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Sunshine Coast Regional Council - Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan Project Team

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To the Project team

**RE: OSCAR RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT DOG EXERCISE AREA REGIONAL PLAN AND NETWORK BLUEPRINT (2025)**

The Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents Inc. (OSCAR) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit umbrella/peak organisation covering resident and community organisations on the Sunshine Coast and Noosa Local Government Areas (LGAs) in South East Queensland. OSCAR currently has over 35 member groups from the Pumicestone Passage to Noosa and from the Coast to the hinterland and ranges. Collectively, these organisations comprise more than several thousand engaged and community minded members.

The OSCAR overarching Vision states: "The residents of this region enjoy being part of a connected and engaged community living in an area of outstanding natural beauty. They recognise that they are custodians of the unique and abundant biodiversity, beaches and green spaces of the region."

OSCAR appreciates the opportunity to respond to the *DRAFT Dog Exercise Regional Plan and Network Blueprint (2025)* released by Sunshine Coast Regional Council (SCRC).

We congratulate SCRC on the detail included in the draft document including statistics, maps, assessment criteria, desired standards of service, community and stakeholder feedback and Action Planning.

We also want to make specific reference to page 12 re the SCRC Vision. This introductory section, putting this document into the context of the SC Biosphere, is excellent and should be included in all Strategies produced by the SCRC. Other strategies can amend the last paragraph (as below) to relate to the particular strategy under consideration.

*The Plan contributes to implementing the Sunshine Coast vision and biosphere values by balancing the need for DEAs with other recreation uses and in a way that facilitates harmony between people, pets and the environment.*

Further to that, on page 18, where the pie diagram outlines the SCRC's Strategic Framework, there is a great opportunity to place in the bottom part of the outer circle (the circle which has SCRC's motto), three words - ***Sunshine Coast Biosphere.***

OSCAR makes the following general comments, identifies some issues and makes recommendations in the interest of supporting the existing document.

### Questions of clarification:

1. Does the 1600km of on-leash pathways identified on page 32 include all street, road, road-verge and verge pathways that are utilized every day for the purpose of dog exercise on the Sunshine Coast?
2. The DEA site assessment criteria (p51-57 incl.) Appreciating the Multi Criteria Assessment (MCRA) process, including the weighting by pairwise analysis, we are somewhat surprised with the low rating in the Recreation Parks MCRA of environmental factors and indigenous cultural factors – thinking that the interaction of dogs and koalas and macropods is usually detrimental to the wildlife. We ask why the environmental rating is not higher than 21%. Similarly, that the development of DEAs on areas of significant cultural heritage in Recreation Parks should also have a higher rating than 14%?
3. Similarly with the Beaches, we were expecting that marine turtle and shorebird habitat would have had a higher value than 31% given they are such important international environmental components and comprise some species that are endangered or critically endangered.
4. On page 59, the map shows District Open Space Planning Catchments. There does not appear to be a Catchment B? Such an area is not identified on the map.
5. Dog exercise on and off-lead is a recreational pursuit, it appears that over time this recreational pursuit has overtaken/overshadowed all other recreational pursuits. Are other recreational pursuits across the Sunshine Coast afforded access to as much public lands as for dog recreation areas? If the response is “no”, some OSCAR members question the fairness of this to the community as a whole. Does the question of fairness/ equity also apply to the costs of support for dog recreation vs other recreational activities?
6. It is obvious from anecdotal experience and evidence that a dog on-lead proposed use in natural areas is often not observed. One has to ask SCRC from where will the funding come to fund the seven day a week compliance enforcement costs over all the area/ proposed reserves. Unrestrained dogs in existing on-lead dog areas regularly occur and when SCRC has been contacted, their response has been that they do not have the funding for the officers to enforce the rules. This has been problematic for many years. As a community, we do not acknowledge the impact unrestrained dogs have on koalas, ground nesting and foraging birds, reptiles, small mammals and kangaroos in protected areas.
7. The plan for expansion of DEAs is both extensive and expensive. How, when there are pressures on the SCRC budget now and into the future, will these be funded and delivered, as well as funding the compliance officers required?

### OSCAR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Objective 3 (p15) *“To protect environmental values: to protect **significant** (our emphasis) environmental values, including our region’s cultural values, landscapes, habitats and wildlife”*, be expanded to include specific examples of “significant” wildlife and flora or another objective that references the specifics.

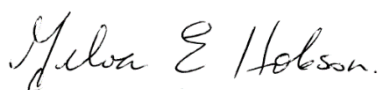
There is NO direction in the draft plan to include any intent for action to protect the environmentally sensitive areas that provide nesting habitat for endangered and vulnerable species of marine turtles. There are changes identified for the Northshore migratory birds area, which are welcomed, but the environment outside reserves eg where there are koalas, macropods and other wild life do not seem to be recognised. To those in the community not

familiar with all the "Reserve" areas of the Sunshine Coast as listed as part of Strategic Action 5 (p109-112 - does the list of reserves cover all areas where wildlife, particularly endangered wildlife and flora are found?

As one of our members, a Turtle Care advocate wrote: *Perhaps RESOLVING the apparent conflicts between these statements of intent to real actions would, at a minimum, acknowledge in the draft plan that key / major turtle nesting beaches are unsuitable for off-leash dogs. Amending DOLAs in these environmentally sensitive locations to on-leash at all times would demonstrate a genuine commitment to protect the nesting habitat of the MSES and support the WH&S of TurtleCare and CNSCC volunteers who work in this space.*

2. That a detailed budget plan be developed by SCRC for a number of years ahead relating to the delivery and funding of the extension proposals, including potential funding sources outside of SCRC Budgets. A number of sources of funding are listed on page 118 and the Plan Actions implementation (p119). These need to be articulated for at least 3 years in the short-term with possibilities identified in the longer-term.
3. That SCRC investigate and develop an additional component in the framework for the Provision of DEAs within private and non-SCRC owned and managed land, as referenced (p34) *but not considered further in this plan*. As the document states *"However opportunities for future collaboration with external stakeholders to complement the DEA network have been considered"*. We suggest that more than "considered" needs to be actioned.
4. That SCRC in consultation with the State Government, LGAQ and other Local Governments look at how requirement for developments in Greenfield sites should have DEAs included, the categorisation depending on the scale of the development.
5. At the same time as the above recommended action, SCRC's Strategic Planning Unit investigate how current and future DEAs are recognised and included in PS Outcomes.
6. With the implementation of the DEA Network Plan SCRC identify the following staffing responsibilities: a) where overall responsibility rests for the oversight of the project and b) which groups are responsible for delivery of various components of the Plan.
7. That SCRC form a taskforce across the responsible groups both within and between the SCRC silos.
8. That a full monitoring, evaluation and reporting plan be developed, with progress being reported annually.
9. A detailed Review occur within 3 years, not 5 as identified in the DEA Plan (p119).

Yours sincerely



Melva Hobson PSM  
President

Organisation Sunshine Coast Association of Residents Inc. (OSCAR)

