



Greater Dandenong Dog Off-Leash Strategy ☆

November 2019



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Executive Summary

The City of Greater Dandenong first introduced dog off-leash areas in 2001. Since this time, they have proven extremely popular as they provide a great way for dogs (and their owners) to get regular exercise and socialisation.

While there is demand from dog owners to expand the off-leash network, the presence of dogs off-leash can make other park users feel uncomfortable. A careful balance is therefore required between meeting the needs of dog owners and continuing to provide access to public open space for all.

With this balance in mind, the dog off-leash strategy will gradually increase the number of off-leash areas from the current 15 to 21 across the municipality, improve the facilities in existing dog off-leash areas, and also expand the size of two existing dog off-leash areas. This expansion and upgrade of off-leash areas is proposed to roll out as a prioritised work program over a ten year timeframe. The funding to implement the projects is subject to the support and funding of capital works bids as part of Council's annual budget process.

The expansion of the dog off-leash network and improvements to existing off-leash areas across Greater Dandenong over a period of time will allow responsible dog owners more opportunity to safely and legally exercise their dogs and allow the community time to adjust to further off-leash facilities being present.

The key outcomes of the Strategy are to:

- Improve and expand the dog off-leash network across Greater Dandenong.
- Increase accessibility to off-leash areas for all residents.
- Have a method (criteria) to determine the suitability of a park for dog off-leash activities.
- Categorise dog off-leash areas based on their suitability for small, medium and large sized dogs and promote this widely.
- Promote and educate the community on Council's off-leash rules.
- Revise mapping and off-leash information on Council's website and communicate updates to registered owners.
- Have an implementation plan that provides guidance and indicative costs to guide the capital infrastructure works for the establishment and ongoing operation of dog off-leash areas (*the future implementation and staging of which is dependent on the inclusion of the Action Plan in Council's Long Term Financial Plan*).

Review this Strategy in five years (2024) to track progress and determine if any modifications are required to the implementation plan (Action Plan 1).



1 Background

1.1 Registered dogs in the City of Greater Dandenong

In September 2018 there were approximately 8,000 registered dogs in Greater Dandenong. This figure has fallen from approximately 10,000 in 2013 and 8,400 in 2017. Anecdotally, it is thought that there are a further 2,400 unregistered dogs in Greater Dandenong (or 25-30 per cent more than are registered). This unregistered dog figure is based on the number of dogs that are processed through the pound or returned home by Council officers or other volunteer groups that were registered (or were not) over an 18 month period.

A key objective of Council's *Domestic Animal Management Plan (2017)* is to increase dog and cat registration numbers to be more in line with other Council's.

Table 1: Dog registration rates and number of dog off-leash areas by Council

Council	Resident Population	No. of Dogs registered	Population per dog	No. dog off-leash areas	Dogs per off-leash area
Greater Dandenong	157,200	7,992	19.6	15	532
Casey (2017)	299,301	27,218	11.0	Most (600+)	~45
Monash (2016)	190,234	11,464	16.6	31	370
Kingston (2016)	153,079	15,068	10.2	29, 4 with exercise equipment	520
Frankston (2016)	134,143	19,690	6.8	33	656

Greater Dandenong has a low number of designated off-leash areas, with only Frankston City Council having fewer off-leash areas available per dog (at 656 dogs per off-leash area) than Greater Dandenong (532 dogs per off-leash area).

In addition, several of Greater Dandenong's existing dog off-leash areas (such as Tirhatuan Park in Dandenong North and Spring Valley Reserve in Springvale South) are located close to our municipal boundaries meaning that they are also being utilised by visitors from outside of the municipality – which adds to their popularity.



1.2 Existing dog off-leash network

Via an Order under the *Domestic Animals Act (1994)*, Council requires all dogs in public places to be on leash, unless they are within a designated off-leash area. Dog off-leash areas only apply to a designated area and not necessarily to an entire park.

To assist in the management of Council's off-leash areas, the following rules apply:

- Dogs must only be off-leash in areas designated by Council.
- Dogs can be exercised off-leash only within these designated areas and must be put back on leash when they leave the sign-posted area.
- Dogs must be no more than 50 metres from the person walking them and under effective control by voice command or hand signal at all times.
- Dogs must remain on-leash in all areas if any club or school sport is being played in the park or reserve.
- Dogs off-leash must not be within 20 metres of a playground at any time.
- Dogs must be wearing a current registration tag at all times when they are outside their owner's property.
- Dogs must not be allowed within 20 metres of a designated cycling path or track, unless they are separated from the track by a fence at least 1.2 metres in height.
- Dogs must not be allowed to chase people or other animals.
- Any droppings left by a dog must be cleaned up and disposed of properly.

Council currently has 15 dog off-leash areas dispersed across the city (as illustrated in Map 1).



Map 1: Existing Dog Off-Leash Areas in Greater Dandenong



All 15 dog off-leash areas were surveyed for their existing infrastructure provision as detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Existing Dog off-leash parks and facilities ordered by size

Reserve	Suburb	Size of off leash sqm	Category	Existing facilities							
				Signage	Seating	Bins	Drink fountain	Shelter	Fully fenced	Bollards	Other
Spring Valley Reserve	Springvale South	107,000	V. Large	X						X	
Greaves Reserve	Dandenong	20,000	Large	X	X				Part		
Tirhatuan Park	Dandenong North	12,560	Large	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Tatterson Park	Keysborough	12,500	Large	X	X	X	X		X		Logs
Barry J Powell Reserve	Noble Park North	11,150	Medium	X	X	X	X	X	Part	X	
Lois Twohig Reserve	Dandenong North	9,370	Medium	X	X	X		X		X	
Frederick Wachter Reserve	Keysborough	8,100	Medium	X	X	X	X		X		
Warner Reserve	Springvale	7,670	Medium	X		X			Part		
Fabian Reserve	Keysborough	6,940	Medium	X	X	X				X	Trial
Fotheringham Reserve	Dandenong	6,840	Medium	X	X	X	X		Part		
Robert Booth Reserve	Dandenong	4080	Small	X	X	X	X		X		
Roth Hetherington Reserve	Keysborough	1950	Small	X	X	X	X		X		
Springvale Reserve	Springvale	1490	Small	X	X	X	X		X		
Birkley Court Reserve	Noble Park North	1440	Small	X	X						Trial
Ross Reserve	Noble Park	1230	Small	X	X	X			X		New



2 Policy context

2.1 State Policy

The *Domestic Animals Act (1994)* allows Councils to impose conditions on the restraint or control of dogs in public spaces, including designating certain areas as being off-leash.

In 2001 Council resolved to require all dogs in public spaces to be on-leash unless they are in a designated off-leash area.

2.2 Council Policy

Dog off-leash strategy (2011)

Council's current dog off-leash strategy was adopted in 2011 and contained 13 actions covering both the expansion of the off-leash network and the provision of additional infrastructure in existing off-leash areas. All actions from this strategy have been completed.

Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) (2017-2020)

As set out in the *Domestic Animals Act (1994)*, Council is required to prepare an animal management plan. This plan seeks to balance the competing needs of animal owners, the broader community and the animals that share people's lives.

Open Space Strategy (2009) (currently being reviewed)

The Open Space Strategy aims to achieve a quality public park and reserve network to meet the recreational and social needs of the existing and future Greater Dandenong community over the next 20 years.

Community Wellbeing Plan (2017-2021)

This Plan seeks to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of the community with its main goal being to assist residents so that they can live rewarding, healthy and socially connected lives.

Activate Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (2014-2019)

Guides Council in the provision of facilities, services and programs designed to increase participation in sport and active recreation across the city.

A key outcome of this strategy is to increase accessibility to off-leash areas, particularly for residents who are older, with a disability, or find it financially challenging to access these areas.



Greater Dandenong Walking Strategy (2015-23)

The aim of the Walking Strategy is to increase the number of people walking by activating places, spaces and people through increased promotion, access and opportunity.

An action of the strategy is to *Create more off-leash parks consistent with the Greater Dandenong Dog off-leash strategy.*



3 Vision and Objectives

Rather than a stand-alone vision for this strategy, it is pertinent to instead tie in closely with the overall Council vision and goals for managing both animals and open space that already exist.

The Dog Off-Leash Strategy is closely aligned with Council *Domestic Animal Management Plan (2017-2020)* which states that Council must outline the ways in which it will:

- Promote and encourage responsible ownership of cats and dogs.
- Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.

Council's *Open Space Strategy (2009)* is also relevant and seeks to:

- Provide a range of public parks and reserves within walking distance from most residents that are attractive, interesting, safe, readily accessible and comfortable places to be.
- Provide a comprehensive open space network that delivers environmental, social, health and wellbeing, and economic benefits to the community.

In order to achieve the above statements, a series of strategic objectives were developed which guided the preparation of this strategy as follows:

- To balance the needs and wishes of dog owners with the needs of the community for accessible and safe parks.
- To expand the number of dog off-leash areas and ensure a more equitable distribution across the city.
- To minimise potential conflicts between off-leash areas and other park activities.
- To incorporate community views and preferences regarding the management and control of dogs in public spaces.
- To encourage greater compliance with local laws through education and information.



4 Community consultation

4.1 Approach used

Council undertook community consultation for this revised strategy over a five week period from April to May 2019.

Large signs were placed in 11 proposed dog off-leash areas and approximately 250 postcards were sent to all directly adjoining owners and occupiers of these parks.

An article was placed in the *Greater Dandenong Council News* (sent to all residents) and *Pet News* (sent to all registered pet owners), as well as prominently on Council's website.

Council asked the community:

- What do you think about Greater Dandenong's dog off-leash areas?
- How satisfied are you with the draft method we have used to select the proposed new dog off-leash parks? (Refer to Section 5.2 of this Strategy for details of the draft method).
- Do you think we have chosen the right locations for the proposed new dog off-leash parks?
- Any other comments?

DOG OFF-LEASH PARKS

HAVE YOUR SAY

Council is looking to improve and increase our dog off-leash areas throughout Greater Dandenong and we want to know your thoughts

We have identified several parks for potential new dog off-leash areas.

You have received this postcard as you live in or own a property near one of these parks.

We'd really like to hear from you!

- What do you think about Greater Dandenong's dog off-leash parks?
- How satisfied are you with the draft method we have used to select the proposed new dog off-leash parks?
- Do you think we have chosen the right locations for the proposed new dog off-leash parks?
- Any other comments?

Comments close Friday 3 May 2019

For more information visit us online at greaterdandenong.com/dogoffleash

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Greater Dandenong Animal Management

Figure 1: Example of postcard sent to residents adjoining proposed new off-leash parks advising them of the project

Map 2: Dog off-leash areas consulted on in April/May 2019



4.2 Consultation summary

A total of 187 submissions were received, with 46per cent supportive, 22per cent supportive with changes (often wanting a dog off-leash area to not be located at 'X' park) and 36per cent strongly against either a particular proposed off-leash area, or generally against off-leash areas.

For further detail on the consultation results, please refer to Appendix 2 Community Consultation Report.



5 Key Considerations

As a result of the community consultation feedback and the information already known about the operation of our existing dog off-leash areas, there are a number of key considerations for this strategy.

5.1 Balancing the needs of dog owners and other park users

Council's dog off-leash areas provide a great way for dogs (and their owners) to get regular exercise and socialisation – the benefits of which cannot be underestimated.

Increasing the number, quality and spread of off-leash areas will improve accessibility for residents who are older, with a disability, or find it financially challenging to access off-leash areas.

Regular exercise of a dog can also negate nuisance behaviour such as barking at home as pent up energy can be released. Exercise can also provide an avenue to socialise a dog as they are given an opportunity to be trained in how to behave in public spaces with other animals and people.

Activating spaces that are currently underutilised by allowing off-leash activities can also play an important role in making a place feel safer as there are more people out and about.

While there is demand from dog owners to expand the off-leash network, the presence of dogs off-leash can make other park users feel uncomfortable and limit their use of a park. A careful balance is therefore required between meeting the needs of dog owners and continuing to provide access to public open space for all.

5.1.1 Strategy response

With this balance in mind, the dog off-leash strategy will gradually increase the number of off-leash areas from 15 to 21 across the municipality, alter three existing dog off-leash areas and make two existing 'trial' locations permanent.

This expansion will roll out as a prioritised work program over a ten year timeframe, subject to the support and funding of capital works bids as part of Council's annual budget process.

The program will create new off-leash areas at:

- Clarendon Reserve, Keysborough
- Burden Park, Springvale South
- Goodman Reserve, Noble Park
- Simpson Reserve, Dandenong North
- Oakwood Park Reserve, Noble Park North
- Keneally Reserve, Dandenong



Alter the existing off-leash areas at:

- Tirhatuan Park, Dandenong North
- Ian Tatterson Leisure Park, Keysborough
- Spring Valley Reserve, Springvale South

Make the following 'trial' locations permanent:

- Birkley Court Reserve, Noble Park North
- Fabian Reserve, Keysborough

5.2 Criteria for new parks

There is currently no guidance regarding what makes an appropriate site for dog off-leash activities.

Council's current *Dog off-leash strategy (2011)* has been implemented. During its life, Council increased the number of dog off-leash areas from seven to 13. Two further sites have since been constructed, bringing the total number to 15. The Burden Park Master Plan is currently proposing a dog off-leash area.

The draft method for choosing new dog off-leash parks was based on whether the park:

- Is in an area of high dog registration.
- Is close to one of the busier parks such as Tatterson Park, Tirhatuan Park or Wachter Reserve.
- Is flat and drains well.
- Has any existing infrastructure such as bins, fencing and seating.
- Is easily accessible for locals.
- Would become too busy if a new dog off-leash area was introduced.
- Has any potential conflicts such as existing playgrounds or conservation areas.

Community consultation found that many submissions were 'mostly' to 'very satisfied' with the proposed method for choosing off-leash parks and thought the method was clear.

5.2.1 Strategy response

- All proposed parks in this strategy have been assessed by this criteria.
- The priority roll out of expansion and improvement is based on the criteria above (See Section 6.1, Table 5).
- Any future off-leash area suggestions will be assessed for its suitability using the above criteria.



5.3 Consistency and cost of infrastructure

5.3.1 Consistency

It is important that there is a consistency of infrastructure across the off-leash network to allow certainty for users so that if they are to use a certain park, they can expect the same infrastructure as any other off-leash park of that size. Additionally, if users are feeling that a certain park is too busy etc. they can visit a different park confident that the infrastructure will be consistent.

5.3.2 Cost

As the off-leash areas are likely to have lifecycles of 20+ years, it is important to factor in the replacement and maintenance costs across the life of the infrastructure asset.

Table 3 below details the initial costs associated with supplying and installing an 'asset', the interval at which that asset needs to be replaced, and how much per year the new asset will cost Council.

Table 3: Cost of assets

Asset	Cost to supply/install	Replaced every	Annual Maintenance cost
Sign	\$2500	5 years	N/A
Rubbish bins	\$1500	12 years	Emptying bin 3.5 times per week \$5,460
Park bench	\$2000	10 years	1.5% of the value of the asset - repairing fences, graffiti removal
Drinking fountain	\$6000-\$10,000	10 years	
Fencing/bollards	\$200 per metre/ \$300 each	10-15 years	

There are other ongoing operational costs, which are difficult to quantify such as:

- The 'tipping' point at which new staff or infrastructure (such as a new truck) are needed to empty additional rubbish bins introduced as a result of this strategy.
- Extra fencing could result in ride on mowers not being able to be used and instead more labour intensive and slower hand mowers (and equipment) being required.

While these costs are hard to quantify, they are important factors when thinking of expanding the infrastructure network. The siting of new infrastructure must be carefully considered so as not to slow up other Council maintenance works that occur in our reserves.

During the community consultation, some submissions did not agree with expanding the off-leash network, but no feedback specific to costs was provided. Many submissions discussed the need for various parks to have more rubbish bins, seating, water fountains and shelter and there was support for having different park sizes to cater for different sized dogs.



Some feedback regarding the current park signage was also received. For the most part, it is clear and well received, however some parks (such as Lois Twohig and Tatterson Park) need clearer signage directing people to the off-leash areas.

5.3.3 Strategy response

Each of the existing (and proposed) off-leash areas has been classified as being of small, medium, large or very large size. This will ensure consistency across the off-leash network allowing visitors to know what infrastructure to expect at each park.

Council's website will list each off-leash area and whether it is suitable for small, medium or large dogs as per Table 4 below. It is envisaged that this will encourage a spread of users and may help take some of the pressure off the busier off-leash areas. Additionally, if an owner is feeling uncomfortable in a certain park, they can consult Council's website to locate a more suitable off-leash area for their dog nearby.

Table 4: Infrastructure required by size of off-leash area

Size of DOL area	Infrastructure required	Size of dog recommendation
Small (less than 5000sqm)	Educational signage at entrance	Small to medium sized dogs
	Rubbish bin	
	Seating	
Medium & Large (5001 – 20,000sqm)	As for small	Medium - Small to medium sized dogs
	Trees – Large Canopy Shade	
	Drinking fountain	Large - All sized dogs
	Potential for dog play equipment	
Very Large (20,001sqm+)	As for medium and large	All sized dogs
	Shelter	

Any gaps in the infrastructure provision (old signs, missing bins etc.) have been added to the Strategy Approach at Section 6 of this strategy and will be rolled out in a prioritised order.



5.4 Fencing

To meet demand, Council has created an additional eight off-leash areas since 2011. New sites have generally been fully enclosed due to safety perceptions. This is, however, not without issue.

In several of the larger fenced off-leash areas, in particular Tirhatuan Park, Frederick Wachter Reserve and Ian Tatterson Leisure Park, there appears to be an attitude from some dog owners that as dogs are fenced in, they do not need to be effectively controlled.

Fencing can also be a negative as it:

- Is visually intrusive and costly to install and maintain.
- Can cause unnecessary barriers to movement within a park.
- Effectively designates certain sections of parks as exclusively for use of one group (dog owners).
- Can lead to dog owners taking a more casual approach when supervising their dogs as they assume a dog does not need to be as well trained or closely supervised in an enclosed space.
- Can cause access issues if an incident is to occur inside the fenced area.

5.4.1 Strategy response

- While a popular option in recent years fencing is not always necessary and should be used as a last resort.
- Areas where there is no existing use conflict (such as playgrounds or main roads) or areas that have natural depressions or other boundaries (such as existing neighbouring fencing) are better options to additional fencing.



5.5 Dog waste and plastic dog bags

Council's local law states that dog owners are responsible for removal and appropriate disposal of litter and dog waste. While an owner can be fined for non-compliance, this is a difficult law to enforce as an owner has to be caught doing the wrong thing.

The provision of bins in parks is a popular way to support responsible dog owner behaviour however the issue of Council providing dog bags in our parks is more complex.

On the one hand, it is argued that supplying bags in off-leash areas would increase compliance with Council's local law and encourage dog owners to pick up after their dog. Moreover, the supply of biodegradable bags (instead of dog owners supplying their own plastic bags) could have a positive environmental impact. However, there are concerns that:

- Providing dog bags (and their associated dispensers) incurs significant capital expenditure and ongoing maintenance costs to Council - a trial some years ago at Frederick Wachter Reserve found that the dispenser and bags were repeatedly vandalised and stolen - with the recommendation at the time being to discontinue their use.
- 'Biodegradable' bags have also been shown to be problematic and instead of 'degrading', break in to smaller pieces of harmful plastic, or do not break down at all. By their very nature they are also not as strong as other plastic bags so break down quickly (sometimes while still on the roll) when exposed to weather conditions meaning more than one may need to be used at a time.
- Experience at other Councils who supply dog bags has shown up to 30per cent will be lost to theft - sometimes with whole rolls being stolen at a time.
- The mere presence of dog bags does not necessarily influence behaviour - particularly as responsible dog owners are already prepared to clean up after their dogs and therefore carry a bag already.
- Dog owners are already in the habit of bringing their own bags, so if Council breaks this habit and owners come to rely on dog bags being provided, there may be times when they are not available (due to availability or vandalism) and owners instead have to leave the dog waste in parks.
- While bags may be supplied at off-leash parks, this is ineffective if the dog relieves itself on the journey to the park. Moreover, dog owners also use Council's on-leash parks, so this may set a precedent for Council to provide dog bags across our open space network.

5.5.1 Strategy response

- Council's local laws currently require dog owners to carry the appropriate means and to pick up and dispose of their dog's waste. This will continue.
- At least one rubbish bin to be supplied at every off-leash area.
- All promotional materials for dog off-leash areas will promote responsible dog ownership and compliance with Council's local laws and orders, including that owners are responsible for picking up after their dog.



5.6 Mapping and education

The mapping and some of the information regarding the dog off-leash areas on Council's website is out of date and not interactive.

Signage in the off-leash parks clearly states the rules for the area yet Council officers regularly note dogs off-leash in on leash areas (particularly when walking from an on leash area to an off-leash area).

There are also issues with owners not picking up after their dogs. Non-compliance with rules is further exacerbated as often dog owners are coming from outside of the municipality and may be unfamiliar with Greater Dandenong's off-leash regulations.

5.6.1 Strategy response

- Section 6.2 details all the education and promotional approaches to be used over the life of this strategy.
- Updating Council's website and replacing old signage with new signage where required.



6 Strategy Approach

This Strategy sets out a reasonable and equitable approach to satisfy the needs of dog owners in public spaces while acknowledging the growing recreational needs of other park users. An increase in the number of off-leash facilities over a number of years and infrastructure improvements to many of the existing parks, allows for a fairer spread of good quality off-leash areas across Greater Dandenong.

The vast majority of public spaces will remain on-leash and fully accessible to all park users.

6.1 Expansion of the existing off-leash area – detailed proposal

This Strategy will create off-leash areas in the following six parks across Greater Dandenong:

- Clarendon Reserve, Keysborough
- Burden Park, Springvale South
- Goodman Reserve, Noble Park
- Simpson Reserve, Dandenong North
- Oakwood Park Reserve, Noble Park North
- Keneally Reserve, Dandenong

Alter the existing off-leash areas at:

- Tirhatuan Park, Dandenong North
- Ian Tatterson Leisure Park, Keysborough
- Spring Valley Reserve, Springvale South

Make the following 'trial' locations permanent:

- Birkley Court Reserve, Noble Park North
- Fabian Reserve, Keysborough

Map 3 below shows the location of all existing and proposed off-leash areas, with Table 5 providing detail of the prioritised roll out of the expansion or improvements to the off-leash parks.



Map 3: Location of existing and proposed dog off-leash areas



Table 5: Proposals for off-leash network

Priority	Reserve	Proposal comment	Category	Facilities required					
				Signage	Seating	Bins	Drink fountain	Fully fenced	Comment
1	Tirhatuan Park, Dandenong North	Extend existing off-leash area to the north and have a separate fully fenced area for smaller dogs	Large	X	X	X	X	X	Design concept required for installation
2	Clarendon Reserve, Keysborough	New	Medium	X		X			Initial trial for 12 months
				X	X		X	Part	Install if trial successful
3	Ian Tatterson Leisure Park, Keysborough	Clearer signage	Large	X				X	Way finding sign needed at Springers car park entrance Investigate separate fenced pen and dog play equipment
4	Frederick Wachter Reserve, Keysborough	Clearer signage and other infrastructure for a park of this size	Medium	X	X		X		
5	Burden Park, Springvale South	New	Small	X					Effective signage required to negate fencing
6	Goodman Reserve, Noble Park	New	Small	X		X			



Priority	Reserve	Proposal comment	Category	Facilities required					
				Signage	Seating	Bins	Drink fountain	Fully fenced	Comment
7	Simpson Reserve, Dandenong North	New	Small	X	X	X		Part	30m length of fencing required along the Simpson Road frontage
8	Lois Twohig Reserve, Dandenong North	Clearer signage and enforcement monitoring	Medium	X	X		X		
9	Spring Valley Reserve, Springvale South	Expansion of existing off-leash area New signage required at 4 main entrances	V. Large	X					
10	Oakwood Park Reserve, Noble Park North	New	Small	X	X	X			Design concept required for installation
11	Keneally Reserve, Dandenong	New	Small	X	X	X		X	Design concept required for installation
12	Roth Hetherington Reserve, Keysborough	Clearer signage	Small	X					
13	Springvale Reserve, Springvale	Clearer signage	Small	X					
14	Fabian Reserve, Keysborough	Current trial to be made permanent	Medium				X		



Priority	Reserve	Proposal comment	Category	Facilities required					
				Signage	Seating	Bins	Drink fountain	Fully fenced	Comment
15	Warner Reserve, Springvale	Clearer signage and other infrastructure for a park of this size	Medium	X	X		X		Sign needed at Flynn Street car park
16	Birkley Reserve, Noble Park North	Current trial to be made permanent	Small			X			
17	Greaves Reserve, Dandenong	Clearer way finding signage	Large	X					Other infrastructure for a park of this size are cost prohibitive due to locational difficulties with access.
18	Fotheringham Reserve, Dandenong	Requires 1 further perimeter sign near EastLink trail	Medium	X					
Maintain	Robert Booth Reserve, Dandenong	Ongoing maintenance and enforcement patrols	Small						
Maintain	Barry J Powell Reserve, Dandenong	Ongoing maintenance and enforcement patrols	Large						
Maintain	Ross Reserve, Noble Park	Ongoing maintenance and enforcement patrols	Small						



6.2 Increasing community awareness

Many of the community concerns raised earlier in relation to the management and control of dogs in public space are not necessarily related to particular sites' designation as off-leash, but the broader issue of responsible dog ownership and compliance with Council's local laws and orders.

If Council is to 'reward' dog owners with greater access to off-leash areas, it is critical that Council also promote responsible dog ownership and educate dog owners on their responsibilities when managing their dogs in public spaces.

Council's *Domestic Animal Management Plan, 2017* already outlines a comprehensive educational program designed to encourage responsible pet ownership via Council's website, printed educational materials, displays in public areas, Council's annual *Pet News* and so on.

The strategy complements these approaches and will involve the following elements:

In-Park promotion and education:

- Council's dog off-leash signage and rules.

As new dog off-leash areas are established:

- Notification to immediately adjoining residents that a new off-leash area is to be implemented.
- 'Opening day' events such as barbecue mornings so Council Officers can be in parks to answer any questions from dog owners or residents.
- Media releases, articles in *Pet News* and *Greater Dandenong Council News* as well as website updates to notify that a new dog off-leash area is available for use - and its associated rules.

Other promotional materials:

- Printed (and online) Dog off-leash area brochures at Council's customer service centres and updates to Council's website.



7 Action Plan Implementation

7.1 Action Plan 1

The Strategy prioritises the expansion of the off-leash network and the provision of infrastructure in existing and proposed dog off-leash areas. New sites have been selected and assessed based on the criteria as described in this strategy.

This Action Plan ensures that these are appropriately sequenced so that they occur in accordance with their priority ranking. The development of a priority list also assists in making budget funding submissions under Council’s City Improvement Program (CIP).

The list has been prioritised based on need and popularity of location and is envisaged to roll out over a number of years.

All costings are estimates only, rounded to the nearest hundred dollars, and based on current (2019) rates. Further detailed costings are found at Appendix 3.

Table 6: Priority roll out list with costings

Priority	Reserve	Cost to supply and install (new infrastructure)	Recurring costs over 20 years	Annual service costs	Ongoing maintenance costs per year
1	Tirhatuan Park, Dandenong North	\$34,500 (Stage 1) \$30,000 (Stage 2)	\$163,200	\$16,400	\$3,100
2	Clarendon Reserve, Keysborough	\$15,000 (trial) \$58,500 (after)	\$67,800	\$5,500	\$200
3	Ian Tatterson Park, Keysborough	\$18,500 (Stage 1) \$30,000 (Stage 2)	\$130,800	\$10,900	\$2,500
4	Frederick Wachter Reserve, Keysborough	\$15,600	\$32,800	\$10,900	\$1,100
5	Burden Park, Springvale South	\$11,200	\$43,000	\$5,500	\$300
6	Goodman Reserve, Noble Park	\$4,000	\$13,000	\$5,500	\$100
7	Simpson Reserve, Dandenong North	\$12,000	\$14,900	\$5,500	\$200
8	Lois Twohig Reserve, Dandenong North	\$13,300	\$60,100	\$10,900	\$700
9	Spring Valley Reserve, Springvale South	\$10,000	\$31,000	N/A	\$200



Priority	Reserve	Cost to supply and install (new infrastructure)	Recurring costs over 20 years	Annual service costs	Ongoing maintenance costs per year
10	Oakwood Park Reserve, Noble Park North	\$12,200	\$27,500	\$5,500	\$200
11	Keneally Reserve, Dandenong	\$46,000	\$31,900	\$5,500	\$700
12	Roth Hetherington Reserve, Keysborough	\$2,500	\$49,400	\$5,500	\$900
13	Springvale Reserve, Springvale	\$2,500	\$41,900	\$5,500	\$700
14	Fabian Reserve, Keysborough	\$6,000	\$24,100	\$10,900	\$300
15	Warner Reserve, Springvale	\$10,500	\$40,400	\$5,500	\$300
16	Birkley Reserve, Noble Park North	\$1,500	\$11,900	\$5,500	\$100
17	Greaves Reserve, Dandenong	\$2,500	\$24,000	N/A	\$300
18	Fotheringham Reserve, Dandenong	\$300	\$37,200	\$5,500	\$800
Maintain	Robert Booth Reserve, Dandenong	N/A	\$37,900	\$5,500	\$800
Maintain	Barry J Powell Reserve, Dandenong	N/A	\$38,400	\$5,500	\$500
Maintain	Ross Reserve, Noble Park	N/A	\$36,800	\$10,900	\$800
Totals (estimate)		\$336,600	\$958,000	\$142,400	\$14,800



7.2 Action Plan Item 2

Council's Regulatory Services Department already undertake significant community education regarding animal management and responsible pet ownership so these actions outlined below are specific to off-leash areas.

Initiative	Responsibility	Cost
<i>In park promotion</i>		
Council's Dog off-leash signage – Design.	Regulatory Services	These design costs need to be considered as new signs are rolled out across the network.
Council's Dog off-leash signage – Installation.	City Improvement	These costs have been outlined in Action Plan 1 of this Strategy.
<i>Community notification procedure – as new dog parks are established</i>		
Notification to immediately adjoining residents.	Regulatory Services	Nil (can be absorbed within Council's existing resources and staff capacity).
'Opening day' events such as barbecue mornings so Animal Management Officers can be in parks to answer any questions from dog owners or residents.	Regulatory Services	Nil (can be absorbed within Council's existing resources and staff capacity).
Updating of Council's website reflecting the recommendations of this strategy.	Planning & Design (initially) Regulatory Services (ongoing)	Nil (can be absorbed within Council's existing resources and staff capacity).
Media release and articles in Greater Dandenong Council News and Pet News to advise new residents of change to the off-leash network.	Regulatory Services	Nil (can be absorbed within Council's existing resources and staff capacity).
<i>Other promotional materials</i>		
Printed (and online) Dog off-leash area brochures at Council's customer service centres and updates to Council's website.	Regulatory Services	These costs will need to be included as a business plan update.

If additional off-leash areas are chosen there will be community consultation with local residents to ensure there is general support for the areas before this is rolled out.



8 Implications

8.1 Financial Implications

Future implementation and staging will be dependent on the inclusion of the Action Plan in Council's long term financial plan. Further, the implementation of the strategy will be subject to the support and funding of capital works bids as part of the budget process.

All funding for additional dog off-leash infrastructure will have to be applied for as a capital works bid as part of Council's annual budget process.

Additional funds will need to be set aside from 2020-21 to further expand and improve on the off-leash network and implement this strategy as outlined in Action Plans 1 and 2.

Accordingly, the implementation of this strategy is a staged process, subject to successful funding bids and is set to occur over a number of years.

There are a number of cost implications for Council that can be broken down in to the three broad categories of establishment, lifecycle and maintenance/servicing costs.

8.1.1 Establishment costs

- The establishment of six new dog off-leash areas, the altering of three existing off-leash areas and changing two trial locations into permanent off-leash areas will incur costs of \$336,600 over the life of the strategy – which includes costs for design, signage, fencing, rubbish bins and seating.
- Some promotional costs (such as the development of new off-leash mapping and brochures) will need to be addressed in the annual operating budget of the Regulatory Services area.
- Other promotional costs such as updating Council's website, articles in Greater Dandenong Council News, and letter drops to residents will need to be included as a business plan update to Council's Regulatory Services Department.

8.1.2 Lifecycle costs

- The strategy has built in the lifecycle costs of the dog off-leash infrastructure and presently amounts to \$958,000 over 20 years – funded through the City Improvement Program (CIP).
- Replacement and repair of signage, fencing or bins can be accommodated within the Asset Renewal Program.



8.1.3 Maintenance and servicing costs

- Patrolling of the off-leash areas and general park network by the Regulatory Services Department can be accommodated within the existing resources of the team.
- Repair of fencing, rubbish bins, signage, removal of graffiti, emptying of rubbish bins – which can be accommodated within existing resources and budgets. The strategy has factored in a yearly maintenance cost of 1.5 per cent of the cost of the infrastructure per year. This amounts to \$14,800 per year.
- The main servicing cost involves the emptying of the rubbish bins – which in dog off-leash areas is between 2-5 times per week. So factoring in an average of 3.5 times per week, it costs around \$5460 per bin per year to empty. This results in a servicing cost across the completed network of some \$142,400 per year.
- Ongoing maintenance for the website information and brochures (which will require a business plan update for the Regulatory Services Department).

While ongoing maintenance costs are difficult to quantify, they are important and need to be considered especially as they will impact on the day to day operations of service teams. For example, any new rubbish bins installed are then added to the program of being emptied – sometimes up to five times a week in off-leash areas. At some point there is a ‘tipping’ point where further staff and trucks are required which are a significant budget consideration for Council.

Additionally, the installation of fencing and seating slows down the ability to mow the grass as further obstacles are put in place. It can also mean that larger, faster ride on mowers cannot be used and instead hand mowing is required – again changing the dynamics of staff and the type of equipment they use.

It is expected that management and maintenance costs will be monitored and reported annually as this Strategy is reviewed.

The implementation plan will be subject to review and adjustment annually at the time of CIP development. While this plan is fully costed and prioritised, the expenditure program and roll out of new off-leash areas needs to be balanced against other Council projects and priorities.

8.2 Policy implications

Council currently has a local law in place that requires all dogs in the public realm to be on-leash unless in a designated off-leash area. This also enables Council to amend the off-leash network by specifying further off-leash or dog prohibited areas or modifying existing off-leash areas, via a Council resolution.

In order to implement this Strategy, a Council resolution is required to specify changes to the off-leash network in accordance with the proposals contained in Action Plan 1.

Council's off-leash rules and general policies pertaining to the presence of dogs in public open space will remain unchanged and continue to be enforced by Council officers.



9 Monitoring and review

The activities and initiatives set out in the above Action Plans, and the regular monitoring of the off-leash sites will be reviewed each year as part of Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan process and annual business planning. This will ensure continued CIP and operational funding to support the expansion of the off-leash network and the implementation of this Strategy.

This Strategy is to be reviewed in five years' time to track progress and ensure that the priorities are still in line with community expectations and requirements.





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