

UPDATE - JUNE 2023

This fact sheet provides an update regarding the upkeep and maintenance of the Walka Water Works site.

BACKGROUND

The Walka Water Works site is owned by the NSW State Government and Council manages the land under the Crown Land Management Act.

Walka Water Works partially reopened to the public in December 2022 following an asbestos contamination closure in early 2022. The site was reopened with limited access and all contaminated areas have remained closed to the public.

The pre-closure maintenance regime that Council was undertaking has been impacted with the discovery of the contamination, which means that there are now some constraints and conditions on how Council can maintain Walka until there is sufficient funding to be able to fully remediate the site. This is for the health and safety of Council staff as well as the broader community.

HOW IS THE MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE AFFECTED BY THE ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION?

With large parts of Walka closed due to contamination, the maintenance schedule and presentation of the site needs to be balanced with retaining as much access as possible to the site for the community. The current maintenance schedule is that:

- all work at Walka Water Works is completed under the Walka Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) and associated WHS Plan which includes clear Asbestos Management Procedures created for the site.
- mowing outside the fenced areas must be completed on site using a closed cab mower and vegetation coverage must be maintained to $\geq 100\text{mm}$ where possible. No whipper snipping or brush cutting is permitted in the areas closest to the Pumphouse Building but is permitted with use of a P2 dust mask in the areas to the West and on the other side of the reservoir.
- any mowing or maintenance required within the fenced off areas requires a robotic mower and the entire site to be closed to the public. Mowing these areas takes a minimum of 2 days.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE?

Maintenance of the Walka Water Works site is limited due to the asbestos contamination. Council is still undertaking essential, seasonal maintenance including:

- over the Winter period when there is less growth, mowing and other vegetation maintenance is undertaken monthly (with site inspections fortnightly) in order to maintain as much access as possible for the community. With this in mind, people may notice the grass is a bit longer and there is some vegetation growth during the Winter months.
- prior to Spring, there will be a larger program of mowing and vegetation management both inside and outside the fenced off areas to get grass and vegetation under control prior to the warmer growing months. This is likely to result in a full closure of the site and the community will be informed when this, and any future closures, happen.
- following recent inspections, some elements of the site were identified as beyond repair, such as the rotunda, which needed to be removed for public safety. The spillway bridge has also been temporarily repaired to make safe until more permanent works can be completed when funds become available.

ARE THE WALKING TRAILS OPEN AND BEING MAINTAINED?

There have been a number of comments and enquiries around the maintenance and vegetation growth on the walking trails. In June, maintenance and sustainability teams walked the site and can confirm that:

- the vine adjacent to some walking trails and covering the surrounding bush has been identified as *Parsonia Straminea*, which is a native climber. It acts a food source and habitat for native fauna. Council's environmental team have confirmed that control and removal of this species is not recommended, as its presence is less detrimental to the environment than its removal would be. The location of this vine is only in very isolated areas along the walking trails at this point it is not impeding any use of the trails.
- lantana removal at Walka Water Works is usually funded through Crown Lands grants and Council has previously been successful in obtaining funding. Council will pursue funding opportunities for lantana removal as and when they become available.
- trail and drainage maintenance works are required by maintenance staff, in order to improve some of the water retention issues along the Lake Trail. Work is currently underway on outstanding trail maintenance required on the Nature Trail and Bush trail. None of the track maintenance issues that are being addressed or that will be outstanding are by any means at a point that would deem the track unusable or unsafe. Council regularly complete checks to make sure trails are safe.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Council will continue to keep the community informed throughout the planning process of the staged reopening of Walka Water Works. Information is available on our website at <https://www.maitland.nsw.gov.au/council/your-say/staged-reopening-of-walka-water-works> If you wish to speak with a member of the team you can contact us:

Phone: 4934 9700 email: info@maitland.nsw.gov.au

