



S H I R E O F



M E L T O N

**DRAFT**

# **PEOPLE DOGS AND PARKS STRATEGY**

**(DOG OFF-LEASH  
STRATEGY)**

**JULY 2011**

### **THE VISION FOR OPEN SPACE IN MELTON**

*A network of open space that contributes to the health and happiness of the community by encouraging activity, sociability, and connection to nature*

### **WHY COUNCIL MAKES PROVISION FOR DOG OWNERS AND THEIR COMPANION ANIMALS IN PARKS**

Council recognises the importance of companion animals to many Melton households and the physical, social, emotional and economic benefits they bring to individual and families.

It is for this reason that council will consider the needs of pet owners and opportunities to embrace them and their companion animals in the community, and support pet ownership where appropriate.

The People, Dogs, and Parks Strategy outlines council's strategy for accommodating residents and their companion dogs in parks and reserves.

<b>CLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>			
<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
On-leash areas	Areas where dogs have to be on a leash at all times	Dog carer/ walker	Refers to anyone responsible for the actions of a dog when it is in a park or reserve
Dog owner	The registered owner of the dog	Dog litter	Dog droppings or excrement
Dog parks	Dog off-leash areas that are fully enclosed / fenced	Off-leash areas	Areas where dogs are permitted to run off-leash but only if they are under effective control of their carer
Parks, reserves,	Areas of open space that include trails, linear reserves, sports fields, natural environments	Shared recreation zones	Areas where a number of recreation or social activities may occur e.g. walking, kite flying, dog walking
Short leash	A leash that is no longer then 1.8 metres		

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	4
1. Introduction .....	7
1.1 Why the need for a 'People, Dogs and Parks Strategy' .....	7
1.2 The difference between 'dog off-leash areas' and 'dog parks' .....	7
1.2.1 What are the possible benefits of dog parks? <b>NEW</b> .....	7
1.2.2 What are the possible downsides dog parks? <b>NEW</b> .....	8
2. The planning context.....	9
2.1 Dog owners.....	9
2.2 Recognising the benefits of pet ownership .....	9
2.3 Council's position on pets .....	10
2.4 Council planning and consultation .....	10
3. Considerations when planning for dog owners and their dogs in parks.....	12
3.1 Dog off-leash provision .....	12
3.2 Dog litter.....	13
3.3 Gathering places.....	15
3.4 Universal design .....	15
3.5 Fencing of dog off-leash areas .....	16
3.6 Play spaces, picnic and BBQ facilities .....	17
3.7 Sports fields and surrounding parkland .....	18
3.8 Waterways and wildlife corridors .....	18
3.9 Trails .....	19
3.10 Partnerships.....	19
3.11 Management and maintenance of dog off-leash areas.....	20
4. What is the state of play in the Shire of Melton?.....	21
4.1 The current situation .....	21
4.1.1 Dog ownership in Australia.....	21
4.1.2 Dog ownership in the Shire of Melton .....	21
4.1.3 Dog registrations in the Shire of Melton .....	22
4.1.4 Current policies and animal management services.....	22
4.2 The future.....	22
4.2.1 Projected dog numbers .....	22
4.2.2 Guiding principles.....	23
4.2.3 Our provision framework and rationale .....	25
4.2.4 Dog off-leash area provision and design considerations.....	28
5. Selection of trial dog off-leash sites .....	29
6. What will influence development priorities .....	31
7. Monitoring and reviewing of trial sites .....	32
8. Action Plan .....	33
9. Information Sheets.....	37
Information Sheet 1 - Analysis of short-listed sites for trial off-leash sites .....	37
Information Sheet 2 - Demographic summary .....	45
Information Sheet 3 - Literature review and references .....	47
Information Sheet 4 - References Summary.....	54
Information Sheet 5 - Industry consultation Summary .....	55
Information Sheet 6 - Resident consultation .....	63
Information Sheet 7 - Design guidelines for dog off-leash areas .....	68

## **Executive Summary**

The People Dogs and Parks Strategy provides a framework for evaluating opportunities to accommodate residents and their companion dogs in parks and reserves.

Residents with dogs comprise 30% of Melton households and these households are home to 14,456 companion dogs. It is estimated that by 2031 the Shire of Melton could be home to between 38,678 and 41,036 companion dogs.

Parks and reserves in Melton have to cater for the diverse range of sport and recreation needs. For many families being able to take their companion dog on outings to the local park and for walks along trails is an important recreation and social activity. There are however people in the community who do not want to encounter dogs when they visit parks and reserves.

The People Dog and Parks Strategy provides the framework for considering the needs of dog owners, as well as other residents, when planning and managing Melton's important and highly valued parks and reserves.

Fifty-seven percent of respondents to the household survey conducted as part of the project believe it is appropriate that dogs be allowed off-leash in designated parks, or designated sections of parks. Thirty-one percent of respondents believe dogs should only be allowed off-leash in fully fenced areas, and 11% stated they should not be allowed off-leash in parks at all.

A number of council planning documents, including the Domestic Animal Management Plan and work undertaken for the new Open Space Strategy, identify growing community demand for greater access to parks and reserves by residents with dogs.

Other planning documents identify the need for alternative recreation opportunities and activities that encourage greater levels of physical activity. Providing opportunities for residents with dogs can help council achieve these outcomes.

The People Dogs and Parks Strategy identifies options for designated dog off-leash areas and also 'dog parks', which are fully enclosed areas that are designated for residents with dogs.

Twelve parks or reserves are recommended for further consideration and consultation as sites to accommodate potential dog off-leash areas. Two of the sites, Navan Park in West Melton and Boronia Drive Reserve in Hillside are recommended as providing the best options for fully enclosed dog parks at this time. The sites are in:

### **Brookfield**

- Botanica Springs Linear Reserve, Brookfield Road to Blackdog Drive
- Black Dog Drive Linear Reserve - Arnolds Creek Linear Reserve to Blackdog Drive area

### **Hillside**

- Stoney Creek Linear Reserve - northern section of Caroline Springs and Hillside
- Boronia Drive Reserve
- Lauchlan's Field - northwest corner of Calder Park Drive and Melton Highway

### **Kurunjang**

- Black Knight Way Reserve

### **Melton**

- Hannah Watts Park - area west of the lake

### **Melton South**

- Mt Carberry Reserve
- Fraser Street Reserve

### **Melton West**

- Navan Park
- Arnolds Creek Linear Reserve - North-west of Navan Park
- West Melton Recreation Reserve

The strategy also provides a discussion of the key issues that need to be addressed when making provision for residents and their companion dogs in parks and reserves. The following recommendations are made to address the findings of the project:

**Priority 1 recommendations**

1. Consider the implementation of the trial dog off-leash sites recommended in section 5.
2. Proposed dog off-leash areas to be evaluated in line with the criteria contained in the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.
3. Future council budgets to consider the resources required to ensure dog off-leash areas are managed and maintained in accordance with desired open space and animal management service standards.
8. As part of council's community education and awareness program:
  - reinforce, through a focused information campaign, council's local law that requires dog walkers to carry a plastic bag / receptacle when walking a dog in a public place, and to pick up after their dog
  - adopt an educational approach, with the support of dog owners / walkers, to deal with the issue of dog litter.
9. Ensure dog off-leash areas are planned and designed in line with the provision framework contained in the Melton Open Space Strategy and the Dogs, People and Parks Strategy.
11. Promote council requirements relating to permits for use of parks and reserves for community and commercial activities.
12. Ensure universal design principles are applied to the planning and design of dog off-leash areas, including amenities such as accessible car parking, pathways and seating, and where appropriate, fencing and gateways.
13. That fencing of dog off-leash areas will generally only be considered:
  - where there is a need to provide a dog off-leash area but insufficient room to do this without using fencing
  - where there is a need to consider fencing as a risk management strategy e.g. near busy roads
  - when the area is a designated 'fenced dog park'
  - at 'district' and municipal' level sites only, that is not at parks classified as 'local' level parks
  - where provision is to be made for people with special needs.
14. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce council's General Local Law that requires dogs to be on a leash when outside designated dog off-leash areas.
15. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce council's General Local Law that requires dogs to be on a leash in and around sports fields unless the area is designated as a dog off-leash area, or unless a special permit has been granted.
16. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce that all sporting activities have precedence over dog off-leash activities on sports fields.
18. Council to consider dog off-leash activities along trails in line with the site evaluation criteria in People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.
19. Council to consider partnerships with residents, schools, commercial service providers and community groups that address issues and identify initiatives that result in positive outcomes for people and dogs in parks.

20. That the trial dog off-leash sites identified in section 5 of the strategy be monitored for a period of 8 months during which time the resourcing implications associated with these sites will be evaluated.

**Priority 2 recommendations**

4. Council to consider allocating funds to develop an education and information program to that focuses on responsible pet ownership in parks.
5. Work with local and regional providers of dog obedience training to:
  - encourage dog owners and their dogs into education programs
  - reinforce council requirements of dog owners in parks.
6. Council to consider a community – council partnership based on the Warringah Council 'Community Watch Dog project' to proactively deal with managing the issue of dog litter in parks. This would involve consideration of:
  - involving and training volunteers
  - providing litter bag dispensers that can be attached to dog leads
  - selling biodegradable plastic bags, or partner with other outlets to sell bags.

**Priority 3 recommendations**

7. Council to consider a joint council-schools initiative as part of council's responsible pet ownership program.
10. Encourage social gatherings and events for dog owners / walkers in appropriate dog off-leash areas, and the use of these areas by commercial service providers.
17. Council to consider the inclusion of water elements / environments in the planning of municipal level dog off-leash facilities.



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Why the need for a 'People, Dogs and Parks Strategy'

The People Dog and Parks Strategy has been developed to assist council plan for the needs of Melton dog owners who want to enjoy parks and reserves with their companion dogs.

**In March 2010 council resolved to develop a document that would guide the development of dog off-leash areas in the shire.**

The People Dog and Parks Strategy provides an explanation of council's position on pets, and why council considers it important to make provision for dog owners and their companion dogs in parks and reserves.

The strategy also provides an explanation of the issues that will be taken into account when deciding the type of access that will be granted to dogs in different park environments.

Parks and reserves in Melton have to cater for the diverse range of sport and recreation activities sought by Melton residents. For some residents this means recreating with their companion dog often in the company of family and friends, or through social or organised dog activity groups.

Council however recognises there are people in the community who do not want to encounter dogs when they visit parks and reserves. The People Dog and Parks Strategy provides the framework for considering the needs of dog owners, as well as other residents, when planning and managing Melton's important and highly valued parks and reserves.

Of the 257 people responding to the household survey

- 80% (205) own a dog
- 11% said dogs should be on a leash in parks

### 1.2 The difference between 'dog off-leash areas' and 'dog parks'

A dog off-leash area is a space in a park or reserve where dogs are permitted to run off-leash. Generally these areas are informally defined by signage or vegetation that provides a visual delineation between dog on-leash areas and areas in the park where dogs have to be on a lead.

Fencing that encloses an off-leash area, or a number of areas, is the feature that generally distinguishes a 'dog park' from other dog off-leash areas.

However, unfenced dog off-leash areas can incorporate the same or similar features as can a dog park. For example, rock scramble areas such as hillocks and dry stone creek beds, open ball play areas, and educational / confidence development features such as equipment that simulates every day encounters e.g. doorways / gateways, steps, and pathways.

Section 3.5 discusses the factors that should be taken into account when deciding to fence a dog off-leash area and the opportunities fenced areas offer.

The planning of dog parks should be undertaken as part of an overall strategy for providing for the needs of dog owners in parks and reserves. They should not be provided in isolation to other off-leash areas.

Dog parks, as with other off-leash areas can vary in size depending on the role they are to play in the overall provision of recreation, educational and social opportunities for dog owners and associated groups.

#### 1.2.1 What are the possible benefits of dog parks? **NEW**

The following highlights some of the benefits of dog parks. Dog parks should however be considered as one of a range of opportunities to provide for the dog owning community. Other opportunities for dog owners and their pets should be considered in relation to dog off-leash areas that are unfenced, trails, and urban environments including outdoor cafés.

### The benefits of dog parks

- They mean dogs and their owners can **be separate** from other people who don't want to interact with dogs while visiting the park
- They keep dogs out of **sensitive environments such as waterways or bushland areas** but still allow them access to parkland
- They provide a meeting place or **activity hub** for people and families
- They encourage people to **exercise** more vigorously with their dogs
- They provide **older people and people with disabilities** with an accessible and safe place to exercise their animal companions
- They allow **apartment dwellers** or people living on small allotments to have canine companions
- They provide a venue that encourages **dog to dog socialisation**
- They can provide an environment where **advice** is exchanged on dog management and where responsible dog ownership is encouraged
- They provide for the **travelling community** in areas where there are limited opportunities for dogs e.g. roadside stops
- They provide a focal point for **community education** and **training programs**, and
- They can help **avoid potential conflict** between dogs and other activities in parks.

#### 1.2.2 What are the possible downsides dog parks? **NEW**

It is important that people using a dog park understand they do not abdicate their responsibilities as a dog owner because they are in an enclosed area. Local laws relating to dogs in public spaces and off-leash areas still apply.

The following highlight some of the issues that may arise in relation to any dog off-leash area. They are not necessarily specific to dog parks. Many of these matters can be addressed by appropriate management and through dog owner education, and many are rare occurrences.

The most common issues are likely to arise from:

- Dog owners / walkers not picking up after their dogs
- Too many dogs brought to the dog park by the one person
- Inappropriate dogs being brought to the dog park (e.g. entire dogs, restricted breeds, dogs that are too young, and unvaccinated dogs)
- Young children being taken into the dog park and children being left unattended
- People leaving their dog unattended in the dog park
- Domination of the dog park by commercial or community activity groups.

Sometimes there are concerns about an increase in dog rushing<sup>1</sup> incidents and in dog-to-human and dog-to-dog biting. Research indicates this is not the case<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Dog Bites: Why, When and Where, Podberscek, A. L. & Blackshaw, J. K. (1990).. Australian Wildlife Research, 20, 182-187.

Bark Parks-A Study on Interdog Aggression in a Limited-Control Environment, Shyan, M. R.; Fortune, K.A. Christine King.C. (2003). Journal of Applied Animal Welfare



## 2. The planning context

### 2.1 Dog owners

Dogs are a significant part of 30% of Melton families, and for every 100 people living in the shire there are 13 dogs. Council recognises dog owners as an important part of the community and the role that dogs, as one of a variety of pets owned by residents, play in their lives.

Ninety three per cent of survey respondents stated they would continue to own a dog into the future or, if they did not currently own a dog, they would consider getting a dog in the future. Only 3 respondents that currently own a dog said they would not own a dog in the future.

It is anticipated the number of dog owners in the community will increase appreciably in line with the significant increase in population forecast for the Shire of Melton over the next 20 years.

Council recognises the aspirations and needs of dog owners are important and acknowledges the need to provide a range of different opportunities for dog owners.

30% of Melton households own at least one dog

2010/11 Melton Council registration data

### 2.2 Recognising the benefits of pet ownership

Research undertaken for the publication '*Australians and Their Pets: The Facts*' highlights the significant health and well being benefits associated with owning a pet:

- People who own pets typically visit the doctor less often and use less medication<sup>2</sup>
- Pet owners, on average have lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure and are less likely to report feeling lonely
- Pet owners recover more quickly from illness and surgery and deal better with stressful situations
- Pet owners show lower levels of risk factors associated with heart disease<sup>1</sup>
- Pets have been shown to greatly increase quality of life for the elderly including reduced tension, fatigue and confusion and increased feelings of enthusiasm, interest and inspiration
- Self-esteem has been shown to be higher in children or adolescents who have a pet<sup>2</sup>

Of particular relevance to this report is the research cited in '*Living Well Together*' which highlights the growing body of research that shows how dogs are likely to contribute to the health and wellbeing of dog owners and their families:

- dog walkers are more likely to experience social contact and conversation than those that walk alone.
- dogs motivate their owners to walk more often and meet recommended levels of physical activity
- children who own dogs are less likely to become overweight or obese.
- young girls who own a dog spend minutes more per day in physical activity and as a result achieve half the recommended level of physical activity for children just through the activities they undertake with their dog
- 5 to 6 year olds are 50% less likely to be overweight or obese compared with those who did not own a dog.

"My pets give me great comfort in times of need."

(89% of pet owners & 73% of total respondents to the Melton Shire household survey)

Research indicates that people over 65 who walk a dog, walk very frequently. However the greater proportion of dog owners over the age of 65 do not walk their dog at all or very

<sup>2</sup> The Power of pets: The benefits of companion animal ownership, Australian Companion Animal Council, 2009

infrequently. This raises the opportunity for initiatives that focus on dog walking for physical fitness and social interaction for older age groups.

Research shows that pets are important in instigating contact between people. Pet owners are more likely to engage with other people, exchange favours and perceive their neighbourhood and community as more friendly than do non-pet owners.<sup>3</sup>

Respondents to the Melton household survey state:

- their pets give them great comfort in times of need (73% of respondents)
- they exercise more because they have a pet (69% of respondents) and their family exercises more because they have a pet (62% of respondents)
- they talk to more people because they have a pet (62% of respondents), and
- 56% of respondents said their pets give them a strong reason for living.

### 2.3 Council's position on pets

Council recognises the importance of companion animals to many Melton households and the physical, social, emotional and economic benefits they bring to individuals and families.

It is for this reason that council will consider the needs of pet owners and opportunities to embrace them and their companion animals in the community, and support pet ownership where appropriate.

**"Our pet is an important part of our family."**

(99% of dog owners - Melton Shire household survey)

The People, Dogs and Parks Strategy outlines council's strategy for accommodating residents and their companion dogs in parks and reserves.

### 2.4 Council planning and consultation

Council prepares service plans to ensure the long-term vision for Melton is achieved. The People, Dog and Parks Strategy supports this vision and in particular a number of council's health and wellbeing, community engagement and lifestyle objectives relating to:

- expanding the range of informal recreation opportunities available to residents
- encouraging participation in active lifestyles
- increasing informal opportunities for people to meet and expand friendship and network groups
- strategies that help residents maintain their independence and 'age in place'
- residents with special needs.

Of particular relevance to the People, Dog, and Parks Strategy are council's Leisure and Open Space Strategy and Domestic Animal Management Plan. The Open Space Strategy recognises the number of different activities Melton parks and reserves must cater for and the way in which this will be achieved. The Domestic Animal Management Plan articulates the services council will provide in relation to domestic animals.

These documents highlight the need for:

- a council policy that recognises the health and wellbeing benefits of pets should underpin the People, Dog and Parks Strategy
- a variety of options to provide for the needs of dog owners in parks and reserves to be explored, and that options should include consideration of on-leash and off-leash areas; enriching / educational environments for dogs; fenced dog park/s; and the provision of seating, drinking water and shade

<sup>3</sup> Various as cited in 'Living Well Together'; Australians and Their Pets: The Facts

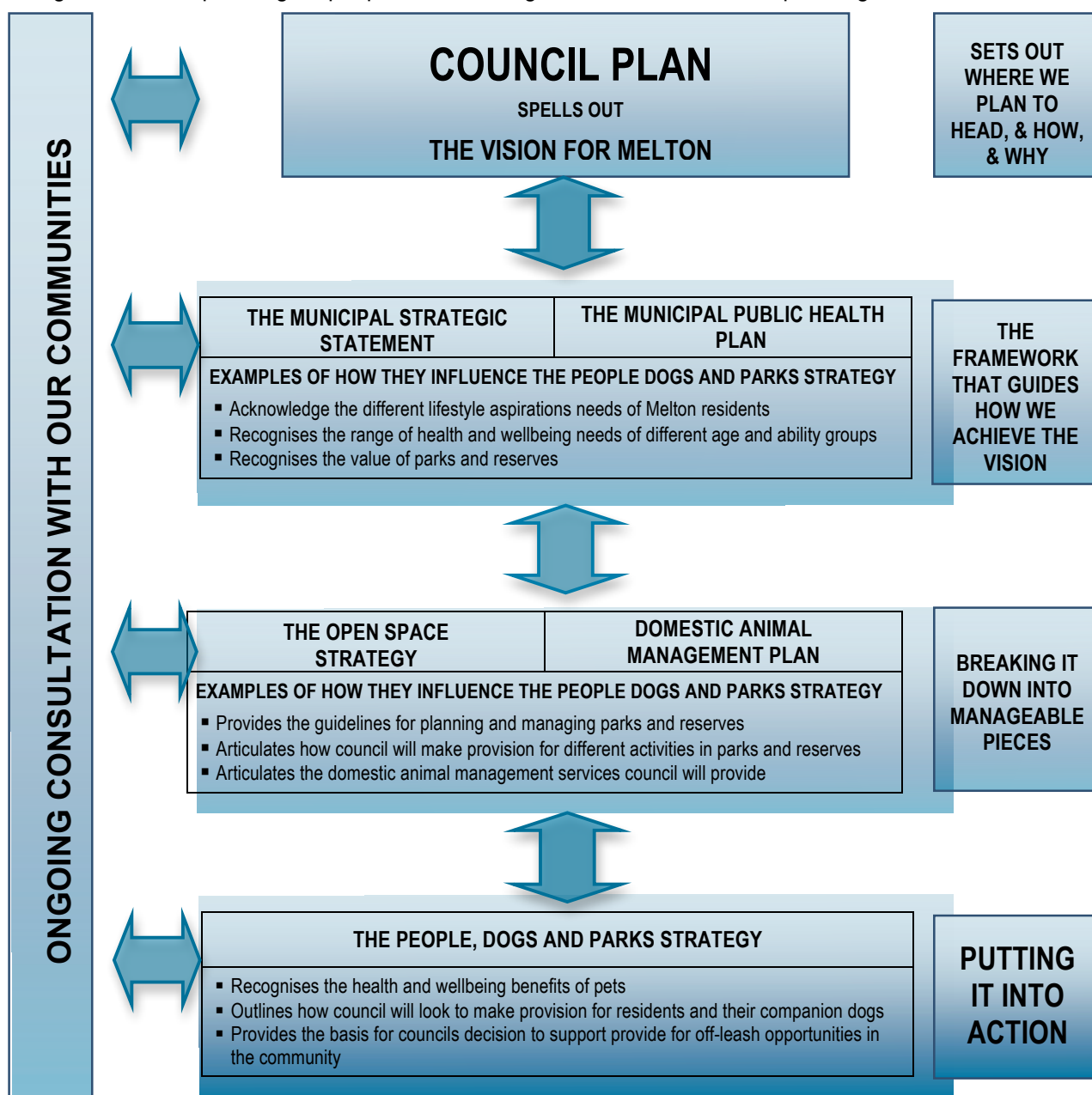
- a review of council's local laws to require that dogs be required to be on a leash at all times when in public places unless in designated off-leash areas
- better provision for people with disabilities or special needs when planning dog off-leash areas
- opportunities to involve volunteers.<sup>4</sup>

Council consults with the community through its various planning processes to ensure changing community needs are addressed. The People, Dogs and Parks Strategy has incorporated relevant research from other council planning processes, and information collected from the household and industry surveys conducted as part of the project.

Consultation will continue to take place as the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy is implemented, and in particular as various off-leash sites are established and reviewed.

The following table provides an overview of the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy relationship with other key Council planning documents and processes.

Diagram 1 – How planning for people and their dogs fits in with the Council planning framework



<sup>4</sup> Council Plan, Municipal Public Health Plan; Ageing Well Strategy, Leisure & Open Space Strategy)

### 3. Considerations when planning for dog owners and their dogs in parks

#### 3.1 Dog off-leash provision

Councils in Victoria differ in terms of how they provide for dogs in their communities. This was also the case for the 22 councils that responded to the project survey, of which:

- 5 stated they have a predominantly *off-leash* policy. Some of these councils allow dogs off-leash in all parks, while others apply restrictions that exclude the use of some parks or areas within parks for dog off-leash
- 7 councils stated they have a predominantly *on-leash* policy but with a large number of off-leash areas / parks
- 8 council stated they have a predominantly *on-leash* policy with very few parks or no parks that allow dogs to be off-leash.

Eight councils stated they were looking to alter their dog off-leash policies. Seven (7) of these councils are considering an increase in the number of dog off-leash areas because they want to provide for the needs of dog owners.

Research undertaken for council's Leisure and Open Space Strategy in 2005 indicates that 84% of residents support the concept of dog off-leash areas. The household survey undertaken for this project suggests this may have decreased to 78%, with 88% of dog owners and 58%\* of non-dog owners likely to support a variety of dog off-leash options.<sup>5</sup>

Dog owners and future dog owners are likely to prefer fenced dog off-leash areas (33% of respondents) followed by restricted (unfenced) dog off-leash areas in most parks (24% of survey respondents).

Dog owners responding to the Melton household survey believe dog off-leash areas are important because they contribute to the health and wellbeing of their dogs (89%); they provide an opportunity for families to play with their dogs (87%); and it is an opportunity for dogs to socialise with other dogs (77%).



Dogs that are well exercised and socialised are less likely to exhibit anti-social behaviours. The social benefits of dog off-leash areas was acknowledged by 61% of respondents who stated these areas gave people with similar interests an opportunity to meet and they encouraged conversation between people.

Survey respondents expressed a number of concerns about dog off-leash areas. Dog owners' ability to control their dogs in off-leash areas was the major concern. Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents were concerned about the safety of dogs in relation to roads, and 81% were concerned about owners not being able to control their dogs.

Sixty percent (60%) of respondents were worried about dogs rushing up to people who did not like dogs, and 63% were concerned about dogs annoying other dogs. Over half the respondents were concerned about dogs rushing up to them or their family. Nearly 40% of dog owners indicated they would be concerned about their own dog running off if allowed to run off-leash.

Dog owners and non-dog owners alike share these concerns.

Councils responding to the project survey identified the following key management issues relating to dog off-leash areas:

- not having the resources to manage the areas adequately (15 of 19 councils)
- owners not picking up their dogs litter (15 of 19 councils)

<sup>5</sup> \* Note only 19 non-dog owners responded to the survey)

- not having the resources to monitor compliance with dog off-leash requirements (14 of 19 councils)
- conflict with other activities on the site (13 of 19 councils)
- owners not being able to control their dogs (12 of 19 councils)
- dog attack and / or rushes on people and other dogs (9 of 19 councils)

Section 5 recommends a number of sites for trialing as dog off-leash areas. Following the trialing of these sites consideration should be given to providing opportunities in other areas.

## Recommendations

1. Consider the implementation of the trial dog off-leash sites recommended in section 5.
2. Proposed dog off-leash areas to be evaluated in line with the criteria contained in the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.
3. Future council budgets to consider the resources required to ensure dog off-leash areas are managed and maintained in accordance with desired open space and animal management service standards.
4. Council to consider allocating funds to develop an education and information program to that focuses on responsible pet ownership in parks.
5. Work with local and regional providers of dog obedience training to:
  - encourage dog owners and their dogs into education programs
  - reinforce council requirements of dog owners in parks.

## 3.2 Dog litter

Dog litter is likely to be one of the most controversial issues in relation to dogs in parks and in particular dog off-leash areas. Research quoted in the Journal of Applied Psychology identifies the failure to pick up after one's dog litter provokes more community ire than littering, illegally parking a car and graffiti.

Seventy-eight percent (78%) of household survey respondents said this is an issue of significant concern to them in relation to dog off-leash areas.



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.<sup>6</sup>

Feedback received through the project survey and anecdotal feedback received indicates that councils are likely to be divided about the use of dog litterbag dispensers in parks to deal with the issue.

Of the 22 councils responding to the survey, 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.

Councils that do not provide litterbag dispensers, or are considering removing them gave the following reasons for their position:

- council wants dog owners to be responsible for carrying bags at all time (5 councils)
- dispensers were vandalised (4 councils)

<sup>6</sup> www.stormwatercenter.net; Reference: Journal Applied Social Psychology, (Chaurand & Brauer, 2008); www.sciencedirect.com)

- the cost of supplying bags could not be justified (2 councils)
- people kept taking the bags (2 councils)

Anecdotal feedback from some councils indicates the benefits of providing dispensers was outweighed by the negative publicity generated when they were not functioning as they should be.

'Living Well Together' cites an example of a successful litter management program that is co-ordinated by Warringah City Council and involves 6 other councils including Sydney City Council.

The project focuses on informing dog-owners about the harmful effects of dog litter and encouraging behavioural change. Council involves volunteers who are specially selected and trained to raise the issue with dog owners in a non-confrontational manner, provide information and encourage a change in behaviours.

An incentive litterbag pouch, which attaches to the dog's lead, is provided to every person who registers a dog and sells biodegradable bags. The council also installed dog litterbins in dog-walking areas.

Warringah Council says the number of droppings in these areas dropped dramatically by over 66% in some areas.

Melton Shire Council requires any person in charge of an animal in a public place to carry a device for the collection of their animal's excrement and collect and dispose of the excrement appropriately.<sup>7</sup>

### **Recommendations**

6. Council to consider a community – council partnership based on the Warringah Council 'Community Watch Dog project' to proactively deal with managing the issue of dog litter in parks. This would involve consideration of:
  - involving and training volunteers
  - providing litter bag dispensers that can be attached to dog leads
  - selling biodegradable plastic bags, or partner with other outlets to sell bags.
7. Council to consider a joint council-schools initiative as part of council's responsible pet ownership program.
8. As part of council's community education and awareness program:
  - reinforce, through a focused information campaign, council's local law that requires dog walkers to carry a plastic bag / receptacle when walking a dog in a public place, and to pick up after their dog
  - adopt an educational approach, with the support of dog owners / walkers, to deal with the issue of dog litter.

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<sup>7</sup> General Local Law, part 6, section 609



### 3.3 Gathering places

Dog off-leash areas have become significant community meeting places not only for dog owners. Dog owners or walkers represent most of the people present at these sites, however research shows that non-dog owners are also visitors to dog off-leash areas.

These sites are important for people who no longer have a dog in their life but want to connect with dogs and other people via the means of a companion dog. Dog off-leash areas provide an alternative recreation opportunity, are frequently used for celebratory events, and are an ideal focus for responsible pet ownership initiatives.



As a result it is important that amenities (e.g. seating, pathways, car parking, water, toilets) and environments (e.g. shaded areas, attractive parkland vistas, maintenance standards) for these areas are in line with amenities provided in other parkland areas and for other park users.

Council's Open Space Strategy sets the framework for the type and level of provision of amenities in parkland environments overall, and the design framework in this document provides the framework for dog off-leash areas. This recognises the important social and recreation role dog off-leash areas play in the community.

Council will encourage the use of these areas by commercial dog walkers but requires relevant parties to obtain a permit<sup>8</sup>. Permits are also required for any public gathering on reserves. This enables council to monitor any impact including wear and tear on the parkland, and any impact activities may have on the use of the reserve by other members of the public.

### Recommendations

9. Ensure dog off-leash areas are planned and designed in line with the provision framework contained in the Melton Open Space Strategy and the Dogs, People and Parks Strategy.
10. Encourage social gatherings and events for dog owners / walkers in appropriate dog off-leash areas, and the use of these areas by commercial service providers.
11. Promote council requirements relating to permits for use of parks and reserves for community and commercial activities.

### 3.4 Universal design

There is extensive research that highlights the importance of pets in the lives of people with disabilities, and other people in the community who have the potential to be socially and physically isolated.

A number of studies have demonstrated that the presence of a companion dog serves to increase the quantity and quality of attention friends and strangers direct towards the person with the disability. The presence of a companion dog serves to break down the barrier between the able bodied person and the person with the disability.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Local Law, Part 3 (Use of Council Land) section 328

<sup>9</sup> Dog Companionship and Its Benefits to Humans

Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan acknowledges the need to provide better facilities for people with disabilities or special needs at dog off-leash sites. Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents to the household survey rated facilities and opportunities for people with disabilities or limited mobility, as an important consideration in dog off-leash areas.

Fenced dog parks were seen as particularly important for older and less mobile people (82% of respondents) because they provide these groups with a safe place to exercise their dogs.

There are limited opportunities for people with disabilities or limited mobility to engage with other people in their community. Research undertaken as part of the project supports other industry research that shows dogs can be communication icebreakers.

Given this, universal design principles should be applied to the design and provision of dog off-leash areas to optimise opportunities for people with special needs, and to encourage their engagement with the community through their companion dog.

Universal design considerations for dog off-leash areas should be applied to car parking provision, access pathways, seating (with arm rests), shade. In the case of fenced dog off-leash areas consideration should also be given to accessible gates and a separate, quiet area for small dogs, which older people and people with disabilities tend to own.

## Recommendations

12. Ensure universal design principles are applied to the planning and design of dog off-leash areas, including amenities such as accessible car parking, pathways and seating, and where appropriate, fencing and gateways.

### 3.5 Fencing of dog off-leash areas

Council's policy is to minimise, as much as possible, the fencing of parks and reserves and areas such as play spaces and sports grounds within reserves. Council does however recognise there are situations where partial or full fencing of an area or park is appropriate for safety reasons, or to separate activity spaces in confined parks.

Thirty-one percent (31%) of respondents to the household survey stated that dogs should only be allowed off-leash if they are in a fenced area, and 33% of dog owners would prefer dog off-leashed areas to be fenced.

Of the 257 respondents to the household survey:

- 57% prefer unfenced off-leash areas
- 31% prefer fenced off-leash areas

Eleven (11) of the 22 councils responding to the survey said they had at least one fully fenced dog off-leash dog park, or they are considering installing fenced / a fenced dog park. Councils considering fenced dog parks tend to be metropolitan or metropolitan fringe councils rather than rural councils and stated:

- their council is responding to community demand for fenced dog parks
- they are an effective way to provide for dogs in small or busy reserves and near sensitive environments
- they provide an alternative social opportunity for residents
- they provide an opportunity for dogs to socialise.

Council's preference is to provide a natural buffer between activity spaces and to use landscaping and vegetation plantings to designate activity areas within parks and reserves.

In line with this policy the partial or full fencing of dog off-leash areas will generally only be considered:

- where there is a need to provide a dog off-leash area but insufficient room to do this without using fencing. For example when there is insufficient space to provide a

landscape buffer between a dog off-leash area and a busy road, other activity areas such as trails or play spaces

- where there is a need to consider fencing as a risk management strategy e.g. near busy roads
- when the area is a designated 'fenced dog park'
- at 'district' and municipal' level sites only, that is not at parks classified as 'local' level parks
- where provision is to be made for people with special needs.

## Recommendations

13. Fencing of dog off-leash areas will generally only be considered:

- where there is a need to provide a dog off-leash area but insufficient room to do this without using fencing
- where there is a need to consider fencing as a risk management strategy e.g. near busy roads
- when the area is a designated 'fenced dog park'
- at 'district' and municipal' level sites only, that is not at parks classified as 'local' level parks
- where provision is to be made for people with special needs.

### 3.6 Play spaces, picnic and BBQ facilities

For many individuals and families there is often the desire to share the family outing to the park with the family dog. There are also individuals and families who do not want to interact with dogs as part of their visit to the park. Therefore it is necessary to consider strategies that address the needs of both dog owners / walkers as well as other members of the community.

#### Play spaces

It is important to understand the nature of dogs and children, particularly when in a public place that might be unfamiliar to a child and a dog, and where there are unfamiliar people and animals. Dogs can intimidate children particularly those not familiar with dogs and conversely, the excited nature of children's play can excite some dogs or be intimidating to them. This can then lead to excitable and defensive behaviours such as rushing, jumping, barking, or snapping.

Play Australia's position on dogs reflects an understanding of the role dogs play in the lives of families. Play Australia's position is that dogs must be on a lead and under the supervision of their dog owner (carer) when within 50 metres of a play space.

This, says Play Australia 'recognises that dogs play an important role in the social and community infrastructure, particularly at a local level.'<sup>10</sup>

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents to the household survey support the presence of dogs around play spaces as long as they are on a leash, while 12% do not support the presence of dogs near play spaces under any conditions. The remaining respondents were unsure or did not answer the question.

#### Picnic and BBQ areas

Similar to play spaces council recognises dogs are often an important part of social outings to parks and reserves.



<sup>10</sup> Play Australia Information Sheet – Dogs and play spaces

However, the proximity of food can cause dogs to react excitedly, defensively, or aggressively, particularly if there are other dogs in the vicinity. For this reason dogs must be on a short leash when in the vicinity of a picnic area unless otherwise designated.

### **Recommendations**

14. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce council's General Local Law that requires dogs to be on a leash when outside designated dog off-leash areas.

### **3.7 Sports fields and surrounding parkland**

Generally council will avoid using sports fields for casual dog off-leash activities, but recognises that in some areas sports fields may afford the only opportunity to provide for dogs off-leash.

Council will consider use of sports fields by organised groups such as dog obedience groups or other similar formal community groups. These groups will enter into an agreement with council for the use of the site. They will be responsible for ensuring owners or carers manage dogs properly, and sports fields are left in an appropriate condition.

If a sports field is designated as a dog off-leash area, priority use will be given to all sporting activities conducted at the reserve including all training, competition, fundraising and social events. If additional sporting activities are located to the reserve, these will take precedence to dog off-leash activities.

In some reserves, dogs may be permitted off-leash in parkland surrounding the sports field. When sporting activities are occurring dogs must be on a short leash within 20 metres of the sports field, spectators and sporting infrastructure such as pavilions.

Council will monitor use of sports fields to ensure the use of the reserve by dogs does not impact on the amenity and cleanliness of the playing field and surrounding areas.

In some cases Council will grant a permit for dog off-leash activities to occur on a sports field. Generally these permits will be for fully supervised dog off-leash activities such as those conducted by a formal dog obedience or training club.

### **Recommendations**

15. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce council's General Local Law that requires dogs to be on a leash in and around sports fields unless the area is designated as a dog off-leash area, or unless a special permit has been granted.
16. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce that all sporting activities have precedence over dog off-leash activities on sports fields.

### **3.8 Waterways and wildlife corridors**

A number of waterways traverse the shire and many flow through parks and reserves. Bacteria levels in these waterways vary and can reach levels that make it unhealthy for dogs to swim in.

The banks of waterways are often steep, unstable and the base of these waterways and associated dams is generally thick with mud. After periods of significant rainfall some waterways become fast moving and unsafe. Snakes are also prevalent along waterways. As a result most waterways and water bodies are off limits to dogs.

Waterways are generally a part of the linear parkland network that provides wildlife shelter and corridors in built up residential areas. It is important to preserve and manage these environments so they continue to provide safe havens for wildlife and to preserve remnant



vegetation habitats where necessary. As a result, dog owners will be responsible for ensuring their dogs do not interfere with wildlife and wildlife habitats.

Council may consider water access for dogs at designated dog off-leash areas.

## Recommendations

17. Council to consider the inclusion of water elements / environments in the planning of municipal level dog off-leash facilities.

### 3.9 Trails

As with other parks and reserves, council currently requires dogs to be on a leash on all trails.

Council recognises that trails are attractive to dog walkers because they provide health and fitness opportunities for the dog owner / walker as well as the pet dog. Because trails traverse a number of residential areas they are easily accessed by a large number of residents, unlike a park that has to be accessed along footpaths and roadways.

Council generally designs trails so they accommodate a range of different activities and can be used by different users. Some trails are used for commuting to work places, schools, to shopping precincts or for recreation and fitness purposes. They provide safe off-road passage for walkers, people with prams and young children, people using mobility scooters, cyclists, and people on skateboards.

Conflict can arise between some of these activities particularly along well-used trails and at specific times of the day such immediately before and after school hours. Some of these activities involve speed, which is incompatible with dogs running off-leash. Because trails are used for a variety of activities, dog off-leash activities may be limited. The type of access for dogs along trails will be determined on a trail-by-trail basis.

The People, Dogs and Parks Strategy recommends a number of trails for consideration as dog off-leash areas. Consideration may be given to entire lengths of trail being declared off-leash areas, and in other cases sections of trails may be restricted to on-leash.

## Recommendations

18. Council to consider dog off-leash activities along trails in line with the site evaluation criteria in People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.

### 3.10 Partnerships

Partnerships with residents, community groups, professional service providers will identify opportunities to proactively address issues associated with dog off-leash areas and optimise outcomes for non-dog owners, dog owners and companion dogs in the community.

Schools, professional dog walkers, veterinarians, animal welfare groups, social dog walking groups, township groups and committees of management are in a good position to assist council develop and distribute information about topics such as:

- responsible pet ownership
- safety of children around dogs
- understanding dog behaviour



- dog training and education opportunities
- dealing with difficult issues such as barking dogs
- council requirements relating to dogs in parks and reserves, and
- volunteer based opportunities associated with companion dogs.

Council will consider working with these groups to develop and promote a dog owner code of responsibility.

## Recommendations

19. Council to consider partnerships with residents, schools, commercial service providers and community groups that address issues and identify initiatives that result in positive outcomes for people and dogs in parks.

### 3.11 Management and maintenance of dog off-leash areas

There are budget implications if dog off-leash areas are to be provided and managed in line with standards articulated in the Open Spaces Strategy, and the provision and design framework outlined in the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.

Council recognises that additional resources will be required to effectively manage and monitor dog off-leash areas.

A number of sites have been recommended as trial dog off-leash sites. These sites will be monitored for a period of 8 months during which time any additional resources required to manage sites, address customer service requests and put in place associated community awareness initiatives will be quantified and considered by council.

In determining the number and type of dog off-leash areas for the Shire of Melton, council will consider the budget implications associated with:

- effectively monitoring compliance with dog off-leash requirements, particularly in the short term
- promoting dog off-leash areas, associated codes of behaviour, and responsibilities of dog owners
- working with the community to develop initiatives that improve compliance with responsible pet ownership requirements
- attracting and training volunteers to support community education, marketing and program initiatives
- managing customer service requests associated with dogs in parks.

## Recommendations

20. That the trial dog off-leash sites identified in section 5 of the strategy be monitored for a period of 8 months during which time the resourcing implications associated with these sites will be evaluated.





## **4. What is the state of play in the Shire of Melton?**

### **4.1 The current situation**

#### **4.1.1 Dog ownership in Australia**

Australia has one of the highest incidences of dog ownership in the world with 36% of households owning a dog (Euromonitor International, 2009). This is higher than the United Kingdom, where 23% of households own a dog, but lower than in the USA where 40% own a dog.

Victoria has the second highest rate of dog ownership with 24% of Australia's dogs residing in Victorian households. This is exceeded only by the state of New South Wales, which accounts for 32.7% of the country's dog population.

According to Bis Shrapnel the number of dogs owned by Australian households has declined from approximately 4 million in 1998 to 3.41 million in 2009.

#### **4.1.2 Dog ownership in the Shire of Melton**

Over the last 6 months council has been undertaking a door knock to establish a more accurate picture of the dog population in the shire. This door knock indicates there are approximately 14,456 dogs residing in the municipality.

This represents approximately 13 dogs for every 100 people, which is lower than the Bis Shrapnel estimate of approximately 16 dogs per 100 people across Victoria.

Approximately 31% of households in the shire own at least one dog, which is lower than the 36% of households Australia wide that own a dog according to Bis Shrapnel. Twenty percent (20%) of shire households have 1 dog while 11% have more than one dog.

The residential suburbs with the largest dog populations are Melton West (2,365 dogs), Caroline Springs (1,727 dogs), Melton South (1,693) and Melton (1,651 dogs).

The suburbs with the highest number of dogs for every 100 residents are Melton (21 dogs per 100 people), Brookfield (21 dogs per 100 people), Melton South (19 dogs per 100 people), and Kuranjang (18 dogs per 100 people). Toolern / Toolern Vale has the highest number of dogs per 100 residents (43 dogs per 100 people), which is probably indicative of the rural nature of the area.

The areas with the smallest number of dogs for every 100 residents are Burnside Heights (6 dogs per 100 people), Taylors Hill (7 dogs per 100 people) and Caroline Springs (8 dogs per 100 people).

Melton Shire suburbs with the highest percentage of households owning dogs are Toolern (64% of households own at least one dog), Brookfield (46% of households own at least one dog), Kuranjang (40% of households own at least one dog). These are followed by Melton, Melton South, and Melton West where approximately 38% of households own at least one dog.

According to Bis Shrapnel the number of dogs owned by Australian households has declined from approximately 4 million in 1998 to 3.41 million in 2009. The dog population in the shire continues to increase as people take up residence with their dogs in expanding suburbs.



### **4.1.3 Dog registrations in the Shire of Melton**

There are approximately 12,647 dogs listed on council's registration database approximately 1,809 fewer dogs than identified in the 2010 / 11 door count of dogs. This indicates that in 2010 / 2011 86% of dogs residing in the shire were registered.

### **4.1.4 Current policies and animal management services**

Council is required to act in accordance with the Victorian Domestic Animal Act of 1994. The act established council's responsibilities in relation to domestic pets and pet establishments such as shelters, pet shops, boarding, and breeding facilities.

Council's General Local Law Part 3 (Use of Council Land) and Part 6 (Animal Control) are particularly relevant to the People Dogs and Parks Strategy. These parts of the local law outline council's requirements in relation to the keeping of dogs and the management or control of dogs by their owners / carers when in parks or reserves.

## **4.2 The future**

### **4.2.1 Projected dog numbers**

A number of assumptions have been made in forecasting dog number for the Shire of Melton in 2031. It is assumed that:

- dog numbers per head on population in established areas of older suburbs will remain the same
- dog numbers per head of population will decline in response to the smaller size of new residential allotments coming online, and as the number of rural allotments / farms decrease
- the rate of dog ownership in suburbs to be developed in the future will be similar to the rate of dog ownership in more recently developed suburbs such as Caroline Springs, Burnside and Hillside. These have smaller allotments than the more established suburbs of Melton, Melton South and Kurunjang.

The table on the following page outlines three scenarios for the 2031 shire dog population:

If the dog population for the longer established areas (with larger allotments) remains the same but new and infill areas attract dog ownership at 7 dogs per 100 people\* because of smaller allotments in these areas, then the Shire of Melton could expect to have a dog population of 38,678 in 2031.

(\* Average of Burnside, Caroline Springs, Hillside, Taylors Hill/Taylors Hill West)

If however dog ownership trends in line with the more recently established areas of Burnside and Hillside+ then the shire could expect to have a dog population of 41,036 in 2031. (+ Dog ownership at 15 dogs per 100 people)

If the shire's dog population continues to increase in line with the current level of dog ownership, which is unlikely, then the dog population could be as high as 48,107 by 2031.



Table 1 - Estimated dog population for 2031

Suburb	Dogs per 100 people in 2011	Estimated dog population for 2031 assuming:	
		7 dogs per 100 people <sup>1.</sup> for new areas / infill areas	13 dogs per 100 people <sup>2.</sup> for new areas / infill areas
Brookfield	21	1201	1481
Burnside	10	885	991
Burnside Heights	6	340	371
Caroline Springs	8	1716	1707
Diggers Rest	17	758	1105
Eynesbury	12	347	611
Hillside	11	1551	1492
Kurunjang	21	1685	1732
Melton	21	1700	1741
Melton South	18	1917	2109
Melton West	16	2565	2736
Rural Balance	11	2791	4814
Taylors Hill / Taylors Hill West	7	1256	1638
Toolern/Toolern Vale	42	3985	7240
<b>TOTAL DOGS</b>		22,706	29,778
<b>Melton Shire dog ownership per 100 people</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>

Note: estimates assume same level of dog ownership for existing areas

1. Based on average of current ownership for the 4 suburbs with lower levels of dog ownership per head of population – Burnside, Caroline Springs, Taylors Hill/Taylors Hill West
2. Based on 2011 average dog ownership per head of population

#### 4.2.2 Guiding principles

The following outlines the principles that will guide the planning, design, and management of open space opportunities for dog owners.

1. **Council makes provision for dog owners and their dogs in parks and reserves because it recognises the important health and wellbeing, social and economic benefits associated with owning a companion animal.**

In consideration of this council will identify opportunities to cater for the needs of dog owners and their companion dogs in consideration of:

- the needs of other groups in the community
- the activities that need access to parks and reserves
- the parks and reserves available in the area

2. **Dogs are required to be on-leash in all public places, including parks and reserves unless otherwise designated.**

**3. Access to some parks and reserves or areas within these parks may be restricted.**

Some environments are not appropriate for dogs either on or off leash (e.g. sensitive environmental areas, playgrounds), while other areas may be appropriate to allow dogs on-leash (e.g. high use trails) or off-leash (e.g. dog off-leash areas).

Some areas may be considered unsafe for dogs including some waterways which may have high levels of bacteria levels, unsafe entry points, snakes)

Council will develop and review its policy on dogs in parks in consideration of a range of social and environmental needs.

**4. Dogs will be the responsibility of the person accompanying a dog in a park or reserve.**

This recognises that it is not only dog owners who walk dogs. Regardless of who owns the dog/s, it will be incumbent on the person accompanying the dog/s to make themselves familiar with the responsibilities associated with taking a dog/s into parks and reserves.

The person accompanying a dog or dogs in parks and reserves will be responsible for the behaviour of the dog/s and for keeping them under effective control at all times. This is in accordance with the Domestic Animals Act, which requires the person accompanying the dog/s to:

- prevent the dog/s from running up to other people (including people with dogs)
- prevent the dog/s from running up to other dogs
- impacting on other activities or facilities in the park or reserve
- actively manage their dog/s so that other park users do not have to take evasive action

Council's General Local Law requires people accompanying a dog/s in public places to carry a receptacle for collecting and disposing of their dogs waste in a rubbish bin.

**5. Dog owners are an important part of the community and their needs will be considered as with other open space users when open space is being planned and / or developed.**

Council recognises there are individuals and families in the community that do not want to interact with dogs as part of their visit to a park or reserve. Provision for dog owners and their dogs will be in line with open space planning principles contained in the Melton Open Space Strategy and the People Dogs and Parks Strategy.

Council plans and manages open space in accordance with a set of guiding principles and a provision framework, which articulates the type of facilities for each type of open space (e.g. sports fields, parks, trails). As a result not all dog off-leash areas will include the same area, type of opportunities or facilities.

**6. Council will aim to provide a range of different opportunities for dog owners across the Shire to address the different needs of the dog owning community.**

This means council will consider on-leash and off-leash opportunities, which may include open run-about areas and / or enclosed dog parks in appropriate environments.

**7. Universal design principles that optimise access to dog on-leash and off-leash areas and associated park infrastructure for the whole community will underpin provision for dog owners / carers.**

This will optimise access for all ages and abilities and will include consideration of seating, water, pathways that enable easy access to dog on leash and off-leash facilities.

**8. Local communities will be encouraged to be involved in the development and management of dog off-leash areas.**

**9. The type and level of provision for dogs in parks will be subject to council budget considerations.**

This recognises the cost associated with managing and monitoring dog access areas (e.g. compliance with local laws) and the cost associated with installing and maintaining facilities (e.g. agility equipment), and amenities (e.g. seating, worn grassed areas).

**10. Risk minimisation strategies will be considered in the planning and provision of opportunities for dogs, their owners and other members of the community.**

As with other open space environments and activities dog off-leash and on-leash areas will not be risk-free. Council provides facilities such as play spaces, sporting facilities, skate parks, and dog off-leash areas in response to the needs of the community.

Council takes all steps to minimise risk to people who use these areas through appropriate design and management protocols.

#### **4.2.3 Our provision framework and rationale**

Council's Open Space Strategy has established a hierarchy of provision for all open space assets, including sports grounds, parks, play spaces and trails. This hierarchy has four levels 'local', 'neighbourhood', 'district', and 'regional', which define the type and level of facilities that will be considered for any one reserve or park.

These classifications do not necessarily apply to all activity areas at the park or reserve. Some activity areas, such as a dog off-leash area, may only be a 'local' level facility even though it is located at a 'district' or 'municipal' level reserve.

The following provides an overview of the different classifications of parks and reserves and highlights some of the implications for possible dog off-leash activities.

#### **'Local' parks and reserves**

##### **Overview**

These reserves or parks are mostly between 0.7 – 1.0 hectares in size and they cater for residents living within a 400 metre safe walking distance. Generally they will have natural vegetation and landscape features, natural shade, paths, seats, and in some cases may include basic play equipment. They tend to have a lower level of use than other parks and reserves.

##### **Implications for possible dog off-leash activities**

- The following considerations may impact on the type and level of dog off-leash activities possible at 'local' parks and reserves:
  - the size of the park
  - the number of activities the park has to cater for
  - space to enable a buffer between dog off-leash activities and other activities
  - the proximity of abutting properties.

## **‘Neighbourhood’ parks and reserves**

### **Overview**

These reserves or parks are on sites that are largely in excess of 1 hectare in size and they cater for residents living within an 800-metre safe walking distance. Generally they will have natural vegetation and landscape features, natural shade, paths, seats, and play elements for a range of age groups. They tend to be used quite regularly by residents in the surrounding area.

### **Implications for possible dog off-leash activities**

- The following considerations may impact on the type and level of dog off-leash activities possible at ‘neighbourhood’ parks and reserves:
  - the size of the park
  - the number of activities the park has to cater for
  - space to enable a buffer between dog off-leash activities and other activities
  - compliance with on-leash requirements in other sections of the park.

## **‘District’ parks and reserves – (Passive / Non sporting)**

### **Overview**

These reserves or parks are at least 5 hectares in size and they cater for the non-sport recreation needs of residents living within 1 kilometre safe walking distance. Generally they will have a range of social, and informal (non-sport) recreation activities, natural vegetation and landscape features, paths, seats, and play elements for a range of age groups. They tend to attract people for longer stays of 3 hours or more.

### **Implications for possible dog off-leash activities**

- The following considerations may impact on the type and level of dog off-leash activities possible at ‘district’ (non-sport) parks and reserves:
  - space to enable a buffer between dog off-leash activities and other activities
  - the number of activities the park has to cater for
  - managing dog access to sensitive environmental areas that may be part of the park
  - compliance with on-leash requirements in other sections of the park.

## **‘District’ parks and reserves – (Active / sporting)**

### **Overview**

These reserves or parks are at least 8 hectares in size and they cater for the sporting needs of residents living within 1 kilometre safe walking distance. Generally they will cater for activities such as tennis, football, cricket etc., and will have natural vegetation and landscape features, paths, seats, and play elements for a range of age groups.

### **Implications for possible dog off-leash activities**

- The following considerations may impact on the type and level of dog off-leash activities possible at ‘district’ (non-sport) parks and reserves:
  - the necessary space to enable a buffer between dog off-leash activities, sporting activities and vehicle traffic
  - the time available outside formal sport and training activity times if sports fields are to be considered for dog off-leash activities
  - possible dog droppings on or around playing surfaces.



## **'Regional' parks and reserves – (Parks Victoria)**

### **Overview**

These reserves or parks are owned and managed by Parks Victoria and have significant environmental, tourism, recreational and linkage values. They have a significant number of parkland features including natural vegetation, conservation and other landscape features; paths; seats; and play features for a range of age groups.

### **Implications for possible dog off-leash activities**

- Generally dogs are not permitted in these reserves.

## **'Linear' parks – (Trails)**

### **Overview**

These are long narrow tracts of parkland that generally follow waterways, roadsides, or easements, or that link residential areas to community facilities and parks. They generally include pathways, seats, natural features and vegetation.

### **Implications for possible dog off-leash activities**

- The following considerations may impact on the type and level of dog off-leash activities possible along 'linear' parks:
  - managing the mix of activities and users the park caters for e.g. cycling, walking, people using mobility aids, young children
  - managing dog access to sensitive environmental areas that may be part of the park / trail
  - compliance with on-leash requirements in other sections of the park / trail.



#### 4.2.4 Dog off-leash area provision and design considerations

This section establishes the type and extent of provision that council will consider at dog off-leash areas. Generally a higher level of provision will be considered for 'neighbourhood' level reserves than 'local' level reserve, and similarly a higher level of provision will be considered at 'district' level reserves than at 'neighbourhood' level reserves.

Council has prepared an open space planning and design framework that guides the planning of parks and reserves. This framework has been applied to the planning and design of dog off-leash areas.

The following table provides an overview of the type of features and amenities that will be considered for each classification of dog off-leash area. Not all dog off-leash areas will have all amenities.

Table 2 - Features and amenities that will be considered for each classification of dog off-leash area						
Amenity	Classification of Open Space (parks and reserves)					
	Local	N' hood	District (Non-sport)	District (Sport)	Regional>	Trails
Dog open ball play areas	•	••	•••	•••	••••	
Dog scramble areas		•	••		••	
Pathways						
- approach pathways	x	x	••	x	••	x
- internal pathways	x	x	••	x	••	x
- textured pathways	x	x	••	x	••	x
Dog educational and / or agility equipment		•	•••	•	••••	•
Fencing						
- fully fenced with 2 double gated entries			•••		••••	
- partial fencing	• (if required for safety)	••	•••		••••	
- separate small and large dog areas		•	•••		••••	
Dog litter bag dispensers	x	x	x	x	-	x
Dog litter bag bins	x	x	x	x	-	x
Signage						
- regulations	•••	•••	•••	•••	•••	•••
- instructional		•	•••			•
- directional			•			••
Off street car parking			•••	•••	•••	
Shade - natural	•	•	••	••	•••	•
- shelters	•	•	••	••	•••	
Access to drinking water						
- people			••	••	•••	
- dogs			••	••		
Seating & tables	•	••	•••	•••	•••	••
Designated disability car parking and			•••	•••	•••	

Table 2 - Features and amenities that will be considered for each classification of dog off-leash area

Amenity	Classification of Open Space (parks and reserves)					
	Local	N' hood	District (Non-sport)	District (Sport)	Regional>	Trails
accessible pathways						
Disability access	•	•	•••	•••	•••	•
<b>Other considerations</b>						
Area may be shared with sporting / recreation activities	•	•	•••	•••	•••	••
Access to a shared pavilion			••	•••		
Access to storage facilities			••	•••		
Access to public toilets		•	•••	•••	•••	
Suitable for local events / activities*		••	•••	•••		
Suitable for larger scale events / activities*			•••	•••		
• = Lower level of provision will be considered    ••• = Higher level of provision will be considered appropriate * Events / activities such as dog obedience classes, competitions, family fun days / responsible pet ownership initiatives > Regional parks are provided by Parks Victoria. Actual level of provision, if any, would be determined by Parks Victoria.						

## 5. Selection of trial dog off-leash sites

A number of sites, including some shared pathways were identified for consideration as trial dog off-leash sites. In selecting trial dog off-leash sites consideration was given to trialing:

- at different size sites, for example 'local', 'district' and 'municipal' size parks
- in different types of parkland environments such as along trails, and in unfenced and fenced areas
- in environments where there are a number of co-located activity areas such as playgrounds and picnic / BBQ areas
- in a number of different suburbs.

Thirty-seven sites were evaluated as possible trial dog off-leash sites. Twelve sites were then shortlisted as trial sites. Shortlisted sites were those that:

- offered greater potential in terms of managing access to other activity areas and sensitive environments in the park, roadways and / or adjoining properties
- had access to requisite amenities (e.g. seating) and pleasant park environments (e.g. shade, treed areas) or had the capacity for these to be developed or enhanced with minimal outlay.

The following table provides a summary of the sites that best satisfied the preliminary criteria for trialing as dog off-leash sites. A more detailed summary of the opportunities / benefits of these sites together with other considerations is provided in Information Sheet 1.

Trial sites include:

- 4 linear reserves as dog off-leash areas
- 2 undeveloped reserves as fenced dog parks and / or large dog off-leash areas
- 2 local reserves as a dog off-leash areas (including 1 water retarding basin

Two of these sites have the scope for consideration as fenced dog parks - Boronia Drive Reserve and Navan Park.

Table 3 – Evaluation of shortlisted sites for consideration as dog off-leash areas

	SUBURB	NAME OF PARK & SCORE	CLASSIFICATION <sup>11</sup> OF THE RESERVE & CATCHMENT	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
1	Brookfield	Botanica Springs Linear Reserve <b>Score - 47</b>	Linear Reserve Medium catchment - developed / developing area Small to medium size allotments of 500-700 sq metres	Brookfield Road to Blackdog Drive
<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash trail other than within 5 metres of the pathway				
2	Brookfield	Black Dog Drive Linear Reserve <b>Score - 46</b>	Linear Reserve Large catchment – developed area. Medium size allotment 600-800 sq metres	Arnolds Creek Linear Reserve – Blackdog Drive area
<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash trail other than within 5 metres of the pathway				
3	Hillside	Stoney Creek Linear Reserve <b>Score - 49</b>	Linear Reserve Large catchment – mix of developed & undeveloped area. Mix of low (2,000 sq metres) and high-density size allotments (300-500 sq metres).	Located in the northern section of Caroline Springs and Hillside.
<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash trail other than within 5 metres of the pathway				
4	Hillside	Lauchlan's Field <b>Score - 44</b>	Drainage Retarding Basin / Local Reserve Large catchment - developed area Medium 600-800 sq metres size allotments	Located on the northwest corner of Calder Park Drive and Melton Highway.
<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash park other than around the play space. All dogs must be on a short leash within 50 metres of the play space.				
5	Hillside	Boronia Drive Reserve <b>Score - 41</b>	Undeveloped Reserve Smaller catchment - developed area. Mix of low (2,000 sq metres) and high-density size allotments (300-500 sq metres)	Large site (7.05 ha) for which a master plan is being developed.
<b>Opportunity</b> Part of the reserve fully fenced for a dog park or designated as a dog off-leash area that caters for a district to municipal catchment.				
6	Kurunjang	Black Knight Way Reserve <b>Score - 44</b>	Undeveloped Reserve Smaller catchment – mix of developing & undeveloped areas Smaller size allotments - 600 sq metre size allotments	2.44 ha adjacent to Little Blind Creek Linear Reserve.
<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash park.				
7	Melton	Hannah Watts Park <b>Score - 46</b>	District Reserve Smaller catchment - developed area Popular destination	Area west of the lake
<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash area to the west of the lake.				
8	Melton South	Mt Carberry Reserve <b>Score - 47</b>	District Reserve Very large catchment - developed area Medium 600-800 sq metre size	

11 Melton Shire Draft Open Space Strategy

Table 3 – Evaluation of shortlisted sites for consideration as dog off-leash areas

	SUBURB	NAME OF PARK & SCORE	CLASSIFICATION <sup>11</sup> OF THE RESERVE & CATCHMENT	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
			allotments. Popular destination	
	<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash area within the park to be defined following further consultation.			
9	Melton South	Fraser Street Reserve <b>Score - 45</b>	Local Reserve Large catchment - developed area. Medium 600-800 sq metre size allotments	Large reserve, linked to Toolern Creek Reserve
	<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash area within the park to be defined following further consultation.			
10	Melton West	Navan Park <b>Score - 53</b>	District Reserve Very large catchment - developed area Medium 600-800 sq metre size allotments Popular destination	East of entry road
	<b>Opportunity</b> A fully fenced dog park or designated as a dog off-leash area in the south east corner of the reserve.			
11	Melton West	West Melton Rec. Reserve <b>Score - 47</b>	District Reserve Large catchment - developed area. Medium 800 sq metre size allotments	West side of James Cook Drive
	<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash area to the west of James Cook Drive			
12	Melton West	Arnolds Creek Linear Reserve <b>Score - 46</b>	Linear Reserve Large catchment - developing area. Medium 600-800 sq metre size allotments	North-west of Navan Park
	<b>Opportunity</b> Designated dog off-leash trail other than within 5 metres of the pathway			

Parks and reserves not listed as possible trial dog off-leash sites will not necessarily be excluded from consideration as future dog off-leash sites. Similarly, other sites may be referred for consideration as they come on line or as opportunities are identified.

Council originally identified four sites that should be investigated as possible sites for dog parks. These site were Navan Park in West Melton, Boronia Drive Reserve in Hillside, MacPhersons Park in Melton West and Town Centre Park in Melton.

Two of these sites, Navan Park and Boronia Drive Reserve, are recommended for development as dog parks because of their high to medium profile, their capacity to accommodate a significant number of activity components, and because there will be minimal conflict in terms of other activities on the site.

Town Centre Park ..... Do we need to talk re this one ??

## 6. What will influence development priorities

The following criteria will help determine priorities for development or enhancement of dog off-leash areas. In the future priority projects will be those that:

- address a gap or shortfall in the number of dog off-leash opportunities in the area
- respond to changes in demographics and the dog population in the area e.g. increased housing density, increase or decrease in the number of dogs in the area
- enhance the quality and variety of dog off-leash areas in line with the dog off-leash area design framework.
- Achieve / fulfil other community health a wellbeing outcomes e.g. community engagement, physical activity

- need to accommodate a different or higher level of use
- that achieve the greatest benefit for the cost
- that address risk management and risk mitigation issues
- improve the attractiveness of dog off-leash areas.

## **7. Monitoring and reviewing of trial sites**

Trail sites will be monitored for 8 months during which time the following will be assessed:

- the number and nature of customer requests lodged with council in relation to trial dog off-leash sites
- the resources required to attend to customer service requests
- resources required to maintain and manage trial sites

Following the trial period council will determine whether to retain trial sites as permanent dog off-leash areas, modify the area designated for dog off-leash activities, and / or extend the number of dog off-leash sites in the shire.



## 8. Action Plan

The following table lists the actions recommended to address the issues discussed in the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.

Recommendation	Priority & Responsibility	Resourcing
<b>Subject - Dog off-leash provision</b>		
1. Consider the implementation of the trial dog off-leash sites recommended in section 5.	<b>Priority 1</b> Council - <b>AMS</b> , OS, R Other - dog clubs, residents groups	Within operational budget
2. Proposed dog off-leash areas should be evaluated in line with the criteria contained in the People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.	<b>Ongoing</b>	Within operational budget
3. Future council budgets to consider the resources required to ensure dog off-leash areas are managed and maintained in accordance with desired open space and animal management service standards.	<b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b> Council - <b>AMS</b> , OS, R	Based on estimate of costs / site following initial trial period
4. Council to consider allocating funds to develop an education and information program to that focuses on responsible pet ownership in parks.	<b>Priority 2-Ongoing</b> Council - <b>AMS</b> , OS, PR, R Other - dog clubs, residents groups, schools, adjoining councils	Yr1-Program framework Yr2-\$10,000
5. Work with local and regional providers of dog obedience training to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- encourage dog owners and their dogs into education programs</li> <li>- reinforce council requirements of dog owners in parks.</li> </ul>	<b>Priority 2-Ongoing</b> Council - <b>AMS</b> , OS, PR, R Other - dog clubs, residents groups, schools, adjoining councils	Yr1-Program framework developed Yr2-\$10,000
<b>Subject - Dog litter</b>		
6. Council to consider a community – council partnership based on the Warringah Council ‘Community Watch Dog project’ to proactively deal with managing the issue of dog litter in parks. This would involve consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- involving and training volunteers</li> <li>- providing litter bag dispensers that can be attached to dog leads</li> <li>- selling biodegradable plastic bags,</li> </ul>	<b>Priority 2-Ongoing</b> Council - <b>AMS</b> , PR, OS, R  Other - DSE, schools, dog clubs, residents groups, veterinarians, animal welfare organisations, adjoining councils	Yr1-Program framework developed \$5,000 Yr2-Volunteer training / promotion / bag supply \$10,000 Yr3-ongoing support/bag supply

Recommendation	Priority & Responsibility	Resourcing
or partner with other outlets to sell bags.		etc. \$3,000
7. Council to consider a joint council-schools initiative as part of council's responsible pet ownership program.	<b>Priority 3-Ongoing</b> Council - <b>AMS, PR, OS, R</b>  Other – DSE, dog obedience clubs, veterinarians, professional dog trainers, animal welfare organisations, adjoining councils	Yr1-Program framework developed Yr2-\$10,000
8. As part of council's community education and awareness program: - reinforce, through a focused information campaign, council's local law that that requires dog walkers to carry a plastic bag / receptacle when walking a dog in a public place, and to pick up after their dog - adopt an educational approach, with the support of dog owners / walkers, to deal with the issue of dog litter.	<b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b> Council - <b>AMS, PR, OS, R</b>  Other - DSE, schools, dog clubs, residents groups, veterinarians, animal welfare organisations,	Yr1-Develop media / promotional strategy  Refer also action 6
<b>Subject - Gathering places</b>		
9. Ensure dog off-leash areas are planned and designed in line with the provision framework contained in the Melton Open Space Strategy and the Dogs, People and Parks Strategy.	<b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b> Council – <b>OS, AMS, R</b>	Within operational budget
10. Encourage social gatherings and events for dog owners / walkers in appropriate dog off-leash areas, and the use of these areas by commercial service providers.	<b>Priority 3-Ongoing</b>  Council – <b>OS, AMS, R</b>	Within operational budget
11. Promote council requirements relating to permits for use of parks and reserves for community and commercial activities.	<b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b>  Council – <b>OS, AMS, PR, R</b>	Within operational budget
<b>Subject - Universal design</b>		
12. Ensure universal design principles are applied to the planning and design of dog off-leash areas, including amenities such as accessible car parking, pathways and seating, and where appropriate, fencing and gateways.	<b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b>  Council – <b>OS, R, AMS</b>	Within operational budget

Recommendation	Priority & Responsibility	Resourcing
<b>Subject - Fencing of dog off-leash areas</b>		
<p>13. Fencing of dog off-leash areas will generally only be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where there is a need to provide a dog off-leash area but insufficient room to do this without using fencing</li> <li>- where there is a need to consider fencing as a risk management strategy e.g. near busy roads</li> <li>- when the area is a designated 'fenced dog park'</li> <li>- at 'district' and municipal' level sites only, that is not at parks classified as 'local' level parks</li> <li>- where provision is to be made for people with special needs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b></p> <p>Council – <b>OS, R, AMS</b></p> <p>Others – residents, aged / disability groups, dog clubs / trainers</p>	<p>Within operational budget</p>
<b>Subject - Play spaces, picnic and BBQ facilities</b>		
<p>14. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce council's General Local Law that requires dogs to be on a leash when outside designated dog off-leash areas.</p>	<p><b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b></p> <p>Council – <b>AMS</b></p>	<p>Within operational budget</p>
<b>Subject - Sports fields and surrounding parkland</b>		
<p>15. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce council's General Local Law that requires dogs to be on a leash in and around sports fields unless the area is designated as a dog off-leash area, or unless a special permit has been granted.</p>	<p><b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b></p> <p>Council – <b>AMS</b></p> <p>Other – residents, dog clubs,</p>	<p>Within operational budget</p>
<p>16. As part of a community education and information program (refer recommendation 4) reinforce that all sporting activities have precedence over dog off-leash activities on sports fields.</p>	<p><b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b></p> <p>Council – <b>AMS</b></p> <p>Other – residents, dog clubs,</p>	<p>Within operational budget</p>
<b>Subject - Waterways and wildlife corridors</b>		
<p>17. Council to consider the inclusion of water elements / environments in the planning of municipal level dog off-leash facilities.</p>	<p><b>Priority 3</b></p> <p>Council – <b>OS, R, AMS</b></p> <p>Other – residents, dog clubs</p>	<p>Within operational budget</p>

Recommendation	Priority & Responsibility	Resourcing
<b>Subject - Trails</b>		
18. Council to consider dog off-leash activities along trails in line with the site evaluation criteria in People, Dogs and Parks Strategy.	<b>Priority 1-Ongoing</b> Council – <b>OS, R, AMS</b> Other – residents, dog clubs	Within operational budget
<b>Subject - Partnerships</b>		
19. Council to consider partnerships with residents, schools, commercial service providers and community groups that address issues and identify initiatives that result in positive outcomes for people and dogs in parks.	Refer actions 7 and 8	Refer actions 7 and 8
<b>Subject - Management and maintenance of dog off-leash areas</b>		
20. That the trial dog off-leash sites identified in section 5 of the strategy be monitored for a period of 8 months during which time the resourcing implications associated with these sites will be evaluated.	<b>Priority 1</b> Council – <b>OS, R, AMS</b> Other – residents, dog clubs	Within operational budget

## 9. Information Sheets

### Information Sheet 1 – Analysis of short-listed sites for trial off-leash sites

#### Site - BOTANICA SPRINGS LINEAR RESERVE

**Type of site** – Linear reserve - incorporating a waterway and associated shared path.

**Suburb** - Brookfield

**Location** - Brooklyn Road to Blackdog Drive

**Evaluation Score** – 47

**Survey** - Not tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey, but was nominated by a number of survey respondents as a site that should be considered as a dog off-leash area.

#### Opportunities / advantages

- The 800 metre length of reserve provides access to an extended dog off-leash area via a number of streets and access points
- The pathway is not a 'commuter pathway' so minimal likely conflict with bicycles
- Because the site is a pathway it encourages walking (in line with council objectives to increase physical activity)

#### Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site

- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

#### Site - LAUCLAN'S FIELD

**Type of site** – Drainage Retarding Basis

**Suburb** - Hillside

**Location** - Northwest Corner Melton Highway and Calder Park Drive

**Evaluation Score** – 44

**Survey** – Tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey. Strongly supported as a dog off-leash site with 85% of household survey respondents supporting the site as a dog off-leash area.

#### Opportunities / advantages

- Opportunity as a 'local' dog off-leash area
- High profile site due to the proximity of the major roads
- The site is a water-retarding basin so will have limited use only as a sporting venue. The site is used for pre-season training in spring only so minimal conflict of use
- Opportunity to add additional trees, vegetation to create seating / social areas in south-east corner.
- Fenced reserve, therefore additional protection from adjoining roads.

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Would need to manage interface between the playground and any dog off-leash activities
- Site enhancements such as shade trees and seating to improve the attractiveness and amenity of the site and establish it as a community hub
- Review of the fencing should be considered given the site is on a busy intersection. Dogs can be prone to bounding up to other dogs and this can occur as dogs approach the park and or leave it. Care needs to be taken to minimise this occurring on adjoining footpaths and busy roadways
- Use may be limited during wet periods
- Car parking limited because of frontage on busy street corner and small residential street frontage
- Limited space to develop permanent infrastructure, if required for a dog park / dog activity centre.
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site - BORONIA DRIVE RESERVE**

**Type of site** – Park / reserve (undeveloped site)

**Suburb** - Hillside

**Location** - South side of Boronia Drive

**Evaluation Score** – 41

**Survey** – Tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey. Strongly supported as a dog off-leash site with 89% of household survey respondents supporting the site as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Easy to establish part as a dog off-leash area in the very short term, and as a trial site because there are no other activities with which it would conflict
- A large undeveloped site of 7.05 ha that provides the opportunity to build in buffers between any dog off-leash activities and residential properties, incorporate a pavilion and storage facilities that caters for future users, and provide off-street car parking etc.
- Master plan being prepared for the site includes consideration as a dog off-leash area and/or provision of a dog park within the reserve
- Good opportunity for consideration as:
  - A local / district level off-leash area in the short term
  - a significant dedicated dog off-leash area with a range of different activity spaces and environments in the medium to longer term
  - a fully fenced dog park in the medium to longer term
  - and / or as a site that is dedicated to dog activities including as a possible permanent base for a dog club and associated events and infrastructure in the medium to longer term
- Good connection to the north and the south via Stoney Creek Linear Reserve, which includes a shared path
- Development likely to occur to the reserve including landscaping, provision of play space and associated community infrastructure.



**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Will require significant landscaping, shade, seating etc. to make the site a pleasant site to visit, to encourage its use as a community hub and to delineate dog off-leash areas
- Will provide for far fewer residents than a number of other sites because there are far fewer residents in the catchment due to the low density dwellings to the north, although higher density dwellings exist to the south, thereby resulting in higher demand
- Will need clear communication to explain to the community that only part of the site will be considered as a dog off-leash area due to other recreation demands and the size of the site. Potential exists to use the creek as a physical separation between the two uses
- Any significant development as a major dog activity precinct or dog park should be well planned to:
  - ensure a quality and standard of provision that is associated with a major dog activity precinct or dog park e.g. vegetation, activity areas, seating, shade, educational / agility equipment, scramble areas etc.
  - ensure ongoing costs are minimised by addressing maintenance requirements and ensuring the design addresses these e.g. appropriate ground surfacing for hard wear areas as in the case of entry / exit areas, social areas, hard play areas, educational / agility equipment
- Will require significant resources if it is to be developed as a major dog activity precinct or dog park. The actual cost will depend on the decision to incorporate fenced areas, the type of landscaped environments planned, equipment installations etc.
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – STONEY CREEK LINEAR RESERVE**

**Suburb** - Hillside

**Type of site** – Linear reserve - incorporating a waterway and associated shared path.

**Location** – Melton Highway, Hillside to Heysen Parkway, Caroline Springs (via Boronia Road Reserve)

**Evaluation Score** – 49

**Survey** – Not tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey, but was nominated by a number of household survey respondents as a site that should be considered as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Provides linear link to Boronia Road Reserve (possible dog activity area)
- Would provide good access to a possible municipal dog activity centre / dog off-leash area at Boronia Creek Reserve for residents of north Caroline Springs and south-west Hillside
- Possible off-leash linear pathway for residents in the north of Caroline Springs and the south-west / north-west of Hillside
- The pathway is not a commuter pathway so minimal likely conflict with bicycles
- Because the site is a pathway it encourages walking (in line with council objectives to increase physical activity)

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Will provide for fewer residents than a number of other sites because there are fewer residents in the catchment because of low density residential development directly surrounding the area, although there is potential demand from higher density areas of Hillside and Caroline Springs
- Limited opportunity in the Caroline Springs area due to narrow width of the reserve. Hillside area is quiet wide and therefore greater opportunity exists
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – BLACK KNIGHT WAY RESERVE**

**Suburb** - Kurunjang

**Type of site** – Local Reserve

**Location** – Southwest corner Dalray Crescent and Black Knight Way

**Evaluation Score** – 44

**Survey** – Tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey. Strongly supported as a dog off-leash site with 91% of household survey respondents supporting the site as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Large undeveloped reserve (2.44 ha) adjacent to Little Blind Creek Linear Reserve
- Surrounded by conventional blocks (600 m2).

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Future development of the reserve and potential uses that may result in conflict as a result of established off leash use
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – ARNOLDS CREEK (WEST BRANCH) LINEAR RESERVE**

**Type of site** – Linear reserve - incorporating a waterway and associated shared path.

**Suburb** - Melton

**Location** – From Faircroft Drive to Brooklyn Road Brookfield

**Evaluation Score** – 47

**Survey** – Not tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey, but was nominated but a number of survey respondents as a site that should be considered as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Provides a number of access points for residents

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Much of the northern section of the reserve is undeveloped open space which is well suited to use as an off leash area
- The southern section is adjacent to the Melton Christian College. Consultation is required with the college to ensure any potential conflict is minimised. Possible use of varying times for off leash areas in this location
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – HANNAH WATTS PARK**

**Type of site** – District Park

**Suburb** - High Street, Melton

**Location** – Area of the park to the west of the lake

**Evaluation Score** – 46

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Well known destination reserve
- Strong linkages with the shared path network.

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Some sections of the community may not easily accept the designation of part of the park as a dog off-leash area
- High usage road to the north
- Upgrading of fencing required along High Street
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – MT CARBERRY RESERVE**

**Type of site** – District Reserve

**Suburb** – Melton South

**Location** – Exford Road

**Evaluation Score** – 47

**Survey** - Tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey. Strongly supported as a dog off-leash site with 87% of household survey respondents supporting the site as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Destination reserve in the Melton South area.
- Well known, easily recognised reserve
- Large reserve that has potential for multiple uses

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Clearly defining areas of off leash
- Management of play space area
- Provision of additional seating
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – FRASER STREET RESERVE**

**Type of site** – District Park

**Suburb** – Melton South

**Location** – East end of Fraser Street, abutting Toolern Creek Linear Reserve

**Evaluation Score** – 45

**Survey** - Not tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey, but was nominated but a number of survey respondents as a site that should be considered as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Large reserve which has limited development. Abuts Toolern Creek Linear Reserve.
- Well suited due to strong links to Toolern Creek Linear Reserve

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Provision of infrastructure such as seating
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – NAVAN PARK**

**Type of site** – District Park

**Suburb** – Melton West

**Location** – East side of entry road

**Evaluation Score** – 53

**Survey** - Tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey. Strongly supported as a dog off-leash site with 87.5% of household survey respondents supporting the site as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Easy to establish part as a dog off-leash area in the very short term, and as a trial site because the site does not have a significant level of use
- Good separation between other designated activity zones in the park such as the play space, picnic and BBQ areas play
- Good opportunity for consideration as:
  - a local / district level off-leash area in the short term
  - a significant dedicated dog off-leash area with a range of different activity spaces and

- environments in the medium to longer term
- a fully fenced dog park in the medium to longer term
- and / or as a site that is dedicated to dog activities including as a possible permanent base for a dog club and associated events and infrastructure in the medium to longer term
- Situated within a large residential catchment
- Located on a significant linear pathway that runs north along the Arnolds Creek line.

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Site enhancements such as shade trees and seating to improve the attractiveness and amenity of the site and establish it as a community hub
- Fencing should be considered given the site is on a busy intersection. Dogs can be prone to bounding up to other dogs and this can occur as dogs approach the park and or leave it
- Care needs to be taken to minimise this occurring on adjoining footpaths and busy roadways
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – ARNOLDS CREEK**

**Type of site** – Linear Reserve

**Suburb** – Melton West

**Location** – Northwest of Navan Park

**Evaluation Score** – 46

**Survey** - Tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey. Strongly supported as a dog off-leash site with 87.5% of household survey respondents supporting the site as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Abutting Navan Park which is a well know park in the area.
- Accessible space

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Local roads either side of the reserve may require fencing. Risk assessment should be undertaken
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.

**Site – WEST MELTON RECREATION RESERVE**

**Type of site** – District Park

**Suburb** – Melton West

**Location** – West side of James Cook Drive

**Evaluation Score** – 47

**Survey** - Tested as a dog off-leash area as part of the household survey. Strongly supported as a dog off-leash site with 91% of household survey respondents supporting the site as a dog off-leash area.

**Opportunities / advantages**

- Site not extensively used for other recreation activities
- Has attractive treed area
- Play space is on the other side of the road with recreation facilities so minimal conflict with children's play and other recreation activities.

**Issues that will need to be addressed if designated a shared recreation and dog off-leash site:**

- Provision of seating
- Generic issues relating to community information / education, the need for monitoring with compliance with local laws, signage, seating etc.



## Information Sheet 2 – Demographic summary

Suburb	Households			People			Estimated dog pop. 2011 *	Number of dogs/100 people 2011	Number registered dogs 2011
	Number H'holds 2011	Number H'holds 2031	H'hold growth 2011-2031	Population 2011	Population 2031	Pop. growth 2011-2031			
Brookfield <sup>2</sup> .	1323	2940	1617	4239	8902	4663	874	21	765
Burnside <sup>2</sup> .	1506	2308	802	4428	6193	1765	761	17	405
Burnside Heights <sup>1</sup> .	1532	1933	401	4746	5273	527	303	6	265
Caroline Springs <sup>1</sup> .	6965	7883	918	20711	20557	-154	1727	8	1727
Diggers Rest <sup>3</sup> .	789	3027	2238	2098	7892	5794	352	17	308
Eynesbury <sup>3</sup> .	104	1724	1620	322	4711	4389	40	12	35
Hillside <sup>1</sup> .	4519	4836	317	15270	14289	-981	1619	11	1451
Kurunjang <sup>1</sup> .	3090	3700	610	9271	10055	784	1630	18	1426
Melton <sup>1</sup> .	3140	3449	309	7730	8420	690	1651	21	1376
Melton South <sup>1</sup> .	3539	5036	1497	9045	12244	3199	1693	19	1481
Melton West <sup>1</sup> .	4714	6385	1671	14361	17214	2853	2365	16	2069
Rural Balance <sup>3</sup> .	1132	12732	11600	3832	37551	33719	431	11	377
Taylors Hill / Taylors Hill West <sup>1</sup> .	3695	6473	2778	12339	18716	6377	809	7	797
Toolern <sup>3</sup> .	157	17087	16930	447	54,686	54239	189	42	165
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,205</b>	<b>79,513</b>	<b>43,308</b>	<b>108,839</b>	<b>226,703</b>	<b>117,864</b>	<b>14456</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12647</b>

1. Indicates fully / largely established area    2. Indicates an area that is partially established    3. Indicates an area that is unestablished or has low population density

\* Based on actual door / dog count conducted by council in 2010.

^ Based on average of 10 dogs / 100 people which is indicative of the number of dogs per 100 people in the growth areas. It is not based on existing level of dog ownership in each suburb, which in some suburbs is high. The increase in dog numbers may exceed this number some suburbs, while in other suburbs numbers may be less.

### Information Sheet 3 - Literature review and references

This appendix provides a summary of documents relevant to the project

#### Part 1 – Council Documents

##### Document 1 - Council Plan 2010-2013 (Revised 2010)

Findings of relevance to the Melton Off-leash Policy

- Vision:
  - To work for the wellbeing of the whole community and providing services and resources to offer benefits and lifestyle choices for all residents. p 6.
  - To promote sustainability and provide recreational facilities for the broader community p6.
  - Commits to the delivery of additional services, parks to improve and protect the quality of life, the built and natural environments p10.
- Key Result Areas - Six Key Result Areas are identified that provide the focus for service planning and provision between 2009 and 2013. Of these, two are relevant to the issue of creating off-leash Dog Parks. These are:
  - Key Result Area 1 - Community Health and Wellbeing p.10.
    - Strategic Objective of KRA1 relevant to the project:
      - 1.2 Provide opportunities for people to come together, socialise and be involved in their neighbourhood
      - 1.3 Improve physical, social and mental health and wellbeing for a safe, active and healthy community
    - Strategic Indicators of KRA1 p.10
      - Healthy, safe and inclusive communities
      - Accessibility to services provided by Council
  - Key Strategic Plans relevant to KRA 1
    - Municipal Public Health Plan
    - Ageing Well Strategy
    - Youth Strategy
    - Leisure and Open Space Strategy 2004
    - Community Development Strategy 2009-12
  - Key Result Area 2 - Protecting and enhancing our environment:
    - Strategic Objectives of KRA2 relevant to the project p.11
      - 2.1 Encourage and promote sustainable living
      - 2.2 Protect and enhance our natural environment and cultural heritage
      - 2.3 Enhance the quality of urban and natural environments
      - 2.4 Provide services and infrastructure that are environmentally sustainable
    - Strategic Indicators of KRA2 relevant to the project p.11
      - Responsible natural resource management (e.g. natural reserves, water and energy conservation)
      - Environmental protection and enhancement
    - Key Strategic Plans relevant to KRA 2 1.
      - Leisure and Open Space Strategy 2004
  - Key Result Area 4 - Managing Growth (ensuring our fast growth is well planned and

- managed)
- Strategic Objective of KRA4 relevant to the project p.13
  - 4.4 Provide access to quality infrastructure and services
- Strategic Indicators of KRA4 relevant to the project
  - Accessibility to community infrastructure provided by Council
  - Provide access to quality infrastructure and services
- Key Result Area 6 - Community engagement (Fostering a well-connected and engaged community)
  - Strategic Objectives of KRA6 relevant to the project p.15
    - 6.1 Consult and involve the community to provide responsive, high quality services and facilities
    - 6.2 Enhance volunteering and leadership within the community
    - 6.4 Ensure that all groups have an equal opportunity to participate and be involved
  - Strategic indicators relevant to the project p.15
    - Democratic and engaged communities
    - Increase in volunteers in Council programs

## **Document 2 – Domestic Animal Management Plan – 2008-2011**

Summary of findings relevant to the project:

- Strong community support for:
  - more and clearer signage in parks and to develop clear on/off leash areas p13
  - higher presence of Local Laws Officers in parks and off-leash areas; and waste dispensing bags/devices p13
  - off-leash areas, with a particular emphasis on parks that can be easily accessed by older residents or those with disabilities p13
- Recommendation to:
  - Review Dog on Leash areas and Orders, with a view to increasing the number of off-leash areas (Recommendation 3.5.2)
  - Actions - Identify additional / sites suitable for dog off-leash areas, with a focus on sites that will be suitable for disabled users; Provide a report for council on suitable sites and establishment costs; Seek community feedback on proposed sites; Introduce new sites through community awareness campaign

## **Document 3 – Municipal Public Health Plan – 2008-2012**

Findings relevant to the Melton Off-leash Policy are:

- Identifies four environments that influence health and wellbeing of which two of are relevant to the Melton Off-leash Policy. p.16. These are:
  - The Built / Physical Environment: Altering our surroundings for example, through buildings, parks and facilities, roads, paths, and other infrastructure
  - The Social Environment: Creating opportunities for people to participate in the life of the community
- Notes that the leading causes of ill health in the shire are chronic diseases tobacco use, alcohol harm, physical inactivity, high blood pressure and obesity as the most important risk factors causing the disease burden p.19 and local health priorities align with meeting these challenges p.21.
- Key issues identified by residents included:
  - A desire for a friendly and supportive social environment with healthy lifestyles promoted across all life stages. p.23

- A built environment that promotes fitness, health, and community connectivity. p.23
- Also Identifies 7 health priorities of which two are relevant to the Melton Off-leash Policy:
  - Priority 3 – Healthy lifestyle
    - Strategy to raise community awareness of the benefits of healthy lifestyles.
  - Priority 6 - Support the development of sustainable built environments.
    - Strategy – Promote healthy town planning.p.34
- Next 4 Years
  - Establish a Steering Committee to assist with the implementation and review of *'Health and Wellbeing in the Shire of Melton'*. p.24
  - Promote the benefits of lifelong physical activity through the provision of well-planned sporting facilities, open space reserves, playgrounds and walking/ cycle trail networks. p.30
  - Support planning initiatives that maximise opportunities for active and passive physical activity. p.34

#### **Document 4 – How Open Space Contributes to People's Health and Wellbeing as part of the Review of Municipal Public Health Plan**

Findings relevant to the Melton Off-leash Policy:

- Number identifying that open space important for dog owners (e.g. walking, health of dogs, training)
  - Hanna Watts Park meeting 1. 7/10/10 – 18
  - Hanna Watts Park meeting 2. 7/10/10 – 6
  - Caroline Springs meeting 24/7/10 – 11
  - Woodgrove station 31/7/10 - 6
- Number identifying that open space is important as a meeting place for dog owners
  - Hanna Watts Park meeting 1. 7/10/10 – 10
  - Hanna Watts Park meeting 2. 7/10/10 – 4
  - Woodgrove station 31/7/10 - 4
- Number identifying that more dog friendly areas / fenced dog parks / litter bags etc. would provide better for their needs
  - Hanna Watts Park meeting 1. 7/10/10 – 15
  - Hanna Watts Park meeting 2. 7/10/10 – 5
  - Caroline Springs meeting 24/7/10 – 1
  - Woodgrove station 31/7/10 - 4
- Melton Community Hall meeting – 16/10/10 p32
  - Directions from meeting including the need for off-lead areas for dogs with the following considerations:
    - Dangerous dogs to be muzzled
    - Strategic locations i.e. not near schools/playgrounds
    - Fenced
    - Water available
    - Poop bags and bins
    - 2 -3 acres in size
    - Owner responsibility encouraged
    - Seating and shaded areas
    - Grassy areas
    - Well-surfaced perimeter fence

## **Document 5 – Ageing Well Strategy 2004-2016**

Findings relevant to the Melton Off-leash Policy:

- Notes that the demographics of three councils (Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Melton) included in this strategy differ.p.1
  - Melton has a population that has is younger and comprised of a larger proportion of Trade and blue-collar workers than the Melbourne average p10. Melton comprises of a greater number of families with children p.12 than the Melbourne average. Over the period of the strategy, a significant increase (280%) in the proportion of people aged 70 years and over is expected in Melton. p.3
  - The Shire of Melton is the tenth most disadvantaged local government area in the Melbourne Statistical Division. p.11.
  - In Maribyrnong 41% of people 75 years and older live alone. This is double the Melbourne metropolitan figure. p.2. Maribyrnong is an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage (Attachment A).
  - In Brimbank, 61% of the population aged 65 years and over are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. p.3
- Issues of concern relevant to the Melton Off-leash Policy: included concern over the ability of the ageing to remain socially connected. p.5
- Strategies and priorities arising from the community consultation included:
  - To encourage older people to be more active, by providing them with opportunities in a safe and supportive environment. p.6
  - To support older people to participate in community activities in local meeting places by providing access to affordable recreation, travel and leisure opportunities. p.6
- Next 6 years
  - A Specific action in Brimbank is to maximise community participation and social connectedness. p12

## **Document 6 – Youth Strategy 2009-2014**

Findings relevant to the Melton Off-leash Policy:

- Noted that Melton has a relatively large proportion of unemployed (p.46) and disengaged youth. p.47
- Residents strongly advocated for increased sporting and non-sporting recreational activities and facilities. p.10
- Identification of four key directions of which one is relevant:
  - Vibrant and Active Lifestyle – to meet the needs for entertainment, arts and culture, physical exercise, information and support. This includes access to a range of free and/or low cost activities and facilities. p.10
- Achieved to date
  - Feasibility paper re subsidising low income young people to begin and remain in sport 4 x School holiday 'try a sports' day. p.29
- Next four years:
  - Implement list of sports for 'try a sports' day Over school holiday times.p.29



**Document 7 - Leisure & Open Space Strategy 2004 – Vol 1 includes the recommendations from the strategy.**

Findings of relevance to the Melton Off-leash Policy:

- These documents provide Melton Shire Council with extensive research and a clear action plan to guide the management and development of the Shire's leisure and open space facilities and amenities to provide a range of opportunities that promotes a sense of community and individual wellbeing. p.3.
- There are two recommendations arising from this strategy relevant to the Melton Off-leash Policy:
  - Action 16
    - Establishing a Council position statement in relation to dogs in public places which should consider Council's social policy position relating to dogs in community e.g. benefits, compliance policy, and responsible pet ownership policy. p.17
    - This action plan was scheduled to be conducted in 2005
  - Action 17
    - Investigating a range of options for accommodating dogs in community settings This should consider, fenced and non-fenced areas, on-leash activity stations (equipment), off-leash activity areas (with equipment), and identify innovative community participation and education programs (research).
    - This action was to be conducted in 2006

**Document 8 - Leisure & Open Space Strategy 2004 – Vol 2**

Findings of relevance to the Melton Off-leash Policy:

- Identifies that the provision of a range of unstructured activities in accessible open space is important to encourage family participation but that consideration must be given to the projected threefold increase in couples without dependents by the year 2016. p.11
- The areas projected to experience the greatest increases in population are Caroline Springs (+21391 persons) followed by Taylors Hill (+11,798 persons) and Burnside (+10,495 persons). p.14
- Larger houses on smaller blocks will increase the importance and value of open space provision for the purpose of exercising dogs. p.14
- Notes that there is likely to be an increase demand for 'social' or non-club based recreation such as walking and an increasing isolation of community sectors such as the physically socially and financially isolated. p.17. Non-Australian born female residents are less likely to participate in sporting activities compared to males and Australian born residents. p.18.
- Notes that the ratio of female: male participation is decreasing. p.18.
- Residents showed strong support across all demographics for the concept of on and off leash dog areas in Council's parks and reserves with 84.1% of respondents to the household telephone surveys (p.26), 74.3% of those surveyed 'in-field' (p.32) supporting the concept. Community forums identified a need for on and off-leash parks (p.36). Young family forums identified that the lack of designated on and off leash dog areas was a problem (p.43). Older adult forums identified that designated on and off leash dog areas should be created (p.45)
- Only a small number of respondents supported the concept of on and off leash dog areas conditionally based upon dogs having to be 'muzzled'. p.26
- Dogs in Public Open Space. P58
  - Local law prohibits dogs being off leash in all public open space. Currently Melton Shire has no clear policy direction in relation to dogs in public places and this is creating issues in the broader dog walking community and also for specialised groups such as the Working Gun Dog Club.

- Notes that policy should recognise 'the role and value' of pets in the community, and consideration of a range of opportunities to provide for both dog owner and non-dog owners needs.
- Councils are exploring more innovative ways to provide for dogs in the community including: on-leash activity areas, off leash activity areas, and enclosed dog parks that provide a stimulating and enriching environment for both dogs and owners. These areas typically include activity and/or agility equipment, a variety of environments (e.g. water play, sand play), and amenities for owners (e.g. shade, seating)
- The strategy recommendations identify that a dog playground be developed at MacPherson Park in West Melton. p.83
- The 'Strategic Planning Management and Development Needs and Issues' identifies that the priority of 'Leisure Infrastructure Provision and Access' includes Dogs in Public Places (pp. 93-94) and states that any policy relating to Dogs in Public Places needs to consider pet ownership in a broad context including:
  - the opportunities that should be afforded pet owners,
  - the responsibilities that need to come with pet ownership,
  - the recognition of individual health and wellbeing benefits of pet ownership, and
  - recognition of broader community considerations such as safety, management, attitude of pet owners relating to appropriate behaviours of their animals e.g. anti-social behaviour, dog droppings.
  - recognises the need for a positive and co-operative approach to dog ownership issues and opportunities. Changing demographics and an increasing number of single person households will potentially increase dog ownership in future. p.94
  - extensive research identifies the positive benefits of animal ownership, particularly for the elderly and single person households.
  - Increased participation in walking as a recreational activity together with smaller urban house-blocks means that there will be an increasing need and benefit to approach the issue of responsible pet ownership in a positive manner.
  - Innovative options should be considered in providing for dogs in the open space environment in the Shire.
  - 84% of household survey respondents were supportive of the concept of off leash areas for dogs.

#### **Document 9 - Leisure & Open Space Strategy 2004 – Vol 3 (Planning and Management).**

Findings of relevance to the Melton Off-leash Policy:

- Regional category sporting reserves are identified as the appropriate venue for dog walking activities. p.12.
  - Such reserves have strong physical linkages with other open space facilities in close proximity e.g. waterways, linear corridors etc.p.10.
  - Attracts a wide range of different user interests & motivations. p.11.
  - Generally exceed 10 hectares in size (p.20) and include primary features such as: Lake, waterway, stands of trees, constructed water feature; bushland; landscaped grounds; open lawn areas, built structures such as boardwalks, observation areas and require high level of infrastructure to manage the access to sensitive areas e.g. trails, boardwalks, fencing, etc. p.21
  - Indicate that a fenced dog run is an appropriate element of Infrastructure design for regional reserves (p.20) as are other amenities such as toilets, shelters, shade, disabled access, and refreshment facilities of some type. They may also possibly include an educational centre, playgrounds and lookouts.
- A fenced dog run is also considered an appropriate infrastructure element for some district category reserves. p.21:

- Majority of visitors for a more limited range of interests or activities. p.11
- District category reserves are larger than 5 hectares and include features such as shelters, shade, accessible to the disabled, playgrounds, Lighting along paths, at park entrances and around carparks to increase safety and access, and include areas of bushland; landscaped grounds; open lawn areas, built structures such as boardwalks, etc.
- Protect environmental, landscape or cultural values. p.20.

#### Information Sheet 4 – References Summary

Australian Companion Animal Council. 2006. **Contribution of the Petcare Industry to the Australian Economy**. 6th Edition.

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#### Planning for Dogs in Open Space with a Focus on Integrated Planning and Dog Parks

Dr. L Marston, L Humphreys, Paper delivered at the Australian Institute of Animal Management Conference, 2009

### Information Sheet 5 – Industry consultation Summary

This background paper provides a summary of the responses provided by 21 local government staff who responded to the survey. Fifteen respondents work in the local laws sector and 6 work in the leisure / open space sector.

What best describes your council's current Dog Off-leash policy for PARKS/RESERVES?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Dogs on leash in all council parks at all times	14.3%	3
Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a small number of off-leash areas	19.0%	4
Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a significant number of dog off-leash parks / areas	28.6%	6
Dogs allowed off-leash in all council parks with the exception of a small number of on-leash only parks	14.3%	3
Dogs allowed off-leash in all council parks with the exception of a significant number of on-leash only parks	9.5%	2
Other (please specify)	14.3%	3
<b>answered question</b>		<b>21</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>0</b>

Is your council's policy Dog Off-leash policy likely to alter in the near future?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	28.6%	6
No	71.4%	15
Can you please explain how it might change?		8
<b>answered question</b>		<b>21</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>0</b>

Additional comments:

- We are currently reviewing the on/off leash provision in the municipality. We have engaged a consultant to undertake this review. A draft report is expected to go out for public consult later this month (march).
- Council is introducing fenced dog park locations
- Intention is to keep an eye on community need, other areas and growth areas and see what is required.
- Currently under review
- It is unlikely to change, but it is currently being reviewed as part of the review of the Animal Management Plan. Council decided to keep with the legislation and allow dogs to be exercised off-leash in parks, rather than create separate dog parks; and the Dog By-Law was amended to require dogs to be on-leash in parks when organised sport is being played.
- Incorporate some Melbourne Water properties in our Section 26 Order - other than that, it is working well
- Council has just adopted a new dog control Order under DAA
- Council made a resolution to declare an area within the Municipality to be a dog exercise area, and specify for that area the time dogs can be exercised, and the conditions to apply.

The following provides a summary of dog off-leash policy that applies in the relevant municipalities. The summary includes information from 23 councils.

	Municipality	No. DOL areas	Type of DOL policy	Is the policy likely to change?
1	Surf Coast Shire Council, Victoria	6 kms (with restrictions). Approximately 100 parks	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a significant number of dog off-leash parks / areas	No
2	Campaspe Shire Council, Victoria	31	No Dog-off leash policy - we have no dog parks and dogs allowed parks.	No
3	Darebin City Council, Victoria	36	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a significant number of dog off-leash parks / areas	No
4	Glen Eira City, Victoria	22	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a significant number of dog off-leash parks / areas	Yes - review being
5	Banyule City Council, Victoria	6 approx	Dogs allowed off-leash in all council parks with the exception of a small number of on-leash only parks	No
6	Whittlesea City Council, Victoria	1	On leash policy within all Council parks - have recently introduced a fenced dog park with the Whittlesea Regional Public Gardens	Yes - Introducing fenced dog parks
7	Maroondah, Victoria	35	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a significant number of dog off-leash parks / areas	No
8	City of Ballarat - Victoria	Most parks	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a small number of off-leash areas	Yes Intention is to keep an eye on community need, other areas and growth areas and see what is required.
9	Wodonga City Council, Victoria	1	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a small number of off-leash areas	No
10	Banyule City Council, Victoria	50 approximately	Dogs allowed off-leash in all council parks with the exception of a significant number of on-leash only parks	No
11	Ryde City Council, NSW	2 + 18 under trial	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a small number of off-leash areas	Yes Currently under review
12	Boroondara City Council, Victoria	42	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a significant number of dog off-leash parks / areas	No
13	Port Hedland Town Council	1	Dogs on leash in all council parks at all times	No
14	Marion City Council, South Australia	All parks	Dogs on leash in all council parks at all times	Unlikely Under review. Dogs on-leash in parks when organised sport is being played.
15	Knox City Council, Victoria	All parks other than 12 bushland areas	Dogs allowed off-leash in all council parks with the exception of a significant number of on-leash only parks	Yes Incorporate some Melbourne Water properties in our Section 26 Order - other than that, it is working well.
16	Kingston City	27	Mostly a dogs on leash policy,	No



	Council, Victoria		but with a significant number of dog off-leash parks / areas	
17	West Torrens City Council, South Australia	72	Other (please specify) - Dogs allowed off leash in all council parks with exception of 2 where dogs are not permitted	No
18	Litchfield Council Darwin, N.T.	1 (just)	Dogs on leash in all council parks at all times	Yes CL just declared its first DOL
19	Penrith City Council, NSW	6	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a small number of off-leash areas	No
20	Colac Otway Shire Council, Victoria	Several	Dogs allowed off-leash in all council parks with the exception of a small number of on-leash only parks	No
21	City of Casey, Victoria	Hundreds - too many to list	Dogs allowed off-leash in all council parks with the exception of a small number of on-leash only parks	No
22	Brimbank City Council	21	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a significant number of dog off-leash parks / areas	No
23	Macedon Ranges Shire Council Victoria	10	Mostly a dogs on leash policy, but with a small number of off-leash areas	No

#### Is your council likely to increase or decrease off-leash areas for dogs in the near future?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Likely to consider additional dog off-leash areas	28.6%	6
Likely to consider decreasing the number of dog off-leash areas	4.8%	1
Likely to retain the current level of provision	66.7%	14
<b>answered question</b>		<b>21</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>0</b>

Additional comments:

- Only introduced in January 2011
- Only Parks Vic land on leash and approx. 8 environmentally sensitive wetlands
- Increase in reported dog attacks have occurred since the increase in leash free parks. Number of Leash Free Areas / Parks are unsustainable from a resource point of view as expectation these will be monitored daily, This takes Rangers off other work.
- We have just opened our first fully fenced dog park and it is a huge success. Have recently obtained funding to install a second park next financial year.

#### IF YOUR COUNCIL IS CONSIDERING DECREASING dog off-leash areas can you please tell us why?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Because our open space has to cater for too many other activities	0.0%	0
Because council has received complaints	10.5%	2
Because it is too difficult for council to monitor these areas	10.5%	2
Because of the cost of maintaining these areas	5.3%	1
Because of concern over possible dog rushes or attacks	10.5%	2
Because some dog owners are not picking up their dog's droppings	0.0%	0
Because dog owners are not controlling their dogs adequately	10.5%	2

Not relevant for me, my council is not considering decreasing dog off-leash areas	84.2%	16
<b>answered question</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>2</b>

**IF YOUR COUNCIL IS CONSIDERING INCREASING dog off-leash areas, can you please tell us why?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Because of the demand from the community for more dog off-leash areas	21.1%	4
Because council wants to provide for the needs of dog owners	15.8%	3
Because there is an increase in the number of dog owners in the municipality	0.0%	0
Not relevant for me, my council is not considering increasing dog off-leash areas	63.2%	12
<b>answered question</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>2</b>

Additional comments:

- Popularity of our fenced dog play park.
- Demand from the community for more fenced off leash areas

**Does your council provide dog litter bag dispensers in any reserves?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No, we never have and are unlikely to in the future	21.1%	4
No, but we did in the past	15.8%	3
Yes, and we will continue to provide them	57.9%	11
Yes, but we are considering taking them out	5.3%	1
<b>answered question</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>2</b>

**If you have removed bag dispensers or are considering removing them can you please tell us why?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
People take / kept taking all the bags	10.5%	2
Too costly to keep replacing bags	10.5%	2
Council wants dog owners to be responsible for carrying their own bags at all times	21.1%	4
They were vandalised	21.1%	4
Not relevant for me, my council has not removed them/is not likely to remove them	68.4%	13
<b>answered question</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>2</b>

**Does your council have any fully fenced dog off-leash areas /local parks?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
YES, but not considering any more at this time	10.5%	2
YES, and is considering more	15.8%	3

No, but is considering them	15.8%	3
No, and is not considering any at this time	57.9%	11
<b>answered question</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>2</b>

**If your council is considering a /or more fully fenced dog off-leash areas, can you tell us why?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
It is an effective way to provide for dogs in small or busy reserves	10.5%	2
It provides dog owners with a safe place to go with their dogs	26.3%	5
It is a good focus for responsible pet ownership initiatives	10.5%	2
The community wants them	31.6%	6
They are good for elderly or disabled owners to let their dogs have a run in a confined area	10.5%	2
It keeps dogs out of sensitive environments but still allows them to use the reserve	21.1%	4
They are a good place for dogs to socialise in	10.5%	2
Not relevant we do not have / are not considering fenced areas for dogs	57.9%	11
<b>answered question</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>2</b>

**Which of the following best describes the amenities you have in dog off-leash areas?**

Answer Options	Not in any areas	Not any, considering some	In some areas	In some areas & considering more	In most areas	Don't have DOL areas	Response Count
Seating	2	0	9	1	6	1	19
Shaded areas / shelters	3	0	9	1	4	1	18
Water	4	1	7	1	5	1	19
Agility equipment /courses	10	1	2	2	2	1	18
Rock / vegetation scramble areas	11	1	4	0	1	1	18
Open ball play areas	2	0	5	1	8	1	17
Water features dogs can play in	15	1	1	0	0	1	18
Digging areas	16	1	0	0	0	1	18
<b>answered question</b>							<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>							<b>2</b>

Have you developed or know of any successful initiatives in relation to the following:					
Answer Options	Yes	Yes, willing to share	No, like to know more	No	Response Count
Indicating dog off-leash areas without cluttering the reserves/parks with too many signs	1	0	9	4	14
Getting more dog owners to pick up their dogs' droppings	2	1	11	3	17
Maintaining dog off-leash areas	3	0	9	3	15
Schools programs	3	3	5	6	17
Private / public program or activity partnerships relating to dogs	2	3	6	6	17
Responsible pet ownership initiatives	5	4	5	4	18
<b>answered question</b>					<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>					<b>2</b>

Additional comments:

- Patrols in parks, being out and about and talking to residents, this is part of our DAM Plan action
- We have dog poo bag dispensers in many areas; we have run education at schools in the past but not at the moment, with "Pet Pep" program run by Veterinary Association
- The park has only been going for a few months so am still working on all of this!
- Council has an education officer who visits schools to promote RPO and awareness, we also have an education dog on staff that we use.

Which of the following statements are true for your council?			
Answer Options	True for my council	Not so true for my council	Response Count
Council views dogs as an important part of family life for many residents	15	4	19
Dogs are a difficult issue to deal with in our community	11	8	19
The physical and mental benefits of dog ownership is recognised by our council	16	3	19
There is an increase in demand by dog owners for access to more parkland	10	9	19
On the whole dog owners manage their dogs well in local parks	16	3	19
We have a dog advisory group or similar	1	18	19
We have an education rather than a punitive approach to dealing with wayward pet owners	14	5	19
Any comments?			4
<b>answered question</b>			<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>			<b>2</b>

Would you be interested in....			
Answer Options	Interested	Not interested	Response Count
Strategies to deal with common issues relating to dogs in reserves	17	2	19
Information on how to set up and manage fully fenced dog parks	15	4	19
A online forum for discussing industry issues	14	5	19
Finding out where to go for practical courses on animal management	12	7	19
Other (please specify)			1
<b>answered question</b>			<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>			<b>2</b>

Has your council done any research on community attitudes and needs relating to dogs in the community?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	10.5%	2
Yes, and we are willing to share	15.8%	3
No, and I would be interested in any information	47.4%	9
No	26.3%	5
<b>answered question</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>2</b>

Which of the following best describes your municipality?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Inner metropolitan council	36.8%	7
Outer metropolitan council	15.8%	3
Metropolitan / rural fringe	5.3%	1
Growth area	10.5%	2
Rural	10.5%	2
Regional	15.8%	3
Other (please specify)	5.3%	1
<b>answered question</b>		<b>19</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>2</b>

#### General comments

- We provided a grant for community members to develop a fenced off-leash park in one of our reserves. It caused quite a bit of controversy at the time, but now is well accepted and used. We recently had Mars PetCare hold a corporate volunteering activity to add some agility equipment to the park. Community feedback is very positive about the project.
- Many of the areas for dogs within our shire are located on Department of Sustainability and Environment land and managed by a local coast committee. Council works closely in partnership with the local committee regarding dog regulations

- I thank you in advance for forwarding the results of this survey, and wish you and your staff all the very best in your endeavours.
- I am interested in any info that can help - also happy to share anything that we have developed.
- We regularly use Councils newspaper and local papers to promote all dog related issues, such as picking up after your dog, dogs need to be on leash, registration, micro-chipping and compulsory de-sexing for all new registrations of dogs and cats over 3 months of age (we have an Order in place). Next financial year we will be holding 4 dog events in our local parks, small gatherings of dog owners and will be providing information and fun activities etc.
- Litchfield Council has just enforced the By/ Laws 1st March 2011 and because it is rural 5 acres or more, we have a lot of pig hunters with some properties having up to 10 or more dogs Bull Mastiff ,Pitt Bull, Wolf Hounds etc. Council has an area of 3000 sq km and only 2 officers to enforce By Laws. We use the Police Summary Offence Act 75 A for dangerous dog issues, Even though the By Laws are enforced now it's more of an education to dog owner and schools education to change dog owners attitude. Any information will be welcome from you in regards to these matters.

### **Additional industry information**

#### **Brimbank Council**

- In May 2005 the Council resolved to make a new Order requiring dogs to be restrained by a leash in all public areas at all times except for some designated off-leash areas.
- Dogs must however be kept on a leash within any designated off-leash areas:
  - In conservation areas
  - within 30 metres of children's play spaces
  - in the vicinity of barbecue and outdoor eating areas
  - during formal sports events
  - in the vicinity of informal sports or social events
  - within 5 metres of a walking or bike path, and
  - where there may be heavy pedestrian traffic to or from a school.

### **Pet Information and Advisory Service**

Summary of discussion:

- Dog off-leash areas are important provision for dog owning residents who chose to walk and exercise with their pets
- Dogs and dog off-leash areas are an important part of
- Open space needs to be planned effectively to ensure adequate provision is made for dog owners
- It cannot be assumed that people who live in high-density areas and apartments will not own pets. Open space for dog owners and other residents will be even more important
- Responsible pet ownership information and programs very important

### **Bureau of Animal Welfare**

Summary of discussion:

- Important to collect accurate information about dog ownership so that planning and provision of services and open space is based on real data
- Melton is a proactive council that has conducted door knocks to determine the real level of ownership in the shire

## Information Sheet 6 - Resident consultation

### Household survey

Two hundred and fifty-seven residents and interested people completed an online survey. The following provide a summary of responses. Of the 257 people responding to the survey 205 own a dog.

Where respondents live				
Suburb	Where respondents live		Respondents that own a dog/s	
	Response Percent	Response Count	Response Percent	Response Count
Brookfield	7.8%	20	90.0	18
Burnside	0.4%	1	100.0	1
Burnside Heights	3.1%	8	62.5	5
Caroline Springs	19.8%	51	62.7	32
Diggers Rest	1.2%	3	33.3	1
Exford	1.6%	4	100.0	4
Hillside	3.5%	9	66.7	6
Kurunjang	11.7%	30	80.0	24
Melton	12.5%	32	90.6	29
Melton South	13.6%	35	88.6	31
Melton West	17.1%	44	81.8	36
Rockbank	0.8%	2	100.0	2
Taylors Hill	5.1%	13	84.6	11
Toolern Vale	1.9%	5	100.0	5
Total		257		205
<b>answered question</b>				<b>257</b>
<b>skipped question</b>				<b>1</b>

Age group of respondents		
Age groups	Response Percent	Response Count
Under 12	0.4%	1
13-18	1.2%	3
19-30	22.6%	58
31-50	48.6%	125
51-70	25.7%	66
Older than 70	1.6%	4
<b>answered question</b>		<b>257</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>1</b>

Is it appropriate to let DOGS OFF LEASH IN PARKS or reserves?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
YES, they should be allowed off leash in MOST PARKS	15.2%	39
YES, in most parks but only in an ALLOCATED AREA IN A PARK	23.0%	59
YES, but only in SOME PARKS	19.5%	50
YES, but only if they are in a FENCED AREA	31.1%	80
NO, dogs should be on a lead WHENEVER they are in parks	11.3%	29
<b>answered question</b>		<b>257</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>1</b>



**Why is it good to have Dog Off-Leash (DOL) areas in parks? You can select any number of reasons.**

Answer Options	True for me	Not true for me	Undecided	Response Count
It is good for dogs' health, they can have a good run around	228	15	14	257
Dogs can socialise with other dogs	200	30	27	257
Owners and families can play with their dogs	223	20	14	257
Dogs can run around even if their owners cannot or don't want to	198	43	16	257
People can talk to other people and their dog can still have a run	174	53	30	257
Families can go to the park together and do different things	169	63	25	257
I don't think dogs should be allowed in parks unless they are on a leash.	52	180	25	257
<b>answered question</b>				<b>257</b>
<b>skipped question</b>				<b>1</b>

**What may concern you about dogs being off leash in parks?**

Answer Options	True for me	Not True for me	Undecided	Response Count
Owners not picking up their dogs' droppings	192	41	12	245
Dogs annoying people who don't like dogs	144	85	11	240
Dogs annoying other dogs	151	79	10	240
Dogs rushing up to me or my family	129	99	9	237
Dogs running out onto nearby roads and getting hurt	208	32	6	246
Owners not being able to control their dogs	201	37	10	248
My dog running off	93	143	2	238
I don't have any real concerns	41	126	30	197
<b>answered question</b>				<b>257</b>
<b>skipped question</b>				<b>1</b>

**What sort of things would be GOOD TO HAVE in Dog Off-Leash (DOL) areas?**

Answer Options	Important to have	Not so important to have	Undecided	I don't support dog off-leash areas	Response Count
Things like comfortable seats and shade	171	54	12	20	257
Drinking water for dogs a people	215	19	4	19	257
Areas for dogs to scramble through	109	113	14	21	257
A fenced area	181	45	14	17	257
Separate fenced area for small dogs	90	120	30	17	257
Equipment for agility and confidence development	110	112	15	20	257
Fun things to do with your dog	135	92	11	19	257
Events	75	140	22	20	257
Features for people with disabilities	161	66	11	19	257
Dog obedience lessons	137	86	17	17	257
<b>answered question</b>					<b>257</b>

<b>skipped question</b>				<b>1</b>
<b>A FULLY FENCED dog off-leash area in some parks would be good because:</b>				
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Not so important</b>	<b>I don't support dog off-leash areas</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
It would separate dogs from other activities in the park	211	31	15	257
It gives less mobile people/older people a safe place to exercise their dogs	208	34	15	257
It provides another opportunity for people to meet other people with a similar interest	156	82	19	257
It would be a good place for responsible pet ownership initiatives	209	30	18	257
It would be a good place for dogs to socialise	199	39	19	257
It would allow dogs to use small parks that have other activities happening	176	60	21	257
<b>answered question</b>				<b>257</b>
<b>skipped question</b>				<b>1</b>

<b>Agree / disagree statements.</b>					
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Don't agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Not relevant for me, I don't have a pet</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
My/our pet/s are an important part of my/our family	224	1	2	30	257
I exercise more because I have a pet	178	37	9	33	257
My family exercises more because we have a pet	160	47	16	34	257
It is okay for dogs to be near playgrounds as long as they are on a leash	198	31	18	10	257
I/we talk to more people because I/we have a pet	159	48	16	34	257
It would be good to have more recreation activities for dog owners and their dogs	199	21	22	15	257
Dogs should not be allowed within 50mtres of a playground even if they are on a leash	55	170	24	8	257
<b>answered question</b>					<b>257</b>
<b>skipped question</b>					<b>1</b>

<b>I have a pet because:</b>				
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>True for me</b>	<b>Not so true for me</b>	<b>Not relevant to me, I don't have a pet</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
It is important to me to have a animal in my life	206	18	31	255
My pet/s give me a strong reason for living	139	81	30	250
My pet/s give me great comfort in times of need	183	37	31	251
They teach my children about compassion and responsibility	160	53	37	250
For protection or peace of mind	135	82	31	248
They encourage me to exercise	170	49	31	250
<b>answered question</b>				<b>257</b>
<b>skipped question</b>				<b>1</b>

The following table provides a summary of survey respondent's assessment of the suitability of a number of sites as possible dog off-leash areas.

Reserve	Of respondents that know of the site			
	Number Great/Good/ Possible site	% Great/Good/ Possible site	Number Unsuitable site	% Unsuitable site
Archer Drive, Kurunjang	50	89.3	6	10.7
Blacknight Way, Kurunjang	49	90.7	5	9.3
Boronia Drive Reserve, Hillside	41	89.1	5	10.9
Caroline Springs Lake Reserve	69	75.0	23	25.0
Glencarpel Crt, Hillside	37	80.4	9	19.6
Lauchlan's Field, Hillside	39	84.8	7	15.2
Mt Carberry Reserve, Melton Sth	100	87.0	15	13.0
Navan Park, West Melton	119	87.5	17	12.5
Parkwood Green, Hillside	38	71.7	15	28.3
Rosina Drive Reserve, Melton	53	76.8	13	19.7
Serpentine Reserve, Caroline Springs	59	83.1	12	16.9
West Melton Recreation Reserve	91	91.0	9	9.0

## Written comments

### Community groups

#### Caroline Springs Dog Club

Summary of discussions:

- Operating since 2001
- Over 150 members, with an average of 50 people training every week.
- Club runs **puppy class** (dogs under the age of 6 months), general obedience classes and agility lessons for dogs over 12 months.
- The aim of the club is to assist in training dogs in a fun and safe environment.
- club accepts dogs of all ages and does not discriminate between pure breed and cross breed dogs. All instructors are volunteers.
- Classes run every Sunday from February to December 9.30 - 10.40 at the Burnside Oval. Both session run for 1 hour duration.
- **Yearly Membership Fees** - \$40 Family (2 or more dogs or 2 or more trainers)
- \$30 Single (1 dog and 1 trainer)
- **Lesson Fee** - \$3 per dog per lesson when training.

#### Working Gun Dog Club

Summary of discussions:

- Supports dog off-leash areas:
  - Socialised dogs are better behaved
  - Dogs need opportunities for free running
  - Open space should cater for all community needs including needs of dog owners who want to walk in parks in the company of their dogs
- The club has 40 members, approximately 50 dogs. Membership has been as low as 30 and as high as 60/70 over the years
- Working Gun Dog Club is a member of the Sporting Shooters Association is the umbrella group and conducts 'infield trials (live game) and simulated trials
- The club uses Town Centre Park including the lake. The site works well for the club, which has been at the site for over 30 years
- Club needs:
  - Storage facilities. Club members cart a trailer to and from the site. Equipment currently stored at members houses
  - Undercover shelter. No shelter on trials days or for family activities e.g. BBQs that occur on site
  - Vehicle access around the lake. The existing track needs rebuilding / reinforcing
- Issues with the site:
  - People dump rubbish, including cars, which the club cleans up because they want to keep the park clean and do not want the rubbish to reflect badly on the club
- 

#### Melton Dog Obedience Club

#### TBI

## Information Sheet 7 - Design guidelines for dog off-leash areas

### 1.0 For all dog off-leash areas

- Pathways
  - Consider the use of pathways with different textured surfaces in the dog park. These can be used for education activities that develop confidence in different environments.
  - Pathways should provide good access for people with disabilities.
- Seating, shelters and signage
  - Seating, shelters and signage should be located away from entries and amenities like water stations. This will minimise activity and congestion at busy areas in the park and the potential for conflict between dogs
  - Make sure seating is not in the middle of an area such as dog agility equipment. This is particularly important if the equipment pieces are installed very close to each other
  - Provide seating in a social L-shape layout that encourages conversation
  - Seating should accommodate the needs of older and less mobile park users
  - Consider 'square platform / bench seating in some areas. This can then be used for doing education / obedience activities as well as general seating.
- Water
  - Provide several watering / drinking stations to avoid congestion
  - Do not install water stations with dog tie up facilities. Dogs should not be tied up at any time when in the dog park
  - The area around drinking stations and bowls should be drained and surfaced adequately to avoid the area becoming muddy and unsightly
  - Some sites may include water play amenities
  - Access to water bodies such as lakes and creeks should be well planned with defined and robust entry points. Access to these water bodies needs to take into account possible bacteria levels in the water, the likely presence of snakes.
- Tie up points
  - *Do not* provide tie up points for dogs. Dogs should never be left alone in dog off-leash areas. Further, a dog may become agitated and may resort to defensive behaviours if it is tied up and cannot escape from a confronting situation e.g. a pack of dogs.
- Dog litter
  - Provision of dog litter bag dispensers and bins should be in line with council's policy. Consideration should be given to policy that encourages dog owners to be fully accountable for their dogs in public places. This includes owners being responsible for having the means to pick up their dogs droppings and disposing of it appropriately.
- Vegetation and natural shade
  - Provide a number of shaded areas to minimise congestion
  - Use mounding to vary the terrain and natural features such as rock clamber areas to create interest
  - Use a variety of scented vegetation which is attractive to dogs
  - Be aware of some species of plants that can be toxic to dogs
  - Use trees and shrubs to create separate activity or play spaces within the park and to break dogs' lines of sight.
- Ground cover

- A variety of group cover should be considered for both ease of maintenance, to avoid unsightly wear and tear and to add an additional educational element to the dog park
- Consider hard surface, pee pebbles, granitic sand or tan bark depending on the requirements of the area. Well-used areas will need a more robust surface treatment and may require drainage e.g. around water taps, at entry points and around agility equipment
- Consider Tall Fescue Grass, Kentucky Bluegrass, and Ryegrass for best resistance to dog urine.
- Dog agility equipment
  - Agility equipment provides another education and confidence development aid
  - Equipment should not be based on competition agility equipment because of the height and gradient of some surfaces. Instead select equipment that simulates the activity but is of a lower height and gradient
  - Signage is needed to inform people of the purpose of the equipment and how to use it
  - Needs to be appropriately maintained.
- Signage and Information
  - Place signage away from entry points and social areas to avoid congestion
  - Signage should communicate dog park etiquette / code of conduct
  - Consider a brochure that provides guidelines for using the dog park and elements
- Play spaces, picnic areas and sports fields
  - Dogs should be on a short lead when within 50 metres of play equipment and picnic areas
  - Dogs should be on a short lead or within 20 metres of a sports field, spectators or pavilions when sporting activities are in progress

## **2.0 Additional considerations for a fenced dog park**

- Fencing
  - Black cyclone wire fencing of approximately 1.2 metres. This height and colour will minimise impact on the park and still provide a secure barrier for most dogs.
  - Consider separately fenced areas for small and larger dogs and / or a 'time-out' area if the room is available. This is a good strategy when providing for less mobile / older people who have small dogs and who do not want to be amidst the boisterous play of larger dogs
  - Minimise right-angled corners where possible to avoid dogs and people getting trapped / surrounded with no escape.
- Entries / exits
  - There should be more than one entry / exit point to minimise congestion.
  - Entries should be 'double gated' for security
  - Entries should be easily accessible for people in wheelchairs or using mobility aids
  - Entries should be placed along the long length of a fenceline. Avoid placing gates in or near a corner. Corner gates create squeeze points and the potential for conflict between dogs. A gate along a fence line means owners and dogs have a 180-degree escape route if any trouble occurs, unlike a corner where there is only a 90-degree escape option
  - Entries should be design so people in wheelchairs can access them easily.
- Pathways
  - Avoid pathways that follow the line of the fence to the dog park entry. This will reduce the likelihood of dogs *in* the dog park barking as they follow the newcomer

along the fence line and to the gate. It will also minimise congestion at the entry as dogs eagerly wait to greet new arrivals.

- If the dog park abuts a footpath along a street consider low level vegetation to minimise contact with dogs in the dog park and possible barking.
- Other considerations
  - Food - Do not encourage food in the dog park. Some dogs can show aggression if there is a sense of competition for food.