



YARRA RANGES

DRAFT PEOPLE AND DOGS IN PARKS PLAN 2025-2035

Summary

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
1 Complete a review of the provision, access, and level of service of dog off-leash areas throughout Yarra Ranges.	Immediate
Based on the results of Action 1, develop a priority list for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade or relocation of existing dog off-leash areas. • Provision of new dog off-leash areas. 	
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.	Immediate
3 Undertake a review of dog-prohibited areas.	Short
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.	Short
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.	Short
6 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. 	Medium
7 Ensure a scheduled presence of Authorised Officers at dog off-leash areas.	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>

