



EXTRACTS FROM

PLANNING, DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT OF OFF-LEASH AREAS TECHNICAL MANUAL

(INCLUDING FENCED OFF-LEASH AREAS)

Lesley Humphreys (LMH Consulting/Paws4Play)

FULL TECHNICAL MANUAL
'Planning, Managing, Designing Off-Leash Areas (including Fenced Off-Leash Areas)'

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Definitions	
Term	Definition
FOLA	Off-leash areas that are fenced
LGAs	Local Government Authorities (Aust)
OLAs	Unfenced off-leash areas where dogs are allowed off the leash in line with relevant state and local government Acts/legislation.
Open space/ public open space	Areas of parkland that can be accessed by the public. May include parks, trails, foreshore areas, playspaces, and sporting reserves
VDAA	Victorian Domestic Animals Act, 1994. The state government Act that articulates LGA responsibilities relating to the management of domestic animals in Victoria
VLGA	Victorian Local Government Act, 1989

1. Background Information

1.1. Source of the Information in this Document

This document contains extracts from the '**Technical Manual – The Planning, Management and Design of Off-leash Areas** (including Fenced Off-leash Areas') (© 2013-2021) to be released at a later date

The Technical Manual provides LGAs with a framework to guide policy, planning and management for all off-leash areas (OLAs), whether unfenced or fenced.

This document contains material from Technical Papers 2, 4, 5 and 6 of the Manual. Section 8 of this document contains the Technical Manual table of contents.

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1.2. A Word About FOLA Policy and Planning Context

There has been a proliferation of fenced off-leash areas over the last 5-8 years. Initially this was driven by LGAs looking for ways to incorporate provision for dogs off-leash in overcrowded parks, and often, in close proximity to potentially incompatible park activities.

This is still a primary driver for the fencing of off-leash areas. However some LGAs are fencing off-leash areas as a result of pressure from residents, without understanding the management implications particularly those associated with:

- dog and human behaviour in FOLAs
- dog owners not controlling their dogs or not able to control their dogs
- aggressive dogs
- the additional resources required for compliance monitoring and addressing complaints relating to lack of compliance monitoring
- aggression and intimidation by some dog owners towards other dog owners, compliance staff, and open space and bushland management staff
- budget requirements for the appropriate management and maintenance of OLAs
- poor or uninformed understanding of OLA/FOLA design requirements particularly as they relate to risk management.

Unfortunately, many fenced off-leash areas are being installed without reference to a comprehensive dog off-leash policy that talks to the LGA's rationale for providing off-leash access to parks whether unfenced, partially fenced and fully fenced. This will result in reactive and uninformed decision-making.

Regardless of whether they are fenced or unfenced, OLAs have benefits including those associated with community networking and engagement, and the opportunity for dogs to engage in robust physical activity and socialise with other dogs. It is important that OLAs are not fenced in response to:

- pressure from people who cannot/do not control their dogs in line with council and state government legislation
- trends elsewhere
- without an understanding of dog and human behaviour in these environments and the potential implications.

There are a number of situations where consideration may be given to the fencing of an off-leash area, including:

- the need to provide for dogs in close proximity to other activities that are not compatible with dogs
- the close proximity of the OLA to roads or other potential hazards
- the need to prevent dogs from entering nearby wildlife or sensitive vegetation areas
- the desire to, provide for specific needs or demographic requirements (e.g. older residents or apartment dwellers).

An area should not be fenced as a measure to keep uncontrollable dogs contained. These dogs should not be off-leash in public places. This is for their own safety and so they do not impact on other people's enjoyment of parks. Dog owners have the same responsibility to control their dogs in a fenced off-leash area as in unfenced off-leash areas.

Dog owners need to exercise greater vigilance and responsibility as in the case when fenced off-leash areas become overcrowded, and the potential for dog-on-dog and dog-on-human conflict can increase.

Fencing is not necessary in a large parkland area where there are unlikely to be conflicts between different activities; where there are no likely hazards such as nearby roads; or where there are adequate spatial or landscape buffers between potential hazards or areas where dogs should be prevented from entering.

Land management agencies need to give careful consideration to the rationale for providing fenced off-leash areas, 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 dog as they are legally required to do.

1.3. A Word About Terminology

It is strongly advised that the term 'Dog Park' is not used to describe any off-leash area, whether fenced or unfenced. Instead, it is recommended that these areas be referred to off-leash areas and fenced off-leash areas or for simplicity, OLAs and FOLAs.

This will help manage dog owner expectations relating to the use of the space, and to reinforce council's dog control regulations.

A significant number of dog owners assume that a 'dog park' is for sole use by dog owners and their dogs, and is not 'public space' that the general public can or should have access to.

By implication, many dog owners assume that their legal and civic responsibilities and courtesies relating to the control of dogs do not apply, which is generally not the intent of LGAs and other land management agencies.

2. Benefits and Challenges of Off-Leash Areas

This section highlights the most significant benefits and challenges associated with the management of unfenced and fenced off-leash areas.

2.1. Unfenced Off-Leash Areas – Key Opportunities and Challenges

Key opportunities associated with unfenced off-leash areas:

- They:
 - become community hubs where dog owners meet up incidentally, by casual arrangement or as part of a neighbourhood, community or breed group
They encourage people into the out of doors because there is a sense of safety and security due to the number of people congregating in the one area.
Unlike the trail environment, open off-leash areas provide a focal or gathering point where dog owners can socialise with each other, but still actively supervise and engage with their dogs
 - add to the diversity of affordable recreation activities available for residents, and are an alternative recreation option, particularly for residents who derive their physical activity primarily from walking or interacting with their dog
 - encourage conversations between people, who would otherwise be strangers, based on a mutual interest and passion for the pet dog
 - are an avenue of community support and engagement, particularly for people who would otherwise not engage with the wider community
 - are an avenues through which dog owners exchange information and advice relating to pets
 - allow apartment and unit dwellers or people living on small allotments to continue to own dogs

It is important that dog owners select breeds that are suitable for accommodation in small, confined spaces, that is, smaller, less boisterous dog breeds and breeds that do not require a high level of physical activity.

A large boisterous dog with pent up energy is likely to behave very differently, when let off the leash, to the small dog with different physical activity needs. The former has the potential to impact on the enjoyment of other dogs and dog owners using the off-leash area.

- provide a venue that allows and encourages off-leash dog to dog socialisation
- can provide a focal point for:
 - community education and awareness initiatives and training programs
 - partnerships with and/or colocation of dog clubs if the space is available
 - special events.

Key challenges associated with unfenced off-leash areas:

- Dog owners who:
 - do not pick up their dog's litter
 - assume that they and their dog have priority access to the space, and other people are a secondary user
 - assume that when in an off-leash area local laws do not apply or will not be enforced
 - allow their dog to annoy other people and/or dogs or allow their dog to approach people and dogs uninvited
 - take inappropriate dogs to the OLA (e.g. poorly behaved, unregistered, entire dogs, dangerous breeds & dogs that are too young or not vaccinated)
 - assume that all park users, including other dogs and dog owners will be welcoming/ comfortable when approached by their dog
 - are rude and/or aggressive.
- Degradation of the ground surface because of intense and confined use, inappropriate ground cover for the size of the area and level of use
- Possible dog to human 'rushing', mouthing, biting, knocks etc.
- Possible dog to dog 'rushing', mouthing, bites, fights
- Too many dogs taken to an OLA by the one person

Many people, including dog trainers and behaviourists, strongly recommend that owners take only one dog to an OLA at a time, whether it be fenced or unfenced. A dog owner cannot actively supervise a dog if having to attend to an incident involving another of their dogs. Anecdotal information indicates that many dog owners, even though they have two dogs, will only take one dog at a time to the off-leash area¹. Many LGAs restrict the number of dogs per person in FOLAs to two, but do not have any such restrictions for unfenced OLAs.

- Children left in charge of a dog

Children/young teenagers do not have the emotional maturity or the experience to read dog behaviour, read the wider environment, recognise when situations are getting out of control, and to manage difficult situations between dogs.
- Potential for conflict with adjoining parkland activities/activity spaces such as playspaces, trails, picnic/BBQ areas
- Difficult to monitor and enforce compliance if the site:
 - has poor sightlines
 - does not have easily recognisable landmarks that delineate on and off-leash areas (e.g. landmarks such as trails, stands of trees, fence lines) between on-leash and off-leash areas
 - is an irregular shape
 - has difficult or remote access that prevents/restricts access easy and swift access by compliance officers (e.g. as in the case of a beach location where observation is from a cliff top).

¹ Mildura Trial Off-leash Area, community survey, 2018

2.2. Fenced Off-Leash Areas - Key Opportunities and Challenges

Key opportunities associated with fenced off-leash areas:

These benefits are in addition to those outlined in relation to unfenced off-leash areas:

- they allow dogs to be off-leash in small or busy parks, or near facilities/activities incompatible with dog activity (e.g. playgrounds, sports fields, trails)
- they allow people who do not want to interact with dogs to still use the park
- they allow dogs access to parkland that adjoins sensitive environments (e.g. wetlands)
- they provide older people or people with limited mobility to exercise their dogs off-leash and to socialise with other people

Important Notation: The containment of uncontrollable dogs is not a benefit or opportunity that should be associated with FOLAs. Owners who cannot control their dog or who have dogs with overly aggressive tendencies must be discouraged from using FOLAs.

Key challenges associated with fenced off-leash areas:

These challenges are in addition to those outlined in relation to unfenced off-leash areas.

- Planning and design that is does not informed by:
 - a comprehensive policy and provision rationale for dogs in public places
 - an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding of dog behaviour, risk management, restrictions on use (e.g. uncontrollable dogs, 'menacing dogs' etc.) that applies to the design and management of FOLAs
 - an understanding of the real and ongoing costs associated with the effective management of FOLAs, including costs associated with:
 - installation (e.g. fencing, ground surfacing, elements)
 - maintenance and renewal
 - compliance monitoring
 - complaints and customer referrals
 - community education.
- Dog owners who cannot control their dog
If an owner cannot control their dog then the dog should not be off-leash, especially not in a FOLA where issues can escalate quickly because of the confined nature of the environment
- LGAs responding to community pressure or 'industry trends' for FOLAs in an ad hoc manner
- Community expectations relating to:
 - the type and level of provision and maintenance and renewal schedules
 - quality of provision e.g. ground surfaces, features/elements
 - control of dogs
 - frequency of compliance monitoring by LGAs
 - LGA intervention in relation to irresponsible and discourteous dog owners.
- Increased degradation (over unfenced OLAs) of the ground surface because of intense and confined use
- Overcrowding. This can occur because:
 - the level of use or popularity of the area has exceeded expectation
 - the site was too small to fence.Overcrowding has the potential to increase dog management issues and problematic dog behaviour, such as dogs intimidating other dogs, bites/rushes and injuries to smaller dogs from boisterous play.
- Potential risk associated with young children and babies in prams taken into the fenced area
- Dogs left unattended

Anecdotal feedback from councils indicates that this occurs in fenced off-leash areas, including sports fields. For this reason, some councils do not provide fenced or partially fenced off-leash areas. In Australia², dog owners are subject to a fine if their dog is found unattended/wandering in any public space. This includes dogs that escape the owner's property as well as dogs that are left unattended in a fenced off-leash area

- Use by commercial dog walkers, breed groups, or social groups
There is an increasing use of these areas by commercial dog walkers 'social' breed groups. This can result in overcrowding and injury to smaller/less robust dogs if the breed or social groups involve large boisterous dogs, and poorly controlled/behaved dogs
- Dog owners being less active/vigilant in managing their dogs because of the fence
Dog owners must understand that the fence is not designed to contain a dog that does not respond to recall, is unmanageable or jumps a 1.2 m fence. These dogs should not be allowed off-leash in any public environment. Because of the confined area, owners must have the same, if not greater level of control and vigilance, over their dogs' activities.

3. Off-Leash Site Selection and Evaluation

A thorough site evaluation process will help decision-makers understand the complexity of issues that need to be considered when determining a site's suitability as an OLA or FOLA. It will also identify how a site compares with another in terms of suitability.

The evaluation criteria outlined in this section will assist LGAs to determine:

- the suitability of a site as an off-leash area, whether unfenced, partially fenced, or fully fenced
- whether a site should continue to operate as an OLA/FOLA
- opportunities and challenges associated with a site/sites
- the site/sites that best satisfy planning and design requirements
- the capacity of a site/sites to fulfil a specific function in the network of off-leash areas
- priorities for the commissioning/decommissioning of sites.

The criteria is consistent with legislation, guidelines and policy³ used by LGAs and other authorities for the planning and design of open space, but with additional site, design and risk management considerations that relate to use of an area by dogs.

This is not necessarily a comprehensive checklist, and it may require the following adjustments in order to address specific local planning requirements:

- very occasionally, primary and secondary evaluation criteria may be switched, depending on planning and site considerations specific to each LGA. However, the need for this should be the exception rather than the rule.
- in some cases, it may be appropriate to combine secondary evaluation criteria. However, it is inadvisable to combine too many criteria because this can make it difficult to differentiate sites.
- some criteria may not be relevant to the local planning context and should be excluded from the evaluation process. For example, if it is known that there will not be any significant population growth associated with any of the sites then this becomes irrelevant.

There may be other considerations unique to the municipality or the project that an LGA should include in the primary evaluation criteria. For example, will the FOLA cater for tourists travelling with their dogs? If yes, will the wider site need to accommodate caravan parking and picnic facilities outside the FOLA⁴.

3.1. Spatial Requirements for Fenced Off-Leash Areas

In an ideal situation, planning for off-leash areas would be the same as planning for other open space and community assets, with space allocation defined for a specific catchment or demand. This results in an appropriate distribution of facilities or opportunities across the LGA

² Refer relevant state government legislation

³ e.g. Victorian Planning Scheme Provisions; Victorian Urban Design Guidelines, LGA Open Space Strategies; Healthy by Design: A Guide to Planning Environments for Active Living in Victoria; Centre for Universal Design Australia

⁴ For risk management reasons there must not be any picnic infrastructure inside a FOLA

and avoids overcrowding and conflicts between dogs and other open space activities and users.

However for most LGAs this requirement is generally difficult to satisfy due to a lack of available open space and competing priorities for the space.

For fenced off-leash areas an area of 5,000+ sq mts and ideally to 10,000+ sq mts for higher level sites is advisable. Generally sites under 3,000 sq mts do not allow LGAs to best manage issues typically associated with FOLAs, including those associated with poorly controlled dogs, overcrowding and inappropriate dogs in off-leash areas. Many dog owners who frequent FOLAs are those that do not have control over their dog when off-leash and are relying on the fenced environment to manage/contain their dog.

This is an issue that needs to be proactively addressed by LGAs, particularly in relation to small FOLAs.

Anecdotal information from LGAs indicates a higher level of dog on dog/dog on human aggression in off-leash areas than in on-leash areas. A sound policy rationale, good design, regular patrols by Local Laws Officers, enforcement of dog control requirements, and clear instructions to dog owners about responsibilities will help address potential risk management implications for LGAs particularly in relation to smaller FOLAs.

A FOLA of 5,000 -10,000 sq mts allows for design features that assist to manage dog behaviour and satisfy community expectations, such as those relating to the requirement for separate 'quiet dog' enclosures, retreat areas defined by landscaping, and sensory environments to disperse dog activity.

Size requirements will also be influenced by the shape of the space available. If the space is elongated or have squeeze points then dog activity will be in a linear pattern, increasing congestion and likelihood of 'pack activity' along the length of the site. An elongated site provides minimal or no capacity to create breakout or quiet areas away from overly excited dog activity or overcrowding in the FOLA.

If FOLAs are smaller than 3,000-5,000 sq mts then consideration needs to be given to additional FOLAs within the catchment in order to minimise overcrowding at peak use times. Ideally, there will be a mix of unfenced (should be the majority of sites) and fenced OLAs within the catchment in order to disperse use.

Unfenced areas should have appropriate spatial and/or landscape buffers between environmental hazards and other parkland activities. The size of unfenced areas will vary depending on a number of factors including:

- whether there are nearby hazards (e.g. roads) or sensitive (e.g. wildlife areas) or restricted environments (e.g. playspaces) that restrict or prevent access use
- the proximity of other parkland activities that are not compatible with off-leash activities
- whether the site is primarily used as a 'walk-through' or transition off-leash area, such as might be part of linear parkland, or a stand-alone off-leash destination site

Because dogs are kept on the move by owners accessing 'walk-through' sites they will generally tend not to venture deep into the off-leash area⁵. In addition, owners tend to ensure their dogs move through the site with them. As a result, a smaller area may be required.

On the other hand, dog owners generally stay longer at destination sites and so more inquisitive and active dogs some will investigate widely across the site and often outside of the designated off-leash area if allowed.

⁵ Unless they are a very active dog, in which case they may run the area in a short space of time

3.2. The Evaluation Process

The following provides an outline of the process that can be used to assess site suitability for consideration as an off-leash area, whether fenced or unfenced. However, the criteria is primarily focused on assessing site suitability for the incorporation of fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs).

The process can be modified depending on the scope of the exercise/project, the detail required, and organisation requirements.

1. Establish Project Lead/Manager and a Project Management Group

The Project Lead/Manager will co-ordinate the project, co-ordinate input by stakeholders and undertake key evaluation and reporting tasks

The scope of the project will determine if a Project Management Group is required. This group would oversee the process.

3. Scope the project

Ensure all stakeholders understand:

- the purpose of the project
- their role
- the planning and design, dog behaviour, and animal management issues relevant to the project
- the type and extent of information required
- advice being sought from relevant.

2. Form a Project Working Group.

This group will comprise representatives from departments involved in the planning or management of open space, the management of animals in public spaces, the writing of policy around pets in the community, and community development or program initiatives. Table 1 identifies LGA departments that should be considered for involvement in the Working Group.

Table 1 – LGA departments that should be considered for involvement in the Working Group	
Service Area	Role/Rationale for Involvement
Open space planning	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integration of dogs into public open space e.g. sites from which dogs should be excluded, allowed on leash, allowed off-leash ▪ Integration/compatibility of dogs with other site activities ▪ 'Fair' access to open space for all residents including dog owners ▪ Service level planning and integration with Open Space Strategies/ Plans etc.
Open space maintenance	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget requirements for surface, landscape and vegetation maintenance and renewal ▪ Hygiene and waste management/cleansing requirements/protocols ▪ Casual observation of sites and reporting of inappropriate behaviour dog owner/dog activity
Recreation planning & management	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dog off-leash Policy ▪ 'Best practice' design of OLAs/FOLAs ▪ FOLA Management Plans ▪ Local Laws/orders ▪ Public relations and customer complaints and feedback ▪ Community Education ▪ 'Active lifestyle' initiatives/ partnerships with dog obedience clubs, dog trainers etc.

Table 1 – LGA departments that should be considered for involvement in the Working Group	
Service Area	Role/Rationale for Involvement
Local laws/animal management services	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled and unscheduled patrols of OLAs during the day and after hours to monitor compliance Public relations Issuing of infringement notices and associated followup Community education and compliance initiatives
Environmental/conservation services	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of dogs into public open space e.g. sites from which dogs should be excluded, allowed on leash, allowed off-leash Integration/compatibility of dogs with other site activities Public relations and customer complaints and feedback Community Education Casual observation of sites and reporting of inappropriate behaviour dog owner/dog activity
Risk management	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of risk Assessment and documentation of potential risk implications and mitigation strategies Communication of risk implications to community and council
Communications/promotion	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of information Public relations and customer complaints and feedback
Town/urban planning	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporation of provision for off-leash requirements in town planning protocols and local planning scheme as for other open space/public infrastructure
Family Services	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community education relating to managing children around dogs in public spaces Initiatives/information to minimise incidents of dog bites/attacks on children generally
Health and Wellbeing	Advice and/or operations relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits of pets to older demographics in terms of mental, physical and social health and wellbeing

4. List sites with potential

List all sites that have/may have some potential for accommodating a OLA/FOLA . All possible sites should be flagged for consideration at this stage, even if there is considerable doubt about the suitability of the site because of administrative or process requirements, or if there is dispute along departmental or community lines about the site's suitability.

Include all sites that have been referred by internal or external parties to ensure impartiality.

Consider land managed by other agencies as well as council owned/managed land.

5. Preliminary discussion of site/s suitability with the Project Working Group

Document all information relating to perceived issues and opportunities associated with use of the identified site/s as a possible OLA.

6. Site visits

Project Lead/Manager and relevant staff to undertake visits to sites that have passed the 'Preliminary Site Evaluation Criteria' (section 3.3).

Sites should now be evaluated against Primary and Secondary Evaluation Criteria.

Two 'evaluation spreadsheets' should be considered, one to 'score' each site, the second to record the supporting commentary.

7. Hierarchy of provision and service levels

Project Lead/Manager and relevant staff recommended sites for consideration as OLAs/FOLAs.

NOTE: It is important that council policy guide the number and distribution of FOLAs. FOLAs (fenced off-leash areas).

8. Project Working Group signoff

3.3. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria have been framed so that they generally apply to both FOLAs and OLAs.

3.3.1. Preliminary Site Evaluation Criteria

Criteria 1 – Risk Management

Requirement – Minimum size and shape requirements must be met at this stage. Refer to Section 3.1.

Points for consideration

The site must provide a safe environment with respect to size and shape of the space available and associated requirements relating to:

- risk posed to dogs that might escape from the OLA/FOLA (e.g. proximity to busy roads)
- restricted access to the OLA/FOLA due to other parkland activities (e.g. as in ticketed access to a reserve during AFL competition)
- traffic congestion/competition for parking and associated pedestrian safety

If the checklist is being used to assess the best site for a high-level facility only (e.g. municipal or regional level facility) then non-negotiables may relate to car parking, toilets, lighting, picnic facilities etc.

If the response is 'no' to any of these considerations then the site should not proceed to the next stages of evaluation.

From this point the evaluation process compares sites in terms of how well each satisfies the Primary and Secondary Evaluation criteria.

3.3.2. Primary Site Evaluation Criteria (Recommended each to be scored out of 10)

Criteria in this stage are particularly important and must be weighted higher (e.g. each rated out of 10) than Secondary Evaluation Criteria.

Criteria 2 – Size and Shape of the Proposed Site (rate out of 10)

Requirement - The size and shape of the proposed site has flexibility/options in terms of design, particularly in relation to risk minimisation.

Points for consideration

- Does the space avoid a configuration that is long, narrow and with squeeze points?
An elongated shape will make it difficult to design separate spaces into which owners can retreat with overly excited or timid dogs. Instead dog activity will be in a linear pattern through the site, increasing congestion and likelihood of 'pack activity' through the centre corridor.
- Can the space accommodate a FOLA of 3,000 sq mts-5,000+ sq mts⁶ and up to 10,000+ sq mts? (OLAs & FOLAs)

⁶ Note design, usage, management/risk management implications for small FOLAs. Refer section 2.1

- Is there a suitable smaller space elsewhere but that has natural or built containment barriers as in the case of an OLA that is located between a creekland and a trail; or is located between two streets and adjoining residential properties?

Criteria 3 – Location on the Site and Integration within the Park (rate out of 10)

Requirement – The ability to effectively co-locate the OLA/FOLA within the park.

Points for Consideration

- Is there the space to include an OLA including relevant buffers between other activities such as playspaces, picnic amenities? Will there be possible conflict with between commuter/at speed bicycle trails, if yes what remedies will be needed?

Is there the space that can satisfy management/risk management and usage requirements for a FOLA? Will fencing inappropriately intrude on amenity?

The response will depend on whether the off-leash area is to be fenced or unfenced and the type of activities that are in close proximity e.g. playground or picnic areas.

- Are there potential site management/risk management issues?
- Does the proposal enhance social and other opportunities at the park?

Management issues may relate to dog owners leaving dogs unattended in a FOLA or conversely leaving children unattended in the playspace regardless. This should not deter consideration of locating the two facilities nearby but will trigger design and community education considerations

Ideally dog owners should not be relegated to isolated areas of the park or at such a distance that dog owners cannot monitor other members of the family that may be using other facilities/amenities.

Criteria 4 – Visibility/Profile (rate out of 10)

Requirement - The proposed site has good passive surveillance via high level of visitation; is overlooked by adjoining residential properties and from adjoining streets. Addresses issues related to personal safety, perceptions of safety and vandalism etc.

Points for Consideration

- Does the site have good and consistent passive surveillance from passers-by (walkers, car drivers)?
e.g. visitors participating in other park activities such as sport; or can be overlooked by or are within 'calling distance' from residential properties.

- Is the site 'safe' or likely to be perceived as safe?

In line with open space planning principles, avoid isolated sites that are:

- heavily wooded with poor sightlines
- sit on the fringe of residential areas
- are 'landlocked'
- are embedded deeply within large open space parklands.

Dog owners may walk their dogs through these areas but are less likely to stay for extended time periods. In addition, FOLAs deep within large parklands are difficult for people with limited mobility to access.

- Does the OLA/FOLA help to activate an under-utilised part of the park?

The OLA/FOLA should not be the only or first facility to be included in a large or isolated park in order to 'activate' it, particularly if the park is already a site prone to vandalism and anti-social behaviour and/or if there are no plans to develop the site further in the near future.

Criteria 5 – Compliance Monitoring (rate out of 10)

Requirement – The site offers good/easy drive by monitoring by compliance staff

Points for Consideration

- Can local laws officers easily monitor the site from the local road (drive by) or internal park road for compliance with rules, regulations, legislation etc. ?
- Does the site allow easy access to enable local laws officers to act immediately on transgressions? (OLA/FOLA)
e.g. an off-leash area that can be observed from a clifftop but does not have ready access to enable timely approach to dog owners
- Are there easy to discern natural landmarks (e.g. significant tree, pathway) or signage that can/does clearly delineate the boundary of the off-leash area and that compliance staff can use for 'photographic evidence' if required?

Criteria 6 – Environmental Sensitivity (rate out of 10)

Requirement – No/minimal issues relating to environmental factors that will significantly impact on the proposed site/s

Points for Consideration

- Are there any contamination issues associated with the site that may need addressing, constitute a safety hazard or render the site unusable? e.g. was it a former landfill site that has contamination issues that cannot be addressed within relevant timeframes
- Is the site part of a protected area because of remnant/protected vegetation or is the site significant in terms of wildlife?

Fencing may be a remedy depending on the extent of community sentiment relating to the site and perceived attitude/behaviour of some dog owners

Alternatively, it may be appropriate to relocate the unfenced off-leash area (OLA) away from the sensitive environment and put in place an 'on-leash' buffer.

- Does the proposed site abut residential properties?

This should not/does not have to be a deal breaker, however if there is an alternative site that fits same criteria but does not abut residential properties, then it may be a more suitable option and save time in terms of dealing with community concerns. A site that abuts residential properties may require additional consultation with residents.

Do not eliminate sites that have a boundary with residential properties. Contrary to perception, noise emanating from FOLAs is minimal. Dogs are too busy exploring and engaged in physical or social play to be engaged in barking.

The greatest noise is likely to come from dogs in adjoining properties who bark because they are eager to join the activity at the FOLA, or who bark at dogs in the FOLA who are sniffing around fencelines.

Vegetation buffers or exclusion zones on the inside of the FOLA will prevent dogs going nose to nose through the fence.

Depending on the site, some residents may be concerned about overlooking of their property by people onsite. Again vegetation buffers can help address this concern.

Criteria 7 – Appeal of the Site & Linkages (rate out of 10)

Requirement - The park and/or proposed off-leash site are appealing and welcoming

Points for Consideration

- Does the site have existing natural shade and variety of vegetation or potential for this (lower score)?
- Does the site have a varied topography and already includes sensory vegetation features for dogs or landscape features or potential for this (lower score)?
- Is the site impacted by noise from a nearby freeway/busy road, factory noise etc. that detracts from the amenity of the site and will discourage use?

- Are there good walking routes to the site that do not traverse undesirable environments such as industrial areas or isolated areas?

Criteria 8 – Ownership & Management Considerations (rate out of 10)

Requirement - No/minimal land ownership/management barriers/potential barriers

Points for Consideration

- Is council free to make all decisions relating to the site?
- Do existing activities or infrastructure need to be relocated from the site?
- Is another landowner or management agency likely to withhold consent for use of the site?
- Are there land or management transfer matters that have to be negotiated with another agency. Can they be negotiated within the required timeframe?
- Involvement by another agency may result in:
 - limitations that restrict design and service provision objectives
 - delays in getting approval, and the initiation of the project.

This may not eliminate the site from consideration but may impact on the commissioning of the site or design and scope considerations. For this reason, it may score lower and relegated to a lower priority in terms of development/commissioning

If it becomes apparent through the evaluation process that the landowner /manager will not allow dogs on or off-leash the site should be removed from consideration.

3.3.3. Secondary Site Evaluation Criteria – (Recommended to rate out of 5)

Criteria in the stage generally rate the next most important (e.g. score out of 5). Again, the score should relate to the opportunity to achieve ideal outcomes relating to the criteria.

Criteria 9 – Existing or Proposed Level of Infrastructure (rate out of 5)

Requirement – The site has access to the type and level of infrastructure relevant to the classification of the OLA/FOLA.

Points for Consideration

- Is there the requisite level of provision in place for car parking, toilets, access pathways etc. in line with the classification of the OLA/FOLA (e.g. local, district, municipal) and does it comply with relevant guidelines and legislation?

or

- will the above infrastructure be in place sometime in the future? (lower score)

If the site is proposed as a 'local' level off-leash area, then most visitors will walk to the site and will stay for a shorter time. Therefore, there will be no/minimal requirement for significant car parking provision and picnic amenities etc.

If the site is proposed as 'municipal' level off-leash area, and especially if there are other 'municipal' level activities occurring at the site, then there will most likely be the need for significant car parking, picnic facilities, and toilets etc.

Criteria 10 – Site Readiness for Development (rate out of 5)

Requirement – The commissioning of the site will not be impacted by site preparation works.

Points for Consideration

- Are there costly site preparatory works (such as fill or drainage work) to be undertaken before the project can commence?
- Are there issues that may prolong commissioning timelines or add to development/preparation costs such as with landowners
- Is there a likely delay in handing the site over to council in the case of developer contribution of open space?

Criteria 11 – Addressing a Gap in Provision (rate out of 5)

Requirement – The site helps to address a gap in provision or helps provide a more equitable distribution of OLAs/FOLAs

Points for Consideration

'Addressing a gap' in provision would normally be a key criterion in the planning of community infrastructure. However, it is difficult for most urban LGAs to introduce OLA/FOLAs into parks using the same provision framework as is used for other community infrastructure because of the often lack of open space.

Where possible, the opportunity to address gaps in provision should be considered. However, the desire to provide 'equitable' access to off-leash opportunities should not override more important considerations relating to safety.

3.3.4. Other Site Evaluation Criteria (Recommended that these be rated out of 3)

The following are criteria that may be relevant to the evaluation process for some LGAs. It is recommended that these be rated out of 3.

Criteria 12 – Existing Use of the Site for Off-Leash Activities (OLA/FOLA) (rate out of 3)

Requirement - The proposed site is popular as an OLA or there is the demand for one

Points for Consideration

- Is the site already a popular off-leash OLA, whether legitimate or illegitimate?

Criteria 13 – Significant population increase (rate out of 3)

Requirement – There is likely to be a significant increase in the number of people who will live within the catchment. (This will determine the likely level of dog ownership)

Points for Consideration

- Will generally only be relevant in new subdivisions or significant infill projects
- The site may be well placed to cater for future growth and in which case it should be set aside for future use as an off-leash area.

4. Designing Off-Leash Areas

4.1. Introduction

As with any other open space asset such as parks or sportsfields, OLAs should be classified according to their overall place and role in the network of OLAs, and in line with the LGAs provision policy.

Once the policy and planning framework has been determined, the next step is to consider the service levels that will apply to the OLA/FOLA.

Currently, most unfenced OLAs are in parks shared by any number and type of other open space activities (e.g. children's run about play, casual sport), and do not include physical or sensory elements/landscapes specifically designed for dogs. The primary activity for dogs in these areas is ball play and socialising with other dogs and people .

Once dogs tire of these social activities, or if activity lessens, dogs will be inclined to investigate sensory environments such as bushland areas that are often outside the designated off-leash area. If allowed, dogs will be attracted into these areas because of the different tactile sensations underfoot, sound and scent, or because they want to retreat from the boisterous activity in the OLA.

Instead of fencing these areas, landscape elements that are of interest to dogs can be introduced. This has the benefit of adding variety to the landscape, better defining off-leash areas (for ease of compliance monitoring), and minimises the need for fencing/cluttering the space with unnecessary infrastructure. These features have the potential to:

- keep dogs contained/attracted to sensory elements within the off-leash area that discourage them from venturing into sensory environments outside the off-leash area
- calm dogs
- provide alternative elements that cater for quieter or smaller dogs without the need for fencing
- disperse activity
- give owners more of an opportunity to restrain dogs before they exit the off-leash area.

These elements are particularly important when there is not a large spatial buffer between the OLA and other parkland activities and sensitive environments that dogs need to be prevented from entering. Landscape features such as rock clammers, rock and vegetation clusters, and miniature tree groves/forests with mulch under surfacing provide ideal landscape and sensory buffers, and even more so after significant dog use.

4.2. Service Levels – Provision Hierarchy

Because many FOLAs are being integrated into existing parks, service levels are generally determined by the space available rather than a provision/distribution framework.

Table 2 provides a checklist of elements that can guide provision in both fenced and unfenced OLAs. An area does not have to be fenced in order to provide environments that have sensory, social, educational and physical benefits for dogs.

Table 2⁸ – Examples of service levels that may be considered for different classifications of OLA (excluding fenced sports fields)

* Elements relevant for consideration in unfenced off-leash areas

Element	Classification of Site			Comments
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
Core Infrastructure				
Fences Generally, 1.2 mt high fencing	✓ As required & in line with council policy		x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider if fencing is really needed or if there are other options for addressing site requirements. Should only be considered for reasons of safety, to provide a barrier between parkland activities. Consider higher along part of the fenceline where applicable for safety reasons.
Enclosure options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> large main area quiet dog area time out area dog training area (external to FOLA) 	✓ ✓ ✓ If relevant	✓ Maybe x x	✓ x x x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of enclosures will be determined by the available space Decreasing the main area to create an additional fenced area may cause overcrowding and result in defensive/ aggressive behaviours in dogs.
Entries/exits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double gated (x2) 	✓	✓	x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A minimum of 2. Additional may be required if the FOLA is large
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicanes (as barriers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An option depending on council's fencing policy 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance/ emergency access gateway 	✓	✓	x	
Pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> approach pathways internal pathway exercise walking track sensory textured pathways 	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	As required /if space available	x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If possible do not run external pathways along fence line. However, part of fenceline can run down to meet external pathway
Signage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rules/regs/emergency contact etc. 	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer Technical Paper – Rules, Regulations and Signage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Safe Use'/ etiquette 	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many be integrated with 'Rules and Regulations Signage'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education/agility instructional info 	✓	As required	As required	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Message board 	As required	As required	As required	
Activity Areas/Design Elements These areas/elements will generally need to have a robust ground surface surround in order to manage the wear and tear associated with the 'coming and going' from the element.				
Open runabout area*	✓	✓	x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include an area of longer grass if size permits, and if not in a snake prone area
Hillocks/mounds*	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grassed mounds are suitable in large areas where activity is dispersed, otherwise these will easily degenerate Can be topped with robust vegetation, large rocks if area has a

⁸ Paws4Play Info Sheet, 2014, updated 2019

Table 2⁸ – Examples of service levels that may be considered for different classifications of OLA (excluding fenced sports fields)

* Elements relevant for consideration in unfenced off-leash areas

Element	Classification of Site			Comments
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> granitic sand surface (grass mound will wear) If grassed they need to have a suitable gradient for mowing
Rock scramble areas/rockscapes*	✓ Min of 2	✓	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flat topped rock mounds with granitic sand infill (to remove paw entrapments)
Dry creekbed or rockbed*	✓	Maybe	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small to medium size round/smooth rocks
Sensory vegetation plantings*	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rummaging/play areas for dogs. Sensory stimulation/environmental enrichment for dogs Do not plant vegetation poisonous to dogs
Digging pit (sand)	✓	Maybe	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Natural elements	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. 'Fallen tree'; braced mounded logs Can be placed in dry creek bed/rock beds
'Space breakers' (to slow down/break fast paced chasing and running)	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small rock mounds and/or rock & tree clusters Small protected plantings
Water element	Maybe	✗	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Educational/agility equipment*	Maybe	Maybe	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational/obedience skill development. Some equipment (e.g. 'sit stay' platforms) double as seating for dog owners Must not be designed to agility competition standards
Landscaping/Landscape features				
Natural shade / tree plantings*	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be a priority Enhances amenity of the area and minimises maintenance costs associated with built shade structures
Vegetation along approach fencing	✓	As required	✗	
Vegetation to separate spaces/ visual barriers'*	✓	As required	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps manage formation of large packs of dogs running together
Tree Grove/ Bamboo Grove*	✓	✓	✗	
Irrigation*	As required	As required	As required	
Drainage*	As required	As required	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider opportunities to incorporate into environmental features e.g. dry creekbed
Amenities/Supporting Infrastructure				
Tie-up points	✗ DO NOT INSTALL – Risk management			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For safety reasons tie-up points must not be included in off-leash areas

Table 2⁸ – Examples of service levels that may be considered for different classifications of OLA (excluding fenced sports fields)

* Elements relevant for consideration in unfenced off-leash areas

Element	Classification of Site			Comments
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	
Seating (no picnic tables in FOLAs) *	✓	✓	✓	▪
Drinking water – people & dogs*	✓	✓	✗	
Shade structures with seats and high 'table bench' and 'hanging hooks'*	✓	As required	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure they are effective e.g. provide shade at peak times and take into account prevailing weather conditions/wind direction ▪ Locate where owners can fully observe dogs ▪ High table bench and or 'hanging hooks' to keep personal items/items of clothing out of dog's reach
Parking				
▪ Off street parking*	✓	Maybe	✗	
▪ Disability Parking*	✓	Maybe	✗	
▪ Caravans/ motorhomes (short term only)*	As required	As required	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Caters for growing travelling pet owning community ▪ Consider in line with LGA Tourism/Ec Dev. Plan
Toilets*	Maybe (In adjacent parkland)	Maybe (In adjacent parkland)	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Associated with provision for the wider parkland

4.3. Overview of Key Design Elements

This section provides an overview of the design elements listed in Table 2. The incorporation of as many zones and sensory elements as possible:

- helps to disperse dog activity across the site
- helps distract dogs from continued dog on dog focused play
- provides areas where dogs can retreat to, or where owners can retreat overly boisterous or timid dogs to
- helps distract dogs from activity at entries/exits
- exposes dogs to a variety of sensory environments. This in turn helps reduce fear or anxiety associated with new experiences.

4.3.1. Fenced Areas

The Run-about Zone will be, or will be incorporated in, the largest fenced area in a FOLA. It is important to optimise the size of the fenced area that includes the Run-about Zone.

For risk management reasons, it is better to provide a large, well-designed single space incorporating a number of sensory and activity environments and spaces separated by landscape elements, rather multiple fenced areas. This will allow dog owners to retreat with their dogs to different parts of the enclosure, with enough sensory/landscape features to attract the interest of their dogs.

Small fenced areas confine dog activity and may lead to overcrowding and associated negative behaviours such as fear-based aggression. In addition, separate small areas can be underused because of the



Normal dog behaviour will soon enrich the environment!

presence of an overly boisterous dog or because people feel they are imposing on someone already using the space.

Dogs have an acute sense of movement and tend to investigate the world around them via their sense of smell, so it is important to break spaces up with landscape features ('space breakers') such as rock mounds, combined rock and vegetation clusters. This will:

- break sightlines between dogs in different zones within a fenced area
- manage/break up the pace of activity
- help dog owners manage/retrieve overly boisterous and excited dogs when they are distracted by sensory elements or slow as a result of physical element

If a fenced has a grassed surface, then it needs to be large enough to allow for areas to be sectioned off for resting or reseeding and consideration can be given to irrigation⁹. Some USA FOLAs that have a granitic sand surface include irrigation to help manage dust and to occasionally cleanse the site.

4.3.2. Landscape Elements

4.3.2.1. Clamber mounds/Rock scramble features (Refer to 'Images Plate 2')

As with humans, dogs enjoy seeing the world from a different perspective, and height provides a sense of security for a dog that is feeling overwhelmed by the action going on around them.

These features can be as formal or informal as the space invites. Every effort must be made to ensure spaces between rocks minimise the opportunity for paw entrapment. To achieve this, rocks should be set wide enough apart, set back from each other, and/or well packed with a filler such as granitic sand.

Rock scramble features do not have to be uniform in shape but should include sufficient flat-topped rocks between more irregular shaped rocks to define an easier route for smaller or less agile dogs and owners, and to provide informal perch points for dog owners.

Clamber mounds and smaller rock clusters positioned throughout the Open Run About Zone to break sightlines and help manage dog activity/behaviour.

In order to help manage wear, and for ease of maintenance the feature should have a 1-1.5 mt granitic sand or similar surround if it abuts a grassed area.

4.3.2.2. Rock beds/Simulated Dry Creek beds (Refer to 'Images Plate 2')

Rock beds or simulated dry creek beds provide a textural/sensory change from the surface material generally found in the wider FOLA. Rock beds/creek beds should comprise a mix of medium and smaller rocks interspersed with large pebble fillers.

It is critical that medium or smaller rocks and pebbles are rounded to minimise impact on paws. Tree trunk lengths add another sensory element (smell, balance, height) for dogs, and large flat-topped rocks add to the aesthetics of the area and provide perch points for dog owners.

In order to help manage wear and for ease of maintenance the feature should have a 1.5-2 mt granitic sand or similar surround if it abuts a grassed area.



Incorporate different underfoot textures

⁹ Refer Section - Grass Surfaces

4.3.2.3. Dog Dig Pit (sand)

The 'dog dig pit' needs to be at a high point on the site to minimise pooling of runoff and should include drainage infrastructure in the under surfacing to take water from the feature.

Dogs dig/like to dig:

- because they are bored
- to release pent up energy
- because it's fun or a playful thing to do
- to uncover cool earth or sand to lie in
- because they have a genetic predisposition for digging (e.g. terriers).¹⁰

The design of the Dig Pit should be large enough to accommodate dogs lying in the dig pit to rest or cool off and others who want to vigorously dig.

The surrounds should be wide and sit above ground level in order to contain the sand. Wide flat-topped rocks or tree trunk sections will also provide perch points for dog owners.

To manage wear and for ease of maintenance, this feature should have a 1.5-2 mt granitic sand or similar surround if it abuts a grassed area.



4.3.2.4. Landscape 'Space-Breakers' (Refer to 'Images Plate 1')

Landscape space-breakers are particularly important in the Run-about Zone. Runabout areas for children are designed to be open and expansive to encourage running. The design of the Run-about Zone in the FOLA must include features to slow the pace of the activity, and minimise the likelihood of smaller dogs and people being knocked over.

The larger the Open Run-about Zone and any fenced area that includes it, the more space-breakers or landscape features needed.

Space breakers can consist of:

- clusters of large rocks positioned closed together
- combination of rocks and vegetation.
- clusters of larger rocks with larger pebble surround (i.e. a surface that 'shifts')
- 'fallen tree trunk' climbing elements.

Space-breakers need to be substantial enough to divert dogs around the feature in order to break the pace of the chase, or divert the dog's attention as in the case of space-breakers that incorporate vegetation and other sensory elements.

Ideally space-breakers will be 600-800 mm in height (to minimise sightlines between dogs) or alternatively provide a significant surface textural contrast to the surrounding area.



¹⁰ My dog is digging up the garden, what should I do?
kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/my-dog-is-digging-up-the-garden-what-should-i-do/

4.3.2.5. Tree Groves/Trees

Throughout the general area of the FOLA consideration should be given to a mix of tree species in line with the LGAs tree planting policy and local soil and climatic conditions, and to provide natural shade.

Relevant budget allocations need to be assured for maintenance and renewal in line with relevant service level requirements for this type of asset, and plants poisonous to dogs avoided. Trees should be maintained to ensure sightlines into the FOLA and between different zones of the FOLA are optimised in line with safe design guidelines.

Plants 'Poisonous2Pets; Plants Poisonous to Dogs and Cats', Nicole O'Kane, 2011, CSIRO publishing

Tree groves or miniature forest environments with mulch and/or vegetation under surfacing provide a sensory contrast in a FOLA that is primarily granitic sand or another hard/semi-sealed surface.

Tree groves also help break up what might otherwise be an open expanse of space. Also, dogs are attracted to the odour/scent and movement associated with vegetated environments. As with 'space-breakers'¹¹ dogs have to focus on maneuvering around obstacles (trees), which helps distract them from other activities and crowded play that may be occurring in the more open areas of the FOLA.

Tree groves help to soften and shade the site and can easily be incorporated into smaller FOLAs. The addition of flat-topped rocks provide a perch point for dog owners drawing them into the space, particularly if they need to remove their dogs from the heightened activity in other parts of the FOLA.

Tree groves should comprise small to medium size trunked trees or trees with weeping open vegetation will create a more intimate environment than that associated with large trees.

4.3.2.6. Grass Surfaces

Unless the FOLA is particularly large it is difficult to maintain a good covering of grass throughout the year, particularly in locations with extreme climatic conditions. The addition of irrigation is unlikely to address this issue in most urban FOLAs.

If the size of the FOLA allows it, consideration should be given to including an area of longer grass. Many dogs enjoy hopping over/running through longer grass. However, some varieties of grass can cause skin irritation in dogs and seed heads can be particularly harmful to dogs and so maintenance regimes need to ensure seed heads do not form.

Further, snakes are more difficult to observe in longer grass and are likely to be more prevalent if water is located nearby.

Grass mounds provide a contrast in otherwise flat uninteresting grassed environments. However, it is difficult to maintain a good grassed surface on mounds in the FOLA. Erosion will occur because dogs and dog owners will be attracted to the peaks of the mounds. Other surfaces such as granitic sand or mulch will be subject to erosion/wash away on mounds.

A less visually attractive option is dirt mounds. However, this type of feature will become dusty and muddy at various times of the year and will likely attract complaints.

4.3.2.7. Fallen branched tree trunks or log installations

These low-cost installation options allow dogs to climb without the necessity for earthworks or mounding of the site. However, the site needs firm under surfacing to manage erosion/depressions forming particularly at jump on and jump off points, and where owners follow their dog around the feature.

In order to help manage wear, and for ease of maintenance, the feature should have a 1-1.5 mt granitic sand or similar surround if it abuts a grassed area. An alternative surround of pea pebbles may provide a textural contrast (shifting surface') to the rest of the FOLA.

¹¹ Refer Section-Space-breakers

Use of natural elements.



Above right Image courtesy of Sanford Dog Park, USA

4.3.2.8. Tunnels (additional to tunnels in the dog education/agility zone)

Tunnels can be incorporated into mounds but should not be so long or twisted that owners cannot reach dogs if a problem arises. Tunnel design should incorporate easy access to remove obstructions, broken glass etc.

An inexpensive option is to provide tunnel elements that sit atop the ground; however these can significantly detract from the aesthetics of the site.

Surrounds of tunnels and entry points need a durable surface in order to prevent unsightly erosion and puddles occurring.

4.3.3. Educational/Agility Equipment

The purpose of providing equipment installations in OLAs is to give dog owners a focus for dog education/obedience training and confidence development. Education equipment is not an essential element of the OLA as are landscape features that help to manage risk that can be associated with dogs in confined spaces.

If there are limited funds available for the design and construction of a FOLA then the priority should be on features that optimise safety and amenity.

Agility equipment used by dog agility clubs and in agility competitions must not be installed in public OLAs. Agility competition and dog agility clubs operate under strict guidelines and supervision and by dogs and dog owners who have undertaken the relevant and incremental training.



It is important that instructional signage accompany equipment installations to:

- ensure owners understand their dog's limitations (age, physical limitations) and do not take young dogs on to equipment
- encourage dog owners to take their dogs to education/training classes so they learn appropriate techniques for training their dog, and to clearly communicate with their dog
- ensure dog owners understand how to use the equipment and how to introduce dogs to the equipment
- ensure dog owners do not force their dog onto the equipment.

All steps must be taken to ensure obedience and confidence training is a positive experience for dogs. Equipment must be designed:

- to optimise educational, confidence development and success/sense of achievement outcomes
- to optimise, enjoyment and owner-dog bonding outcomes
- to minimise the possibility of injury or trauma.

Equipment can be stationed around a pathway, however dogs will be distracted by the general activity of the OLA and other people and dogs using the pathway. This will not be a problem for the obedient and well trained dog but it will be a challenge for the untrained dog and owner.

Alternatively, equipment can be located in a more secluded or screened section of the OLA where there are fewer distractions.



Above left: Equipment that might be considered appropriate for a public OLA compared to equipment used under supervised instruction in dog agility clubs and in competition by trained dogs and owners (above right - Image courtesy of Agility Dog Club of Victoria)

4.3.4. Water elements

At this time natural and constructed water features are not commonplace in Australian OLAs unless the site has access to a river or foreshore area.

In the USA there is a significant number of privately owned/commercial FOLAs many of which have access to a natural water body or incorporate constructed water features.

Factors that should be taken into account if planning on incorporating water features, or access to water bodies in the design of OLAs:

- the high cost of installation and maintenance of infrastructure
- possible exposure of dogs to water born bacteria, which can be present in stagnant water, puddles and soil.¹³
- increased likelihood of exposing dogs to snakes
- dogs chasing and killing wildlife, and encroaching into breeding areas if water access is via a natural waterbody
- degradation of embankments and waterways including sensitive wildlife environments
- degradation of water quality (e.g. dog faeces¹⁴, erosion)
- the impact of the estimated 75% of dog owners¹⁵ who don't 'always' pick up their dog's litter.

Sites with access to water or a water feature are particularly attractive to dog owners. However, anecdotal feedback from land management authorities including LGAs, Parks Victoria and the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) indicates there is a section of the dog owning community that:

- shows a disregard for wildlife and sensitive wildlife environments by letting dogs off-leash in on-leash or 'no-dog' areas
- allow their dogs to chase wildlife or disturb nesting areas.

¹³ American Veterinary Medical Association
(AVMA) www.avma.org/public/PetCare/Pages/Leptospirosis.aspx

¹⁴ Victorian dogs estimated to produce 90 tonnes of litter each day; Victorian Litter Alliance

¹⁵ Research by P4P/LMH Consulting indicates that that 75% of dog owners do not 'always pick up their dog's litter'



Images courtesy of Kilcona FOLA, Winnipeg, Canada (left & centre) & Beneful Dream FOLA, Alabaster, USA

4.4. Accessibility and Safety

Environments and infrastructure should be designed in line with 'Universal Access' and 'Safe Design' principles to encourage use of the site by all ages and abilities and, where practical and in line with LGA policy, extended hours of the day.¹⁶¹⁷ This section provides a summary of 'Universal Access' site considerations that have been referenced in detail elsewhere in the Technical Papers.

4.4.1. Infrastructure in the FOLA

Key access considerations:

- Pathways
 - Smooth, stable surface that allows easy transition between different landscape and sensory elements and amenities (e.g. seating, shade, water)
- Entries
 - Entries should:
 - include latches at hip to chest height that are easy to operate whilst controlling dogs and to accommodate people with restricted mobility
 - have an even surface free of depressions, puddles etc.
 - be of a width to allow easy access for wheelchairs/mobility aids.
- Seating
 - Ensure smooth transition between different types of under surfacing
 - Seats should have backrests and preferably arm rests
 - Seating must be accessible for people in wheelchairs/with restricted mobility
 - Some guidelines recommend that seating not be installed in the FOLA in order to encourage people to actively engage with their dog.
This position has merit; however it does not accommodate the less mobile or elderly dog owner, and for this reason most FOLAs incorporate seating.
- Picnic facilities
 - If picnic facilities are provided they should be outside the FOLA to minimise the likelihood of dog aggression relating to food. This needs to be reinforced on FOLA signage. Some guidelines suggest locating picnic facilities out of eyesight of the FOLA to prevent dogs being left unattended in the FOLA while dog owners picnic.
Again, there is merit in this position. However if the FOLA is a destination site that attracts long stays, locating picnic facilities at a distance from the FOLA prevents members of the family being inside with the dog while the others picnic.
 - LGA rationale in relation to matters such as seating and proximity of picnic facilities to the FOLA needs to be documented. Either position can be justified.
- Shade structures
 - Ensure smooth transitions from adjoining surface

¹⁶ Healthy by Design, A Guide to Planning Environments for Active Living in Victoria

¹⁷ Universal Accessibility: Best Practices Guidelines, Architectural Services Dept, UK Govt

- Should be of a size and alignment that maximise shade during the day, shelter from wind/rain and encourage social opportunities
- No picnic settings that encourage picnicking/food to be consumed inside the FOLA should not be included
- A high table bench and or 'hanging hooks' to keep personal items/items of clothing out of dogs' reach
- Water access
 - Drinking fountains
 - Should be disability friendly (e.g. clear of landscaping elements, including WSUD elements such as water gardens) in order for clear access for mobility aids
 - Dog water taps should have an under surfacing that is easily and safely accessible for people with restricted mobility
 - Drainage of the feature is essential
 - **Drinking stations must not have dog tie up points (risk management)**
- Vegetation
 - Natural shade - Ensure under surfacing is accessible for people with restricted mobility/disabilities
 - Plantings - Species that add to the amenity of the site as well as address safe design guidelines e.g. trunked trees, low level plantings that maintain sightlines into and within the site.
- Other considerations
 - Lighting - Lighting will generally be considered on a site by site basis and in line with LGA lighting policy
 - Tie up points – **Tying up of dogs must be discouraged in the OLA (risk management). Therefore, no designated tie up points should be included in the design.**

4.4.2. Infrastructure External to the FOLA

- Pathways
 - Smooth, stable and appropriate grade surface that provides easy transition from local/ street footpaths and car parking areas (i.e. no kerbs)
- Carparking
 - Car parking provision that includes wide bays suitable for people with restricted mobility/disabilities and that allows for easy handling of dogs in and out of the rear and side doors of cars, including by people using mobility aids
- Toilets
 - Accessible toilets as part of wider park provision
- Seating/picnic facilities
 - Picnic tables that make provision for people with restricted mobility. Note that there should not be any picnic tables in the FOLA
 - Seating – Refer above

Images Plate 1 – Tree Groves & Environmental 'Space Breakers'



Tree groves and different textural surfaces provide a sensory diversion and add to the amenity of the FOLA.

Ideally, FOLAs should be large enough to include internal footpaths to encourage dog owners to keep dogs 'on the move' from other higher energy areas in the FOLA.

Space breakers and the occasional seat or 'perch rocks' should also be incorporated into these areas. Trees/tree trunks will work as space breakers if they are planted close together and not in uniform rows.



Space breakers must be incorporated into open run about areas to help manage overly boisterous dog play or large groups of dogs forming. Scent associated with these areas will also help to attract dogs/distract them from other activity. Space breakers are extremely important in main area of the FOLA and in small FOLAs.



Images Plate 2 – Rocks capes and Clamber Mounds



Above: Elements such as dry creekbeds are best surrounded by a durable surface to prevent surface and amenity deterioration

Left: Informal rock mounding with greater sensory value associated with vegetation and 'soft surfaces' (e.g. pea gravel)

Below left & right: More formally designed rock clamber areas



Images Plate 3 – Avoiding Design and Installation Pitfalls



Above: Long & twisted tunnels make it difficult to check for hazards and to retrieve dogs. Poorly integrated design elements detract from the site and render maintenance difficult



The importance of appropriate plant selection & maintenance

Above Left: Opening of the FOLA 2014 (new plantings)

Above Right: (2018) Inappropriate plantings on the rock clamber renders the element ineffective and blocks sightlines into the back portion of the FOLA (risk management)



Left & Below - The importance of drainage and eliminating unwanted depressions. Many dogs love water no matter how muddy!



5. Fencing, Gates and Pathways

5.1. Number of Fenced Areas

if a FOLA is small it should not be divided into smaller fenced areas. Additional enclosures should not be considered if the FOLA is elongated and/or has squeeze points.

A larger FOLA allows for the incorporation of a 'Quiet Dog Area' in addition to the main area.

Anecdotal feedback from dog owners indicates a preference for a 'Quiet Dog Area' rather than a 'Small Dog Area' because this allows for timid/quiet dog regardless of size.

The diving fenceline allows dogs to socialise through the fence without being part of the often frantic activity on the main area and allows dog owners to gradually introduce their dogs to the activity of the FOLA.

If space allows then an additional 'Time Out Area' can be considered. However, a separate space for this purpose should only be considered if a large expanse of area is available well away from the main activity area. Generally, if a dog is misbehaving or hyperactive to the point that it requires removing from the main activity area, then it needs to be removed from the FOLA.



Separate 'Time Out Area' allows dogs to socialise through the fence, and adjust to being among other dogs

5.2. Fence Style and Height

In line with good park planning principles, the objective should be to minimise the intrusion of fencing onto the visual amenity of parkland wherever possible. To achieve this, 1.2 mt black cyclone wire fencing is recommended. A less expensive option is a stiff, galvanised farm style fencing that is free of barbs (including barbs that may occur where strands are fixed together). The wire, which may be appropriate in a rural/rustic setting.

A 1.2 mt high fence will provide an adequate boundary for a dog with minimal training and response to their owner's command. Dogs that are likely to jump over a fence of this height do not have adequate training to be allowed off-leash.

Higher fencing may be considered along boundaries with busy roads, rail lines, adjoining residential properties, etc. but this should be determined on a case by case basis.

Cyclone wire fencing should have fixed rails along the top (to prevent sagging) and bottom (to prevent lifting). There should not be any gaps between the bottom rail and the ground. Cyclone wire fencing set into the ground is an alternative but the wire will have a shorter lifespan.

Farm fencing wire should be an interlocked style (not stranded wire or barbed wire) with timber uprights. Wire should be embedded in the ground. Crossbars will improve rigidity and prevent sagging.

Some councils have installed 1.5-1.8 mt fencing, in the belief that high fences will keep other park users safe from dogs, and free from being imposed on by poorly behaved dogs. The reality is that most dogs, most of the time are not aggressive or harmful and data shows that dog attacks are more likely to occur in or near the home not in public places

The higher the fence and the more secure an off-leash area, the more likely dogs are to be left unattended. Anecdotal feedback¹⁹ indicates an increase in dogs being left unattended in fully fenced off-leash areas.

¹⁹ Research undertaken by LMH Consulting/Paws4Play – consultation feedback; client council feedback
LMH Consulting/Paws4Play

High fences may also inadvertently undermine the educational message council wants to send to dog owners - that they must actively supervise and be able to control their dog before they let it off-leash.

5.3. Corners

Corners must be as 'open' or 'rounded off'. Ideally the fenceline will follow an open sweeping curve to eliminate the need for abrupt corners. This is to minimise opportunities for dogs to become entrapped by other dogs.

There is a significantly increased likelihood that a dog will snap or bite as a defence reaction if cornered, particularly if it has no option of escape. Dog owners may also crowd into a corner to pull dogs out of a fracas and be bitten themselves and/or further overwhelm an already frightened dog.

Unfortunately if a dog bites, even in defense it can have significant legal implications for the dog and dog owner.

For these reasons, fencing with curved or extremely obtuse angles are required.



Curved fencelines or extremely obtuse/ open corners only.

5.4. Entries/Exits

There should be at least 2 entry/exits to reduce congestion that will occur if only one entry/exit and to provide an alternative entry/exit if a quick exit is required, as in the case of a skirmish

More entry/exits may be considered at a larger venue or if there is a small enclosure from which it is desirable to have an entry/exit.

Entries/exits must:

- Be set along the straight line of a fence and well away from corners. Gate enclosures must be located on the outside of the fenced area to prevent any right/acute angles occurring within the enclosure
- Be double gated and restricted to 1.5 x 2.5/3.5 mts in size to limit the number of dogs in the enclosure at one time. be free from congestion. Any design features such as clamber elements or infrastructure, such as bins and water taps, should be set well back from gates.

Extending the size to 1.5 x 3.5 mts will allow more time for introductions between dogs through the fence line before entering the FOLA. This helps to normalise the different energy levels between the dog waiting at the entry inside the enclosure (high energy/excitement) and the dog entering the enclosure (low energy/caution)

- Include secure self-closing mechanisms, with easily accessible catches, so that dogs cannot push their way out of the fenced area.

The priority in FOLAs is for easy access for adults. Young children should not be in the FOLA, therefore childproof catches are not necessary and are likely to make access more difficult for people managing dogs gathered around the entry and/or people with restricted mobility.

- Include a durable surface (generally concrete) to prevent erosion and pooling of water due to the wear and tear. If granitic sand is used, then a solid rock base and good drainage is required. Transition from the concrete surface to the softer surface should be as smooth as possible
- Be clear of elements that may cause congestion. Elements such as bins, drinking fountains, seating etc. must be set back from entries to allow for easy movement into and out of the FOLA

Internal gates may be single-gated but must be located away from any corners or obstructions that prevent a quick and easy entry or exit from the enclosure.

To minimise congestion at entries to the FOLA or fenced areas within the FOLA, it is important to break the sightlines between dogs inside the space and those approaching. This can be done by:

- Planting low to medium height screening vegetation (40-60 cms in height) on the outside the FOLA for approximately 4-5 mts
Plantings will need protection, from uncontrolled dogs approaching the entry, during an extended establishment period. Appropriate irrigation and maintenance protocols will need to be in place
- Plantings on the inside of the FOLA if there is not the space on the outside, however they will need an extended period of protection from trampling by dogs until they become well established.
Appropriately and aesthetically placed rocks between plants will help protect vegetation.
- Using the approach fenceline to display educational/information signage. Refer image below.



Creative educational signage by Lili Chin
www.doggiedrawings.net

Signage is an alternative to using vegetation to break sight lines between dogs in the FOLA and those arriving.

Chicanes:

- provide an alternative entry/exit solution to reduce the likelihood of dogs being left unattended in fenced areas.
- should sit on the outside of the enclosure to ensure there are no corners in the enclosure.
- should only be considered when there are no potential hazards immediately outside the fenced area, such as roads and commuter bike trails.

Chicanes are likely to attract complaint from some dog owners on the basis that the space is not secure. LGAs should have a policy in place that explains the rationale for having unfence, partially fenced or fully fenced OLAs to avoid confusion for residents.

If the LGA policy is to have chicanes rather than gated entries/exits, consideration can be given to a chicane entry/exit at one end of the FOLA and a gated entry at the other. This will provide a more secure area of the FOLA for those concerned about dogs escaping, but will address issues relating to dogs being left unattended in a fenced enclosure

5.5. Pathways

5.5.1. External access pathways

External pathways should not run parallel with the fenceline of the enclosure. Dogs are likely to run along the fence line to the gate to greet new dogs, unwary pedestrians and even cyclists (see image on following page) creating unwanted congestion.

There should be a smooth transition between the pathway and the surface material in the enclosure in order to avoid trip hazards and pooling of water/erosion.

If an external pathway has to run parallel to the fenceline, then ideally the fenceline should be set back 1.5 – 2.0 mts from the pathway and a bank of vegetation (to approximately 0.6 mt) planted between the pathway and the fenceline.

5.5.2. Internal pathways

The primary purpose of internal pathways is to:

- encourage dog owners to stay on the move with their dogs

In small FOLAs internal circuit pathways can motivate dog owners to walk or jog. This will keep dogs on the move and partially distracted by activity in the FOLA. Unfortunately, in small FOLAs there is not the opportunity to incorporate pathways that allows dog owners to move out of sight of the general activity of the FOLA. In this situation, the level to which a dog will be distracted will depend on the control the owner has over their dog and other distractions by way of landscape features.

In significantly large FOLAs there is the opportunity to incorporate pathways or trails that will provide a physical and visual distance between the dog and other dogs in the FOLA.

- ensure ease of access for people who have restricted mobility

This includes older people with limited mobility and people who use mobility aids.

Dog owners should be able to easily access key zones in the enclosure, including:

- entries to internal fenced areas, such as 'time out' or 'small dog' enclosures
- seating
- shelter facilities
- water outlets

Internal pathways can also be designed to incorporate:

- Tactile elements that add to the variety of sensory experiences when walked on-leash. Sensory features that may be incorporated into the pathway may include a clatter bridge (noise and movement) and roughened concrete (touch).
- A walking track with distance markers to encourage dog owners to exercise and keep their dog on the move rather than congregate with other dogs.

Pathways provide an ideal opportunity for owners to teach dogs to walk 'to heel' on the leash, progressing to off-leash when the dog responds to vocal and visual commands.

Images Plate 4 – Fences and Entry/Exits



Urban Park Setting

- 1.2 mtr high black cyclone wire fencing with black top and bottom rails
- Curved fenceline – no corners. Alternatively, obtuse corners
- Consider higher fencing only if it is required to manage a risk e.g. on a busy road or along residential boundary
- Bottom rail set to ground level.
- Timber / recycled plastic / steel uprights



Double Gated Entry

- Double gated entry 1.5 x 2.5/3.5 mts
- Gates set on the outside of the enclosure
- Self-closing gates
- Concrete entry pad with solid (e.g. granitic sand) surface, immediately beyond concrete entry pad with solid (e.g. granitic sand) surface immediately beyond entry pad
- Ensure smooth transition between different surface materials



Fence Parallel with Street Footpath

- Set the fenceline back 1.5-2 mts from any parallel street footpath
- Low to medium height vegetation plantings for approximately 4-5 mts to provide visual barrier between dogs inside and entering the enclosure



Option for 'Natural Park Environment'

- Planks should not be set any wider than 6 cm apart or sit any more than 6 cm from the ground. Wire mesh/ 'interlocked' farm fencing wire can be used to fill gaps in existing enclosures that have wide gaps between planks
- If a concrete pad is not installed at the entry, then maintenance regimes must remedy inevitable degradation of the surface.



Chicanes

- An option to ensure dog owners do not leave dogs unattended
- Chicanes must only be used where there are no immediate risks if dogs escape from the FOLA.



- Chicanes must be located on the outside of the enclosure to ensure no corners in the enclosure (entrapment).



Alternative/less expensive fencing options

- Interlocked farm style fencing (not stranded wiring) with treated pine/ timber uprights
- No barb wire strands
- Wire must be embedded into ground
- This type of fencing will generally have a shorter lifespan than cyclone wire with lower rail
- Crossbars will improve rigidity of fencing and prevent sagging.

6. References & Research

6.1. References

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Lili Chin Artist

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6.2. Colleague Benchmarking Survey

The following is preliminary information obtained from a colleague survey distributed in July 2019 in conjunction with Australian Institute of Animal Management (AIAM).

If you would like to be part of this ongoing research then please consider completing the first survey. You will receive a summary of information
<https://www.research.net/r/TechManualReleaseNotification>

1. Breakdown of Respondent LGAs

Table 1 – Breakdown of respondent LGAs (to July 2019)	
LGA Type	% & No. of LGAs
Inner metropolitan council	23% / 6
Outer metropolitan council	11.5% / 3
Metropolitan / rural fringe	11.5% / 3
Growth Area	3.9% / 1
Rural	7.7%/2
Regional	38.5%/10
Other	3.9%/1

2. Provision of Off-Leash Areas (OLAs – i.e. unfenced and fenced)

Reasons given for reducing the number of OLAs

- 8 LGAs are considering reducing the number of off-leash areas in their municipality primarily because:
 - owners are not controlling their dogs adequately (6 LGAs)
 - of concerns over possible dog attacks or rushes (4 LGAs)
 - council has received complaints (3 LGAs)
 - owners are not picking up their dog's litter (3 LGAs)
 - open space must cater for too many other activities (1 LGA)
 - it is too difficult for council to monitor these areas (1 LGA)

Reasons given for increasing the number of OLAs

- 14 LGAs are considering additional off-leash areas because:
 - of the demand from the community (10 LGAs)
 - council wants to provide for the needs of dog owners (5 LGAs)
 - there has been an increase in dog ownership (4 LGAs)
 - developers are requesting an allocation of open space for off-leash areas (2 LGA)
 - mayoral policy commitment (1 LGA)

3. Issues relating to the provision/management of off-leash Areas (OLAs)

Table 3 – Issues identified by respondent LGAs relating to the provision/management of OLAs (% & No. of LGA respondents)					
		A Significant Issue for My LGA	An Issue for My LGA	Not an Issue for My LGA	Not Sure
1	Inconsiderate attitude of some dog owners	25.00% 5	60.00% 12	5.00% 1	10.00% 2
2	Owners not being able to control their dogs	30.00% 6	50.00% 10	5.00% 1	15.00% 3
3	Owners not picking up their dogs' droppings	25.00% 5	50.00% 10	15.00% 3	10.00% 2
4	Having the resources to maintain areas adequately	25.00% 5	45.00% 9	15.00% 3	15.00% 3
5	Dogs attacks/rushes on people	25.00% 5	45.00% 9	15.00% 3	15.00% 3
6	Increasing demand/pressure from the community for off-leash opportunities	20.00% 4	50.00% 10	15.00% 3	15.00% 3
7	Dogs attacks/rushes on dogs	20.00% 4	45.00% 9	15.00% 3	20.00% 4
8	Having the resources to monitor compliance with local laws	40.00% 8	20.00% 4	25.00% 5	15.00% 3
9	Conflict with other activities on the site	15.00% 3	45.00% 9	25.00% 5	15.00% 3

4. Future provision of FENCED off-leash areas (FOLAs)

Table 2 – Future provision of FENCED off-leash areas (FOLAs)	
Response	% & No. of Respondents
YES has FOLAs, but is not considering any more at this time	20.00% / 4
YES has FOLAs, and is considering more	60.00% / 12
No does not have FOLAs, but is considering them	10.00% / 2
No does not have FOLAs, and is not considering any currently	10.00% / 2

5. Reasons LGAs are considering installing/installing more fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs).

(Of those that are considering new/considering more fenced OLAs)

Table 6 – Reasons LGAs are considering installing/installing more fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs).

	% & No. of respondents		
	Total Very True & True	Very True for Our LGA	True for Our LGA
Community demand	72.2% 13	22.22% 4	50.00% 9
It provides dog owners with a safe place to go with their dogs	70.6% 12.0	29.41% 5	41.18% 7
They are a good place for dogs to socialise in	61.1% 11.0	16.67% 3	44.44% 8
It is a good focus for responsible pet ownership initiatives	58.8% 10.0	29.41% 5	29.41% 5
They are good for elderly or disabled owners to let their dogs have a run in a confined area	52.9% 9.0	5.88% 1	47.06% 8
It keeps dogs out of sensitive environments but still allows them to use the reserve	52.9% 9.0	11.76% 2	41.18% 7
It is an effective way to provide for dogs in small or busy reserves	52.9% 9.0	5.88% 1	47.06% 8
Councillor pressure/ political pressure	27.8% 5.0	5.56% 1	22.22% 4
Because other councils are doing it	17.6% 3.0	5.88% 1	11.76% 2

6. Litter bag dispensers and bin provision

Table 4 – Litter bag dispensers and bin provision

	True for bag dispensers	True for bins	Unsure
Generally, we have never provided	30%/3	40%/4	40%/4
Generally, we did provide in the past but don't provide now	0	14%/1	86%/6
Generally, we do provide them and will continue to	57%/12	76%/16	24%/5
Generally, we did in the past, but we are considering taking them out in some/all areas	20%/2	0	80%/8
We only provide in fenced off-leash areas	35%/4	9%/1	64%/7

Reasons LGAs have removed or are considering removing litter bag dispensers

- They were vandalised (5 LGAs)
- People take/kept taking all the bags (2 LGAs)
- Council wants dog owners to be responsible for carrying their own bags (2 LGAs)
- Too costly to keep replacing bags (1 LGA)

7. Information being sought by respondent LGAs (multiple choice responses)

Table 5 – Information being sought by respondent LGAs		
	Priority Issues/Information requirements	% &No. of Respondents
1	Community compliance and education initiatives	92.86% / 26
2	Case studies examples e.g. What's working, not working	92.86% / 26
3	'Incident trends' associated with off-leash provision/policy or changes in policy e.g. Dog rushes, attacks, uncontrolled dogs	85.71% / 24
4	Trends in the planning and management of fenced (dog parks) and unfenced dog off-leash areas e.g. The number of off-leash areas/fenced dog parks, the distribution	82.14% / 23
5	Maintenance and compliance resourcing e.g. Cost of maintaining fenced dog parks, impact on sports fields	75.00% / 21
6	Service level planning and integration of planning off-leash areas with open space planning e.g. What level of service to provide and where	71.43% / 20
7	Risk management	67.86% / 19
8	Policy and provision rationale e.g. Examples of policies, policy in relation to playgrounds, trails, beaches, shared areas	67.86% / 19
9	Tourism and dogs/provision for dogs	57.14% / 16
10	New estates and developers / developer guidelines or requirements	46.43% / 13

Additional topics of interest/information being sought (written responses)

Respondents requested information relating to the following:

- Fenced off-leash areas (FOLAs) vs non-fenced (off-leash areas OLAs) - benefits of either?
- FOLAs areas that can be hired by people for exclusive use when they have dogs that aren't suitable to be in dog parks with other dogs. Is this appropriate?
- Appropriate size of dog off-leash parks
- Managing overuse/deterioration of site conditions
- Enclosures for registered dogs only - Do any LGAs make this a requirement?
- Why are fenced OLAs more popular than unfenced OLAs?
- How to manage competing interests for limited open space e.g. sport vs. off-leash activities
- Standards/provision guidelines for off-leash areas/Guidelines for inclusions. What to provide? E.g. Water fountains for drinking, agility equipment, poo bags, seating, amount of shade
- Maintenance of the FOLAs
- Cameras for when incidents happen and clear guidelines on who is at fault
- Issues associated with:
 - dog attacks and fights while both off lead
 - dog owner management and control of dogs

- dog owners bringing unsuitable dogs to OLAs that are constant reoffenders in fights
- Environmental impacts of dogs off-leash on creeks/streams and plant/animal habitat (urban waterways of parks and reserves).

8. LGA Initiatives

Table 7 – LGA initiatives being implemented			
	% & No. of respondents		
	Yes	No	Would Like to Know More
Indicating dog off-leash areas without cluttering the reserves/parks with too many signs	15.00% 3	25.0% 5	60.00% 12
Getting more dog owners to pick up their dogs' droppings	10.00% 2	25.0% 5	65.00% 13
Improving dog owner's control of their dogs in public places	15.00% 3	15.0% 3	70.00% 14
School based programs / initiatives	15.00% 3	35.0% 7	50.00% 10
Private / public program or activity partnerships relating to dogs	20.00% 4	35.0% 7	45.00% 9
Responsible pet ownership initiatives	35.00% 7	25.0% 5	40.00% 8

7. Attachments

Attachment 1 - Technical Manual - Planning, Managing, Designing Off-Leash Areas Draft TOC

TECHNICAL MANUAL

Planning, Managing, Designing Off-Leash Areas (including Fenced Off-Leash Areas)

To be notified of the release of the Technical Manual please register at

<https://www.research.net/r/TechManualReleaseNotification>

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Attachment 2 - Contributors to the Technical Manual



Lesley Humphreys - Local government planner and policy writer LMH Consulting/Paws4Play

Lesley has been a recreation, open space and community planner and policy writer for over 25 years and over the last 5 years has increasingly worked with LGAs in relation to:

- Research and writing of dog off-leash policy and review of policy
- review of dog off-leash areas and off-leash site feasibility assessments
- planning, management and design of off-leash areas, including establishing service levels
- concept and detailed design of fenced off-leash areas
- writing of Domestic Animal Management Plans
- community consultation and surveys relating to pets in society/dogs in open space.

Lesley presents on the topic of Dog Park Planning, Management and Design at conferences and workshops and has produced a series of technical information sheets to assist LGAs with the planning and management of fenced off-leash areas.



Dr Jacqui Ley – Veterinarian and Animal Behaviourist Melbourne Veterinary Specialist Centre

Jacqui was the inaugural Hills TM Resident in Veterinary Behavioural Medicine. Her areas of interest and expertise include:

- animal behaviour
- animal training and the functioning brain
- canine personality assessment modelling
- factors that affect the relationships between owner and dog
- the human-animal bond and factors affecting this
- tests for measuring fear and other behaviours in dogs
- the social relationships in dogs and cats
- expert specialist advice to LGAs and VCAT hearings relating to dog rushes and attacks.

In 2011 she became a diplomat of the European College of Animal Welfare and Behavioural Medicine - one of two people to hold this qualification in Australia. Jacqui was awarded a Fellowship to the ANZCVS in the Chapter of Veterinary Behaviour at Science Week 2013. She sees behaviour cases on a regular basis at MVSC.



Nell Thompson – Consultant and G2Z Program Co-ordinator Animal Shelter and Welfare Management Consultant

Nell has a diverse background in shelter management, rehabilitation of shelter animals, animal behaviour. She is sought after by LGAs for her knowledge and practical advice relating to local government animal management services and practices.

Because of her extensive industry and community network she is a wealth of knowledge on innovations in the sector and strategies for improving the sectors response to animal management issues.

Nell serves on the board of the Australian Institute of Animal Management an organisation that provides training and advice to local government and industry professionals working in the animal management sector.

She is also the coordinator of the national 'Getting to Zero (G2Z) program that has a focus on issues relating to the over-population of pets, in particular cats.

G2Z provides best practice knowledge and support to LGAs, communities, and professionals in the companion animal welfare, shelter and pound sectors.



Linda Marston
Research Associate

Linda is a Research Associate at the University of Queensland Veterinary School and has an extensive background in research relating to animal behaviour, the animal human bond, and the rehabilitation of traumatised pets in animal shelters.

She has worked closely with a number of training institutions including Latrobe University and GOTAFE conducting specialist lectures and online training courses relating to companion animals.

Linda was also the Program Manager for the Centre for Service and Therapy Dogs Australia and was the Co-ordinator for the animal rehabilitation program at the Animal Aid animal shelter. She also served on the Development of Animal Assisted Therapy Committee and as a Pet Therapist with the Bass Coast Community Health Service.



Kris Galea – Landscape Architect
KLG Landscape Consultants

Kris operates her own landscape consultancy that provides landscape advice, concept design and detailed design specifications for residential and local government clients.

Kris's eye for detail and practical approach to landscape design means she delivers both realistic and innovative landscape solutions.

Kris works with Lesley on a range of projects including reserve and park masterplans and concept and design drawings for fenced off-leash areas.