

Dogs In Open Space Action Plan

WORKSHOP REPORT

August 2023

Context

In 2022, Central Coast Council (Council) publicly exhibited the draft Dogs In Open Space Action Plan (draft Plan).

Council received a huge response to the exhibition of the draft Plan and on 31 July 2023, released the Consultation Report which provided an in-depth analysis of what we heard from the community throughout the exhibition period and our preliminary response to that feedback.

There were several key issues identified during the exhibition period. In an effort to find solutions to some of these key issues, Council hosted workshops in August 2023. The workshops were by targeted invite to select and randomised individuals given the range of issues raised during the exhibition period. Given the number of people that provided submissions on the draft Plan during the exhibition, it was not possible to accommodate all persons during these workshops.

The objective of the workshops was to work with stakeholders to further refine the draft Plan by codesigning solutions to the key issues identified.

Council hosted the following three workshops between 5pm and 7pm:

- Monday 7 August at Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club
- Tuesday 8 August at Umina Beach Surf Life Saving Club
- Wednesday 9 August at Wyong Council Function Room

This report provides an overview of the workshop activity.



Presentation

Council's project team delivered a presentation on the draft Plan, results of the public exhibition, and provided an overview on the proposed changes as a result of the public exhibition outcomes.

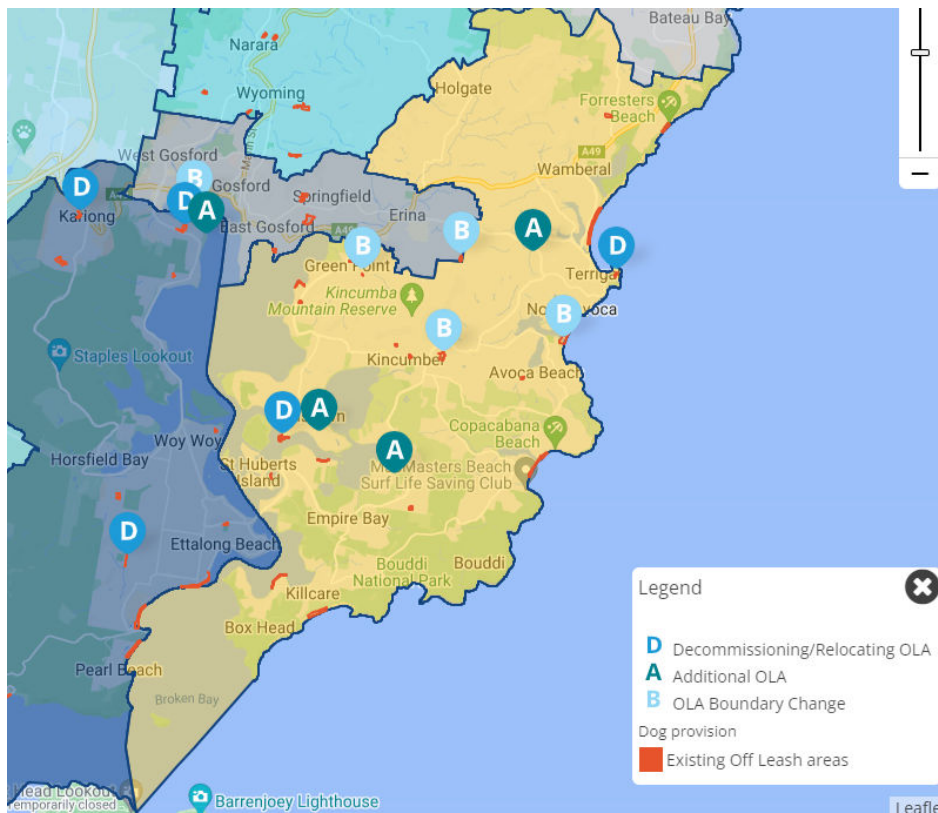
Table one: What are we proposing to change already prior to the workshops?

Topic	Proposed change to draft Plan	Comments
Revised document layout	Document revised to be more accessible to readers	Document revised and to be tabled during the August 2023 Council meeting
Leash Length requirement	Leash length limitations now extended to 2m	Extending leash requirements by 0.5m
Off Leash Beaches	Proposed time/seasonal beach access retracted	Proposed time and/or seasonal beach access restrictions discontinued
Sportsgrounds	Sportsgrounds no longer proposed to be dogs prohibited. On leash only.	Sportsgrounds to be on-leash permitted while off leash use prohibited
Illoura Reserve, Davistown	New proposed alternative site at Memorial Oval, Davistown	Previous proposed site at Pine Ave was not preferred by community groups

Caravel St, Hamlyn Terrace	Proposed OLA retracted	No alternative site required as proposed Hilltop OLA is within 3km
Adelaide St, Killarney Vale	Alternate site proposed at Wyong Rd, Killarney Vale	Adelaide St site conflicts with lease of facility to local sports groups with alternative site proposed off Wyong Rd
Adcock Park, West Gosford	Boundary Change retracted	Area outside of shared path not significant enough to cater for off leash activity with existing OLA to remain as is
Thames Drive, Erina	Boundary Change retracted	Shared path not formalised through area so prohibition from this path is not required
Captain Cook Reserve, Green Point	Boundary Change	Boundary change to exclude 10m buffer zone from playspace

Feedback

Question one: When planning for dogs in the **East Brisbane Water and Coastal** area, what are the alternative options?



CONSIDERATIONS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES & SOLUTIONS

Pippi Point (Illoura Reserve), Davistown (current OLA)

- People have purchased in the area for access to the OLA
- The land/water interface is a key attraction of the OLA
- The OLA is a meeting point for community and is a significant asset for community well-being
- Concerns regarding the location of and the voracity of the Threatened Species Assessment used to inform decision-making
- Clarification on what the impacts of dogs off leash are to the Bush Stone-curlew
- Revised OLA i.e., reduction in use to the west of the OLA or increase in the protection area considered a potential balance
- Timed access – time of day or time of year (i.e., is there a time of day that the Bush Stone-curlew are present? Or is there a time of year that nesting occurs (closure/fencing similar to the Little Tern))
- Legacy issues of previous Council causing distrust amongst community as this issue has been brought up in the past

Memorial Ave, Davistown (proposed alternative OLA)

- Issues with water logging/flooding
- Potential conflicts with existing users

- Located on a main road – safety concerns
- No fence or parking available
- Potential emergency helicopter landing point
- Possible OLA between Mirreen and Restella Streets discussed

Pine Ave, Davistown (proposed alternative OLA)

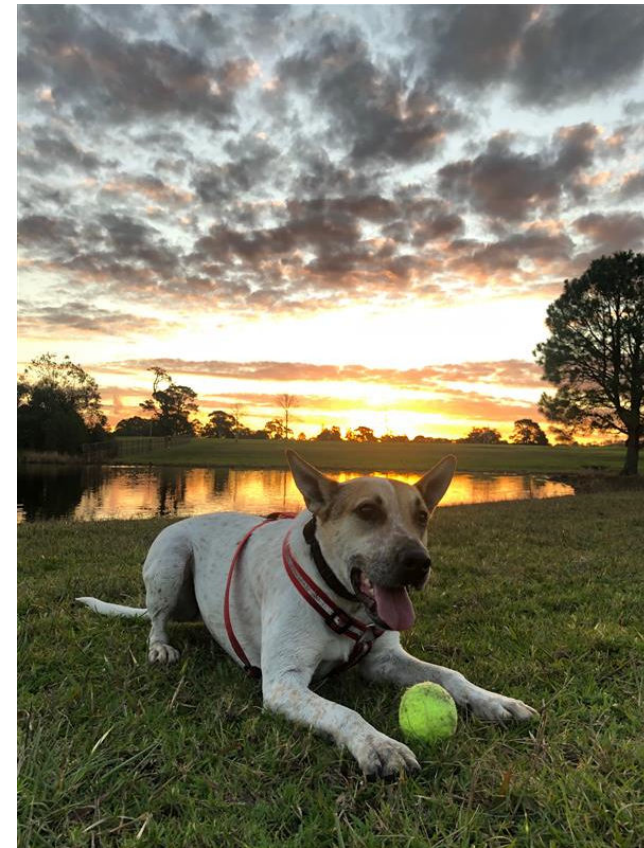
- Issues with water logging/flooding
- Potential site for breeding pair of Bush Stone-curlew and Green and Gold Bell Frog
- No parking available

The Haven, Terrigal

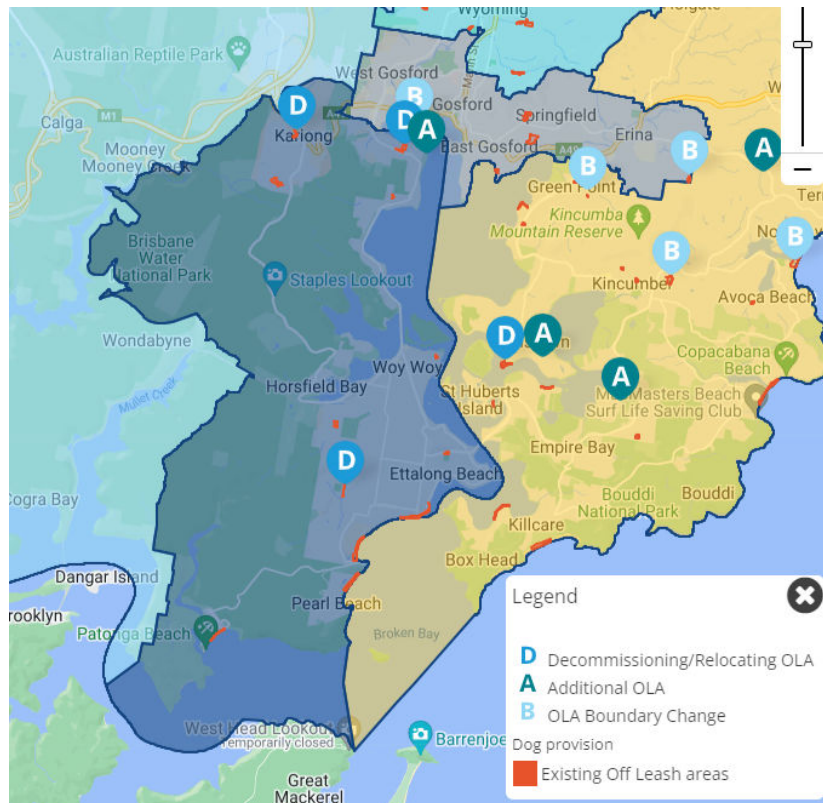
- Concerns about the loss of the human social interaction that the OLA provides
- Concerns about the economic (cafes) and lifestyle implications that the closure of the OLA will have on the community
- Agreement that the OLA does have significant safety concerns
- Some agreement that the OLA should be converted to on-lead
- Fencing options might be able to be explored (suggestion for sandstone or copper logs)
- Grassed OLA provides additional access to OLA in the area for those that cannot visit Wamberal Beach OLA
- Wiles Ave (behind Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club) would be the best alternative grassed site

Duffys Reserve, Terrigal (proposed alternative OLA)

- Concerns about the suitability of the site (flooding, parking, location)
- Concerns about the species in the Reserve (spiders and birds)
- Concerns about impacts to the ASPECT school and other surrounding residents



Question two: When planning for dogs in the **West Brisbane Water and Peninsula** area, what are the alternative options?



CONSIDERATIONS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES & SOLUTIONS

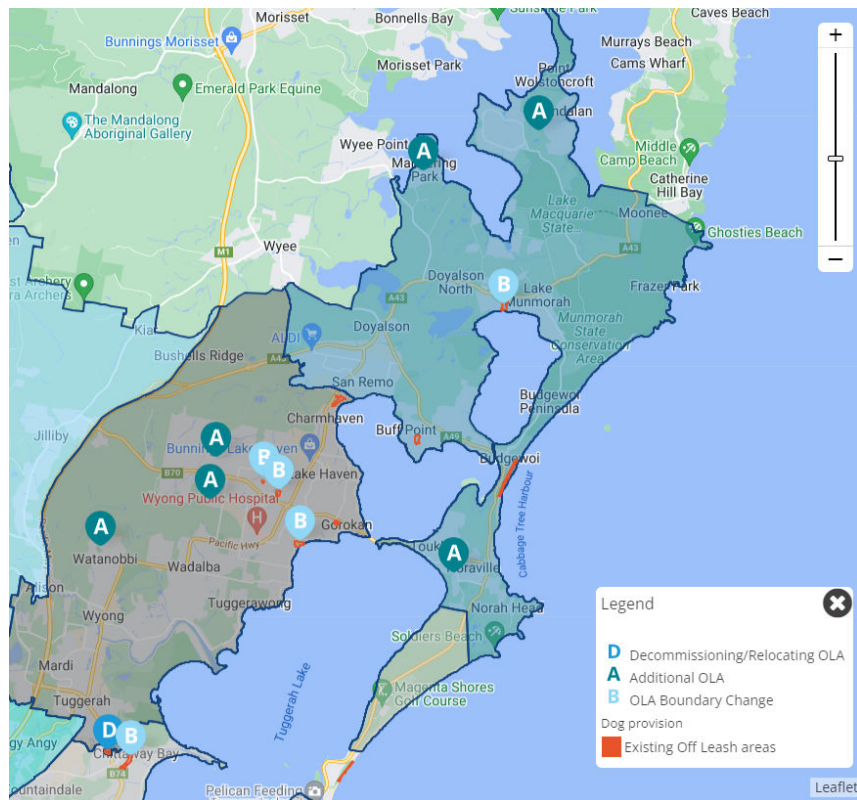
McEvoy Ave Drainage Reserve

- Suggestion for the OLA to be extended
- Suggestion to fence extension near roads (Australia Ave)

Other areas

- Delineation between Council land (along Woy Woy Road) and National Park is good (good regulation for COSS land)
- Signage at Umina Beach is good (large and has a map)
- Lemongrove netball grassed area may be another option for consideration
- Suggestion for a possible extension of the Ettalong Oval OLA
- Compliance between non-dog owners and dog-owners needs improvement in the Umina Beach area
- Improved considerations for mixed use of the space on the Peninsula (conflict between dogs and fishermen etc.)

Question three: When planning for dogs in the **Northern end of the Coast**, what are the alternative options?



CONSIDERATIONS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES & SOLUTIONS

Tuggerah Off Leash Park (existing site)

- Has a drainage problem
- Suggestions for additional equipment to keep dogs engaged

Narara Off Leash Park (existing site)

- Concerns with dog behaviour within the park
- Responsible pet owner issues

Redgum Hilltop Park, Blue Haven (potential additional OLA)

- Suggestion for additional OLA at Redgum Hilltop Park, Blue Haven
- Site has plenty of shade with bushland
- Some parking provision already present

Chelmsford Rd, Charmhaven (near SoCares) (potential additional OLA)

- Suggestion for additional OLA at Chelmsford Rd, Charmhaven – behind the SoCares dog shelter

Tunkawalin OLA (proposed OLA)

- Support for the proposed additional OLA at Tunkawalin
- Tunkawalin is a good location to service both Gwandalan and Summerland Point communities
- Lions Park, Gwandalan was discussed as an additional option

Question four: When it comes to the rules and policing of Dogs in Open Space, what has the Action Plan **done well**?

- Some generalised support for the purpose of the plan and acknowledgement that it's a difficult topic to find agreement by all parties
- Elements of the plan are good, particularly the balance between education and regulation/enforcement
- The proactive elements (i.e., education) to the plan are sound
- Call for additional ranger resources
- Improvements to signage:
 - Size and scale are important
 - Location should be considered (i.e., entry signage is good but when within the area it is hard to know where the areas finish/start)
 - Mapping information is useful (Umina Beach sign referenced)
 - OLA etiquette signage is important, so people understand what the behavioural expectations are for the OLA (i.e. no phones, effective control, monitoring dog behaviour, picking up poo)
 - Humorous signage should be considered
- Proactive education and compliance monitoring requirements
- Responding to community concerns (removal of seasonal timed beach access etc.)
- Consultation was done well (including the workshops)

Question five: When it comes to the rules and policing of dogs in open space, what has the strategy **not done well**?

- Did not speak to the emotional wellbeing and health benefits that dog ownership offers
- The document should have been stronger in the recommendations to further improve compliance monitoring/policing/education
- Did not highlight the important role OLAs provide in establishing community connectedness
- Plan did not speak to how Council is addressing the regulation of declared dangerous or menacing dogs proactively
- It was unclear what the drivers were for a new Plan were (there are legacy issues with former Gosford City Council)
- The submission feedback form was overly complex for those who wanted to provide a simple answer
- Document (original) was too long and complex

Other commentary

- Council should improve the way engagement is advertised via non-electronic means e.g., radio ads, library notices
- Council should target messaging in problem areas and during holiday periods where persons from outside the Local Government Area visit and do not know the rules and/or do not comply
- Education of the community:
 - How do we promote or encourage dog training?
 - How do we promote appropriate behaviour towards approaching dogs?
 - Can we educate or upskill our community /beach lifeguards

- Can Council test documents and second survey with a focus group prior to release to the community
- Can Council do more at the registration stage to give residents more information re responsible pet ownership, re off leash localities, re signage
- Decomposing bags and alternative options for dog litter should be investigated
- Compliance - rangers - more rangers and not just for fines but for proactive engagement, patrols, discussions... the policing
- Can Council leverage volunteer groups, community connectors, partner with dog trainers or vets to get responsible pet messaging out
- Should council consider restarting some form of committee
- Council should consider rebranding dogs on the Coast



Next steps

Council staff are using the feedback received during the workshops to further refine and enhance a revised draft Dogs In Open Space Action Plan (revised draft Plan).

The revised draft Plan will be tabled at the August Council Meeting where endorsement will be sought for the Plan to be re-exhibited for a further 28 days.

It is important to remember that the revised draft Plan will list a number of actions, however; some of these are currently unfunded. Council will continue to explore funding opportunities to deliver the actions identified in accordance with their listed priority. This may be through funding available in Council's recurrent annual budget (Operation and Delivery Plan) or via other external funding opportunities (e.g., grants) as they become available.

It is intended that any final Plan will be reviewed every two years to ensure that new and emerging needs are identified and addressed such as new OLAs being brought online.

We encourage the community to get involved and let us know if we have gotten the revised Plan right.

We will continue to keep the community updated on this project.

It is important to note that there are currently no changes to the management of Council's open space network until a final Plan is adopted by Council.

