



KIAMA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
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Community Engagement Report

Dog Friendly Spaces Strategy

Phase 1: Consultation (co-design)

23 February - 22 March 2024

Background

Council resolved to prepare a Dog Friendly Spaces Strategy (the Strategy). On 12 April 2022 a Council resolution was passed to undertake the development of a 5 year Companion Animals Management Plan, the Dog Friendly Spaces Strategy makes up part of this plan. This plan will provide a strategic approach to the future management of our dog friendly spaces.

The formulation of the Strategy is based on the combination of community consultation and best practice learnt from other Council spaces and related documentation.

The Strategy is linked with Kiama Council's Community Strategic Plan objectives and strategies strongly tied to Pillar 1 – We belong and contribute.

Outcome 1.2: We love where we live; we have the services and facilities we need, and the natural beauty of our surroundings enhances our safe, active and healthy lifestyle.

1.2.1 Provide facilities that enable us to participate in social, cultural, recreational and sports activities, no matter our background, ability or age.

1.2.1.2 Partner with the stakeholders to develop a Strategy for Open Spaces and Recreation Places within the Kiama Local Government Area

1.2.3 Look after each other in times of disaster.

1.2.3.2 Maintain public order and safety in accordance with the Local Government Act through implementing the requirements of the Companion Animals Management Act and Regulations (registration, off-leash area, impounding facilities, and compliance requirements).

Our operational plan identifies the development of a Companion Animals Management Plan.

Consultation

Consultation was conducted internally with Compliance, Property and Engineering staff in relation to the challenges they currently face and the first hand feedback that they receive from customers.

Community consultation consisted of a combination of previous feedback and correspondence to Council and an online survey.

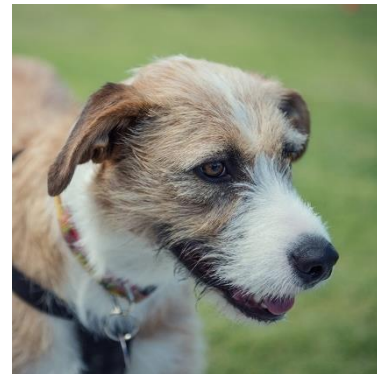
The survey sought feedback from participants on existing dog friendly spaces. The survey also invited suggestions on what Council can do to improve dog friendly spaces and how to find a balance between the needs of dog owners and those of the wider community.

A copy of the survey questions is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

The survey had 533 responses with 76% being dog owners, and 20% identifying as non-dog owners. The remaining responses were made up from visitors to the area.

The survey results and comments have provided information that has helped to inform the preparation of the Strategy. In addition to the survey, Council has used previous community correspondence to Council including complaints, reports of dog attacks and general feedback on dogs in public spaces to help inform the Strategy.

Feedback from community consultation and previous correspondence to Council indicates that overall the existing off-leash spaces are operating well with most concerns being focussed on responsible dog ownership and that there is a desire for Council to provide a fenced dog off-leash area in the Municipality.



Key findings

Where do dog owners exercise their dogs?

The survey found that most dog owners choose to exercise in and around their own neighbourhood with 82% of respondents falling in the category. The most popular dog off-leash area being Bombo Beach showing that 43% of respondents choose to exercise their dogs at this location. Jones Beach (37%), Minnamurra Headland (33%) and Bombo Headland (32%) off-leash areas following close behind.

What were the most important amenities in dog off-leash areas?

Dog owners strongly indicated that the provision of dog waste bags and bins was the most important amenity for a dog off-leash area with 87% of respondents specifying this. The survey showed that 63% of dog owners responded that drinking water facilities were an important feature of a dog off-leash area. At 48% tree shade and at 46% clear signage were both shown to be important features of a dog off-leash area.

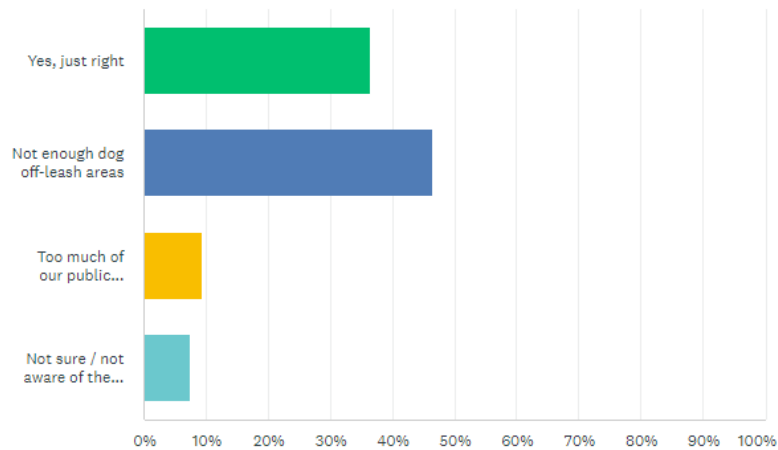
Do the current dog off-leash areas provide a good balance for sharing our public spaces?

47% of respondents felt that there was not enough dog off-leash areas and 37% felt that the balance was just right. 13% of respondents thought there was enough dog off-leash spaces and didn't see the need to provide further dog off-leash area. Of the non-dog owners 9% indicated that there were too many dog off-leash spaces.

When analysing the data it is clear that dog owners are strongly in favour of an educational response from Council with upgrading of signage being a suggestion to improving compliance. However, non-dog owners have indicated that regulation in the form of active patrols, increased enforcement and fines are approaches that could achieve better compliance.

Do the current (nine) dog off-leash areas provide a good balance for sharing our public spaces?

Answered: 490 Skipped: 43



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, just right	36.53%	179
Not enough dog off-leash areas	46.53%	228
Too much of our public spaces are dog off-leash areas	9.39%	46
Not sure / not aware of the dedicated spaces	7.55%	37
TOTAL		490

Preferred location for a new dog off-leash area?

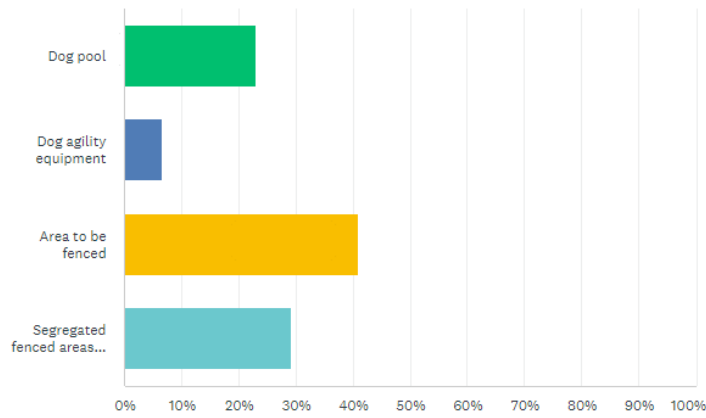
A majority of respondents identified Jamberoo as the preferred location for a potential future dog off-leash area. Other locations mentioned were Chapman Oval, Gainsborough, Easts Beach, Kendall's Beach, Hindmarsh Park, and sporting fields.

What features would you like to see in a dog off-leash area?

Of the options provided the majority (41%) of respondents indicated that the most important feature for a dog off-leash area is fencing followed by segregated fenced areas.

If the Council had the resources and budget to create an additional dog off-leash area, what key feature would you like to see included? (Select your top 2)

Answered: 417 Skipped: 116

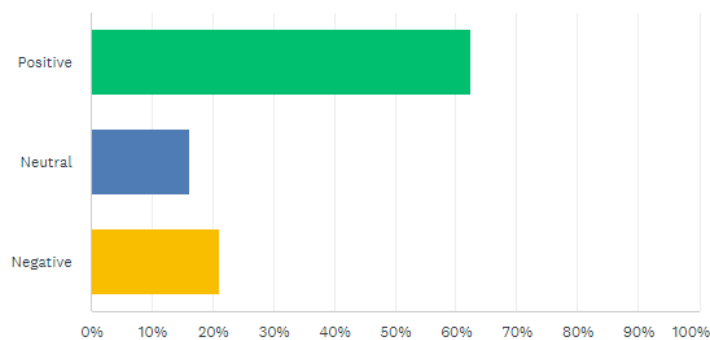


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Dog pool	23.02%	96
Dog agility equipment	6.71%	28
Area to be fenced	41.01%	171
Segregated fenced areas for small vs large dogs	29.26%	122
TOTAL		417

Overall experience of dogs in our public spaces

What is your overarching experience of dogs in our public spaces?

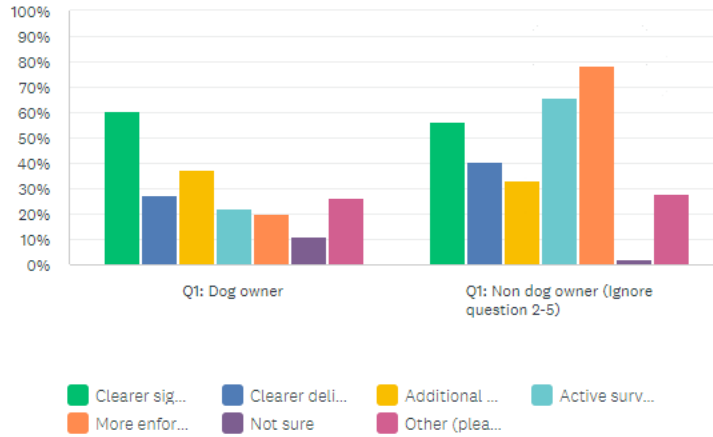
Answered: 505 Skipped: 28



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Positive	62.57%	316
Neutral	16.24%	82
Negative	21.19%	107
TOTAL		505

How can Council encourage responsible pet ownership and behaviour within our public spaces? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 487 Skipped: 21



	CLEARER SIGNAGE	CLEARER DELINEATION	ADDITIONAL EDUCATION	ACTIVE SURVEILLANCE AND CHECKING REGISTRATION THROUGH PATROLS.	MORE ENFORCEMENT AND FINES	NOT SURE	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	T
Q1: Dog owner	60.78% 234	27.27% 105	37.14% 143	22.34% 86	19.74% 76	10.91% 42	26.23% 101 Responses	1
Q1: Non dog owner (Ignore question 2-5)	56.31% 58	40.78% 42	33.01% 34	66.02% 68	78.64% 81	1.94% 2	28.16% 29 Responses	6
Total Respondents	291	147	177	154	157	44	130	

We are generally aware dog owners

Awareness of Council regulations and responsible pet ownership is relatively high, with the opportunity for more awareness on:

- Dogs not being allowed on or off-leash within 10m of children's playground equipment, food preparation areas (public barbeques and kiosks), and active recreation areas (during the play of an organised sport)
- Uncollected dog poo washing into a waterway can create bacteria and make the water unsafe for swimming

Conclusion

The feedback from the community and other stakeholders indicates that generally that the dog off-leash spaces are working well with the major concerns being responsible dog ownership, the provision of a dog off-leash area in the Jamberoo township and a fenced dog-off-leash area to be provided. The Dog Friendly Spaces Strategy will aim to address these concerns and actions. In addition to this, the Strategy will seek to provide consistent rules and signage for these spaces.

Community quotes

"Please don't reduce the number of off-leash areas! It's so important for dogs (and their people) to have spaces to run and play."

"My biggest concern with current area relates to access to the Bombo beach site. When accessing this area from the north the only permitted way to get there is by walking along the road. There is no footpath or speed humps to slow traffic. It is dangerous on busy days or when cars speed along that road (which is often). I have been told off by rangers and life guards for walking my dog (on lead) along the beach to the off-leash area but to me it's the safest option."

"Jamberoo - an off-leash area required. We have family with a dog who have moved to Jamberoo."

"The coastal walk at easts beach needs clearer signage for passing through the area with a dog (on lead). The caravan park won't allow access and the signs indicate dogs aren't allowed on the beach or in the creek."

"Unfortunately there is a segment of the community that does not respect guidelines and make it difficult for owners, that includes owners that place droppings in bag and then drop the bag."

"There is way too many areas that are dog off-leash. I don't feel safe at the dog beaches so am very selective as to when I visit them. During lockdown I tried to face my fear and exercise at Bombo as it was close to my home and nice to walk along, but I was surprised how many dog owners were not taking responsibility for their dog and also assumed I wanted to interact with their dog. Already many people walk their dogs off-lead on rocks around Bombo and the coast track too. Can some of the areas be timed like in the Shoalhaven eg between the hours of 4pm and 8am?"

"Our experience is that people walking around the streets don't pick up after their dog. Signs and plenty of poo bags might help, but it's usually the people who don't leash their dog that don't pick up."

"In my experience of walking in the Jones Beach and Minnamurra Headland area dogs are off-leash in non designated areas and dog prints often evident near the signs to Jones Beach that state "No Dog to enter the beach at the point" obviously the sign is ignored."

"Would love to see more off-leash areas in Kiama."

"Often I find dogs off-leash in the No Dogs Past This Point on the beach. Also we have continual trouble with owners of dogs not picking up after their dog on our footpath."

"Any expansion of these areas should not involve any loss of amenity to adjoining property owners and to people who normally use the area for recreation. It is vital that significant native vegetation and bush regeneration projects or wildlife should not be put at risk. There should be clearer and sufficient signage to adequately delineate the boundaries of the off-leash area. There should be at least 2 entrances / exits for any off-leash area and no blind spots so that dogs are always exercising in direct view of owners. Off-leash areas should not include through roads or paths frequently used by bike riders and walkers. There should be a concerted education campaign for dog owners using off-leash areas and all other public spaces."

"I think that the Kiama Council area is treated as a dog off lead area. over the summer period, we have had 10-15 dogs off-lead per day on the Minnamurra River Reserve on Charles Avenue. This is an accident looking for a place to happen. There are plenty of signs ignored by dog owners clearly stating the need for on leash dogs. Such is life in Kiama Council Area which makes you anxious with small grand children in the river."

"Congratulations to Kiama Council for initiating this survey and soliciting input from the Kiama community. This is an important issue and hopefully the community feedback will support the Council to finesse the 'right' balance for dogs and dog owners, and pooch loving but non-dog owners, to all enjoy and responsibly share the open spaces of our beautiful open spaces."

Next steps

The Draft Strategy was endorsed by Council for public exhibition at its Ordinary Meeting on [date] as follows:

[Resolution detail]

Next steps

- 1. Council consideration**
Draft strategy will be reported to the Council for consideration.
- 2. Public exhibition**
The Draft Strategy will go on formal public exhibition for 28 days, providing you with another chance to have your say.
- 3. Consideration feedback**
Any feedback received during the exhibition period will be considered and incorporate where relevant.
- 4. Council endorsement**
The final Strategy will go to Council for endorsement, including a report outlining how feedback received during the consultation phase shaped the final Dog Friendly Spaces Strategy.

Have your say: [Dogs in Public Spaces Kiama Council \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/dogs-in-public-spaces-kiama-council)

Appendix 1

Copy of Survey Questions

Q1 How do you identify? (select all that apply)

- Dog owner
- Non dog owner
- Kiama Local
- Visitor

Q2 Dog owners only. Where do you take your dog(s) to exercise? (Select all that apply)

- Around my neighbourhood
- Bombo Beach (dog off-leash area)
- Bombo Headland (dog off-leash area)
- Kaleula Reserve (dog off-leash area)
- Marsden Headland (dog off-leash area)
- Jones Beach (dog off-leash area)
- Minnamurra Headland (dog off-leash area)
- Werri Beach (dog off-leash area)
- Gerringong Headland (dog off-leash area)
- Blackhead Reserve Gerroa (dog off-leash area)
- Other (please specify)
- None of the above

Q3 Dog owners only. What are the most important amenities in dog off-leash areas? (Select your top 3)

- Clear signage
- Tree shade
- Seating
- Drinking water facilities
- Provision of dog waste bags and bins
- Accessible parking
- Toilets nearby
- Children playground nearby
- Other (please specify)
- None of the above

Q4 Dog owners only Are you aware that...? (Select all that apply)

- The NSW Government has three education programs targeting responsible pet ownership and safe pet interaction – We are Family: Home (nsw.gov.au)
- Dogs are not allowed on or off-leash within 10m of children's playground equipment, food preparation areas (public barbeques and kiosks), and active recreation areas (during the play of an organised sport)
- Uncollected dog poo washing into a waterway can create bacteria and make the water unsafe for swimming
- All pet dogs must be registered with Council as part of the NSW Companion Animal Register
- Dogs must be microchipped before 6 months of age
- Dog owners must always effectively control their dog(s) in a designated off-leash area. Effective control means their dog returns immediately when called, doesn't approach strangers uninvited and is under constant supervision

- Microchipping and registration make it easier to reunite a lost pet with its family**
- People walking dogs must carry a bag to collect dog poo**
- Dogs must be on leash at all times in public spaces, unless in an area designated off-leash**

Q5 What is your overarching experience of dogs in our public spaces?

- Positive**
- Neutral**
- Negative**

Q6 How can Council encourage responsible pet ownership and behaviour within our public spaces? (Select all that apply)

- Clearer signage**
- Clear delineation**
- Additional education**
- Active surveillance and checking registration through patrols**
- More enforcement and fines**
- Not sure**
- Other (please specify)**

Q7 Do the current (nine) dog off-leash areas provide a good balance for sharing our public spaces?

- Yes, just right
- Not enough dog off-leash areas
- Too much of our public spaces are dog off-leash areas
- Not sure/ not aware of the dedicated spaces

Q8 What would be your preferred location in our community for a potential future dog off-leash area?

Q9 If the Council had the resources and budget to create an additional dog off-leash area, what key feature would you like to see included? (Select your top 2)

- Dog pool
- Dog agility equipment
- Area to be fenced
- Segregated fenced areas for small vs large dogs

Q10 Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Q11 (Optional) Leave your email address to stay in the loop with the developments of the Dog Friendly Spaces Strategy