



DOGS, PEOPLE, AND PARKS

A REVIEW OF DOG OFF- LEASH AREAS

prepared by



in conjunction with



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the review

The review of council's 2007 dog off-leash policy was undertaken to identify if there was a need and opportunity to modify existing provision for dogs off-leash in Bayside parks and on beaches.

The review considered the type and location of dog off-leash areas how well access to these areas caters for community needs. The project also considered strategies to accommodate dog off-leash activities in areas where there are environmental sensitivities, and where restricted access may be required to ensure dog off-leash activities are well integrated with other parkland activities.

Regimes necessary to manage dog off-leash areas, and opportunities for council to work more closely with the community to optimise opportunities for dog owners and their pets were also explored.

1.2 The benefits and challenges associated with of dog off-leash areas

Dog off-leash areas means dogs can engage in extended and vigorous physical activity through free running, ball play and, chasey activities with other dogs and with family members. They can do this regardless of the age or mobility of their owners. Off-leash areas also allow dogs to interact and socialise with other dogs and people. Well-exercised and well-socialised dogs are less likely to exhibit anti-social behaviours, such as barking that can result from or fear or shyness because of a lack of interaction with other dogs and people.

In particular, dog off-leash areas bring people together where conversations and friendships are established because of a common interest in the pet dog. Popular dog off-leash areas encourage people into the out of doors because there is a sense of safety and security due to the number of people congregating in the one area. They also add to the diversity of affordable recreation activities available for residents. In addition, they allow apartment dwellers or people living on small allotments to have canine companions

Council recognises the benefits of pet ownership and providing dog off-leash areas is a way it can support pet ownership. However, Council acknowledges a number of challenges associated with dog off-leash areas, a number of which were highlighted by both dog owners and non-dog owners through the review.

The following highlight some of the issues that may arise in relation to dog off-leash areas. Many of these matters can be addressed by appropriate management and through dog owner education, and many are rare occurrences.

Dog owners or walkers not picking up after their dogs and allowing their dogs to impose on other park users, other dogs and activities, are generally the key points raised in relation to dog off-leash areas. Inappropriate dogs being brought to the dog off-leash areas (e.g. entire dogs, restricted breeds, dogs that are too young, and unvaccinated dogs), and in the case of fenced dog off-leash areas (e.g. sports grounds) degradation of the ground surface. The possibility of dog bites is an issue of concern for dog owners and councils however they are a rare occurrence given the number of dogs using these areas.

In addition, the community often has an expectation that Animal management Officers should monitor these areas more often, which has significant budget implications particularly if there are a number of dog off-leash areas.

1.3 How the review was undertaken

The Review of Dog Off-leash Areas builds on the research and outcomes from the 2007 review and research from other allied council service planning documents. Council has recently completed a draft Open Space Strategy, which makes a number of recommendations relating to dog off-leash areas. These recommendations together with relevant information obtained as part

of the review of the Domestic Animal Management Plan has been addressed in the review. The following consultation is particularly relevant to the Review of Dog Off-leash Areas:

- Two community forums (42 people)
- A community survey (473 respondents)
- 41 submissions (including submissions received as part of the Domestic Animal Management Plan)
- Council staff workshops and interviews
- Consultation with adjoining councils
- Liaison with the Department of Primary Industries.

1.4 Legislation relevant to the project

The Victorian Domestic Animals Act (1994) provides council with the scope to create policy relating to domestic animals. Particularly relevant to this review is the scope the Act gives Council in relation animals in public places. Under the Act¹ Council may prohibit or restrict the presence of dogs in parks and reserves public place, require leashing and put in place any other requirements it deems necessary to appropriately manage animals in public places.

Council's local laws requires dog owners to have their dogs on a leash other than in designated off-leash areas, to effectively control their dog. The local law also requires dogs to be on leash within 20 metres of a playground, sporting game, picnic area, or the boundary of an on-leash area.

1.5 Demographic information

The estimated 2011 population for Bayside is 94,386 with the population expected to increase by 2,098 to 96,484 by 2016³.

The number of 'couple households' without dependents will have the greatest increase (approximately 2,000) together with lone person households (approximately 1,300) between 2006 and 2021.

Households most typically associated with high pet ownership are couples with children followed by lone parent households, the number of which is not forecast to increase significantly in Bayside over this time. As a result the number of dogs is unlikely to increase significantly in the near future.

Type of household	% of households owning pets ²			
	Dogs	Cats	Other pets	All Pets
Married couple with dependants	49	32.9	37	74
Other married couple	37.3	25.7	21.5	59.4
Lone parent with dependants	41.1	29.5	18.9	62.2
Lone person aged less than 35	18.9	7.9	8.4	30.2
Lone person aged 60 or more	15.8	15.4	9.3	32.3
All household family types	37.5	26.7	24.5	59.2

Based on the 2011/12 pet registrations there were 11,970 dogs residing in 31% of Bayside households. Based on animal registrations, there has been a 4.1% (481) increase in the number of dogs in Bayside, with half this increase (244) increase occurring in the last 12 months. This compares with a 4.8% increase in the dog population across the outer east councils in the same period.⁴

A dog population of 11,970 represents approximately 12.7 dogs for every 100 residents, which is slightly higher than the Victoria wide estimated dog ownership of approximately 12.2 dogs per 100 people⁵.

¹ Domestic Animals Act, 1994, Part 3, Section 26(2)

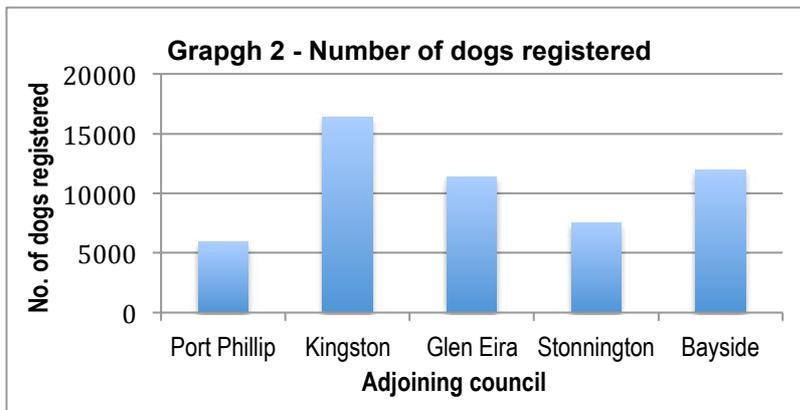
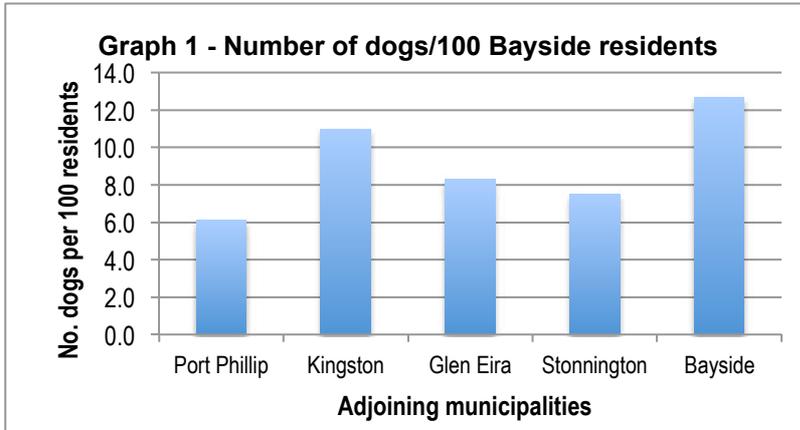
² ABS, 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 1995

³ forecast2.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=107&pg=5170

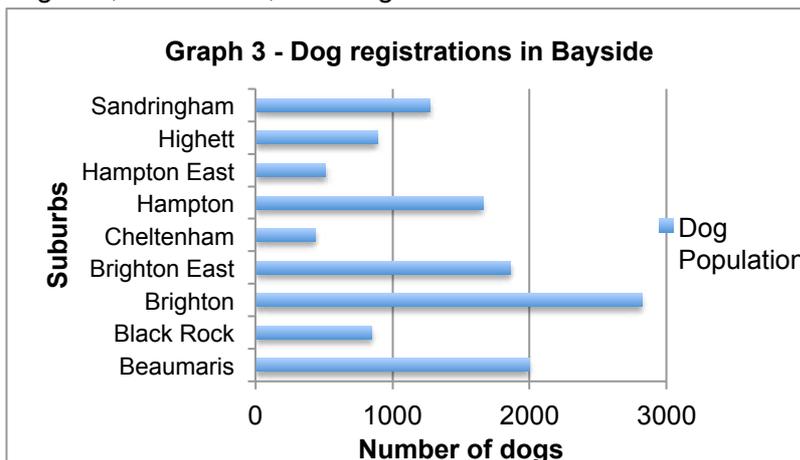
⁴ Data supplied by the Department of Primary Industries)

⁵ Based on data provided by the Department of Primary Industries (Animal levy records) and population data, ABS, 3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, Sep 2011

Graph 3 and 4 are based on the available comparative data (2010/11) and shows that in 2010/11 Bayside had more dogs per 100 residents (12.7) than adjoining municipalities (Port Phillip, and the second highest population of dogs overall.



Graph 3 shows that according to dog registrations the largest dog populations in Bayside are in Brighton, Beaumaris, and Brighton East



2. Open Space and dog off-leash areas

The City of Bayside has 453⁶ hectares of open space, including beaches, which equates to 4.8 hectares per 1,000 people. This is less than the median of 5.8 hectares per 1,000 people for the 29 councils within the Urban Growth Boundary⁷. Compared to adjoining municipalities Bayside has more open space than Glen Eira (1.4 hectares/1000 people) and the City of Port Phillip (4.3 hectares/1000 people) but less than the City of Kingston (5.2 hectares/1000 people).

Only 10 of the councils within the Urban Growth Boundary have less open space per head of population than Bayside.

This means that dog off-leash activities compete for space with council's other open space priorities and requires that many dog off-leash areas have to be on sports fields.

2.1 Summary of dog off-leash areas

There are 18 parks in Bayside that have areas designated for dog off-leash activities. In addition there are 16 beaches on which dogs are allowed leash free. Seasonal restrictions apply to most beaches apart from the 3 all year round dog off-leash beaches and Hampton Beach/Lifesaving Club beaches where dogs are not permitted at any time of the year.

Suburb	Name Of Park / Beach	Off-leash access summary
BEAUMARIS	Balcombe Park Bushland Reserve	DOL (24/7) unfenced areas only. Prohibited in fenced areas.
	Banksia Reserve	DOL (24/7)
	Beaumaris Foreshore Quiet Corner	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Beaumaris Foreshore South Charman Road to Moysey Gardens	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Donald MacDonald Reserve	DOL (24/7)
	Gramatan Avenue Heathland Sanctuary	DOL (24/7) unfenced areas only. Prohibited in fenced areas.
	Long Hollow Heathland	DOL (24/7) unfenced areas only. Prohibited in fenced areas.
	Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Watkins Bay Beach	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
BLACK ROCK	Black Rock Beach	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Black Rock Gardens	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Black Rock South Foreshore	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Half Moon Bay Beach	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Half Moon Bay Foreshore	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
BRIGHTON	Brighton Beach	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Dendy Street Beach	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.

⁶ Draft Bayside Open Space Strategy, 2012

⁷ Melbourne Metropolitan Investigation Discussion Paper, Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

	Elsternwick Park	Part DOL (24/7)
	Middle Brighton Beach	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	Sandown Street Beach	DOL (24/7)
	William Street Reserve	DOL (24/7)
BRIGHTON EAST	Dendy Park	Part DOL (24/7)
	Hurlingham Park	DOL (24/7)
CHELTENHAM	Cheltenham Park	DOL (24/7)
HAMPTON	Hampton Beach	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.
	R.J. Sillitoe	DOL (24/7)
	Sandringham Harbour	DOL (24/7)
	W.L. Simpson Reserve	DOL (24/7)
HAMPTON EAST	N/A	N/A
HIGHETT	Lyle Anderson Reserve	DOL (24/7)
SANDRINGHAM	Bay Road Heathland Sanctuary	DOL (24/7) unfenced areas only. Prohibited in fenced areas.
	George Street Bushland Reserve	DOL (24/7) unfenced areas only. Prohibited in fenced areas.
	Merindah Park	DOL (24/7)
	R.G. Chisolm Reserve	Part DOL (24/7)
	Royal Avenue Park	Part DOL (24/7)
	Sandringham Beach	DOL (24/7) between 1 April - 31 October. DOL (early AM and late PM only) during 1 November – 31 March.

3. Discussion and recommendations

3.1 Access to dog off-leash areas

Project feedback⁸ shows that dog off-leash areas are a valued community asset. Seventy-eight percent of project survey respondents only use dog off-leash areas within Bayside and do not travel or walk to dog off-leash areas elsewhere.

Anecdotal feedback from project respondents indicates residents are walking their dogs off-leash in local on-leash parks, as opposed to parks further afield because they do not require car travel and walking great distances.

Overall only 21% of all survey respondents, including 19% of dog owners and 25% of non-dog owners think there are enough dog off-leash areas in Bayside 19%.

A number of submissions were received prior to the project⁹ and during the project requesting that Castlefield Reserve be designated as a dog off-leash park when sport and school activities were not taking place.

Resident's access to off-leash parks in the area was restricted at the time as a nearby park,

Survey respondents living in the Beaumaris/Black Rock/Cheltenham areas are likely to be more satisfied with the number of dog off-leash areas than respondents from other areas.

Ref: DAM Plan Survey, 2012

Dog owners from older families (74%) and those that reside in coastal suburbs (72%), particularly Hampton (76%), are likely to use dog off-leash areas more frequently than those from inland suburbs (51%).

Ref: DAM Plan Survey, 2012

⁸ Community survey, Domestic Animal Management Plan, 2011/12

⁹ Petitions to Council, 2011

Sillitoe, was closed for a major upgrade. Sillitoe has now been reinstated as a dog off-leash park. Additional sporting activities have recently been allocated to the reserve, which will result in a significant increase in use for training and competition activities. Council will monitor the reserve for 18 months before it considers the introduction of any additional activities, including dog off-leash activities.

In addition, Castlefield is the only significant reserve for the residential catchment to the southwest, west and northwest of the reserve. As a result it has to cater for a wide range of sport and recreation activities.

Hampton East emerged as an area where consideration should be given to the provision of a dog off-leash park. There is no dog off-leash park in the suburb and residents do not have easy access to dog off-leash sites in other suburbs. The draft Open Space Strategy also highlighted the need to identify a site for dogs off-leash in Hampton East.

Submissions to the project reinforced the need for the same open space planning principles to be applied to the provision of dog off-leash areas. Open sites that allow for good casual surveillance and therefore encourage use by key dog owning demographics such as families, children and older people, are important siting and provision considerations. Lyle Anderson Reserve was cited as a reserve that does not encourage extensive dog off-leash use because the area designated for dogs is secluded because it is surrounded by the rail line, backyard fences and factories.

In 2011 Council commissioned the Open Space Strategy to provide a framework for the planning of open space. The draft strategy recognises the importance of dog off-leash areas but also highlights the diverse range of activities competing for access to the city's limited open space. The strategy makes particular reference to the need to:

- review dog off-leash access to bushland areas, particularly Beaumaris foreshore, Gramatan Avenue Heathland Sanctuary, Long Hollow Heathland, Ricketts Point, Bay Road Heathland and George Street Bushland Reserve
The need to review the type of access for dogs to some of these areas was also raised in the previous dog off-leash review.
- identify opportunities to make provision, or additional provision, for dogs off-leash in Brighton (6 existing dog off-leash areas), Cheltenham (1 existing dog off-leash area) and Hampton East (no existing dog off-leash areas)

There was strong support at community forums for dog off-leash access to some local parks early in the morning. This was also supported by written comments from 26% of pet owners responding to the project survey. Early mornings are seen as a time when there is minimal use of local parks and therefore a time when there is likely to be little or no conflict with other park users. It is also a popular time for dog walkers, particularly those who work.

Similarly, daytime when parks are not being used for other activities was seen as an opportunity to provide opportunities for people such as at-home mums, and older people who cannot access dog off-leash parks further afield due to mobility challenges.

Feedback through the project indicates a demand for a more visual presence by local laws officers in dog off-leash areas to increase compliance by dog owners' to leash bylaws. Increasing the number of dog off-leash areas will require additional resources to monitor these bylaws in line with community expectations. Therefore any increase in dog off-leash areas should consider opportunities to address gaps in provision as the first priority.

Recommendations

1. Review provision of dog off-leash areas in Hampton East and Highett.
2. Trial early morning dog off-leash access at 1-2 parks from 6.00 am to 8.00 am. This only to be implemented after the development of protocols and community based education and liaison group. The group would be responsible for promoting responsible pet ownership behaviours among dog owners.

3. Monitor the impact of additional sporting activities (competition and training) at Castlefield Reserve for 18 months and then review dog off leash options.
4. Review the need to alter current dog off-leash access provision to bushland and nature reserves /areas.
5. Develop a policy/guidelines relating to dog off-leash access to sensitive bushland areas.

3.2 Dog litter management

The issue of greatest concern to survey respondents is that of dog litter. Sixty-five per cent of all survey respondents are concerned about dog owners not picking up after their dogs. Non-pet owners (90% of non-pet survey respondents) are likely to be particularly concerned about this issue, however 58% of pet owners also stated this issue was a concern to them.

This was a significant issue raised during consultation for a recent Elsternwick Park project¹⁰ and has been identified by independent auditors in council's Sports Ground Risk Management Audit identified as risk management issue. The audit recommends that sports clubs check grounds prior to sporting activities, which places an additional responsibility on clubs.

'Dog faeces is a problem at many of the sports grounds where dog access is permitted'

Ref: Sports Ground Risk Management Audit, BCC

2006 research indicates that dog owners have become more committed to picking up their dog's litter. In 2006 64% of owners reported that they 'always' picked up their dog's litter and 15% 'never' did so. This compares to 1994 when only 33% stated they always picked up their dog's litter and 42% who did not¹¹.

Council provides litterbag dispensers at 25 parks and beaches. Survey respondents strongly support the ongoing provision of litterbags, with 87% of pet owners and 56% of non-pet owners supporting this service. This issue prompted a number of written comments with 22% of dog owners supporting the continuation or an increase of the service.

Of note are the findings that 24% of dog owners say they rely on dog litterbags being available in parks. This is despite council's requirement that dog owners carry a litter disposal device when walking their dogs. An additional 51% of dog owners say they do not rely on them but they use them. Thirty-three per cent of non-dog owners and 6% of dog owners do not believe council should provide this service. This indicates a significant level of support for the provision of litterbag dispensers and litterbins.

There was an even stronger level of support for the provision of bins for the disposal of dog litter (89% of survey respondents supported the provision of bins for the disposal of dog litter, including 75% of non-dog owners and 94 %of dog owners - DAM Plan survey, Jan 2012).

The need for ongoing provision of dog litterbags and litter disposal bins was reinforced at community forums, with survey comments indicating support for continuation or increase of the service.

Of 22 councils responding to an industry survey in 2011¹², 13 (59%) provide litterbag dispensers and state they will continue to do this. Eight councils (36%) do not provide this facility, 4 of which stated they did in the past but have now removed them, and 1 council is considering removing them.

Recommendations

6. Retain the provision of litterbag dispensers at parks where they are currently installed but review the appropriateness of their location in relation to dog off leash areas and park entries/exits.
7. *Explore the need for dog litterbag dispensers and rubbish bin policy and/or procedures.

¹⁰ Sharing Elsternwick Park – People Pets and Play, 2010

¹¹ 2007 National People And Pets Survey

¹² paws4play survey of 22 industry professionals

8. Explore opportunities for a community education and awareness program to:
 - reinforce Council's local law that requires dog walkers to carry a device for picking up dog litter, and to pick up after their dog
 - develop strategies to address dog litter issues (with the support of dog walkers and owners).

3.3 Signage and information

Residents attending the community forums and survey respondents identify a need to more clearly communicate dog off-leash areas. Only 35% of dog owners and 14% of non-pet owners said dog off-leash boundaries were easy to identify. Thirty-seven percent of dog owners said foreshore signage about off-leash areas was confusing, which was reinforced by attendees at forums.

Council local laws staff report challenges associated with enforcing off-leash requirements on beaches and associated foreshore areas. This is primarily because of the number of off-leash zones along the coastline, the lack of appropriate signage, and the perception by dog owners that off-leash provision applies to car parks and bushland areas and trails areas adjoining off-leash beaches.

Discussion with staff from adjoining councils indicates similar challenges associated with signage in foreshore areas and the benefits to be derived from an industry/local government approach to signage in these areas.

Council has a hard copy brochure available from council offices that indicates dog off-leash parks and beaches. Attendees at community forums requested that this brochure be made available for download from council's website and include more detailed information about dog off-leash areas. Feedback from an adjoining council indicates the benefits associated with site maps that clearly outline dog off-leash areas, particularly in terms of customer service and compliance activities on site.

Council's recently completed dog off-leash strategy for Elsternwick Park identifies a number of strategies for defining dog off-leash areas including better signage, the use of plantings to define dog off-leash areas and brochures that define dog off-leash areas.

A recent survey of parks and animal management officers from 23 councils identified an interest in an industry wide approach to demarcation of dog off-leash areas using landscape design. This was seen as a preference to relying heavily of signage, which impacts visually on the park and adds to asset maintenance costs.

Research undertaken for the preparation of the Domestic Animal Management identifies opportunities to expand the information available online for pet owners, this also applied to information about dog off-leash areas.

Recommendations

9. Consider the opportunity to minimise the number of different dog off-leash zones/consolidate zones on beaches.
10. Review the placement of signage and where necessary install additional signage to optimise awareness of dog off-leash zones and requirements (e.g. Quiet Corner, Ricketts Point)
11. Update the dog off-leash brochure and include an online version suitable for download.
12. Develop dog off-leash signage guidelines for beaches and adjoining foreshore areas. Ideally this could be undertaken with adjoining municipalities to implement a 'common' approach to foreshore signage.
13. Develop dog off-leash area 'demarcation' guidelines (involving signage and landscaping treatments) for inland parks and reserves. Ideally this could be undertaken through the Australian Institute of Animal Management and/or Parks and Leisure Australia and to develop and implement a universal approach.

3.4 Sports grounds

The popularity of some dog off-leash areas, particularly those located on sports grounds, presents a number of challenges. Intense dog off-leash activity on some sports grounds has required refurbishment that is additional to that normally required as part of a regular maintenance routine for a sports ground. Generally more intense use of sporting grounds by dogs occurs where sports grounds are fully fenced. These grounds also attract additional use associated with commercial dog walkers, which further adds to the wear on the grounds.



Council maintenance staff report increased wear and tear because of dog activities at popular sports grounds. Council has to be in a position to protect, as far as possible, sporting grounds for their primary use primary use of sport and this may require restricting dog off-leash as well as other activities periodically. If this is the case then, where possible, council can work with the community to identify alternative short-term dog off-leash options. It has to be understood that alternatives may not provide for the same type and level of dog off-leash activity and it may not be possible to provide an alternative in close proximity to the original site.

Commercial dog walkers use some sporting grounds extensively, which further impacts on the condition of the playing fields. Anecdotal information indicates that use of sports fields by commercial dog walkers is increasing and there is a need to work with them to manage their use to minimise impacts on other users and activities.

The use of sports grounds for the walking of dogs, and in particular dog off-leash activities creates a number of challenges.

Some sporting clubs report that some dog walkers allow dogs to interrupt sporting games and training activities. Dog walkers who do not manage their dogs appropriately in these environments, and who fail to pick up dog droppings have influenced community perceptions, at times unfairly in regards to responsible dog owners.

Anecdotal feedback during the project indicates that dog off leash activities prevent casual after school and weekend activities on the sports grounds by children and families. It also reveals that some dog owners have not been considerate of council's annual grounds maintenance works by allowing their dogs in areas that have been cordoned off. Responsible dog owners need to work with council to minimise inappropriate actions by other dog owners that stand to undermine opportunities for dogs.

Alternative fenced provision for dog off-leash activities can be considered for areas where there is limited space. This may assist to alleviate pressure on fenced sporting ovals currently used for dog off-leash activities. The previous Domestic Animal Management Plan and the new draft plan recommends that consideration be given to the provision of fenced dog off-leash areas.

Recommendations

14. Examine the level of use by commercial dog walkers of on open space areas, particularly sports grounds, assess the impact and prepare guidelines/policy to manage future access.
15. Develop strategies to demonstrate how Bayside will support dog owners in using open space, and what the expectations on dog owners are when using open space.
This will include strategies to address possible conflicts between dogs and children, cyclists, older/frail/disabled people, sporting surfaces, native flora and fauna and dogs.
16. Develop a set of criteria that triggers the reduction or removal of activities, including dog off-leash activities, from sports grounds to maintain condition of sports playing surfaces.
17. Consider opportunities to provide dedicated fenced dog off-leash activity areas.

3.5 Responsible Dog Ownership and Partnerships

There is likely to be a significant disparity between dog owners and non-dog owners perception about owners' control of their dogs. Anecdotal comments by people comfortable in the presence of dogs in parks often indicates a lack of appreciation of the right of others to have a dog free experience if they choose.

This perception is borne out in the project survey where only 22% of non-dog owners feel dog owners are responsible and control their dogs compared to 87% of dog owners. Seventy-three percent (73%) of non-dog owners are concerned about owners not controlling their dogs, and in particular annoying other people (69%). This compares to only 26% of dog owners being concerned about owners not controlling their dogs, and 12% concerned about dogs annoying other people.

Of note is the survey response indicating that a significant number of dog owners (21%) are concerned about dogs annoying other dogs. This compares to 31% of non-dog owners.

Feedback from the sports forum, submissions received as part of the project and through council staff shows that community sport is frequently being interrupted by dogs being allowed to run through both competition and training activities. Fifty-six per cent (56%) of non-dog owners responding to the survey raised this as an area of concern, compared to 5% of dog owners.

Twenty-seven percent (27%) of non-pet owners made a point of making additional comments about their perceptions that many dog owners 'do not do the right thing' in terms of controlling their dogs, not picking up after their dogs, or not being considerate of the rights of others. This compares to 6% of pet owners.

Research quoted in the Journal of Applied Psychology identifies the failure to pick up dog litter provokes more community ire than littering, illegally parking a car, and graffiti.¹³ A survey by the Center for Watershed Protection in the USA 1999 found that 41% of respondents will rarely or never clean up after their dogs, and men are less likely to do this than women. Of these, 44% would refuse to do so in the face of fines and neighbours' complaints.¹⁴ This indicates the challenge that this issues presents for local government.

'Living Well Together'¹⁵ cites the 'Watch Dog' initiative established by Sydney City Council, which has proved successful because it involves trained volunteers to assist in community education programs aimed at addressing dog litter issues.

Of particular note from research carried out for the Domestic Animal Management Plan is the difference between dog owners and non-pet owners in relation to penalties for continued disregard of dog off-leash regulations. Only 35% of dog-owners felt continued disregard of regulations should attract a penalty compared to 81% of non-pet owners.

Feedback indicates that some dog owners are flagrantly ignoring dog on-leash regulations, which makes it difficult for Council and responsible pet owners to advocate for additional dog off-leash areas. This is particularly highlighted in the case of the Cheltenham Golf Course. In this area a number of dog owners ignore requests from council staff and golf course management to not walk on fairways and greens and to keep dogs on leash. Golf course staff have been bitten by dogs off-leash and have found dogs wandering off-leash through the grounds and buildings.

Consideration can be given to developing dog owner and dog etiquette guidelines. This should be done in conjunction with the community and will provide written material that can be handed out by council staff as well as by residents to their fellow dog owners.

The draft Domestic Animal Management Plan recommends that Council give consideration to responsible pet ownership initiatives that complement programs sponsored by the Bureau of Animal Welfare to enhance responsible pet outcomes. Initiatives that improve dog-owner and dog behaviours in off-leash areas should be considered as part of future community education and

¹³ www.spring.org.uk/2008/06/would-you-ask-someone-to-pick-up-their.php

¹⁴ www.stormwatercenter.net; Reference: Journal Applied Social Psychology, (Chaurand & Brauer, 2008); www.sciencedirect.com)

¹⁵ Living Well Together, Petcare Information Advisory Service

information programs. These programs should involve related community networks such as vets, dog obedience clubs, professional trainers, and pre-schools and schools.

Recommendations

18. Explore the development of a pet network/liason group to work with council to develop and implement strategies to address pet related issues.
19. Community education and awareness program introduced to:
 - reinforce Council's local law that requires dog walkers to carry a device for picking up dog litter, and to pick up after their dog
 - develop strategies to address dog litter issues (with the support of dog walkers and owners).
20. Liaise with the management of the Cheltenham Golf Course, the proposed pet liaison, and local dog walkers to ensure responsible behaviour of dog owners in and around the Cheltenham Golf Course.
21. Consider the development of dog owner / dog etiquette guidelines.
22. Promote the benefits of dog training and encourage attendance at dog obedience training.
23. Put in place targeted education and enforcement campaigns in conjunction with groups such as local sporting clubs, sporting associations, vets, schools, sporting reserve committees of management.

4. Challenges

Overall, Bayside residents have access to a comparable number of dog off-leash areas as residents in adjoining municipalities. It is difficult to make a direct comparison, particularly in relation to off-leash beach access because of variations in access times. The difficulty in establishing the area dedicated to dog off-leash activities in each municipality provides a further challenge. Residents in some Bayside suburbs have access to more dog off-leash areas than other residents.

The Dog Off-leash Review and the Open Space Strategy recognises the provision of dog off-leash areas varies across the city. This is in part due to the lack of open space and the demands placed on it for a diverse range of needs.

Because open space is at a premium in Bayside, parks and foreshore areas have to provide for a multiplicity of sport, recreation, and environmental needs. This requires council to find ways to accommodate often-competing demands for access to open space. Some of these demands can be met with appropriate management regimes, however because of the nature of some activities it is difficult to co-locate or mix activities.

In the case of dog off-leash areas location and management challenges arise in relation to environmental areas, sports grounds, children's play spaces, trails, and social areas such as picnic grounds.

Enhancing dog owners' awareness of their responsibilities in relation to their dogs' behaviour and the social and physical boundaries that apply is a significant challenge for Council. This will require a united approach from pet related networks in the community to help reinforce responsible and respectful management of dogs in public spaces.

There are conflicting community expectations in relation to the monitoring of compliance with leash regulations by council's local laws officers. Some residents expect council animal management officers to apply local laws strictly while others do not see that the law should be applied strictly. Managing community expectations and at the same time needing to comply with legislation and local laws is an ongoing challenge for council's animal management officers.

5. Summary of Recommendations

Access to dog off-leash areas

1. Review provision of dog off leash areas in Hampton East and Highett.
2. Trial early morning dog off leash access at 1-2 parks from 6.00 am to 8.00 am. This only to be implemented after the development of protocols and community based education and liaison group. The group would be responsible for promoting responsible pet ownership behaviours among dog owners.
3. Monitor the impact of additional sporting activities (competition and training) at Castlefield Reserve for 18 months and then review dog off leash options.
4. Review the need to alter current dog off-leash access provision to bushland and nature reserves /areas.
5. Develop a policy/guidelines relating to dog off-leash access to sensitive bushland areas.

Dog litter management

6. Retain the provision of litterbag dispensers at parks where they are currently installed but review the appropriateness of their location in relation to dog off leash areas and park entries/exits.
7. *Explore the need for dog litterbag dispensers and rubbish bin policy and/or procedures.
8. Explore opportunities for a community education and awareness program to:
 - reinforce Council's local law that requires dog walkers to carry a device for picking up dog litter, and to pick up after their dog
 - develop strategies to address dog litter issues (with the support of dog walkers and owners).

Signage and information

9. Consider the opportunity to minimise the number of different dog off-leash zones/consolidate zones on beaches.
10. Review the placement of signage and where necessary install additional signage to optimise awareness of dog off-leash zones and requirements (e.g. Quiet Corner, Ricketts Point)
11. Update the dog off-leash brochure and include an online version suitable for download.
12. Develop dog off-leash signage guidelines for beaches and adjoining foreshore areas. Ideally this could be undertaken with adjoining municipalities to implement a 'common' approach to foreshore signage.
13. Develop dog off-leash area 'demarcation' guidelines (involving signage and landscaping treatments) for inland parks and reserves. Ideally this could be undertaken through the Australian Institute of Animal Management and/or Parks and Leisure Australia and to develop and implement a universal approach.

Sports grounds

14. Examine the level of use by commercial dog walkers of on open space areas, particularly sports grounds, assess the impact and prepare guidelines/policy to manage future access.
15. Develop strategies to demonstrate how Bayside will support dog owners in using open space, and what the expectations on dog owners are when using open space.
This will include strategies to address possible conflicts between dogs and children, cyclists, older/frail/disabled people, sporting surfaces, native flora and fauna and dogs.
16. Develop a set of criteria that triggers the reduction or removal of activities, including dog off-leash activities, from sports grounds to maintain condition of sports playing surfaces.
17. Consider opportunities to provide dedicated fenced dog off-leash activity areas.

Responsible Dog Ownership and Partnerships

18. Explore the development of a pet network/liaison group to work with council to develop and implement strategies to address pet related issues.
19. Community education and awareness program introduced to:
 - reinforce Council's local law that requires dog walkers to carry a device for picking up dog litter, and to pick up after their dog
 - develop strategies to address dog litter issues (with the support of dog walkers and owners).
20. Liaise with the management of the Cheltenham Golf Course, the proposed pet liaison, and local dog walkers to ensure responsible behaviour of dog owners in and around the Cheltenham Golf Course.
21. Consider the development of dog owner / dog etiquette guidelines.
22. Promote the benefits of dog training and encourage attendance at dog obedience training.
23. Put in place targeted education and enforcement campaigns in conjunction with groups such as local sporting clubs, sporting associations, vets, schools, sporting reserve committees of management.