

Council Meeting

Agenda

Tuesday, 12 August 2025

Civic Centre, 15 Anderson Street, Lilydale
and via Videoconference

Information for Councillors and the community

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nation peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region.

We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

COUNCIL VISION

Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how sustainable balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.

VALUE OF HISTORY

We acknowledge that history shapes our identities, engages us as citizens, creates inclusive communities, is part of our economic well-being, teaches us to think critically and creatively, inspires leaders and is the foundation of our future generations.

COUNCILLOR COMMITMENT

We'll be truthful, represent the community's needs, be positive and responsive and always strive to do better.

OUR COUNCILLORS

Billanook Ward: Tim Heenan

Chandler Ward: Gareth Ward

Chirnside Ward: Richard Higgins

Lyster Ward: Peter McIlwain

Melba Ward: Mitch Mazzarella

O'Shannassy Ward: Jim Child

Ryrie Ward: Fiona McAllister

Streeton Ward: Jeff Marriott

Walling Ward: Len Cox

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & DIRECTORS

Chief Executive Officer, Tammi Rose

Director Built Environment & Infrastructure,
Hjalmar Philipp

Director Communities, Leanne Hurst

Director Corporate Services,

Vincenzo Lombardi

Director Planning and Sustainable Futures,
Kath McClusky

GOVERNANCE RULES

All Council and Delegated Committee meetings are to be conducted in accordance with Council's Governance Rules, which can be viewed at: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Corporate-documents/Policies-strategies/Governance-rules>

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

Members of the community can participate in Council meetings in any of the following ways:

- making a verbal submission for up to 5 minutes on matters not listed on the agenda.
- submitting a question.
- speaking for up to 5 minutes to a specific item on the agenda. For planning applications and policy issues, the Chair will invite one person to speak on behalf of any objectors and one person to speak on behalf of the applicant. For other matters on the agenda, only one person will be invited to address Council, unless there are opposing views. At the discretion of the Chair, additional speakers may be invited for items of large interest.
- speaking for up to 5 minutes to a petition to be presented at a meeting.

For further information about how to participate in a Council meeting, please visit: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Council-meetings/Submissions-questions-petitions-to-Council>

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The Minutes produced after each Council Meeting form the official record of the decisions made by Yarra Ranges Council.

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In the case of an emergency during a meeting held at the Civic Centre, 15 Anderson Street, Lilydale, you should follow the directions given by staff and evacuate the building using the nearest available exit. You should congregate at the assembly point at Hardy Street car park.

CONTACT US

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YARRA RANGES COUNCIL

**AGENDA FOR THE 629TH COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY
12 AUGUST 2025 COMMENCING AT 7.00PM IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC
CENTRE, ANDERSON STREET, LILYDALE / VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

1. MEETING OPENED

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nation peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region.

We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

3. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS PRESENT

OUR COUNCILLORS

Billanook Ward: Tim Heenan
Chandler Ward: Gareth Ward
Chirnside Ward: Richard Higgins
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Melba Ward: Mitch Mazzarella
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Ryrie Ward: Fiona McAllister
Streeton Ward: Jeff Marriott
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Chief Executive Officer, Tammi Rose
Director Built Environment & Infrastructure, Hjalmar Philipp
Director Communities, Leanne Hurst
Director Corporate Services, Vincenzo Lombardi
Director Planning & Sustainable Futures, Kath McClusky

4. APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

There were no apologies received prior to the commencement of this meeting.

5. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Chapter 7, Rule 4, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

The Local Government Act 2020 defines two categories of conflict of interest:

- *a general conflict of interest, which is defined as "...a relevant person has a general conflict of interest in a matter if an impartial, fair-minded person would consider that the person's private interests could result in that person acting in a manner that is contrary to their public duty", and*
- *a material conflict of interest, which is defined as "...a relevant person has a material conflict of interest in respect of a matter if an affected person would gain a benefit or suffer a loss depending on the outcome of the matter. The benefit may arise or the loss incurred (a) directly or indirectly; or (b) in a pecuniary or non-pecuniary form."*

In accordance with section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020, a conflict of interest must be disclosed in the manner required by the Governance Rules and the relevant person must exclude themselves from the decision-making process.

No Conflicts of Interest have been received prior to the Agenda being printed.

6. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

7. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held Tuesday 22 July 2025, as circulated, be confirmed.

8. QUESTIONS AND SUBMISSIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

In accordance with Chapter 3, Rules 57 and 59, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

A person may make a submission to Council on matters that are not listed on the Agenda. A submission may be on any matter except if it:

- (a) is considered malicious, defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial, or objectionable in language or substance;
- (b) is substantially the same as a submission made to a Council meeting in the preceding 12 months;
- (c) relates to confidential information as defined under the Act;
- (d) relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer; or
- (e) relates to any other matter which the Council considers would prejudice the Council or any person.

SUBMISSIONS TO COUNCIL

Nine New Health Promotion Programs

Brian Mier wishes to provide Councillors with an update on Nine New Health Promotion Programs.

New Parking Restrictions - Upwey South Primary School

Robert Shepherd wishes to provide Councillors with comment regarding new parking restrictions around Upwey South Primary School.

9. PETITIONS

In accordance with Chapter 3, Rules 60, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

A person may submit a petition to Council on matters that are not listed on the Agenda. Every petition or joint letter submitted to Council must:

- a) identify a 'Lead Petitioner' who Council can correspond with;
- b) be legible and in permanent writing;
- c) be clear and state on each page the matter and action sought from Council. Every page of a petition or joint letter must be a single page of paper and not be posted, stapled, pinned or otherwise affixed or attached to any piece of paper other than another page of the petition or joint letter;
- d) not be derogatory, defamatory or objectionable in language or nature;
- e) not relate to matters outside the powers of Council; and
- f) clearly state the names and addresses of at least seven (7) people who live, work, study or do business in the Municipal district.

PETITION TO COUNCIL

Report Author: Senior Governance Officer
Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services
Ward(s) affected: Lyster;

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

The following general petition be received:

General Petition

1. Wildlife Fatalities along Wellington Road

Request that Council advocate to the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) to help reduce the incidents of wildlife fatalities along Wellington Road.

103 valid signatures.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the “Wildlife Fatalities along Wellington Road” petition in accordance with the Governance Rule and refers this petition to the appropriate officers for investigation and response.

MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA - STATE COUNCIL MEETING

Report Author: Senior Advocacy and Government Relations Advisor
 Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer
 Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item will be considered at a Council Meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) will hold the next biannual State Council meeting on Friday 10 October 2025. The MAV has called for councils to submit proposed motions of importance to the local government sector in Victoria, to be considered at the meeting. If supported by the member councils, motions become resolutions, informing advocacy and policy positions of the MAV.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the proposed motions to be submitted to the Municipal Association of Victoria for consideration at the State Council Meeting on 10 October 2025.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

Council considered motions at the Meeting on Tuesday 11 March 2025 that were duly submitted to the State Council meeting, held on 16 May 2025 and were adopted by State Council. A resolution of Council is required for the MAV to accept motions.

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

State Council is the MAV's governing body and is made up of representatives from each member council. State Council meets twice a year, and MAV calls for councils to submit motions approximately two months in advance of State Council. As

decisions of State Council constitute policy directions of the MAV and remain active until the issue is resolved, motions should relate to either new policy directions, or variations to existing policy directions.

Yarra Ranges Council has regularly put forward motions to the biannual MAV State Council meetings.

The MAV Rules require that motions: be of state-wide significance to the local government sector; link to the strategic outcomes in the MAV Strategy 2021-25; not be identical or substantially similar to a motion submitted to State Council at any of the previous four State Council meetings; and not seek to endorse a motion to be put to the Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly. When submitting a motion, Council is required to identify whether the motion is supported by a council resolution.

Options considered

Council has considered various emerging issues and strategic risks impacting Council as an organisation, as well as the broader community and the suitability of these matters for advocacy through MAV State Council for issues of Victorian state significance.

Recommended option and justification

Of the strategic risks and issues currently impacting Council and the community, the proposed motions have been determined as appropriately matched to the advocacy opportunity presented by State Council, in terms of both timing and MAV's submission criteria.

MOTION 1:

That the MAV undertake statewide research into occupational violence incidents against Council staff and Councillors and seek WorkSafe support for a public safety campaign.

COUNCIL: Yarra Ranges Council

RATIONALE:

Occupational violence and aggression (OVA) is an escalating concern across Australian workplaces, with public-facing roles, such as those held by council workers, being particularly vulnerable. Despite growing anecdotal evidence and national data indicating a rise in workplace violence, there is a critical gap in sector-specific research that captures the scope, nature, and impact of OVA on local government employees in Victoria.

Council employees, which includes elected councillors, frequently engage with the public in high-pressure and emotionally charged environments. These roles may include local laws officers, customer service staff, compliance officers and field workers. These interactions increasingly expose them to verbal abuse, threats, and

physical aggression. The absence of comprehensive data and coordinated prevention strategies leaves councils ill-equipped to respond effectively and protect their workforce.

We therefore call on the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to:

1. Undertake a statewide research initiative to quantify and qualify incidents of occupational violence against council staff and councillors.
2. Collaborate with WorkSafe Victoria to develop and launch a public safety campaign aimed at raising awareness, promoting respectful engagement with council staff, and reinforcing zero tolerance for workplace aggression.

This initiative will:

- Provide councils with evidence-based insights to inform policy, training, and support systems.
- Strengthen advocacy for legislative and regulatory protections.
- Foster a culture of safety, respect, and accountability across Victorian communities.

By taking a proactive and unified approach, MAV and WorkSafe Victoria can lead the way in safeguarding council staff and councillors and ensuring that local government remains a safe and sustainable sector for all employees.

This motion aligns to MAV 2024-27 Strategic Priority 3. Health & Wellbeing.

MOTION 2:

That the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) advocate to the Victorian Government for the enhancement of the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) through alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to better reflect the strategic leadership and impact of councils.

COUNCIL: Yarra Ranges Council

RATIONALE:

Local governments are uniquely positioned to drive meaningful progress across social, environmental, and economic dimensions. The current LGPRF, while valuable, presents an opportunity for evolution toward a more holistic, future-focused framework that fully captures the breadth of councils' contributions.

Key opportunities for improvement include:

- **Strategic Alignment:** Councils are more than service providers, they are leaders in climate adaptation, community resilience, and democratic governance.

Aligning the LGPRF with the SDGs would better reflect this broader mandate and support councils in demonstrating their strategic value.

- **Legislative Synergy:** The Local Government Act 2020 champions integrated strategic planning and performance reporting. An SDG-aligned LGPRF would strengthen this intent by enabling councils to measure and communicate progress against long-term objectives, including climate action and equity.
- **Climate Leadership:** Councils are at the forefront of climate response. A modernised performance framework that incorporates SDG indicators would empower councils to showcase their leadership in building resilient, low-carbon communities.

The SDGs offer a globally recognised, comprehensive framework comprising 17 goals. Already endorsed by the MAV through its 2024–2027 Strategic Plan, the SDGs align closely with councils' statutory responsibilities, including sustainability, governance, and community wellbeing. The City of Melbourne's Voluntary Local Review demonstrates the practical benefits of SDG-based reporting, setting a benchmark for innovation and transparency in local government. This reform represents a powerful opportunity to position Local Government Sector as delivering measurable, community-centred impact.

This motion aligns to MAV 2024-27 Strategic Priority 4. Sustainable Economy.

MOTION 3:

That the MAV advocate to the Victorian Government for a commitment and funding towards education and support programs, such as the 2022-24 *Women Leading Locally* program to encourage and support more women and young people, particularly in regional areas, to run for elections to councils in 2028.

COUNCIL: Yarra Ranges Council

RATIONALE:

The Victorian Government has had a target to achieve 50/50 gender representation in councils by 2025. While the trend has been heading in the right direction, parity has not been reached. In the 2024 elections, 44.8% of people elected to local councils in Victoria were women, which is a small increase from 43.2% in 2020, and a sharp increase from 38% in 2016. Currently, it is predominantly in rural and regional areas where there are the lowest numbers of women councillors.

The previously delivered *Women Leading Locally* program was developed through Local Government Victoria with funding support from the Government and with the input of local government councillors, professionals and supporters. This ran successfully from 2022 to 2024.

According to the 2024 Victorian Councillor Census by the VLGA, the average age of councillors in Victoria is 57.5 years, with very few under 30. A program to educate and encourage young people to participate in local leadership opportunities and seek

election to councils would be beneficial. The development of younger candidates to increase diversity, ensure inter-generational representation and future-proof governance would enhance our local democracies.

Funding in the 2026-2027 Victorian Budget would enable a similar program to target areas with low female representation to support and encourage women to run for elections to councils in 2028.

This motion aligns to MAV 2024-27 Strategic Priority 1. Active local democracy & 8. Diversity, equity and inclusion.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

There is no direct cost incurred in putting motions forward to the MAV State Council. Advocacy activities and the officer time to prepare motions can be met as part of business as usual.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

Council's participation in the bi-annual MAV State Council meetings contributes to the following action in the 2021-25 Council Plan:

- *Consolidate and strengthen advocacy through evidence and stronger relationships to ensure other levels of government are effectively and efficiently engaged to support local services and programs.*

RELEVANT LAW

Not applicable.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

There are no identified economic implications.

Social Implications

Council's proposed motions and implementation of programs suggested for improving attitudes and behaviour towards Council staff and the suggested program to encourage more women to run for election to Council in future may both have positive social implications.

Environmental Implications

There are no identified environmental implications.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As the submission of motions to State Council is operational in nature and presents no change to Council's strategic direction, community engagement was not undertaken on this matter. An internal process has been undertaken with Officers and Councillors to identify potential motions for submission. The proposed motions support Council's existing strategies and Council Plan, which have been developed through community consultation and deliberative engagement processes.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The proposed motions build on policy and advocacy efforts that Council and the local government sector through the MAV have undertaken in recent years to:

- See safety and respect given to local government Councillors and staff to be as important an issue as other public sector workers such as nurses and emergency service workers.
- Contribute to the ongoing efforts of the Victorian Government and the local government sector to encourage more women to participate in local democracy and seek election to councils to achieve the 50/50 target.
- Evolve the performance and reporting of councils towards more holistic, future-focused framework that captures the breadth of councils' contributions and the community benefits delivered

RISK ASSESSMENT

The proposed motions to be submitted to the MAV for their local government sector advocacy to the Victorian Government contributes to mitigating Council's identified Strategic Risk regarding Council Reputation – Failure to implement the Council Action Plan.

Seeking to address customer behaviour towards Council staff would contribute to mitigating risks to staff of Occupation Violence and Aggression (OVA).

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

Nil

PEOPLE AND DOGS IN PARKS PLAN SEEK ENDORSEMENT FOR PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Report Author: Coordinator Open Space Strategy and Planning

Responsible Officer: Director Planning & Sustainable Futures

Ward(s) affected: All Wards;

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

Yarra Ranges provides a variety of public open spaces, which accommodate numerous functions including dog off-leash areas. Dog off-leash areas offer flexible opportunities for physical activity, social connections and practising of responsible dog ownership. Providing dog off-leash areas can at times present challenges. These include conflicting uses of public open space, issues with dog and owner behaviour, health and amenity concerns such as animal waste, and the financial burden on Council to build, maintain, and renew a network of such facilities. Council has not previously had a plan governing these spaces.

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan 2025 responds to these opportunities and issues. It outlines standards for the provision, development, and management of dog off-leash areas across the municipality over the next 10 years. The draft Plan is informed by industry practice and extensive community input, specific to a Yarra Ranges' context.

The draft Plan establishes principles for dog off-leash areas to inform specific locations and a hierarchy (Local or District level) for each dog off-leash area. It also considers where fully enclosed sites may be provided. The Plan includes a preliminary list of where Local, District or District fully enclosed areas are proposed.

Initial community engagement was undertaken between 11 July – 13 August 2024, to understand issues and opportunities concerning dog off-leash areas in the municipality to assist in shaping the draft plan. It is proposed that the community be further consulted on the principles, the level of service outlined in the Plan, and the proposed locations and hierarchy for each dog off-leash area.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. *Approves the release of the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan for community engagement.*
2. *Notes that community engagement findings will be presented to a future Council Meeting.*

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

At the 22 November 2022 Council Meeting, Council endorsed the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026 (DAMP). The report highlighted the development of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan as a supporting activity in achieving the social, health and wellbeing objectives of the DAMP.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan and seek Council endorsement to commence community engagement on the Plan.

Background

Councils have legislative obligations regarding domestic animals. These obligations are accompanied by powers to create Council Orders, including Orders relating to management, safety and amenity. Councils are also legislatively required to prepare a domestic animal management plan every four years.

Plans and studies such as the Domestic Animal Management Plan have highlighted the value that the community places on companion animals such as dogs. They also identify that dog ownership provides a range of health and wellbeing benefits. This is reinforced by Yarra Ranges having nearly 32,000 registered dogs, the highest in Greater Melbourne.

In addition to providing a community safety service, Council also provides recreation and open space to residents and visitors. Dog off-leash areas in public open space are a vehicle to maximise the benefits arising from dog ownership, such as:

- Access to public open space by owners and dogs, particularly where private open space is limited.
- Physical activity for owners and dogs.
- Social connection and gathering for owners and dogs.

- Practising of responsible dog ownership.
- Aiding the management of multiple functions and uses of public open space.
- Providing a focal point for community engagement and education.

Council currently provides 23 dog off-leash areas, however there is no guidance or plan that sets agreed standards for their distribution, placement, design and management. Many existing dog off-leash areas occupy significant portions of the park leading to conflict between users, which is often exacerbated by a lack of definition of the space and lack of supporting infrastructure.

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan 2025 has been developed to address this gap in current guidance. It applies to existing and future dog off-leash areas owned or managed by Council. It outlines standards for the provision, development and management of dog off-leash areas for the next 10 years and aims to achieve a balance between the diverse uses of open spaces by all Yarra Ranges residents and visitors, catering to both dog owners and non-dog owners.

The draft Plan has been informed by research, benchmarking and community engagement, which enables Council to address community views whilst using an evidence-based approach where competing priorities emerge.

Issues

Types of dog off-leash areas

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan proposes a hierarchy for dog off-leash areas, and the level of service that can be expected. This hierarchy and level of service is aligned to the settings in Council's adopted Recreation and Open Space Strategy (ROSS) which is currently under review. Dog off-leash areas will be varied in their size and level of service, according to local opportunities and need. The level of service itself may also be varied as required by demand, availability of public open space, budget or other factors.

In addition to consistency with the ROSS, the Plan proposes improvements to dog off-leash areas in a manner that is financially sustainable for Council. This approach guides decision making and will help to respond to community enquiries for improvements to parks.

Council's existing dog off-leash areas are maintained and monitored within existing resource allocations. Where new or improved parks are introduced, additional funding is likely to be required for their construction and operation.

Based on the level of service proposed in the draft Plan, the potential locations for Local, District and fully enclosed dog off-leash areas are outlined below. However, these are subject to change, based on detailed site assessments and community feedback.

The hierarchy of dog off-leash areas includes:

Local-level dog off-leash areas

These areas service a smaller catchment and have lower levels of infrastructure such as landscaping, natural shade and seating. Proposed locations for Local-level parks are:

- Don Road Recreation Reserve, Healesville
- Johns Hill Lookout Reserve, Kallista
- Lakeview Reserve, Lilydale
- Mooroolbark Retarding Basin, Mooroolbark
- Mount Evelyn Aqueduct Trail Reserve, Mount Evelyn
- Mount Morton Reserve, Belgrave South
- Pembroke Retarding Basin, Mooroolbark
- Richards Reserve, Montrose
- Seville Recreation Reserve, Seville
- Yarra Glen Showgrounds, Yarra Glen.

District-level dog off-leash areas

These parks service a larger catchment and encourage longer stays. They may be co-located with other uses or functions, to leverage existing reserve infrastructure such as rubbish bins, toilets and car parking, rather than providing this infrastructure only for the dog off-leash area.

They may include more features than Local-level sites, such as internal paths, landscaping, shade, drinking water, and equipment (informal such as mounds, or formal agility equipment). They may also include trunk infrastructure, such as water connections and drainage to drinking fountains, and optional features such as lighting.

Proposed locations for District-level areas are:

- Belgrave Lake Park, Belgrave
- Coronation Park, Healesville
- Elizabeth Bridge Reserve, Kilsyth
- Kalorama Memorial Reserve, Kalorama
- Kimberley Reserve, Chirnside Park
- Lillydale Lake, Lilydale

- Margaret Lewis Reserve, Coldstream
- Wesburn Park, Wesburn.

Fully enclosed dog off-leash areas

During consultation, the community expressed a strong desire to see more fully enclosed (fenced) sites. Whilst fully enclosing a site presents additional costs and challenges, they are highly valued by the community and have been successfully trialled at Kimberley Reserve, Chirnside Park.

These areas may also provide other benefits such as better articulating the boundaries of the space and providing dog training progression opportunities.

In balancing community demand with feasibility and the viability of fully enclosing spaces, selected sites are proposed to be fully enclosed: two in the Urban areas of the municipality, and one in each in the Hills, Valley and Upper Yarra areas. The proposed locations for fully enclosed sites are:

- Belgrave Lake Park, Belgrave
- Coronation Park, Healesville
- Elizabeth Bridge Reserve, Kilsyth
- Kimberley Reserve, Chirnside Park
- Wesburn Park*, Wesburn.

*A partial fence only is proposed for Wesburn Park, due to clearance required to the existing helipad on the site.

Part or full enclosure of other sites may also be warranted due to proximity to hazards, or other incompatible land uses and functions (such as environmental sensitivity).

Sites requiring review

Several existing dog off-leash sites in the municipality are within proximity to each other and may be servicing similar catchments. Therefore, it is proposed to review the need and utilisation of these sites, and where there is low demand consider disestablishing dog off-leash areas. Please refer to Attachment 3 – Preliminary Site Assessment.

Existing Gaps

There may be some parts of the municipality that are currently not served well or at all by dog off-leash areas. Consideration will be given to improving provision in under-served areas where there is demonstrated need and availability of suitable public open space.

However, comments made by community during consultation suggested that improvements to existing dog off-leash areas should be prioritised above creation of new spaces.

Community Consultation Feedback

The development of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan commenced in 2019, with an independent study commissioned to inform the Plan. However, the project was subsequently deferred as other priorities and initiatives took precedence. In resuming the project, the community was re-engaged in mid-2024, with feedback used to inform this draft Plan.

The primary theme arising from initial consultation undertaken in 2024 was whether Council should offer fully enclosed or fenced dog off-leash areas (occasionally referred to as dog parks or destination spaces).

Council's first trial site was established in 2023, with a fully enclosed dog off-leash area at Kimberley Reserve in Chirnside Park. It has been very well received by the local community as well as residents elsewhere in the municipality seeking similar opportunities closer to home. However, fully enclosing the area has, at times, led to inappropriate use. Common issues include unsupervised dogs and children, overcrowding, and reliance on the enclosure in place of effective dog control. This requires Council to now proactively patrol this site on a frequent basis.

Fully enclosed dog off-leash areas have not been previously provided by Council due to their increased capital and operating needs and reported increases in inappropriate use of the spaces.

However, given the volume of requests from dog off-leash area users and non-dog owners alike seeking fully enclosed spaces, it is reasonable for Council to explore their viability. Should Council decide to provide fully enclosed spaces, a preferred minimum area of 0.5 hectares should be adopted in alignment with industry standards. This benchmark has been established to address issues associated with smaller enclosed sites, which have been linked to increased incidents of conflict and aggression among dogs due to insufficient space.

Options considered

Option 1: Release the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan for public exhibition.

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan aggregates community feedback, industry practice, and research into a Plan that provides a vision, principles and standards for dog off-leash areas in Yarra Ranges. It provides a tool to assess and recommend efficiencies and improvements in the network.

The draft Plan also explores issues and opportunities in relation to the provision of fully enclosed dog off-leash areas, which has been strongly supported by community. The draft Plan allows for fully enclosed spaces where required to manage risk (i.e. proximity to hazards or incompatible uses). However, given strong community demand for fully enclosed sites, there is the potential for Council to also consider providing fully enclosed dog off-leash areas to other sites where risk is not the only factor. This level

of service would respond to community demand, enhances these spaces, and mirrors provision in several neighbouring municipalities. Fully enclosed spaces are associated with increased capital, maintenance and renewal requirements, and possible increase in patrols by Community Safety in these areas.

Option 2: Do not proceed with a People and Dogs in Parks Plan.

The absence of a plan for dog off-leash areas in Yarra Ranges has led to inconsistent provision, and uncertainty for community and Council alike regarding where off-leash areas should be located and what amenities they should include. The People and Dogs in Parks Plan has been keenly anticipated by the community to provide greater certainty in response to their requests for enhanced dog off-leash area provision.

There has also been an absence of a prioritised pipeline of dog-off leash area improvements. This has created inconsistency in delivery of capital projects and missed opportunities concerning grant funding for dog off-leash areas.

Furthermore, the preparation of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan was identified as an action of the Yarra Ranges Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026. Therefore, this option is not recommended.

Recommended option and justification

Option 1 is recommended, as it balances community demand with feasibility and viability considerations. It is likely to be more publicly favourable with some community representatives advocating to Councillors for this model. However, it requires higher capital, operating and renewal costs. There are also heightened health and safety risks associated with fully enclosed sites, arising from unsupervised dogs and children, overcrowding, and lack of effective control. Therefore, this option should be considered in the context of additional operating resource requirements, outlined in the Financial Analysis.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Operating and Capital Cost of Implementing the People and Dogs in Parks Plan

Council's existing dog off-leash areas are maintained and monitored within existing resource allocations. Where new or improved parks are introduced, additional funding is likely to be required for their construction and operation.

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan recommends a range of actions to implement the Plan. Most of the actions do not include physical works and therefore can be undertaken within existing operational budget.

These actions include review of the dog off-leash area network against proposed levels of service, and subsequent preparation of a prioritised list of site-specific projects. A preliminary, high-level assessment has been undertaken and is included as Attachment 3. This assessment will be used as an initial discussion tool with community. Projects arising from a detailed assessment would need capital funding to deliver and may include new, upgrade, review or decommissioning of dog off-leash areas.

Capital costs

If Council adopts the level of service proposed in the current draft, the total capital cost for full implementation is estimated at \$4.9 million. Delivery may be staged over the ten-year life of the Plan, with flexibility to adjust the pace based on available funding.

Currently, these projects are unfunded and will be considered during annual Council Budget reviews. Where projects are prioritised, funding is expected to come primarily from Public Open Space Funds (POSF). In wards with limited POSF, alternative sources such as rates will be required. Regardless of POSF availability, all projects will be submitted to external funding programs where they align strongly with the funding criteria.

The cost of capital renewal of existing assets is not included in the above estimate. However, the draft Plan includes an action to assess these costs based on the adopted level of service, with renewal projects to be considered in future budget reviews.

Operating costs

When a dog off-leash area is upgraded to a higher level of service (i.e. from Local-level to District-level), an increase in maintenance costs is expected. The estimated additional cost is approximately \$18,000 per site per year.

Fully enclosed dog off-leash areas incur further capital and operational expenses beyond those mentioned above. Although it is difficult to assign a fixed cost to ongoing education, engagement and enforcement activities, it is anticipated that 1EFT would be sufficient to support these functions across the proposed new fully-enclosed sites. This resource would also help meet community expectations for proactive monitoring of other sites, including non-enclosed dog off-leash areas, general public open space, and high-attendance tourist locations.

Fully enclosed sites also require more intensive maintenance, with costs estimated at \$20,000 per site per year. If all proposed projects are delivered by the end of the Plan's 10-year timeframe, the total additional annual maintenance cost is expected to be approximately \$208,000 per year across the network (unindexed). This estimate is based on the assumption that the draft Plan is adopted, and projects are implemented according to the preliminary site assessment.

The cost of providing dog waste bag dispensers is excluded. Whilst provision of dog waste bag dispensers is frequently requested by the community, there is mixed feedback regarding their effectiveness. There is a significant cost associated with maintaining, checking and replenishing bags, of approximately \$15,000 per site, per year. This cost has been reduced at Belgrave Lake Park where checking and replenishing of bags is undertaken by community volunteers, however this is unique and reliant on the commitment of individuals and can shift back to Council if there is a change in personnel.

All figures outlined in the Financial Analysis are benchmarked costs and are subject to change.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

Yarra Ranges Council Plan 2021-2025 (under review)

The development of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan is related to a major initiative of the Council Plan:

- Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places: Quality facilities and infrastructure meets current and future needs. Places are well planned and are hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity and innovation.

The draft Plan supports the aim to activate our community spaces and provide a variety of recreational opportunities. It outlines an infrastructure response that meets current and future community need, supporting wellbeing.

Yarra Ranges Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026

The Domestic Animal Management Plan provides Council and the community with a framework for identifying and addressing matters associated with the management and wellbeing of cats and dogs.

With respect to dogs and people in parks, the current DAMP identifies that:

- There is a need to recognise dog owners and their dogs as legitimate users of open space.
- Local government authorities face significant challenges in terms of dog owner non-compliance with on and off-leash regulations, as well as in areas where dogs are prohibited. These challenges have been corroborated by community feedback and Council officer observations.
- Planning for off-leash areas needs to be consistent with space allocated in a defined catchment or on demand.

The development of the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan is an action of the current DAMP.

Yarra Ranges Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013-2023 (under review)

The Recreation and Open Space Strategy (ROSS) sets out directions for creating a healthy and active community and environment. It provides a framework for managing and improving sport and recreation facilities, parks, community spaces and recreation services, including the provision of dog off-leash areas.

The Strategy is currently under review and will include details of service levels across the municipality, the supply of public open space and the principles for decisions on how public open space is used. The People and Dogs in Parks Plan is a key strategic document that sits under the overarching Open Space Strategy.

Other relevant Yarra Ranges strategies and policies include but are not limited to:

- Asset Plan 2022-2032 (under review)

- Active Recreation Plan 2023
- Nature Plan 2024-2034
- Health and Wellbeing Plan (currently in development)
- Disability Action Plan (currently in development).

RELEVANT LAW

Whilst there is no legislative requirement for local government authorities to provide dog off-leash areas, once a council opts to provide this service there is legislative and statutory context that applies.

In addition to requiring councils to prepare domestic animal management plans, the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* permits councils to establish local laws and orders concerning domestic animals such as dogs. The Council Order, amongst other things, sets out dog owner responsibilities including within public spaces such as dog off-leash areas. The *Local Government Act 2020* also confers powers to authorised officers to administer and/or enforce legislation.

In accordance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, a gender impact assessment has been completed. This process has enabled Council officers to determine how use of these spaces by community members is influenced by gender and any other intersecting aspects of their identity. The needs of diverse users have been incorporated into the level of service and design guidelines in the draft Plan, to better support the use of public open space where dog off-leash areas are provided.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan will initiate improvements to the network of dog off-leash areas. Given the location of some of these areas at Regional-level sites and tourist destinations, there are opportunities to enhance the current visitor offering and experience. Additionally, fit-for-purpose sites encourage residents to stay within the municipality, rather than travelling outside to other dog off-leash areas as is currently reported by the community. The draft Plan represents a unique opportunity to maximise economic activity and expenditure by both local and visiting communities, supporting Council in meeting its economic development objectives.

Open spaces near street-based activity centres may benefit from dog users visiting and making discretionary spends as part of the walk and exercise outing, however internal malls prevent pets and do not offer any complementary economic value.

Capital and operating expenditure has been identified as enabling mechanisms to implement the draft Plan. Construction, maintenance and management activities are expected to generate supplementary economic benefits through procurement of labour and materials.

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan also supports a wellbeing economy, through the provision of quality, accessible infrastructure that encourages health and wellbeing outcomes.

Social Implications

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan supports a range of social benefits, including but not limited to:

- Providing places for gathering and socialisation, fostering connection, a sense of community, and participation in civic life.
- Informal, flexible physical activity and recreation options.
- Promotion and reinforcement of responsible dog ownership practices, and exchange of information and advice.
- Access to public open space and nature.
- Equitable and inclusive participation opportunities for community.

Whilst the People and Dogs in Parks Plan offers a variety of health and wellbeing benefits, the provision of dog off-leash areas also introduces several difficult social challenges, including:

- Dogs that are not under effective supervision or control.
- Park users who do not own a dog being negatively impacted through intrusive behaviours, noise, and enjoyment of the open space.
- Dogs being in off-leash areas when it is not suitable for them (i.e. unneutered dogs, dangerous breeds, dogs that are too young).
- Dog faeces and urine creating health and amenity detriment to park users.
- Conflicts with child safety and dangerous proximity to play spaces.
- Risk of conflict between dog off-leash area users, and other users within public open space.
- Risk of dog rush and bites.

In addition to these challenges, there are additional social issues posed by fully enclosed sites including:

- Overcrowding.
- Inappropriate use of the space (i.e. children and/or dogs left unsupervised).
- Fully enclosed dog off leash areas being used to contain and control dogs that cannot be kept under effective control by their owners.

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan seeks to maximise social benefits, whilst managing risks and paving the way for an infrastructure and management response that creates more positive outcomes. Further discussion of challenges is outlined under *Risk Assessment*.

Environmental Implications

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan establishes a level of service for dog off-leash areas, including landscaping. There are dog off-leash areas in the Yarra Ranges network with minimal tree canopy coverage and planting, and no containment of dogs when near sensitive biodiversity areas. Implementation of the Plan will result in protection and enhancement of biodiversity as well as user experience.

The provision of dog off-leash areas equally represents challenges in protecting existing biodiversity, such as managing the effects of dog waste and protection of animals, vegetation and waterways from dogs. In addition to the infrastructure response recommended under the draft Plan to minimise these impacts, Council officers have commenced review of environmentally sensitive spaces within dog off-leash areas that require protection. A further action of the Plan is to review sites within the municipality where dogs are prohibited and consider the introduction of new sites.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was undertaken in developing the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan, to understand issues and opportunities concerning dog off-leash areas in the municipality.

Community engagement was conducted between 11 July – 13 August 2024, using a variety of methods to ensure ample opportunities for the community to participate. These included online surveys, on-site drop-in sessions at dog off-leash areas, and promotion via social media and newsletters.

Council received:

- 223 survey responses
- 50 online budgeting tool responses
- 5 direct emails/phone calls.

Whilst non-dog owners were encouraged to contribute, the overwhelming majority of submissions were from dog owners (93%). Of these, 65 per cent indicated that they use dog off-leash areas. Respondents commented on what is working well at dog off-leash areas, challenges, and suggestions for improvements.

Fencing of dog off-leash areas was a dominant theme and cited by both dog owners and non-dog owners as a desired improvement. Other common themes included:

- Dog off-leash areas are highly valued by the community for socialisation, physical activity, and connection with nature, for urban and non-urban owners alike.

- Dog off-leash areas are not always readily accessible.
- Dogs that are not effectively controlled, poorly socialised or have a poor temperament, as well as poor owner supervision and etiquette, were a challenge in enjoyment of these spaces.
- Clearer articulation of dog off-leash area boundaries is needed, with the current lack of clear boundaries creating confusion and conflict.
- A desire to see better barrier treatments to dog off-leash areas.
- More fully fenced opportunities.
- Poor drainage within existing dog off-leash areas.
- Greater embellishment and landscaping of dog off-leash areas (such as seating, drinking fountains and waste disposal).
- Education regarding dog owner responsibilities, non-dog-owner responsibilities, and information regarding dog off-leash locations and features.
- Desire for enhanced monitoring and enforcement of dog off-leash area etiquette and regulations.

The draft Plan incorporates the views expressed by the community, striving to balance this feedback with Council's responsibilities in providing, developing, and maintaining these spaces. It also seeks to balance the needs of dog off-leash area users, and other public open space users.

Further details on the community engagement undertaken to date is in Attachment 5 – People and Dogs in Parks Plan Community Engagement Report.

If endorsed by Council, the draft Plan will be placed on public exhibition in August 2025 for a minimum of four weeks. This round of engagement will socialise the draft Plan with the community and invite their feedback. A range of engagement methods will be used, including but not limited to Council's Shaping Yarra Ranges platform that will seek feedback about the principles and standards and if have we missed anything, pop-ups at selected dog off-leash areas for the community to speak to officers, and promotion of engagement opportunities via social media.

Should Council adopt the draft Plan in the future, any specific projects and actions may require additional, site-specific community engagement.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan is the product of significant internal collaboration between relevant service owners and teams. A collaborative approach has been adopted to ensure that:

- The service need is thoroughly understood and met with an appropriate infrastructure response.

- The implications of providing, designing, developing, maintaining and managing the service have been considered.

Council officers have also worked with neighbouring councils, leading industry experts and relevant State Government bodies to seek advice, identify issues and opportunities, and apply best practice to the draft Plan.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Risks are associated with the provision of dog off-leash areas, which are heightened in the absence of a plan or standards for these spaces. Risks include:

Assets: the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan outlines provision and development levels of service, which in turn informs the maintenance of dog off-leash areas and priorities for capital improvement. A lack of a plan creates uncertainty and risk to assets where there is no clear guidance for development and maintenance of these spaces and leaves the door open to reactive decision making.

Environment: dogs off-leash can pose risks to the environment, particularly in environmentally sensitive places. The draft Plan establishes standards, priorities and actions to mitigate this risk.

Financial: in a constrained funding environment, Council's ability to construct and maintain public amenities is increasingly hampered. As well as limitations on rates income and diminishing grants, there is a current downturn in housing development which has slowed the rate of Public Open Space Contributions to Council. However, the implementation of the draft Plan has a relatively modest cost when compared to other recreational projects, which can be spread out over the life of the Plan and adjusted according to funding availability.

Health and Safety: there are numerous risks arising from dogs off leash, with both owners and non-dog owners reporting that the current presentation of dog off-leash areas results in conflict between people and dogs. These risks are compounded by spaces that are too small or not carefully designed. Risks are also presented by inappropriate use of dog off-leash areas. The standards proposed by the draft Plan will assist Council in mitigating these risks with appropriate infrastructure. There are also biological risks to humans and other fauna and waterways arising from dog faeces and urine.

Additionally, consideration must be given to education and enforcement, with community members expressing a desire to see more initiatives in this vein. Whilst pet registration fees are not currently specifically allocated towards infrastructure, the fees – beyond their use for essential community safety and animal management – can be used to support initiatives that encourage responsible pet ownership.

Reputation and Stakeholder Relationship: reputational risks concerning the draft Plan include:

- Reputational risk if Council is perceived to have not adequately responded to feedback, particularly regarding the provision of barrier treatments, fully enclosed spaces, and upgrades of dog off-leash areas.
- Localised, site-specific feedback is anticipated when applying the proposed level of service. Initially, the community will be invited to comment on the proposed principles and standards during public exhibition of the draft Plan, before Council attempts to conduct a detailed assessment and apply these principles and standards to individual sites. The preliminary assessment at Attachment 3 will assist the community when considering the draft Plan. This does create a risk that progress of the draft Plan could be disrupted by localised, site-specific feedback rather than constructive feedback on the overarching principles and standards.

Once the draft Plan is adopted officers will, as included in the actions in the draft Plan, conduct a detailed assessment of the dog off-leash area network. Officers will then engage directly with any impacted local communities, to test proposals and invite feedback before proceeding with site-specific projects.

Regulation and Compliance: dog off-leash areas are highly valued by the community and provide numerous benefits – however, ensuring compliance with Council Orders and regulations requires operational resourcing for enforcement and education.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan
2. Draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan – Background and Research Findings
3. Draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan – Preliminary Site Assessment
4. Draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan – Summary
5. People and Dogs in Parks Plan – Community Engagement Report.

People and Dogs in Parks Plan

2025–2035

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Acknowledgement of Country

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Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nation peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

Glossary

All definitions must be read in conjunction with the latest version of Domestic Animal Management Act (DAA) and the Council Order (The Order) (currently Order 1/2013), which take precedence.

Council

Yarra Ranges Council

DAM or DAMP

Yarra Ranges Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026

Dog off-leash areas

A designated open space where dogs are allowed to run or roam freely with no physical restraint or leash. The area may be either dedicated or shared with other open space activities. In dog off-leash areas, owners must:

- › Carry a leash and immediately leash their dog if circumstances require;
- › Remain in 'effective control' of the dog (see separate glossary definition);
- › Not allow the dog to worry, threaten, rush, or attack another person or animal;
- › Obey all rules displayed on signs for use of an off-leash area.

Dog on-leash area

Any area not specifically designated as a dog off-leash area, such as streets, footpaths, parks, and reserves. In essence the dog must be physically restrained by a leash or equivalent device held by the owner or tethered securely where appropriate. (Refer to DAA and The Order).

Dog owner

The Domestic Animal Act 1994 (DAA) defines this as: "owner in respect of a dog or cat, includes a person who keeps or harbours the animal or has the animal in his or her care for the time being whether the animal is at large or in confinement."

Dog park

A fully fenced, off-leash area created to be both functional for dogs and welcoming for visitors.

Dog prohibited area

A location where dogs are prohibited at all times, whether on- or off-leash, typically due to its high environmental significance, the need for preservation, or activities that are incompatible with dogs. Requirements are set out in Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026.

Effective control

Per the DAMP, effective control means dog owners have the dog on a leash or under voice command, can see what the dog is doing, and can demonstrate that the dog will return promptly on command.

Local Laws/ Council Order

A Local Law is a regulation put in place by Council to address specific community needs or issues, and is tailored to the unique circumstances of the municipality.

One of the purposes of the Council Order is to impose conditions on the presence of dogs in any public place of the municipal district.

Park / reserve / open space

Land that is owned or managed by Council or other public land manager and set aside, zoned or reserved for public parkland or recreation. This may also include land that does not have a primary function of open space (i.e. drainage reserves) that can still provide open space as a secondary function.

Plan / the Plan

Yarra Ranges People and Dogs in Parks Plan.

Urban areas

For the purposes of this Plan, urban areas refers to areas of built up development that are contained by the Melbourne Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Townships outside the Melbourne UGB are assessed based on rural population and catchment measures even though they have some urbanised areas.



Our vision

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People and dogs
can enjoy public
open space in Yarra
Ranges, in harmony
with each other and
the environment.



Introduction

The People and Dogs in Parks Plan establishes principles for the distribution and scope that can be included when planning for dog off-leash areas. It will be the basis for planning and decision making for existing or new spaces on Council-owned or managed land.

It outlines standards for the provision, development, enhancement, and management of dog off-leash areas across Yarra Ranges over the next 10 years. It provides a tool to assess current provision, and recommend improvements where shortfalls are identified. It combines community feedback about what they would like to see in dog off-leash areas with expert research and industry standards to form a clear plan.

This Plan aims to achieve a balance between the diverse use of open spaces by all Yarra Ranges residents and visitors, catering to both dog owners and non-dog owners.

The Plan supports the achievement of broader Council Plan objectives, specifically:

- › Connected and Healthy Communities
- › Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places
- › Protected and Enhanced Natural Environment.

Requirements for other areas, such as dog on-leash areas and areas where dogs are prohibited, are set out in Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026 (p.18 Local Laws and Orders) and sit outside the scope of this Plan.



Image: Stock image

The objectives of this Plan are to:

01

Ensure an adequate number of dog off-leash areas to meet the community's needs.

02

Support healthy and well socialised pet dogs.

03

Establish standards to address user needs, through enhancement and maintenance of existing parks and facilities and creation of new assets, balanced with Council's capital and maintenance financial capacity.

04

Support the safety, health and amenity of other park users, minimising and managing the potential conflicts between dog-owners' needs and other open space priorities.

05

Protect environmental values.

06

Support education and regulation for responsible dog use in open space.

The People and Dogs in Parks Plan has drawn on research and input commissioned through LMH Consulting.

Principles

Throughout community engagement and research for the development of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan, three clear principles emerged:



Dog off-leash areas should be sufficient in quantity, quality, and variety

- There should be an appropriate quantity and distribution of dog off-leash areas.
- The provision of dog off-leash areas plays a supporting role in ensuring the public open space network meets the needs of all that inhabit it – dog owners, non-dog owners, dogs, plants and other animals and wildlife and waterways.
- Dog off-leash areas are designed and maintained to an appropriate standard.
- A need to offer a variety of dog off-leash areas to provide different experiences, training progression and opportunities for dogs to exercise. Dog off-leash areas will be delivered in diverse landscapes and settings, and where suitable, may feature water access. The design and development of each dog off-leash area will be tailored to the unique opportunities provided by the specific site and landscape.



Dog off-leash areas should be accessible, inclusive, and safe

- They can be readily accessed by the community – consideration is given to location, modes of transport, wayfinding, size and layout.
- They are not only accessible to, but actively support use by people with disability, diverse genders, backgrounds and ages.
- Dog off-leash areas facilitate fair and equitable access to public open space, by non-dog owners and dog-owners alike.
- They provide opportunity for regulation, education and promoting responsible dog ownership, as well as socialisation and recreation.
- Dog off-leash areas will be designed for the health and safety of both dogs and people.
- Provide improved community information and education about the availability and proper use of dog off-leash areas.



Dog off-leash areas are sustainable

- Given the high biodiversity and ecological value of the public open space network, dog off-leash areas must be provided in a way to protect, enhance and maximise environmental sustainability.
- Dog off-leash areas are considered to be an important service for the community. Council aims to balance provision of these spaces, while maintaining financial sustainability. Council resources will be allocated to manage and maintain dog off-leash areas to agreed service levels and remain fit-for-purpose.

Framework

Provision and hierarchy

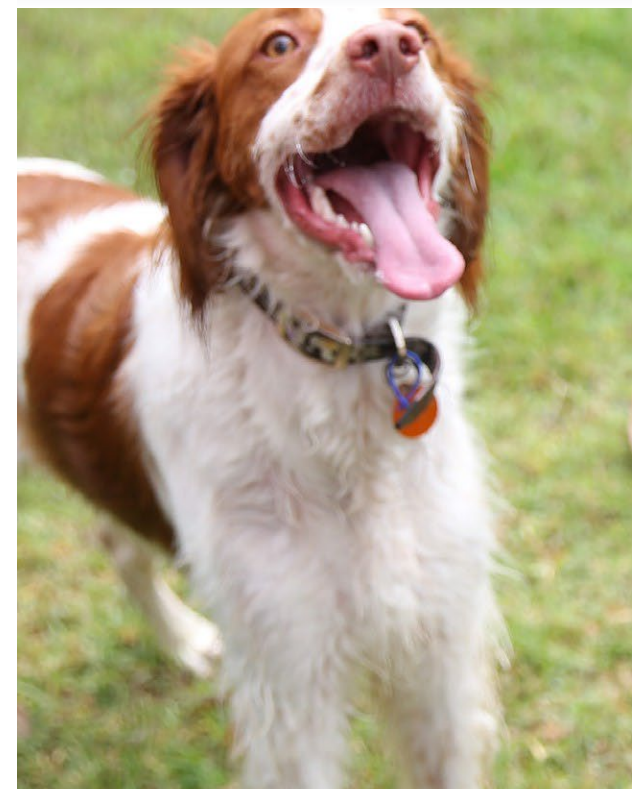
At least one dog off-leash area should be available to the majority of Yarra Ranges residents within a 10-minute drive from home. In urban areas, this should be available within a 20-minute walk for most residents (approx. 2 kilometres).

This provision measure may be varied due to factors such as a lack of suitable open space in a priority area, Council budgeting, or other factors.

The selection of sites will reflect anticipated need, based on a range of factors such as:

- › Existing public open space provision.
- › Number of people and dogs within the catchment.
- › Quantity, types, and proximity of existing dog off-leash areas. Generally, dog off-leash areas should be spatially separated by at least 2km in urban areas.
- › Customer requests for additional areas, or improvement of existing areas.

When assessing whether an existing or proposed site is suitable for a dog off-leash area, the attributes outlined in the Level of Service will be applied. Some parts of the municipality may be underserved by dog off-leash areas. Consideration will be given to improving provision in under-served areas, subject to the above factors.



Framework

Site suitability and selection

Site qualities

This includes factors such as the topography of the site, drainage, and opportunities for natural shade. Safety concerns such as the ease of surveillance should be considered. A further consideration is environmental risks arising from flood, bushfire or landslip risk, or land contamination.

Sloping sites can provide a diversity and interest at the site but need to allow appropriate access as well as maintenance.

Landscape significance needs to be considered in the design of any dog off-leash areas and supporting infrastructure.

Visibility and safety

Passive surveillance (a sense of 'eyes of the park') from surrounding areas is important for the safety of dog off-leash areas, and public open space generally.

Adjacent uses and activities

Dog off-leash opportunities need to be complementary to adjacent land uses and open space types, including:

- › The needs of other park users in the area, and ability to provide equity for both dog and non-dog use.
- › The potential for environmentally significant areas that may be compromised.
- › Proximity to other uses/functions (sports, playspaces, residential development, conservation, biodiversity, heritage).
- › Siting dog off-leash areas on a sports field of play should generally be avoided, except where suitable alternative options do not exist.

Adjacent uses and activities may preclude the provision of dog off-leash areas, at existing and proposed sites.



Framework

Design

Design principles for dog off-leash areas are:



Safety

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

Design of all planting and features to be dog safe.

Landscaping in dog off-leash areas should be kept at either low level understorey plants and ground covers or canopy trees, avoiding mid-level planting and shrubs to maintain high levels of visibility in and out of the area. Remove low level branches from canopy trees as they mature to lift the canopy to nominal 3m.

Break up fence lines through planting, features and deviating paths to avoid 'fence running'.

Areas should be provided to encourage breaks in fast chasing and running, and discourage forming of packs.

Provide areas for retreat from play.

Avoid conflict with other uses such as footpaths and cyclists, through barriers or location.



Accessibility

Apply Universal Design principles to support a range of age groups and mobility levels.

In fenced dog parks, locate seating and amenities away from entries to discourage people and dogs from congregating at entryways.

Create connectivity to and within the dog off-leash area (i.e. does the parking bay connect easily and safely to the pathways).

Include appropriate footpath widths for easy movement of mobility aids.

Seating to include options with backs and arms.



Diversity

Design should consider opportunities to create visually separate spaces, encourage dogs and their owners to move around the site and include a variety of seated areas around the site rather than one congregation point.

Design should seek to encourage social interaction between people of various ages and mobility levels, such as through adequate shade, seating and shelter.



Engaging spaces

Landscape elements, including rocks, planting and other features, that are appealing and stimulating for dogs.

Include options for different dog activities, including running, climbing, digging and exploring.

Formalised or constructed elements may also be considered for some sites.

Preference is given to natural materials to complement the natural surrounds of open space.

Framework

Design

Design principles for dog off-leash areas are:



Clarity

Signage and other design elements to clearly demarcate the boundaries of dog off-leash areas.

Provide clear signage to delineate dog off-leash areas and ensure consistent regulation.



Environmental sustainability

Incorporate environmentally sustainable design, with consideration to planting location and species selection, energy and resource use, and contribution to local climate and biodiversity.

Manage onsite animal waste to protect biodiversity and waterways.



Durability

Smaller, heavily used areas need more robust surfaces and design elements that encourage a variety of off-leash activities for dogs, promoting mental stimulation and reducing potential conflicts.

Dog off-leash areas should be designed to ensure efficient, cost-effective and ease of maintenance.

A variety of surface materials may be considered, to optimise use and minimise surface degradation and maintenance inputs.

Disperse play and activity elements throughout the space to spread usage more evenly and prevent heavy compaction in isolated areas.



Barriers and enclosures

Many existing dog off-leash areas have natural boundaries that help define the area.

Further barrier treatments may be required to articulate the boundary of the dog off-leash area, manage proximity to hazards or other open space functions, or enhance user experience.

Treatments can include but are not limited to existing features (i.e. mounds or retaining walls), landscaping, chicanes, or constructed fencing.

Dog off-leash areas are not required to be fenced, however some circumstances may trigger the need for part-full fencing or other enclosure treatments, which may include:

- › Proximity to existing playspaces, recreational facilities or other incompatible uses that attract significant use and may cause a safety issue for users.
- › Proximity to areas which may cause a safety issue for dogs, such as busy roads, drains and hazardous areas.

- › Proximity to areas with environmental conservation value, and/or potential for conflict with wildlife.
- › Where boundaries of dog off-leash areas are unclear, and other options for delineating spaces are not feasible or effective (i.e. natural topography).

Where there an assessment recommends providing a fully enclosed space, a minimum area of 0.5 hectares should be adopted in alignment with industry standards. This benchmark has been established to address issues associated with smaller enclosed sites, which have been linked to increased incidents of conflict and aggression among dogs due to insufficient space.

The need for barrier treatments (natural or constructed) will be determined on a site-by-site basis by Council, and subject to a risk assessment.

Framework

Level of service

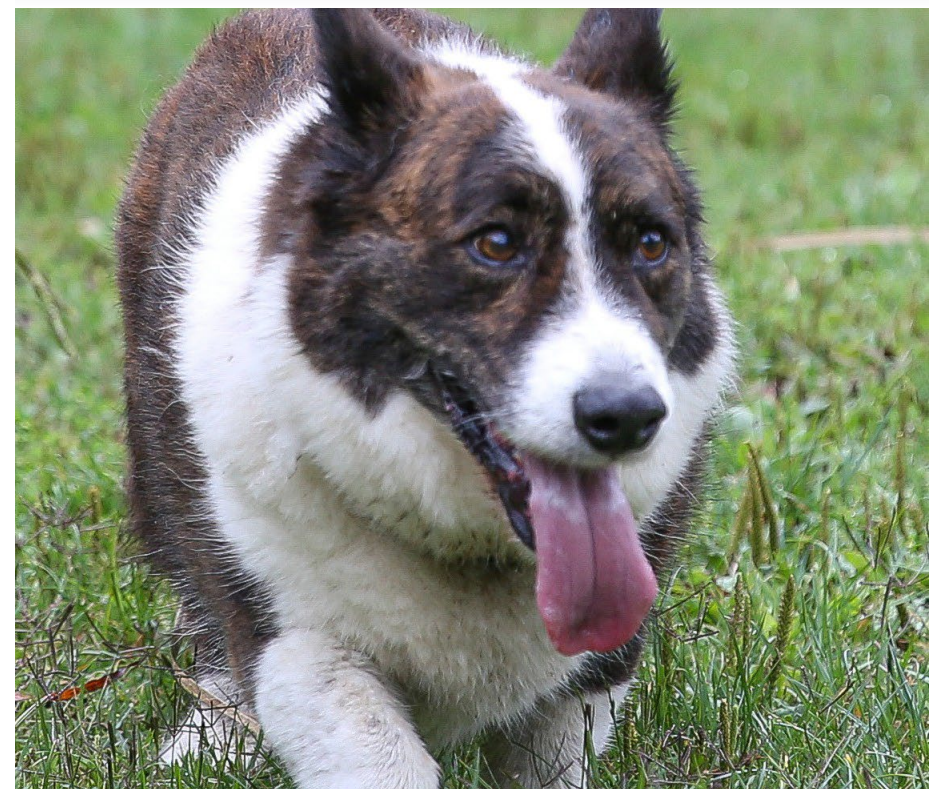
Dog off-leash areas will be varied in their size and level of service, according to local opportunities and need. The level of service itself may also be varied as required by demand, availability of public open space, budget or other factors.

Table 1 describes core features to be expected at any dog off-leash area, some of which may be shaded with broader open space areas nearby. Table 1 also describes optional, additional features that may apply to District-level facilities.

These areas will be embellished with a range of features, which will vary by location and will be determined by need and a site analysis.

Dog off-leash spaces will be provided to a Local and District level only (servicing the municipality), and not Regional (servicing beyond the municipality).

[See Table 01 overleaf](#) →



Framework

Table 01 — Level of service

Feature	Local	District	Comment
Overview	<p>Provided to service a local catchment, and shorter but more frequent use (i.e. <1 hour, daily or weekly).</p> <p>May service a walkable catchment.</p> <p>Will have lower levels of infrastructure.</p>	<p>Provided to service a larger catchment of multiple suburbs.</p> <p>Usage may be less frequent, however higher levels of infrastructure will encourage longer stays.</p> <p>May be co-located with other uses or functions (i.e. playspace or sporting facilities).</p>	
Size (including geometry and layout)	<p>As an indicative guide, dog off-leash areas should be 0.3 hectares at a minimum.</p> <p>For fenced dog parks, the size should be a preferred minimum of 0.5 hectares.</p>		<p>A dog off-leash area should be large enough to meet demand without becoming degraded from overuse.</p> <p>The ultimate size, geometry and layout of the dog off-leash area must ensure fair and equitable use of open space by other users and functions.</p>
Location/ Catchment	<p>Provide at least one within:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 20-minute walk of most suburban households within the Urban region of Yarra Ranges. › 10-minute drive of most households within the Hills, Valley and Upper Yarra regions, and non-suburban households in the Urban region of Council. 	<p>Provide one per Council sub-planning region, where demand and a suitable site are present.</p>	
Paths	<p>Accessible paths connecting to the dog off-leash area should be provided.</p> <p>Internal paths generally not provided.</p>	<p>Accessible paths connecting to dog off-leash area must be provided.</p> <p>District-level sites should have the necessary supporting infrastructure to enable car access, such as pedestrian path connections from car parking.</p> <p>Internal paths within dog off-leash area should be provided.</p>	<p>There should be opportunities for pedestrian access, such as linkages to pedestrian paths and trails.</p> <p>Path surfacing to be determined on a site-by-site basis.</p>

Table 01 — Level of service

Feature	Local	District	Comment
Barriers and enclosures	May only be provided to manage proximity to hazards.	Fully-enclosed sites may be provided at selected District-level sites: two in the Urban area, and one each in the Hills, Upper Yarra and Valley areas. May only be provided at other sites to manage proximity to hazards.	Barriers and enclosures must not be provided to control dogs that cannot be kept under effective control by their owners. Where constructed fencing is required, provision must consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Double layer of entry gates › Service vehicle access gates › Emergency services access › Gate must be accessible to people with limited mobility/using mobility aids.
Landscaping/ Planting	May be provided while maintaining sightlines.	Must be provided while maintaining sightlines.	Ensure species selection is non-toxic to dogs.
Shade	Shade may be provided.	A designated shade location must be provided within the off leash area	Preference for natural shade instead of constructed, where possible. Weather protection should consider rain and wind while preserving sightlines.
Seating	Seating generally provided, with some seating that includes a back and arm supports		
Lighting	Generally not provided.	May be provided.	Where lighting is provided, it should be time limited with consideration should be given to lower lux levels, warm colour temperature for nocturnal animals and perceptions of safety. Provide baffles to prevent skyglow and light spill.
Drinking water	Generally not provided.	May be provided (for people and dogs). Provision for rinsing taps may be considered.	Drinking facilities should include dog bowl feature from overflow.

Table 01 — Level of service

Feature	Local	District	Comment
Rubbish bins	Generally not provided.	May be provided as part of broader District or Regional-level public open space.	New waste bag dispensers generally not provided. Council will consider maintaining existing dog waste bag dispensers where they are shown to increase compliance.
Equipment	Generally not provided.	Activity zones may be provided. Design elements to address dogs' sensory needs, such as varied terrain, mounds, sensory planting.	May include informal equipment (such as mounds or large rocks) or formal equipment (such as agility). Preference for natural materials and landscape treatments.
Water entry points	Generally not provided.	May be provided, where feasible and without negative impact to waterway and wildlife.	Water entry not permissible in areas of high ecological value. No new artificial water bodies will be created for dog off-leash areas.
Signage	Signage must be provided to and within dog off-leash areas. Signage and features must clearly delineate extent of dog off leash areas.		Signage may include wayfinding, educational and compliance, with preference for pictograms. Dog control signage in on-leash areas generally not provided.
Confident/not confident dog zones	Generally not provided.	May be provided where size allows (minimum 0.8 – 1 hectares).	Consideration will be given to zoned areas, initially on a trial basis.
Car parking	Use of existing local parking provisions only	May be provided as part of broader District or Regional-level public open space. Inclusion of accessible parking bays.	
Toilets	Generally not provided.	May be provided as part of broader District or Regional-level public open space.	
Irrigation and drainage	Generally not provided, although landscape treatments may assist in addressing drainage issues.	May be provided. Preference for passive irrigation and drainage – constructed irrigation and drainage generally not provided	Provision to be considered on a site-by-site basis, subject to budget. May not be feasible where a site's primary purpose is for water detention.

Framework

Operation of dog off-leash areas

Good management and maintenance of dog off-leash spaces includes:

- › Maintenance requirements of dog off-leash areas and associated infrastructure and features.
- › Patrolling and enforcement.
- › Educational initiatives for users of dog off-leash areas on responsible dog ownership.

These needs are addressed further in section four - Implementation.

Dog off-leash areas are intended for informal community use only. Use by organised or commercial groups is subject to prior agreement by Council.

Community education will encourage positive dog behaviour and increase dog owners' understanding of responsibility in dog off-leash areas, including but not limited to signage at dog off-leash locations, information on Council's website and other channels.

This will target:

Reasonable control of dogs and behaviours



Supervision of dogs



Disposal of waste



Restrictions for dog off-leash areas are outlined in the Council Order. The Council Order will be periodically reviewed, to keep pace with community needs. Where repeated compliance issues are identified at a particular site, Council will review whether a dog off-leash area continues to be provided.

Additional operating costs may be associated with education and enforcement activities. These costs will be considered as part of annual reviews of the Council Budget.

Asset management

The ongoing management of Council's dog off-leash areas is guided by documents such as the Asset Plan 2022-2032, which identifies the need to maintain assets to keep them in good shape for years to come, and replacing, upgrading and providing new assets where required.

Implementation of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan will include a focus on planning for the cost of maintaining, renewing and upgrading of Council's dog off-leash area network, in a manner that meets community needs whilst also delivering value for money and durability for reduced maintenance.

Implementation

The People and Dogs in Parks Plan will be implemented by undertaking the below actions.

The actions have each been allocated a priority level, which equates to the following timing goals for completion of implementation:

Short term	0–5 years
Medium term	5–10 years
Ongoing	Continual (as need arises)

The delivery of the action plan is subject to change based on available resourcing and evolving organisational priorities.



Implementation

Table 02 — Action Plan

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Action		Responsibility	Priority	Resourcing
01	Complete a review of the provision, access, and level of service of dog off-leash areas throughout Yarra Ranges.	Open Space Strategy and Planning	Immediate	Within operational budget
02	<p>Based on the results of Action 1, develop a priority list for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">› Upgrade or relocation of existing dog off-leash areas.› Provision of new dog off-leash areas. <p>This will consider an assessment of the overall network, shortfalls in provision and levels of service and community feedback and recommend an appropriate infrastructure response. The priority list of projects will be referred to Council's capital expenditure program planning and budgeting. The priority list will consider the existing preliminary site assessment list, and community engagement feedback.</p>	Open Space Strategy and Planning Capital Investment Planning Strategic Asset Management Parks, Trees and Trails Recreation and Sport	Immediate	<p>Priority list development resourced within operational budget.</p> <p>Capital upgrade, new and renewal projects to be costed and referred to annual Council Budget process.</p> <p>Operational budgets updated to reflect improvements to dog off-leash areas.</p>
03	Undertake a review of dog-prohibited areas.	Open Space Strategy and Planning Community Safety	Short	Within operational budget
04	Following the review of dog off-leash areas, provision and boundary changes will be proposed and the community invited to provide feedback. Following consideration of the feedback, Council will finalise the boundaries, amend the Council Order and gazette any changes.	Open Space Strategy and Planning Community Safety	Short	Within operational budget
05	Complete a review of signage at dog off-leash areas regarding signage function, content, placement, and legibility, and develop a new consistent signage suite.	Open Space Strategy and Planning	Short	Additional operational budget required for signage suite development

Implementation

Table 02 — Action Plan

	Action	Responsibility	Priority	Resourcing
06	Update information on Council's website and other Council information sources regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Locations of dog off-leash areas › Expectations of owners and dogs › Relevant regulations. 	Open Space Strategy and Planning Community Safety	Medium	Within operational budget
07	Ensure a scheduled presence of Authorised Officers at dog off-leash areas.	Community Safety	Ongoing	Additional operational budget required

Implementation

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan is critical to confirm progress of the Plan's implementation, and check and adjust its settings and priorities. Review and monitoring will be conducted on a regular basis.

We will conduct a major review of the priorities and implementation of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan at year four of the Plan's lifespan.

Any proposed update that materially changes the content or intent of the Plan will be subject to engagement with the community, and approval by Council.



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DRAFT

YARRA RANGES

DRAFT PEOPLE AND DOGS IN PARKS PLAN

Background and Research Findings
May 2025

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DRAFT

1. Introduction

Dogs have the ability to bring people together by motivating them to go outdoors, engage in physical activity, and bond over their shared experience of owning a companion animal. Dogs are known to have a large range of physical and mental benefits for people at varying life stages. Council acknowledges that dogs play a key role in fostering a healthy and socially connected community for many.

This can, however, conflict with the safety and enjoyment of other members of community, and some public open spaces are highly valued habitat and ecological spaces that need protection from dogs. Parameters need to be established to ensure all users can safely and comfortably enjoy public open space and that valued ecology is preserved.

As the population grows and housing becomes denser, Yarra Ranges' open spaces are used by an increasing number of users and for an increasing diversity of purposes. Well-planned and thoughtfully designed parks with off-leash dog areas are essential to ensure the comfort and safety of all park visitors. Use by dog owners and their pets needs to be balanced with the interests and safety of other user groups.

Planning for dog-off-leash areas is important to provide a range of spaces and experiences for the Yarra Ranges community. These spaces may include a variety of equipment and features that differ from site to site, and can have a variety of enclosure options from fully open, elements of barriers or partial enclosure through to fully enclosed. There is strong community support for increased provision of a degree of enclosure to separate dogs and park users.

Why does Yarra Ranges Council provide dog off-leash areas?

Council provides a broad range of services, including recreation and open space, and community safety. Council also has legislative obligations regarding domestic animals, which in turn provide Council with powers to create local laws and orders. Council Orders include provisions for the management, safety and amenity associated with domestic animals.

Pets, and dogs bring company and meaning to the lives of many Yarra Ranges residents. Numerous studies, including the Yarra Ranges Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026, outline the value dogs provide, often experienced and loved as a member of the family or household. They provide mental health support, and encourage exercise and socialisation of both owners and their dogs.

Dog off-leash areas maximise these community benefits by:

- Becoming social meeting places or activity hubs for like-minded residents, and provide an alternative recreation option for residents in their preferred mode.
- Providing a venue for the healthy socialisation of dogs, and support healthy animals through space to exercise, explore, develop skills and roam safely.
- Providing an environment where dog owners can exchange advice on dog management, and where responsible dog ownership principles can be promoted and reinforced.

- Allowing apartment and unit dwellers or people with less access to private open space to continue to own dogs.
- Providing a focal point for community education and training programs.
- Protecting the remainder of the park or open space from adverse impacts that can arise from unrestrained dogs, including activities that would be competing or incompatible with dog behaviour.
- Localise the health risks for park users associated with animal faeces and urine.

Why is the People and Dogs in Parks Plan needed?

Council's Domestic Animal Management plan identifies that "there is a need to recognise dog owners and their dogs as legitimate users of open space and promote an expectation of responsibility and consideration of others while enjoying facilities, parks, paths, and trails provided for their enjoyment."

Council has not previously had a plan for dog off-leash areas, resulting in uncertainty around the number and distribution of dog facilities. There has also been no agreement on what is considered adequate or affordable within Council's budget, and no consistent standards for what components should be included. This lack of standards or guidance has made it difficult for Council and community to assess requests for new or improved facilities. The Plan will help provide clarity for community around principles Council uses in its decision making for dog off-leash areas.

Who is the People and Dogs in Parks Plan for?

The plan is for:

- The community: the Plan outlines where dog off-leash areas should be provided, and to what standard. This includes dog owners seeking off-leash facilities in open space, and people using open space but who do not want to interact with off-leash dogs.
- Council officers who are responsible for:
 - Planning, designing, maintaining and managing dog off-leash areas.
 - Preparing and implementing the Domestic Animal Management Plan and Council Order for domestic animals.
- State and Federal Government departments and agencies: including but not limited to those who own/manage open space and dog off-leash areas in Yarra Ranges, as well as those responsible for managing partnership opportunities (such as grants).
- Open space industry: establishing and publishing dog off-leash area plans allows industry to share information, consider best practice examples, and where possible aim for a more consistent approach across the sector. This in turn leads to an improved outcome for the community.

What have we heard so far?

An initial community engagement process was undertaken during July and August 2024 using a variety of methods including:

- Project page on Shaping Yarra Ranges, featuring an online survey.
- Pop-up events at dog off-leash areas.

- Direct phone and emails.
- Social media.
- Yarra Ranges local e-newsletter.

Some of the key findings are summarised below:

How can dog off-leash areas be improved?

Top suggestions included:

- more dog park fencing (18%), and
- bins for disposal of dog waste (16%).

Other suggestions that ranked highly were the provision of drinking water fountains and more seating.

A total of 77% of respondents suggested that more dog off-leash areas are needed, and 65% indicated they currently use off-leash spaces.

Dog behaviour

It was found there was significant concern with dogs not being controlled, with a suggested need for education for dog owners on issues of dog behaviour, and more clearly defining the boundaries of dog off-leash to support non dog owners, and guidance on approaching dogs.

Other concerns were:

- Wandering dogs
- Dog waste facilities when walking dogs
- Dog, and owner, aggression.

The Plan seeks to further explore these themes and identify ways these issues can be addressed.

For further information regarding community engagement for the Plan, refer to the People and Dogs in Parks Plan – Community Engagement Report.

2. Planning for dog off-leash areas

Background

Yarra Ranges has the largest number of registered dogs in Greater Melbourne (31,904 dogs), and nearly 20 dogs per 100 residents. It also has one of the lowest ratios of humans per dog (~5.0 humans for every dog). Whilst every local government authority expects to have a population of unregistered dogs, Yarra Ranges has a relatively high registration rate of both cats and dogs, likely due to targeted campaigns to increase registration. Accurate registration data ensures Council can adequately plan for and meet demand, such as through the provision of dog off-leash areas.

Yarra Ranges also accommodates significant tourism on top of local needs. Consideration of national pet ownership rates and anecdotal feedback suggests this use of public open space extends to tourists and their dogs.

The benefits of dog ownership are well understood, and include contributing to family life, supporting physical and mental wellbeing, and socialisation of owners and dogs alike. Previous surveys undertaken by Council have seen a shift from owners previously considering pets as a companion animal, to now viewing them as a member of the household.

Planning for dog off-leash areas is crucial to achieving a high-quality network of spaces that meet the needs of the Yarra Ranges community. Dog off-leash areas:

- Allow people to take their dogs to a safe space where they can run freely and interact with other dogs.
- Offer a social gathering place that gives people the chance to connect with others in their local community.

Council needs to take a strategic approach to dog off-leash areas to achieve well-designed and well-maintained facilities that enhance the community's quality of life by offering spaces for recreation, education, and social engagement. These facilities must adhere to safety standards and be accessible to all users.

About Yarra Ranges

Yarra Ranges is the largest (by land mass) local government area in Melbourne, at 2,468km¹. It is located 30-110 kilometres from the CBD¹. We have 65 townships, with some urban areas but predominantly peri-urban and regional settlement.

Yarra Ranges has a population of approximately 160,137 residents (2024 estimated resident population), with just under half of residents (46%) living in urban areas. We have a greater proportion of older adults aged over 60¹, and a lower proportion of young adults aged 18–34 years old¹ when compared to the Melbourne average.

Yarra Ranges' population growth from 2025-2046 is projected to have 95% in the urban areas of Lilydale, Chirnside Park, Mooroolbark, Kilsyth, Mount Evelyn, Montrose and

Coldstream. With an estimated 21,952 additional residents by 2046 this will equate to an around 3,811 new dogs. This increase in need will likely require upgrade of existing facilities and creation of new facilities.

Strategic context

Legislative and statutory background

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 permits councils to establish local laws and orders concerning domestic animals such as dogs. The Council Order, amongst other things, sets out dog owner responsibilities, including in public open space and specifically in dog off-leash areas. The Act also requires councils to update its Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years.

The Local Government Act 2020 also confers powers to authorised officers to administer and/or enforce legislation.

Policy background

The development of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan relates to the following Council policies and strategies.

Yarra Ranges Council Plan 2021-2025

The Council Plan articulates the Community Vision 2036 that whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for Country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.

The development of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan is related to a major initiative of the Council Plan:

Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

Quality facilities and infrastructure meets current and future needs. Places are well planned and are hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity and innovation.

The Plan supports the aim to activate our community spaces and provide a variety of recreational opportunities. It outlines an infrastructure response that meets current and future community need and supports wellbeing.

Yarra Ranges Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) provides Council and the community with a framework for identifying and addressing matters associated with the management and wellbeing of cats and dogs. It identifies animal management compliance and education initiatives carried out by Council, and new initiatives identified to address emerging issues. It also identifies opportunities for community and Council partnerships to tackle challenges associated with pets (mainly dogs and cats) in the community, including impacts on the environment and native wildlife.

The current DAMP notes:

- There is a need to recognise dog owners and their dogs as legitimate users of open space.
- Local government authorities face significant challenges in terms of dog owner non-compliance with on and off-leash regulations, as well as in areas where dogs are prohibited. These challenges have been echoed in community feedback and Council officer observations.
- Planning for off-leash areas needs to be consistent, with space allocated based on a defined catchment or need.

The development of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan is an action of the current DAMP.

Yarra Ranges Recreation and Open Space Strategy 2013-2023

The Recreation and Open Space Strategy (ROSS) sets out directions for creating a healthy and active community and environment. It provides a framework for managing and improving sport and recreation facilities, parks, community spaces and recreation services, including the provision of dog off-leash areas.

The Strategy is currently under review and will include details of service levels across the municipality, the supply of public open space and the principles for decision on how public open space is used. The People and Dogs in Parks Plan is a key strategic document that sits under the overarching Open Space Strategy.

Other relevant Yarra Ranges strategies and policies include but are not limited to:

- Health and Wellbeing Plan (currently in development)
- Asset Plan 2022-2032
- Active Recreation Plan 2023
- Disability Action Plan (currently in development)
- Key Life Stages Plan (currently in development).

What are other councils doing?

Various councils have noted the impact of population growth (human and canine) and reduced housing block size, which places pressure on open space to support dog exercise.

Local government authorities acknowledge the benefits of dog off-leash areas, such as participation in civic and community life, health and wellbeing, reduced inappropriate off-leash behaviours and reduced impacts to sensitive sites. However numerous challenges are noted, such as conflicts between open space users, increased maintenance and dog waste.

Councils take widely different approaches to domestic animal management, which influences their approach to providing dog off-leash areas. Most Councils have strict requirements for dogs to be on-leash in all areas except for designated spaces, whereas a minority of councils allow dogs to be off leash almost everywhere in the municipality and some councils allow dogs to be off leash at most of their parks and reserves.

Provision

Whilst most councils do not specify a provision ratio for designated dog off-leash areas, the current ratio of neighbouring and/or similar municipalities ranges from one dog off-leash area to every 3,200 people, up to 1:36,000 (for comparison, Yarra Ranges' current provision is approximately 1:7,000). Other councils aim to provide 1-2 dog off-leash areas per local area, or within 20 minutes walking distance in urban areas.

While ratios are useful for comparison, they do not account for quality or access to dog off-leash areas. Planning these should consider population number and density, as well as quality, access, and role in the broader network.

Standards

Many councils apply a hierarchy to their dog off-leash areas (ranked either by catchment or size). Most will seek to provide supporting infrastructure which may be tied to hierarchy i.e. smaller or lower order dog off-leash areas have a lower level of embellishment.

The provision of dog parks through dedicated fenced areas varies greatly, with neighbouring councils providing anywhere from two to 11 dedicated dog parks. Fencing use also differs, with some councils fully fencing all off-leash areas while others take a site-specific approach. There are challenges with fencing, including:

- Owners have been observed to be less vigilant in supervising and maintaining effective control of dogs within fully fenced areas.
- The capital, maintenance and renewal cost.
- Negative impact of partitioning the broader public open space experience.
- Impeding movement and access in public open space.

However, councils often note that permanent constructed fencing should be used where required (for example, where conflicts exist and a lack of alternative options).

Lessons from dog off-leash areas elsewhere

The success and use of an off-leash area has been found to be influenced by various factors, including:

- The importance of location – ideally dog off-leash areas should be visible and accessible to passing traffic for owner safety and accessibility.
- The need for appropriately sized areas to limit potential conflicts between dogs.
- Features such as trees for shade, seating and other amenities.
- The importance of defining dog off-leash areas through signs, pathways, landscapes, clear information, and where appropriate, fencing.

Current provision in Yarra Ranges

Council currently manages 24 dog off-leash areas, in addition to sites owned and managed by others (such as Parks Victoria). One site (Hull Road, Mooroolbark) is owned by VicRoads and is currently occupied by the Level Crossing Removal Project.

Provision is concentrated in the urban areas of Yarra Ranges, however supply is also available throughout the municipality. Many residents outside the urban areas live on large properties that offer generous space for dogs to exercise and roam. The only existing fully fenced dog off-leash area is the trial site in Kimberley Reserve, Chirnside Park.

For planning purposes, the municipality is divided into four regions:

- Hills: south-west of the municipality, such as Kalorama through to Belgrave South.
- Upper Yarra: north-east of the municipality, such as Yellingbo, Warburton through to Reefton.
- Urban: west of the municipality and includes Chirnside Park, Coldstream, Kilsyth, Lilydale, Montrose, Mooroolbark and Mount Evelyn.
- Valley: north-west of the municipality, including Healesville and Yarra Glen.

However, the regions are used as a guide and it is acknowledged that population density, proximity, major transport routes and desirability of a given space mean that any boundaries are fluid in practice.

A full list of existing dog off-leash areas is included at Appendix I.

3. Issues and opportunities

In speaking with community members and researching the People and Dogs in Parks Plan, a number of issues and opportunities were identified and are summarised below:

ISSUE	OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICATIONS
HEALTH AND WELLBEING, PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY LIFE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentiment that there is less support for and prioritisation of investment in informal recreational activities (such as dog off-leash areas) compared to organised or formal recreation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owners report exercising more (including as a family) because of their dog. Owners choose their recreation activities based on being able to take their dog with them. Community reported that dog off-leash areas enable their dog to socialise with other dogs. Off-leash areas were recognised for their importance to owners, with respondents stating that this is how they socialise or meet people. Well-exercised and socialised dogs are less likely to bark or have behavioural problems. Dog off-leash areas have led to establishment of a network of support for dog owners. Dog off-leash areas have also allowed dogs to create friendships with other local dogs. Off-leash spaces provide flexible exercise and recreation opportunities (i.e. after work). Off-leash spaces foster community pride and civic participation (i.e. volunteers creating and maintaining 'dog-poo stations' at Margaret Lewis Reserve). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog off-leash areas have an important role in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging involvement in physical activity Fostering relationships and breaking down social (isolation) barriers, and ensuing mental health benefits and savings to the economy. Better exercised, socialised and behaved dogs. Creating and strengthening communities.

ISSUE	OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICATIONS
EQUITY AND INCLUSION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female owners reported feeling unsafe in dog off-leash areas, particularly where they were unable to see who is entering the space (whether due to lack of visibility, lighting, or legibility of the dog off-leash area boundary). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More women and girls walk/exercise dogs than boys/men in Yarra Ranges. Female owners report that fenced dog parks support their use of dog off-leash areas, deeming them easier to assess those entering the space, and being able to evaluate whether to remain in the space. Lighting would also contribute to feelings of safety in off-leash areas. Older owners reported that off-leash areas provided increasing value to them, as age and/or mobility influenced their recreational choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog off-leash areas have an important role to play in supporting use and participation by women and girls, older adults, and people with disability.
PROVISION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yarra Ranges currently offers 24 off-leash areas, but there may be shortages in some areas. Some community members reported not using dog off-leash areas, as they are too far from home or not easily accessible. Challenges associated with time-share sites such as sporting ovals (limited use for dog-owners; impacts of faeces on sport participants). Provision must be tailored according to context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite being the largest local government area in Melbourne, only 2% of the municipality is Council land. Council land has numerous purposes such as civic, community facilities and public open space. The limited amount of land available as public open space means there is existing pressure on the network. Furthermore, existing open space may include constraints such as water bodies, high biodiversity, or other functions (sport). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of existing and future provision will capture potential gaps in the network, and assess the fit-for-purpose of existing sites. An agreed level of service, informed by community feedback, should be established before assessing the network.

ISSUE	OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICATIONS
<p>Applying a blanket provision level across the municipality (i.e. providing per suburb, by distance or by population) would be inappropriate and result in some communities being overserved, and others underserved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback that the south of the municipality may be underserved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some community comments indicated a preference for improvements to existing off-leash areas, before adding new ones to the network. Whilst dog ownership is concentrated in the urban area, similar percentages of people in the rest of Yarra Ranges (Hills, Valley and Upper Yarra) report walking their dog for physical activity. The needs of urban and non-urban areas are different. However, dog off-leash areas provide benefits to non-urban communities through socialisation, different experiences and equipment, particularly where these residents feel physically and socially isolated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously, it was thought that residents in peri-urban and rural areas have less need for dog off-leash areas, given they have greater access to large private open space to exercise their dogs. However, the community engagement feedback demonstrates that dog off-leash areas also provide significant value to these communities. Differential provision levels should be applied according to settlement type, however adopted levels of service must still meet the needs of peri-urban and rural areas.
NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many existing dog off-leash areas have high biodiversity values. As a result, there is potential for greater conflict between dogs and wildlife and vegetation in off-leash areas in Yarra Ranges, compared to inner-urban and growth area councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to connect with nature in a number of our spaces was highly rated by the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create design and level of service standards that minimise and manage environmental impacts, whilst still supporting community to access and enjoy these spaces.
DESIGN AND FUNCTION		
<p>Open space function and boundaries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varying responses regarding the current size of 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The space allocation and boundaries of existing dog off-leash areas require review, due to the

ISSUE	OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICATIONS
<p>spaces (some residents believe they are a good size, others believe they are too big).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently, dog off-leash areas comprise most if not all of a given public open space reserve. This results in conflicts between dog off-leash users and non-dog off-leash users simultaneously using the space. General open space infrastructure is subsequently placed within off-leash areas (i.e. paths, barbecues). Conflicts include off leash dogs near playspaces, non-dog owners attempting to use open space with small children, or picnic or sit/lie on the ground within dog off-leash areas. People who walk their dog on leash are compelled to walk through where dogs are off leash. This can create anxiety and reactivity in the on-leash dog, leading to conflict. Reports of conflicts between big dogs and little dogs/confident dogs and timid dogs. Legibility of off-leash boundaries is unclear or non-existent. Signage and wayfinding are poor and confusing. 		<p>numerous challenges associated with combining this use with other recreational functions within the one space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to better define, contain and improve the legibility of off-leash boundaries. Clearer signage is required within parks and reserves, and at the boundaries of off-leash areas.
<p>Level of service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to enhance the appeal and functionality of many existing off-leash areas in Yarra Ranges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of the Yarra Ranges dog off-leash areas, Kimberley Reserve was frequently cited as an example of good-practice. Opportunity to provide formalised water entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a standard level of service governing the embellishment of dog off-leash areas. Assess sites against any adopted level of service and recommend a program of improvements.

ISSUE	OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This includes improving infrastructure and landscaping, such as adding shade, paths, seating, drinking water for dogs, lighting, different surfaces, points of interest and equipment for dogs, and more bins. • Existing dog off-leash areas can have poor drainage or may be in poor condition. However, many are located adjacent to water bodies or within land subject to inundation, therefore the spaces are required to hold water to mitigate flooding to other land uses (such as residential). • Inconsistency in provision may be placing pressure on better embellished spaces in the network (i.e. reports of overcrowding at Kimberley Reserve). 	<p>points at appropriate sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst an improved level of service was desired, there was acknowledgement by the community that this is not appropriate or possible at every site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where feasible, consider improvements to drainage. This may include landscaping or water sensitive urban design as opposed to constructed drainage. • Provide enhanced accessibility at dog off-leash areas for older owners, owners with disability, or owners with mobility needs.
<p>Dog waste</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog waste, including faeces and urine, was frequently cited as an issue in both off-leash and on-leash public spaces. • Provision of waste disposal within parks and reserves was frequently mentioned as an improvement opportunity. • There is mixed feedback as to effectiveness of dog waste bags. The costs associated with maintaining stock and labour is high. • There are challenges for Council regarding safe and appropriate treatment of dog waste once collected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are innovative waste disposal opportunities being trialed by other municipalities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a level of service for waste disposal. • Promote better waste disposal compliance through signage and education. • Consider trialing innovative waste disposal options.

ISSUE	OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICATIONS
<p>Fenced dog parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At present, there is one fully fenced dog park at Kimberley Reserve, Chirnside Park, with demand for more of these facilities. There are generally fewer fenced dog parks than unfenced due to the costs of construction and infrastructure, and also the need to isolate part of a public open space to achieve a fenced dog park. More fully fenced spaces was one of the most frequent responses regarding improvement opportunities. The lack of fencing deters owners from letting dogs off leash, and there are concerns that this is no longer fair or equitable especially when considering limited/no private open space in newer urban dwellings. Dog rush was often cited as a reason for fencing. Fencing should only be applied where the size of the dog off-leash area is sufficient (0.5ha is typically deemed the minimum size for a fully fenced area by other local government authorities). Councils have experienced increased conflict when fencing smaller dog off-leash areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is existing industry guidance regarding fencing of recreational areas that can be applied to dog off-leash areas in the municipality. Formalised fencing may aid in responding to the current issues caused by lack of obvious boundaries – fencing is highly legible. It provides opportunities for dog training progression and fostering the required behaviours (practice recall in an enclosed space, before moving up to an open space). Was cited by female owners as enabling them to assess who is entering the space, and plan their use accordingly. Provides separation of off-leash and on-leash dogs, particularly for reactive dogs that are on-leash. Provision of fencing acknowledges the reality that recall in dogs may be good but will rarely (if ever) be 100%. Provides protection of wildlife and areas with biodiversity value (creeks, revegetation sites). Owners and non-owners alike reported that they would feel more confident to use public open space where the dog off-leash area is fenced. Fencing may support older owners or owners with disability to continue to enjoy dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The adopted level of service should include a variety of barrier treatments, including but not limited to landscaping, natural features (existing topography etc.) and constructed fencing. It must balance the benefits of barrier treatments against relying on them as a first line of defence for poor owner and dog control and behaviour.

ISSUE	OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a significant capital and maintenance cost associated with formal, constructed fencing. There are reports of dog owners being less vigilant when using fully fenced dog off-leash areas. Constructed, permanent fencing may detract from the amenity of public open space, particular those spaces in Yarra Ranges with a strong natural landscape character. 	<p>ownership, companionship and exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fencing may be a required treatment where there is proximity to vehicles (car parks and roads, emergency vehicles and helipads), and other recreational infrastructure (i.e. playspaces, walking and cycling trails, equestrian, sports). 	
EDUCATION AND COMPLIANCE		
<div>Page 74</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to raise community awareness about off-leash areas, including issues of etiquette and behaviour, and also informing people about the locations and features of each site, in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve safety and reduce risks Promote inclusive open spaces for all park users Protect the environment and wildlife Encourage compliance with regulations. Many dog owners (31%) do not currently use dog off-leash areas, with reasons including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled/aggressive dogs Unsocialised or poorly socialised dogs Poor recall of their own dogs Lack of etiquette from other owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was expressed community support for greater enforcement and penalties. The provision of fit-for-purpose off-leash areas may lead to a reduction in inappropriate behaviour in on-leash areas. Community expressed an interest in hearing good news stories regarding how dog registration fees have been used, work conducted by Council's Community Safety officers (i.e. reunited dogs and owners), and education and responsible pet ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider opportunities to improve monitoring and enforcement. Provide better mapping and information available on the website. Consider opportunities to increase the dissemination of information that is useful and interesting to dog owners.

ISSUE	OPPORTUNITY	IMPLICATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other owners not paying attention to their dogs or other dogs and people in the area • Owners not picking up after their dogs • The location of off-leash areas is not known. • The community has reported issues concerning sites not owned or managed by Council, however Council does not have jurisdiction to provide patrols and enforcement of these sites. 		

Appendix I – Existing dog off-leash areas

LOCATION	ADDRESS	PLANNING AREA	SUB-PLANNING AREA
Belgrave Lake Park	33-41 Park Drive, Belgrave 3160	Hills	Belgrave Heights, Belgrave South, Belgrave and Selby
Cherylne Crescent Easement	94 Cherylne Crescent, Kilsyth 3137	Urban	Kilsyth and Montrose
Coronation Park	95-115 River Street, Healesville 3777	Valley	Healesville and Yarra Glen
Don Road Recreation Reserve	249B Don Road, Healesville 3777	Valley	Healesville and Yarra Glen
Elizabeth Bridge Reserve*	39-47 Durham Road, Kilsyth 3137	Urban	Kilsyth and Montrose
Hickman Place Reserve	7 Hickman Place, Seville 3139	Upper Yarra	Mount Evelyn, Wandin and Surrounds, Seville and Seville East
Hull Road Drainage Reserve**	456-458 Hull Road, Mooroolbark 3138	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark
Johns Hill Lookout Reserve	84A Ridge Road, Kallista 3791	Hills	Hilltop, Kallista and Surrounds
Kalorama Memorial Reserve	1190-1196 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, Kalorama 3766	Hills	Hilltop, Kallista and Surrounds
Kimberley Reserve	33 Kimberley Drive, Chirnside Park 3116	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark
Lakeview Reserve	16B Lakeview Drive, Lilydale 3140	Urban	Lilydale
Lillydale Lake	435 Swansea Road, Lilydale 3140	Urban	Lilydale
Margaret Lewis Reserve	1/12 Kelso Street, Coldstream 3770	Urban	Gruyere, Coldstream and Yering
Minak Reserve	1/1 Minak Road, Selby 3159	Hills	Belgrave Heights, Belgrave South, Belgrave and

			Selby
Mooroolbark Retarding Basin	140 Maroondah Highway, Mooroolbark 3138	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark
Mount Evelyn Aqueduct Trail Reserve	York Road, Mount Evelyn 3796	Urban	Mount Evelyn, Wandin and Surrounds, Seville and Seville East
Mount Morton Reserve	97 Mount Morton Road, Belgrave South 3160	Hills	Belgrave Heights, Belgrave South, Belgrave and Selby
Pembroke Retarding Basin	2-4 Wordsworth Street, Mooroolbark 3138	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark
Richards Reserve	30 Swansea Road, Montrose 3765	Urban	Kilsyth and Montrose
Seville Recreation Reserve	20-28 Monbulk- Seville Road, Seville 3139	Upper Yarra	Mount Evelyn, Wandin and Surrounds, Seville and Seville East
Summerhill Park Drive Reserve	91A Blackburn Road, Mooroolbark 3138	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark
Wandin East Recreation Reserve	3/2 Old Baker Road, Wandin East 3139	Upper Yarra	Mount Evelyn, Wandin and Surrounds, Seville and Seville East
Wesburn Park	2804 Warburton Highway, Wesburn 3799	Upper Yarra	Launching Place, Woori Yallock, Don Valley, Wesburn, Yarra Junction, Millgrove and Warburton
Yarra Glen Showgrounds	1159D Healesville-Yarra Glen Road, Yarra Glen 3775	Valley	Healesville and Yarra Glen
Olinda Precinct (former Olinda Golf Course)	75-77 Olinda-Monbulk Road, Olinda 3788	Hills	Hilltop, Kallista and Surrounds

*In addition to a permanent dog off-leash area, a time-share arrangement is in place for owners to use the sports oval as a dog off-leash area at designated times.

**Site is owned by VicRoads and managed by Council. Currently being used for the level crossing removal project, unclear if/when will be returned to the Council for management as public open space and in what condition.

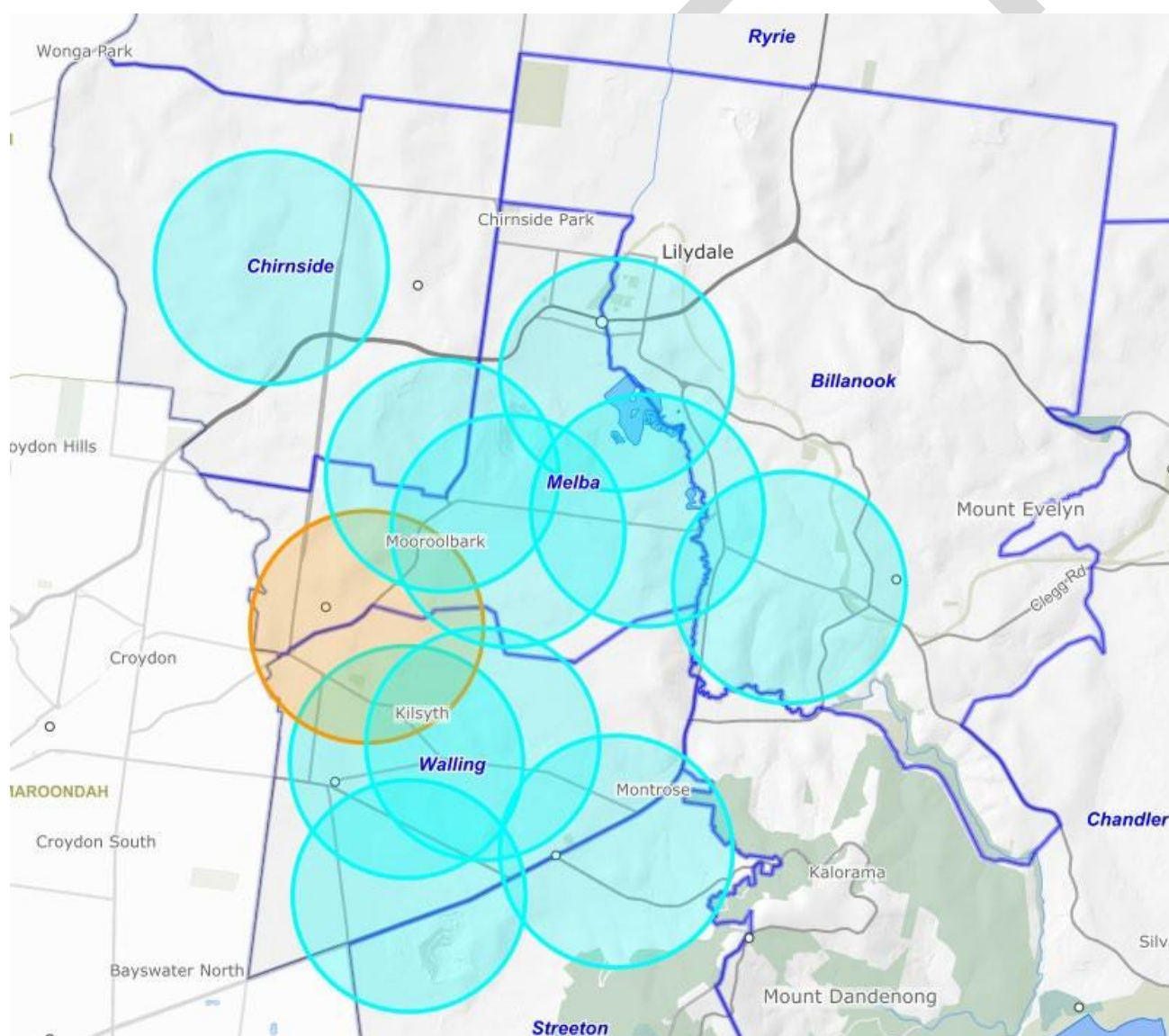
Appendix II – dog off-leash area map

Existing dog off-leash areas

These maps show existing dog off-leash areas owned or managed by Yarra Ranges Council. Although every effort has been made to ensure the maps' accuracy and completeness, they may contain errors or omissions due to changing circumstances over time.

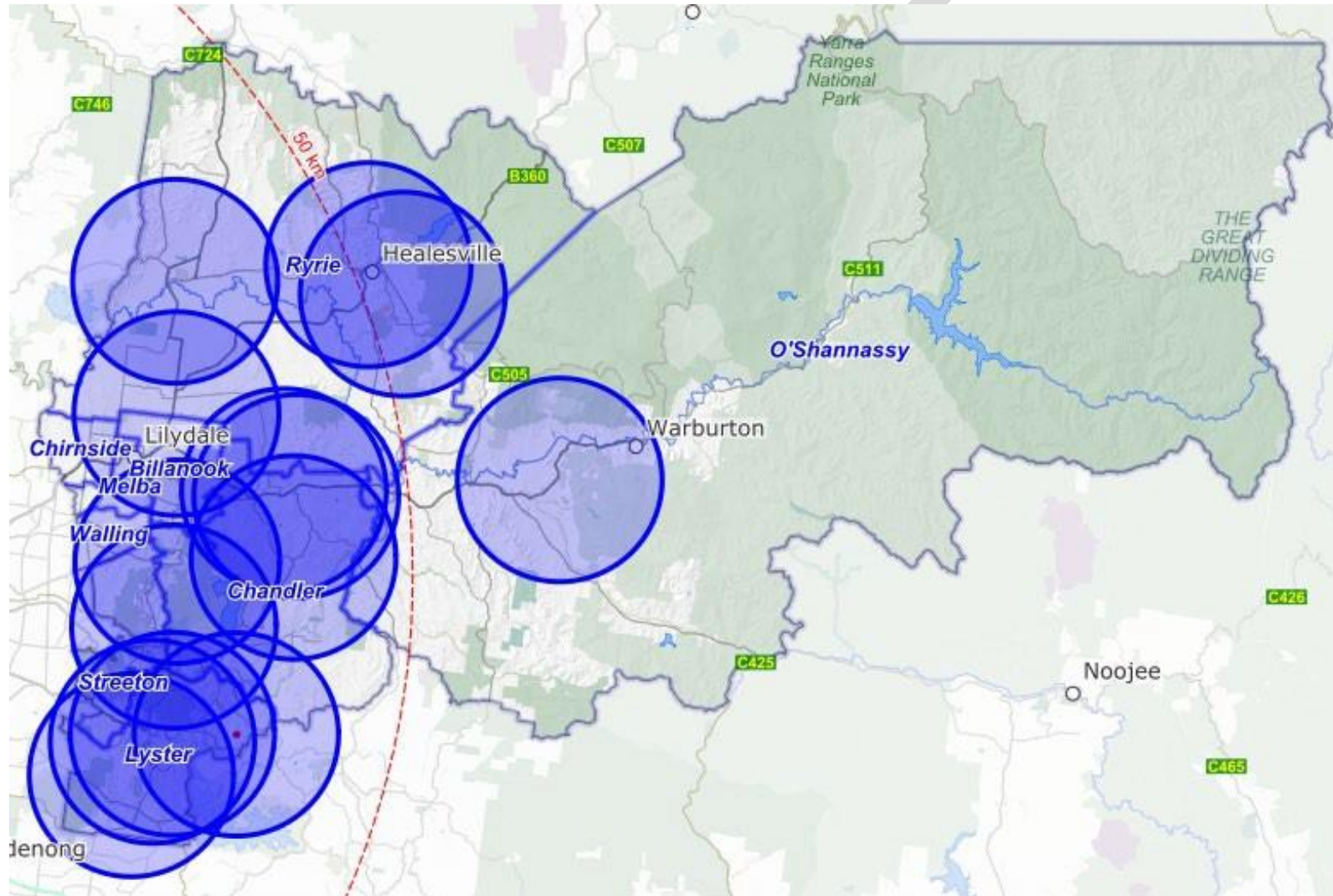
Urban dog off-leash areas

Existing Urban dog off-leash areas are shown, with an approximate 20-minute walk time catchment applied. The VicRoads Hull Road site is not currently operational and is shown in orange.



Non-urban dog off-leash areas

Existing dog off-leash areas in the Hills, Upper Yarra and Valley planning regions are shown, with an approximate 10-minute drive time catchment applied.



DRAFT

YARRA RANGES

DRAFT PEOPLE AND DOGS IN PARKS PLAN

Preliminary Site Assessment

Preliminary Site Assessment

A preliminary site assessment has been conducted, to test the proposed levels of service against Council's existing network of dog off-leash areas. However, any changes to the network will be subject to:

- A detailed assessment, per Actions 1, 2 and 3 of the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan.
- Engagement with local communities regarding any site-specific proposals.

This preliminary site assessment excludes review of where new sites may be warranted.

LOCATION	AREA	SUB AREA	PRELIMINARY HIERARCHY
Belgrave Lake Park	Hills	Belgrave Heights, Belgrave South, Belgrave and Selby	District, fully-enclosed
CherylInne Crescent Easement	Urban	Kilsyth and Montrose	Review into ongoing provision required
Coronation Park	Valley	Healesville and Yarra Glen	District, fully-enclosed
Don Road Recreation Reserve	Valley	Healesville and Yarra Glen	Local
Elizabeth Bridge Reserve	Urban	Kilsyth and Montrose	District, fully-enclosed
Elizabeth Bridge Reserve – time share oval	Urban	Kilsyth and Montrose	Review into ongoing provision required
Hickman Place Reserve	Upper Yarra	Mount Evelyn, Wandin and Surrounds, Seville and Seville East	Review into ongoing provision required, including existing contradictory signage
Hull Road Drainage Reserve*	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark	Consider for disestablishment
Johns Hill Lookout Reserve	Hills	Hilltop, Kallista and Surrounds	Local
Kalorama Memorial Reserve	Hills	Hilltop, Kallista and Surrounds	District
Kimberley Reserve	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark	District, fully-enclosed
Lakeview Reserve	Urban	Lilydale	Local

LOCATION	AREA	SUB AREA	PRELIMINARY HIERARCHY
Lillydale Lake – primary dog off leash area	Urban	Lilydale	District
Margaret Lewis Reserve	Urban	Gruyere, Coldstream and Yering	District
Minak Reserve	Hills	Belgrave Heights, Belgrave South, Belgrave and Selby	Review into ongoing provision required
Mooroolbark Retarding Basin	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark	Local
Mount Evelyn Aqueduct Trail Reserve	Urban	Mount Evelyn, Wandin and Surrounds, Seville and Seville East	Local
Mount Morton Reserve	Hills	Belgrave Heights, Belgrave South, Belgrave and Selby	Local
Pembroke Retarding Basin	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark	Local
Richards Reserve	Urban	Kilsyth and Montrose	Local
Seville Recreation Reserve	Upper Yarra	Mount Evelyn, Wandin and Surrounds, Seville and Seville East	Local
Summerhill Park Drive Reserve	Urban	Chirnside and Mooroolbark	Review into ongoing provision required
Wandin East Recreation Reserve	Upper Yarra	Mount Evelyn, Wandin and Surrounds, Seville and Seville East	Review into ongoing provision required
Wesburn Park	Upper Yarra	Launching Place, Woori Yallock, Don Valley, Wesburn, Yarra Junction, Millgrove and Warburton	District, partly-enclosed **
Yarra Glen Showgrounds	Valley	Healesville and Yarra Glen	Local

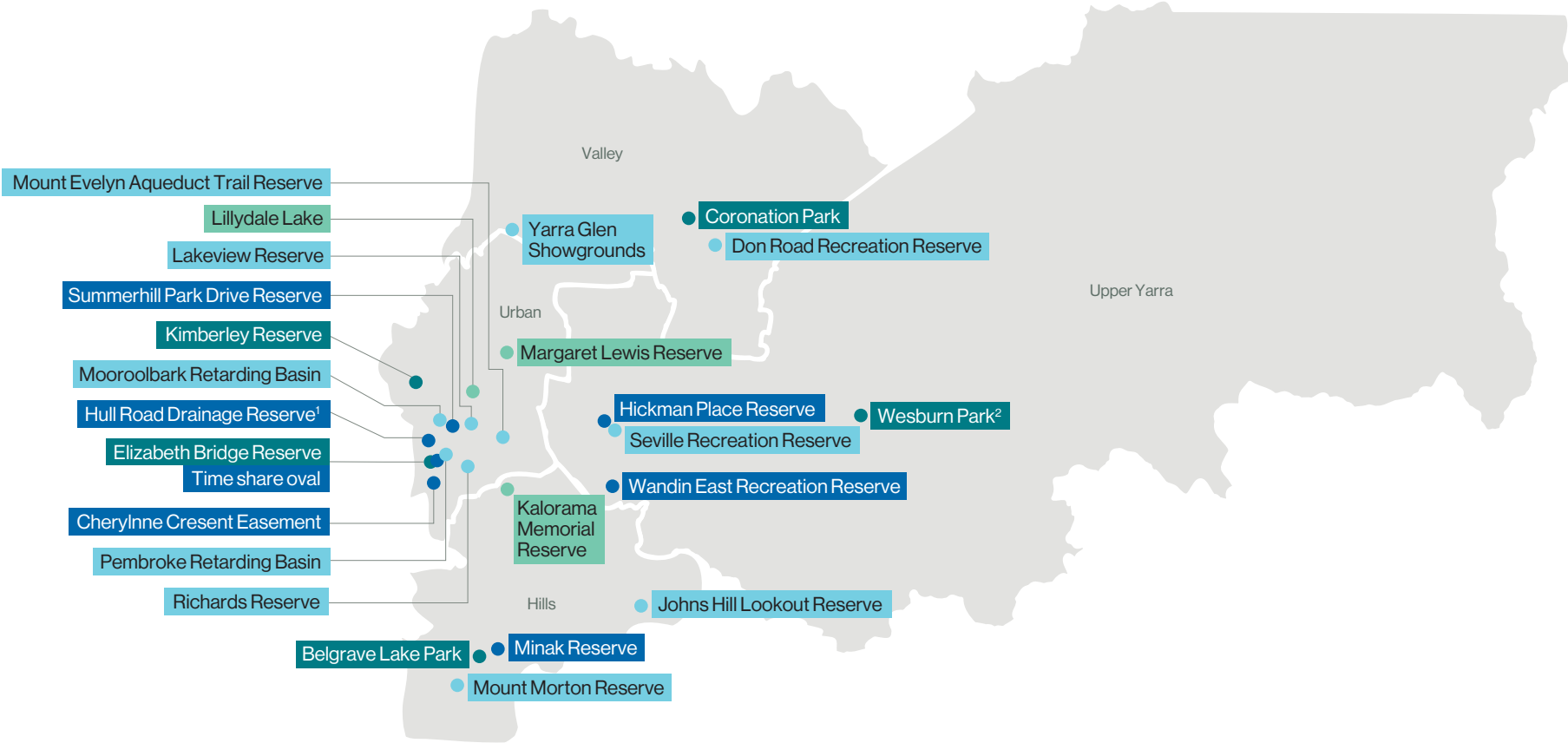
*Site is owned by VicRoads and managed by Council. Currently being used for the level crossing removal project, unclear if/when will be returned to Council for management as public open space and in what condition.

**Full enclosure may not be feasible due to existing site constraints.

People and Dogs in Parks Plan

Preliminary Site Assessment

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Preliminary Hierarchy

- Local
- District
- District fully enclosed
- Review into ongoing provision required

¹Site is owned by VicRoads and managed by Council. Currently being used for the level crossing removal project, unclear if/when will be returned to Council for management as public open space and in what condition.

² Full enclosure may not be feasible due to existing site constraints.



YARRA RANGES DRAFT PEOPLE AND DOGS IN PARKS PLAN 2025-2035

Summary

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Vision

People and dogs can enjoy public open space in Yarra Ranges, in harmony with each other and the environment.

Introduction

The People and Dogs in Parks Plan establishes principles for the distribution and scope that can be included when planning for dog off-leash areas. It will be the basis for planning and decision making for existing or new spaces on Council-owned or managed land.

It provides a tool to assess current provision, and recommend improvements where shortfalls are identified. It combines community feedback about what they would like to see in dog off-leash areas with expert research and industry standards to form a clear plan.

This Plan aims to achieve a balance between the diverse use of open spaces by all Yarra Ranges residents and visitors, catering to both dog owners and non-dog owners.



Principles

Throughout community engagement and research for the development of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan, three clear principles emerged:

Dog off-leash areas should be sufficient in quantity, quality, and variety:

- There should be an appropriate quantity and distribution of dog off-leash areas.
- Public open space meets the needs of all users – dog owners, non-dog owners, dogs, plants, other animals and wildlife, and waterways.
- Dog off-leash areas are designed and maintained to an appropriate standard.
- Provide different experiences, training progression and opportunities for dogs to socialise and exercise.

Dog off-leash areas should be accessible, inclusive, and safe:

- Readily accessed by the community – location, modes of transport, wayfinding, size and layout.
- Actively support use by people with disability, diverse genders, backgrounds and ages.
- Facilitate fair and equitable access to public open space for all users.
- They provide opportunity for regulation, education and promoting responsible dog ownership, as well as socialisation and recreation.
- Designed for the health and safety of both dogs and people.
- Provide improved community information and education about the availability and proper use of dog off-leash areas.

Dog off-leash areas are sustainable:

- Protect and enhance biodiversity, and maximise environmental sustainability.
- Balanced provision that maintains financial sustainability.



Framework

Provision, hierarchy and level of service

At least one dog off-leash area should be available to the majority of Yarra Ranges residents within a 10-minute drive from home. In urban areas, this should be available within a 20- minute walk for most residents (approx. 2 kilometres).

Provision and development of dog off-leash areas may be varied due to factors such as availability of open space, demand, existing provision, Council budgeting, or other factors.

Dog off-leash areas will be varied in their size and level of service. They will be provided to a Local and District level only (servicing the municipality).

Site suitability and selection

Site suitability and selection will consider the following factors:

- Site qualities
- Visibility and safety
- Adjacent uses and activities.

Design

Design principles for dog off-leash areas include:

- Safety
- Accessibility
- Diversity
- Engaging spaces
- Clarity
- Durability
- Environmental sustainability
- Enclosure/barrier treatments, determined on a site-by-site basis, and subject to a risk assessment.

Operation of dog off-leash areas

Good management and maintenance of dog off-leash spaces includes:

- Maintenance requirements of dog off-leash areas and associated infrastructure and features.
- Patrolling and enforcement.
- Educational initiatives for users of dog off-leash areas on responsible dog ownership.

Implementation of the People and Dogs in Parks Plan will include a focus on planning for the cost of maintaining, renewing and upgrading of Council's dog off-leash area network, in a manner that meets community needs whilst also delivering value for money and durability for reduced maintenance.

Implementation

Action plan

The People and Dogs in Parks Plan will be implemented by undertaking the below actions.

ACTION	PRIORITY
<p>1 Complete a review of the provision, access, and level of service of dog off-leash areas throughout Yarra Ranges.</p> <p>Based on the results of Action 1, develop a priority list for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade or relocation of existing dog off-leash areas. • Provision of new dog off-leash areas. 	Immediate
<p>2 This will consider an assessment of the overall network, shortfalls in provision and levels of service and community feedback and recommend an appropriate infrastructure response. The priority list of projects will be referred to Council's capital expenditure program planning and budgeting. The priority list will consider the existing preliminary site assessment list, and community engagement feedback.</p>	Immediate
<p>3 Undertake a review of dog-prohibited areas.</p>	Short
<p>4 Following the review of dog off-leash areas, provision and boundary changes will be proposed and the community invited to provide feedback. Following consideration of the feedback, Council will finalise the boundaries, amend the Council Order and gazette any changes.</p>	Short
<p>5 Complete a review of signage at dog off-leash areas regarding signage function, content, placement, and legibility, and develop a new consistent signage suite.</p>	Short
<p>6 Update information on Council's website and other Council information sources regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locations of dog off-leash areas • Expectations of owners and dogs • Relevant regulations. 	Medium
<p>7 Ensure a scheduled presence of Authorised Officers at dog off-leash areas.</p>	Ongoing

How to get involved

The community will be invited to provide feedback regarding the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan, and its proposed principles and standards. A preliminary assessment of all existing dog off-leash areas will also be presented to the community, to outline what the proposed principles and standards may look like in practice.

For more information, visit <https://shaping.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/dogs-parks>



People and Dogs in Parks Plan

Preliminary Community
Engagement Report

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May 2025



Acknowledgement of Country



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nation peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

Project background

Council currently provides 23 dog off-leash areas. However, Council has not previously had a plan or standards for dog off-leash areas, resulting in uncertainty regarding where they should be provided, and to what standard they should be constructed and maintained.

In response, a draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan has been developed. It applies to existing and future dog off-leash areas owned or managed by Yarra Ranges Council and outlines standards for the provision, development, enhancement, and management of dog off-leash areas across Yarra Ranges over the next 10 years.

This Plan aims to achieve a balance between the diverse use of open spaces by all Yarra Ranges residents and visitors, catering to both dog owners and non-dog owners. The vision of the Plan is “people and dogs can enjoy public open space in Yarra Ranges, in harmony with each other and the environment.”



Community engagement

In preparing the Draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan, we engaged with the community to understand issues and opportunities concerning dog off-leash areas in the municipality. Dog owners and non-dog owners were encouraged to contribute.

Community engagement was conducted between 11 July – 13 August 2024, deploying a variety of methods to ensure ample opportunities for the community to participate. These included online surveys, on-site drop-in sessions at dog off-leash areas, and promotion via social media and newsletters.

How we engaged

Community engagement activities



Project page on
Shaping Yarra Ranges

Page 93
2,256 views
125 page followers

25% of visitors returned to
the page more than once.

Dates 2024

11 July — 13 August



Online survey

223 contributions

50 responses to
budgeting activity

Dates 2024

11 July — 13 August



Pop ups

60 conversations
with park users

50 good dogs
patted!

Dates 2024

29 July Wesburn Park,
Wesburn

30 July Elizabeth Bridge
Reserve, Kilsyth



6 August Coronation Park,
Healesville

13 August Belgrave Lake
Park, Belgrave



Direct emails and phone calls

5 direct emails
and phone calls

How we engaged

Communications and marketing activities



Facebook

Page 94

1542 Total engagement
4 Total number of posts
14,297 Total reach
120 Total link clicks

Dates 2024

15 July 1 August
25 July 6 August



Instagram

2,254 Total engagement
4 Total number of posts
2,020 Total reach
14 Total link clicks

Dates 2024

15 July 1 August
25 July 6 August



YR Local e-newsletter

175 Total link clicks
11,793 Total reach
3 Newsletters sent

Dates 2024

12 July
26 July
9 August

What we heard

We asked about dog ownership and use of existing facilities

93%

of respondents were dog owners.

“
People

More females (61%) than males (53%) walk / exercise dogs, particularly those under 40 years old.

“

Dog ownership amongst respondents was concentrated in the Urban area where there is also a higher density of people, but similar percentages of people in the Hills, Valley and Upper Yarra areas report walking their dogs for their physical activity.

65%

of the dog owners who responded currently use off leash areas.

What is working well with off-leash areas across Yarra Ranges?

56%

of respondents use dog off-leash areas to enable their dog to socialise with other dogs.

60%

believe that the spaces provided are a good size.

“

The ability to connect with nature in some of our spaces was also highly rated.

“

Off-leash areas were recognised for their importance to owners, with several respondents stating that is how they socialise or meet people.

Challenges or barriers currently preventing use of off-leash areas

34%

of respondents who were dog owners do not currently use off-leash areas. There were a variety of explanations provided, including:

“

Uncontrolled/aggressive dogs.

Unsocialised or poorly socialised dogs.

Poor recall of their own dog/s.

Etiquette from other owners is lacking.

Other owners are not paying attention to their dog/s or other dogs and people in the area.

Owners not picking up faeces after their dog/s.

Off-leash areas are too far from home / not easily accessible.

Location of off-leash areas is not known.

!

It was also highlighted that Council needs to consider appropriate provision in the Upper Yarra and Valley areas. A misconception has been that these residents will have homes on larger blocks of land and therefore are able to exercise their dog/s off-leash on their property.

However, this has overlooked the positive social aspects of off-leash areas for both dogs and owners, especially as these residents may often feel physically and socially isolated.

What we heard

What could be improved regarding dog off-leash areas?



Clearer signage within parks and reserves and at boundaries of the off-leash area.



Natural/constructed/visual barriers and landscaping.



More fully fenced opportunities.



Education regarding owner responsibilities, location of off-leash areas, and non-dog owner responsibilities.



Provision of waste disposal within parks and reserves.



Areas have poor drainage or are in poor condition.



A recurrent idea several respondents shared was along the lines of dedicated dog parks with fencing, as currently the lack of fencing is creating a barrier for letting dogs off the leash, deterring owners.

This was considered no longer fair or equitable given the size of the property now being built (i.e., limited/no garden area). Well-exercised and socialised dogs are less likely to bark or have behavioural problems.

Anything else we should know



Half of respondents were in favour of more off-leash areas within the municipality.



Better drainage so areas are usable year-round.



Education and etiquette for dog owners and non-owners alike.



More seating within off-leash areas.



More accessible areas for older owners, owners with a disability, or owners with mobility issues.



Better mapping and information available on the Council's website.



Clearer identification of boundaries within open space, not just fencing.



Greater embellishment of off-leash areas, rather than just a designated patch of grass.



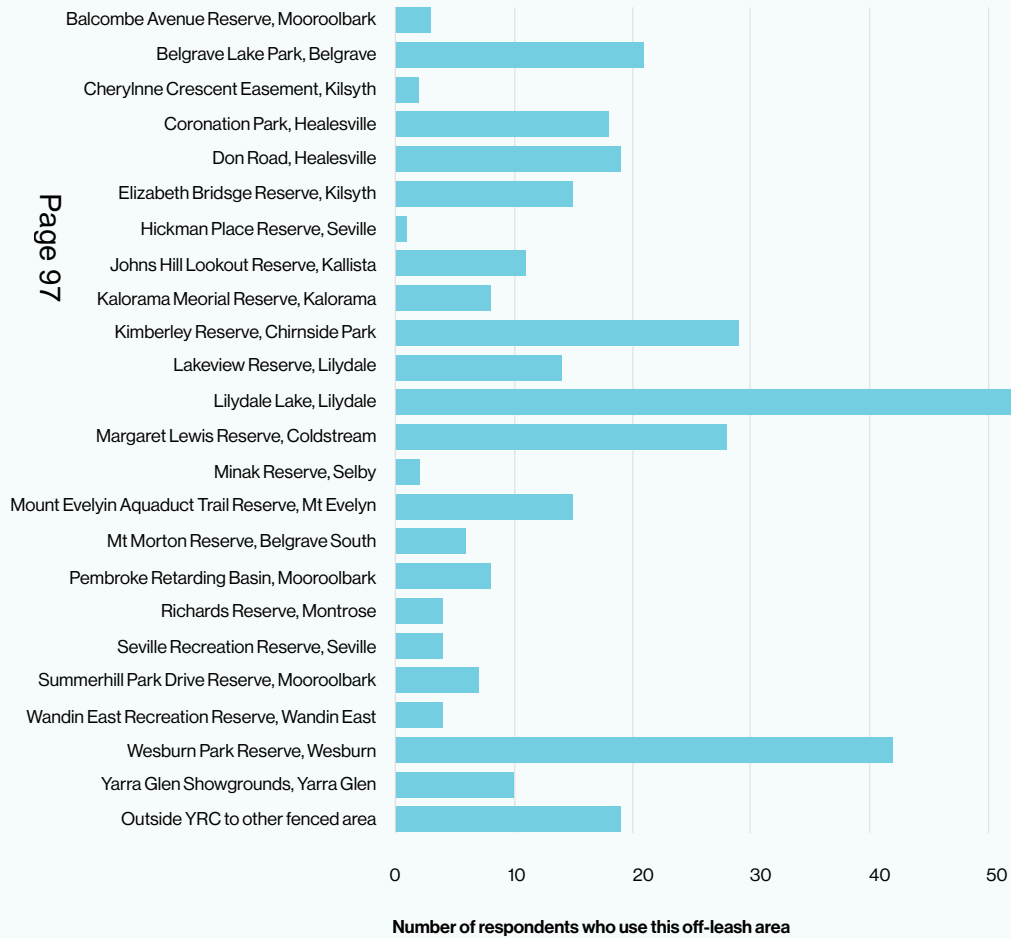
Better monitoring and enforcement to encourage owners to be more responsible, particularly around picking up after their dog/s.



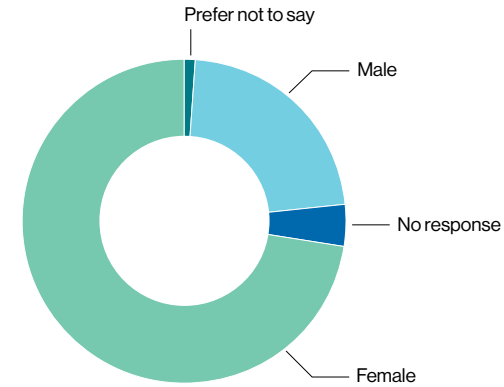
A good mix of fenced and un-fenced areas so owners can choose what suits them and their dog/s.

What we heard

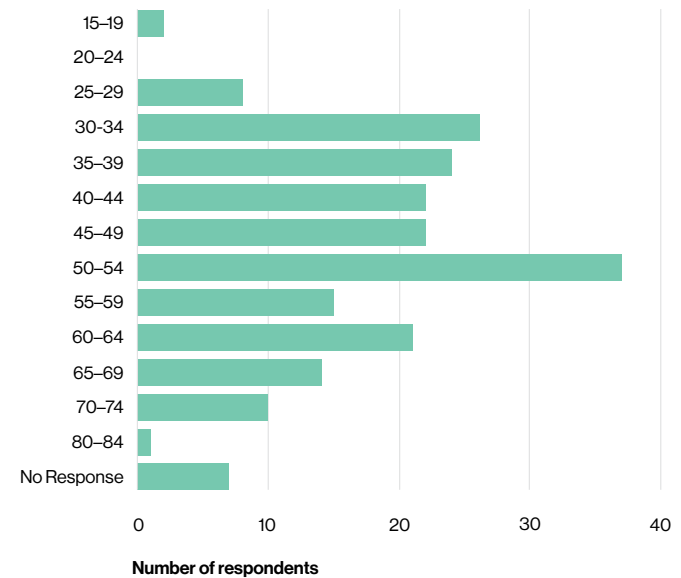
We also asked which dog off-leash areas the community currently uses:



Gender of respondents



Age of respondents



Next steps

The community insights received during this round of engagement have been used to develop the draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan. The draft Plan will be provided to Council for consideration, and then publicly exhibited.

How to get involved

The community will be invited to provide feedback regarding the draft Plan, and its proposed principles and standards. A preliminary assessment of all existing dog off-leash areas will also be presented to the community, to outline what the proposed principles and standards may look like in practice.

Necessary amendments will be made following public exhibition, before presenting the final People and Dogs in Parks Plan to Council to seek adoption.

Should Council adopt the draft Plan, any specific projects may be subject to additional, site-specific community engagement.

- 01

Community engagement
July - August 2024
- 02

Development of draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan
Ongoing
- 03

Community engagement on draft Plan
August 2025
- 04

Review feedback
September 2025
- 05

Council consideration of final People and Dogs in Parks Plan
Late 2025 / Early 2026
- 06

Actions from the People and Dogs in Parks Plan and site-specific engagement
2026+

Contact us

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EOI6105 7855 – VICTORIA ROAD, CHIRNSIDE PARK – ROAD REHABILITATION

Report Author: Senior Project Engineer
 Responsible Officer: Director Built Environment and Infrastructure
 Ward(s) affected: Billanook, Chirnside, Ryrie

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

The item has been included in the public agenda to facilitate openness and transparency in Council's decision making. Confidential attachments have been included with the report which contain commercially sensitive information that is not to be disclosed whilst the meeting is open to the public.

SUMMARY

This report summarises the evaluation process and seeks Council approval for the award of the contract for the next stage of Victoria Road, Coldstream Road Rehabilitation works.

Victoria Road, Coldstream (Kingsburgh Lane to Flowerfield Drive) is listed under the Roads Rehabilitation & Renewal Program within the Yarra Ranges Council Capital Expenditure Program with an allocated funding from the Federal Roads to Recovery Program of \$2,080,000.00. There are subsequent stages of Victoria Road, Coldstream Road Rehabilitation works still to be funded from this budget allocation later in the financial year.

The evaluation panel recommends the tender from TDM Earthworks Pty Ltd be accepted for a lump sum contract amount of \$877,387.40 GST exclusive and inclusive of provisional items (\$965,126.14 GST inclusive).

RECOMMENDATION***That Council***

- 1. Appoints TDM Earthworks Pty Ltd to EOI6105 7855 Victoria Road, Coldstream (Kingsburgh Lane to Flowerfield Drive) Road Rehabilitation works for \$877,387.40 exclusive of GST.***
- 2. The Director, Built Environment and Infrastructure be delegated authority to sign the contract documents***

3. ***Authorise the Director, Built Environment and Infrastructure to sign off any required contingency not exceeding 20 percent of the total lump sum contract.***
4. ***The confidential attachments to this report remain confidential indefinitely as they relate to matters specified under section 3(1)(g)(i),(g)(ii) of the Local Government Act 2020.***

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

There are no Council decisions relevant to this item.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

To seek Council approval to award EO16105 7855 Victoria Road, Coldstream (Kingsburgh Lane to Flowerfield Drive) Road Rehabilitation works.

Background

Victoria Road, Coldstream (Kingsburgh Lane to Flowerfield Drive) is listed under the Roads Rehabilitation & Renewal Program within the Yarra Ranges Council Capital Expenditure Program with an allocated funding of \$2,080,000.00.

The works include 1.4kms of pavement reconstruction and minor drainage works.

Council maintains a Works Panel comprising twelve (12) pre-qualified contractors for Road Construction and Associated Works, established through EO16105. This panel supports efficient procurement by enabling Council to invite quotations for specific projects as funding becomes available.

On 6 June 2025, Council invited four (4) pre-qualified suppliers from the panel to submit pricing for the Victoria Road Rehabilitation Project. The tender remained open for 16 business days, closing on 30 June 2025. Due to internal technical issues, the submission deadline was extended to 3 July 2025. A total of four (4) submissions were received.

Options considered

This tender process has been carried out in accordance with the requirement of Council's Procurement Policy.

Tenderer's submissions were assessed for conformity with the tender documents and no tenders were eliminated from further evaluation as a result of any non-conformances.

The Evaluation Panel scored tenders against pre-established evaluation criteria. A summary of the evaluation criteria follows.

Evaluation Criteria	Weighting
Price	80%
Resourcing	5%
Timeframes	15%
TOTAL	100%

Recommended option and justification

Following a detailed evaluation process, as outlined in Confidential Attachment 1. The evaluation panel are unanimous in their decision to recommend TDM Earthworks Pty Ltd as the successful tenderer for EO16105 7855 Victoria Road, Coldstream Rehabilitation. The evaluation panel request that Council adopts the recommendations within this report.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Victoria Road, Coldstream (Kingsburgh Lane to Flowerfield Drive) is listed under the Roads Rehabilitation & Renewal Program within the Yarra Ranges Council Capital Expenditure Program with an allocated funding of \$2,080,000.00. There are subsequent stages of Victoria Road, Coldstream Road Rehabilitation works still to be funded from this budget allocation later in the financial year.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan: The road rehabilitation works meets the Council Plan 2021-2025 strategic objective of Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places. Ensuring that the network of roads, footpaths, bridges and drainage are maintained and renewed into the future.

RELEVANT LAW

This report seeks Council approval to award a contract that complies with Section 108 of the Local Government Act 2020.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The construction of these roads would be undertaken utilising contractors from Council Road Construction and Associated Works Panel. This panel was established with a majority of local smaller contractors which will help provide economic support to these local businesses.

Social Implications

The recommended tenderer is a local business that resides and operates within Yarra Ranges Council. It has a successful history of recruiting local staff and utilising local sub-contractors.

Environmental Implications

As part of the contract the successful tenderer will be required to prepare and adhere to a Construction Environmental Management Plan for the duration of the project.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Residents and businesses along Victoria Road, Coldstream will be notified of the works prior to works commencement. Through traffic will also be notified prior to works commencing by road side variable message boards.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Not relevant

RISK ASSESSMENT

Risk have been considered as part of the project design, contract terms and conditions, and evaluation process.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. EOI6105 7855 Council Evaluation Report (Confidential Attachment)

Confidential Item

CT7828 MORRISON RESERVE YOUTH ACTIVATION & BIKE PARK – STAGE 2

Report Author: Executive Officer Major Projects
 Responsible Officer: Director Built Environment & Infrastructure
 Ward(s) affected: Billanook;

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public. The item has been included in the public agenda to facilitate openness and transparency in Council's decision making.

Confidential information is contained in Attachment 1. This information relates to contractual matters and contains commercially sensitive information including, but not limited to, the name of tendering parties, the evaluation panel members, the tendered prices, and the evaluation of the tenders received against the published evaluation criteria.

Any disclosure of the information included within the confidential attachment to this report could be prejudicial to the interests of the Council or other parties. If discussion of this information is required, it is recommended Council resolve that the item be deferred to the confidential section of the agenda when the meeting is closed to members of the public in accordance with Section 3(1)(g)(i)(g)(ii) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

SUMMARY

This report summarises the evaluation process and seeks Council approval for the award of the contract for the Morrison Reserve Youth Activation & Bike Park– Stage 2, located off Mikado Road, Mount Evelyn VIC 3796.

Council received \$2.6 million from the State Government's Growing Suburbs Fund Program 2023/2024 to activate Morrison Reserve by providing new and engaging social areas for people to play, gather, and recreate in a safe and communal environment. Following delivery of the upgraded play space (stage 1), this contract will deliver the final stage of the youth precinct activation project, transforming Morrison Reserve into a dynamic and inclusive open space precinct. Works include a multi-level bike trail network, pump track, snake run, youth activation zone(s), DDA-compliant access paths, overpass bridges, and landscaping throughout.

The Evaluation Panel recommends accepting the tender from Warrandale Industries for a lump sum contract amount of \$1,898,942.95 exclusive of GST.

Subject to contract award, works are anticipated to commence in Q4, 2025 with works expected to reach practical completion by Mid-2026.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. *Awards the tender from The Trustee for Burma Family Trust t/as Warrandale Industries Pty Ltd for CT7828 Morrison Reserve Youth Activation & Bike Park - Stage 2 for \$1,898,942.95 exclusive of GST.*
2. *The Director, Built Environment and Infrastructure be delegated authority to sign the contract documents*
3. *Authorise the Director, Built Environment and Infrastructure to sign off any required contingency not exceeding 7.5 percent of the total lump sum contract.*
4. *The confidential attachments to this report remain confidential indefinitely as they relate to matters specified under section 3(1)(g)(i),(g)(ii) of the Local Government Act 2020.*

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

28 May 2024- Council adopted the Morrison Reserve Masterplan.

PROPOSAL

To seek Council Approval to award CT7828 Morrison Reserve Youth Activation & Bike Park - Stage 2.

Purpose and Background

This report has been prepared to seek Council approval for the construction of the Morrison Reserve Youth Activation & Bike Park – Stage 2. The project addresses the growing demand for youth-oriented recreational facilities and supports Council's strategic objectives for community wellbeing, infrastructure development, and active living.

The scope includes:

- A multi-level bike trail network for all skill levels
- A pump track and snake run
- Youth activation zones with seating and shade
- DDA-compliant access paths
- Overpass bridges and trail connectors
- Landscaping

The procurement method for this tender was a single stage competitive open tender. An advertisement calling for tenders was placed in The Age newspaper on Saturday

29 March 2025. Tenders closed Thursday 29 May 2025, and three (3) submissions were received.

Tenderers were asked to provide a base lump sum price, a set list of provisional sum items and to individually price identified project options for consideration. Tenderers were also asked to suggest innovative and alternative options to the design, to identify potential project cost savings for further consideration.

The tender process has been carried out in accordance with Council's procurement policy and the endorsed evaluation plan. A summary of the tender submissions and evaluation is contained within Confidential Attachment 01.

The evaluation panel scored the tenders against the pre-established evaluation criteria, as published in the tender document.

A summary of the evaluation criteria follows:

- Capability & Capacity -15%
- Commitment to Quality & Sustainability - 5%
- Community benefit - 5%
- Time frames - 10%
- Methodology - 5%

Recommendation, and Justification

To proceed with full development, as documented in tender, subject to budget constraints as outlined in confidential attachment. It offers the greatest value in terms of safety, engagement, accessibility and recreational use, and reflects strong community support for the project through the engagement process.

STRATEGIC LINKS

This report supports Council's Strategic framework in being a high performing organisation that listens and delivers quality, value for money services to our community.

The project is closely aligned with Council's strategic objectives as it will deliver on:

- Connected and Healthy Communities, and
- Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The recommended tender award amount includes funding from both External grants from the Victorian State Government Growing Suburbs Fund and Council. Council funds have been allocated to this project as part of Yarra Ranges Council 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 Capital Expenditure Program. Confidential attachment 01 provides further details of the budget breakdown and anticipated expenditure for the project.

The contract amount above currently allocated budget will be sourced from a Billanook Public Open Space Fund and/or project budget savings.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

A Connected and Healthy Community

- Encourages active lifestyles through inclusive and accessible recreational infrastructure.
- Supports youth wellbeing and social inclusion by providing engaging outdoor spaces.

A Liveable and Sustainable Place

- Enhances public open space and promotes sustainable transport options such as cycling and walking.
- Incorporates environmentally conscious design and landscaping.

Vibrant and Resilient Communities

- Strengthens community engagement and participation through well-designed, multi-use public spaces.
- Responds to the needs of young people through targeted infrastructure investment.

No regional, state or national plans and policies are applicable to the recommendation in this report.

RELEVANT LAW

Council is exercising its general power under Section 10 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, which enables Council to do all things necessary or convenient in connection with the performance of its role. This includes the delivery of infrastructure projects that support community wellbeing and recreational access.

There are no known limitations or restrictions to the exercise of this power in relation to this project.

A Gender Impact Assessment has been considered in accordance with the Gender Equality Act 2020, ensuring the design and delivery of the precinct supports inclusive access and equitable use across all demographics.

Applicable legislative provisions:

- *Local Government Act 2020* – Section 10: General power of Council to undertake works and services for the benefit of the community.
- *Gender Equality Act 2020*: Requires consideration of gender impacts in policy, program and service delivery.

This report seeks Council approval to award a contract that complies with section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Environmental Impacts

This has been considered as part of the project specification and evaluation process. There are no environmental impacts directly associated with this report. As part of the contract, the successful tenderer will be required to adhere to a construction environmental management plan for the duration of the project.

The recommended tenderer has an Environmental Management System and Quality Management System in place and seeks to recycle the majority of removed material and equipment including components of the existing play space.

Social Impacts

This has been considered as part of the project specification and evaluation process. The design team and recommended tenderer have committed to provide a high quality landscaped Urban Park for the community to enjoy. The recommended tenderer is seeking to purchase major materials items where required within the Yarra Ranges Shire for the construction of the project as well as employing locally.

Economic Impacts

This has been considered as part of the project specification and evaluation process. The recommended tenderer has committed to source goods, services and materials proposed for this contract from within Yarra Ranges Shire.

Climate Change

The project contributes positively to climate resilience by:

- Using durable, low-impact materials
- Designing for stormwater management and erosion control
- Encouraging non-motorised transport, reducing greenhouse gas emissions

These measures align with Council's Liveable Climate Plan and the State Government's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017–20, supporting long-term environmental sustainability and climate risk mitigation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was undertaken through surveys and workshops. Feedback showed strong support for the project and informed the design and scope of works.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The design of the facility has been through an extensive consultation process with multiple approval gateways prior to tender. Stakeholder consultation has included both external and internal stakeholders throughout the process.

The specification and tender documentation have been prepared in collaboration with an external expert consultant team, along with Council's Planning, Recreation, Major Projects, and Parks teams, and has been developed in consultation with Council's Procurement team.

Additionally, funding support involved collaboration with other levels of government, contributing to the financial viability and delivery of the project. The project incorporates innovative trail design, inclusive access features, and flexible recreational zones to support continuous improvement and long-term community use.

RISK ASSESSMENT

This has been considered as part of project design, contract terms and conditions, and within the evaluation process. A project risk register has been developed, maintained, and monitored for this project.

The recommended contractor is considered an expert in their field and highly qualified to deliver a successful result. They are also registered within the Rapid Global system and meet Councils' compliance requirements for this size and type of contract.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. CT7828 Morrisons Reserve - Stage 02 Council Evaluation Report (Confidential Attachment)

Confidential Item

11. COUNCILLOR MOTIONS

In accordance with Chapter 3 Division 4 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

There were no Councillor motions received prior to the Agenda being printed.

12. ITEMS THROUGH THE CHAIR

13. REPORTS FROM DELEGATES

14. DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNING AND SEALING

In accordance with Clause 87 of the Meeting Procedures and Use of Common Seal Local Law 2015, as prescribed by Section 14(2)(c) of the Local Government Act 2020.

There were no Documents for Signing and Sealing listed for this meeting prior to the Agenda being printed.

15. INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS

Report Author: Governance Officer
 Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services
 Ward(s) affected: All Wards

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public

SUMMARY

Chapter 8, Rule 1, of the Governance Rules requires that records of informal meetings of Councillors must be kept and that the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a summary of the matters discussed at the meeting tabled at the next convenient Council meeting and recorded in the Minutes of that Council meeting.

An 'informal meeting of Councillors' is defined in the Governance Rules as a meeting of Councillors that:

- is scheduled or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors;
- is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- is not a Council meeting, Delegated Committee meeting or Community Asset Committee meeting.

The records for informal meetings of Councillors are attached to the report.

RECOMMENDATION

That the records of the Informal Meetings of Councillors, copies of which are attached to the report, be received and noted.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. 15 July 2025 – Council Briefing
2. 15 July 2025 - Council Forum
3. 30 July 2025 – Disability Advisory Committee

Informal Meeting of Councillors

Public Record

Meeting Name:	Council Briefing		
Date: Venue: Attendees: Apologies: Disclosure of COI: Matter/s Discussed: Completed By:	15 July 2025	Start Time: 7.03pm	Finish Time: 7.08pm
	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference		
	Councillors:	Cr Child (Chair), Cr Cox, Cr Heenan, Cr McIlwain, Cr Ward, and Cr Marriott	
	Via Zoom:	Cr McAllister and Cr Higgins (Deputy Chair)	
	CEO/Directors:	Vincenzo Lombardi (Acting CEO), Leanne Hurst, Hjalmar Philipp, Kath McClusky and Alanna Ford (Acting Director Corporate Services)	
	Officers:	Amee Cooper, Gina Walter, Beck Stevens, Joanne, Hammond, Stuart Wilson, Shannon Maynard, Louise Parzatka, Stephen Hodge, Cristina Vara Almirall, Jenna Hepburn, Lisa Balaban, Angelique Miller,	
	Via Zoom:	Isha Scott and Jane Sinnamon	
	Cr Mazzarella and Tammi Rose		
Nil			
This briefing covered the following items of business to be considered at the 22 July 2025 Council Meeting.			
10.1	YR-2024/269 - 7 Ryrie Street, Healesville		
10.2	Amendment C212 Monbulk Township Submissions and adoption request for Panel		
11.1	Councillor Motions - Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombings – Cr McIlwain		
14.1	Documents for Signing and Sealing - Retirement Letter under Council Seal - Harry Harrison		
Gina Walter			

Informal Meeting of Councillors

Public Record

Meeting Name:	Council Forum	
Date:	15 July 2025	Start Time: 5.30pm Finish Time: 9.01pm
Venue:	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference	
Attendees:	<p>Councillors: Cr Child (Chair), Cr Cox, Cr Heenan, Cr McIlwain, Cr Ward, and Cr Marriott</p> <p>Via Zoom: Cr McAllister and Cr Higgins (Deputy Chair) (From 5.43pm)</p> <p>CEO/Directors: Vincenzo Lombardi (Acting CEO), Leanne Hurst, Hjalmar Philipp, Kath McClusky and Alanna Ford (Acting Director Corporate Services)</p> <p>Officers: Ameer Cooper, Gina Walter, Beck Stevens, Ben Waterhouse, Joanne Hammond, Kirsten Vernon, Stuart Wilson, Shannon Maynard, Lisa Balaban, Jenna Hepburn, Angelique Miller, Amanda Kern, Corinne Bowen, Amy Gregorovich, Louise Parzatka, Stephen Hodge, Cristina Vara Almirall, Jenna Hepburn</p> <p>Via Zoom: Alison Fowler, Nick Cherrie, Isha Scott, Jessica Thomas and Jane Sinnamon</p> <p>Externals: John Scales (Founder JWS Research) (Exited the Chamber at 6.09pm)</p>	
Apologies	Cr Mazarella and Tammi Rose	
Disclosure of COI:	Nil	
	1.1	Acknowledgement of Country
	1.2	Declaration of Interest
	1.3	Action and Agreement Record – 1 July 2025
	2.1	Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey 2025 - External Presenters

	3.1	Review of the Public Agenda for Council's Meeting on 22 July 2025
	5.1	Mayoral Taskforce - Back Your Neighbour Campaign
	5.2	Draft Council Order in accordance with Section 25(2) and 26(2) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 for Community Engagement
	5.3	Draft People and Dogs in Parks Plan
	5.4	Climate Change Briefing
	6.0	Mayor & CEO Update
	7.0	General Business
	8.0	Forum Finish
Completed By:	Gina Walter	

Informal meeting of Councillors

Public Record



Meeting Name:	Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Committee	
Date:	30 July 2025	Start Time: 1.00pm Finish Time: 2.40pm
Venue:	Conference Room A	
Attendees:	<p>Councillors: Cr Len Cox</p> <p>Other attendees: Tracey Wannet, Kelly Parker, Julie McDonald, Marie Pleuger, Jackson Ellis, Michelle McDonald, Lisa McIlfratrick</p> <p>CEO/Directors:</p> <p>Officers: Amanda May, Jenna Hepburn, Brendan Jahn, Erika Atwill, Shannon Maynard, Bronwyn Grass, Methni Dahanayake, Karen O'Gorman, Gabby Golds, Sarah Brophy, Alison Fowler, Matt Harrington</p>	
Apologies	Cr Richard Higgins, Shek Kho, Paul Stoney, Rachael Giddens, Isabella O'Hare, James Wood, Renae Purcell, Simone Marais,	
Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:	None	
Matter/s Discussed:	1.1	NDIS updates
	1.2	Consultation on Draft Key Life Stages Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy
	1.3	Update on Warburton Mountain Bike Trail
	1.4	Update on Accessible parking bay locations
	1.5	Disability Inclusion Officer update
	1.6	Member updates
Completed By:	Amanda May	

16. URGENT BUSINESS

In accordance with Chapter 3 Rule 24 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

17. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

In accordance with Chapter 3 Rule 24 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

There were no Confidential Items listed for this meeting.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Council is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 26 August 2025 commencing at 7.00pm, at Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference.



In providing for the good governance of its community, Councillors are reminded of their obligation to abide by the provisions as set within the Local Government Act 2020 and the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

When attending a Council Meeting, Councillors should adhere to the procedures set out in the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

The following is a guide for all Councillors to ensure they act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of Yarra Ranges as a whole.

1. Councillors will respect the personal views of other Councillors and the decisions of Council.
2. Councillors may publicly express their own opinions on Council matters but not so as to undermine the standing of Council in the community.
3. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council.
4. Councillors will incur expenditure in a responsible manner and in accordance with the Councillor Expenditure and Policy.
5. Councillors will avoid conflicts of interest and will always openly disclose any direct and indirect interests where they exist.
6. Councillors will act with integrity and respect when interacting with Council staff and members of the public.
7. Councillors will demonstrate fairness in all dealings and conduct and be open with and accountable to the community at all times.
8. Councillors will conduct themselves in a manner that does not cause detriment to Council or the Yarra Ranges community.