



**Item 7.1 Petition - Public Spaces on Port Phillip Beaches - Inclusion and Safety**

A Petition containing 19 signatures was received from local residents.

**The Petition states the following:-**

*Currently some people feel unsafe and excluded from the beaches of Port Phillip due to the presence of off-leash dogs.*

*Equity: The current dog regulations ( off-leash, dog prohibited) for the beaches of Port Phillip do not provide fair access for those who do not want to go to a beach which has off-leash dogs, especially in Off-Peak Season, when access is off-leash on all beaches at all times. There are about 13 times as many people in Port Phillip who do not own dogs as those who do, however, it seems that most policy re usage of public space by dogs on the beaches has been Based more on the wishes of dog owners, rather than the whole community.*

*Promotion of Public Health: Some residents hesitate to go to the beach because of the off-leash dogs and previous confrontations with dogs and their owners. Reluctance to go to the beach adversely impacts well-being, connection with other people and exercise opportunities. Enforcement of Dog Regulations is Lacking on the Beaches: Some-dog owners fail to keep their dog under effective control. Council enforcement is inadequate.*

*The following Petitioners (Residents/Rate-payers of Port Phillip) hereby request that:*

- 1. a review is undertaken about dogs off-leash in the Public Spaces of Port Phillip before any trial or changes to dog regulations on the beaches are made (Public Open Space Strategy, p. 34, 8-12-21, see below a);*
- 2. in conducting the review, consultation needs to be conducted on a representative basis, as recommended in the Petition Response Report, (p. 247, 3-11-21, (see below h);*
- 3. the review examines whether dog off-leash and dog prohibited beaches in both Seasons are equitable for those who do and those who don't want dogs off-leash; and that the beaches without dogs off-leash provide extended walking opportunities and disabled access;*
- 4. the review is conducted urgently to prevent a further Off-Peak Season (7 months) without dog prohibited or on-leash beach access, especially during the Pandemic;*
- 5. Council provides adequate resources to enforce the dog regulations without delay so that beach users can be safe; and that the review also examines what is needed in the long term to enforce compliance to the dog regulations;*
- 6. community members are given the opportunity to suggest questions for the review.*

**A Public Open Space Strategy, Council Meeting 8-12-21, 10.4, p. 34** *"Inclusion of a new key move to investigate opportunities for new, and review -permitted times of existing;-dog off-leash areas-in all public.open spaces, including beaches, which is identified as a short-term action, commencing in 2022"*

**B Petition Response Report, Council Meeting 3-11-21, 10.3, p. 24 7** *"Should Council decide to proceed with a review or trial, a market research approach is recommended to provide Council with a solid dataset to support future decisions. This approach would involve developing quotas for representation and random sampling to ensure outcomes of engagement reflect a representative sample of our community and key stakeholders."*



### OFFICER COMMENT

- Updates to the Public Space Strategy and The Domestic Animal Management Plan were adopted this year and the topic of dog parks and off-leash areas came up during both of these consultations, with people strongly for and against changes.
- The municipality has limited public space and, due to this, there are a number of challenges involved in balancing the desires of dog walkers with the views and needs of all other users of our beaches and open spaces.
- There have been a number of petitions to extend the locations and times of dog off-leash parks, the latest on 3 November to accompany the adoption of the DAMP. There have also been frequent complaints from other community members of the impacts of dog parks on their amenity.
- On 3 November 2021 a petition requesting changed dog restrictions on Port Melbourne Beaches was presented. Council moved to:
  - Retain the current dog restrictions on beaches
  - Include an action in the draft Public Space Strategy to undertake a review of all on-beach dog restrictions
- The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2021- 25 was adopted in November 2021. The DAMP is a four-year Plan that provides Council with a strategic, balanced approach towards promoting responsible pet ownership and the welfare of dogs and cats in the community; and protecting the community and the environment from nuisance dogs and cats. The Plan also outlines how Council will enforce legislative requirements and compliance with its local laws related to animal management in Council's Local Law No.1 (Community Amenity) 2013.
- The DAMP includes actions to:
  - Ensure the needs of dogs and their owners are incorporated into the draft City of Port Phillip Public Space Strategy (PSS) through the delivery of:
    - MO Moran Reserve Dog Park
    - Investigation of a fenced dog off leash area along the light rail in Port Melbourne and at Clarke Reserve in Elwood
    - Develop criteria for dog off leash parks and investigate opportunities for new, and review permitted times in existing, dog off-leash areas, in all public open spaces including beaches
  - When developing landscape master plans, consider:
    - Ways to provide separate fenced areas for small and large dogs
    - Provision of lighting of popular dog walking areas.
    - Feasibility of incorporating dog agility equipment
- The Places for People: Public Space Strategy 2022-32 is a long-term plan that outlines the challenges, outcomes, prioritisation approach and actions required to realise the full potential of Port Phillip's already enviable public space network. The 10-year Action Plan that will guide the operation, delivery, upgrade and design of public spaces for each neighbourhood across the City, and includes actions relating to dog parks and off-leash areas. Including:

# MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL

## 2 FEBRUARY 2022



- design and manage spaces for more than one use to increase appeal and level of use (e.g. sporting facilities, dog off-leash areas, events, casual and unplanned activities and play etc)
- investigate opportunities for new, and review permitted times in existing, dog off-leash areas (in all open spaces, including beaches)
- prepare an overarching framework to support Council in managing the shared use of public open space, including, but not limited to, formal and informal sport and recreation, commercial uses, festivals, events and activations, dogs, community gardens and public space infrastructure
- Council's budget build for 2021/22 financial year will include consideration of funding to develop Off-Leash Dog Guidelines – which will deliver the Public Space Strategy outcome of reviewing dog off-leash areas.
- This project will include community consultation. Council's objective for community consultation is to hear from a broad and diverse range of stakeholders and use different avenues to gain this comprehensive perspective.
- In line with our Community Engagement Policy, Council's Strategic Engagement Team is always keen to hear of ways to improve their consultation and encourages the community to contact them with any ideas or concerns. – [engagement@portphillip.vic.gov.au](mailto:engagement@portphillip.vic.gov.au)
- The community can also keep up to date with all upcoming consultations and Council news through signing up for notifications from Have Your Say, Council Meetings and Diversity.
- Council Animal Management and City Amenity officers will continue to enforce the dog regulations in public space. Patrols are conducted daily, and enforcement action is taken when owners allow their dogs in prohibited beach areas.

### OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Petition.
2. Thanks the petitioners for their petition.
3. Notes the challenges involved in balancing the desires of dog walkers with the views and needs of all other users of our beaches and open spaces.
4. Notes that the Domestic Animal Management Plan and People and Places: Public Space Strategy 2022-32 contains actions in response to community feedback to review dog off lead areas.
5. Considers the development of Off-Leash Dog Guidelines in the 2022/23 Council Budget and Plan. This project will investigate opportunities for new, and review permitted times in existing, dog off-leash areas (in all open spaces, including beaches).
6. Includes community consultation in the development of the Off-Leash Dog Guidelines which will consider the views of a diverse range of stakeholders.
7. Encourages petitioners to contact the Strategic Engagement Team for any ideas or concerns regarding community consultation for this project - [engagement@portphillip.vic.gov.au](mailto:engagement@portphillip.vic.gov.au).

### ATTACHMENTS

Nil