
WYNDHAM DOG OFF-LEASH APPROACH

DRAFT — SEPTEMBER 2021



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INTRODUCTION

We know that equitable access to quality open space that meets the needs of our residents is a key priority of community. This is a theme that is at the forefront of conversations, whether it be as part of the annual budget planning process, through the Wyndham 2040 refresh, or in everyday conversations with our residents.

This is even more important as we emerge from the lockdowns and restrictions of COVID-19, with our residents spending more time in their local area rediscovering their neighbourhoods. Our open spaces are being used for a range of functions – events, hospitality, exercise, and public gatherings. A strong network of quality open spaces has never been more important. As a Council, as we work to meet these needs and maintain our existing spaces but also plan for new ones, we must ensure the product delivered is one that is multipurposed and meets our residents' diverse needs.

The demand for dog off-leash open spaces, particularly formal fenced dog parks, is growing. But as our municipality grows at a rapid rate, there is a need to consider how usage of parks and open spaces can be multi-faceted. We know that with rapid residential development of affordable and diverse housing comes smaller backyards. Dog parks provide a space for residents to safely let their dogs out, encouraging socialisation and connection. Dogs can draw people together by encouraging them outside to interact, exercise and share the common bond of owning a companion animal. Dogs are an important part of a healthy and socially connected community.

This is a commitment outlined in the Wyndham Open Space Strategy, which states: *"we will provide an accessible and well-connected open space network which contributes to the social interaction, health and wellbeing of our community and protection of our natural and cultural environment now and into the future"*. The way in which we plan for, develop, manage and renew our open space is key to achieving this vision.

The strategy goes on to list, as a key action, the need to identify suitable open space areas for dog off-leash exercise parks, ensuring that planning and design contains appropriate infrastructure and provides for various types and levels of activity.

This paper outlines the work conducted to date in planning for additional dog off-leash spaces in Wyndham, and sets the foundations for the development of a formal strategy: Wyndham Dog Off-Leash Approach.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Wyndham Dog Off-Leash Approach (the plan) is to provide direction on the provision, development and management of dog off-leash spaces across Wyndham.

Key guiding principles that have shaped the plan are:

Safety – of both dogs and their owners as well as other users of Wyndham’s open space network.

Balance of demand on Open Space – increasing demand for various activities is constantly being placed on Wyndham’s open spaces, consideration of whole of community needs and protection of open space is required when providing for dog off-leash spaces.

Equitable Access – ensuring all residents have access to dog off-leash spaces within their local neighbourhood.

Financial Management – consideration of Council’s Long Term Financial and Asset Management planning to ensure we can afford to not only develop dog off-leash spaces but also maintain and renew these spaces into the future.

The plan has been structured to include the following topics:



Dogs in Wyndham – context and demand



Community Engagement – what we have learnt from our community



Provision – Types of dog off-leash spaces and ensuring equitable access across Wyndham



Development – site assessment criteria and design principles

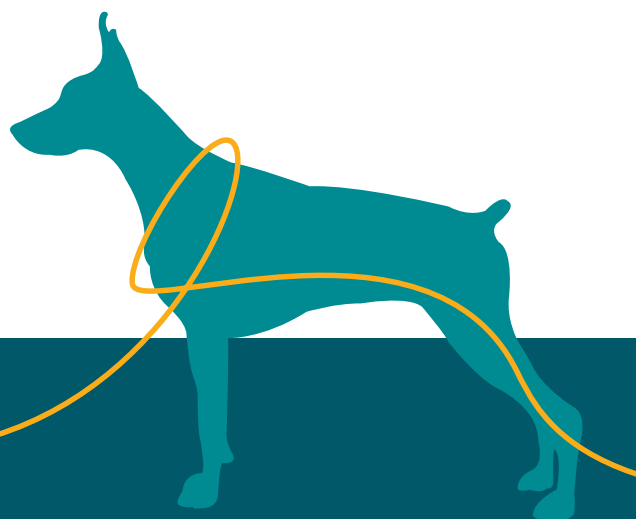


Management – patrolling and enforcement, education and maintenance guidelines

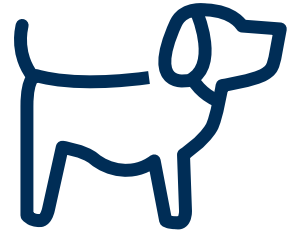


Implementation – 5 year implementation plan and associated costings

A review of this plan will occur five years after implementation to ensure we capture learnings and adjust accordingly.



DOGS IN WYNDHAM



DOGS IN WYNDHAM

Wyndham's population is growing at a rapid rate, and access to larger backyards is becoming more rare. With a larger population living on smaller land, the demand for public open space to provide appropriate spaces for people to exercise and socialise their dogs is increasing. We need to plan for the current and future demand and do so with a variety of dog off-leash spaces, including both fenced and non-fenced spaces.

Dog off-leash spaces have become increasingly popular and are recognised as a valued asset in providing for the physical and mental health of both dogs and their owners. In Wyndham there are currently 21,030 registered dogs, with 16,702 households owning one or more dogs.

The below table outlines registered dog ownership by suburb (2019/2020).

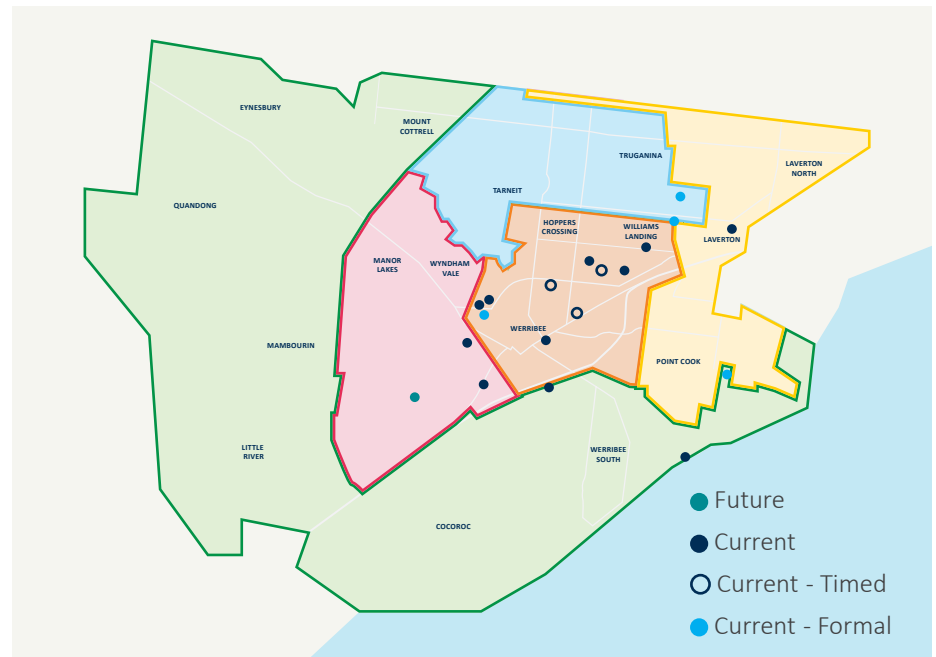
Suburb	Properties with dogs	Total Dogs
Hoppers Crossing	3,176	4,039
Laverton North	3	4
Little River	126	216
Manor Lakes	655	846
Mambourin	4	6
Mount Cottrell	23	35
Point Cook	3,768	4,607
Quandong	2	5
Tarneit	1,874	2,312
Truganina	796	1,024
Werribee	4,160	5,275
Werribee South	210	267
Williams Landing	394	476
Wyndham Vale	1,511	1,918
TOTAL	16,702	21,030

The above table demonstrates that the established suburbs of Werribee, Point Cook and Hoppers Crossing have the highest ownership of dogs within Wyndham. However, growth forecasts predict that suburbs such as Manor Lakes and Mambourin are anticipated to increase in population by 339% and 449% respectively by 2041 (forecast ID), likely resulting in substantial increases in dog ownership. A key outcome of this strategy is to ensure we are providing equitable access to dog off-leash spaces for both established areas across the City, as well as in areas projected to experience significant growth over the coming years.

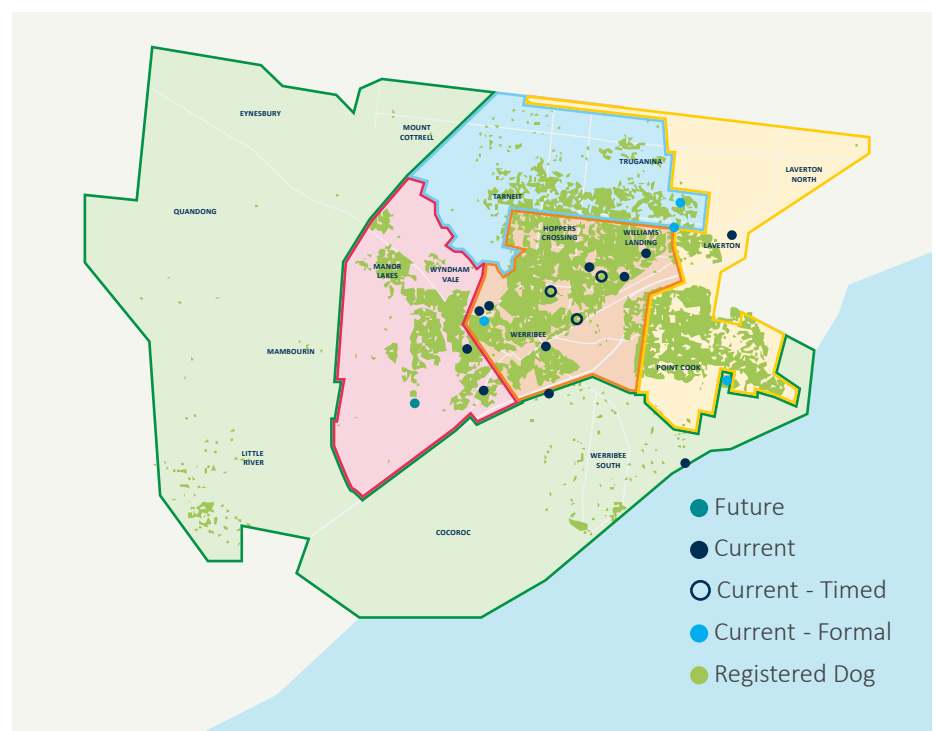
DOGS IN WYNDHAM

There are currently 18 dog off-leash areas provided across the City with various levels of amenity provided including informal spaces (unfenced), formal (fenced) and destination spaces (higher order fenced activity spaces). See below map for detail. A full list of Wyndham dog off-leash spaces can be found here:

www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/services/pets-animals/caring-your-pets/dog-lead-areas



When mapping the dog off-leash areas across Wyndham, overlaid with dog ownership numbers, it is clear there is an inequity in provision and access to all types of facilities (see below map). This is particularly evident within the growth areas of Tarneit, Manor Lakes and Mambourin.



DOGS IN WYNDHAM

In addition to evaluating dog ownership numbers and density mapping to aid in planning for provision levels, it is important to assess the various breeds of dogs across the City and ensure facilities provided are suitable for the differing needs. At present, the top three dog breeds across Wyndham include Jack Russell, Staffordshire Bull Terrier and Labrador. To ensure we are providing appropriate facilities, this information was broken down further into top four breeds per suburb to allow for a place-based planning approach (see below table).

Suburb	Top 4 Dog Breeds	Suburb	Top 4 Dog Breeds	Suburb	Top 4 Dog Breeds
Hoppers Crossing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack Russell • Staffordshire Bull Terrier • Labrador • German Shepherd 	Mount Cottrell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffordshire Bull Terrier • German Shepherd • Rottweiler • Boxer 	Werribee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack Russell • Staffordshire Bull Terrier • Labrador • King Charles Cavalier
Laverton North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German Shepherd • Rottweiler 	Point Cook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labrador • King Charles Cavalier • Jack Russell • Staffordshire Bull Terrier 	Werribee South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labrador • Jack Russell • Kelpie • Staffordshire Bull Terrier
Little River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack Russell • Kelpie • Border Collie • Labrador 	Quandong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retriever • Pointer 	Williams Landing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labrador • King Charles Cavalier • Maltese Terrier • German Shepherd
Manor Lakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffordshire Bull Terrier • Jack Russell • Labrador • Maltese Shih Tzu 	Tarneit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack Russell • Labrador • Staffordshire Bull Terrier • King Charles Cavalier 	Wyndham Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffordshire Bull Terrier • Jack Russell • Labrador • German Shepherd
Mambourin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kelpie • Staffordshire Bull Terrier • Border Collie • Maltese Shih Tzu 	Truganina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labrador • Jack Russell • Staffordshire Bull Terrier • German Shepherd 		



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

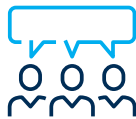
To ensure future provision and planning of dog off-leash spaces across Wyndham meets community need, a four week community engagement process was undertaken to further understand the way in which existing dog off-leash spaces are utilised and the important elements to be considered in future provision.

Various methods of community engagement were utilised to ensure our community had the opportunity to participate, these methods included:

The Loop Survey and Social Mapping Tool:

A community survey was developed requesting information in relation to dog ownership, utilisation of existing dog off-leash spaces and key design elements for future provision. In addition, community were able to provide direct feedback on existing areas and highlight gaps in provision via the social mapping tool:

- 3,237 visits by 2,479 individuals
- 555 contributions – 304 surveys, 251 comments via mapping tool



Face to Face consultations

Three face to face consultations were held:

- Presidents Park Dog Park, Wyndham Vale: 53 people attended
- Tarneit Community Learning Centre, Tarneit: 10 people attended
- Saltwater Reserve Dog Park, Point Cook: 20 people attended



Direct Project Lead Email and Phone consultations:

- 23 people emailed or called project lead directly to provide input
- One petition received by Williams Landing community with 350 signatures for provision of Dog Park

To support our direct engagement process, a four-week social media campaign was launched promoting the development of this plan and how the community could be involved. The campaign was held over multiple platforms with high levels of engagement.





Facebook	
	Results
Total engagement (number of likes, comments, and shares of posts)	1908
Total No of Posts	8
Total No of Reach	62,985
Total No of Clicks to website	419



Instagram	
	Results
Total engagement (number of likes, comments, and shares of posts)	23
Total No of Posts	1
Total No of Impressions	924



Twitter	
	Results
Total engagement	16
Total No of Posts	1
Total No of Impressions	62
Total No of Clicks to website	9

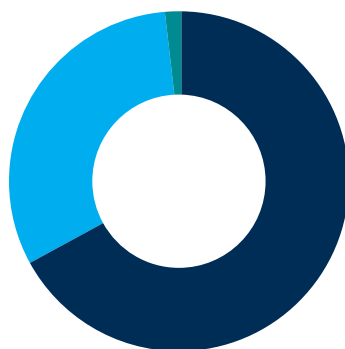
Over the four-week consultation period a total of **4,882** individuals engaged in the development of the Wyndham Dog Off-Leash Approach. This level of engagement is a representation of the importance in providing dog off-leash spaces within Wyndham and acknowledges the large community demand for appropriate planning for the future provision, development and management of these spaces.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

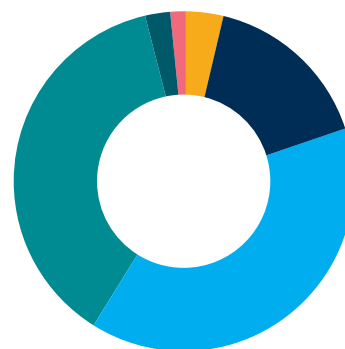
WHAT WE LEARNT ABOUT OWNERSHIP AND USAGE OF EXISTING SPACES

Majority of owners have 1 dog



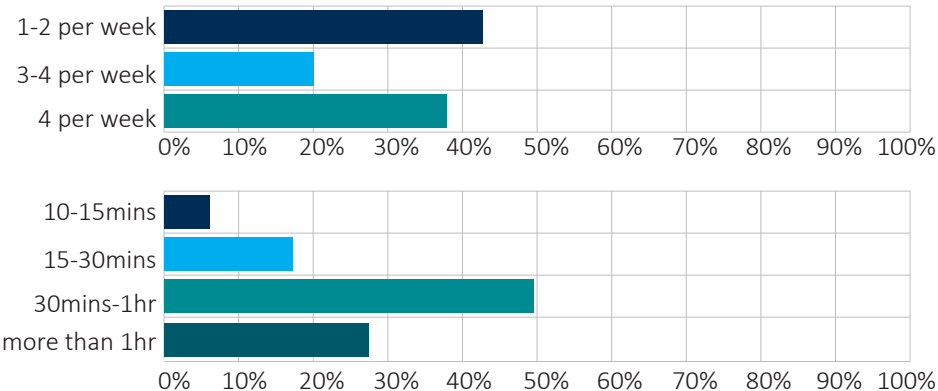
1 2 3 4 More than 4

Majority of people own medium to large dogs

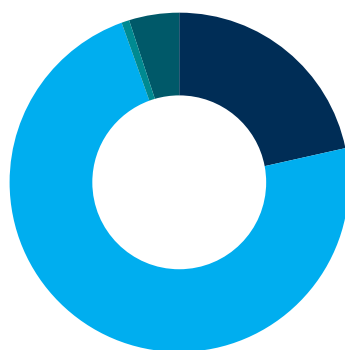


Toy (under 5kg) Small (5-10kgs)
Medium (11-25kgs) Large (26-45kgs)
Giant (46kgs and over) Other

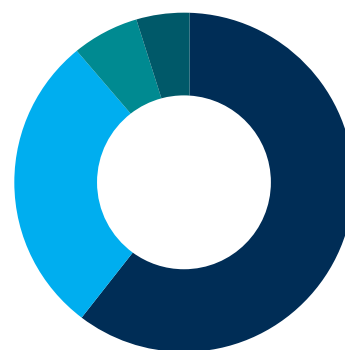
Majority of people utilised dog off-leash spaces 1-2 times per week for up to an hour



Majority of users drive to off-leash spaces, however users would be willing to walk 10-20mins if available



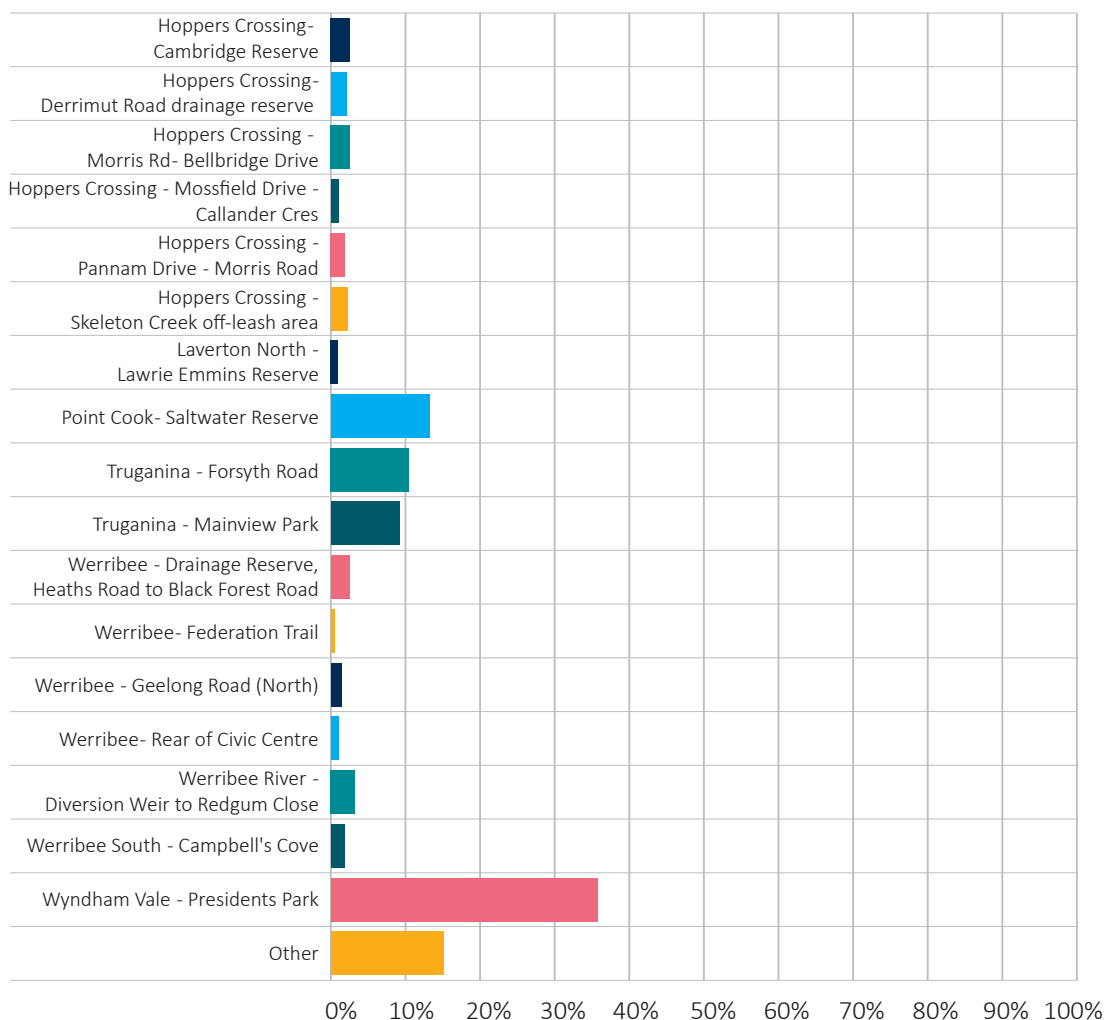
Walk Drive Cycle Other



10mins 20mins 30mins Other

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

When choosing a dog off-leash space, majority of people chose to utilise a fenced dog off-leash park, with Presidents Park, Wyndham Vale the most popular.

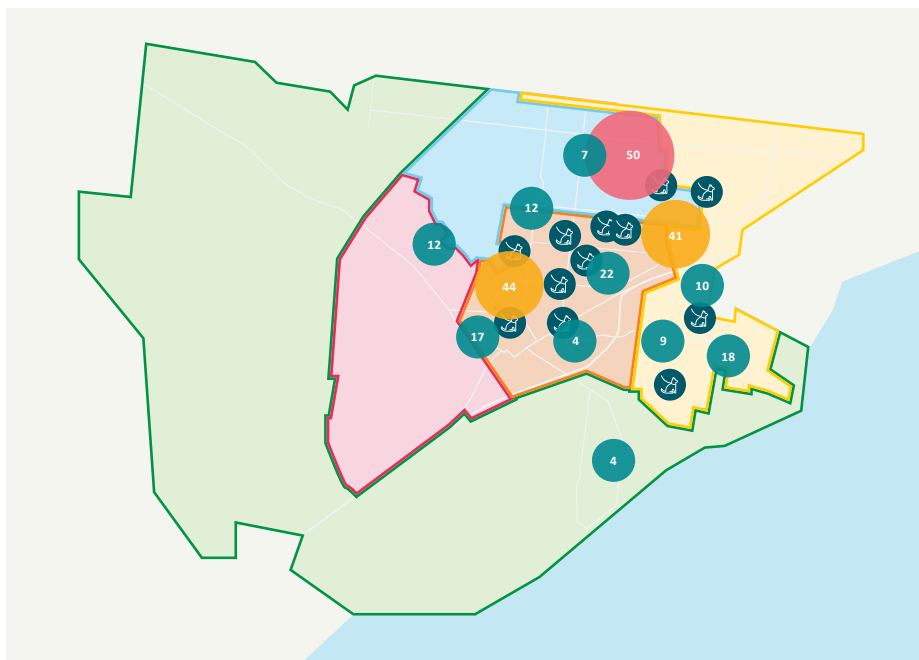


COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WE LEARNT ABOUT COMMUNITY DEMAND AND GAPS IN PROVISION

Through the consultation we received 251 comments relating to the community need and lack of dog off-leash spaces across Wyndham.

We also received a petition of 350 signatures from the Williams Landing community requesting additional dog off-leash spaces.



Communities in our growth areas have highlighted there is currently no dog off-leash spaces within their community, particularly within Tarneit and Manor Lakes.

Communities in our established areas have highlighted the need for additional spaces due to the increasing number of dogs within their community placing increased pressure and demand on existing spaces. This is particularly evident in Point Cook, Werribee and Williams Landing.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

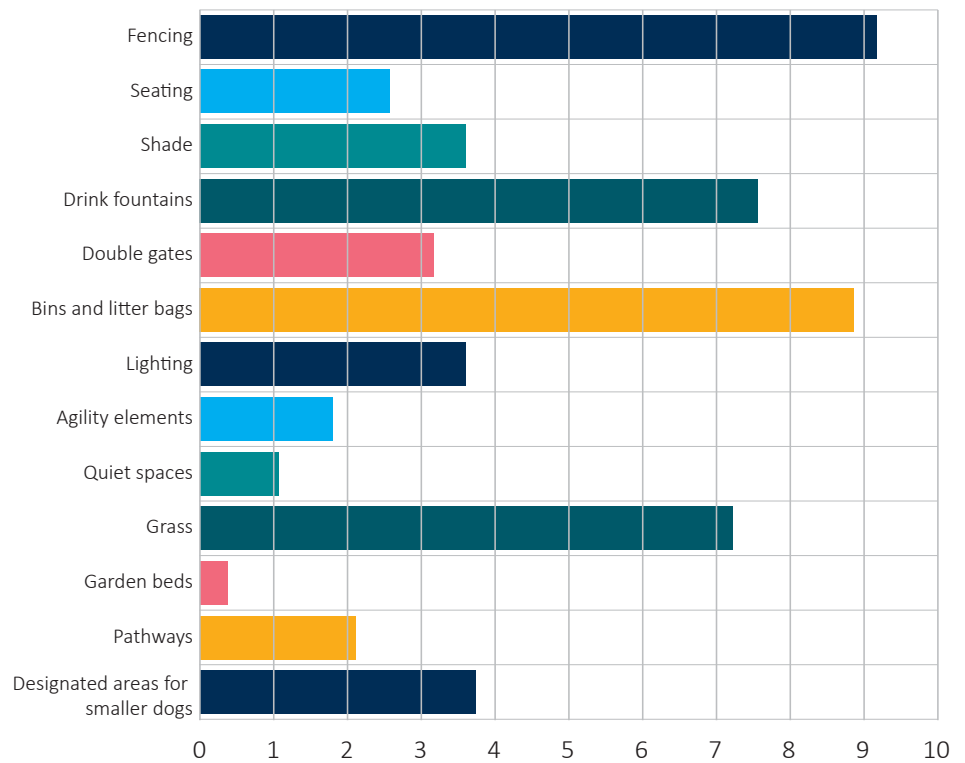
WHAT WE LEARNT ABOUT DESIGN OF FUTURE DOG OFF-LEASH SPACES

Majority of owners prefer to utilise fenced off-leash spaces (75%) because

- Safety – Dogs not running out onto main roads or other open space areas like playgrounds
- Better socialisation experience for dogs and owners
- Comfort of other users of the open space that do not like or are afraid of dogs

Top 5 most important elements of dog off-leash spaces are:

- Fencing, including double gates
- Bins and Litter Bags
- Drink Fountains
- Grass
- Designated areas for smaller dogs/Quiet Areas



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WHAT WE LEARNT ABOUT SIGNAGE AND EDUCATION

In addition to these important elements, two other key themes were represented strongly – signage and education.

Signage – additional signage is required in all dog off-leash spaces, specifically rules of use for fenced dog parks and areas where users cross over from designated dog off-leash areas to areas in which a leash is required.

Education – additional education is needed on responsible dog ownership and other requirements within Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan. Suggestions of educational signage located at fenced dog off-leash parks with pictures demonstrating happy, scared, warning and aggressive behaviour of dogs to reduce conflicts.



PROVISION



PROVISION

Wyndham is made up of 17 suburbs, all with various characteristics, open space experiences and interests. Not all suburbs have the same level of dog ownership and therefore demand for dog off-leash spaces varies across the City. Through this plan we aim to provide equitable access across all suburbs. There are various types of dog off-leash spaces that can be utilised by the community, these include:

Non-formal/non-fenced:

- Dog off-leash areas along walking trails/linear and drainage reserves
- Timed dog off-leash areas

Formal/fenced:

- Dog Off-leash parks, local and destination

PROVISION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA CHECK LIST

Key factors requiring consideration when identifying the type, level and location of dog off-leash spaces are outlined in the check list below:

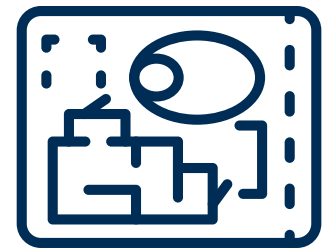
	Considerations	Preference
Current demand and existing infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of registered dogs within the suburb • Existing dog off-leash spaces within the suburb • Location of nearby dog off-leash spaces outside of the suburb and/or Wyndham City Council boundaries • Number of community requests for particular type of dog off-leash space (e.g: Fenced Dog Park) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority provision of dog off-leash spaces to area with limited access and high demand
Site Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who owns the open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of dog off-leash spaces on Council owned and/or managed land • Work with developers in growth areas to provide as part of open space delivery



PROVISION

	Considerations	Preference
Existing Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What activities already occur on the site and is there potential for conflict, current classification of open space (conservation, heritage, active, passive, drainage etc)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce conflicting use of open space it is recommended provision of formal fenced dog off-leash areas be provided on District/Regional level open space. A buffer zone of 50meters is recommended between playgrounds/bbq areas and any dog off-leash space Non-formal/non-fenced dog off-leash should be located on encumbered open space, to maximise use All dog off-leash spaces should be located away from environmentally sensitive areas
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it located close to schools, main roads, residential areas? Is the space centrally located for all users within the suburb? Does the site have good visibility, both internally and externally? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog off-leash spaces, where possible, should be located away from schools, main roads and residential areas The site should be highly visible to the public to ensure user safety
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the size of available land? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal/fenced dog off-leash parks should be a minimum of 3,000 square meters
Site qualities and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the site constraints? What existing infrastructure exists on the site? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing water connection is preferred Relatively flat area is preferred Existing natural shade is preferred
Site Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the site accessible via walking trails? Does the site have carparking? Is maintenance access achievable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-20min walkability to site for suburb residents is recommended Carpark recommended to ensure accessibility Maintenance access will be required

DEVELOPMENT



DEVELOPMENT

There are many ways in which a dog off-leash space can be provided. They can be located along long linear reserves, electrical easements, walking trails and/or formal fenced parks. They can also be timed and not timed. Non-formal spaces are relatively simple in design as they do not require fencing and make use of the natural elements provided. They are also utilised differently to the formal fenced dog off-leash parks as people and their dogs are often walking through the area and not spending a lot of time in the location.

When designing dog off-leash spaces there are four key considerations that will shape the outcome:

- Site conditions
- Budget
- Anticipated level of use and
- The demand and needs of the community

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR FORMAL FENCED DOG OFF-LEASH PARKS

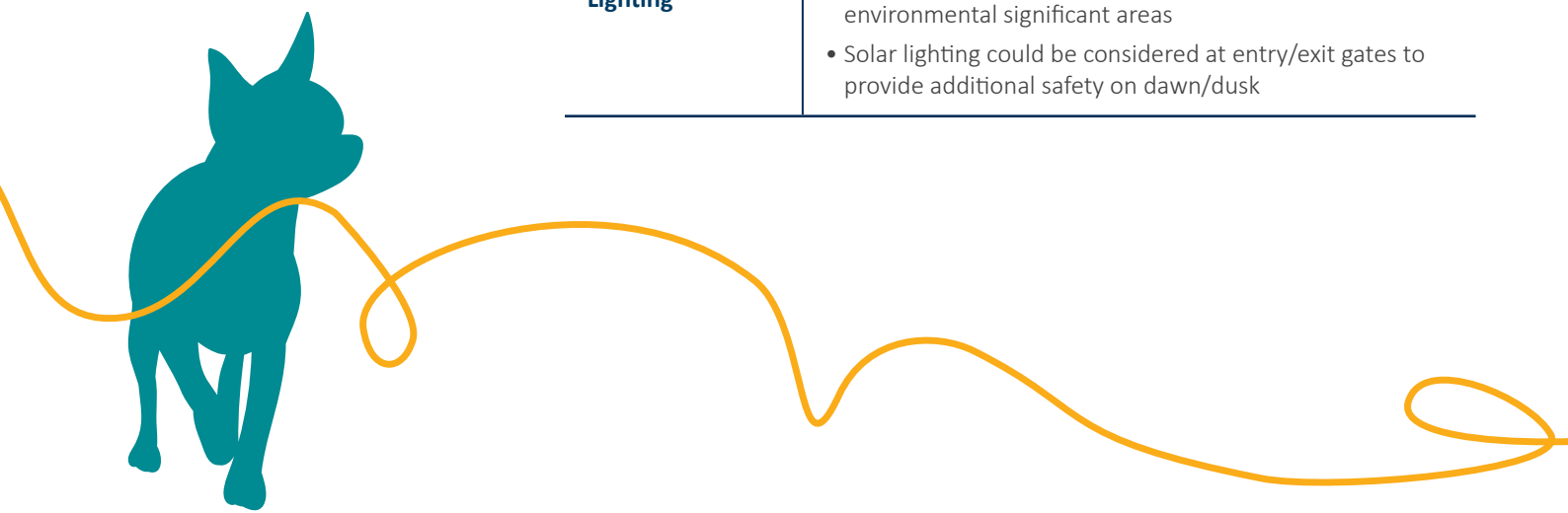
Formal fenced dog off-leash parks design needs more consideration, there is no “one size fits all” approach that can be taken when delivering these areas. Consideration needs to be given to the core infrastructure of the park, as well as the amenities which those utilising the park would like to see.

The below table outlines the core infrastructure requirements for fenced dog off-leash parks and additional amenities that may be provided based on site conditions, budget, anticipated levels of use and community needs. It is designed to be used by Council and Developers to guide the development of dog off-leash spaces. It is expected that Developers will submit proposed designs for dog off-leash space to Council for assessment and approval. It is also expected that upon completion all dog off-leash spaces are submitted to Council’s planning department for gazettal.

Core Infrastructure	Requirements
Perimeter Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 1.7-1.8 meters high • Footing to prevent smaller dogs from escaping under fence
Shape/Size of park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Square shapes to be avoided, where possible, to prevent dogs feeling cornered/trapped. Oval or bean shaped preferred • Minimum of 3,000 square meters
Entry/Exit points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-closing double gates to prevent dogs from escaping • Located away from other uses of open space (ie: playgrounds, sporting fields) • Where possible, two entry/exit gates provided per park • Maintenance gate provided with lock
Surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of surfaces to be used • All spaces must include grassed areas • Concrete to be considered in high traffic areas, water stations and entry and exit points • Irrigation is required

DEVELOPMENT

Core Infrastructure	Requirements
Shade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference to utilise natural shade from trees • Built structures to be located away from entry/exit points to reduce congestion
Seating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located close to shaded areas • Seating provided with built in backs and arm braces
Drinking Fountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision for both owners and dogs • Located in areas with good drainage to reduce pooling/puddles • Located away from high traffic areas and entry/exits to prevent congestion
Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located and entry/exit points • Clearly outline requirements of use • Provide education on appropriate behaviour
Bins/Bags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided outside of dog off-leash park • Located at entry/exit of park or central to users • Provision of litter bags to be included with bins
Additional Amenities	Requirements
Designated Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each designated area to be a minimum of 3,000 square meters (if fenced separately) • Entry and exit gate to be provided in each space • If not separated by fence, natural barriers could be utilised i.e. mass plantings
Agility Equipment/ Activity Zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended for areas of 4,000 square meters and above • Agility equipment to be located away from high traffic areas • Activity zones to be spread out within the park to reduce wear and tear on surfaces
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of existing lighting within the open space area • Consideration of location and proximity to residential and environmental significant areas • Solar lighting could be considered at entry/exit gates to provide additional safety on dawn/dusk



MANAGEMENT



MANAGEMENT

Good management and maintenance of dog off-leash spaces results in good experiences for both owners and dogs. Management of these spaces not only include maintenance requirements but also include patrolling and enforcements as well as the way we education users of these spaces on responsible dog ownership.

Patrolling and Enforcement

Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan outlines the requirements of responsible dog ownership in public places and the patrolling and enforcement activities performed by our local rangers. These include, but are not limited to;

- Dogs must always be supervised and under effective control when in public spaces and
- Owners are required to pick up after their dogs.
- All dogs must remain on lead unless signage states otherwise. All dog off-leash spaces will have designated signage.

When implementing these requirements, our rangers will always try to take an educational approach first. In achieving compliance, our rangers will apply their discretion and will be guided by the Wyndham City Enforcement Policy ([see Policy here](#)).

Education

Council already undertakes educational activities promoting responsible dog ownership through information on our website, media articles and social media.

Through the community consultation we learnt that this education can be further enhanced via the use of educational signage at dog off-leash spaces. Signage at fenced dog off-leash parks identifying the signs of happy, scared, warning and aggressive behaviours through pictures, as well as Rules of Engagement for the use of these spaces are required.

MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES FOR DOG OFF-LEASH SPACES

Levels of management and maintenance are dependent on the type of dog off-leash space.

Non-formal dog off-leash spaces (non-fenced) are included in Council's existing open space management and maintenance programs.

Formal (fenced) dog off-leash parks require higher levels of management and maintenance to ensure the safety and enjoyment of users.



MANAGEMENT

The below table provides guidelines on maintenance requirements for formal dog off-leash parks.

Elements	Maintenance guidance
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to customer maintenance requests such as holes, broken gates, graffiti etc
Fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular inspections for holes in fencing • Regular inspections for damaged gates • Repair/replacement as required
Surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration and replacement where required • If irrigated, regular inspections for damage, repair/ replacement as required
Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearing of hazards, repair/replacement where required
Shelters/ Seating/Drinking Fountains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspections as per existing policy for open space furniture • Repair/replacement when required
Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of graffiti • Repair/replacement of damaged signage • Ensure signs are highly visible and free from obstructions
Bins/Bags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular emptying of bins • Regular replacement of litter bags
Planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of weeds using non-toxic sprays • Replacement of damaged plants • Protection of damaged areas with barriers
Agility Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspections as per existing policy for open space furniture • Repair/replacement when required



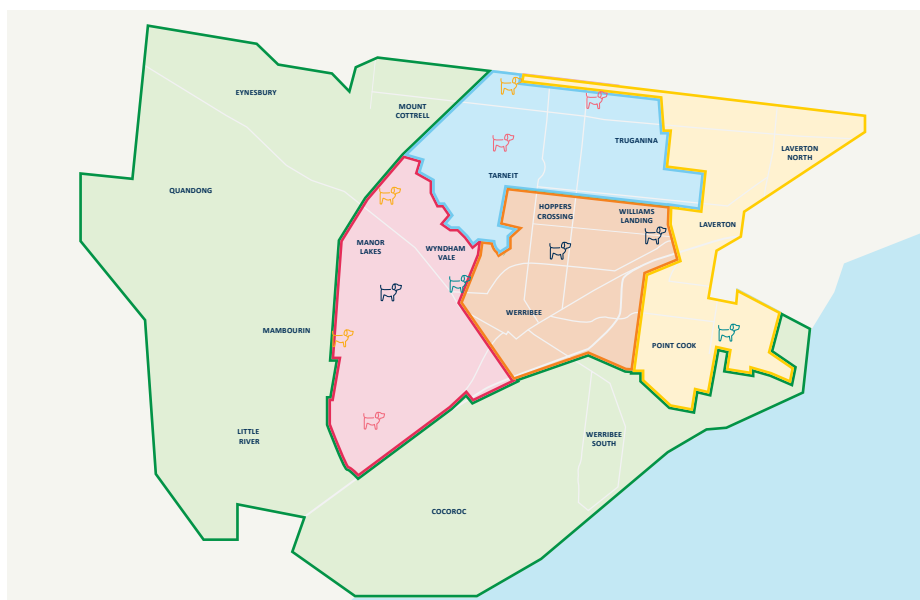
IMPLEMENTATION














IMPLEMENTATION

The five year implementation plan will focus on delivering:

- Gazettal of existing dog off-leash spaces within Wyndham, specifically dog off-leash spaces located at Forsyth Park and Mainview Park, Truganina
- Upgrade of signage at all dog off-leash spaces, with a focus on educational signage
- City wide distribution of formal fenced dog off-leash parks with one park provided per Ward per year, with the intention for all urban suburbs to have at least one dog park per suburb within 5 years. All projects are subject to formal budgetary approval and alignment with Long Term Financial Plan.
- Identification of future open space master-planning in Precinct Structure Plans that should consider provision of dog off-leash spaces.
- Increasing Dog Off-leash areas from 18 to 28 sites, with a specific focus on fenced parks, across Wyndham



Year	Site	Year	Site
Year One		Year Two	
	Bulban Road, Werribee		Cambridge Reserve, Hoppers Crossing
	Trug SE Masterplan, Truganina		Eureka Drive, Mannor Lakes
	Camelot Reserve, Tarneit		Williams Land Reserve, Williams Landing (Delivery)
Detailed Design	Williams Land Reserve, Williams Landing		
Year Three		Year Four/Five	
	Saltwater Reserve, Point Cook		Wyndham Vale PSP's (developers)
	Presidents Park, Wyndham Vale		Mambourin PSP's (developers)
			Tarneit Electrical Easement (developers)

