



Dungog Common Information Sheet

What is happening?

The Government has reached agreement with the Karuah LALC to resolve all of their outstanding Aboriginal Land Claims on the Dungog Common (the Common).

This Agreement has two key parts:

1. The land which forms the Common will be transferred to Karuah LALC
2. The community will continue to have access to and use the Common now and into the future.

Has there always been a Land Claim? Since when? What exactly does that mean?

In 1983 the NSW parliament passed into law the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*. The Act allows the Aboriginal Community to form Land Councils and make Aboriginal Land Claims on Crown Land. The Common is Crown Land and subject to several of these Aboriginal Land Claims. Most of these Claims are more than a decade old. The recently announced agreement will resolve all Aboriginal Land Claims on the Common.

Why is this happening and why is it happening now?

Karuah LALC's Claims have been progressing through the administrative process for some time. When it became apparent that the resolution of these claims could fracture ownership of the Common into several parts the Government with input from community partners decided a better outcome would be to preserve the Common as a whole and work with Karuah LALC to ensure certainty of community use and access over the long term.

How will the \$650,000 be spent?

In various ways. These will include:

- Understand and protect the Aboriginal Culture and Heritage landscape of the Common;
- enhance the visitor experience;
- provide Aboriginal employment;
- undertake capital works to improve infrastructure on the Common;
- Work with our partners to explore and map out the future of the Common.



Will there be a fee charged to access the Common now?

No – This agreement doesn't introduce an access fee.

What impact will this have on the users of the Common?

None – By reaching agreement with Karuah LALC we've ensured the community will continue to have use and access of the Common into the future.

What impact will this have on users of the Common in the future?

The agreement will improve and enhance the user experience of those who visit the Common in the future.

Are we still allowed to ride the current trails, including the Flow Tracks?

Yes – A specific part of the agreement announced today is providing certainty of use and access for the community to the Common now and into the future.

Is walking in the Common still permitted?

Yes – A specific part of the agreement announced today is providing certainty of use and access for the community to the Common now and into the future.

Is horse-riding in the Common still permitted?

Yes – A specific part of the agreement announced today is providing certainty of use and access for the community to the Common now and into the future.

Will camping be permitted?

Sometimes –Camping will continue to be permitted in designated areas with appropriate approvals.

Will the events which have already been scheduled for 2021 be allowed to continue, such as Run Dungog and the Hunter Mountain Biking Competition in September?

Yes – A specific part of the agreement is providing certainty of use and access for the community to the Common now and into the future. This includes all scheduled events.

Will cattle continue to graze the Common for the management of the grass?

Yes – all currently permissible activities, including leases, licenses, tenures and community uses will continue on the Common.



Will Karuah Aboriginal Land Council have the ability to change the purpose of the reserve and sell it?

No - The Common will continue to be managed jointly by representatives from across the community including Karuah LALC, Council and the community. The majority of the Common is currently zoned for the purposes of environmental protection and recreation (E3), the agreement doesn't impact this in any way.

If Karuah LALC ever choose to exercise their right to sell the Common (in any part or as a whole) they've agreed the NSW Government will have first right of refusal to purchase any land that forms the Common back from them.

Who will be responsible for managing, repairing and maintaining the mountain bike tracks?

In the first instance the Crown Land Manager will continue its current operations. It will be their responsibility to manage the bike tracks in conjunction with their licensee Ride Dungog. The agreement includes funding for track repairs and maintenance.

Who will be responsible for the management of the Dungog Common?

In the first instance, the Crown Land Manger will continue to manage the Common as it has in recent times. Over time the manager of the Common will change to be a body that includes representatives of: Karuah LALC, Ride Dugong, Council, NSW Government, the community and others.

Who will be responsible for the land care management of the Dungog Common such as weeds and bushfire risk management?

In the first instance the Crown Land Manager will continue, the agreement includes funding to continue and improve land care management activities on the Common.

Will there be more opportunity for community involvement in the Common?

Yes – the agreement includes funding to engage with the community to explore and map out the future of the Common.

Will bikes be allowed to take over the Common?

The Common is presently enjoyed by a range of users including bush walkers, Landcare volunteers, mountain bikers, horse riders and others. Under the agreement all permitted uses will continue.



Does this mean the mountain bike tracks have been approved by Dungog Shire Council and the Development Application has been approved?

No – That is a separate process. What has been agreed is that the Mountain Biking operation will continue into the future so that plans to enhance the facilities can go ahead.

If not, what is that process and how long will it take?

At present the DA is only in its early stages of assessment. It's likely that further studies and assessment will need to be undertaken before the DA process is concluded.

What will be the process in the future for Development Applications?

The DA process is one administered by Dungog Shire Council. The standard DA process will continue to apply to any future works undertaken on the Common.

What happens with the \$70,000 raised by the community for the design and construction of two new tracks.

These funds are being held by Ride Dungog. When the DA process is completed and work can begin, these funds will contribute to the construction of future mountain biking tracks.

What are the next steps?

Welcoming our new partners from Karuah LALC into the community and onto the Common. Karuah LALC is very excited to be part of the bright future of the Common and see it as an opportunity for them to help enhance the current offering to draw more visitors from across Australia and beyond.

Who can contact if we have questions or concerns?

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