



Plan of Management  
for Willans Hill Park  
2008–2013



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## **1. Introduction**

This Plan of Management has been prepared over Crown Land owned by the Department of Lands known as Willans Hill Park of which Wagga Wagga City Council are the Trust Manager.

### **1.1 Purpose of the Plan**

The purpose of this plan is to provide directions to management and operational staff about how to manage Willans Hill Park for the next 5 years. The Plan will also communicate intended management to the community.

### **1.2 Relevant Lands**

This Plan of Management is for Willans Hill Park as shown at Map 1. It is an area of 249 hectares of predominantly natural bushland on both Wagga Wagga City Council Community Land and Crown Reserve with a range of utilities such as water reservoirs, communications towers and powerlines. This Plan of Management does not include The Botanic Gardens, Museum or Music Bowl all of which will be addressed in a separate Master Plan.

Part Reserve Number: 1440

Trust Manager: Willans Hill Wagga Wagga (R 1440) Reserve Trust

Purpose of Reserve: Public Recreation

# WILLANS HILL PARK - Map 1 Extent



### **1.3 Regional Setting**

Willans Hill Park is a natural area located in the middle of the Wagga Wagga city landscape. It is surrounded by the suburbs of Turvey Park, Mount Austin, Tolland and Koorinal. There are major roads running through the Park including Lord Baden Powell Drive, Captain Cook Drive, Red Hill Road and Leavenworth Drive.

It is highly elevated and visible from most of the surrounding urban area. Willans Hill sheds water to the east into Lake Albert and to the west into Wagga Wagga and Wollundry Lagoon.

The Park is connected to numerous civic areas such as the Botanic Gardens, Music Bowl and Museum.

The Willans Hill Park forms part of a interconnected natural corridor which connects from Willans Hill around the southern edge of the Wagga Wagga urban area to Pomingalarna Park then down to the Murrumbidgee River.

### **1.4 History of land use**

The Park was named after William Willans who owned an 80 acre farm on the north western side of Willans Hill (McCrone 2003).

Portions of the current Park were first set aside for recreation purposes in 1876 (McCrone 2003). The current Willans Hill area was proclaimed as Willans Hill Reserve in 1887. Council was later appointed as trustee in 1928 (McCrone 2003). Additional portions were added to the existing Park between 1886 and 1970.

The history of land use of Willans Hill Park reflects the development of Wagga Wagga. It was originally used for firewood collection and grazing. Later as Wagga Wagga developed it was cleared. It was also used for gravel and rock extraction as part of the development of Wagga Wagga. A rifle range existed on the western slopes of the Park in the 1920's but was soon re-located to Pomingalarna Park (Plan of Management 1990). In recent times the Park has been used as a location for municipal facilities such as water storage and communications facilities.

Between 1951 and 1957 Willans Hill was extensively replanted with trees. Contour banks were constructed in the 1960's by the Soil Conservation Service and Wagga Wagga City Council to manage soil erosion. Further tree plantings occurred in 1971.

In 1958 walking tracks and some picnic areas were developed. The lookouts were developed soon after in 1960 in association with the sealing of Captain Cook Drive.

Willans Hill was also used for gold extraction and mining at various times in its history.

## 2. Planning context

### 2.1 Previous Plans

The earliest Plan of Management for Willans Hill Park was produced in 1990, by Wagga Wagga City Council. In 2003 an updated plan was developed. These previous plans have been used in the development of this Plan.

The 1990 Plan of Management recommended protection of existing natural values, consolidation of existing facilities including walking tracks and a possible new lookout and associated restaurant on the southern side of Lord Baden Powell Drive.

The 2003 plan identified major use pressures causing degradation of the Park. It recommended protection of the natural values and continued recreation usage.

### 2.2 Relevant legislation

Legislation that is relevant to this plan of management includes:

- Local Government Act (1993)
- Crown Lands Act (1989)
- Rural Fires Act (1997)
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979)
- Public Works Act (1912)
- Threatened Conservation Species Act (1995)
- Native Vegetation Act (1997)
- Clean Waters Act (1970)
- Wagga Wagga Development Control Plan (Draft 2008)
- Local Environmental Plan (Draft 2008)
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)
- State Environmental Planning policies

#### ***Local Government Act 1993***

The Local Government Act directs that all non operational community lands require plans of management. The Act prescribes the following guidelines for the preparation of plans of management for community lands:

- (1) A Council must prepare a draft plan of management for community land.
- (2) A draft plan of management may apply to one or more areas of community land, except as provided by this Division.
- (3) A plan of management for community land must identify the following:
  - (a) the category of the land,
  - (b) the objectives and performance targets of the plan with respect to the land,
  - (c) the means by which the Council proposes to achieve the plan's objectives and performance targets,
  - (d) the manner in which the Council proposes to assess its performance with respect to the plan's objectives and performance targets,

and may require the prior approval of the Council to the carrying out of any specified activity on the land.

### **Crown Lands Act 1989**

A large portion of the Plan area is Crown Reserve. All Plans of Management of Crown Lands need to be adopted in terms of the Crown Lands Act, 1989. In this instance because the Plan is over both Crown and Council Community Lands it will need to be adopted by both the Minister for Lands and Council.

### **2.3 Relevant planning policies**

The construction of all open space infrastructure that complies with the Wagga Wagga Development Control Plan is exempt development.

Wagga Wagga Council has developed a range of other planning initiatives which influence this Plan. These include:

- Recreation and Open Space Strategy (2005)
- Wagga Wagga Natural Resources Management Plan (1998)
- Council's Strategic Plan 2008-2018
- Wagga Wagga City Council's Annual Management Plan
- Wagga Wagga Community Social Plan 2009 – 2013 (Draft 2008)
- Wagga Wagga Development Control Plan (Draft 2008)
- Strategic Plan for Recreation in Wagga Wagga (1998)
- Wagga Wagga Bikeway Plan (1998)
- Strategic Plan for Management of Public Land in the City of Wagga Wagga (1995)

There are also a number of relevant Council policies including:

Council Run Community Events

Community Services

Access and Equity

Youth

Noxious Weeds

Stormwater

Leasing and Licensing

Signs for reserves, Gardens and Public reserves

Cultural Policies

Tree Management

Risk Management

OH&S

Events Support

### **2.4 Community Consultation**

This Plan of Management has been developed based on a community consultation process. The consultation involved interviews with key stakeholders, a public workshop and public exhibition. There were approximately 40 participants at the community workshop held on 23 October 2007. One response was also received through the Council website.

## **3. Values of the Park**

Willans Hill Park has recreational, operational, social, historical, natural and cultural values

### **3.1 Recreation Values**

Willans Hill Park is Wagga Wagga's most popular and significant bushland recreation area. People use it for walking, jogging, fitness, mountain biking, dog exercise, and picnicking. It is used by a range of age groups including BMX enthusiasts, downhill mountain bike users, bushwalkers, and running and orienteering clubs.

Vehicle based sightseeing is also popular within the Park. Captain Cook Drive provides easy vehicle access to a range of lookouts and facilities.

Willans Hill Reserve also gets use from people attracted to adjoining civic areas such as the Botanic Gardens, Museum, Zoo and Music Bowl.

### **3.2 Natural and Cultural Values**

Willans Hill Park is increasingly important as a natural environment given the extensive loss of natural landscapes on the south west slopes (Priday S and Mulvaney M, 2005).

The natural values in many cases are being degraded by a range of activities including illegal motorised vehicle access, weed invasion and fire. The vegetation structure of the reserve has significantly changed due number of fires in the Park. There is limited native shrubland and grassland understorey.

#### **Flora**

The vegetation of the reserve contains a mixture of dry eucalypt open woodland and forest with a varied shrubby understorey. The vegetation community is described by Priday S and Mulvaney M (2005) as Wagga Wagga Hills Open forest vegetation community. This vegetation community is identified as vulnerable as it has gone from an estimated pre-1750 extant area of 2030Ha to a current extent of 304Ha (Priday S and Mulvaney M, 2005). The dominant flora species include Western Grey Box (*E. macrocarpa*), White Box (*E. albens*), Blakely's Red Gum (*E. Blakelyi*), *E. sideroxylon*, Red Stringy Bark (*E. macrorhyncha*), White Cypress Pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*), and Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus*) (McCrone 2003)

The natural vegetation has been previously disturbed by grazing, fire and gravel extraction. The resultant vegetation consists of even aged stands of woodland with shrubby understorey which exist throughout much of the Park, with occasional larger mature trees.

#### **Fauna**

There are a range of fauna habitats in the Park including open forest and grassy woodlands. These habitats provide a range of habitats for fauna species including reptiles, amphibians, birds and marsupials.

The Park provides a habitat for a range of threatened species including Swift Parrot, Squirrel Glider, Diamond Firetail and Speckled Warbler (Priday S and Mulvaney M, 2005).

#### **Cultural Heritage**

Aboriginal communities would have used the Park given its elevation and availability of food (Wagga Wagga Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Report 2005).



The Park also has an extensive history of European landuse. The history of the Park reflects the history and development of Wagga Wagga. Some of this heritage is displayed in the adjoining Museum of the Riverina.

### **3.3 Operational Values**

Willans Hill Park, because of its central location and elevation, provides a strategic location for communications facilities and water management. Consequently there are a range of utilities in the reserve including telecommunications towers, water storage facilities and major powerlines. Many of these facilities are excised from the Park.

## **4. Management Issues**

The following management issues have been identified after review of the site and discussions with council staff, user groups and the general community. These issues are addressed in the management strategies (Section 5).

### **4.1 Vehicle Access**

Willans Hill Park is easily accessed by motorised vehicles with major sealed roads running adjacent to and through the Park. Willans Hill is also located within a short drive for most residents of Wagga Wagga. There are numerous opportunities for vehicles to enter the Park as there is no continuous perimeter barrier. Motorbikes in particular are able to easily access and use the myriad of informal tracks in the Park.

The unauthorised motorised vehicle access and use is a major cause of degradation and disturbance to the local community. There are also safety concerns related with this unauthorised access as the Park is popular with walkers and bike riders.

### **4.2 Informal Tracking**

There are numerous informal tracks that have been created by illegal vehicle access and mountain bike use. Many of these tracks have caused vegetation disturbance and are actively eroding as they are poorly located (eg. on a creek bed).

### **4.3 Degraded Sites and Facilities**

Most recreation facilities and sites within Willans Hill Park have been poorly maintained. Facilities such as tables, signage, and fitness equipment are old and increasingly dysfunctional. This gives the Park the appearance of being run down and poorly cared for. The major lookout sites have been extensively vandalised and are in very poor condition.

### **4.4 Fire Management**

Willans Hill needs to be carefully managed for fire to protect utility assets within the Park, the Botanic Gardens and surrounding urban areas.

Previous fires in the Park have caused some concern to surrounding residents. Agencies have responded with the installation of an extensive firebreak system and a fuel reduction burning program.

## **4.5 Weeds**

There are a range of weed species in the Park including noxious weeds. The major weeds include:

- St Johns Wort (noxious)
- Boxthorn
- Radiata Pine
- Privet
- Gorse
- Cootamundra Wattle
- Horehound

The highest priority for weed control is St Johns Wort which is located extensively through the Park, especially in the open woodland and grassland areas.

Willans Hill Park is susceptible to a wide variety of weeds due its location within residential areas. Weeds can easily escape from surrounding gardens or from dumping of garden waste.

The Park is strategically sprayed on an annual basis.

## **4.6 Complexity of land tenures**

Willans Hill Park contains numerous land tenures and reserves as a result of the development of numerous utilities and roads in the Park. Some utilities have been excised while others have not. A communications tower utilised by Council & two not for profit organisations sits within a small area of lot 12 DP 757249 zoned 5 Special Uses Radio Antenna under the Wagga Wagga City Council Local Environmental Plan (1985) and the Development Control Plan (2005).

There is also inappropriate land tenure at some locations. Lord Baden Powell Drive and Captain Cook drive currently do not have road easements and are not Council dedicated roads. As a priority road easements need to be created for these two roads.

## **5. Management Strategies**

The following management strategies have been developed from management objectives and issues (section 4). The strategies include specific actions, ongoing actions and policies.

### **5.1 Objectives of Management**

The following specific land management objectives have been developed based on the issues and values of the Park.

1. Protect and rehabilitate natural values
2. Manage fire to protect assets and enhance biodiversity
3. Enhance the existing scenic lookout for Wagga Wagga
4. Manage the Park as a major landscape feature of the Wagga Wagga area
5. Provide controlled vehicle access within the Park
6. Permit and manage passive recreation usage
7. Manage utility use of the Park
8. Resolve land tenure complexities

## **5.2 Management Actions and Policies**

Management actions and policies are identified below which relate to each of the above management objectives.

### ***5.2.1 Protect and rehabilitate natural values***

1. Removal of any naturally occurring materials, flora or fauna including fire wood is prohibited.
2. Encourage flora and fauna research within the Park, especially research that gives a long term analysis of the health of the flora and fauna populations.
3. Investigate the potential closure and rehabilitation of selected informal tracks.
4. The following weed species will be prioritised for control: woody weeds and St Johns Wort.
5. A brochure on environmental management including weed escapes from neighbouring households will be developed and distributed to surrounding suburbs.
6. No exotic species are to be planted in the Park.
7. Any new buildings or facilities within the Park will be assessed by Council for visual and environmental impacts on the values of the Park. Consideration will be given to possible co-location with existing facilities and the impacts of associated developments such as access roads and firebreaks.

### ***5.2.2 Manage fire to protect assets and enhance biodiversity***

8. A fire management plan is to be prepared for the Park which protects assets and enhances the natural biodiversity.
9. Existing fire management trails will be reviewed to ensure that they are effectively located for fire management, access to utilities and other management purposes. Reducing soil erosion will be considered in the review.

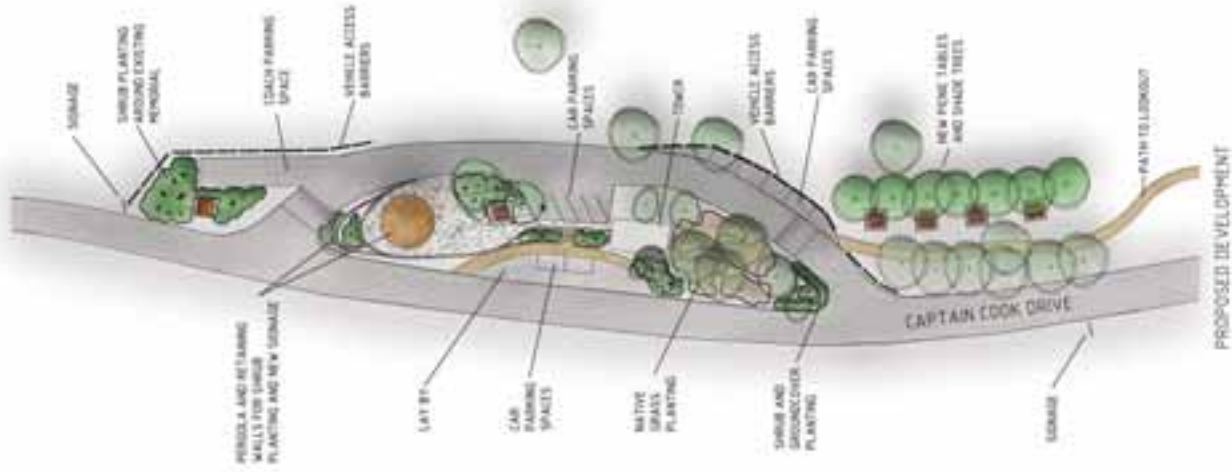
### ***5.2.3 Enhance the existing scenic lookout for Wagga Wagga***

10. Develop the lookout consistent with the concept site plan (Figure 1). The lookout will also provide access to walking tracks, mountain bike tracks and the fitness track.



# PLANS OF MANAGEMENT

## WILLANS HILL LOOKOUT SITE PLAN



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



EXISTING LOOKOUT CONDITION



AIR PHOTO - EXISTING



CLIENT: WINDRA COUNTY  
 DATE: 07 JAN 20  
 DWG NO: 2020-01  
 SCALE: 1:500 (0.48)  
 DRAWN: CP  
 CHECKED: WS



#### **5.2.4 Manage Willans Hill Park as a major natural landscape feature of Wagga Wagga**

11. Wiradjuri Walking Track in its existing design creates a regional natural corridor linking Willans Hill, Silvalite Reserve, Pomingalarna reserve and the Murrumbidgee River (Wiradjuri Walking Track). In the near future it is proposed that the track will be relocated along the hill top south of Red Hill Road to join Mangoplah Road and Silvalite Reserve ringing the southern part of the city.
12. Investigate the zoning of Willans Hill Park as environmental protection with a high scenic value according to the Wagga Wagga Local Environmental Plan.

#### **5.2.5 Provide controlled vehicle access within the Park**

13. No vehicles are permitted off the sealed roads (Captain Cook Drive and Lord Baden Powell Drive) except for management purposes.
14. All management tracks will be gated and locked to restrict public vehicle access.
15. Provide appropriate carparking for users of Willans Hill Park.
16. Close the southern end of Captain Cook Drive.
17. Install strategic fencing at all locations which currently allow public vehicle access onto Willans Hill Park.

#### **5.2.6 Permit and manage passive recreation usage**

18. Motorised vehicle use including motorbikes is not permitted off the formed roads.
19. Recreational events which do not impact on natural values of the Park or conflict with other users are permitted in the Park, subject to Council policies and approval.
20. Interpretation signage is to be provided at visitor nodes and carparks. Interpretation themes are to include: the history of the Park and Wagga Wagga, flora and fauna, salinity management and cultural heritage.
21. All major tracks are to have a sign which identifies the track and its use.
22. Caution signage will be installed in the vicinity of the downhill mountain bike track.
23. Rubbish bins will not be provided in the Park except at the proposed lookout site and dog off leash areas.
24. Toilet facilities will not be provided within the Park but are available in the adjoining community lands.
25. The existing equipment on the fitness trail will be removed and upgraded.
26. Upgrade existing tracks to create a dual use (bike and walking) track along the ridge line of Willans Hill, linking in with the existing fitness trail, lookout site, Botanic Gardens and Museum. This track is to be designed to a level 3 walking track according to the AS 2156.1-2001 Australian Walking Track Standards (see Schedule 1).

27. This dual use track will provide a safe crossing of intersecting roads (Lord Baden Powell Drive and Leavenworth Drive). This may involve a bicycle lane along Captain Cook Drive and bicycle lanes on Leavenworth Drive and Lord Baden Powell Drive.
28. The fitness track will be upgraded to an Australian Walking track standard level 2 track (AS 2156.1-2001 Standards Australia). This will require topdressing and compaction of the existing track to provide a smoother surface.
29. Council will investigate the feasibility of developing a downhill mountain bike course in the area shown on Map 2. Council will liaise and work with the downhill mountain bike community to plan and manage mountain bike riding in the Park. An agreement between MTB Wagga Wagga and Wagga Wagga City Council should be formalised in terms of a licence agreement under section 102 of the Crown Lands Act, 1989 to allow MTB Wagga to manage and review annually the mountain bike tracks on behalf of Council.
30. Mountain bike events are permitted within the Park. Spectator vehicles are to use designated parking areas only.
31. Council will investigate the feasibility of developing a BMX track in the area shown on Map 2. This will be designed for youth activity.

# WILLANS HILL PARK - Map 2 Proposed Management



### 5.2.7 Manage utility use within the Park

32. Vehicle access to utilities is to be maintained.
33. Any new buildings or facilities within the Park will be assessed by Council for visual and environmental impacts on the values of the Park. Consideration will be given to possible co-location with existing facilities and the impacts of associated developments such as access roads and firebreaks.
34. Existing communication providers and any new proponents must be granted consent by the Department of Lands and enter into a direct licence with the Department of Lands under section 34A of the Crown Lands Act, 1989.

### 5.2.8 Resolve land tenure complexities of the Park

35. Council to liaise with the Department of Lands on the feasibility of Captain Cook Drive and Lord Baden Powell Drive being dedicated as Council roads with a road easement (except the section of Captain Cook Drive proposed to be closed).
36. All communication towers on Crown Reserves will be licensed by the Department of Lands in terms of Section 34A of the Crown Lands Act, 1989. This will occur regardless of the community nature of the tower facility consistent with all such installations across the state.

## 6. Implementation Plan

The following actions will be undertaken according to their timeframe. These actions will be used as a basis for future budget consideration and provide the specific direction for operational works plans.

Table 1. Management Actions

Management Action	Activity No.	Timeframe
Investigate the zoning of Willans Hill Park as environmental protection with a high scenic value according to the Wagga Wagga Local Environmental Plan	12	2009
All management tracks will be gated and locked to restrict public vehicle access	14	2009
Install strategic fencing at all locations which currently allow public vehicle access onto Willans Hill Park	17	2009
A brochure on environmental management including weed escapes from neighbouring households will be developed and distributed to surrounding suburbs	5	2010
Council to liaise with the Department of Lands on the feasibility of Captain Cook Drive and Lord Baden Powell Drive being dedicated as Council roads with a road easement (except the section of Captain Cook Drive proposed to be closed)	35	2010
Investigate the potential closure and rehabilitation of selected informal tracks	3	2010
Close the southern end of Captain Cook Drive.	16	2009
Council will investigate the feasibility of developing a downhill mountain bike course in the area shown on Map 2. Council will liaise and work with the downhill mountain bike community to plan and manage mountain bike riding in the Park	30	2010



Council will investigate the feasibility of developing a BMX track in the area shown on Map 2. This will be designed for youth activity.	32	2010
Existing fire management trails will be reviewed to ensure that they are effectively located for fire management, access to utilities and other management purposes. Reducing soil erosion will be considered in the review.	9	2010
A fire management plan is to be prepared for the Park which protects assets and enhances the natural biodiversity.	8	2011
Provide appropriate carparking for users of Willans Hill Park.	15	2010
The existing equipment on the fitness trail will be removed and upgraded.	25	2010
Develop the lookout consistent with the concept site plan (Figure 1). The lookout will also provide access to walking tracks, mountain bike tracks and the fitness track.	10	2010
Upgrade existing tracks to create a dual use (bike and walking) track along the ridge line of Willans Hill, linking in with the existing fitness trail, lookout site, Botanic Gardens and Museum. This track is to be designed to a level 3 walking track according to the AS 2156.1-2001 Australian Walking Track Standards (see Schedule 1).	27	2012
The fitness track will be upgraded to an Australian Walking track standard level 2 track (AS 2156.1-2001 Standards Australia). This will require topdressing and compaction of the existing track to provide a smoother surface.	29	2012
Interpretation signage is to be provided at visitor nodes and carparks. Interpretation themes are to include: the history of the Park and Wagga Wagga, flora and fauna, salinity management and cultural heritage.	21	2012

## References

AS 2156.1-2001 (2001) Walking Tracks – Classification and signage (Standards Australia).

Greening Australia (1994). Introductory Plant Species List for Willans Hill

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Willans Hill Reserve Management Plan (1990). Wagga Wagga City Council

Willans Hill Reserve Draft Plan of Management (2003). McCrone. Wagga Wagga City Council.

StratCorp Consulting Pty Ltd 2005, *Recreation and Open Space Strategy (2005 – 2015)*. Prepared for Wagga Wagga City Council (2005).

Wagga Wagga Natural Resource Management Plan (draft). Wagga Wagga City Council.

Go Green Services 2002, *Wiradjuri Heritage Study (2002)*. Prepared for Wagga Wagga City Council.

## **Schedule 1. Australian Walking track Standards**

AS 2156.1-2001 (Standards Australia)

1: path - easy – all access, hard surface, no steps, wheelchair accessible; high safety; suitable all ages/difficulty

2: walk – easy well surfaced track; some steps; few difficulties; high safety level; suited to all ages but care with children

3: track – moderate – distinct track with steep and rough sections. Steps and some difficulties; moderate safety; suited to people who walk occasionally

4: track-hard – distinct track with long steep and rough sections; many steps and stairs and/or frequent difficulties; low to moderate safety level; suited to regular walkers

5: route – hard – rough unformed track; steep with frequent difficulties; minimal signage and low safety level; experienced bushwalkers only

6: route – unmarked and unmodified route with frequent obstacles; dependence on navigation