

8 April 2025

Melva Hobson PSM
President
Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents Inc. (OSCAR)

Via Email: mail@oscar.org.au

Dear Melva,

RE: Submission Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan and Network Blueprint - March 2025

Thank you for your letter of submission provided to Council on 7 March 2025. Council acknowledges and appreciates the work and support from OSCAR in relation to the draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan and Network Blueprint. Council has considered feedback and recommendations provided in your submission and provides the following clarification and comments.

Page 32 of the draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan and Network Blueprint (the Plan), the draft Plan highlights that there is 1600km of on-leash pathways across the Sunshine Coast region. I can confirm that this includes all street, road, road-verge, and verge pathways. The draft Plan also refers to dog on-leash provision providing effective exercise and enrichment opportunities and confirms dogs can be on-leash within all Council owned and controlled open space unless prohibited.

The Multi Criteria Assessment (MCRA), including the weightings by pairwise analysis, were developed based on feedback from the Community Focus Groups, information gathered through past consultation on dog access and technical input from Council officers, including relevant subject matter experts through an internal working group. While the weightings for environment and cultural values may appear low for parks and gardens areas, the assessment process does consider the existing risk management controls in place, including the proposed design of fenced dog off-leash areas, which significantly reduces the risk of off-leash dog interactions with native wildlife in these locations. Where a new dog off-leash area is proposed for a specific location, additional site risk assessments would be undertaken by the project team and in consultation with key council stakeholders for the specific values the location. This may include a detailed environmental values assessment and cultural heritage assessment, which would further inform the suitability of provisioning a dog off-leash area in a specific location. Where risks are identified for cultural or environmental values, additional controls would be considered to manage or mitigate those risks. Alternatively, the site may be assessed as *not* suitable for dog-on or off leash.

The weightings for environmental values on beaches and foreshores were formulated through the pairwise analysis. For all values, including turtles and shorebirds, the project team consulted with internal experts to consider existing risk management controls. For example, the well-established and active TurtleCare program, with 260 participating volunteers, has strong controls in place to protect turtle nests and hatchlings from the risk of dogs on beaches. Council staff work closely with volunteers, including managing any Workplace Health and Safety concerns. While we recognise there are a diversity of views amongst TurtleCare volunteers regarding dogs on beaches, we rely on our highly experienced staff managing these programs. Two locations with a higher frequency of turtle nesting on the Sunshine Coast were identified where dogs on-leash were recommended through the MCRA (Shelly Beach and Buddina Beach nursery site - these sites are already dog on-leash).

The MCRA assessment for shorebirds contributed to the draft recommendation for dog prohibitions at Maroochy North Shore (high tide roost site) and on rocky foreshores/headlands (amongst other risks that were deemed unacceptable for these locations). These locations have been identified as the most significant shorebird habitat and no suitable controls to manage or mitigate the impacts of dogs was identified. This indicates that the MCRA tool is driving suitable management outcomes for these sensitive areas.

Page 59 of the draft Plan, the map identifies District Open Space Planning Catchments which does not include an Urban B catchment. The Urban B district open space network planning catchment was included in previous versions of the Environment and Liveability Strategy; however the latest iteration of the Strategy has amended the boundaries. The amendment sees Urban B catchment absorbed into the Urban G catchment.

As noted on page 37 of the draft Plan, The Draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan and Network Blueprint has been developed to locate Dog Exercise Areas in suitable locations to meet our community's need for dog-friendly spaces, while maintaining safe and accessible open space for all recreation users. It also reiterates the need to balance Dog Exercise Area provision with other recreation needs.

The submission suggests that dog exercise on and off-leash as a recreational pursuit appears to have overtaken/overshadowed all other recreational pursuits. When comparing the current provision of 47 fenced, unfenced and beach type Dog Exercise Areas to other open space assets provided to the Sunshine Coast community, it is evident that dog Exercise Areas make up a small portion of the overall public open space network. Council continues to manage and maintain the Sunshine Coast region's open space network and assets, including but not limited to 534 Recreation Parks (Council wide, District and Local), 88 Landscape Corridors, 512 Amenity Reserves, 142 Linear and 5 Civic Parks. Assets provided at these locations include 317 BBQs, 158 Showers, 318 Drinking Fountains, 3075 Park Seats, 1547 Picnic Tables, 15 Fish Cleaning Tables, 831 Shelters, 400 Shade Sails, 57 Fitness Equipment Stations, 73 Basketball Courts, 373 Playgrounds, 31 Skate Parks, 266 Beach Access Points and 184 Public Amenities/Toilets. Council also provides 59 sports ground sites for various sporting endeavors.

Currently under Council local laws all areas of Council managed open space, including Environment Reserves, allow dogs on-leash by default. Inherently, whether dogs are allowed on-leash or are prohibited, a level of compliance and enforcement is required. Enforcement and compliance is generally more effective where a dog prohibition for an environment reserve is in place. Currently there are only eight Environment Reserves where dogs are prohibited in the region. The draft Plan recommends additional prohibition of dogs in high conservation value Environment Reserves to protect these values and support improved compliance. While enforcement will continue to be a challenge, many of the Environment

Reserves identified for dog prohibition are generally large inaccessible and isolated areas of bushland, with minimal recreational infrastructure. In developing the recommendations for Environment Reserves, consideration was also given to the logistics of prohibiting dogs (number of entry points and therefore signage will be required) and ability to undertake compliance for each reserve. Prioritisation of the recommendations for prohibition of dogs in Environment Reserves was driven by the ecological and cultural values of the reserve, particularly in relation to threats to koalas, macropods, riparian habitat, threatened flora and fauna and known cultural heritage.

Financial resourcing for the identified actions will be a critical factor and will guide delivery timeframes. One or a combination of funding options may be considered to achieve the implementation of the draft Plan including but not limited to the following streams:

- general revenue
- the Local Government Infrastructure Plan (LGIP)
- infrastructure agreements
- external grants and subsidies from state and federal government agencies
- partnerships (including with research bodies such as universities)
- philanthropic approaches
- special levies
- tenure security and adjustment
- commercial leases
- commercial revenue
- land disposal
- compensation for land required for other purposes (for example, road-widening)
- investigation and liaison with state government regarding allocation of dog registration fees.

As referenced on page 34 of the draft Plan, “where opportunities for future collaboration with external stakeholders to complement the Dog Exercise Area network have been considered”. This is specifically included as part of strategic action 10 where as it recommends to explore opportunities to work with other agencies and stakeholders to contribute to and complement our region’s Dog Exercise Area network. These stakeholders include State Government Authorities to consider opportunities to use easements within State Government owned land and investigating opportunities to support the establishment of private dog exercise provision to complement Council’s network.

Strategic action 10 includes a sub-action to implement policy, planning and infrastructure agreements, and work with developers to deliver appropriate level of Dog Exercise Area facilities within planned open space networks for new large-scale greenfield developments and large and medium scale developments such as retirement facilities and multiple dwellings.

In addition to these planning actions, the specifics of the draft Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan desired standards of service have been captured and are referenced within the draft of the new Planning Scheme. This supporting new dog exercise assets to be delivered by developers via developer contributions. Councils Landscape Infrastructure Manual (LIM) details the desired level of embellishment of contributed assets and provides guidance on the types of assets to be included. This is also referenced in the draft of the new planning scheme.

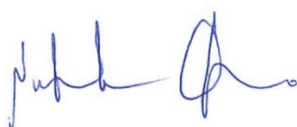
A working group consisting of the following teams across Council will be established to deliver the strategic actions of the Plan. Key stakeholders and delivery of strategic actions are provided in the table below.

SCC Team	Plan Delivery Responsibility
Parks & Gardens	Overall responsibility for KPI reporting on strategic actions and managing the annual review process on deliverables.
Environmental Operations	Administer changes to the Beaches and Foreshores and Environmental Reserve assets and in particular monitor the migratory and roosting shorebird population, turtle nesting sites and water quality
Governance and Customer Response	Support the amendments of local laws for the proposed changes to off-leash and prohibited areas should they be endorsed.
Customer Response	Continue to advocate for the Responsible Pet Ownership program and educating the community. Carry out a review of regulatory signage and update Continue to enforce Local Laws associated with the Plan.
Sport and Community Venues	Work with Sporting Clubs to mobilise the changes in prohibiting dogs from playing surfaces of sports grounds.
Customer Engagement and Planning Services	Work with developers to ensure appropriate DEA assets are included in the development of new estates including the provision of adequate embellishments.
Design and Placemaking	Investigate desirable locations for new DEA assets and upgrades to existing and manage the planning, design and installation components.

The draft Plan recommends a five-year review period which is consistent with Council Strategy review periods. This also aligns with each of the five-year cohorts for delivery of the draft Plan actions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your submission and hope the information provided is helpful. As the lead submitter, it would be appreciated if you could please advise your members. I also wish to acknowledge the nine recommendations provided by OSCAR which we have provided some clarification on within our response and will be considered as part of the formal review process of all feedback received.

Yours sincerely,



Nicholas Coluccio | Manager Parks and Gardens
Built Infrastructure | Sunshine Coast Council