

12.2.3 Dogs On and Off Leash Areas - Beaches

Report Type	Decision
City Plan Theme	Community Leadership
Report Author	Manager Community & Environmental Health, Community Development
Report Summary	This report seeks endorsement of proposed on-leash and off-leash rules for dogs on beaches and grassed foreshore areas.
Attachments	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. On-Leash Area - Semaphore Jetty [12.2.3.1 - 1 page]2. On-Leash Area - Largs Bay Jetty [12.2.3.2 - 1 page]3. On-Leash Area - Grassed Foreshore [12.2.3.3 - 1 page]4. Off-Leash Area - Strathfield Terrace to North Haven Breakwater [12.2.3.4 - 1 page]5. Daylight Saving Areas - Foreshore [12.2.3.5 - 1 page]

RECOMMENDATION

Council resolves that:

1. The report of the Director Community Development titled "Dogs On and Off Leash Areas - Beaches" be received and noted.
2. With effect from 6 October 2024, the resolution of the Special Council Meeting held on 30 August 2022, Item 4.1 regarding dog on-leash areas on the foreshore is revoked and of no effect.
3. Pursuant to the power contained in Section 246(3)(e) of the Local Government Act 1999, and for the purposes of Clause 9.1.1 of the Dogs By-law 2022, the following foreshore areas or public places are, with effect from 6 October 2024, 'Dog On-Leash Areas' at all times:
 - a. The foreshore area 150 metres either side of the Semaphore jetty, which area is shown in the map contained in Attachment 1;
 - b. The foreshore area 150 metres either side of the Largs Bay jetty, which area is shown in the map contained in Attachment 2; and
 - c. All grass areas adjacent to the foreshore areas, which areas are shown the map contained in Attachment 3.
4. With effect from 6 October 2024, dogs may be exercised off-leash (provided they are under effective control as required by the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*) at all times on the foreshore commencing north of Strathfield Terrace Taperoo continuing to the North Haven breakwater, being the area shown in the map contained in Attachment 4.
5. Pursuant to the power contained in Section 246(3)(e) of the Local Government Act 1999 and with effect from 6 October 2024, Clause 9.1.1 of the Dogs By-law 2022 applies to all foreshore areas that are identified in the map contained in Attachment 5 between the hours of 10:00am and 8:00pm on any day during the period of daylight savings so that dogs are required to be on-leash in these areas during these times.

Background

At its meeting on 12 September 2023, Council resolved as follows:

1. *The report of the Director Community Development titled "Dogs On and Off Leash Areas – Beaches" be received and noted.*
2. *The options for leashing rules for dogs on the beach and foreshore areas as provided in Attachments 1-3 is endorsed for community engagement.*

Report

Community engagement for leashing rules for dogs on the beach and foreshore areas occurred between 3 September and 29 October 2023.

The community engagement was undertaken through a range of channels:

- An email to all registered dog owners with an email in the Dogs and Cats online system (12,000+ emails);
- Letter to all households on the LeFevre Peninsula (13,000+ letters);
- 4000 emails across 4 email campaigns to Participate PAE site members and project followers;
- Signs at beach entrances and along foreshore areas across PAE – a significant number of these signs were illegally removed during the engagement period;
- Roadside banners;
- Postcards;
- 4 City of PAE social media posts including promoted posts;
- One appearance on television news;
- 9 Pop-up sessions at locations across the beaches and City of PAE.

This resulted in 20,590 views on the Participate PAE page, 7,313 visitors and 962 survey contributions.

For those completing the consultation, 86% own a dog or care for a dog and 83% of respondents love or like dogs. There was only 9% of respondents who said they are indifferent, dislike or are scared of dogs, whilst 7% of respondents said they have a reactive dog, therefore the responses are heavily weighted towards those with a positive relationship with dogs.

Using the Likert Scale (Love it, Like it, Can live with it, Dislike it, Loathe it) respondents were asked how they felt about 4 concepts being:

- Daylight Savings Rules (On-leash between 10am and 8pm);
- Dog On-Leash Areas;
- Dog Off-Leash Areas;
- Dog Exclusions Areas.

Using the same Likert Scale, they were asked how they felt about various options for:

- Grassed Foreshore;
- North Haven Beach;
- Semaphore South to North Haven Breakwater.

For each option and concept, respondents were asked to include a comment to provide extra details about their responses.

A thorough analysis of engagement outcomes should consider both the qualitative data (words, comments from survey respondents, from those attending pop ups and from the working group) as well as that quantitative data (numbers and statistics primarily from the survey) to provide a full picture of the views of the community.

13.2% (127) of the respondents indicated that they do not want to see any changes at all. The rest have indicated that they are open to or could at least live with and/or accept change in one or more of the areas. 4.6% (45) disliked all the current rules. These results show there is appetite for change or willingness to accept change, as we find the right balance for all users.

Overall, the quantitative data is heavily weighted by those respondents with a positive relationship with dogs, however the qualitative data provides comments about how a respondent felt about the various options and concepts.

The consultation engagement results and summaries are attached as [Attachment 6 provided under separate cover.](#)

The consultation responses and comments by each individual are attached as [Attachment 7 provided under separate cover.](#)

Written submissions sent in via the Participate PAE ask a question form, email or by mail are attached as [Attachment 8 provided under separate cover.](#)

Dogs on Beaches Community Working Group Workshop 4 Summary is attached as [Attachment 9 provided under separate cover.](#)

Concepts

Daylight Savings Rules (On-leash between 10am and 8pm)

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	86%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	86%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	78%
Own a reactive dog	90%
Scared of dogs	77%

Comments regarding daylight savings rules include that it provides the right balance for users and general support for the rules, that daylight savings rules are too restrictive and want more off-leash times and want daylight savings rules for all year round.

Dog On-Leash Areas

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	42%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	43%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	83%
Own a reactive dog	70%
Scared of dogs	93%

Comments regarding support for on-leash areas included the need to create community spaces and need to feel safe. Some people only support on-leash during daylight savings times. People who don't support on-leash areas commented about being confusing to have different rules and beaches being quiet outside of daylight savings times.

Dog Off-Leash Areas

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	75%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	73%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	22%
Own a reactive dog	62%
Scared of dogs	14%

People who support off-leash area commented that it provides options for shift workers and dog walkers all year round. People who don't support off-leash areas commented about the impact of the areas on other beach users e.g. congestion and poor dog behaviour and management.

Dog Exclusions Areas

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	38%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	39%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	82%
Own a reactive dog	53%
Scared of dogs	83%

People who support exclusion areas commented about creating safe spaces for people who don't want to interact with dogs. People who were not supportive commented about the impact it could have on the community.

OPTIONS FEEDBACK

Grassed Foreshore

Option 1 – Off-leash all areas (current rules)

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	72%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	71%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	42%
Own a reactive dog	50%
Scared of dogs	15%

People who commented in support of the current rules spoke about there being no issues with the current rules with some just stating to leave the rules as they are. This cohort of respondents did not provide much context as to their support for the current rules.

Option 2 – On-leash at designated areas

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	62%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	62%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	81%
Own a reactive dog	76%
Scared of dogs	80%

People who commented in support of the on-leash areas spoke with support of having safe areas for families and the general community to gather, support for on-leash in high traffic areas and the general benefits of an on-leash area.

Summary comments

A large cohort of people comments in support of the rules for the grassed foreshore being on-leash at all times with some mentioning creating safe spaces for people, safety of animals due to proximity of roads and missed use with people walking and cycling along the shared path.

Dogs on Beaches Community Working group feedback

There was support from the group for Option 2 and providing family/community focused spaces in key high traffic areas which also creates safe spaces for those who may be scared of dogs to spend time. The group felt Option 2 was a good compromise overall.

There were discussions about whether the on-leash area on grassed foreshore aligning with the rules for the beach. The group had mixed views whether they should align and believe there are benefits for alignment of these spaces.

At Semaphore, the group acknowledged the need to consider the Semaphore Foreshore redevelopment and potentially needing to adjust depending on the outcome of the redevelopment and without having all the information, Council Administration were best placed to consider these elements.

The majority of the group were supportive of on-leash areas around jetties on grassed foreshore (Option 2)

Options

1. Off-leash at all times on the entire grassed foreshore.
2. On-leash at designated areas near Semaphore and Largs Bay Jetties and off-leash all other areas of the grassed foreshore.
3. On-leash at all times on the entire grassed foreshore.

Recommendation

From the community engagement and feedback received from the Dogs on Beaches Community Working Group, there is support that dogs should be on-leash in designated areas along the grassed foreshore.

During the Elected Member workshop on 30 January 2024, feedback was received about the mixed use of the grassed foreshore spaces with events, the shared path with cyclists/runners/walkers, cafes, Semaphore train and families and how these activities

interact with dogs both off-leash and on-leash. It was noted that there is a need to balance the needs of all users and consider the risk between these interactions. There were views that dogs should be on-leash in these areas. Considering the interaction between dogs and how the grassed foreshore is used along the whole area, it is reasonable to consider that dogs should be on-leash on the entire grassed foreshore. The option that dogs are on-leash along the whole grassed foreshore was explored during the working group and there was support for this option.

It is recommended that Option 3 - On-leash at all times on the entire grassed foreshore, as shown in the map contained in **Attachment 3** is endorsed.

North Haven Beach

Option 1 – Off-leash all areas (Current Rules)

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	85%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	84%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	58%
Own a reactive dog	75%
Scared of dogs	46%

A high number of comments showed a lack of support for changes to current rules due to there being nothing wrong with the current rules, general support for daylight savings rules, that the current rules being a fair option for all or just simply stating to leave the rules as they area.

Option 2 –North On-leash area

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	32%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	34%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	80%
Own a reactive dog	52%
Scared of dogs	89%

People in support for this option, spoke about creating safe community/family spaces and voiced feelings that it would be a good compromise for all. People not in support, spoke about this area of beach being too small to split, rules should be the same for the full beach, the changes would unfairly impact dog owners, could create dog/people congestion and would be confusing.

Summary comments

Overall, a large cohort of people mentioned that this area of the beach was quiet, small and that majority of people using the beach were doing so with dogs. There were several comments about effective control not currently being followed by dog owners and/or not being enforced by Council.

Dogs on Beaches Community Working Group feedback

The group noted the feedback about North Haven being a small beach and questioned whether it was beneficial to split the beach.

The group recognized the feedback from the North Haven Surf Life Saving Club that the on-leash area wouldn't be beneficial to them as they need the flexibility to move their activities based on the weather conditions and tides.

The group were unanimous in their support for retaining the current daylight savings rules (Option 1).

Options

1. Daylight Savings Rules - On-leash between 10am and 8pm during daylight savings times.
2. On-leash area northern end of beach and daylight savings rules at southern end of the beach.

Recommendation

There was overwhelming feedback from community and the Dogs on Beaches Community Working Group that North Haven beach is too small and the location and type of usage to support having two separate areas on the beach. Similar feedback was received from the North Haven Surf Life Saving Club and during the Elected Member workshop. As this beach does not support an alternative option, it is recommended to retain the daylight savings rules.

It is recommended that Option 1 – Daylight Savings Rules (On-leash between 10am and 8pm during daylight savings times) on North Haven beach as shown in the map contained in **Attachment 5** is endorsed.

Semaphore South to North Haven Breakwater

Option 1 – Off-leash all areas (current rules)

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	84%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	84%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	56%
Own a reactive dog	77%
Scared of dogs	57%

There were significant comments around staying with the current daylight savings rules, the current rules are fair for all users, request that council 'leave the rules as they are' and general support for daylight savings rules. A group of people supported reducing the daylight savings hours to increase off-leash hours on the beach especially in the evening.

Option 2 – On-leash around jetties

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	51%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	51%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	77%
Own a reactive dog	68%
Scared of dogs	77%

People who were in support of this option, commented in general support for on-leash areas and more specifically about supporting the provision of a safe space for everyone all year round. A group of people mentioned only having the on-leash area during daylight savings times.

Option 3 – On-leash around jetties and off-leash area north of Taperoo

Responses grouped by question: What is your relationship with dogs?	Support (Love it, Like it, Can live with it)
All responses	46%
Positive (Love/like dogs)	47%
Indifferent to/dislike of dogs	42%
Own a reactive dog	59%
Scared of dogs	54%

This option provided the most contrast between respondents with some people being very supportive of accessing an off-leash area anytime of the day all year round and/or feeling that this option provided the fairest option for all users. Others believed that no area should be off-leash all the time and that this space may cause people to be less aware of their animals and congregate in one space. Also, some people did not support the location of the off-leash area and/or do not want to have to travel to the off-leash area.

People who were not supportive of option 2 or 3 spoke about confusion these rules may cause in the community, issues enforcing the rules and the effects on dog owners and local businesses.

Summary comments

General comments for these options centred around effective control not currently being followed by dog owners or enforced by council and around further education around effective control being needed. Some people thought that it should be dog owner's responsibility to decide when and whether their dog should be off-leash.

There was no clear feedback from the community on the size of the on-leash area if supported, with comments that the distance should be anything from 100m per jetty to at least 1km per jetty.

Dogs on Beaches Community Working Group feedback

Group members highlighted the need for an inclusive option for this area of the beach, something that offers opportunity for all to access and enjoy the space.

More than half of the group were supportive of on-leash areas and more than half (a different but overlapping group) were supportive of off-leash areas.

The viability of retaining the status quo was discussed in the context of the remit of the group to find a balanced option for the broader community. Whilst a proportion of the group supported retaining the current daylight savings rules, it was discussed that retaining the current rules is unlikely due to consideration of balancing the needs of the whole community.

The group explored 4 options where they could work on and agree to a compromise that provided opportunities for all community members to find a safe and enjoyable space on

the beach. This wasn't the first choice for each group but offered something for each and with compromise for each.

The group supported (noting it was not unanimous) of Option 3, in two variants for Council to consider being:

- On-leash around jetties and off-leash area north of Strathfield Terrace Taperoo; or
- On-leash around jetties (all times during daylight savings only) and off-leash area north of Strathfield Terrace Taperoo

Options

1. Daylight Savings Rules - On-leash between 10am and 8pm during daylight savings times for the entire Semaphore South to North Haven breakwater beach.
2. On-leash at all times all year round at Semaphore and Largs Bay Jetties and daylight savings rules for the remaining length of beach.
3. On-leash at all times all year round at Semaphore and Largs Bay Jetties, off-leash north of Strathfield Terrace Taperoo and daylight savings rules for the remaining length of beach.
4. On-leash at all times only during daylight savings at Semaphore and Largs Bay Jetties, off-leash north of Strathfield Terrace Taperoo and daylight savings rules for the remaining length of beach

Recommendation

There were many contrasting views from the community, however the feedback identified the need to cater for all beach users and how each person may use the beach. It was clear there was a need for everyone to compromise in reaching a balanced outcome. The feedback from both the community and working group incorporated a level of agreement around having on-leash around jetties, however, there was no clear preferred option on the distance for that area.

In the Elected Member workshop, there was also support for on-leash areas around jetties. However, it was noted that utilising a distance rule or alignment with beach entry paths both provided their own complexities. It was identified that to align the distance for both Semaphore and Largs Bay jetties, a distance rule would be the best outcome. In consideration of providing an area that is sufficient to cater for people to exercise dogs on-leash or for people to enjoy the beach without dog interactions and still provide sufficient space for off-leash dog exercise, it is recommended that the on-leash area applies 150m each side of the jetty.

Noting that there is an option where dogs are on-leash at all times and in consideration of people who want to exercise their dogs off-leash, it is recommended that there is an off-leash at all times area. There are limited areas on the beach where this area could reasonably be, and whilst noting the feedback from the community, the best area is north of Strathfield Terrace Taperoo.

It is recommended that Option 3 – On-leash at all times all year round at Semaphore and Largs Bay Jetties, off-leash north of Strathfield Terrace Taperoo and daylight savings rules for the remaining length of beach as shown in the maps contained in **Attachments 1, 2, 4 & 5** is endorsed.

Transition

It is proposed that the changes for rules on the beach come into effect on Sunday 6 October 2024 in line with daylight saving time starting for 2024. This provides sufficient time for a transition plan to be implemented which includes new signage, comprehensive communication program and the delivery of an education campaign.

A fifth workshop will occur with the Dogs on Beaches Community Working Group in 2024 which will have a focus on 4 key elements to support any changes which includes education, beach culture/etiquette, enforcement and reporting. The feedback from the group will be considered as part of the transition plan.

City Plan Relationship

Community – By finding rules that support all users of the beach, both dog and non-dog owners will create a sense of safety, comfort and enjoyment of our beach and foreshore spaces.

Leadership – Through a robust and meaningful community engagement that creates opportunities for involvement and collaboration, will support that we are an innovative, collaborative, and high performing leader in Local Government.

Legislative Context and Related Policies

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 and the City of PAE By-law No 5 of 2022 – Dogs provides Council with the legislative framework to declare areas of Local Government Land or foreshore as dog on leash areas.

The City of PAE Communications and Engagement Framework 2022-2025 (Participate PAE) provides the framework for our community engagement approach.

Stakeholder Engagement

The community engagement was undertaken through a range of channels:

- An email to all registered dog owners with email in the Dogs and Cats online system (12,000+ emails);
- Letter to all households on the LeFevre Peninsula (13,000+ letters);
- 4000 emails across 4 email campaigns to Participate PAE site members and project followers;
- Signs at beach entrances and along foreshore areas across PAE – a significant number of these signs were illegally removed during the engagement period;
- Roadside banners;
- Postcards;
- 4 City of PAE social media posts including promoted posts;
- One appearance on television news;
- 9 Pop-up sessions at locations across the baches and City of PAE.

The Dogs on Beaches Community Working Group participated in 4 workshops between April and December 2023 which includes the development of options for Council consideration for community engagement and analysing feedback from the community engagement to present their feedback to Council.

An Elected Member workshop occurred on 30 January 2024 to discuss the feedback received through the community engagement.

Risk Management

Dogs not under effective control, or off-leash can pose a risk to other users of open space. It's important that the leashing rules in our open spaces are balanced to ensure they provide opportunities for people to exercise dogs off-leash whilst also ensuring that our public spaces are safe for community use and safe from dogs.

The proposed leashing rules provide a good balance between managing the health and wellbeing of the broader community and that of dogs and dog owners.

Financial Management

The costs associated with changes to the signage at the beach will be managed within the existing budget for the new signage strategy program.

The additional costs for communication and education program will be managed within existing budgets.

Environmental and Social Impacts

Research shows that dogs can improve our physical and social benefits including enhanced interpersonal relationships and positive moods, improved stress relief and overall physical and mental health improvement. Whilst it is important that dogs can be on the beach in both an off-leash and on-leash capacity, it is critical that we consider the impact that dogs can have on people who may have a fear or anxiety around dogs in public places. By considering and balancing the needs of both dog and non-dog owners, the beach can be shared and enjoyed by all.









