

2.1 OFF-LEASH AREA REVIEW & DRAFT OFF-LEASH POLICY

(Author:JG)

Responsible Director: Russell Hopkins

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with Council's resolution made at its 30 November 2021 Council meeting, officers have completed a review of Dog Off-Leash Areas within Monash and drafted an Off-Leash Policy (Attachment A) for Council consideration and community consultation.

Based on the principles embedded in the draft policy, the Off-Leash Area Review has identified opportunities for:

- Up to 14 **new** potential OLA sites.
- The **expansion** of 4 existing OLAs – Ashwood/Jingella/Holmesglen Reserve, Mount Waverley Linear Reserve (Heany Street & Beverley Grove), Pamela- Smyth Street electricity Easement, Janice Road – Ivanhoe Street Electricity Easement.
- The **removal** of 1 existing OLA – Damper Creek Conservation Reserve.
- The **reduction** in size of 4 existing OLAs – Jack Edwards, Gardiners, Mulgrave & Caloola Reserves.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the findings the Off-Leash Area Review and present the draft Off-Leash Policy (Attachment A) for Council consideration and seek approval to consult with the community on these.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS/ISSUES

Experts note that many dog off-leash areas (OLAs), and particularly fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs), are installed without being accompanied by a comprehensive dog off-leash policy that provides a rationale for the provision of unfenced, partially fenced and fully-fenced leash areas.

There are many considerations that need to be taken into account in relation to the provision of off-leash and potential fenced off-leash areas. At the 30 November 2021 Council meeting, Council endorsed 16 key design principles and considerations that are to be applied to the review of existing and design and development of new off-leash areas in Monash.

Based on industry best practice and the endorsed OLA principles, an Off-Leash Policy has been drafted for Council consideration as detailed in Attachment A.

Based on the principles embedded in the draft Off-Leash Policy, a review of off-leash areas has been completed (Appendix 1).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications for any future recommendations in relation to the provision of off-leash areas will be in accordance with the Off-Leash Policy. This policy details the minimum service and infrastructure provision standards to be used to guide future design and management of off-leash areas (including potential fenced off-leash areas).

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended Council approve the Off-Leash Area Review as shown at Appendix 1 and the draft Off-Leash Policy (Attachment A) for public exhibition and community feedback, with the findings of the consultation and final recommendations tabled for Council consideration at a future meeting.

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RECOMMENDATION/S

That Council:

1. *Notes the findings of the review of off-leash areas as presented in Appendix 1.*
2. *Notes the Draft Dog Off-Leash Policy as presented in Attachment A and that this draft:*
 - *incorporates the 16 key design principles endorsed by Council at the 30 November 2021 Council meeting; and*
 - *has been used to directly inform the review of off-leash areas as presented in Appendix 1 which identifies potential changes to existing and potential new off-leash areas.*
3. *Approve the public exhibition of the Off-Leash Area Review and Draft Dog Off-Leash Policy (Attachment A) for community feedback.*
4. *Approve temporary signage to be erected at reserves where changes to existing, new or potential off-leash or fenced off-leash areas are proposed to inform the community of these proposed changes and provide details on how they can have their say.*
5. *Consider the findings of the community consultation at a future meeting.*

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings the Dog Off-Leash Area Review as shown in Appendix 1 and a draft Dog Off-Leash Policy (Attachment A) for Council consideration and approval to publicly exhibit findings and the draft policy for community feedback before seeking Council endorsement at a future meeting.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting held 30 November 2021, Council resolved to:

1. *Note that work has been done on FOLAs as per the 15 December 2020 resolution of Council, including investigation of potential locations having regard to the off-leash area key principles as outlined in Attachment A.*
2. *Note the key considerations and challenges of FOLAs as outlined in this report and resolve not to proceed with FOLAs at this point in time.*

3. *Accepts in-principle that for the above reasons, the scale and number of any potential FOLA developments in Monash need to be further considered following further assessment and consultation, but if introduced should be on a limited basis.*
4. *Note the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) action for review of OLAs and accepts that this will impact existing areas, and the need to develop a policy and identify new OLAs (including possibly FOLAs) accepting this will have an impact on current and future locations where people can exercise their dogs off lead.*
5. *Agree to undertake a holistic review of OLAs, including consideration of any changes/removal of existing OLAs and the identification of new possible OLA/FOLA locations.*
6. *Accept that the review of existing OLAs will be undertaken within accordance with the 16 key principles as detailed in Attachment A.*
7. *Consult with clubs and users where OLAs exist and may be subject to any changes/removal of existing OLAs and report to Council at the appropriate time on proposed actions and feedback as well as a draft policy to inform the establishment (and retention) of OLAs, including how FOLAs may be considered in the future.*
8. *That following the review referred to in part 6 of the motion that Council consults with the broader community to seek their feedback on the review, including OLAs and FOLAs, moving forward.*

Officers have since completed a review of existing dog off-leash areas in Monash and identified 14 potential new off-leash areas for Council consideration as detailed as summarised in Appendix 1 of this report. The review also recommends the reduction in size of four (4) and removal of one (1) existing off-leash areas.

Subject to Council endorsement, officers will erect signage at the reserves where changes to off-leash areas are proposed and invite community feedback regarding the proposed changes.

It is important to note the proposed changes have been directly informed by the 16 key design principles endorsed by Council at the 30 November 2021 Council meeting. These principles have also been embedded in the Draft Dog Off-Leash Policy and should be used to inform any decisions made around the future provision of dog off-leash areas.

DISCUSSION

Traditionally, planning for dog off-leash areas has not been subject to the same planning rigour as for other community facilities such as parks, sportsgrounds and playspaces. As a result, off-leash areas have generally been accommodated in and around existing parkland infrastructure (e.g. sportsgrounds and passive open space) and in smaller and/or less popular parks.

This has often resulted in conflict due to incompatible uses, inadequate buffers between off-leash and other parkland activities and non-compliance of some dog owners (e.g. dog litter and damage to sportsgrounds).

There is also a need to better understand the key drivers behind community requests for fenced off-leash areas (or 'fenced dog parks'). For example, would additional and/or a more equitable distribution of OLAs across the municipality alleviate the perceived need for exclusive fenced off-leash areas for dogs?

There are many considerations (pros and cons) associated with the provision of OLAs (including FOLAs). With this in mind, officers have reviewed existing and potential new off-leash areas, whilst being considerate of the endorsed OLA design principles.

Spatial mapping of existing and proposed OLAs has also been considered as part of the review to ensure more accessible and equitable provision, such as aspiring to meet a minimum OLA provision standard of having an OLA located within 800 metres of 95% of all residential dwellings (refer to Appendix 2).

Draft OLA Policy

Experts note that many dog off-leash areas (OLAs) and particularly fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) are installed without being accompanied by a comprehensive dog off-leash policy that provides a rationale for the provision of unfenced, partially fenced and fully fenced leash areas.

The *Planning, Design and Management of Off-Leash Areas Technical Manual 2019* (or Technical Manual) has been developed to provide a best practice approach to the planning, design and management off-leash, fenced and partially fenced off-leash areas for dogs. The Technical Manual cautions land managers to give '*...careful consideration to the rationale for providing FOLAs, and to understand the implications of acquiescing to pressure from dog owners who are not prepared to actively supervise their dog or who cannot control their dogs as they are legally required to do*'.

A dog off-leash policy is required to ensure decision-making is based on a sound understanding of dog control and management implications, particularly those associated with:

- Dog behaviour in confined spaces and dog owners who do not remove nervous/ poorly behaved dogs from the area and the perception by some dog owners that these are areas appropriate for poorly educated/behaved and aggressive dogs.
- The additional resources required for compliance monitoring and addressing complaints relating to lack of compliance monitoring.

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- Poor or uninformed understanding of OLA design requirements, particularly as they relate to risk management.
 - Capital costs associated with a space that is appropriately designed in order to help manage dog behaviour in small and/or confined spaces.
 - Ongoing budget requirements for the appropriate management and maintenance of fenced off-leash areas including:
 - routine maintenance and replenishment of surfaces and vegetation
 - waste collection/cleansing
 - local laws/animal management patrols/compliance monitoring
 - complaint handling
 - community education
 - active programming of the space
 - dog poo bags and drinking stations.
 - Usage requirements including:
 - hours of use
 - age considerations relating to control of dogs, children/toddlers, etc.
 - number of dogs per person/use by commercial operators and dog groups, etc.

The draft Dog Off-Leash Policy has been prepared for community consideration as part of this review. Community feedback will be sought before a final policy is presented to Council for consideration and endorsement at a future Council meeting.

The major implications of implementing the policy include:

1. Specialised Sports Surfaces – Dog free zones

Dogs are currently allowed off-leash on some sportsgrounds and will continue to be allowed off-leash on some sportsgrounds, such as designated B and C grade grounds.

Under the policy, specialised sport surfaces such as premier A grade sportsgrounds and synthetic sports surfaces, will all become dog free, e.g. Jack Edwards & Gardiners Reserves' NPL match (turf) pitches and synthetic pitches, Ashwood Reserve synthetic hockey pitch, Central Reserve and Warrawee Park ovals.

2. Conservation Reserves – On-leash Areas

To protect high levels of biodiversity, Council designated conservation reserves are to be reclassified as dog on-leash areas in areas where provision standards are predominately met (i.e. aspire to provide an OLA within 800m of 95% of residential dwellings) e.g. Damper Creek Conservation Reserve and Mulgrave Reserve Wetlands.

3. Major Shared Trails - On-leash Areas

Transport Victoria has identified several primary and main Strategic Cycling Corridor (SCC) routes or major shared trails run through Monash such as Scotchmans Creek Trail, Djerring (or Station) Trail, Gardiners Creek Trail, Dandenong Creek Trail, Waverley Rail Trail, Monash Freeway Trail (part) and Syndal Pipe Track Trail (potential).

These trails are heavily utilised by commuter cyclists, recreational cyclists, joggers and walkers.

To minimise potential conflicts of use between dogs and trail users and to encourage greater cycling for transport through the provision of safer, lower stress cycle environments, it is recommended dogs be on-leash 10m either side of a major shared trail e.g. along creek corridors at Ashwood, Napier Park, Caloola & Gardiners Reserves.

OLA Review

Using the draft policy as a framework, the review has identified:

- Up to 14 **new** potential OLA sites
- The **expansion** of 4 existing OLAs – Ashwood, Jingella, Holmesglen Reserve, Mount Waverley Linear Reserve (Heany Street & Beverley Grove), Pamela- Smyth Street electricity Easement, Janice Road – Ivanhoe Street Electricity Easement
- The **removal** of 1 existing OLA – Damper Creek Conservation Reserve
- The **reduction** in size of 4 existing OLAs – Jack Edwards, Gardiners, Mulgrave & Caloola Reserves.

Spatial mapping of the proposed OLA sites also demonstrates that a minimum provision standard of an OLA being located within 800 metres of 95% of all residential dwellings can essentially be met (note: excludes non-residential precincts such as Monash University, industrial business zones and golf courses); refer Appendix 2: OLA Catchment Mapping (Existing & Proposed OLAs) – 800m Minimum Provision Standard.

The review has also notionally identified areas that may be suitable for partial or full fencing subject to investigation and consultation. Due to the value of open space across the city, it is recommended OLAs flagged for potential fencing not be deemed exclusively for dogs (i.e. designated ‘fenced dog parks’) but remain accessible for all whilst giving dog-owners some comfort that their dogs can be safely contained in an OLA.

Subject to Council approval, consultation with the community regarding the proposed changes to OLAs will occur over the next 3-6 months. Consultation findings, a final policy and officer recommendations regarding changes to OLAs will be presented to Council for endorsement at a meeting in late 2022.

Future Reviews

Future OLA reviews should ideally be undertaken every four years with community consultation for these reviews undertaken as part of the development of each new Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). The DAMP recommends the review of off-leash areas to ascertain:

- Sites where there is a conflict between dog off-leash and other activities.
- Possible opportunities for additional off-leash areas.
- Sites where off-leash provision may need to be modified given other site considerations e.g. reclassification of sportsgrounds due to capital works, changes in the level of sport being played at reserves.
- Opportunities to better align on/off-leash boundaries for clarity of understanding (community) and ease of monitoring (compliance staff).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

At the 30 November 2021 Council meeting Council agreed to develop a Dog Off-Leash Policy to ensure decision-making is based on a sound understanding of dog control and management implications.

GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT

More data is needed to understand gender implications regarding dog ownership and how women, men and non-binary people access and use dog off-leash areas. Due to a lack of data, a gender impact assessment has not been undertaken at this time. It is recommended Council undertake a gender impact assessment as part of any future DAMP consultation/s.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

An increase in the number of off-leash reserves will place more pressure on Community Laws to educate and regulate dog owners. An additional Animal Management Officer (0.6-1.0 EFT) is considered necessary to support implementation and enforcement of the proposed changes.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

OLAs have benefits, including providing opportunities for community connectivity and for dog owners and their dogs to engage in physical activity and socialise with other dog owners/dogs.

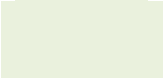


It is important that OLAs are not fenced in response to pressure from those who cannot or do not effectively control their dogs. Similarly, an understanding of dog and human behaviour in fenced environments is needed to ensure the design, maintenance, management and regulation of existing and new off-leash areas (including fenced OLAs) is adequate.

It is recommended Council approve the Off-Leash Area Review as shown at Appendix 1 and the draft Dog Off-Leash Policy (Attachment A) for public exhibition and community feedback, with the findings of the consultation and final recommendations tabled for Council consideration at a future meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Draft Dog Off-Leash Policy

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF OLA REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**LEGEND:**

	New/expanded OLA
	Removed/reduced OLA
	Potential future FOLAs (subject to consultation)

Existing Off-Leash Areas (x31)		
<i>Reserve</i>	<i>Recommended Change</i>	<i>Recommended Status</i>
1. Gardiners Reserve, Burwood Change to name Gardiners Reserve North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced OLA ▪ A grade pitch – no dogs ▪ Synthetic pitch – no dogs ▪ Shared Trail – on-lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA - north pitch area only
2. Ashwood Reserve – Change name to Ashwood/Jingella/Holmesglen Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded OLA to include part Jingella Reserve ▪ A grade pitch – no dogs ▪ Synthetic pitch – no dogs ▪ Shared Trail – on-lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-lead with no dogs on A grade & synthetic pitches ▪ OLA parts of Jingella Reserve & Ashwood Reserve North
3. Electra Reserve, Ashwood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
4. Federal Reserve, Mount Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
5. Damper Creek Conservation Reserve, Mount Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remove OLA status ▪ Conservation reserve - on-leash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-leash

6. Tally Ho Reserve, Mount Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
7. Glen Waverley North Reserve, Glen Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
8. Capital Reserve, Glen Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
9. Batesford Reserve, Chadstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
10. Heany Street Reserve, Mount Waverley Change name to Mount Waverley Linear Reserve (Heany Street & Beverley Grove)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded OLA to include Mount Waverley Linear Reserve North (Beverley Grove Reserve) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand OLA to include Mount Waverley Linear Reserve North (Beverley Grove Reserve)
11. Mount Waverley Reserve, Mount Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
12. Bogong Reserve, Glen Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA ▪ Note: A Conservation Management Plan (pending) for this site may recommend changes be considered in relation to the current status of this reserve.
13. Hinkler Reserve, Glen Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
14. Dick Mason Reserve, Glen Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change ▪ A grade baseball diamonds – no dogs ▪ Major Shared Trail – on-lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA – Dick Mason oval only
15. Pamela-Smyth Street Electricity Easement, Mount Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded OLA to area east of Smyth Street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA ▪ Consider fencing along street frontages ▪ Potential FOLA at 50-56 Smyth Street
16. Janice Road – Ivanhoe Street Electricity Easement, Glen Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expanded OLA to area east of Janice Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand OLA to area east of Janice Road
17. Whites Lane Retarding Basin, Glen Waverley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA – retarding basin
18. Herford Crescent Reserve, Wheelers Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
19. Caloola Reserve, Oakleigh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced OLA ▪ Minor change but still predominately OLA ▪ Major Shared Trail – change to on-lead north section of the reserve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA – playing surfaces and open space south of shared trail
20. Scotchmans Run Reserve, Oakleigh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA

21. Argyle Reserve, Hughesdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
22. Jack Edwards Reserve, Oakleigh Change name to Jack Edwards Reserve South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced OLA ▪ A grade pitch – no dogs ▪ Synthetic pitch – no dogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA – triangular areas south of reserve
23. Princes Highway Reserve, Oakleigh East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
24. Carlson Reserve, Clayton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
25. Lum Reserve (excluding the bushland area), Wheelers Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
26. Columbia Park Reserve, Wheelers Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
27. Freeway Reserve, Mulgrave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
28. Mulgrave Reserve, Wheelers Hill Change name to Mulgrave Reserve North West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduced OLA ▪ Mulgrave Wetlands – no dog ▪ Major Shared Trail – on-lead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA – NW section of reserve including west, middle, east ovals
29. Southern Reserve, Mulgrave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
30. Gladeswood Reserve, Mulgrave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA
31. Golf Course Reserve (part) Waverley Road, Glen Waverley Change name to Glen Waverley Sports Hub South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OLA ▪ Boundary will likely be impacted by construction of Glen Waverley Sports Hub

Potential NEW Off-Leash Areas (x14)		
Reserve	Potential Change	Potential Status
32. Larpent Reserve, Glen Waverley	▪ New	▪ OLA
33. Highview Park, Glen Waverley	▪ New	▪ OLA
34. Jordan Reserve, Chadstone	▪ New	▪ OLA
35. Mayfield Park, Mount Waverley	▪ New	▪ OLA
36. Brandon Park, Glen Waverley	▪ New	▪ OLA
37. Sunnybrook Drive Reserve East (area west of tennis courts & east of Jells Road), Wheelers Hill	▪ New	▪ OLA
38. Wellington Reserve, Mulgrave	▪ New	▪ OLA
39. Whitehaven Crescent Reserve, Mulgrave	▪ New	▪ OLA
40. Fregon Reserve, Clayton	▪ New	▪ OLA
41. Davies Reserve, Oakleigh South	▪ New	▪ OLA
42. Bowman Street Reserve, Mount Waverley	▪ New ▪ Note: Nearby Bowman Street & Federal Reserves to help off-set the loss of the off-leash area at Damper Creek Conservation Reserve	▪ OLA
43. Finch Street Reserve, Notting Hill	▪ New – to address gap area in OLA provision (refer Appendix 2)	▪ OLA
44. F E Hunt Reserve (part), Oakleigh East	▪ New - to address gap area in OLA provision (refer Appendix 2)	▪ OLA
45. Off Keylana Boulevard & Legana Street, Mount Waverley	▪ New - to address gap area in OLA provision (refer Appendix 2)	▪ OLA

APPENDIX 2: OLA CATCHMENT MAPPING (EXISTING & PROPOSED OLAs) – 800m MINIMUM PROVISION STANDARD

