

DOGS IN OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN 2022 - 2032



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS			
Term	Definition	Term	Definition
Council	Central Coast Council	LGA	Local Government Authority
CAA	NSW Companion Animal Act, 1998	LG Act	NSW Local Government Act
CAMP	Companion Animal Management Plan	OLA	Off-leash areas where dogs are permitted to run off-leash but only if dogs are under 'effective control'
COSS	Coastal Open Space System; a network of high value conservation reserves in the south of the LGA	On-leash areas	Areas where dogs are required to be always on a leash
Destination site	A site that attracts visitors from across the region. It is not necessarily fenced	On a leash	Securely held by someone who is 16 or older and via a leash
Dog owner	The person responsible for the dog while in a public place, whether or not the actual owner	Order	A Council directive made in accordance with the CAA and the LG Act
FOLA/Dog parks	Fenced dog off-leash areas	Park/reserve /open space	Areas that include open parkland, play spaces, sporting areas, trails, natural environments

1. The Purpose of the Dogs in Open Space Action Plan (DIOSAP)

The DIOSAP is to provide Council with a 10-year planning framework that will guide decision-making about how and where provision will be made for dog owners and their dogs. The Action Plan has been prepared in consideration of the diversity of demands that are placed on the open space network.

These considerations relate to:

- the protection and enhancement of natural environments
- the recreation and sporting needs of the community
- managing risk
- the preservation of public amenity
- dog owners and those who do not want to interact with dogs in public places.

The Action Plan provides:

- A statement of the principles that will guide planning of opportunities for dog owners and their dogs
- An assessment of current provision and associated opportunities and challenges
- A way forward that is aligned to Council's service objectives, particularly as they relate to open space, recreation and animal management services
- A set of actions that articulate:
 - how gaps in provision for dogs off-leash may be addressed
 - the type and level of infrastructure that may be considered at individual sites
 - development and ongoing maintenance and management costs
 - Council's position in relation to the fencing of off-leash areas
- Consideration of:
 - the programs and information required to optimise community understanding of dog control requirements and the basis for the requirements
 - existing regulations¹ that may need to be reviewed.

This document supersedes the 'Dogs in Open Space Areas Policy (2002)' and the Dogs in Open Space Strategy(2012).²

Table 1 – Recent survey responses about the importance of pets (LMH/P4P: 6,500 respondents)	
Responses	%/No of respondents
Pets are an important part of my family	99
It is important for me to have a pet in my life	96
My pets give me great comfort in times of need	93
My pet is important because they give me unconditional affection	90
Pets give me a strong reason for living	74
My pet is important because they give me peace of mind	65
* % of Pet survey respondents selecting 'Agree' + 'Strongly Agree'	

2. Background Information

2.1 The Benefits of Dog and Pet Ownership

There is a significant body of research that indicates that pet owners experience greater health and wellbeing than non-pet owners, including^{3 4}:

- greater physical health and fitness
- a greater sense of happiness and higher self-esteem
- lower levels of loneliness, anxiety and blood pressure
- greater resilience when dealing with negative life events

¹ Dog off-leash/control Local Laws/'Orders in Council' created in line with the Domestic Animals Act and/or the Local Government Act

² Former City of Gosford

³ Friends with Benefits; On the Positive Consequences of Pet Ownership, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol 101, No. 6, 2011; A. McConnell

⁴ Pets, touch, and COVID-19: health benefits from non-human touch through times of stress; Journal of Behavioural Economics for Policy, Vol. 4, COVID-19 Special Issue 2, 25-33, 2020

- relationship benefits within their close circle of friends and with other people, including neighbours⁵

Dog ownership can have benefits associated with physical exercise however, this is likely to be limited to people who are committed to walking their dog on a regular basis. Dog owners also attend off-leash areas because of the opportunity to engage with other dog owners.

Recent research carried out for a Melbourne metropolitan council in 2021 indicates the importance of pets to families because of the companionship they provide. The same research highlights the important role pets play in breaking down social barriers with over 70% of respondents reporting they interact with more people because they have a pet.

2.2 Central Coast Planning Context

Central Coast Council was established in 2016 following the amalgamation of Gosford City (fGCC) and former Wyong Shire Councils (fWSC).

The Central Coast Local Government Area population is estimated to be 358,826 and to increase to 414,615 by 2036. The Central Coast is the 3rd most populous Local Government Area in NSW and ranks 9th as the largest urban centre by population in Australia. The Central Coast Local Government Area comprises an area of 1,681 sq. kms and has more than 80 kms of coastline. More than half of the Council area comprises National Parks, State forest, bushland, open space, nature reserves and aquatic environments (beaches and waterways).

Several Council and State Government planning documents are relevant to this project. Some of these documents were prepared by the former Gosford and Wyong Councils and continue to provide relevant policy and planning frameworks and direction for the new Central Coast Local Government area. Central Coast Council's Responsible Dog Ownership Policy defines the expectations, requirements and responsibilities of dog owners to their dogs whereas the Dogs In Open Space Action Plan relates specifically to the management of Open Space Areas for dog use.

Examples of documents that have informed this project:

- Community Strategic Plan
- Dogs in Open Space Strategy
- Responsible Dog Ownership Policy
- Our Coast Our Waterways
- Central Coast Active Lifestyle Strategy
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- NSW Companion Animal Act (NSW Govt)
- Central Coast Regional Plan (NSW Govt)

A review of these documents highlights the need:

- for an integrated approach to planning for people with dogs as for the planning of other community assets and recreation and lifestyle activities
- for town and open space planning to consider the implications of pet ownership in increasingly urbanised living environments, and for resource planning to take into account the increasing demands on compliance monitoring and complaints relating to pets
- to plan for dog owners and their relationship with the general public
- to protect the environment from the impacts/potential impacts associated with domestic animals
- to ensure the Dogs In Open Space Action Plan (DIOSAP) is informed by a comprehensive understanding of dog and associated human behaviour in public environments, the benefits and challenges of different off-leash environments and good practice policy and provision protocols.

The DIOSAP recognises the health and wellbeing benefits of pet ownership, and as particularly relevant to this project, dog ownership. There is now a significant body of research that highlights the physical, emotional, mental and social benefits that accrue from pet ownership.

⁵ Social Capital and Pet Ownership – A Tale of Four Cities; L. Wood, K. Martin et al, SSM - Population Health, Vol 3, Dec 2017, Pages 442-447

2.3 The Regulatory Context

The NSW Companion Animal Act (CAA) sets out several legal requirements relating to the management and control of dogs in public spaces and the associated responsibilities of local government.

The CAA requires that:

- Dogs wear a collar with name and owner contact details
- A person be at least 16 years to be in charge of a dog in a public place and that person has to be competent to handle the dog/s
- A person cannot have any more than 4 dogs in their charge in a public place and that they are kept under 'effective control'
- Dogs are not allowed:
 - within 10m of play equipment
 - on school, pre-school grounds or in shopping centres without the permission of the relevant person/organisation
- Council's designate and clearly sign areas/spaces where dogs are prohibited. These areas/spaces may include:
 - sportsfields
 - public bathing areas
 - shopping areas
 - wildlife protection areas
- Dogs be prohibited, unless permission is granted by the relevant authorities, to enter schools and kindergartens
- Dog owners/carers immediately pick up dog litter

Of particular note is the CAA definition of a 'nuisance dog' as it relates to a public place. Penalties can be issued under section 32A of the CAA if a dog:

- repeatedly runs or chases at any person, animal or vehicle
- endangers the health of any person or animal
- repeatedly causes substantial damage to anything outside the property on which it is ordinarily kept.

As with most other LGAs in NSW, Council policy requires that dogs be on a leash in all parks unless the park or a site within a park has been designated for off-leash activities.

2.4 The Local Government Dog Off-Leash Planning Context

LGAs choose to provide for dogs in public places depending on a number of factors including:

- the availability of open space
- policy position relating to the sharing of public open space and fencing of open space
- dog control regulations and expectations about compliance with regulations
- informed understanding of the implications of different provision options.

The following is a summary of the way in which LGAs typically make provision for dogs in public open space. The following table is an extract from 'Technical Manual – Planning, Designing and Managing Off-Leash Areas' ©

Type of Access	Description
No Access for Dogs	<p>These are areas where dogs are not allowed, either on or off-leash. They will be more prevalent in urban areas and townships but may also be in rural areas.</p> <p>Areas may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the confines of a playground or within a designated distance of play equipment

Table 2 – Examples of LGA Provision for Dogs in Urban, Township and Rural Areas	
Type of Access	Description
	<p>In NSW dogs are not allowed within 10m of play equipment. In some other Australian States, Local Government can determine on and off-leash proximity to playspaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ some/all sports fields. <p>NSW legislation allows LGAs to limit or prohibit dogs from being on sportsfields. Some LGAs allow dogs to be off-leash on sportsfields due to a lack of other options, and some limit access to lower grade sportsfields because of the impact of dog activity and urine on playing surfaces</p> <p>Dogs are not permitted on sportsfields in Central Coast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ some/all foreshore areas/water bodies with sensitive flora or fauna environments ▪ environments potentially dangerous for dogs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NSW Government legislation prohibits dogs from being in National Parks
Access for Dogs but On-leash Only	<p>This requirement is generally in areas where there is a reasonable probability of conflict between dogs and other activities, where there is a need to closely monitor dog access and/or where the safety of dogs could be compromised. 'On-leash only' access areas are more prevalent in urban areas and townships; however they may also be in rural areas.</p> <p>Areas may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sensitive flora and/or fauna environments in urban and/or rural areas ▪ within a defined buffer from a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ walking and/or cycling trail (e.g 5-10m of a trail*) ○ picnic/BBQ areas <p>* May vary depending on workable buffer space being available</p>
Access for Dogs Off-Leash	<p>In urban and some townships these sites generally cater for a few recreation and or sporting activities. They are mostly unfenced and will vary in size. They may include an entire park, part of a park and in some cases a sportsfield.</p> <p>A small number of these sites may be fenced or partially fenced, and 'higher level' (e.g 'district', 'major township' or 'municipal') sites may include features specific to dogs such as sensory vegetation/elements, rock clamber mounds, dog education/agility equipment.</p> <p>In most rural areas, apart from areas that are designated 'no dogs' and 'on-leash', owners are permitted to have dogs off the leash.</p>
Time Share – On/Off-Leash Access	<p>Due to a shortage of suitable open space, and/or potential conflict with other activities, some LGAs designate times and/or times of the year when dogs can be off the leash. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Daily Timeshare</u> Examples include: A popular walking route to a school or pre-school that traverses an off-leash area (risk management) that may only allow dog walking outside of school drop off or pick up hours; sports fields where sport has priority during competition and training times and where dogs are allowed off-leash at other times. ▪ <u>Seasonal Timeshare</u> Examples include: Beach or lake foreshore areas where off-leash activities may be disallowed during summer, or restricted to specific hours on a seasonal or annual basis.

3. Current Situation in Central Coast

3.1 Dog Ownership on the Central Coast

The lifetime animal registration fee levied by the NSW State Government, as opposed to an annual registration fee, means deceased and relocated pets are not identifiable from database records. As a result, dogs registered in 1988 remain on the NSW Government database even though they are deceased. This makes it difficult to determine the number of dogs that are on the database and living on the Central Coast.

Only dogs listed on the registration database as of 2008 were included in dog population counts for the DIOSAP. These 55,257 dogs are likely to be an overestimation on the basis that dogs have an average lifespan of 11/12 years. According to Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) the 'owned' dog population in Australia however is likely to be significantly higher than is reflected on registration data bases around the country. AMA research and information suggests there are likely to be over 65,000 dogs residing in Central Coast households⁶. This is at least 10,000 more dogs than registration estimates. If estimations are applied to future household numbers, dog numbers on the Central Coast could be in excess of 80,000 by 2032.

3.2 Dog Off-Leash Provision

There are currently 62 sites on the Central Coast where dogs can be off the leash. If the recommendations in the DIOSAP are implemented, then this will increase to 69 sites.

Dogs are not allowed in NSW National Parks⁷ but they are allowed off the leash in State Forests, except for Cumberland State Forest⁸ and in some Regional Parks. In line with the CAA, dogs must be under 'effective control' in these locations.

4. Fenced & Unfenced Provision Options – Benefits and Challenges

4.1 Background

The way Councils accommodate dogs in public spaces is being reconsidered as attitudes towards dogs and the role they play in the wider community changes. As multiple other activities compete for finite open space, a comprehensive understanding of the implications of each provision opportunity must be assessed. These factors relate to dog and human behaviour, dog owner attitudes to the control of dogs in different environments, the likely level of use of different off-leash environments, and planning that is not informed by good practice.

Fencing of off-leash areas is often a response to requests from dog owners who cannot or will not control their dogs in line with regulations, or as a result of complaints from people about unwanted approaches from dogs. Fencing is often seen as an effective and immediate response to localised complaints or requests without understanding that these issues are likely to be commonplace across all public environments, not just in open space.

Survey respondents⁹, the majority of whom are dog owners, report that dogs being off leash in on-leash areas and/or bothersome dogs, is their principal grievance after dog littering. This points to the need for strategies that encourage (e.g through education and partnerships) and/or require (e.g through punitive measures) dog owners to control and leash dogs in line with CAA regulations.

Council reports and complaints relating to dog attacks¹⁰ also indicates the need to address matters relating to dog control more holistically. In 2021, 48% of reported dog attacks on the Central Coast occurred on roads and/or footpaths and accounted for 45% of human and animal victims. Only

⁶ Based on 1.3 dogs for 40% of households in Australia, pgs. 6&9; Pets in Australia; Animal Medicines Australia

⁷ www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-policies/pets-in-parks

⁸ www.forestrycorporation.com.au/old11992200/visit/activities/dogs

⁹ Research undertaken by LMH/Paws4Play 2016-2021

¹⁰ On investigation of complaints, some reported 'dog attacks' may be found to be 'dog rushes' or dog behaviour interpreted as an attack by the complainant

15% of reported attacks occurred in parks or off-leash areas and accounted for 6% of human and animal victims.

Anecdotal feedback from respondents¹¹ however, indicates significantly more 'dog off-leash' incidents (in both off-leash and on-leash areas) occur than are reported.

Menzies Institute for Medical Research states that 'injuries due to dog bites are a largely unrecognised and growing public health problem' and estimates that over 100,000 people are bitten by dogs in Australia each year. Twelve to fourteen thousand incidents require medical attention, and 1,200-1,400 incidents require hospitalisation.¹²

4.2 Provision Options Discussed¹³

The following highlights the benefits and challenges associated with different access options for dog owners and their dogs:

4.2.1 Dog Exclusion Areas

The Benefits

- Significantly reduces the impact of dogs on sensitive flora and fauna habitats. In particular on foreshore bird nesting sites where vulnerability to nest disturbance and potential predation is high.
- Likely to be significantly fewer dog owners disregarding access and control regulations
- Easy to monitor for non-compliance.

The Challenges

- Minimal challenges as incidents of conflict are reduced when dogs are excluded
- Community expectation that these areas will be more closely monitored

4.2.2 On-leash Only Provision

The Benefits

- The wider community can use these areas knowing that dogs will be on-leash at all times
- Dogs remain under 'effective control' (because they are leashed)
- Issues relating to dog bites and attacks, and unwanted approaches by dogs are minimised
- Allows dog owners access to amenities (e.g trails) and some areas of bushland where it would not otherwise be appropriate to allow people with dogs.

The Challenges

- Owners letting their dogs off the leash in breach of leashing regulations resulting in the additional challenges associated with off-leash areas
- Dog owners not being respectful of other users on trails and footpaths and appropriately controlling dogs (e.g use of extension leads)
- Increasing expectations by the community relating to:
 - the enforcement of leashing regulations
 - presence/profile of Rangers and pro-active monitoring of on-leash areas, in particular areas where there is a high level of non-compliance and/or where there is likely to be conflict (e.g high use areas such as beaches).

4.2.3 Off-leash Provision - Unfenced

The Benefits

- OLAs are social and recreation hubs particularly for people who want to exercise and socialise with their dog/s or other dog owners.
- OLAs are generally observed to attract:

¹¹ LMH/P4P Jan-Feb 2022 (HCC)

¹² The Incidence of Public Sector Hospitalisations due to Dog Bites in Australia 2001-13; 2017

¹³ LMH/P4P Technical Manual, Planning, Design and Management of Off-Leash Areas, © 2019-22.

- more people with dogs at any one time than fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) because of the area over which activity can range (opportunity for separation of dogs)
- people who actively monitor and engage with their dogs than in FOLAs
- They allow apartment and unit dwellers or people living on small allotments to continue to own dogs
- They provide a focal point for community education and training programs.

The Challenges

- Increasing demand from dog owners for access to additional dog off-leash areas
- Increased likelihood of dog litter not being picked up by owners
- Inappropriate dogs (e.g Unregistered, un-desexed dogs, dangerous breeds & dogs that are too young or not vaccinated) being let off the leash
- Increased likelihood of dog-on-dog and dog-on-human incidents (e.g Bites, rushing, knocks/falls)
- Aggressive and/or poorly behaved dogs
- Dog owners who take too many dogs, do not actively supervise and control their dog, let their dogs approach other people and/or dogs, take inappropriate dogs (e.g aggressive, poorly behaved)
- Dog owners who are of the opinion that they and their dogs have priority access to the space, and other people are a secondary user
- Owners allowing dogs to access sensitive environments that adjoin off-leash areas (e.g sand dunes that adjoin foreshore areas)
- Lack of resources to enable local laws officers to monitor compliance in line with community expectations.
- May be difficult to adequately define boundaries in some sites.

4.2.4 Off-leash Provision – Partial Fencing/Buffer Provision

This type of provision may include:

- Landscape features that provide a visual buffer for dogs (e.g rock mounding, vegetation plantings), and/or
- Partial fencing (e.g Along roadside of OLA)

The Benefits

These benefits are in addition to those outlined in sections 4.2.3

- Still requires owners to actively monitor and control their dogs
- Does not exclude the site from being used for other recreation activities
- Provides a physical and/or visual barrier to surrounding infrastructure (e.g roads), activities (e.g playspaces) and environments (e.g wetlands) without excluding other uses from the space as does full fencing
- Can help reduce conflict between dogs and other activities in parks
- Does not clutter the environment with fencing
- Can add to the amenity and natural values of the site (in the case of landscape buffers).

The Challenges

These challenges are in addition to those outlined in sections 4.2.3

- Sets a precedence for additional fully fenced OLAs from residents who do not/cannot control their dogs and from people who are dissatisfied with the lack of control of dogs by owners
- Informing dog owners/the community as to the rationale for not fencing OLAs
- Explaining to the wider community why Council will not provide fencing to control poorly managed dogs.

4.2.5 Off-leash Provision – Full Fencing

The Benefits

These benefits are in addition to those outlined in sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4

- Provide people with limited mobility a contained environment.

The Challenges

These challenges are in addition to those outlined in sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4

- Excludes shared use/isolates open space by fencing it for a single purpose
- Increased wear and tear on the area with resulting unsightliness unless the FOLA is large and/or has a durable surface (i.e. not grass)
- Can increase expectations by the community that FOLAs will become the norm and not the exception
- Increased management/maintenance costs
- Overcrowding. This can occur because:
 - the level of use or popularity of the area has exceeded expectations
 - the site was too small to fence
 - use by commercial dog walkers, breed groups, or social groups
- Young children and babies in prams taken into the fenced area may present a risk
- Dogs left unattended
- Dog owners being less vigilant in managing their dogs
- An attitude by some dog owners that they do not have to prevent their dogs from bothering others because they are in an area primarily used by dogs
- Underutilisation because of a prevalence of poorly controlled dogs, poor amenity and maintenance
- An increase in the likelihood of dog bites, rushing and poor owner control over that which occurs in unfenced off-leash areas.



5. Discussion of Key Issues and Opportunities

This section contains a summary of the issues and opportunities that have been identified as part of the project.

5.1 Planning for Dog Owners and Their Dogs

Historically the management of dogs has tended to focus on 'managing their impact' on resident and public amenity, and more recently environmental protection. As a result, matters relating to dogs (and pets) have generally been addressed in terms of 'managing problems' and dealt with through relevant compliance legislation.

Research is now starting to better inform decision-making in relation to pets and the physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing benefits derived from pet ownership; benefits that also accrue to the wider community.

In recognition of the benefits pets provide, a growing number of LGAs are recognising the benefits of a more holistic approach to the planning for pet owners and their pets.¹⁴

These LGAs are adopting a whole-of-Council approach to pets and their owners that involves consideration of:

- Behaviour change information and strategies that address environmental matters (e.g control of dogs, the overpopulation of cats)
- Community support services (e.g 'at risk' pet owners such as those dealing with family violence support to less mobile/ageing pet owners)
- Open space and town planning and the need to address matters relating to OLA provision in higher density residential environments
- Networks to support pet owners in times of natural disaster

Animal Management Service teams are being overrun by regulatory issues that arise as most information, education and communication strategies relating to pets are not effective. Matters relating to dogs in public spaces are escalating (e.g responding to attacks, rushes) which diminishes any capacity to address the cause of these issues proactively. The DIOSAP recommends that Council prepare a Companion Animal Management Plan to fully understand the changing needs of the service, community expectations and challenges facing the capacity of the service to address needs.

Pet owners generally live in free standing dwellings however, unlike assumptions of the past, it is now clear that many households in higher density dwellings (e.g apartments) are choosing to include a pet. Australian and USA research shows that here are potentially up to 40% of apartment dwellers are likely to own a pet.¹⁵

Higher populations of both people and dogs will place further demand on limited public open space. It also reinforces the need for greater compliance with dog control regulations and to encourage people to make appropriate decisions about the type of pet chosen, and the size of their dogs.

In some growth areas LGAs are allowing developers to install FOLAs as an incentive to property purchasers or as part of the open space contribution scheme. It is apparent that these facilities are not complying with any good practice guidelines with minimal understanding of appropriate location, design and management practices. The associated LGAs are often unaware of the management and behavioural (i.e. dog and owner) implications of these facilities and inherit the ongoing problems associated with fencing of off-leash areas such as the size of space allocated, poor location and design, and insufficient resourcing for compliance monitoring and maintenance.

¹⁴ Victorian and South Australian State Governments require LGAs to prepared Animal Management Plans every 4 years.

¹⁵ www.realestate.com.au/news/pets-planning-in-melbourne-highrises-should-be-mandatory-caydon/

Open space and town planning needs to consider the implications of dog ownership in future planning and negotiations with developers in terms of additional facilities for dog owners.

Walking is recognised as the most popular recreation activity in Australia and NSW¹⁶ with 46% and 45% participation rate respectively. The research does not yet break down the number of people who walk with their dog however, other research indicates that a significant number of walkers walk with their dog.¹⁷

Research indicates that the greater proportion of dog owners are likely to drive to an off-leash area rather than walk to it. Once at an off-leash area, dog owners generally do not engage in a level of physical activity that will result in improved physical health. Many are observed to sit/stand and watch their dog, engage with devices, and/or talk to other dog owners.

Any strategies that involve using the pet dog to encourage people to be more physically active need to focus on walking and the associated benefits for both dog and owner.

The Central Coast attracts visitors from outside the LGA as well as local visitors because of the attractiveness of its beach destinations and natural bushland. Submissions to the DIOSAP indicate a need for more proactive monitoring of these sites and/or community education programs in order to address complaints relating to non-compliance with dog leashing and control regulations.

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

1. Ensure future requests relating to OLAs and FOLAs are addressed in line with the DIOSAP
2. Ensure additional open space is incorporated in new subdivisions to cater for off-leash requirements as outlined in the DIOSAP
3. Ensure a co-ordinated and fully integrated approach to the planning and provision for OLAs that involves regulatory services, open space planning and management, community development, town planning
4. Prepare developer guidelines relating to OLAs and FOLAs (partially fenced only)
5. Consider the preparation of a Companion Animal Management Plan that enables Council to quantify service needs and priorities for the next 5-10 years.

5.2 Changes to OLA Provision

Local government is now experiencing challenges in providing for dog owners and their dogs. This is primarily because the sector has not planned for the needs of dog owners as it has for other recreation activities. As a result, LGAs are struggling to find appropriate off-leash sites that do not impact existing activities or environments.

The Central Coast is constrained in finding provision opportunities because of limitations associated with sensitive environments, National Parks, the availability of appropriate sites within residential catchments, and the geography and topography of the area.

Historically, LGAs have attempted to accommodate requests by residents for off-leash access to parks without a full understanding of the implications particularly relating to:

- conflict with other recreation activities
- risk management considerations relating to proximity of OLAs to trails/pathways, roads/ carparks and cliff tops
- proximity to sensitive flora and fauna habitats
- sites that are too small
- assumptions that owners would be able to control their dogs in line with regulations and in consideration of other parks users.

¹⁶ AusPlay-NSW-data-tables-29-October-2021 and AusPlay-National-data-tables-29-October-2021

¹⁷ LMH Consulting research, 2016, 2017-21

As a result, often unsuitable sites were set aside for off-leash activities. In addition, there has been a significant shift in community attitudes and expectations in relation to the control of dogs and the impact they can have on sensitive environments and community enjoyment of public open space.

This report has identified five sites that should be decommissioned as OLAs and, where possible alternative sites identified within the catchment provided. Table 3 lists those sites together with the rationale for decommissioning or relocating.

Site	Rationale for Decommissioning/Relocating
Illoura Reserve - Davistown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The site is recognised as having environmental significance because it is one of the few nesting sites on the Central Coast for the Bush Stone Curlew. Council has proposed that the existing protected area be extended into the parkland and to include water shallows associated with the protected area. ▪ There is poor compliance with leashing regulations along pathways and foreshore areas leading to the reserve. In addition, Council has received ongoing complaints from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ residents about the poor control of dogs at this site, including owners who let dogs run onto private property ○ from other trail and park users, including concerned dog walkers. ▪ The site is isolated and difficult for Council staff to monitor for compliance with leashing regulations ▪ Council recognises that the reserve and foreshore areas leading to it are attractive and popular with residents. For this reason, the DIOSAP does not recommend the exclusion of dogs but rather the leashing of dogs in the reserve and along pathways adjoining the reserve. ▪ An additional OLA site within the Illoura reserve catchment is proposed at Pine Ave Reserve (Davistown/Saratoga)
Terrigal Haven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Terrigal Haven attracts high levels of visitation, particularly in summer and holiday periods. ▪ This site has been the subject of ongoing and intense complaints about the conflict between dogs and other users of the site. Complaints relate to dogs being off the leash in on-leash areas, dogs not being appropriately controlled on pathways, dogs off the leash in car parks and associated accidents, and the lack of control of dogs around cliff tops. ▪ The natural amenity of the site has been severely impacted by dog activity because of its gradient ▪ From an industry perspective this is an inappropriate site for an OLA because it presents several risk management considerations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ high levels of constant vehicle activity within immediate proximity ○ the proximity of high pedestrian traffic areas along its boundary and associated pathways ○ the proximity of cliff edges ▪ It is not possible to maintain the amenity of the site because of its gradient with continued off-leash activity. It is not recommended that the site be fenced or partially fenced to address these risk management issues because the amenity and primary function of the site would be significantly compromised. ▪ Council recognises that this site is popular with residents and visitors, including dog owners. For this reason, the DIOSAP does not recommend the exclusion of dogs from Terrigal Haven but rather the leashing of dogs in the reserve and along pathways adjoining the reserve. ▪ An additional OLA site within the Terrigal Haven catchment is proposed at Duffy's Road.
Fagan Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relocation of the OLA to Karrawa Reserve (Pt. Clare) to remove conflict with sporting activity and close proximity to Brisbane Water Drive.
Lees Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is a densely vegetated site that forms part of riparian Ourimbah Creek Corridor vegetation that is being regenerated for catchment protection ▪ There is no evidence that the site is used for dog walking/off-leash activities
Kariong Recreation Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In line with the master plan for this reserve, a playspace and skatepark facility are being constructed in the 2022/23 financial year. These activities are not

Table 3 – Sites recommended for decommissioning and/or relocating	
Site	Rationale for Decommissioning/Relocating
	<p>compatible with dogs off-leash and there is insufficient space available to enable a 10 mt buffer zone between these activities and dog off-leash activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state government owner Mount Penang Gardens site is within a 15 minute walk of the current site and offers a 1.4 Ha fenced off-leash area.
McEvoy Drainage Easement (Umina Beach)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicts with shared use thoroughfare Not currently listed as an OLA on Council's website/promotional material.

Twelve new OLAs are proposed in this Action Plan to help address gaps in provision and/or replace sites that have been recommended for relocation/removal.

Table 4 – Sites recommended as additional OLAs		
	PROPOSED NEW SITE	REASON FOR ADDITION
1	Pine Av. Reserve (Davistown/Saratoga)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision To accommodate the relocation of the OLA from Illoura Reserve
2	Duffy's Rd. Reserve (Terrigal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision To accommodate the relocation of the OLA from Terrigal Haven
3	Adelaide St. Reserve (Killarney Vale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision
4	Robertson Rd. Reserve (Killarney Vale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision
5	Wattle St. Reserve (Toukley)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision
6	Tunkwallin / Kanangra Dr. reserve (Gwandalan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision, site will need significant development prior to use.
7	Warwick Av. Reserve (Manning Park)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision
8	Karrawa Reserve (Pt. Claire)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision To accommodate the relocation of the OLA from Fagan Reserve
9	Caraval St. Reserve (Hamlyn Terrace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address future gap in provision considering development of Warnervale area
10	Watanobbi Knoll (Watanobbi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision
11	Lara Cl. Reserve (Ourimbah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision
12	Linga Longa Reserve (Yarramalong)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address a gap in provision
13	Hilltop Park (Woongarah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address future gap in provision considering development of Warnervale area

The report also proposes modifications to the boundary of several OLA sites. These changes are listed in Table 5 and are recommended to:

- Clearly define OLAs using site landmarks
- Define sportsfields where dogs are prohibited from entering in line with the CAA and Council Orders
- Reinforce the regulatory requirements to keep dogs on a leash on footpaths

OLAs will continue to be reviewed to ensure boundaries minimise any conflict with off-leash activities.

Table 5 – Sites where boundary changes are recommended		
	SITE	REASON FOR OLA BOUNDARY CHANGE
1	North Avoca Beach (North Avoca) – Extension South to 'shark tower' (Avoca)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 'shark tower' is a landmark that easily identifies the OLA boundary
2	Greenvale Road Reserve (Green Point) – Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To extend the size of the OLA (from 0.14 Ha to 0.30)

Table 5 – Sites where boundary changes are recommended		
	SITE	REASON FOR OLA BOUNDARY CHANGE
3	Colongra Bay Reserve (Lake Munmorah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction to exclude dogs from sportsfields and natural environments and removal of fencing (apart from along roadside)
4	Peppercorn Av. Reserve (Woongarah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide the required 10m buffer around the playspace and remove north to south pathway from the OLA
5	Mataram Ridge Park (Woongarah) – Relocation within the park to the North-east quadrant of the park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removes conflict with sensitive flora and fauna environments in existing area Evidence of significant use by dogs off-leash in proposed area Picnic area no longer operational
6	Craigie Reserve (Kanwal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To require dogs to be kept on a leash in car park, toilet and entry roadway/pathways
7	Adcock Memorial Park (West Gosford)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reinforce requirement for dogs to be on a leash on footpaths
8	Thames Dr. Reserve (Erina)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reinforce requirement for dogs to be on a leash on footpaths
9	James Watt Drive Drainage Easement (Chittaway Bay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reinforce requirement for dogs to be on a leash on footpaths
10	Oberton Street Reserve (Kincumber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reinforce requirement for dogs to be on a leash on footpaths

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

6. Decommission/relocate 6 OLAs as per Table 3.
7. Designate 13 additional OLAs, and develop where necessary, outlined in Table 4.
8. Modify the boundary of 10 OLAs as per Table 5.

5.3 Dog Exclusion Areas

Dogs are not permitted in National Parks, within 10m of play equipment (CAA), on sportsfields, on Coastal Open Space System (COSS)¹⁸ sites, beaches apart from areas designated as 'dog off-leash areas', sand dunes and areas Council has designated 'Wildlife Protection Areas' and 'Natural Assets'.

Council does not allow dogs on sportsfields because of the conflict between sporting activities and dogs off leash, damage to the sports surface caused by dog urine and digging, dog litter not being picked up by dog owners, and general wear associated with dogs running to and from owners gathered on the sports field.

Council will aim to define off-leash areas with natural features in combination with signage. This may include defining areas with trees/vegetation and landscape features. At some sites it will be appropriate to use signage that includes mapping. The latter will generally be at sites with a high level of visitation and/or in areas that adjoin sensitive flora and fauna environments.

The DIOSAP also proposes that in line with the CAA, to preserve public amenity and address risk management issues, that:

- dogs be excluded from patrolled beach areas and for 20m either side, including sand dunes extending to the waterline as a minimum

¹⁸ Coastal Open Space System Strategy. The COSS is a network of reserves has been identified because of its importance in protecting native flora and fauna, Aboriginal and European cultural and heritage sites, local water catchments, geological formations and urban environmental amenity.

- dogs be excluded from all beaches if not designated Off Leash Areas.
- consideration be given to restricting access to dogs on a seasonal basis to popular beaches that fall within designated 'dog off-leash' areas.

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

9. Review Council Orders to ensure all sportsfields are appropriately designated and signed as 'Dog Exclusion' sites in line with CAA requirements
10. Review Council Orders to ensure that the following natural environments are all appropriately designated and signed as dog exclusion zones:
 - all COSS sites
 - areas designated by Council as Natural Assets
 - all beaches not designated as Off Leash Areas
 - sand dune areas
11. Ensure any mapping of OLAs clearly designates a 10 mtr exclusion zone for dogs around play equipment in line with requirements of the CAA.
12. Deploy appropriate signage for OLAs

5.4 Compliance with Dog Control Regulations

Non-compliance by some dog owners has led to a community divide when it comes to dogs. This includes significant frustration by dog owners who abide by leashing requirements and are generally considerate of other users of open space.

LMH/Paws4Play research demonstrates that community frustration with owners who let their dogs off the leash in on-leash areas comes second only to frustration with owners who do not pick up their dog's litter.

LMH/Paws4Play research and written feedback from recent projects¹⁹ demonstrates that the lack of compliance with on-leash regulations is causing significant frustration. The areas of primary concern relate to:

- dogs being off leash on residential footpaths
- dogs being off leash in on-leash parks and reserves
- owners who do not control their dogs in line with dog control Orders and who let their dogs approach other people or other dogs
- ill-mannered or aggressive dog owners.

As the above responses are primarily from dog owners, it could be expected that there would be a higher level of grievance in the wider community. This Action Plan indicates similar issues relating to non-compliance with dog leashing and control regulations on the Central Coast.

NSW State Government and Council planning documents note that inappropriate access and control of dogs is problematic in sensitive environmental areas. Over 97% of respondents to a 2021 Council survey²⁰ agreed that more should be done to protect and enhance the natural aspects of waterways, including protection of wildlife.

Research undertaken by a Deakin University²¹ study that reveals 70% of dogs were off the leash in the on-leash study area. Along with similar studies, this found that a significant number of dog

¹⁹ LMH/P4P Domestic Animal Management Planning (DAMP – Vic) and Off-Leash Strategy and Policy projects

²⁰ Our Coast Our waterways, Central Coast Council, 2021

²¹ Associate Professor Mike Weston from Deakin's Centre for Integrative Ecology

owners place a higher value on their 'perceived rights of their dog' than on environmental values and preventing harm to wildlife.

The Deakin University study highlighted that the challenge of managing non-compliance was worsened by the large number of holiday makers in summer and holiday periods. Non-compliant visiting dog owners were found to have an even lower sense of responsibility towards local wildlife than local dog owners. The study goes on to suggest banning dogs from some sites because of the high level of non-compliance with leashing regulations, and the low level of enforcement by regulatory authorities.

Feedback from National Parks and Council staff identifies a significant level of non-compliance with dog control regulations relating to National Parks forest and foreshore areas. Poor control of dogs and a lack of regard for other beach users has attracted a particularly high level of complaint from residents which indicates ongoing frustration with this behaviour on the Central Coast. Of particular note is the frequency of dogs being on and off-leash in patrolled swimming areas.

In order to minimise conflict on popular foreshore areas, many LGAs have introduced access restrictions during peak usage times, particularly during summer. As part of the implementation of this Action Plan Council will consider the introduction of seasonal restrictions for dogs to popular beaches.

Enhanced signage, mapping (online and on site) and electronic information will improve dog owner awareness however, willingness on the part of non-compliant dog owners will be key to improving relations between beach goers. Research indicates that this requires effective information, grass roots education initiatives and face-to-face interaction with dog owners.

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

13. Consider the introduction of seasonal timed access to beaches that are located in foreshore OLAs (e.g sunrise to 9.00am and 5.00pm to sunset) for restricted summertime/peak season access for dogs
14. Prepare a cost-benefit analysis for the reintroduction of proactive compliance monitoring and educational initiatives to address non-compliance matters raised in this report. Particularly as they relate to dogs off-leash in on-leash areas and control of dogs in line with regulations
15. Continue to review areas of environmental sensitivity where dogs should be excluded or be required to be on a leash
16. Liaise with the National Parks Service to identify projects that will help increase awareness of dog exclusion zones and minimise non-compliance with regulations

5.5 Access to Foreshore Off-Leash Areas

A number of foreshore OLAs are challenging in terms of access. The Wamberal foreshore OLA is particularly problematic because direct access is limited to a pathway off Surfers Road which is a narrow residential road with no car park access. The only other access directly to the OLA is via parkland allotments 25-25B on Ocean View Drive. The only car parking available in this location is on Ocean View Drive (Wamberal). Opportunities to create a small number of car parking bays in this site can be investigated as part of the implementation of the DIOSAP. Options will need to consider the cost-benefit of any proposed works and environmental impacts to the site and surrounding area.

Consideration can be given to more detailed signage at the Remembrance Drive car park and the Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club car park where dog owners tend to access the OLA. Signage at this site should consider mapping that clearly shows the location of the OLA and access points

and informs owners that dogs are excluded from all other areas of the foreshore. This information needs also to be reinforced on Council's website.

The only access for the Killcare Beach OLA is via the north-east end of the Beach Drive car park. Many dog owners use the car parks along Putty Beach Road to access the Killcare Beach OLA which means they are taking dogs on to foreshore areas where they are not permitted. Consideration should be given to signage at these car parks that includes a map that clearly defines the OLA and dog exclusion zones.

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

17. Consider signage, that includes mapping of OLAs and permitted access points, at car parks commonly used by dog owners to access Putty Beach and Wamberal foreshore OLAs
18. Ensure information on Council's website clearly informs dog owners of permitted points of access to foreshore OLAs
19. Investigate the feasibility and cost benefit of providing off-street or on-street car parking at or near 25-25B Ocean View Drive, Wamberal

5.6 Dog Registrations

Research over the past 8 years²² strongly suggests that the number of dogs actually residing in a Local Government Area can be 2 to 3 times higher than on LGAs and state government registration databases.

Cross-referencing of microchip databases with the NSW Government microchip/registration database can highlight 'unregistered' dogs. Anecdotal reporting demonstrates that LGAs with a proactive and grass roots strategy for engaging with pet owners are likely to have significantly higher rates of registration. This may involve door-knocks, Rangers frequenting popular off-leash areas and include incentives.

The significance of the issue is indicated by the Victorian State Government who require LGAs to demonstrate the strategies they will put in place to increase dog registration rates.

The benefits of increasing registration for the community and Council include:

- Optimising the number of dog owners Council can easily communicate with (for projects, events, matters of concern, changes to policy and legislation, opportunities to engage)
- Resourcing/improving compliance with registration regulations
- Allows for residents to promptly return wandering dogs to owners (dog safety, owner peace of mind)
- Increases financial capacity of Council to address service priorities
- Effective targeting of information and initiatives where they will have the greatest impact
- Identifying owners of dogs with problematic behaviours.

Table 6 identifies suburbs/groups of suburbs in Central Coast with the estimated current highest and lowest dog registration rates. It also shows the suburbs with the likely greatest discrepancy between estimated current dog registrations and the number of dogs likely to reside in Central Coast based on AMA research.

The following are points of note from available data:

- Suburbs in the West Brisbane Waters and Gosford Planning Districts are likely to have a significantly greater number of dogs than are on the registration database
- The West Brisbane Waters and Southern Lakes Planning Districts appear to have registration numbers that more closely align to industry estimations that are based on household

²² LMH/Paws4Play Domestic Animal Management Planning (DAMPS) 2017-2022

numbers; however, registration numbers are still under what might be expected

- Suburbs in five planning districts are expected to have the highest dog populations (over 3,000) in 2032 according to industry estimations based on projected household numbers

Table 6 – Dog registration/microchip registration by Planning District (PD)

PDs with highest dog no. of dogs on the registration database (est. actual)		PDs with lowest dog registration numbers (est. actual)		PDs with likely highest dog populations based on AMA est.		PDs with greatest diff. btw est. 'actual' and AMA est. (2022)		PDs with the highest estimated dog population in 2032	
Umina/Pearl Bch/ Patonga	2,703	Gosford/West Gosford	268	Umina/Pearl Bch/ Patonga	3,650	Woy Woy/ Blackwall	1,022	Umina/Pearl Beach/Patonga	3,926
Berkeley Vale/ Glenning V. Chittaway Bay/ Fountaindale	2,601	Warnervale/ Wallarah/ Bushells Ridge	299	Woy Woy/ Blackwall	2,865	Gosford/West Gosford	978	Nth Gosford/ Wyoming	3,509
Killarney Vale/ Tumby Umbi	2,165	Tuggerawong / Tacoma/ Rocky Pt	366	Nth Gosford/ Wyoming	2,802	Umina/Pearl Bch/ Patonga	947	Terrigal/North Avoca	3,233
Terrigal/North Avoca	2,045	Manning Park	500	Terrigal/Nth Avoca	2,648	Entrance/ Entrance Nth /Magenta	879	Woy Woy/ Blackwall	3,220
North Gosford/ Wyoming	2,035	Wadalba	541	Bateau Bay	2,394	East Gosford/ Point Frederick	850	Lake Munmorah /Chain Valley	2,989
Bateau Bay	1,972	Erina	554	Killarney Vale/ Tumby Umbi	2,304	Ettalong Bch/ Booker Bay	724	Berkeley Vale/ Glenning V. Chittaway Bay/ Fountaindale	2,700
Legend – Council Planning districts									
West Brisb Water & Peninsula	Sthn Lakes/ Entrance District	Narara Vall Ourimbah District	Nthn Lakes, San R/ Budgewoi/Toukley	East Brisb Water/ Coastal District	Gosford Central	Wyong, Warnervale Gorokan District			

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

20. Develop targeted (e.g by suburb) projects to encourage owners to comply with dog registration regulations

5.7 Fencing of Off-Leash Areas

Council has determined that fenced OLAs are not intended to contain dogs that owners cannot or will not control in line with State and Local Government regulations, or that are aggressive or unsocialised. These dogs should always be on a leash when in a public place.

The fencing of an OLA will be considered if it is in close proximity to other parkland activities that are incompatible with dogs off the leash, environmental sensitivities or for safety reasons (e.g close proximity to a busy road or bike trail).

In these cases, preference should be given to:

- Partial/barrier fencing
- Natural landscape features such as rock mounding or vegetation plantings to demark off-leash areas and break sightlines between dogs and other park users

Council has determined to minimise the use of fencing around OLAs for the reasons outlined in section 4.

Two recent projects²³ signify the caution that should be taken in relation to fencing. These projects found that survey respondents who supported fencing did so because they are not confident:

²³ LMH Consulting/P4P (Hume/Whitehorse Councils)

- their dogs won't run off
- their dog will obey recall commands
- their dog won't run into other parkland activities and/or concern other people

This research also found that:

- fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs), unless very large are used by only a small percentage of dog owners on a regular basis (i.e. once a day or more - approximately 11% of respondents)
- over 60% of respondents indicated they had stopped using FOLAs because of:
 - the presence of aggressive dogs (71% of respondents)
 - owners who do not actively supervise their dogs (69% of respondents)
 - poorly behaved/trained dogs (68% of respondents)
 - of inadequate enforcement of dog control requirements (61% of respondents).

Existing FOLAs will remain fenced apart from the Colongra Bay Reserve where it is recommended that the fence be removed and landscape and sensory features appealing to dogs be incorporated. At other FOLAs consideration will be given to enhancing provision at these sites in order to address management considerations, protect vegetation and improve the amenity of the site. This may include increasing the size of a facility where it is under 3,500 sqm and where there is the capacity to do this on the site.

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

21. Adopt the guiding principles in this report and the Provision Framework for OLAs, noting Council's position is not to fence OLAs other than for management considerations contained in this document.
22. Ensure Council's rationale for fencing/not fencing OLAs is explained in information to the community
23. Prepare a Concept and Detailed Design Plan for the Tuggerah fenced dog off-leash area (FOA) to:
 - enhance the amenity of the site
 - improve sensory and development outcomes for dogs
24. Prepare a Concept Plan for the Maitland Bay (Ettalong) Rd FOA to:
 - Investigate opportunities to expand
 - improve the amenity of the site
 - Improve sensory and development outcomes for dogs
25. Prepare a Concept Plan for the Sensory Park (Narara) FOA to:
 - Investigate fencing options
 - Improve the amenity of the site
 - Improve the amenity of the site and address maintenance challenges (e.g surface degradation, tree protection)
 - Improve sensory and development outcomes for dogs
 - Consider opportunities to improve the amenity of the site and incorporate additional natural sensory and development elements for dogs.
26. Remove the fencing around the Colongra Bay Reserve OLA, apart from barrier fencing along the roadside and incorporate landscape features to enhance the amenity of the site and sensory features appealing to dogs

5.8 Effective Control of Dogs

The NSW CAA requires dog owners to keep their dog under 'effective control' but does not provide any criteria that defines the meaning of 'effective control'. Some LGAs are now implementing local policy that clearly defines the term, particularly in terms of measurable criteria such as dog responsiveness to recall, the distance between owner and dog, and sight lines between owner and dog.

This provides Council staff and dog owners with clarity in terms of expectations, a basis for discussion with dog owners and for the issuing of infringement notices if required.

The DIOSAP recommends that Council create an Order that clearly defines expectations relating to the control of dogs.

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

27. Consider the incorporation of some or all of the following requirements in a Council Order to effectively define 'effective control' of dogs:

a) In on-leash areas

Dogs must:

- be always held on a leash and in line with CAA age and capability requirements
- be on a short leash (max 1.5 m) when on or within 5m of footpaths or trails
- not be tethered to a fixed place or object

b) In off-leash areas

- Dogs can only be off the leash if they always immediately respond/recall to owner's voice and/or hand commands
- Dogs must remain:
 - within 100 m of their owner or guardian (?)
 - within clear sight of their owner or guardian (?)
- Dogs must not:
 - run or rush at another dog or person
 - make unwanted approaches to another dog or person
 - be allowed into 'dog exclusion' areas

5.9 Management of Off-Leash Areas

Resources required to design, construct, maintain and manage assets are typically underestimated. As a result, this impacts on the capacity to effectively manage OLAs and FOLAs in line with industry good practice, Council service levels for similar open space assets, and likely community expectations.

This Action Plan highlights the need to review resourcing of both Animal Management Services and Parks Maintenance Services and the planning and design of off-leash areas, in particular district level off-leash areas.

5.9.1 Asset Planning and Management

Council requires that the whole-of-life cost of a new or upgraded facility be considered during the planning phase. This means consideration is given to the initial capital cost of new infrastructure or the upgrading of existing infrastructure; and expenditure associated with the maintenance and renewal of infrastructure and day-to-day management.

Wear and tear is likely to occur in popular OLAs, particularly inland OLAs where owners congregate in one location (e.g. under trees) and dogs run to and from owners. In FOLAs, particularly in small FOLAs, ground surfaces become degraded because of the intensive use in a confined space. Each of the FOLAs on the Central Coast, apart from the Tuggerah Facility, are undersized and therefore have become degraded. In addition, they do not contain any sensory elements necessary to help manage dog activity or provide stimulation, nor are the sites particularly inviting.

It is not practical to replant grass surfaces in existing FOLAs as they will again degrade. If fencing is to be retained, then a more durable surface is required to make the site more appealing to dog owners and to integrate the facility with the wider parkland.

Where there is sufficient open space to provide a buffer between OLAs and other parkland activities, consideration can be given to removing fencing, particularly where usage is low. This will help disperse dog activity and preserve grass coverage. Consideration can be given to introducing vegetation and landscape features that provide sensory features for dogs and amenity features for humans. This might include the planting of trees, landscape mounding etc.

The following table outlines the current budget for the maintenance of OLAs and the projected level of expenditure required to maintain OLAs to a minimum standard. Current funding allows for minimal mowing and rubbish bin collection only. It does not allow for basic maintenance works associated with:

- General site rubbish clean-up
- Turf reinstatement/management
- Removal and management of Bindii
- Horticulture services associated with tree/vegetation protection and re-instatement, mulching, equipment repairs etc.
-

Table 10 provides an overview of current resourcing of Inland OLAs, funding that is required to maintain Inland OLAs in line with service levels for similar open space assets. Funding to accommodate the additional 8 new Inland OLAs proposed to address gaps in the OLA network is highlighted in bold

Table 10 - Current and future recommended resourcing for 'inland' OLAs					
CURRENT RESOURCING (Inland OLAs/FOLAs only – 45 sites)			FUTURE RESOURCING (Inland OLAs/FOLAs only – 45 current/52 new sites)		
Fenced (5)	P/wk	\$733	Fenced (5)	P/wk	\$2,063/\$2,383
	Ann.	\$38,116		Ann.	\$107,276/\$123,963
Unfenced (40)	P/wk	\$3,689	Unfenced (40)	P/wk	\$8,236/\$9,517
	Ann.	\$191,828		Ann.	\$428,272/\$494,892
TOTAL CURRENT		\$ 229,944	TOTAL FUTURE (Rec.)		\$535,548 (45 sites) \$630,755 (53 sites)

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

28. Review the resourcing of maintenance for inland OLAs in consideration of:

- Establishing service levels in line with similar open space assets (public amenity)
- FOLAs good practice design and management

5.9.2 Animal Management Services

Matters relating to dog control plays out across all public spaces. This is unlike other open space activities such as sport and children's play where resources can be targeted at facilities provided for a specific use. While these activities may occur on a casual basis elsewhere, they do not require additional resources to manage risk management (e.g dogs off-leash in areas residents should expect them to be on-leash) and behavioural issues (e.g owners not picking up dog litter).

Resources need to be applied to on-leash and dog exclusion sites as well as where dogs are permitted off-leash. As highlighted in section 5.4 in this report, there is significant community frustration with non-compliance with dog control regulations and dog littering.

It is recommended that the resourcing of Animal Management Services be reviewed in consideration of:

- The impact of changing service demands which has eliminated the team's capacity to undertake any proactive monitoring for compliance with dog control regulations or community engagement.

- Community complaint and frustration over the lack of Animal Management Service in 'hotspots', on beaches during summer and holiday periods and in areas where dogs are prohibited
- The increase in disregard of on-leash and dog control regulations. This requires the monitoring of on-leash areas where dogs are known to be regularly off the leash and where other members of the community should expect to visit and not be concerned about the presence of dogs
- The need for a comprehensive community education program and appropriate resourcing that involves targeted (e.g location specific, demographic/population specific) engagement with the community, in addition to current initiatives.

Currently there is no proactive monitoring of OLAs or on-leash areas for compliance with regulations. The team is struggling to address matters relating to complaints and has not had the capacity to proactively monitor or engage with the community for over 2 years.

The resourcing of Animal Management Services was significantly reduced following Council amalgamations. Prior to amalgamation, there were 8 FTE staff dedicated to animal management matters relating to dogs and off-lead areas in the former Wyong Shire alone. There are now approximately 8 FTE staff delivering this service across the new expanded LGA.

Attending to reports and complaints (dog attacks, rushes and investigating verified incidents) accounts for 50% of Ranger time; attending to barking dog complaints 20% and attending to roaming dogs and complaints and incidents of dogs off-leash in on-leash areas approximately 30% of Ranger time.

Actions Proposed to Address Emerging Priorities

29. Review the resourcing of Ranger Services, in consideration of:

- Changing service demands
- The impact and effectiveness of current strategies
- The cost-benefit (e.g public amenity, financial, public relations, staff morale) of implementing proactive strategies to address matters relating to animal management

6. The Future – Policy and Planning

6.1 The Principles that will Guide the Planning for Dogs in Open Space

The following 'statements' or principles have guided this project and will underpin planning for people and dogs in open space areas.

Why Council Makes Provision for Dog Owners and their Dogs in the Community

1. Council makes provision for dog owners and their dogs in public places:
 - because dogs are an important part of many households and are frequently part of family visits to parks, beaches and other public places
 - in recognition of the social, physical and mental health benefits owners can derive from dog/pet ownership.

Sharing of Community Spaces

2. The peaceful and enjoyable use of public places requires everyone to be considerate and respectful of others who also use and want to enjoy 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 and picking up of dog litter

- understand that some people do not want to interact with dogs, do not like dogs or are fearful of dogs
- prevent their dogs from:
 - making any unsolicited approach to other dogs or people
 - approaching wildlife and/or interfering with wildlife habitats
 - remove poorly behaving dogs from the public environment.

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 or allow children in their care to do likewise
- must not encourage dogs to approach them or incite dogs to be aggressive
- should become familiar with the location of off-leash areas and consider alternative open space options for their outdoor activities.

3. People should expect to use public places and know that they, and/or their dogs, will not be approached uninvited by dogs.

Planning and Management of Off-leash Areas

4. Planning for dogs off the leash is challenging because:
 - Community attitudes and expectations have shifted towards greater control and restrictions on dogs in public places for environmental, social and cultural reasons
 - Of increasing dog owner expectations about having access to public open space with their dogs
 - People living on smaller allotment and in apartments and units continue to own pets as do those living on larger allotments
 - Historical open space and town planning did not recognise:
 - the spatial requirements for dog off-leash activities, as has the planning for other community assets
 - the potential conflict between off-leash and other open space activities (e.g sensitive flora and fauna areas, sport) and conflict in shared spaces (e.g trails, family play and recreation areas)
5. Planning for dogs in open space will:
 - as best as possible, be undertaken and reviewed in line with Council and State Government open space planning frameworks and policy
 - include sites where dogs are permitted off the leash if owners can keep them under 'effective control'
 - include sites where dogs are incompatible with other land uses and will not be permitted
 - consider the needs of people who do not want to interact with dogs
 - consider provision for dog owners made by other agencies when planning the distribution of off-leash areas.

Type and Level of Provision for Dog Owners and Their Dogs

6. A provision framework will guide the type and range of natural and built features that will be considered at any given off-leash site. Council may consider unique features for dogs at sites that attract a high level of use
7. Not all off-leash areas will have the same natural and built features.
8. Fencing:
 - will generally only be considered to address risk management considerations (e.g proximity to busy roads), when there is an inadequate spatial buffer between off-leash areas and other parkland activities or environmental areas
 - is not provided to contain dogs that owners cannot or will not control. These dogs should not be off the leash in public places.

6.2 Planning and Provision of Off-leash Areas

6.2.1 Distribution and Number of Off-Leash Areas

Dog off-leash areas in existing residential areas have been planned based on the following:

- Generally Local level OLAs are within a maximum 1 km radius from most homes. In higher density residential areas, where possible this has been reduced to 750m.
- District level OLAs are generally within a 3 km radius of homes.

The above is in consideration of:

- limitations associated with the local topography and geography
- availability of enough space in parks to minimise conflict with other park activities
- the need to protect sensitive flora and fauna environments that may adjoin a proposed OLA.

Category of OLA	Inland OLAs		Foreshore OLAs	TOTAL
	Unfenced	Fenced		
CURRENT				
Local	33	3	5	41
District	7	2	11	20
Subtotal	40	5*	16	61*
PROPOSED FUTURE				
Local	40	1	5	40
District	12	4	11	28
Subtotal	47	5*	16	68*
* Does not include the NSW Government site at Mt. Penang Gardens				

The implementation of the DIOSAP will see the number of Council owned and/or managed OLAs increase from 61 to 69. With the addition of the NSW State Government site at Mount Penang Gardens, resulting in 70 OLAs in the Central Coast LGA.

This includes the relocation and decommissioning of some OLAs and the addition of new OLAs to address gaps in provision. The reasons for these changes are discussed in section 5.2 of this report and a list of sites and changes to sites is included in Appendix 1.

6.2.1 Dogs Excluded Areas

In line with the requirements of NSW Government Companion Animal Act (CAA), the National Parks and Wildlife Act (NPWA)²⁴ and Council Orders (CO), dogs are excluded or can be excluded from specific sites and/or community facilities.

Table 8 lists sites/facilities that dogs are currently excluded from.

SITE/SITES	REF	STATUS
National Parks	NPWA	Current – National Parks & Wildlife Act
The grounds of schools, pre-schools etc. (unless access has been approved)	CAA	Current - CAA
Within 10m of play equipment	CAA	Current - CAA
Sportsfields and playing surfaces	CAA, LG Act/CO	Council Order to be reviewed and updated as required to ensure all sportsfields are designated as 'Dog Exclusion' zones
Coastal Open Space System (COSS) sites	CAA, LG Act/CO	Council Order to be reviewed and updated as required to ensure all COSS sites are designated as 'Dog Exclusion' zones

²⁴ NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974, Section 155

Table 8 – Sites where dogs are currently/or will be excluded		
SITE/SITES	REF	STATUS
Areas designated as 'Natural Assets'	CAA, LG Act/CO	Council Order to be reviewed and updated as required to exclude dogs from 'Natural Assets'
Illoura Foreshore Reserve, Davistown	CAA, LG Act/CO	Council Order to be reviewed and updated to ensure 'Dog Exclusion' zone includes new boundary for the reserve
Crommelin Native Arboretum (Pearl Beach)	CAA, LG Act/CO	Current
Saratoga Conservation Area	CAA, LG Act/CO	Current
Sand Dunes	CAA, LG Act/CO	Council Order to be created to exclude dogs from sand dunes
Bathing Areas	CAA, LG Act/CO	Council Order to be created that will exclude dogs on patrolled beaches from the water's edge to the base of sand dunes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ as between flags ▪ for 20m either side of the flagged (patrolled area)
Seasonal and Daily timed access for dogs off-leash to beaches	CAA	To be considered as part of the implementation of the DIOSAP

Currently there are no alterations to dog off-leash access to beaches. Given the conflict that is occurring particularly at popular beaches, consideration will be given to limiting off-leash access during summer and/or holiday periods.

6.2.2 New Subdivisions

New subdivisions are generally on inland locations. The DIOSAP recommends that every opportunity be taken to provide:

- Trails where dogs can be walked on the leash
- Local footpaths
- Local level dog off leash areas within 750m-1km radius OR 500m of households with a minimum area of 5,500 sqm (0.55 Ha) and up to 115,000 sqm(1.5 Ha) if a buffer is required because the site is shared with other parkland activities
- District level OLAs within 3 km radius of households with a minimum area of 15,000 sqm (1.5 Ha)

OLAs on steeper sites and sites that have other site constraints may require larger areas to prevent intensive use and ground degradation in concentrated areas.

6.2.3 Service Levels (Infrastructure)

Council's service levels provide a general framework for determining the type and level of infrastructure that will be considered for different categories of open space.

The following categories are based on the size of the catchment/community/site or facility that will be catered for.

- Local facilities cater for the nearby neighbourhood catchments and are generally within walking distance of most households
- District facilities cater for a larger catchment, and generally attract people for longer stays and across neighbourhoods
- Regional facilities will be of a size and level of development that will attract people from across the LGA, and visitors will generally drive to these sites
- Destination facilities provide unique and/or iconic experiences and will attract people from outside the LGA as well as local residents

Off-leash areas will be planned and developed as either Local or District level facilities:

- to optimise opportunities for residents to access facilities as close to home as possible
- in consideration of the geography and topography of the LGA which makes far away sites challenging to access

Table 9 defines the type and level of provision that council will consider at Local and District level OLAs, and compliance and community education initiatives that will be considered.

Table 9 – Infrastructure and management and compliance requirements that will generally apply at Local and District OLAs	
INLAND OFF-LEASH AREAS (OLAs)	
LOCAL LEVEL OLAs	DISTRICT LEVEL OLAs
<p>Infrastructure</p> <p>Local level OLAs in inland locations will generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be relatively small ▪ Attract short stay visitations 15-30 mins and primarily people walk to the venue and may visit the site as part of a longer outing/walk with their dog ▪ May be on sites that have another primary purpose e.g drainage basin, powerline easement, natural parkland <p><u>Have:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seating, water (may be elsewhere in the park) and natural vegetation features such as shade trees ▪ Litter bins <p><u>May have</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Barrier or partial fencing between parkland activities and/or to protect environmental assets (e.g Tree roots) and manage risk (e.g associated with roads) and generally not full fencing ▪ Landscape or sensory elements: ▪ To improve the amenity of the site e.g shade trees/vegetation plantings ▪ (in FOLAs) 1-2 types of ground surfacing to manage wear and tear, which will depend on the level of use and associated durability of the ground surface ▪ Access to toilet facilities* ▪ Off-road car parking but will generally have on-street parking. * <p><u>Not have:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fencing other than to address risk management considerations and protect natural environmental assets (e.g sensitive vegetation, wetland areas) ▪ Litter bag dispensers 	<p>Infrastructure</p> <p>District level OLAs in inland locations will generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be in large open parkland settings that offer a wide expanse of space and include multiple natural sensory environments over which dog activity can be dispersed. ▪ Attract longer stay visitations (e.g 30 mins+) from people outside the immediate residential catchment and short stay visitations (15-30 mins) by people who live locally ▪ May be on sites that have another primary purpose e.g drainage basin, powerline easement, natural parkland <p><u>Have:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seating, water (may be elsewhere in the park) and natural vegetation features such as shade trees ▪ Litter bins <p><u>May have:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Landscape or sensory elements for dogs in addition to any natural landscape features ▪ (in FOLAs) 1-2 types of ground surfacing to manage wear and tear, which will depend on the level of use and associated durability of the ground surface; and access to water ▪ Introduced surface treatments to manage wear ▪ Barrier or partial fencing between parkland activities and/or to protect environmental assets (e.g Tree roots) and manage risk (e.g associated with roads) ▪ Trails/footpaths leading to and through the off-leash area and amenities such as seating and water ▪ Access to toilet facilities* ▪ Off-road car parking * ▪ Dog education/agility equipment/elements and associated instructional signage <p><u>Not have:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fencing other than to address risk management considerations and protect natural environmental assets (e.g sensitive vegetation, wetland areas) ▪ Litter bag dispensers

Table 9 – Infrastructure and management and compliance requirements that will generally apply at Local and District OLAs

FORESHORE/COASTAL OFF-LEASH AREAS (OLAs)	
LOCAL LEVEL OLAs	DISTRICT LEVEL OLAs
<p>Local level OLAs in foreshore/coastal locations will generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract dog owners from a local residential catchment Attract dog owners who stay on the move with their dogs Will not include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any introduced features or built features such as seating or shade shelters Enclosed fencing. <p>Regulations/Compliance Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will involve incidental compliance monitoring carried out as routine park maintenance and inspection schedules Will involve scheduled compliance monitoring by Rangers as incidents are referred/as required May involve unscheduled proactive compliance monitoring OLAs in Local level foreshore/coastal locations may have daily and or seasonal access restrictions e.g where off-leash activities are disallowed during summer or restricted to specific hours. <p>Community Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, no onsite activities. 	<p>District level OLAs in foreshore/coastal locations will generally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract dog owners from an extended catchment (e.g by tourists) as well as from a local residential catchment Attract dog owners who stay on the move with their dogs Will not include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any introduced features or built features such as seating or shade shelters Enclosed fencing. <p>Regulations/Compliance Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will involve incidental compliance monitoring carried out as routine park maintenance and inspection schedules Will be subject to routine proactive monitoring by Rangers Will generally involve a higher level of proactive compliance monitoring than Local level OLAs OLAs in District level foreshore/coastal locations may have daily and or seasonal access restrictions e.g where off-leash activities are disallowed during summer or restricted to specific hours. <p>Community Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face community education programs will be considered at District level sites to address community education and compliance objectives.
* May be available if the OLA is part of a larger reserve or park	

6.3 OLA Provision and Maintenance

The Upgrade of existing FOLAs

Budgets to improve the amenity of FOLAs has not been allocated in Council's forward capital works plan. A budget of \$75,000-\$100,000 should be allocated for the upgrade of existing small FOLAs For the Tuggerah FOLA a minimum allocation of \$200,000-\$350,000

Budget allocations for off-leash areas allow for minimal and basic maintenance only of OLAs. It does not allow for any major maintenance works or enhancement of degraded FOLA sites. The

current budget allocation for maintenance of unfenced off-leash area is \$3,073/week (\$229,000 pa).

The DIOSAP recommends that the following allocations be made to enhance existing FOLAs

- Small FOLAs \$75,000-\$100,000 depending on size, type and extent of fencing required, and elements that provide for the sensory needs of dogs and disperse dog activity (e.g rock mounds, digging pits, dry creek beds).
- Tuggerah FOLA \$200,000-\$350,000 for installation of landscape features and sensory elements to help manage dog behaviour and distribute activity across the site. Additional funds of \$100,000-\$150,000 may be required for drainage/sub surface works given the nature of the site. Consider reducing the size of the FOLA or the number of fenced areas to be upgraded to minimise development costs.

Actual costs will depend on the area that is to be developed and/or the extent of landscaping/tree planting incorporated; subsurface (e.g drainage) requirements; type and extent of fencing/changes to fencing required; elements that improve the amenity of the site, provide for the sensory needs of dogs and disperse dog activity; and risk management considerations (e.g rock mounds, digging pits, dry creek beds).

Prior to any significant works being carried out at FOLAs consideration should be given to a detailed site plan (Tuggerah) or concept plans to guide works.

The DIOSAP does not propose that any additional fully fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) be installed.

Enhancing Amenity of District Level OLAs

The DIOSAP recommends that consideration be given to enhancing the amenity and environments of 'district level' OLAs, in line with open space planning principles relating to:

- The greening of public open space
- Accessibility
- Ancillary Infrastructure such as seating
- Landscape features (e.g rock-scapes/rock clammers) that help to disperse dog and associated human behaviour across the site, manage dog on dog interaction, provide for the physical and sensory needs of dogs and optimise use of the site
- Additional and interactive landscape features. That provide opportunities for the non-dog owning community by way of natural play environments, meditative spaces and informal 'perch seating'

The DIOSAP recommends an allocation of \$20,000-\$30,000 for the addition of general parkland landscape features at the 12 inland district OLAs over the next 5 years. For some sites it will be appropriate for primarily vegetation enhancements. At other sites it will be appropriate for more formal landscaping such as rocks-capes. This will depend on the level of use of the site by other than dog owners and their dogs (e.g families).

6.3.1 Community Partnerships, Education and Communication

The benefits of pets are well established. Pets however can cause concern in the community when expectations about the management and control of pets differs among residents and visitors.

Consultation for the DIOSAP and other industry research demonstrates community concern about dog behaviour and control in public open space. The focus of the DIOSAP is on matters relating to off-leash areas, however dog control issues are likely to relate equally, if not significantly more, to on-leash areas. As a result, residents and visitors using parkland are often confronted by unleashed dogs at sites where dogs should be leashed.

Community education initiatives need to especially target dog owners who let their dogs off the leash in on-leash areas and sites that are particularly problematic. This requires additional messaging (e.g about the need to comply with leashing regulations) to that which applies at off-leash areas (e.g understanding dog behaviour and risk management considerations).

Changing community behaviour is challenging and requires a multi-faceted approach. LGAs have typically focused on written (e.g brochures) or electronic information (e.g on Council websites) that is generally generic and not specific to the area. Residents need to know the information is available, be interested in seeking it, and perceive that the information is relevant to them.

A trial research project in the US concludes that initiatives to encourage behaviour change can only be addressed via community-led strategies that involve school-aged children and strong partnerships between community agencies.²⁵ This project focused on the issue of dog litter, but findings are equally applicable to other dog management matters.

Local Government has long recognised the merit of community-based programs that engage directly with residents and visitors. Often attempts to address too many issues at the one-time lessens the impact and are not effective in addressing specific undesirable behaviours.

If resources are limited, then focus should be given to a particular action or behaviour that is having the most significant impact. In the case of dogs, it is apparent that dog littering, poor control of dogs, and owners letting dogs off the leash in on-leash areas are key matters of concern.

Any education and engagement program should:

- Focus on a key behaviour change objective (e.g dog control in high use on-leash areas OR compliance with dog exclusion zones at a specific site) and not attempt to influence/change all inappropriate behaviours
- Ensure a simple, consistent and ongoing messaging campaign about the key behaviour change desired so the message is not weakened; and include relevant research data (facts) and information.
- Involve community stakeholders (e.g dog trainers, obedience clubs, veterinarians, schools), non-dog owners trained 'volunteer advocates'
- Focus on hot spots where non-compliance is particularly problematic, rather diluting efforts across a wider area. This also provides a focus for promotional/educational material.
- Consider initiatives that are incentive based, for example:
 - 'Good Canine Citizen' program
 - Option for a non-compliant dog owner, who would otherwise be fined, to attend dog obedience training as an alternative
- Address (unfounded) common justifications that are used by non-compliant dog owners to dismiss concerns about inappropriate dog control (e.g "don't worry, he is friendly", there is no-one else around, so it is ok to let me dog off the leash")
- Ensure all internal stakeholders have the information and knowledge to enable consistent messaging from within the organisation

A Community Development Officer works with the Community Safety and Development Control section three days a week and is allocated 3 days/wk (0.6 FTE) on developing and disseminating information relating to dogs. Currently due to resource and time constraints the focus of the position is limited to information provision with limited face to face programs.

This position does not currently have the capacity for developing and managing community behaviour change initiatives that will have significant effect on the matters that have been identified in the DIOSAP.

Given the matters confronting Council are commonplace across most LGAs, it is worth considering the resourcing of joint initiatives and seeking external funding for trial programs. In addition, priority should be given to initiatives that capitalise on community networks (e.g dog training organisations, dog clubs, vets).

²⁵ Dogs in Parks; Managing the Waste, R. Dolesh, Nov 2018

The DIOSAP recommends that consideration be given to the resourcing of 1 FTE position dedicated to animal management initiatives relating to dog control, and other matters relating to dog management. The incumbent needs to be experienced in effective public behaviour change methodology and processes, and community development/building.

Initially the position would be focused on planning the campaign; developing community networks; defining initiatives associated with willing stakeholders; preparing campaign/ project material; ensuring the campaign remains focused; liaising with media/information channels; training of community advocates/volunteers (the face of the campaign). Position overheads/oncosts and development of program material (e.g advertising, design and printing) and needs also to be resourced.

Table 10 identifies strategies that can be considered to address dog control/ behaviour matters identified in the DIOSAP.

Table 10 - Actions that can be considered to address dog control/ behaviour matters of concern		
ACTION	COMMENTS	TIMEFRAME/\$
SHORT TERM ACTIONS (YEARS 1-2)		
Incident/compliant mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the GIS mapping of dog control/behaviour complaints. (This will help identify problematic sites where community education initiatives should be first focused) 	Short Term Resourcing will depend on current IT system and hardware capacity
Council website Review and update information on Council's website relating to dogs in public spaces so information is consolidated clear and concise information	Information should relate to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On and off-leash regulations relating to on-leash, off-leash and 'dog exclusion' zones Existing and proposed new orders relating to dog access to open space Information and data that provides the context for provision rationale (Information is likely to increase compliance) Data from research that highlights/communicates general community sentiment about non-compliance (provides policy context) Council position on fencing and the rationale Community building/partnership information e.g dog obedience clubs, 'Good Citizen Dog Awards', 	Short Term Resourcing will depend on current IT system and hardware capacity Allocation of \$15,000 to assist with collecting/preparing information and presenting in clear, concise and plain English
Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify sites (particularly on foreshore areas) where site mapping is needed to better depict the location of OLAs Design and development of signage 	Short Term \$15,000
Trial a partnership with dog obedience clubs and trainers that is aimed at improving dog control techniques/ addressing problematic dog behaviour	Benefits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity for residents to learn simple and effective dog control/management strategies Opportunity for providers to promote services 	Short Term \$5,000 (Promo, expenses)
MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS YEARS 3-5)		
Animal Management Resourcing Increase resourcing to the Animal Management Team for a period of 12 months to assist with increasing registrations in line with	Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimises the number of dog owners that Council can liaise with Resourcing/improving compliance with registration regulations 	Medium Term \$55,000

Table 10 - Actions that can be considered to address dog control/ behaviour matters of concern		
ACTION	COMMENTS	TIMEFRAME/\$
estimated actual number of dogs e.g annual door knock (Likely to be 10,000+ additional dogs than are on the database).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allows for residents to promptly return wandering dogs to owners (dog safety, owner peace of mind) ▪ Increases financial capacity of Council to address service priorities 	
<p>Community Development Appoint dedicated Community Development Role (Behaviour change specialist) and resource position overheads (e.g program materials, advertising, travel).</p>	<p>If the position is resourced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confirm non-compliant dog owner behaviour to be targeted (priority being control of dogs in line with dog control Orders) as part of community education/information campaign ▪ Determine sites/locations to be targeted (These should be identified from the GIS mapping of incidents and complaints) ▪ Develop campaign strategy ▪ Develop campaign and education/information material and networks (internal and external) to target specific behaviour and locations ▪ Ensure Rangers are an integral part of the program to raise profile and ensure they are seen as part of the team ▪ Liaise with National Parks to identify initiatives to address common dog control issues ▪ Consider 'Citizen Junior Ranger' initiative (to encourage young people to actively engage in the training of the family dog and receiving 'award' (e.g at annual pet expo) 	<p>Medium Term \$110,000</p>
LONGER TERM ACTIONS		
<p>Dog education/training Consider strategies to incentivise attendance at puppy classes and adult dog training classes</p>	<p>Benefits include the potential to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve owner control of dogs ▪ Decrease the number of incidents and complaints relating to dogs in public spaces 	To be investigated
<p>Mobile Dog Education Service Consider the employment or engagement of a dog behaviourist and acquisition of a mobile Dog Owner Education Van</p>	<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increases awareness of dog control techniques and community understanding of the need/ obligation to minimise impact of dogs on other people, dogs and the environment ▪ Increases the profile of Council/Animal Management Services (i.e community awareness) ▪ Is a proactive and positive way Council can engage with the community (as opposed to a reactive and disciplinary manner) 	To be investigated

7. Attachments

Attachment 1 – Off-Leash Area (OLA) Site Listing

Table 11 lists the 68 council owned and/or managed OLA on the Central Coast. In addition to these sites there is the Mount Penang Gardens FOLA in Kariong (i.e 69 OLAs in total in the shire)

Table 11 – List of current and proposed Off-leash areas (OLAs) and fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) both Inland and Foreshore (Fshore)					
Existing count	Future count	NAME OF SITE	ADDRESS	FUTURE CLASSIFICATION	STATUS
1	1	Fitzgibbon Close Reserve	Fitzgibbon Close, Avoca Beach	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
2	2	North Avoca Beach	View Street, North Avoca Beach	D (OLA)/Fshore	CHANGE to OLA BOUNDARY TO EXTEND OLA to the 'Shark Tower' - A landmark that clearly defines a boundary (Extends the OLA by 35m to 600m)
3	3	Yarram Road Park	Yarram Road, Bensville	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE. 10m exclusion zone for dogs applies around the playspace
4		Illoura Reserve	Mirreen Avenue, Davistown	DECOMMISSIONED	REMOVE as an OLA. Area is defined as a sensitive habitat for the threatened Bush Stone Curlew. Dog exclusion zone to include water shallows and to be extended to the north of the current park fence line.
	4	Pine Ave Reserve	30A/30B Pine Ave / 27 Illawong Cl, Davistown	D (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA To address gap in provision and provide alternative OLA site for current Illoura Reserve OLA
5	5	Sorrento Road Reserve	Sorrento Road, Empire Bay	L (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
6	6	Forresters Beach	Kalakau Avenue, Forresters Beach	L (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
7	7	Blessington Reserve	Kanangra Street, Green Point	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
8	8	Captain Cook Reserve	Orana Street, Green Point	L (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
9	9	Greenvale Road Reserve	Greenvale Road, Green Point	L (OLA)	CHANGE to OLA BOUNDARY. To EXTEND OLA from 0.144 to 0.3 Ha and contain to the east of pathway.
10	10	Sun Valley Park	14A Highland Rd, GREEN POINT	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE. 10m exclusion zone for dogs applies around the playspace

Table 11 – List of current and proposed Off-leash areas (OLAs) and fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) both Inland and Foreshore (Fshore)

Existing count	Future count	NAME OF SITE	ADDRESS	FUTURE CLASSIFICATION	STATUS
11	11	Putty Beach Road Reserve	Putty Beach Road, Killcare Heights	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE. Access from beach Dr. carpark only. No access from Putty Beach Road car park
12	12	Carlo Close Reserve	Carlo Close, Kincumber	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
13	13	Oberton Street Reserve	Oberton Street, Kincumber	L (OLA)	CHANGE to OLA BOUNDARY. To require dogs to be on the leash on access pathways
14	14	Edmonson Cres Reserve (formerly P. Croke Ova)	31 Melville Street, Kincumber	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
15	15	Tuross Close Reserve	Tuross Close, Kincumber	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
16	16	Araluen Drive Road Reserve	Araluen Drive, Pretty Beach	L (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
17	17	Long Arm Parade Reserve	Long Arm Parade, St Huberts Island	L (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
18		Terrigal Haven	Scenic Highway, Terrigal	DECOMMISSIONED	REMOVE as an OLA and revert to on-leash only.
	18	Duffy's Road Reserve	55-73 Duffys Rd	L (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision (2 Ha)
19	19	Tumbi Road Reserve (formerly Tumbi Road Fire Station Reserve)	Longview Road, Wamberal	D (OLA)	NO CHANGE
20	20	Wamberal Beach	Dover Road, Wamberal	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE. 9 Drysdale St
21	21	Copa/Macmasters Lagoon	Marine Pd, Macmasters Beach	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
	22	Portside CI Reserve	Portside CI	L (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision (1.08 Ha)
22	23	Bateau Bay Reserve	Fishermans Bend, Bateau Bay	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE. 10m exclusion zone for dogs applies around the playspace
23	24	James Watt Drive Drainage Easement	James Watt Drive, Chittaway Bay	L (OLA)	CHANGE to OLA BOUNDARY. Dog exclusion zone on sportsfields

Table 11 – List of current and proposed Off-leash areas (OLAs) and fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) both Inland and Foreshore (Fshore)

Existing count	Future count	NAME OF SITE	ADDRESS	FUTURE CLASSIFICATION	STATUS
24		Lees Reserve	Wyong Road, Chittaway Bay	DECOMISSIONED	REMOVE as an OLA and revert to on-leash only.
25	25	The Entrance North Beach	Hutton Road, The Entrance North NSW 2261	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE.
26	26	North Shelly Reserve	Oaks Avenue, Toowoan Bay	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE.
	27	Robertson Rd Reserve	Robertson Rd	L (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision (1.08 Ha)
	28	Adelaide St Reserve	Adelaide St Reserve	L (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision (0.45 Ha). 10m exclusion zone for dogs applies around the playspace
27	29	Lakes Beach	Budgewoi Rd, Budgewoi	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
28	30	Moola Rd Reserve (former Buff Point Oval)	Matumba Road, Buff Point	D (FOLA)	NO CHANGE
29	31	Colongra Bay Reserve	Colongra Bay Road, Lake Munmorah	D (FOLA)	CHANGE to OLA BOUNDARY. To show exclusion zones on sportsfields and designated 'Natural Assets'. 10m exclusion zone for dogs applies around the playspace. REMOVE fencing (apart from fencing along roadside and enhance amenity of site with plantings & landscape features
	32	Wattle St Reserve	Wattle St Toukley	L (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision (0.4 Ha)
	33	Kanangra Drive Reserve	Tunkuwallan	D (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision (0.7 Ha)
	34	Warwick Av. Reserve	Warwick Ave	L (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA to address gap in provision (.25 Ha). To contain OLA to the east of the pathway
30	35	Caroline Bay Reserve	George Street, East Gosford	D (OLA)	NO CHANGE
31	36	Emma James St. Reserve	Emma James Street, East Gosford	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE

Table 11 – List of current and proposed Off-leash areas (OLAs) and fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) both Inland and Foreshore (Fshore)

Existing count	Future count	NAME OF SITE	ADDRESS	FUTURE CLASSIFICATION	STATUS
32	37	Coburg St Reserve (formerly Hylton Moore Oval)	Althorpe Street, East Gosford	D (OLA)	NO CHANGE
33	38	Thames Dr. Reserve	Thames Drive, Erina	L (OLA)	CHANGE to OLA BOUNDARY. To contain OLA to the east side of the pathway
34	39	Adcock Memorial Park	Central Coast Highway, West Gosford	D (OLA)	NO CHANGE
35	40	Ettalong Beach	The Esplanade, Ettalong Beach	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
36	41	Maitland Bay Drive Reserve (formerly Ettalong Oval)	Pacific Parade, Ettalong Beach	L (FOLA)	NO CHANGE
37		Kariong Recreation Reserve	Curringa Road, Kariong	DECOMISSIONED	REMOVE as an OLA and revert to on-leash only. Conflict with skatepark and playspace to be installed 2022/23
		Kariong Dog Park	Mt Penang Gardens	D (FOLA)	NO CHANGE (state government site)
38	42	Peppermint Park	Langford Drive, Kariong	D (OLA)	NO CHANGE
39	43	Patonga Beach	Bay Street, Patonga Beach	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
40	44	Pearl Beach	Agate Avenue, Pearl Beach	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
41		Fagan Park	Brisbane Water Drive, Point Clare	DECOMISSIONED	RELOCATE OLA to Kurrawa Ave, Point Claire because of conflict with sporting activities/proximity to sportsfields
	45	Kurrawa Av. Reserve	Kurrawa Ave, Point Claire	L (OLA)	NEW OLA - To replace OLA at Fagan Park
42	46	Seabrook Reserve	Jacaranda Crescent, Tascott NSW 2250	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
43	47	Umina Beach	The Esplanade, Umina Beach	D (OLA)/Fshore	NO CHANGE
44	48	Dulkara Rd Reserve	Dulkara Road, Woy Woy	D (OLA)	NO CHANGE

Table 11 – List of current and proposed Off-leash areas (OLAs) and fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) both Inland and Foreshore (Fshore)

Existing count	Future count	NAME OF SITE	ADDRESS	FUTURE CLASSIFICATION	STATUS
45	49	North Burge Road Reserve	North Burge Road, Woy Woy	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
46		McEvoy Drainage Easement	106-107 McEvoy Ave, Umina Beach	DECOMISSIONED	REMOVE as an OLA. Site very dense with vegetation and inaccessible.
47	50	Charmhaven Reserve	207W Panarama Ave	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
48	51	Helen Reserve	Gascoigne Road, Gorokan	D (FOLA)	NO CHANGE
49	52	Craigie Reserve	Donald Avenue, Kanwal	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
50	53	Second Av. Reserve	Second Avenue, Tuggerah	D (OLA)	NO CHANGE
51	54	Mataram Ridge Park	Mountain View Drive, Woongarah	D (OLA)	RELOCATE OLA to the north-east quadrant of reserve (including former picnic area). Enhanced provision for OLA, removes OLA from sensitive/wetland and bushland areas in the reserve
52	55	Peppercorn Av. Reserve	Peppercorn Avenue and Ivory Crescent, Woongarah	L (OLA)	CHANGE TO OLA BOUNDARY. To expand to include area to the southeast side of the pathway that links Peppercorn Av. and Ivory Cres
53	56	Hilltop Park	Hakone Road, Woongarah	D (OLA) (New)	EXTEND & UPGRADE OLA in line with park master plan
	57	Caraval St. Reserve	Caravel St	D (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision
	58	Watanobbi Knoll	The Terrace	L (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision
54	59	Apara Close Reserve	6A Willari Ave, Narara	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
55	60	Rowena Rd Reserve (formerly Gavenlock Oval)	Adam Street, Narara	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
56	61	Karina Dr. Reserve	5A Yera Close, Narara	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE

Table 11 – List of current and proposed Off-leash areas (OLAs) and fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) both Inland and Foreshore (Fshore)

Existing count	Future count	NAME OF SITE	ADDRESS	FUTURE CLASSIFICATION	STATUS
57	62	Mitchell Park	Corella Crescent, Narara	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
58	63	Sensory Park	162 Showground Road, Narara	D (FOLA)	UPGRADE in line with DIOSAP
59	64	Stachon St. Reserve	Stachon Street, North Gosford	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
60	65	Tallowood Cres. Reserve	Tallowood Crescent, Ourimbah	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
	66	Lara Cl. Reserve	Lara Close	L (OLA)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision
61	67	Warrawilla Rd Reserve	Warrawilla Road, Wyoming	L (OLA)	NO CHANGE
	68	Linga Longa Rd Reserve	18-19 Linga Longa Rd	L (OLA) (New)	NEW OLA. To address gap in provision