

POLICY TITLE	Draft Fenced Dog Parks Policy
POLICY TYPE	Council
DIRECTORATE	Planning & Development

1. Background

As more recreation opportunities are being sought by the local community, dog parks have become a growing trend in providing safe, social spaces where dog owners can exercise their dogs in a secure public environment.

The role of dogs is also evolving with specialist companion dogs assisting owners with conditions such as seizure alert and support for victims of violence and crime.

Approximately 15-20% of Moonee Valley's households own dogs. Further detail of dog ownership by suburb is outlined in Table 1, **Appendix I**.

Moonee Valley is well provisioned with nine dog off leash dog areas within the municipality for people to exercise their pets. The need for fenced dog parks or fenced dog off leash areas assist those who have limited mobility to exercise their dogs and provide a secure space for dogs and their owners to socialise.

There is opportunity for Council to utilise existing infrastructure, such as fenced sports fields for dog off leash activities. This would increase provision of fenced facilities without extensive investment or creation of a single use facility.

2. Purpose

Councillors of Moonee Valley have identified the need to create policy to guide development of dog related facilities in the municipality.

3. Scope

To outline broad requirements to consider in provision of dog related facilities. This policy does not identify particular locations, but rather provides guiding principles and criteria.

4. Definitions

Dog off leash area: A dog off leash area is a flexible unfenced space which allows a free runabout area for dogs. It is often a shared use, such as a sports oval. These occur in places such as Aberfeldie Park and Fairbairn Park.

Fenced dog off leash area: A fenced dog off leash area is a flexible fenced space which allows a free runabout area for dogs. It is often a shared use, such as a sports oval and has time restrictions depending on time of use. There are currently no fenced dog off leash areas in Moonee Valley City Council.

Fenced dog park: A fenced dog park is a designated off leash play area designed to create a social setting for dog owners to exercise their dogs. It includes amenity such as seating and shade and a variety of spaces to allow for different abilities and skills. It is typically not a shared use space. The fenced dog park will only be considered if there is no opportunity for a fenced dog off leash area in a sporting reserve within the immediate neighbourhood.

5. Responsibility

Responsibilities are shared across a number of Council departments:

- **City Design**
Undertake planning, consultation and design.
- **Legislative Services and Support**
Investigate possible breaches of the Domestic Animal Act and terms of use. Provide guidance for responsible pet ownership.
- **Operations**
Maintenance of Council assets located within the dog related facilities including fencing and furniture, landscaping including ground surfaces and vegetation and signage.
- **Sport and Recreation**
With potential interface with sports facilities and with their relationship with dog obedience clubs, the Sport and Recreation team will be involved with promotion and education of dog related facilities.

6. Policy Context

The Domestic Animal Management Act 1994 requires Council to review the Domestic Animal Management Plan every four years. The approved policy for dog related facilities will be updated at the next four year review.

7. Strategic Policy Position

The Council is committed to a policy which:

- **Provides residents with a diverse range of open space opportunities**
The Open Space Strategy outlines the long term vision for Open Space within Moonee Valley to be 'A linked, sustainable and accessible system of quality open space well used by Moonee Valley's diverse community, comprising the waterway corridors that are highly valued for their native habitat and recreational use, and a diverse range of other open space reserves across the City including historical gardens, large sporting reserves and a network of smaller vibrant open spaces'.

Dog parks and fenced dog off leash areas provide areas where dogs and their owners can be separate from other people who don't want to interact with dogs while visiting the park. Furthermore, fenced dog areas keep dogs out of sensitive environments such as waterways or bushland areas but still allow them access to parkland.

- **Provides residents with a range of opportunities for recreation**

Moonee Valley provides a range of opportunities for recreation including formal sports facilities, shared pathways and walking trails in a variety of settings, playspaces and youth parks. The Leisure Strategy outlines that walking is the most popular activity in open space and streetscapes. Furthermore the Leisure Strategy outlines that people would like greater access to activities that provide opportunities to meet other people and that aren't highly physical. The provision of dog related facilities provide an opportunity for those to socialise with their pets and an alternative to existing open space uses.

- **Provides residents with a range of opportunities to exercise and train dogs**

Moonee Valley has a diverse population, creating opportunities for a wide range of age groups is crucial in providing an equitable community. This is particularly important for those who are unable to exercise their dogs through walking or accessing many of the off leash dog parks. Dog parks and fenced dog off leash areas provide the opportunity for community members who have limited mobility to exercise and socialise their dogs in a comfortable setting.

- **Promotes responsible pet ownership**

Dog related facilities within Moonee Valley promote responsible pet ownership in a number of ways. They can provide an environment where advice is exchanged on dog management and where responsible dog ownership is encouraged. It can furthermore provide a focal point for community education and training programs, and also help avoid potential conflict between dogs and other activities in parks.

- **Makes for a better community by promoting public health and safety**

Well-exercised and stimulated dogs are less likely to create a nuisance, bark excessively, and destroy property. Their presence in the park, along with their owners can increase positive passive surveillance.

8. Policy

8.1 Dog Management

General

Dog owners are subject to the same responsibilities when using a fenced dog park as those relating to dog off-leash areas or a fenced dog off leash facility. Dog owner's responsibilities relating to dogs in public places include:

- Anyone in charge of a dog is responsible for cleaning up their dog's litter and carrying a device suitable for doing this.
- Anyone in charge of a dog/s in any off-leash area must also:
 - have their dog/s under effective voice control
 - have their dog/s in their sight at all times
 - carry a leash
 - ensure their dog/s do not go within 15 metres of play, public BBQ and exercise equipment (applies to both on-leash and off-leash) but excludes fenced dog parks.
 - ensure their dog/s are on a leash within 5 metres of a shared footway or bike path.

Dog Management within Dog Parks

Dog owners / carers will have additional responsibilities when using a dog park and will need to comply with user regulations including:

- The number of dogs any one person can take into a dog park is limited to two to ensure owners can manage dogs they are responsible for while in the dog park.
- Dog owners to be discouraged from taking young children into dog parks. Children should be introduced to dogs in quiet and controlled environments so they learn to understand the nature of dogs and are not overwhelmed by them.
- Children to be fully supervised by an older person who can monitor and reinforce appropriate behaviour. As the environments in dog parks are for dogs. Children need be managed in these environments, particularly when there are a number of dogs engaged in robust play.
- Unvaccinated dogs, such as puppies, should preferably not use the dog park because they could be open to infection. Owners to be made aware that young dogs to not be encouraged to jump from heights (e.g. rocks, education / agility equipment) because it can damage developing joints.
- Dogs using dog parks should be registered, de-sexed and vaccinated.
- Breeds classified 'dangerous dogs' and other breeds of dog designated by Council will not be permitted in the dog park.
- Use of dog parks by commercial/private providers and large groups (e.g. formal gatherings) should be managed to minimise any

conflict between these groups and residents wanting to use the dog park.

- Information and signage must clearly state that dogs will be fully supervised and dog owners must be inside the dog park with their dogs.
- Picking up and disposing of dog litter.
- Dog owners must familiarise themselves with information signage to ensure they are aware of how to safely and appropriately use agility equipment. It is also important that signage clearly indicates the equipment is for use by dogs and not by people.
- Domination of the dog park by commercial or community activity groups to be discouraged.

Dog parks tend to become self-regulating. Experience from other Councils indicates that responsible dog owners put pressure on other dog owners. As a result responsible ownership behaviours are reinforced and wayward dog owners tend to cease using the dog park.

8.2 Facility management

Management and ongoing maintenance of a dog park to form part of a facility management plan to address the following key areas.

8.3 Risk

A risk management plan to manage and where possible mitigate risk.

8.4 Maintenance

- Scheduling of routine maintenance and surface restoration for times of the year, week and day where minimal use is expected. Maintenance levels will vary depending on the level of subsurface drainage, the gradient of the land, soil conditions, the type of surface/under surfacing and the level of use.
- Cleansing and waste management will vary depending on the level of use, the level of responsibility dog owners/walkers take in cleaning up after their dogs, the type of surface. Increased use of the park may result in additional cleaning associated with toilets, rubbish bins, and rubbish collection and picnic areas in the park or reserve.
- Vegetation management and replacement including grass cutting.
- Infrastructure maintenance and replacement associated with seating, dog education/agility equipment, car parks, toilets, fencing etc.
- Council will develop proactive maintenance and risk management inspections including a checklist and procedures for how outcomes are to be recorded.

8.5 Monitoring and education

- Monitoring of the site for compliance with local laws and dog park rules and regulations.
- Local Laws Officers will provide animal education to users.
- Suitable information prepared for use in Council publications, local media and other outlets.

8.6 Signage

- Signs will be installed guiding appropriate use of the facility.
- Signage requirements may include:
 - Regulatory signage addressing the issues above and how to report incidents or maintenance issues
 - Time restrictions for use of park, in particular fenced off leash areas which are associated with a sports oval.
 - Equipment signage showing the appropriate use of equipment
 - Park etiquette
 - Responsibilities of dog owners/carers to ensure their dogs are under control at all times
 - Wording to be checked for legal and insurance implications.

8.7 Ongoing community input

- Survey park users periodically to determine their level of satisfaction with the facility and how it can be improved.
- Process for regular communication with users, the community, clubs and associations.

8.8 Site evaluation criteria

Dog related facilities will be assessed by their suitability in terms of classification and character of open space, which is outlined in Table 2, **Appendix I**. The primary and secondary evaluation criteria will also determine suitability based on further site analysis.

8.8.1 Primary evaluation criteria

- **Use of existing single use open space**

It is common practice across municipalities for sports ovals to be used as a designated dog off leash area, whilst not being used for sport. Signage and communication with the sports club will play a key role. The preferred option is to use existing infrastructure, particularly if the field is already fenced.

- **Proximity to other dog related facilities**

Consideration must be given to the number and provision of dog related facilities within the municipality. This is to ensure that a diversity of space is met within each suburb. For example a fenced dog park should not be located within 500m of a dog off leash park. This is to encourage residents to walk and exercise their dog and to also receive the health benefits of being active.

- **Use of existing compromised space**

Consideration must be given to the potential for a fenced dog park to find a new use for a limited piece of land. This includes the use of service easements to encourage use with a specific activity.

- **The space available in the open space to accommodate a dog park without it unreasonably impacting on the space available for existing park activities**

The site capacity to accommodate a dog park, with awareness of the number of activities that may be impacted and the existing open space character and classification. This will also include the ability to provide buffers between existing activities and provision of room to allow for future flexibility of the space.

- **The level of environmental sensitivity associated with the open space**

The impact the dog park may have on sensitive environments, wildlife areas, wetlands or previous use that may require management arrangements, such as wildlife, former landfill. Open Space areas classified under Waterway and Conservation would not be considered for inclusion of dog parks.

- **Site access**

Consideration must be given to access to the site, including barriers to access e.g. major roads, creeks/waterways. The location of the site including the nature of surrounding land uses, the openness of the site and the nature of other activities that will attract additional park users and optimise causal surveillance to be considered.

8.8.2 Secondary evaluation criteria

- **The integration of the proposed dog park site with other park activities**

The location of the dog park within the site should provide users connectivity to other park activity spaces such as sporting and passive recreation areas.

- **The proposed dog park site has good natural features including natural shade, attractiveness of the landscape**

The dog park should be located in a natural setting/environment and include landscaped and natural shade areas. Green sites with pleasant surroundings will attract users.

- **The proposed dog park site has existing and accessible infrastructure and amenities**

The location of the dog park should give dog owners easy access to park infrastructure and amenities to support the nature and length of visit. Infrastructure will reflect the hierarchy of facility.

- **The open space has good linkages via the shared path network**

This will optimise the number of residents who can access the park or reserve via safe off-road pathways that provide direct routes to the site.

A park or reserve, with good connectivity and pedestrian friendly will encourage walking to access the facility, which is in line with Council's health and wellbeing objectives.

- **The number of people living near the park and who would potentially be able to walk to the site**

Locating the dog park at a park or reserve that has a close and significant population of dog ownership will increase the use of the facility. It will also reduce dependence on motorised transport to access the site.

- **The number of dogs residing within walking distance of the site**

The park or reserve has a significant number of households with dog ownership within its catchment.

8.9 Design Guidelines

Dog Off Leash Design Criteria

- **Core Infrastructure**

- Signage with Conditions of Use
- Sports field or large unimpeded open space (no fencing)
- Drinking fountain with dog drinking bowl
- Furniture including bins and bag dispensers at entry
- Lawn surface

Fenced Dog Off Leash Design Criteria

- **Core Infrastructure**

- Existing or standard fencing and gates (typical Council detail)
- Signage with Conditions of Use
- Sports field
- Lawn surface
- Pathways to and within the dog park
- Furniture including bins and bag dispensers at entry

Fenced Dog Park Design Criteria

Design elements to refer to relevant Australian Standards and Universal Design Principles and include core infrastructure to ensure best use and visitation of the dog park and provide a different experience to a dog off leash area:

- **Core Infrastructure**

- 1.5m high fencing and double gated entry points
- Enclosures
- Signage with Conditions of Use
- Pathways to and within the dog park
- Furniture including bins and bag dispensers
- Shade and areas for exploration

- **Amenities**

- Variety of seating opportunities
- Water for people and dogs
- Off street parking
- Picnic Facilities

- **Activity Areas**

- Rock scramble areas

- Sensory vegetation plantings
- Open areas, predominantly granitic sand surface
- Agility equipment/education areas
- **Landscaping**
 - Natural shade/tree plantings
 - Vegetation along approach fencing
 - Vegetation to delineate zones
 - Drainage
 - Hard wearing ground cover/surface
- **Site amenity**

The amenity of dog parks also needs to be considered through appropriate design so as to minimise impact on the local area.

Other Considerations

- **Fence**

The fencing of open space is minimised wherever possible, but there are situations where the fencing or partial fencing of open space is appropriate. Fenced dog parks and fenced dog off leash areas are appropriate:

 - when there is a need or desire to separate dog off-leash activities from other park activities
 - can accommodate multi use, such as an existing fenced sports field
 - to enable less mobile people and older people to let their dogs run off-leash in a secure environment
 - as a training ground for dogs learning obedience skills, and
 - to provide a secure environment where dog owners can be less concerned about their dogs encroaching on other park users or roads.

- **Surface Treatment**

The type of surface used within dog related facilities depends on a number of factors.

Lawn

Lawn areas are appropriate:

- when there is existing irrigation on site
- utilisation of existing sportsfield and maintenance regime

Granitic sand

Granitic sand areas are appropriate:

- when there is no existing irrigation on site
- when access is restricted
- includes multiple fenced areas within the facility
- when complemented with shade trees and variety of surface treatments to provide a shaded, low maintenance landscape setting.
- **Noise**

Measures can be taken to minimise potential noise impacts including:

 - locating approach pathways away from the dog park boundary to minimise dogs becoming excited as they approach the park
 - planting low lying plants along pathways to distract dogs approaching the park and in the park from each other
 - designing major activity areas in the dog park away from adjoining or nearby properties
 - planting buffer plantations
 - owners to familiarise their responsibilities as a dog park user in relation to calming their dogs where necessary.
- **Other**

To make dog parks inviting places for people and dogs to visit, amenities including shelter, seating, water, parking and access paths are important for a positive dog park experience.

9. Related Documents

Essential

The management of animals within the public realm is governed by the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

General

The development of the plan relates to action and guidelines from the following documents.

- Domestic Animal Management Plan
- Leisure Strategy
- Diversity, Access and Social Inclusion Strategy

10. Review and Evaluation

Create electronic mechanism for prompt, to ensure policies are up to date.

Appendix I

Table 1: Dog ownership by suburbs

Suburb	# of registered dogs (2016)	% of total dog population	# of households (2011)
Aberfeldie	444	4.33%	1316
Airport West	723	7.06%	2906
Ascot Vale	1304	12.74%	5626
Avondale Heights	913	8.92%	4095
East Keilor	1340	13.09%	4841
Essendon	1756	17.16%	7424
Flemington	405	3.95%	3287
Moonee Ponds	1286	12.56%	5529
Niddrie	558	5.45%	1889
North Essendon	167	1.63%	995
Strathmore & Strathmore Heights	1069	10.44%	3156
Travancore	120	1.17%	812
West Essendon	148	1.44%	509

Table 2: Categories of open space and suitability of new dog parks, fenced dog off-leash areas and dog off-leash areas

Category of open space	Characteristics	Type of provision for dogs that may be considered			
		Dog Parks	Fenced Dog Off Leash areas	Dog off-lead areas	Dog on-leash areas
State	Development of these sites is the responsibility of state government or is dependent on state government approval.	x	✓	✓	✓
Regional	Unlimited size. Caters to broader Melbourne-wide population, including residents of Moonee Valley, and/or protection of environmental values in a regional context. For example linear open space along waterways with habitat connectivity in the riparian zone, and/or regional trails that extend beyond Council boundaries, or major features that attract people from a broader catchment than Moonee Valley. Examples include Maribyrnong River Regional Parklands, Aberfeldie Park Athletics Track and Queens Park.	x	✓	✓	✓
Municipal	Minimum 3 hectares. Located within 2km of all dwellings. Primarily provides facilities that attract visitors from Moonee Valley, rather than a local or neighbourhood focus. For examples this may include sporting facilities, or historical gardens. Examples include Woodlands Park, Buckley Park and AJ Davis Reserve. *There can be some Municipal open space smaller than 3 hectares where the reserve is a specialised facility on a smaller area of land, and fulfils a Municipal function. Examples include tennis courts or multi-purpose courts.	x	✓	✓	✓
Neighbourhood	Minimum 1 hectare. Located within 500m safe walking distance from all dwellings. Provides for Neighbourhood use within walking distance of	✓	x	x	✓

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Category of open space	Characteristics	Type of provision for dogs that may be considered			
		Dog Parks	Fenced Dog Off Leash areas	Dog off-lead areas	Dog on-leash areas
	home with a range of facilities on the larger area of land. Examples include Cliff Allison Reserve, Monte Carlo Reserve and Clarinda Park.				
Local	Less than 1 hectare (0.99 to 0.26 hectares). Located within 300m safe walking distance from all dwellings. Located within safe walking distance of home and large enough to provide for two activities in the one open space reserve – e.g. A playground and open grassed area with seats. Examples include Rothwell park, Riviera Reserve and Canterbury Reserve	x	x	x	✓
Small local	From 0.25 hectares to 0.03 hectares. Located within 150m safe walking distance from all dwellings. Located within safe walking distance of house and generally able to accommodate a single use – e.g. seats in a small park/garden, a small play area or walk-through with seating, where it is larger than 0.03 hectares for the walk-through or playground. Examples include Grandview Street Reserve, Chantilly Avenue Reserve and Treadwell Reserve.	x	x	x	✓
Small Local Link	Less than 0.03 hectares. These area of open space provide improved connectivity between streets and open space reserves. They are less than 0.03 hectares in size and only provide for the single use of a path connection between streets or open space reserves. There is no space to locate a seat with a view. Examples include Monte Carlo Walkway and Wheeler Place Walkway.	x	x	x	✓

✓ might or should have x won't have

Table 2: Classification of open space and suitability of dog parks and dog off-leash areas

Classification of open space	Description	Type of provision for dogs that may be considered			
		Dog Parks	Fenced Dog Off Leash Areas	Dog off-leash areas	Dog on-leash areas
Botanical	Where there is a significant botanical collection or where there is botanical interest. This can apply to indigenous and nonindigenous vegetation.	x	x	x	✓
Community Garden	Where members of the community have assigned 'garden' plots on open space to grow their own plants. These areas are typically fenced and open only to those who have been assigned the garden plots.	x	x	x	✓
Formal	Where the facilities and open space is planned and laid out in a structured form (not necessarily historic in character).	x	x	x	✓
Heritage	Where the presence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous history makes a significant contribution to the open space character and use. This classification is not limited to reserves that have formal use.	x	x	x	✓
Informal	Where the facilities and overall layout are not highly structured or formal.	x	x	✓	✓
Linear	Linked or continuous reserves that are used primarily for travelling through or along. These reserves are located along waterways, drainage lines, easements and roads.	x	x	✓	✓
Linking space	Where open space provides a local link or connection between streets or individual open space reserves and is not part of a linear network.	x	x	x	✓
Nature conservation	Where there is intent to protect and/or improve the biodiversity habitat values. This may include reserves with existing values, or those identified to have	x	x	x	✓

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Classification of open space	Description	Type of provision for dogs that may be considered			
		Dog Parks	Fenced Dog Off Leash Areas	Dog off-leash areas	Dog on-leash areas
	potential to provide this in the future.				
Play	Where the character of the open space is dominated by a play facility.	x	x	x	✓
Railway easement/siding	Open space (other than linear) where the railway significantly influences the future use and design of the open space.	✓	x	✓	✓
Restricted sporting/recreation	Available on a club membership or fee-paying basis only and not available for general public use at any time. This includes golf courses, tennis courts, bowling clubs etc.	x	x	x	x
Seating/Viewing	Where the character and major use of the open space is for seating and viewing.	x	x	x	✓
Service Easement	Open space where the level of use, design and management is influenced by the presence of services.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Significant Road Reservation	Road reserves of a significant size or width to contribute to the open space network for nature conservation, visual landscape or recreational use. This classification recognises the land's primary use and influence of transport.	x	x	✓	✓
Sporting	Primarily provides for organised club-based sporting use and where the outdoor grounds and facilities are available for general public use when no organised sporting events are in progress or training.	x	✓	✓	✓
Undeveloped	Open space that has not been developed and contains little or no constructed facilities.	x	x	✓	✓
Urban plaza	The surrounding urban setting significantly influences the character and function of the space.	x	x	x	✓

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Classification of open space	Description	Type of provision for dogs that may be considered			
		Dog Parks	Fenced Dog Off Leash Areas	Dog off-leash areas	Dog on-leash areas
	These spaces are primarily located in commercial, or business precincts and are used as public places (eg. without commercial premises tables etc. taking up more than 50 per cent of the space). A range of other urban design strategies and planning frameworks can guide these spaces.				
Water feature	The presence of a wetland, lake or other water feature that makes a significant contribution to the value, character and use of the open space.	x	x	x	✓
Waterway	The presence of a waterway makes a significant contribution to the character, value and use of the open space.	x	x	x	✓

✓ might or should have x won't have