Sydney Local Health District last night reiterated its promise that public access to the Yaralla Estate at Concord would not change once the NSW Mounted Police moved onto the site this year.

At a public meeting at the Concord RSL club, the District’s Chief Executive Dr Teresa Anderson told residents the public would still be free to visit horses on the site at any time – and enjoy the beautiful grounds left to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital by Dame Eadith Walker.

She confirmed the District was committed to ensuring land on the Yaralla Estate continued to be used for horse agistment purposes, in keeping with The Walker Trust Act of 1938, and that no development of the site would occur.

Last night’s meeting was called by residents after the current lessee, who sublets agistment rights to other horse owners, was asked to vacate the site by 31 May due to significant breaches of the lease agreement.

It is part of the lease agreement that the site be maintained to an acceptable standard to ensure the horses and land are cared for appropriately.

Dr Anderson said the District had received complaints last year that two horses were found on Concord Hospital’s helipad and one in a neighbour’s backyard, posing a serious risk.

An independent audit then found the land and fencing to be in such a poor condition that the safety of the public and horses was at risk.

It also found the property was overstocked (33 horses instead of a maximum of 28); there was evidence of fireweed and significant erosion, illegal trenching, little to no fertilisation, a lack of water in troughs and metal rubbish in the paddocks posing a safety risk to the horses.

“We were very happy to attend last night’s meeting to dispel many of the myths that have been circulating in the community over this decision because, while we understand owners will have to find new places to keep their horses, we also believe this is a decision which will benefit the entire community,” Dr Anderson said.

“The NSW Mounted Police Unit is very excited to be moving to Concord and wants to embrace this community.
“They have already said they will hold up to four open days a year, in addition to a Christmas event, to showcase their work and they are very happy for the public to visit their horses at any time during daylight hours,” she said.

“Let me assure you that access will not change. The Yaralla Estate will continue to be open for the enjoyment of the public, but it is important to remember that this is a health facility, consistent with The Walker Act,” Dr Anderson said.

“The Walker family was aware that when patients are cared for in a facility with beautiful grounds, it greatly assists their recovery and rehabilitation.”

For more information please call the Sydney Local Health District Media Unit on 9515 9607.