

6 OFF LEASH DOG AREA REVIEW

FILE REFERENCE INT1846334

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RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the results of community consultation and endorse the implementation of an Off Leash Dog Area Hierarchy across the Shire.

Attachments

- | | |
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| 1 Off leash dog area hierarchy | 1 Page |
| 2 Dog agility equipment cost estimates | 4 Pages |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cardinia has had Dog Leash Free Areas across the Shire since 2007.

The criteria to designate these Off Leash Dog Areas has been reviewed, with a view to strengthen the assessment by applying a quantifiable measure.

Community consultation, in the form of on line survey and direct communication with key stakeholders, has identified that community expectation regarding infrastructure within Off Leash Dog Areas has increased over time.

A hierarchal management model across Off Leash Dog Areas has been developed to guide the appropriate distribution and management of Off Leash Dog Areas and associated infrastructure to meet community expectations.

BACKGROUND

In 2007, Council developed criteria for establishing Off Leash Dog Areas, and adopted a number of locations for off leash dog areas. These off leash dog areas have proven to be popular with dog owners over a number of years as they provide an outlet for dogs to receive regular exercise and increase their socialisation skills. In 2015, Council reviewed the criteria for establishing Off Leash Dog Areas, and adopted a number of locations for them. The criteria and off leash areas has again been asked to be reviewed.

The 2015 review of the criteria for establishing off leash dog areas confirmed that the criteria remains appropriate, with the criteria being;

- Proximity to wildlife nature reserve habitat.
- The likely impact on existing children's play areas.
- The likely impacts on existing picnic and barbeque areas.
- Proximity to vehicular traffic.
- The likely impact on sport and recreation facilities.
- Proximity to high people traffic i.e. walking / bicycle tracks.

The review according to the above criteria resulted in the following reserves being allocated as Off Leash Dog Area in 2015;

- Pepi's Land, Emerald.
- Toomuc Creek Linear Reserve, Pakenham.
- Simon Drive Reserve, Pakenham.
- Cochrane Park, Koo Wee Rup.
- Alma Treloar Reserve, Cockatoo.
- Garfield Recreation Reserve, Garfield.
- Ray Canobie Reserve, Pakenham.

The criteria has been reviewed again with a view to strengthen the assessment by applying a quantifiable measure. The proposed changes to the criteria are as follows;

- 30 metres away from wildlife nature reserve habitat.
- 30 metres away from formal children play spaces.
- 30 metres away from existing picnic and barbeque areas.
- Proximity to major vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic.
- Likely impact on sport and recreation facilities (not during organised sporting events).
- Proximity to other off leash sites.

Appropriate signage at all designated Off Leash Dog Areas is considered a requirement to ensure all park users are aware of the exact location of Off Leash Dog Area within reserves. It is expected that some sites will require at least two signs, depending on park entrance locations. Signage would include the following information as a minimum:

- Cardinia corporate branding and contact details.
- Visual mapped location of dog off-leash area.
- Regulative and advisory information.

Below is an example of proposed Off Leash Dog Area



signage.

The fencing of Off Leash Dog Area has been considered as part of the review. Initially, Council officers considered the entire fencing of areas to be inappropriate. This is due to the belief that fencing open space areas can create a greater potential for dog attacks with owners who have little to no control over their dogs being more likely to use these areas compared with un-fenced off

leash areas. However, it cannot be dismissed that many of the community comments and suggestions received during the consultation process related to the inclusion of fenced Off Leash Dog Areas.

Therefore, it is considered that a hierarchical consideration of Off Leash Dog Areas would be appropriate. This will then allow the appropriate level of infrastructure to be included within an Off Leash Dog Area, in a direct relationship to the usage of the reserve. This is consistent with how council currently manages all other open space functions within the Shire. (See attachment Off Leash Dog Area Hierarchy).

This hierarchy would mean that a Regional Off Leash Dog Area would be fenced while neighbourhood leash free areas would not be fenced.

The following list represents the proposed implementation of a hierarchical approach to Off Leash Dog Area across the Shire:

- Regional Off Leash Dog Areas
 - Toomuc Creek Linear Reserve, Pakenham.
 - Alma Treloar Reserve - Cockatoo.
 - Don Jackson Reserve, Pakenham
 - Cochrane Park, Koo Wee Rup.
- District Off Leash Dog Areas
 - Pepi's Land, Emerald.
 - Victory Drive Reserve, Pakenham.
 - Garfield Recreation Reserve, Garfield.
- Neighbourhood Off Leash Dog Area
 - Hammerwood Green Reserve, Beaconsfield
 - Bob Burgess Park Reserve, Beaconsfield.
 - Vantage Drive Reserve, Pakenham.
 - Simon Drive Reserve, Pakenham.
 - Ray Canobie Reserve, Pakenham.
 - Harris Reserve, Upper Beaconsfield.
 - Tynong Recreation Reserve.
 - Toddington Avenue, Officer

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Cardinia's Local Law 17 was enacted on 1st July 2016 and seeks to control a number of amenity issues within the Cardinia Shire.

Section 45 states that:

"A person who owns or is in apparent control of a dog in a public place must keep the dog under control by a leash, chain or cord connecting that person to the dog unless the public place is designated by Council signage to be an 'off leash' area. By the nature of Section 45, Council must ensure it designates off leash parks and adequately publicize those parks."

Section 26 part 3 of the Domestic Animal Act states that:

"An order made by the Council under this section must be published in the Government Gazette and in a newspaper circulating in the municipal district of the Council making the order."

This means that a site selected as an Off Leash Dog Area requires an order made by Council and subsequent gazetting of the order to allow the effective enforcement of Local Law 17.

RELEVANCE TO COUNCIL PLAN

The review of off leash dog areas is in line with Council Plan goals:

- Variety of recreation and leisure opportunities.
- Improve health and wellbeing for all.
- Our diverse community requirements met.

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

An online survey was completed in September/October 2017 receiving 264 respondents; the results of the survey are as follows:

- 96.5% of respondents were in support of Off Leash Dog Areas.
- 64.3% walk their dog off lead in designated Off Leash Dog Areas, while 21.3% walk their dog off leash in other parks and reserves
- 88% of dog walkers walk their dog during Cardinia business hours (between 9am and 5pm).
- 54% of dog walkers walk their dog for less than 1 hour in Off Leash Dog Areas.
- 94.6% of respondents support enclosed Off Leash Dog Area.

Survey results indicated three reserves as the most popular dog exercise areas across the Shire (with a total of 42.2% the votes):

- Toomuc Valley Reserve, Pakenham - 53 respondents.
- Alma Treloar Reserve, Cockatoo - 23 respondents.
- Don Jackson Reserve, Pakenham - 19 respondents.
- The survey results indicated a second tier of reserves for reserve popularity (with a total of 21.8% the votes):
- Cochrane Park, Koo Wee Rup - 13 respondents.
- Onyx Reserve, Officer (not a designated Off Leash Dog Area) - 13 respondents.
- Pepi's Land, Emerald - 12 respondents.
- Victory Drive Reserve, Pakenham (not a designated Off Leash Dog Area) - 11 respondents.

The survey specifically requested respondents' opinions regarding the suitability of the suggested Off Leash Dog Area criteria, the results are:

- Designated areas being 30 metres away from a wildlife nature reserve habitat.
 - Not appropriate - 15%
 - Somewhat appropriate - 22%
 - Appropriate - 38%
 - Highly appropriate - 14%
 - Essential - 9%
- Designated areas being 30 metres away from formal children playspaces.
 - Not appropriate - 13%
 - Somewhat appropriate - 21%
 - Appropriate - 35%
 - Highly appropriate - 17%
 - Essential - 11%
- Designated areas being 30 metres away from existing picnic and barbecue areas.
 - Not appropriate - 16%
 - Somewhat appropriate - 23%
 - Appropriate - 32%
 - Highly appropriate - 18%

- Essential - 9%
- Proximity to major vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic be taken into account.
 - Not appropriate - 4%
 - Somewhat appropriate - 13%
 - Appropriate - 29%
 - Highly appropriate - 23%
 - Essential - 28%
- Impact on organised sport and recreational facilities be taken into account.
 - Not appropriate - 10%
 - Somewhat appropriate - 29%
 - Appropriate - 36%
 - Highly appropriate - 12%
 - Essential - 10%

The survey was supported via numerous social media posts and a media release including the then Mayor, Cr Brett Owen and his dog. The social media posts and media release also discussed the opportunity for community members to attend a drop in session with council staff and discuss Off Leash Dog Area issues. This was held in the Council Chamber but no community members attended.

Direct communication was made with recreation reserve committees of management, which are directly affected by Off Leash Dog Areas: Officer Recreation Committee, Garfield Recreation Committee and the Tynong Recreation Committee.

- Garfield Recreation Committee was happy to continue to host an Off Leash Dog Area within the reserve; however, a request was made to modify the location to the southwestern corner of the reserve.
- Tynong Recreation Committee was happy to host an Off Leash Dog Area within the reserve, but suggested that modification may be required such as signage to reduce the impact of active sport played at the site and allow better access for dog walkers.
- Officer Recreation Committee chose to draft a letter stating that it was highly opposed to Off Leash Dog Area being located at the reserve, indicating that dog walkers would negatively affect public safety and the effective use of the reserve by other stakeholders.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

At this stage, there is no allocated budget for the implementation of infrastructure for Off Leash Dog Areas.

An attachment has been included, which identifies infrastructure costs for Off Leash Dog Areas. It is proposed to commence implementation in the 2018/19 FY subject to funding being allocated.

Simplistic calculations estimate the following costs to implement the Off Leash Dog Area hierarchy across the Shire:

Regional \$50,000 (dependent on extent of fencing)
 District \$20,000 (dependent on extent of fencing)
 Neighbourhood \$5,000

The estimated cost to implement the entire recommendation across the Shire totals \$275,000, over an implementation program of seven years.

Off Leash Dog Area Hierarchy			
	Regional	District	Neighbourhood
Purpose	Open space that provides off leash dog areas with a number of activities and infrastructure available. Attracts use from within the local community as well as beyond the Shire. May be located within popular sites that contain other recreational opportunities.	Open space that provides dedicated off leash dog areas. Attracts use from across the Shire. May be located within prominent sites that contain other recreational opportunities.	Open space that provides dedicated off leash dog areas. Attracts use from local residents regularly utilising the site.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agility activities • Exercise • Dog socialisation • Relaxation and enjoyment of open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise • Dog socialisation • Relaxation and enjoyment of open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise • Dog socialisation • Relaxation and enjoyment of open space
Reserve type	Non-Specific	Within district reserves	Within neighbourhood reserves
Visitor Catchment	Caters for residents of Cardinia and beyond	Attracts people from within the municipality	Generally caters for local residents, and surrounding neighbourhoods
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog agility equipment • Fencing • Drinking fountain with dog bowl • Seating • Rubbish bins • Natural and built shade structures • Arboriculture assets • Pathways • Garden beds • Signage • Sealed car parking • Turf cells at gate entrance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial fencing • Drinking fountain with dog bowl • Seating • Rubbish bins • Natural and built shade structures • Pathways • Garden beds • Signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial or no fencing • Seating • Natural shade • Pathways • Garden beds • Signage
Replacement cost	\$50,000	\$20,000	\$5,000



Jump through square frame

\$345



Sit-Stay Platform

\$550



Step Platform

\$1,950



A-Frame

\$1,495



Bridge

\$1,647



Tunnel

\$895



Chute

\$775



Hurdle

\$285



Weave poles

\$360



Walk plank

\$325



Water Station

\$1,255