundaries of the site, they should not be sited to take advantage of roadways immediately outside the boundaries and where new buildings are located where they might have access to external roadways this access should be restricted to emergencies or occasions when separate access is desirable during events.

5.8 new buildings should be in sympathy in scale, form, details, materials and finishes with existing ones

Existing buildings on the Showground represent an eclectic and somewhat confusing mix of styles which range from the vernacular of older pavilions and essentially 'interwar' styles of the Grandstand and older kiosks to the more recent styles of community buildings (such as the Secretary's Office and Play School) and amenity buildings (such as toilet blocks and the more recent kiosks).

As most of these buildings are modest in their scales and undistinguished by their details and finishes the main elements that differentiate them are their forms, materials and colours. Broadly speaking the older buildings are 'tall' (eg with high gables and steep pitched roofs) and built using 'traditional' materials such as undressed hardwood timber and painted galvanised iron or fibro sheeting painted in traditional colours. In contrast, postwar buildings have brought newer forms (eg awning verandahs and low roofs) and new materials (eg masonry for walls, and zincalume) often unpainted. A similar variety of forms and materials is to be found in house buildings in the vicinity of the Showground where slightly more than half are 'postwar' in both their forms and materials.

The contrasts that have resulted, especially between older buildings of heritage significance and newer ones of little or no significance, have been compounded by the fact that newer buildings have often been sited next to older ones or within vistas that include older buildings and sightlines between older buildings.

These things make it difficult to spell out a protocol for the design of new buildings on the Showground. This problem is complicated by the fact that, while it is unlikely that new buildings would be proposed within the cluster of older pavilions, there are other areas on the Showground near to existing buildings where new buildings could be contemplated at some time in the future.

As a general rule, still more stylistic elements notably new forms and materials should not be introduced onto the Showground. Any new building on the Showground should avoid adding to the current visual clutter that can make it difficult to appreciate the significance of older buildings. This is particularly important with any new buildings that might be constructed in the vicinity of older ones or within vistas and sightlines that include older buildings.

Ideally, forms and materials of new buildings should be broadly similar in appearance to those of older ones so as to avoid drawing attention to their differences. Also, because buildings for different uses on the Showground tend to share elements of forms and materials that distinguish them from others, forms and materials should broadly emulate those of existing buildings with similar uses.

For instance, ideally, new pavilions should be broadly similar to older pavilions, toilets and kiosks to existing amenity buildings and community buildings to the play school building or Secretary's Office. This would have the practical merit that buildings with particular purposes would be easily distinguished from buildings with other purposes, which can be useful in a crowd. A 'protocol' that reflects this philosophy is proposed in the box on the next page.

However this protocol may not always be appropriate especially in situations where new buildings are proposed for sites that impact on older and perhaps significant buildings. In these situations, new buildings should not look like old ones because this can draw attention away their neighbours but they should avoid being too obviously 'different' from their immediate neighbours.

The easiest way of achieving this is by having new buildings similar to their neighbours in scale and form (especially in footprint, height and roof pitch), using similar materials or, perhaps, traditional materials used elsewhere on the Showground. And, always, similar setbacks and colours should be used to promote visual harmony.

5.9 *Planting of new vegetation should be according to a master plan*

The aftermath of the 13 December storm has left central areas of the Showground depleted of shade and shelter. Other areas may also be in need of tree plantings or of landscaping to screen or separate areas. A master plan is needed to identify areas for planting, species preferred (deciduous species may be preferable to eucalypts in some areas having regard both for climate and for the failure of past plantings) and staging of plantings.

An ideal design protocol for new buildings on the Showground site

General criteria

- Single storeyed set on one level
- General should be 'tall and wide' rather than 'long and low'
- Medium to steep pitched roofs
- Painted corrugated iron or colorbond roofing
- Verandah awnings if any to be continuous with main roof
- Roofs and walls to avoid large unbroken surfaces (eg long metal sheets and large windows)
- Colour schemes to be broadly in accord with 'heritage' palettes (see above)

Functional buildings

- Gable ended roofs similar to those of older pavilions
- Corrugated iron or colorbond for roofs and any external walls in traditional colours
- 'Tall' rather than wide openings for any windows
- Window and other framing should be timber, not metal

Amenity buildings

- Toilet blocks should be the only buildings with external masonry (unpainted brick) walls
- Kiosks should have hip roofs and wrap-around awnings with timber weatherboard and stud external walls and verandah posts painted in colours contrasting with roofs

Community buildings

- should conform broadly to the scale, forms, materials and colours of the Secretary's office or Play School building

6 Traffic Management

6.1 Promote efficient use of space for vehicular parking and camping

Grading and regrassing to produce more level camping areas and parking spaces separated by grassed contour banks is a relatively cheap and durable way of protecting surfaces from erosion and of regulating the use of areas of intense use during events. These works could be integrated with planting of shade trees and they would help with planning for further reticulation of water and power.

6.2 regulate traffic flows so as to ensure the safety of all users

As discussed above regulation of traffic has become a matter of some urgency during events. 'Regulation' in this context may embrace mean anything from signage and directions to temporary or permanent barriers, rerouting of traffic flows and relocation of areas or buildings (such as amenity buildings) that generate high traffic flows.

7 Management

7.1 Ensure that there is clear delegation of responsibilities for managing the Showground

With the number of bodies currently involved in decision-making and action on the Showground each body needs to be clear as to its responsibilities (and rights) so as to ensure that there is no overlap, dispute or uncertainty about matters that may affect others. Although individual user groups have primary responsibilities to their members and patrons they use the Showground under authority delegated to them by the Trustee. The extent of

that authority and of obligations (such as for cleaning and making good of damage and to provide appropriate information on their use of the Showground) need to be spelt out in written forms of agreement.

The responsibilities of the Trustee (which is Council) and its management Committee also should be spelt out in a clear statement of terms of reference.

7.2 Ensure that there is full communication of relevant information between users with management responsibilities.

As decisions and actions by individuals or groups who have management responsibilities for the Showground can impinge on the decisions and actions of others, information about these should be shared amongst users and with Council as trustee and its management Committee.

The Trustee should be kept informed by user groups about the extent of their activities, including numbers of patrons, income generated and work done, so that the management Committee can plan effectively and seek funds as appropriate. So also should information relating to policy and administrative matters flow freely from the Trustee to its management Committee and to user groups, in writing or by reports at meetings of representatives.

7.3 Ensure that players with major responsibilities for decisions and works are adequately supported

In this context 'support' refers to the 'powers' to insist that individual players meet their responsibilities as well as to the resources needed by each player to carry out these responsibilities. A management committee operating on behalf of the Trustee must be supported administratively by the Trustee and must be able to fund its activities. Other players should also be supported in carrying out their responsibilities, though this may well be through securing their rights rather than provision of funding.

7.4 The Showground should be substantially self-supporting, financially

While the Showground is not a commercial enterprise it does generate considerable income (through its user groups) and a share of this income should be applied to supporting the Showground as well as the activities and events of user groups. In a broad sense the principle of user-pays should apply to the Showground, particularly to costs of a 'recurrent' nature, such as for administration, maintenance and repair.

Because of the potential costs involved it is of particular importance that the responsibilities of user groups for cleaning during and for making good damage after their events, and the arrangements for monitoring these, should be formalised. Users are generally responsible now in these regards but problems do arise and it is seldom appropriate that Council should have to cover costs caused by these problems.

However, the Showground is a community asset that provides recreational benefits to the community as well helping to attract tourism and trade to Dungog. So, application of the user-pays principle should not inhibit Council or grant-funding bodies from deciding to give financial assistance to the Showground or its users to support maintenance, repairs or new capital works.

7.5 ensure that the community is actively involved in working for the future of the Showground

The Trustee, as 'caretaker' of the Showground on behalf of the community at large, should seek to ensure that 'the community' - and not just users groups and members of any management Committee - is involved in decision making both about the future of the Showground and about priorities for maintenance, repair and new works on the Showground.

The continuing involvement of members of the community as individuals or as members of the many community groups that work on the Showground particularly during events is a key to the continuing success of the Dungog Showground.

6 PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

It is not appropriate to include in this Conservation and Management Strategy detailed proposals for action, such as a concept plan for future development or programs of maintenance and other works, for two reasons:

- firstly it is not possible to do this until questions about major issues, such as the future use of the Showground and the funding of maintenance and other works, have been resolved, and
- secondly fine details are matters for the *Plan of Management for Dungog Showground* and Council's works programs which have the flexibility necessary to accommodate changing circumstances.

However, it is appropriate for recommendations to be made here in line with the Policy Framework expressed above both in regard to major issues and for specific actions that might be carried out by the Trustee and user groups. That is the purpose of this section.

The Future of the Showground

The conclusion drawn from the discussion above of an 'overarching principle' for the future of the Showground was 'that the future for the Showground lies only in continuing showground and recreational uses on the Showground, including all present uses if possible but giving priority to uses that will generate income for maintenance and the further development of infrastructure and built fabric'.

From earlier discussion it appears that there is a serious lack of income to the Showground to support routine maintenance and necessary repairs and that there is no certainty about future funding for new works. These problems can only be addressed if uses that will strengthen cash flows for the Trustee are attracted to the Showground.

At present no data is available to measure the extent and nature of Showground usage. There are no records either of numbers of users attracted by individual uses or of the income generated by these users. However, casual observations and comments by various people involved with the Showground suggest that the Showground is not extensively used for many of the activities that might be expected to make use of its land or buildings For instance:

- it is not widely used for informal recreation activities such as people walking or driving in the site at any time during weekdays or weekends even though entry for these is free
- It is not much used for fee-paying occasional recreational activities such as overnight camping and use of function rooms. Income from these uses is irregular and unpredictable
- it is not much used either for fee-paying commercial uses such as auction sales and periodic markets that may be permissible under the LEP because the Showground is a *heritage item*
- apart from small numbers of regular users during weekdays of the play school and during weekends of the main oval and pony club field it is not much used by sporting and community groups who pay fees, charges and donations.

By contrast, the occasional uses of the Showground for the annual agricultural Show, major equine events and the very occasional use of the Showground for major sporting events and outdoor entertainments such as circuses and outdoor concerts, generate large numbers of users over very short periods and very substantial (although unknown) gate takings. Events

of these kinds account for most of the users of the Showground and most of the income generated by the Showground, although they also put heavy pressure on existing facilities and demand for new ones.

In the absence of accurate data on usage it does appear that the only way of justifying existing and proposed user facilities on the Showground and of generating the cash flows necessary to produce income for these and for routine maintenance and necessary repairs lies in promoting fee-paying events. The Showground might be more used for civic occasions, for commercial activities such as periodic markets and for such things as travelling exhibitions that cannot be accommodated elsewhere in Dungog. It might be used intensively for overnight camping. But none of these will increase Showground income substantially.

This raises two problems:

- because it may be necessary (for insurance and financial reasons) to restrict access to the Showground during these occasional fee-paying events informal recreational users, both tourists and people from the community, notably regular users, may be excluded from the Showground for the duration of these events, and
- some events have special needs that may bring them into conflict with regular uses. For examples, car parking on areas such as the pony club field can leave problems for equine users and the special needs of equine events for soft surfaces are ones that cannot easily be reconciled with the needs of other users for more compact and level surfaces.

While the first problem may be solved by the issue of permits or exemptions during events, the second may require surfaces to be prepared before or after particular events. Surfaces that have been used by field sports may need to be prepared for equine events and surfaces that have been prepared for equine events may need to be regraded and rolled before they can safely be used for, say, an outdoor civic event.

However, it is in equine events that the most obvious ways of increasing usage of the Showground appear to lie. The success of camp draft musters points to possibilities for more such events but there may also be possibilities for the Showground to be used for fee-paying dressage events, polocrosse and showjumping events and even as a base for (crosscountry) eventing.

There may also be possibilities for establishing commercial equine-related activities such as horse sales, a blacksmith's shop or a saddlery on the site. As these uses are related to a long-standing use of the Showground they would be permissible under the heritage provisions of the Dungog LEP.

Promoting the Showground as a venue for fee-paying equine events would not necessarily close the Showground to other sporting uses but it would certainly limit use of the Showground by field sports. However, while the Showground has a Grandstand that is suitable for spectators, it does not have an oval that is large enough for many first class sporting fixtures and Dungog has alternative facilities suitable for other fixtures.

In light of this it is **recommended (1) that options for promoting the Showground as a venue for fee paying equine events and related uses should be explored.**

In regard to equine options it should be observed that, while these should generate greater income to the Showground they may also generate demands for new and improved user facilities, such as additional ovals for dressage events, as well as for toilets, kiosks, shaded areas and picnic facilities which would be of benefit to all and not just event users

It is probable that user facilities on the Showground can cope with more intensive uses in the short run. In the longer term, to the extent that it may not, it may be more economic to earmark areas in the Showground for temporary hired facilities than to plan for permanent works that will be used only during events. There are a number of areas on the Showground that could be developed as areas serviced properly for temporary toilets and marquees for

refreshments in the way that Myles Street is more-or-less serviced for sideshows. Temporary awnings also could be attached to buildings as needed to temporarily increase their 'floorspace'.

Therefore, it is **recommended (2) that options for developing temporary areas for user facilities as well new permanent facilities should be investigated.**

Maintenance and repairs

Discussions above have identified many needs for routine maintenance, of both grounds and built fabric and a number of needs for repairs. Needs for paintwork and for works such as fixing posts and rails and loose iron sheeting are widespread. Other needs have been listed in Table Two.

These discussions have also indicated problems in the way in which maintenance and repairs are currently care out by different bodies which include a resident caretaker, Council, the management Committee and user groups not always acting in concert or to any single plan of action.

It is important for the future of the Showground that all of these bodies (other than the resident caretaker whose position has been abolished) remain actively involved in maintenance and repairs. It is of especial importance that the role of user groups whose voluntary and in-kind contributions have both helped to make for the heritage significance of the place and dealt with urgent problems as they have arisen (often during events) be maintained.

However, it is important also that the maintenance and repairs done by the various bodies involved be more effectively co-ordinated both so that there is a better understanding of what various players have done in the past and so that these activities can be more effectively programmed (and responsibilities allocated to them) in the future.

It is **recommended (3) that Council and users groups should be required in future to report annually to the management Committee all maintenance and repair work (including work in-kind as well as work paid for) that they have carried out in the previous year.**

In order that maintenance and repairs can most effectively use the limited resources available from both Council and user groups priorities need to be established that relate clearly to needs to protect what is significant on this place as well as practical considerations such as the needs to secure the place and the limitations of resources.

It is **recommended (4) that Council's Asset Manager should convene a workshop for all involved Council staff and representatives of all users to draw up a program for regular maintenance, a schedule of other maintenance works (such as occasioned by special events) and a list of repairs needed (with priorities), with the body(ies) responsible identified.**

The proposed workshop is needed rather urgently both because of the extent of needs for maintenance and repair that have been identified above and because a resident caretaker is no longer on site with the sufficient knowledge to monitor needs and to carry out urgent. The workshop should take into recommendations made in Appendix Three (summarised in Table Two) including for reports on the Grandstand roof and the structural integrity of several buildings.

New buildings and other works

In discussions above a number of suggestions have been made for built works that might enhance the amenity of the Showground and/or reinforce its heritage significance. As well, various suggestions have been made by users for works that might improve the Showground for particular uses. A consolidated list of these is set out in Table Seven.

TABLE SEVEN: built works variously suggested for the Showground¹

- Reinstatement of the earlier picket fences at the bottom of the Grandstand
- Improved safety and weatherproofing (eg by lattice screens) of the Grandstand
- Renovation of Grandstand function room
- Screening of the Grandstand toilets
- Reinstatement of the original form of the Main Pavilion
- Internal renovation of the Main Pavilion
- Further upgrading of power reticulation and power board outlets
- Upgrading of pedestrian lighting especially south of the Myles Street extension
- Upgrading of oval flood lighting
- New toilet facilities (in the 'red shed' and/or elsewhere)
- New refreshment kiosks with shaded seating
- Temporary sites for eg toilets and refreshment marquees
- New stables and stock yards
- Hitching rails throughout the Showground
- Dressage ovals and levelled areas for equine use
- Tree planting for shade and screening
- Dish or piped drains to direct stormwater away from buildings
- Girl guides hut (for alternative use as a pavilion)
- Grading and sowing of camping and parking areas
- Pedestrian or vehicular way to bypass the Grandstand

¹Note that further suggestions may arise out recommendations below.

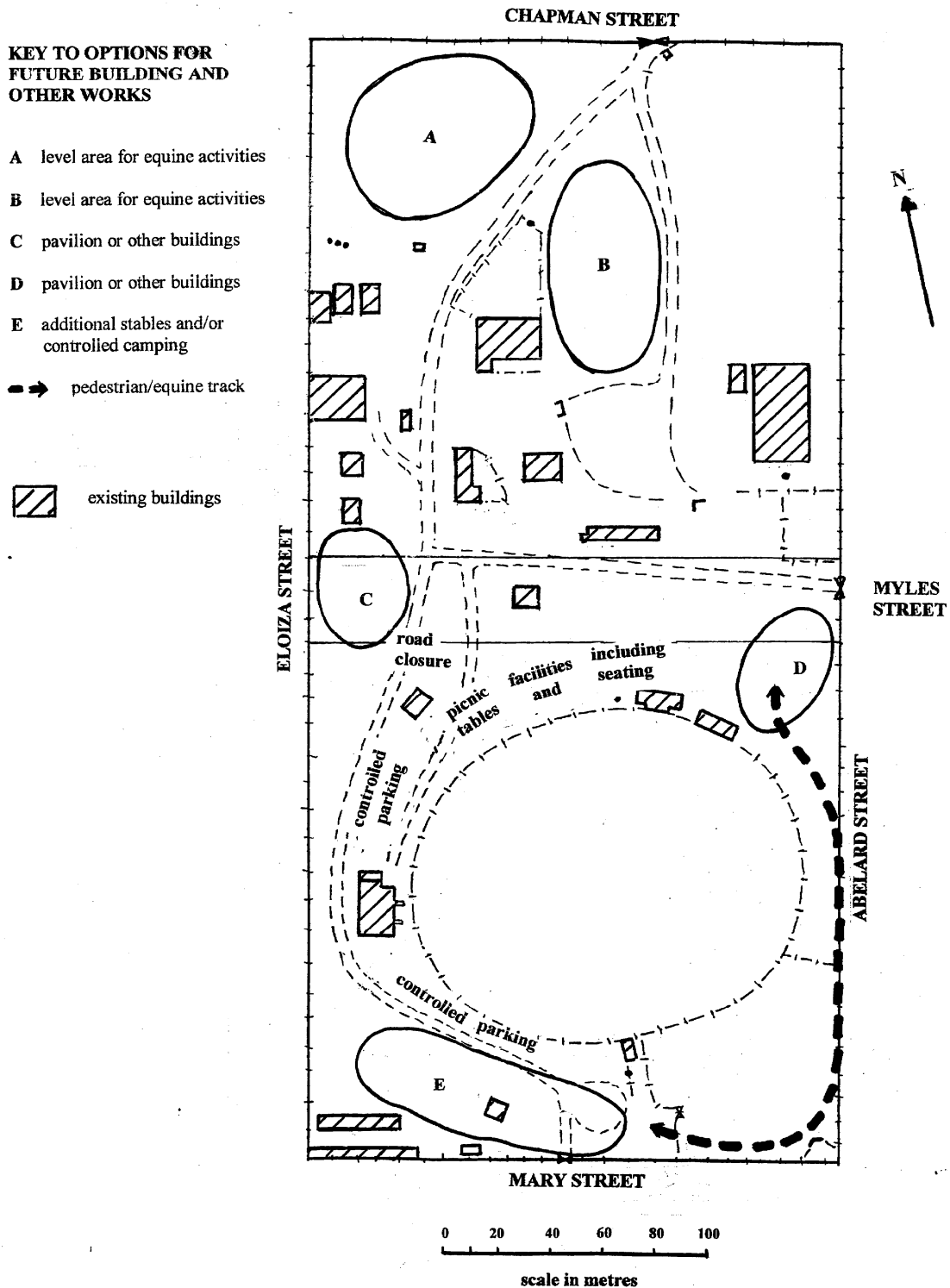
The table is merely a list of suggestions and it should remain that way until future directions for the Showground have been determined. Even when future directions have been determined the real needs for many of these items will remain open to question, particularly while needs for maintenance and repairs remain unaddressed.

Therefore, **It is recommended (5) that the workshop proposed above should prepare also a list of possible new built works, again with priorities and with the body(ies) responsible identified.**

In regard to the siting of new works the policies set out above will substantially limit potential envelopes for new buildings and other works to the areas shown in Figure Eight. This figure suggests that only three general areas should be considered as suitable for future buildings, between the Grandstand and the existing Stables, along Abelard Street adjacent Myles Street and north of the Grandstand between the main drive and Eloiza Street.

These envelopes are all outside the cluster of older buildings and they are near to both potential users and infrastructure only the Eloiza Street envelope is without serious limitations. This envelope is especially suitable for community and amenity buildings (if vehicular traffic were more effectively controlled on the main driveway it would be a better location for a kiosk than the site of the former Apex kiosk) and any building here should be sited so as to leave land for possible further building(s).

FIGURE EIGHT: DUNGOG SHOWGROUND OPTIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT



The area south of the Grandstand is currently a prime camping area and the only new building(s) here should be related to the existing Stables. The Abelard Street envelope is included in sightlines to and from the Showground and building(s) here must avoid intruding into these sightlines. Both of these envelopes would be better left respectively for camping/parking and for equine uses such as an equine warm-up area or dressage oval.

The figure shows two other areas that might be available for development for equine activities. Both of these areas, like the adjacent pony club already used for equine activities, are used for car parking during major events.

It is possible to contemplate possibilities for new building works elsewhere on the Showground, especially if they are freestanding buildings that are small relative to nearby buildings, or involve additions to or adaptive reuse of existing buildings. Examples could include:

- Adaptive reuse of existing 'heritage' buildings, such as the poorly maintained 'red shed' and the adjacent storm-damaged cattle stalls. These existing building(s) should continue to have their present external character.
- Additions to existing pavilions and other functional buildings in order to provide additional floorspace. These should always be built to match the stylistic features of the building. To which the additions are made
- New buildings which because of their use have to be located beside ovals. These should always be in visual sympathy with adjacent buildings (unlike to the Rodeo Shed)
- Areas prepared to provide hardstanding and services for temporary structures such as sideshows, portaloos and refreshment marquees. While these areas should not be extensive they would be preferable to the visual intrusion of unsympathetic permanent buildings (such as the former Apex kiosk).

While any new building works would be constrained by Policy 5.8 the effect of the policy will not be unduly restrictive for works of the kinds listed. Indeed, the *Building Code of Australia (NSW)* may well be regarded as more restrictive, though it should be noted that the application of that Code can be relaxed when heritage items are involved.

Most other future works will be ones ancillary to individual buildings and needing no comment. A particular kind of work, vegetation planting does need a brief comment here. It has been suggested above that the most pressing need for planting is for trees for shade and shelter. In view of the resources likely to be available green screening and other decorative planting – including avenues of trees – should not be given priority in view of the traditionally 'open' nature of the Showground landscape. Planting clusters of what will grow to be trees to provide shade and shelter around stockyards and spectator areas is more urgent, however.

Traffic and related works

From the discussion above it appears that there are no pressing problems with vehicular parking, although the random parking of large vehicles such as animal transports throughout the Showground and of cars along the main drive and other carriage ways both make for inefficient use of land during events and some problems with stormwater drainage.

Some grading and grassing of land along carriage ways, with signage to encourage angle parking by cars and, perhaps, to provide areas designated for parking by transports, would be possible at a relatively low cost but should only be done in conjunction with other works (such as grading of unsealed carriage ways or preparation of building sites).

The provision of camping sites that area better regulated and better serviced is a more pressing need during major events when camping sites (especially ones suitable for caravans and larger mobile homes and stables) close to power, water and toilets are at a premium. The present random use of suitable land simply reduces the number of campers that can be accommodated.

Grading, grassing and contour banking and appropriate signage of camping are relatively cheap ways of regulating use of camping land. They would enable the management Committee to plan more effectively for the possible further reticulation of power and water areas, possible shade plantings and provision of other facilities. Special areas need to be set aside for larger mobile homes and stables to avoid inefficient use of limited land.

Therefore, it is **recommended (6) that Council's Asset Manager in conjunction with the management committee should assess possibilities for the future development of vehicular parking and camping sites and consider priorities for a long term program of upgrading control of parking and camping .**

In regard to the traffic problems discussed above the main need is to limit vehicular and pedestrian (including equine) traffic moving the intersection of the main drive with the Myles Street extension and areas south of the Grandstand during major events.

To the extent that the traffic bottleneck beside the Grandstand during events is caused by cars 'cruising' in search of parking and pedestrians walking around the Grandstand it might be reduced through advisory signage and voluntary traffic controllers. However, there are seldom enough volunteers during events available to direct traffic and control parking as well as man entry gates.

Amongst options for improving traffic safety in the vicinity of the Grandstand would be:

- Mirrors at the southwest corner of the Grandstand
- Appropriate signage for pedestrians and vehicles
- Speed humps on the carriageway south of the Myles Street extension
- Separation of vehicular from pedestrian (including equine) traffic beside the Grandstand by construction of a walkway (possibly at a different grade) beside the carriageway

More drastic (but possibly more effective) solutions would include:

- Realignment of the carriageway to run further south of the Grandstand (possibly requiring regrading beside the Grandstand), which would improve sightlines.
- Restricting vehicular traffic during events to delivery vehicles, emergency vehicles and vehicles that have been issued with permits for reserved parking in numbered spaces and for designated camping sites during those events. This option would depend on signage to discourage non-permit holders driving south of the Myles Street extension and on intervention by permit holders to ensure that non-permit holders did not stay in the area
- Closing the main drive permanently or at advertised times during events by a boom gate and allowing vehicular entry south of the Grandstand only from Mary Street at these times. This option also would also depend on self regulation through use of appropriate signage and on the intervention of permit holders to protect their rights and to discourage unauthorised entry from Mary Street.

In the longer term it appears desirable that ways for traffic to bypass the Grandstand will need to be explored. These would include:

- Developing a 200m long carriageway between the Mary and Abelard Street entrances (see Figure Eight) to run either inside the Showground boundary (where it could run through underused parts of the stockyards and an area of poor drainage along Abelard Street) or along the verge of the road between the Mary and Abelard Street entrances. This costly option is unlikely to be feasible in the foreseeable future
- Developing a walkway along a similar alignment to take pedestrian and equine traffic. The much lower costs of this might well be justified should further equine development of the Showground increase horse movements between the Stables area and other parts of the Showground . Some of these costs might well be recouped through s94 contributions levied as a condition of consent to any new equine-related developments

It is **recommended (7)** that vehicular traffic south of the Myles Street extension should be restricted as a matter of urgency during events and that options for improving the safety of pedestrian and vehicular traffic (including ways of bypassing the Grandstand) should be investigated.

Increasing income

The discussion above indicates that there is a backlog of maintenance and repairs in the Showground and that there are many new works that could be implemented. It also points to fact that the Showground Committee has very limited funds with which to do this. It may be inferred from this that there is presently not enough income from Showground usage to fund current and capital needs.

As to whether there is insufficient income various sources have suggested that some user groups generate from their events substantial surpluses that could be applied to funding Showground works. In rebuttal other sources have suggested that user groups already apply considerable sums, as well as much voluntary labour and donated materials, to the Showground (albeit to priorities determined by the user groups).

It will remain impossible for the management Committee to coordinate routine maintenance, needed repairs or new works in a rational way until it has full information about numbers of users to the Showground, income generated by them and what is spent by user groups on the Showground.

It is therefore **recommended (8)** that user groups be required to apply for licenses or other written authorisation of their use of the Showground and that they should be required to supply annually, full details of their Showground income and expenses.

These details should include numbers of paying and other users, amounts of gate and other Showground-generated takings, the works carried out on Showground land and buildings and any amounts expended on these works.

This information, along with related information from Council and the management Committee, would make possible for the first time a consolidated view of the income that is generated by the Showground and of the real costs of operating the Showground.

However, even if such a consolidation of accounts were to reveal 'surplus' income that could be applied to Showground works, it is unlikely that it would reveal substantial funds that might be available either for major repairs (eg the Grandstand roof, perhaps \$25,000) or alterations (eg refurbishment of the function rooms, at least \$10,000) or for new works. Major works are likely to need funding assistance from outside bodies.

It is not possible here to catalogue all possible sources of funding assistance that might be available for Showground works. It is understood that there are industry funds that may be tapped by individual user groups but nothing is known of these. It is known that there are many State and Federal funds to which Showground projects might be tailored (eg NSW Ministry for the Arts cultural development programs, Federal Department of Tourism national tourism development programs, NSW Planning area assistance funds).

Fuller information on grant opportunities may be gathered from pages on various websites, including

www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au

www.grantlink.gov.au and

www.armidale3rddcityarts.org.au (the so called 'easygrants' site)

The most obvious sources of substantial funding assistance appear to be:

- showground assistance programs run by the NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation and
- heritage incentive programs run by the NSW Heritage Office.

Broadly speaking, both of these programs allocate funds on a competitive, often matching grant, basis. Local funds to match these grants may be realised out of any surplus income generated by the Showground and in other including funds raised by voluntary and service organisations (although these are under considerable pressure in Dungog) and in-kind assistance from volunteers and workers from day-release and work-for-dole programs. There may also be individual ratepayers in the Shire, or companies with which they are associated, prepared to donate towards the Showground.

For smaller projects it may be possible to get assistance directly from Council. Obviously, Council's budget is seriously constrained but there are ways in which it might be stretched. For example up to \$7500 will be provided by the NSW Heritage Office to support a Local Heritage Fund matched on a 1:1 basis by funding from Council. Heritage-related projects would be eligible for assistance from such a fund.

It is recommended (9) that Council or its management Committee should investigate the range of possible sources of assistance for both major and minor capital works and should seek to tap these as a matter of urgency.

While funding capital works on the Showground may seem to be the most daunting problem facing the Showground a more pressing problem is to generate the funds needed for recurrent maintenance and repairs.

Obviously Council has some responsibilities in this regard because the Showground does provide unpriced benefits to the community. However unless the burden of maintenance and repairs is shifted directly onto user groups the management Committee must generate more income for these. Three avenues for this are discussed below:

- Increasing fees and charges to user groups.

Until a 'consolidated account' for all Showground is available the extent to which costs directly attributable to user groups are being covered will not be known. Presently, regular users groups make 'donations' in lieu of fees, other users pay fees according to a schedule and all users make contributions towards costs such as of power and grounds maintenance.

While the extent of this potential will uncertain until the income generated by the Showground and the costs of running it are fully known, there appears to be a considerable potential for donations and fees to be adjusted upwards, particularly for larger user groups who would be the main beneficiaries of things such as better regulation of camping and parking used during major events.

There may be potential also to increase charges to user groups. The management Committee is currently considering separate metering of power and water supplies so as to enable full cost recovery for these during periods when the Showground or individual facilities are being used exclusively for events. Council is considering passing on the costs of insuring buildings that are used exclusively by particular groups (and as a quid pro quo might explore ways in which users activities could be brought under Council's public liability insurance).

Fuller cost recovery might also be achieved eg by requiring user groups as a condition of their licences to bear the full costs (or to reimburse Council for these) of for instance toilet cleaning during events and ground repairs after heavy usage.

- imposing levies on users during events

Council receives no income directly from users of camping, reserved parking or other facilities during events. As a way of generating income to fund the maintenance, repairs and improvement of these facilities it would not be unreasonable for a levy to be added on behalf of Council to user groups' charges for entry, camping and parking and participation in events. For example it would not be unreasonable to require users to add a general levy of \$1 per person per day to admission and registration charges and a similar charge and for the privilege of having reserved parking. Nor would it be unreasonable for users to collect a levy equivalent to half the normal camping fee when people registering for events are seeking overnight camping.

(An alternative to a Council levy would be for Council to take a share in gate and other takings (including a contribution for users who get free entry through membership or other rights), which is a practice at other Showgrounds).

Admission tickets and permits for parking and camping should note that the inclusion of a Council levy and, in the cases of parking and camping permits, should be displayed on dashboards/windcreens. Until such time as Council has rangers or compliance officers who can check that tickets and permits have been bought the user groups responsible for collecting levies would need to be responsible for checking them.

- Increasing charges to other users

Currently most income from other than user groups comes from camping fees and hire of facilities. Charges for overnight camping and for hire of facilities appear to be reasonable and there would appear to be few opportunities for increasing them (although levies from users of commercial activities such as auctions might be considered) until facilities such as the Grandstand function room and main pavilion are refurbished.

However, it does appear that a great deal of income is forgone in respect of camping charges that are not collected during events such as pedalfests. These events can incur considerable costs of maintenance and repair and when Council decides to waive or reduce charges it should determine to do so on the basis of the benefit that accrue to the community.

More importantly, and a matter of some urgency because a resident caretaker is no longer available to take bookings for venues and overnight camping or to collect payments for camping, it is essential for Council to protect income from venue use and from camping. This requires both that an agency be designated to take booking and payments and that arrangements be instigated to monitor venue usage and the payment of camping charges.

With respect to generating more income it is **recommended (10) that the management Committee should investigate, in consultation with Council and user groups, ways of increasing fees, charges and usage, along the lines discussed above.**

It is also **recommended (11) that the task of taking bookings and payments for both venue hire and overnight camping should be given to Dungog's Visitor Information Centre.** Obviously, this would require collection of an agency fee by the Visitor Information Centre, particularly if it were to be responsible also (until Council has ranger/compliance staff) for checking camping permits. Appropriate signage would be required at the Showground entrance gate).

Promotion and publicity

It has been suggested above that the facilities on offer in the Showground may not be widely recognised and that there may be potential for increasing the use of these facilities. A wider recognition of what the Showground has to offer has important implications for increasing income to the Showground. It also has implications for greater use of the Showground as a community recreational asset.

To win wider recognition requires some promotion and publicity. Probably the best promotion and publicity is that which highlights the Showground as a significant place in Dungog. This kind of promotion and publicity can be obtained simply and cheaply by ensuring that the Showground is highlighted in tourist literature (such as the *Welcome to Dungog* and *Discover Dungog Shire's Heritage Trail* booklets) as a place for passive recreation and views and as one that has a great deal of history on the ground.

Beyond these, appropriate signage (with a map) at entry gates and, perhaps, plaques or other signage within the Showground, may be useful ways of conveying information.

It is recommended (12) that efforts should be made through Dungog's Visitor Information Centre to achieve wider publicity for and promotion of the Showground.

Management

It has been suggested in section 5.1 that the future for the Showground lies only in continuing showground and recreational uses on the Showground. This raises the question of whether Council is the most appropriate body to act as trustee on behalf of the Department of Land and Water Conservation. This is a question that Council itself is asking at a time when insurance costs are becoming exorbitant.

The answer to this question is that as in 1980 Council is the only body in Dungog with the resources necessary to manage the Showground. Notwithstanding that problems of maintenance and repair remain, Council has been successful in supporting and attracting grants (including emergency grants) over the past two decades.

While Council has the responsibilities for managing the Showground it remains a practical necessity for these responsibilities to be delegated in an appropriate manner. Broadly speaking there appear to be no fundamental problems with the present arrangements which involve a 's355' management Committee and the active involvement of major users in the work of this Committee. This Committee has been quite successful in recent years in coordinating the efforts of Council and the major users.

However, some fine-tuning is needed to make the present management 'model' work more effectively, particularly when there is no longer a resident caretaker or any other one person who has the central role in managing the Showground. In particular, to eliminate perceptions real or imagined of buck-passing and administrative delays:

- The management Committee needs to have explicit terms of reference. The nature and limitations of its delegations, in relation to both policy/planning and day to day decision-making, need to be spelt out in writing for the benefit of the Committee, Council and the user groups, with reference to the trust deed for Reserve 61007.
- The rights and responsibilities of user groups in relation to the Showground and its management Committee, including reporting obligations, need to be clarified and better understood. These terms and conditions should be spelt out clearly in licences or other written agreements under which any user is permitted to use the Showground
- The responsibilities of Council officers in relation to the Showground and its Committee need to be clarified. Responsibilities of Council for administrative support and maintenance and to communicate information to the Committee should be spelt out and a Council officer, probably its Asset Manager, should become *ex officio* a member of the Committee.
- There is a need for a person to be known as the 'manager' of the Showground, to act as a central person of reference in relation to the Showground. This person may be a Council officer but, as the responsibilities are essentially ones carried by the Committee s/he may best be a member of the Committee.
- There is a need for more involvement of the community at large. While members of many voluntary organisations are actively involved during events most voluntary work done on the Showground at other times is done by members of user groups. Much of this work is

of a physical nature and a possibility that might be explored is a closer involvement of Total.

It is recommended (13) that Council's Asset Manager in consultation with the Committee should review the terms of reference of the Committee, the terms of user licences and needs of the Committee for information and administrative support.

It is also recommended (14) that formal procedures for management to monitor Showground use, condition and needs and to report these to Council should be developed.

7 CONCLUSION

The Dungog Showground is an important asset for the people of Dungog not only for its utility value but also for its heritage significance and other amenity values. However, its values do not appear to be widely recognised within the town and the Showground is not widely known beyond the town except to its current users.

The Showground is highly valued by its users, who contribute much toward the place. However, the things that are valued on the Showground are increasingly in need of protection because of lack of funding in the past for ongoing maintenance, needed repairs and further improvements. To some extent this funding problem can be addressed by increasing usage and by increasing fees and charges. However there are issues other than funding that need to be addressed also.

Solutions to these planning issues of the Showground have been proposed in the set of policies and the recommendations for action put forward in the last two sections. Many of these are not new and some may be controversial. They are presented here as a framework that will enable the trustee to ensure the survival of the Showground as an asset for Dungog. In the light of this

It is recommended (15) that Council should forward a copy of this Conservation and Management Strategy to the NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation for its comments and,

Finally, it is recommended (16) that subject to consideration of comments by the Department and in any submissions made after exhibition of the Strategy Council should adopt this Strategy.