

ATTACHMENT A OFF-LEASH AREA (INCLUDING FOLA) PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Key Principles

It is recommended that the following key principles (1-16) guide all future planning relating to off-leash areas including potential fenced off-leash areas:

Planning of Off-leash Areas

1. The assessment of a site's suitability as an off-leash or fenced off-leash area will be undertaken in accordance with the best practice assessment methodology detailed in the *Planning, Design and Management of Off-Leash Areas Technical Manual (Including Fenced Off-Leash Areas) (2019, extract)*, which is consistent with relevant legislation, guidelines and policy.
2. Council makes provision for dog owners and their dogs in public spaces because:
 - owners are increasingly making recreation/activity choices based on being able to take their dog/pet
 - dogs/pets contribute to the social, mental/emotional, and physical health and wellbeing of our society
 - many dog owners have significant engagement with others primarily through their dog
 - these spaces can:
 - become hubs where dog owners congregate and network
 - provide opportunities for education/awareness and community development and 'place-making' initiatives
 - provide an alternative and low-cost recreation option.
3. The following key considerations will influence decision-making relating to dog off-leash areas, including fenced and partially fenced areas and Council's capacity to fund, maintain, renew and manage the site effectively including:
 - active monitoring of the site
 - industry best practice
 - safety/risk minimisation
 - state government legislation
 - Council strategy and policy context e.g. DAMP, reserve masterplans, sportsground classifications
 - Recognised dog and dog owner behaviour in different on/off-leash environments.
4. Off-leash areas are public open space assets that will be accessible to all residents in line with:
 - Council's policy on optimising access to public facilities and open space for all residents
 - universal access, equity and crime prevention through environmental design

(CPTED) and sustainable design principles

- optimising safety/minimising risk for everyone who accesses open space/public facilities regardless of its primary use.
5. Planning and policy acknowledges the needs/aspirations of dog owners, people without dogs but who want to interact with dogs, and people who do not want to interact with dogs in public spaces.
6. Where possible, the same service level/provision principles will apply to the planning of dog off-leash areas as they do for other open space assets (e.g. sports reserves, play spaces).

Shared and Responsible Use of Off-Leash Areas

7. People who use public open space must be respectful of other people who also use these spaces. For dog owners this means they must:
- understand and comply with relevant Council and State Government regulations relating to the control of their dog, leashing of dogs, picking up of dog litter
 - prevent their dogs from making any unsolicited approach to other dogs or people
 - control dogs in line with environment (e.g. short leash on trails) and remove poorly behaved dogs from the public environment
 - be respectful of other open space users and of restrictions that may apply to dogs
 - must understand that some people do not want to interact with dogs, do not like dogs or are fearful of dogs
 - comply with regulations, requiring dogs kept on-leash within 20 metres of an occupied playspace.

For non-dog owners or people who do not want to interact with dogs this means they:

- must not make an unsolicited approach to dogs, and must prevent young people/ children in their care from doing the same
- must not provoke dogs
- should become familiar with the location of off-leash areas and consider alternative open space options for their outdoor activities
- must take due care and consideration when using amenities that are shared with dog owners/dogs such as when on trails and areas abutting trails/footpaths.

8. Council recognises that the majority of dogs can be effectively trained to recall.

Responsible Management of Off-Leash Areas

9. There are costs associated with managing dogs and the actions of dog owners in public spaces and these costs relate to:
- complaint management (e.g. dog litter, poorly controlled dogs/aggressive dogs and/or dog owners, dogs off-leash in on-leash areas)

- waste management including removal of uncollected dog litter, clearing of bins, supply of litter bags
- incidents of dog aggression/rushes, particularly in fenced/partially fenced areas
- degradation, renewal and maintenance of intensively used off-leash areas
- need for increased patrols by local laws, in particular at fenced/partially fenced off-leash areas
- ensuring compliance with dog control orders
- underuse of an asset due to the prevalence of aggressive/poorly behaved dogs.

10. Dog owners must ensure their dogs are appropriately educated to be off the leash and trained to immediate recall in line with Council's orders.

Fencing of Off-Leash Areas

11. Fenced or off-leash areas have a greater likelihood of attracting the following (compared to unfenced/partially fenced off-leash areas):

- owners who have poor/less control over their dogs and whose dogs are not appropriately responsive to control commands
- owners who have poorly socialised dogs
- owners who will leave dogs unattended
- owners and commercial operators who take too many dogs into a fenced off-leash area.

12. The majority of off-leash areas will be unfenced to optimise appropriate owner control over dogs.

13. The purpose of fencing is not to manage poorly controlled/behaved dogs and will generally only be considered where:

- there is a safety or perceived safety risk nearby e.g. a road, commuter trail, busy road
- there is need for a physical barrier between off-leash areas and other closely located or incompatible open space activity that cannot be managed by effective design and/or barrier landscaping e.g. a play space, picnic area.

14. To address safety and design requirements, potential fenced off-leash areas exclusively provided for dogs are to be a **minimum of 3,500m² and preferably 5,000m²+**. The development of potential FOLAs should not displace or disenfranchise other open space users/user groups. Landscape design solutions should be considered before an OLA is partially or fully fenced. For example landscape barriers (vegetation, berms, rock embankments) may be used when OLAs are in close proximity to:

- other parkland activities that are not compatible with dogs off-leash
- potential hazards such as roads and commuter trails
- wildlife or sensitive vegetation areas.

Sportsfields

15. Sportsfields with specialised sport surfaces (e.g. A-grade sportsfields and turf wickets) will generally not accommodate dog related activities to ensure premier playing surfaces are not adversely impacted.

Conservation Reserves

16. To protect high levels of biodiversity, Council designated conservation reserves are classified as dog on-lead areas e.g. Bogong Reserve and Damper Creek Reserve.