



INNER WEST COUNCIL

Dog Off-Leash Areas in Parks Policy



November 2019

Dog Off-Leash Areas in Parks Policy

DOCUMENT PROFILE

Title	Dog Off-Leash Areas in Parks Policy
Summary	The purpose of the Policy is to identify appropriate dog off-leash areas in parks so that public spaces can be enjoyed by all members of the community and natural areas are protected.
Background	Council encourages the appropriate use of public spaces for dog walking as it helps contribute to the health, wellbeing and liveability of the Inner West. It is Council's objective to ensure that dog walking in public spaces is suitable and managed in a manner which is safe and which is appropriate to the local natural environment and surrounding community.
Policy Type	Council
Relevant Strategic Plan Objective	<p>Strategic direction 4: Caring, happy, healthy communities Outcome 4.1 Everyone feels welcome and connected to the community</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster inclusive communities where everyone can participate in community life <p>Outcome 4.3 The community is healthy and people have a sense of wellbeing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide the facilities, spaces and programs that support wellbeing and healthy communities <p>Strategic direction 1: An ecologically sustainable Inner West Outcome 1.2 Inner West has a diverse and increasing urban forest that supports connected habitats for flora and fauna</p> <p>Outcome 1.3 The community is water sensitive, with clean, swimmable waterways</p>
Relevant Council References	<p>Events in Parks Guidelines Sporting Grounds Allocations Policy Commercial Fitness Trainers Policy Park Plans of Management Companion Animal Action Plan Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West</p>
Main Legislative Or Regulatory Reference	<p>Companion Animals Act 1998 Companion Animals Regulations 2008 Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</p>
Applicable Delegation Of Authority	As per delegations' register
Record Notes	External available document
Version Control	See last page

Document:	Council Policy	<i>Uncontrolled Copy When Printed</i>	
Custodian:	Parks & Recreation Planning Manager	Version #	Version #
Approved By:	Director Infrastructure	TRIM Ref #	XXXXXX
Adopted By:	Council	Publish Location	Intranet/Internet
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Policy is to identify appropriate dog off-leash areas in parks so that public spaces can be enjoyed by all members of the community and natural areas are protected.

2. OBJECTIVE

Council is responsible for the management of all activities within parks, reserves, sporting grounds and public open space. There is an ongoing high demand for open space resources within the Inner West, particularly with increasing densities. Council must actively manage access to the parks.

Many Inner West residents own dogs and wish to walk and exercise them in public spaces and public parks.

Council encourages the appropriate use of public spaces for dog walking as it helps contribute to the health, wellbeing and liveability of the Inner West. It is Council's objective to ensure that dog walking in public spaces is suitable and managed in a manner which is safe and which is appropriate to the local natural environment and surrounding community.

3. SCOPE

3.1. In scope

This Policy applies to all Council owned and managed public parks (including areas of Callan Park licenced to Council - Balmain Road, Glover Street and Waterfront Drive sporting grounds and the Callan Park bushcare area).

3.2. Out of scope

This Policy does not apply to privately owned land or land which is not Council owned or managed.

Parks Managed by the State Government

This Policy does not apply to parks owned and managed by the State Government, including Callan Park (all areas outside of the areas licenced to Council) and Ballast Point Park.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Council encourages the appropriate use of public spaces for dog walking as it helps contribute to the health, wellbeing and liveability of the Inner West. It is Council's objective to ensure that dog walking in public spaces is suitable and managed in a manner which is safe and which is appropriate to the local environment and surrounding community.

The purpose of the Policy is to identify appropriate dog off-leash areas in parks so that public spaces can be enjoyed by all members of the community and natural areas are protected.

5. POLICY

5.1. Control of Dogs

All dogs must be leashed in all public spaces and public parks, except in designated off-leash areas in parks. In off-leash areas, all dogs must continue to be under the effective control of their owners or handlers.

The control and management of dogs is addressed in the Companion Animals Action Plan.

5.2. Off-Leash Areas in Parks

The Companion Animals Act requires Council to provide at least one off-leash area within the Inner West.

In a high density, inner city area such as the Inner West, public spaces to walk or run the dog are very important. Off-leash exercise helps to socialise dogs, relieve boredom and reduce incidences of unacceptable nuisance behaviour such as uncontrolled barking.

To maximise opportunities for off-leash exercising and socialising of dogs, Council will provide designated off-leash parks and open space areas and progressively explore opportunities for additional off-leash areas when evidence and community feedback indicates this is appropriate.

Consideration must be given to other park users and to the protection of biodiversity, including native wildlife. Off-leash areas are still public areas and they are open for all to enjoy, not just dog owners.

All dogs within designated off-leash areas must be under the effective control of their owner or handler. The responsible management of dogs is covered by the Companion Animal Action Plan.

Effective signage and stencilling will be used to identify off-leash parks and open spaces. Dog-tidy stations will be installed and maintained in off-leash areas.

Dogs must be on a leash unless signs specifically permit otherwise.

5.3. New Off-Leash Areas in Parks

Off-leash areas in parks must be included within the relevant park Plan of Management. The Plans of Management across the Inner West are being reviewed in accordance with a prioritised strategy.

When investigating potential new off-leash areas in parks, the following criteria will generally be applied:

- Open spaces where there is sufficient width to ensure safe use and passage by other park users (without dogs);
- Open space that has natural boundaries (eg. Plantings or grade changes);
- Open spaces that are not within 10 metres of a playground or children's playing apparatus;
- Open space that are not within 10 metres of a food preparation areas, BBQ, picnic area or food consumption areas;
- Open spaces that are located at a safe distance from busy roads (noting that owners must still have effective control of their dogs);
- Open spaces that are not located adjacent to bushcare / ecological restoration sites unless they are fenced; and
- Open spaces that are not located within Council declared wildlife protection area or where there may be detriment to public safety or wildlife.

Consideration may be given to time share arrangements, where the park may be off-leash at certain times of the day/ week and on-leash at other times.

New off-leash areas will not generally be fenced. New additional lighting will not generally be installed in new off-leash areas.

Council will generally provide bubblers, with dog bowls, within or near off-leash areas in parks. Council will generally support the planting of trees if there are insufficient trees for shade purposes.

5.4. Dog Waste

In all public areas, public parks and off-leash areas in parks, dog owners have a legal responsibility to immediately remove their dog's faeces and properly dispose of them.

Dog faeces can be a hazard to human health and has been shown to contribute to high bacteria levels in local waterways. In all public areas, including footpaths, verges, bushcare sites, natural areas, public parks and off-leash areas in parks, dog owners have a legal responsibility to immediately pick up all their dog's waste.

Council will provide dog tidy stations (including dog litter bags) at off-leash parks and other suitable locations.

5.5. Prohibited Areas

Dogs are prohibited from some public places, at all times, including:

- Children's playgrounds;
- Sporting grounds when booked for use by sporting clubs or schools;
- Signposted recreation areas, such as sporting grounds, pitches and courts; and
- Signposted and/or fenced bushcare protection / ecological restoration areas.

Council may provide dog tying posts near the above prohibited areas, to assist dog owners in restricting their dogs from entering these areas.

A person with a disability is entitled to be accompanied by a certified assistance animal into or onto any building or place open to the public (including the above prohibited areas).

5.6 Commercial Dog Walking In Designated Dog off Leash Parks.

There are increasing pressures on the use and access to Council's Parks and Open Space network. Under the Companion Animals Act, a dog is not considered to be under the effective control of a person if the person has more than 4 dogs under his or her control.-Concerns have been expressed from the community that a number of commercial dog walkers are not adhering to the law in this regard and that a number of parks currently being accessed by commercial operators are not suitable spaces for such high use. In response to this community issue, Council will develop a Commercial Dog Walker Permit policy to address:

- equity of access,
- public liability issues associated with commercial dog walkers
- Ability to identify, mitigate & manage dog behavioural related matters
- compliance with relevant companion animal legislation
- the effective management of parks and open space areas to prevent over use and minimise the potential for recreational conflict (with other park users) .

A policy framework will provide clarification on the obligations of commercial dog walkers as well as ensure good open space management. This policy will be developed with input and ownership from Council's Companion Animal Services team, Legal Services and Sport and Recreation.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

Parks & Recreation Planning staff are responsible for:

- Engaging with the community on proposed new off-leash areas in parks;
- Installing appropriate signage &/or stencilling in parks regarding dog management;
- Installing appropriate infrastructure such as dog tidy stations in parks;
- Reviewing and revising this Dog Off-Leash Areas in Parks Policy when required. Substantive changes must go to Council for approval (this does not include minor administrative updates).

Regulatory Services staff are responsible for:

- The management of dogs and companion animals in public spaces and public parks;
- Preparation and implementation of the Companion Animal Action Plan; and
- Enforcement of relevant Companion Animals Legislation

7. ASSOCIATED PROCEDURES

The following are related legislation, policies and procedures:

- Companion Animals Act 1998
- Companion Animals Regulations 2008
- Local Government Act 1993
- Events in Parks Guidelines
- Sporting Grounds Allocations Policy
- Commercial Fitness Trainers Policy
- Park Plans of Management and Masterplans
- Recreation Needs Study: A Healthier Inner West
- Companion Animal Action Plan

Version Control - POLICY HISTORY:

Governance Use only:

Version	Amended By	Changes Made	Date	TRIM #
1	Director Infrastructure	New IWC Policy	November 2019	
2				