

UNLEASHED A GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL DOG PARKS



2013 Dog and Cat Management Board

Government of South Australia
GPO Box 1047 Adelaide SA 5001
Telephone: (08) 81244962
www.dogandcatboard.com.au
ISBN 978-1-921800-57-3

Dog and Cat Management Board, (2014)
Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks.

Copies of this publication are available online:
www.dogandcatboard.com.au



Acknowledgements	04
Foreword	
From the Dog and Cat Management Board	05
From the Planning Institute of Australia (SA)	05

INTRODUCTION 06

About this Guide	06
Why do we need a Guide?	06
Who is the target audience?	07
Responding to new information and research	07

SECTION 1 CONTEXT 08

Pet ownership rates in Australia	08
Living densities	08
The growth of dog parks	08
Enclosed dog parks in South Australia (map)	09
Enclosed dog park facts	10
Benefits of dog parks	11
Risks	12

SECTION 2 PLANNING 16

How to get started	16
Is there a demand for a dog park?	16
Who should be involved in the planning process?	18
Costs	18
Key components for a dog park	18
Location	20
Parking and accessibility	20
Connections to existing paths and trails	20
Other facilities	20
Size	22
Shape	24

SECTION 3 DESIGN 26

Park layout	26
Activity zones	26
Circulation paths	26
Fencing	29
Entry/exit points	29
Gates	29
Surface materials	30
Planting	30
Essential amenities	31
Optional amenities	34

SECTION 4 MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS 36

Maintenance	36
Waste management	37
Dog park rules and etiquette	37
Dog park education	38
Evaluation	38

SECTION 5 RESOURCES 40

Visiting a park	40
Enclosed dog parks in South Australia (list)	41
Local council resources	42
Helpful literature	42
Useful websites	42
Selecting plants	42
Dog park rules and etiquette	42
Dog park survey	42
References	44
Dog park sign suggestions	46
Dog park checklist	47

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Dog and Cat Management Board of South Australia would like to thank the following people and organisations for their contribution to this publication.

Consultants

Fiona De Rosa and Kylie Fergusen of Balancing Act Adelaide - Pet Friendly Planning for preparing Unleashed: A Guide to Successful Dog Parks.

The University of Adelaide

Dr Susan Hazel, Lecturer in Animal Behaviour, Welfare and Ethics, School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, the University of Adelaide and the numerous students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science (Animal Science) 'Companion Animal and Equine Studies' for conducting dog park surveys from 2010-2012 in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

Individuals

We also thank the various individuals in local councils who provided information and supported the Dog and Cat Management Board in developing this publication.

Special thanks to Paul Harding, Debbie Saegenschnitter and Di Favier for their feedback. Thanks also to Debra Millikan, Canine Behavioural Trainer.

Photography

Photographs by Shane Reid of Fotonaut, Fiona De Rosa of Balancing Act Adelaide and Dog and Cat Management Board.

Photos are for illustrative purposes and do not necessarily demonstrate best practice.

FROM THE DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Dog and Cat Management Board has published *Unleashed: a Guide to Successful Dog Parks*, to assist councils in creating well-designed, well-used and enjoyable dog parks.

Section 26A (2) of the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* requires each council to create:

'A plan of management, [which] must include provisions for parks where dogs may be exercised off-leash and for parks where dogs must be under effective control by means of physical restraint, and may include provisions for parks where dogs are prohibited.'

The Board is confident that *Unleashed: a Guide to Successful Dog Parks* will be a useful resource to support councils in the planning, design and management of effective off-leash parks. The Guide covers the main issues councils need to address when developing a dog park. It encourages councils to tailor their designs to meet the needs of their community.

We've learnt a lot, as dog parks have been introduced around the world. The Guide reflects that learning and experience.

Dogs continue to be very popular pets in South Australia with 297,714 dogs registered. That's approximately one per every two households in South Australia, which is higher than the national average.

Pet ownership brings considerable benefits to individuals, the economy and the community. Dog parks provide a space for exercising and socialising dogs in a safe and controlled environment for the benefit of both owners and their dogs. This Guide is a useful toolkit for councils to design and introduce the best possible dog parks. We hope to increase the number of happy, healthy dogs and, hopefully, happier, healthier dog owners.

Ms Jan Connolly
Chair
Dog and Cat Management Board

FROM THE PLANNING INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA (SA)

There are many reasons why this publication *Unleashed: a Guide to Successful Dog Parks* is timely. Firstly, it will be useful to a wide range of people: those involved in planning especially in areas of urban renewal, where the provision of congenial open space and recreational facilities are an essential part of healthy living. Also it identifies fundamental considerations for council staff involved in designing, managing and maintaining dog parks within the context of public facilities and constrained budgets. Then there are the dog owners and families in South Australia who benefit from a clearly designated and safe area in which to socialise and exercise their pets.

The combination of human and canine behavioural characteristics is addressed throughout this Guide, reminding us that there are mutual social benefits involved in dog ownership – whether it be dog with dog, people with dog, or people with each other (and dogs). By making a safe space for companion animals and people dog parks add to the range of recreational experiences that are available within an urban context.

The opportunity to experience a setting devoted to dog and human activity, and to run free, counteracts the boredom of latchkey pets and lack of contact with other dogs. This can reduce the tendency for excessive barking when dogs are under-exercised and their owners are absent. Socialising dogs at an early age can reduce canine aggression and also lead to new friendships and more personable interaction with other people by dog owners.

Proper planning reduces costs and conflicts for local councils, many of whom already provide dog parks within their council areas. A list of available dog parks in South Australia provides useful information and over time, the list will grow as we achieve well designed, higher density living in appropriate urban areas.

I particularly like the emphasis on both human and canine needs and behaviour in this Guide. It reminds us that the benefits of dog ownership include responsibilities to care for the physical and psychological needs of the animal. In turn, mental and physical health benefits of owning (and loving) a dog include reduced social isolation and loneliness, making our urban environment a more connected and sociable place in which to live.

The Dog and Cat Management Board are congratulated on this publication *Unleashed: a Guide to Successful Dog Parks*. It provides a comprehensive aid to everyone involved in planning, design and management of dog parks and develops further the State's strategic priority for *Safe Communities, Healthy Neighbourhoods*. The Guide also complements planning initiatives such as *Streets for People* and *Healthy by Design* and the Planning Institute of Australia's national guide *Healthy Places, Healthy Spaces*.

The Authors, Fiona De Rosa and Kylie Ferguson are planners passionate about pets and as State President I commend them for demonstrating their commitment to good planning.

Dr Iris Iwanicki, FPIA
State President
Planning Institute of Australia (SA)

INTRODUCTION

'A dog park is a designated public area that's been set aside for dog guardians to legally exercise, play and socialise with their dogs off-leash in a secure environment. The park is fully enclosed or fenced and has amenities that make it clear that dogs are invited, not just permitted'

(De Rosa, 2013:n.d.)



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Unleashed: a Guide to Successful Dog Parks is about a new type of park, a park where dogs can play, exercise and socialise off-leash with their owners. In South Australia, and other states of Australia these places are commonly known as 'dog parks' or 'dog friendly parks' and are rising in popularity with demand. It is important to understand that this type of park is different from others as it has to cater for the needs of both animals and their owners.

It is generally the responsibility of Local Government to meet the demand for dog parks. However, there is very little information on how to design parks in a way that takes into account the behaviour of both dogs and humans, let alone addresses safety, amenity and enjoyment.

This Guide will assist local government, developers, state government agencies and consultants to effectively develop and manage successful dog parks – parks which are safe and enjoyable for both people and dogs. It provides practical advice on the planning, design and management of enclosed, off-leash dog parks for both the development of new dog parks and the upgrade of existing dog parks. It recognises that each dog park is unique and needs to be developed to meet the needs of the community, allocated budget and site conditions.

WHY DO WE NEED A GUIDE?

This Guide has been prepared to address the growing interest and role that off-leash dog parks are playing in our communities. As housing densities increase and backyards become smaller, the role of public spaces to provide meaningful opportunities to exercise, interact and get 'out and about' with our pets is becoming more important.

Local Government is required by legislation to help create dog parks as required under Section 26A(2) of *The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* (the Act). The Act requires South Australian councils to develop management plans that include provisions for parks where dogs are under effective control by means of physical restraint, and parks where dogs can be exercised off-leash.

Despite these legislative responsibilities and the growing interest in off-leash parks, there is little information and research on the planning, design and management of dog parks in Australia that considers both dog and human needs, and incorporates an understanding of dog behaviour.

Unleashed: a Guide to Successful Dog Parks has gathered information from a range of sources from both within Australia and overseas to bring this knowledge together in one document. This Guide provides the basis for a better understanding of what makes a successful dog park. It provides key principles and suggested approaches to assist with the development of new dog parks and upgrade of existing dog parks.

WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

Unleashed: a Guide to Successful Dog Parks is aimed primarily at local government; however, the information it contains can also be useful for other stakeholders involved in the planning, design or management of dog parks, such as state government agencies, consultants and developers.

This information can also be a useful tool to assist local government elected members when considering community needs and requirements, prioritisation of issues and budget allocation.

This Guide aims to assist:

- **Local government** – planners, designers, asset managers, compliance officers, open space managers, community engagement officers, animal management officers and maintenance staff involved in planning, design and management of dog parks.
- **State government agencies** – to cater for the needs of pet owners in higher density living including urban renewal areas. Provide opportunities for pet ownership to be integrated within existing government initiatives such as the State's Strategic Priority for *Safe Communities*, *Healthy Neighbourhoods* and related initiatives such as *Streets for People* and *Healthy by Design*.
- **Consultants** – such as urban and regional planners, open space and recreation planners and landscape architects engaged by local or state governments or developers to prepare master plans, concepts, detailed design or undertake community engagement for dog parks.
- **Developers** – to meet the needs of the community in new residential development, provide places for pet owners to exercise their dogs responsibly and address council requirements for provision of open space in new development.

RESPONDING TO NEW INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

It is intended that this Guide will be reviewed regularly. Dog parks are a new area of study and this Guide should evolve as new findings and research become available including information on emerging dog park practices in Australia, Canada, the United States and United Kingdom.

In addition, your own stories, case studies, issues and experiences in developing new and upgrade of existing dog parks will help inform the next version of *Unleashed: a Guide to Successful Dog Parks*.

Please provide your feedback to the Dog and Cat Management Board via the online form at: www.dogandcatboard.com.au or email us at: dcmb@sa.gov.au

How to use this Guide

This Guide presents guiding principles in the key stages of developing a dog park: Planning, Design, Management and Operations.

It is divided into an Introduction and 5 sections:

1 Context

Background information on pet ownership rates in Australia and growth of dog parks in South Australia. It also provides an overview of the benefits and risks associated with dog parks.

2 Planning

Key steps in planning for a dog park including how to get started, assessing potential demand, involving stakeholders and finding a good location.

3 Design

Design elements including park layout, activity zones, circulation paths, fencing, entry points, surface materials, plants and amenities. The amenities are categorised according to those that are essential and optional for a dog park.

4 Management and Operations

Guidance on maintenance activities, waste management, dog park rules and etiquette, dog park education and evaluation of dog parks.

5 Resources

Useful publications, websites, references and a list of enclosed dog parks in South Australia.

SECTION 1 CONTEXT

PET OWNERSHIP RATES IN AUSTRALIA

Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world with 36% of households owning a dog (Australian Companion Animal Council, 2010).

Although dog ownership is common in Australia, it's becoming more difficult for people to own dogs in urban areas. Dog population numbers in Australia have fluctuated over the last 15 years, with a decrease in dog numbers by 14.9 % since 1998. Some factors that may be directly related to this decline include higher density living, changing lifestyles, environmental concerns and changes in government policy all of which challenge pet ownership (Australian Companion Animal Council, 2010).

Pets clearly play an important part in our lives. Research shows that pets can help improve a person's mental and physical health, reduce the effects of stress, facilitate social interaction between people and build a sense of community (Australian Companion Animal Council, 2010; Petcare Information and Advisory Service, 2012).

'Two in every three homes in Australia have at least one pet. When you consider that lot sizes are getting smaller and census data showing an increase in apartment living, pets need to be catered for in parks and other public spaces'

(Planning Institute of Australia, 2012:n.p.)

LIVING DENSITIES

The Australian (20 November, 2010) reported that the 2003 year probably reflected a peak in house size, and that house sizes are in fact in decline. In addition, building block sizes are smaller than they were 15 years ago, with Adelaide leading other Australian capital cities, having decreased from an average of 600 square metres in 1995 to 375 square metres in 2010. Dwellings also extend nearer to the boundaries, decreasing the amount of outdoor space available, but also bringing potential noise and nuisance closer to the neighbouring dwellings (Hall, 2007).

This urban density increase in Australia implies a decrease in private outdoor space available for exercising dogs within backyards. In an urban setting, therefore, we can expect that there will be a growing trend to exercise dogs outside of the home. There is an expectation therefore that, as urban areas increase in density, there will be an increased requirement within the community for dog-friendly spaces and places, including dog parks.

THE GROWTH OF DOG PARKS

Local authorities are responding to this need to exercise dogs in public places by developing enclosed dog parks. Dog parks have been established state-wide, interstate and overseas as a means of introducing space for exercising and socialising dogs in a secure environment. Dog parks are a relatively new concept in Australia although they have been operating for over 30 years in the United States.

Off-leash dog parks are growing in popularity and demand. In South Australia, they first appeared some 18 years ago with the development of the 'Dog Exercise Park' at Coonalpyn by the Coorong District Council. This was shortly followed by 'Pet Park' at Golden Grove around 1998 by the City of Tea Tree Gully. Today, there are currently 27 enclosed dog parks in South Australia and more are being proposed (De Rosa, 2013).

Dog parks in South Australia vary in location, size, open space classification (e.g. local, district, regional park) dog park type and setting. They are commonly developed and managed by local government, but some developers have been involved in the design and construction of these parks (e.g. Lend Lease developed a dog park 'Pooch Park' in a new housing estate at Blakes Crossing, Blakeview).

The distribution of enclosed dog parks in South Australia is shown to the right.

Enclosed Dog Parks in South Australia



Metropolitan Council Areas

- 1 North Adelaide Dog Park**
Medindie Rd, North Adelaide
- 2 Wright Road Dog Park**
Wright Rd, Crafers
- 3 Four Paws Park**
Cnr Montacute & St Bernards Rd, (behind petrol station) Hectorville
- 4 Puppy Park**
Bolingbroke Ave, Renown Park
- 5 Pooch Park**
Findon Rd, Flinders Park
- 6 Hazelmere Road Reserve**
Cnr Hazelmere & Oaklands Rd, Glengowrie
- 7 CC Hood Reserve**
Cnr Eliza Place & Springbank Rd, Panorama
- 8 Minkarra Dog Park**
Cnr Happy Valley Drive & Manning Rd, Flagstaff Hill
- 9 Pooch Park**
Jabez Way, Blakeview
- 10 Stebonheath Dog Park**
Davoren Rd, Andrews Farm
- 11 L G Lewis**
Just off Grand Junction Rd, Northfield
- 12 Jack Watkins Reserve**
Churchill Rd, Kilburn
- 13 Broadview Dog Park**
Collingrove Ave, Broadview
- 14 Baltimore Reserve**
Oleander Drive, Parafield Gardens
- 15 Bolivar Road**
Bolivar Rd, Bolivar
- 16 Canterbury Reserve**
Canterbury Drive, Salisbury Heights
- 17 Dry Creek Linear Park**
Park Way, Mawson Lakes
- 18 Golding Oval**
Cnr Redhill Rd & Kalina Ave, Para Vista
- 19 Happy Home Reserve**
Waterloo Corner Rd, Salisbury Nth
- 20 Jenkins Reserve**
Saints Rd, Salisbury Park
- 21 The Paddock Reserve**
Maxwell Rd, Para Hills West
- 22 Unity Park**
South Tce, Pooraka
- 23 Bentley Reserve**
Dog Playground, Gentilly St, Holden Hill
- 24 Pet Park**
Bicentennial Drive, Golden Grove

Rural Council Areas

- Dukes Hwy, Tintinara
- Railway Tce, Coonalypyn
- Railway Tce, Tailern Bend

Source: Dog Park Audits
(De Rosa, 2013)

ENCLOSED DOG PARK FACTS**Enclosed dog parks in South Australia, 2013****How many dog parks?**

27 enclosed dog parks in South Australia

Where are they located?**Metropolitan council areas:**

City of Salisbury: **9**

City of Tea Tree Gully; City of Playford; City of Charles Sturt; City of Port Adelaide, Enfield: **2 each**

City of Onkaparinga; Adelaide City Council; Adelaide Hills Council; City of Mitcham; City of Marion; Campbelltown City Council; City of Prospect: **1 each**

Rural council areas:

Coorong District Council: **3**

Many dog parks are co-located with other community facilities, for example:

Minkarra Dog Park, part of Minkarra Park, Flagstaff Hill is co-located with a skate park; outdoor gym; children's playground; walking trails; off street parking and public toilets. **Pooch Park**, part of Tedder Reserve, Flinders Park (and part of River Torrens Linear Park) is co-located with walking trails, off street parking and public toilets

What are the types of dog parks?

There are different types of dog parks, for example:

Dog parks for all dogs

Minkarra Dog Park, Flagstaff Hill; Pooch Park, Flinders Park; Jack Watkins Dog Park, Kilburn; Broadview Dog Park, Broadview; Happy Home Reserve Dog Park, Salisbury North

Dog parks with separate areas for large and small dogs

North Adelaide Dog Park, North Adelaide; Bentley Reserve Dog Playground, Holden Hill

Dog park for puppies

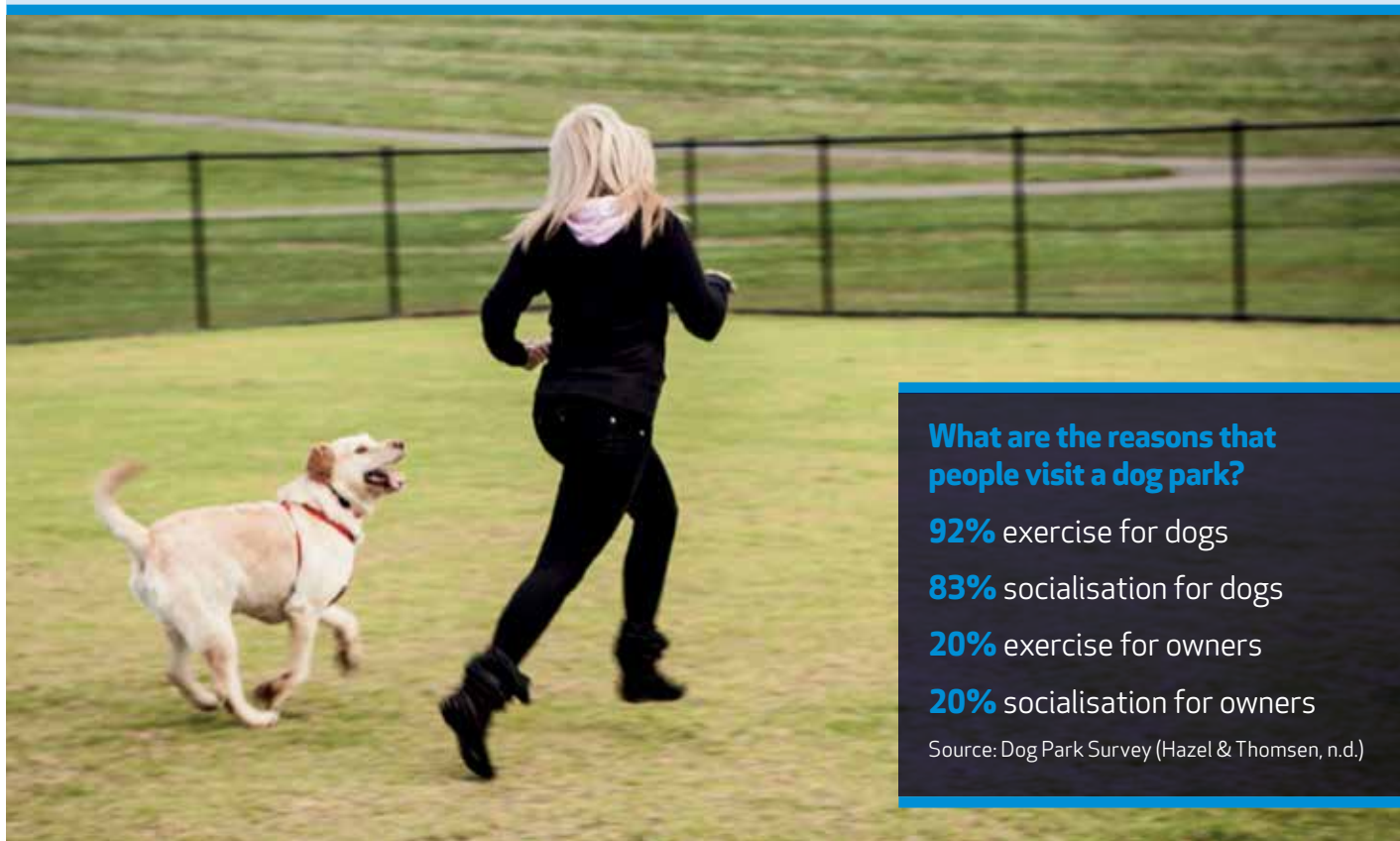
Puppy Park, Renown Park
(caters for dogs under 12 months)

Who develops dog parks?

Most dog parks are developed by local councils
Pooch Park, Blakes Crossing, Blakeview was developed by Lend Lease

Also see **Section 5 Resources for a complete list of enclosed dog parks in South Australia.**

Source: Dog Park Audits (De Rosa, 2013)

**What are the reasons that people visit a dog park?**

92% exercise for dogs

83% socialisation for dogs

20% exercise for owners

20% socialisation for owners

Source: Dog Park Survey (Hazel & Thomsen, n.d.)

BENEFITS OF DOG PARKS

Dog parks can provide many benefits for dogs, their owners and the community.

Benefits for dogs

- **Physical and mental exercise for dogs.** Dog parks can provide opportunities where dogs can get physical and mental exercise. Well exercised dogs are less likely to behave in a destructive or annoying way such as excessive barking.
- **Socialisation for dogs.** Dog parks can provide opportunities for dogs to have frequent interaction with other dogs and people. 'Dogs that are well socialised and exercised are healthier and happier as well as less likely to be aggressive' (Lee, 2007:17).
- **Safe environment for dogs to play.** Off-leash dog parks can provide a secure environment where dog owners can exercise their dogs off-leash and not encounter cars, bikes and other obstacles.

'Dog parks can provide an outlet for natural dog behaviours such as running, chasing, playing and barking with the result that the dog is less likely to engage in such nuisance behaviour at home'

(Larsen Bridge, 2009: n.p.)

Benefits for people

- **Outlet for dog owners to socialise.** Dog parks can provide a public space where dog owners can interact with each other and form community bonds. It has been established that pets 'act as a lubricant or social contact' and pet owners are 'more likely to exchange favours with neighbours, to be involved in community issues and to have higher levels of social capital' (Wood, 2009:5). Some dog park users have also established face book sites for their parks including: Friends of the North Adelaide Dog Park, Tedder Reserve (Pooch Park) and Wright Road Dog Park.
- **Seniors and disabled owners have an accessible place to exercise their dogs.** Dog parks can provide people with limited access such as the elderly and disabled with opportunities to exercise their dog and provide ongoing social contact (Petcare Information and Advisory Service, 1995).
- **Social well being and mental health.** Dog parks can provide a space where dog owners can feel connected with other human beings improving their mental and emotional health (Planning Institute of Australia, 2013).

Benefits for the community

- **Responsible dog ownership.** Dog parks can reduce the likelihood of dog owners letting their dog's off-leash in other recreational areas and infringing on the rights of other community residents and park users. They can also provide opportunities to educate dog owners about animal health and welfare and dog park etiquette.

Also see **Section 4 Management and Operations, Dog Park Education.**

- **Affordable recreation option.** A trip to the dog park is a free, outdoor activity where the family can take both their children and their pet (provided they are both under supervision by adults).
- **Resting place for travelling community.** Dog parks can provide a safe resting spot for those owners travelling with their pets 'pet friendly holidays'. For example, the Dog Exercise Area located on the Dukes Highway, Tintinara (Adelaide to Melbourne route) caters for the travelling community.

RISKS

Although there are many benefits there are also risks and issues that need to be considered when developing a dog park. Good planning, design and management can help reduce some of the risks while poor park design and management can exacerbate the risks.

Animal and human safety

Safety of people and dogs is perceived as a key concern in dealing with dogs parks. Research shows that injuries to people and dogs from dog bites at dog parks are rare (Arhant et al. 2011; Shyan et al. 2003) however; the perception of risk remains significant and must be considered throughout all stages of developing a dog park.

Children and dogs

Uncontrolled and unsupervised children can be an issue in off-leash dog parks. Dog parks can be attractive to young children, especially if they contain dog equipment that looks like play equipment which can be mistaken for a playground.

Good design and management of a dog park can play an important role in managing the interactions between children and dogs. To promote public safety, children must be closely supervised by a responsible adult at all times and must not play on equipment dedicated for dogs. There should also be clearly stated park rules and programs in place to educate park users on good park etiquette and staying safe.

Also see [Section 4 Management and Operations; Dog park rules and etiquette; dog park education.](#)

‘Many dog bites occur when children are playing around dogs. Their high pitched noise and uncoordinated attempts at showing affection may cause the dog to feel threatened and it may act defensively or trigger a chase response.’

(Royal Children’s Hospital, 1997:5)



Dog behaviour

‘The real problems, both short and long term are behavioural, and often owners contribute to these problems because they don’t recognise or don’t interpret correctly what their dogs are doing and learning.

Some problems cause difficulties only when dogs are meeting and interacting with other dogs, and others cause future behaviour to deteriorate and others directly impact on the dog/owner relationships’ (King and Long, 2004:2).

The issue of dog behaviour is closely related to the owner’s knowledge and supervision of their dog. Some dog owners let their dogs engage in inappropriate behaviour as they may not be aware of their dog’s behaviour or the signs of inappropriate play.

Some dogs are unsuitable for off-leash dog parks and some dog behavioural issues can be avoided by not bringing unsuitable dogs into a park. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (2013) suggests that the following dogs are not suitable for a dog park experience:

- Aggressive dogs
- Undersocialised, fearful, anxious dogs
- Unvaccinated puppies
- Females in heat and un-desexed males.

Larsen Bridge (2009) also states that easily aroused dogs, bully dogs, territorial dogs, resource guarding dogs and dogs with signs of infectious disease as unsuitable for off lead running with other dogs.

‘The most basic problems associated with dog parks can be avoided completely by not bringing inappropriate dogs. Dog parks are not a joyful experience for all dogs’ (Smith, 2007:10).

Health risks

Dogs have the potential to carry and spread certain infections to other dogs, and to humans (known as zoonoses). Infections generally spread to humans via exposure to contaminated faecal matter, although being in close proximity to dogs may also aid transmission. In Australia, dogs can transmit any number of infectious agents to humans including: Hookworm, Hydatid disease, Diarrhoea, Leptospirosis and Q Fever (Hayward 2004). Viruses are not usually added to the list as viral infections are not likely to be contracted by humans from dog faeces (Hayward 2004). The provision of adequate bins and faeces collection bags is essential in all dog parks.

Local impacts

Communities may fear impact on the local amenity or character of their neighbourhood including:

- Potential noise and odour problems
- Parking congestion in residential streets
- Dogs off-leash when walking to and from the dog park
- Potential environmental and wildlife impacts.





SECTION 2 PLANNING

The prospect of developing a dog park can be daunting but having a clear idea of key questions that need answers and steps to follow can make the process a lot simpler. Here are some initial steps to help plan for a dog park.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Like most projects, sound planning and good preparation are key to long-term success. Planning for a dog park is not that different to planning for other parks, except that in this instance the needs of both dogs and humans must be integral to the planning and design process. Developing a dog park is more than putting a fence around some vacant land.

It is important to understand what a dog park is, the different types of dog parks and how dog parks contribute to a broader network of open space. A dog park is a type of recreational space that may sit within a network of local, neighborhood parks and district or regional parks. However, dog parks are only one way for dog owners to exercise their dogs off-leash. Other opportunities for off-leash areas may be available within the council area such as beaches, trails and reserves or parks.

At the initial planning stage it may be useful to visit some existing dog parks to better understand what they look like, how people and dogs use the park, their setting, size, shape and their associated amenities. Consider visiting some of the dog parks described in this Guide - a lot can be learnt from experiencing the space first hand.

Also see [Section 5 Resources; Visiting a park.](#)

IS THERE A DEMAND FOR A DOG PARK?

To better understand the potential demand and visitor profile for a dog park considering the following information may be useful.

Demographics:

- A review of dog registrations in your council area
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) contains data on population density and local household sizes and/or information on new developments in the area, which can help, determine the potential demand for a dog park.

Existing off-leash areas (including dog parks):

- What other opportunities exist for dogs to be off-leash in the immediate and surrounding areas? How far away are they? Are there any major physical obstacles such as a main road or train line that make it difficult for people to access? Are they under-utilised, popular with a steady use, or over used?
- The off-leash policies of neighboring councils may also impact on potential demand.

Potential dog park users:

- Are the park users likely to be local residents or will they come from outside the area?
- The demand may have already been raised by the local community or alternatively it may be useful to undertake a survey to identify potential users
- Relevant studies including data from the University of Adelaide on dog park visitation in the Adelaide Region.

Also see [Section 5 Resources; Dog park survey.](#)



WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING PROCESS?

Local community

Engaging the community is essential. This can help to determine the level of acceptance for a dog park and the likely benefits it may bring to the community. Engaging the community in the planning process can increase the level of ownership and care for the park including opportunities to feedback on the site selection process. It is important to identify and address the community's concerns and issues throughout the process.

Potential stakeholders to engage include:

- Dog owners
- Local residents including non-dog owners
- Community interest groups
- Schools.

In addition to one-to-one stakeholder engagement, community workshops, surveys or online forums can be useful mechanisms for engaging the community.

Dog organisations/Animal professionals

Potential stakeholders to engage include:

- Dog organisations (e.g. Association of Pet Dog Trainers Australia Inc.)
- Professionals in the dog industry (e.g. positive reinforcement dog trainers and qualified dog behaviour professionals).

Some examples of consultation reports are included in [Section 5 Resources; Local council resources](#).

Council stakeholders

It is important that key council staff engaged in the planning, design, management, maintenance and compliance of dog parks are well informed and involved throughout the planning process to ensure all facets of a dog park are addressed to reduce the risk of future management and maintenance issues.

A workshop with all key staff (and potentially some elected members) may be useful at this early stage of planning.

COSTS

Although it may not be possible to develop accurate costs during this planning stage, it is important to develop a sound appreciation of the construction and maintenance costs to use as a guide, and to inform the overall budget.

Some of the key stages and budget considerations include:

- Planning (e.g. feasibility study)
- Design fees (e.g. park design) particularly if professional services are required
- Construction
- Maintenance.

As a guide the key components of the construction stage are listed below.

To provide an idea of likely costs some examples of feasibility reports for existing dog parks which include cost estimates are included in [Section 5 Resources; Local council resources](#).

KEY COMPONENTS FOR A DOG PARK

Core infrastructure

- Perimeter fencing (this is likely to be the biggest single cost)
- Entry gates/ doggy airlock (2 gates per entry)
- Service (maintenance) gates
- Pathways (internal and external)
- Ground surfaces (e.g. grass, mulch, gravel, sand, concrete)
- Landscaping (e.g. vegetation, screen planting, mounding)

Essential amenities

- Drinking water fountains (including plumbing & drainage)
- Bins and bag dispensers
- Shelter
- Seating
- Signs (e.g. directional and park rules)

Optional amenities

- Site lighting
- Facilities (e.g. toilets)
- Notice board
- Dog equipment



LOCATION

The site for a dog park is often dictated by the location of available land; however, this may not always be the most appropriate location. A good location should:

- Be easily accessible by road
- Have adequate space for off-street parking
- Have connections to existing pedestrian paths and trails
- Be within walking distance of residential areas
- Have good surveillance from public areas (not an isolated site).

Other considerations include:

- Proximity to compatible uses/activities or other community facilities
- Some natural vegetation and topography
- Good drainage.

PARKING AND ACCESSIBILITY

Research shows that 68% of park users in the Adelaide region drive to dog parks (Hazel and Thomsen, n.d.) which indicates that parking is an important issue.

Off-street parking should be considered, particularly where visitors are likely to be from outside the area and beyond walking distance from the park. This is especially important if there is limited availability for on-street parking and the park is likely to receive high visitation.

The transition from the car park to the designated entrance of the dog park needs to be direct and safe. Locating off-street parking as close as possible to the dog park entrance is important in order to discourage owners letting their dog off-leash to and from the park and to reduce any potential conflict with nearby facilities/activities.

CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING PATHS AND TRAILS

Making it easy for people to walk their dog to the park by locating the park near existing path and trail networks should be a priority due to the significant public health benefits to be gained.

OTHER FACILITIES

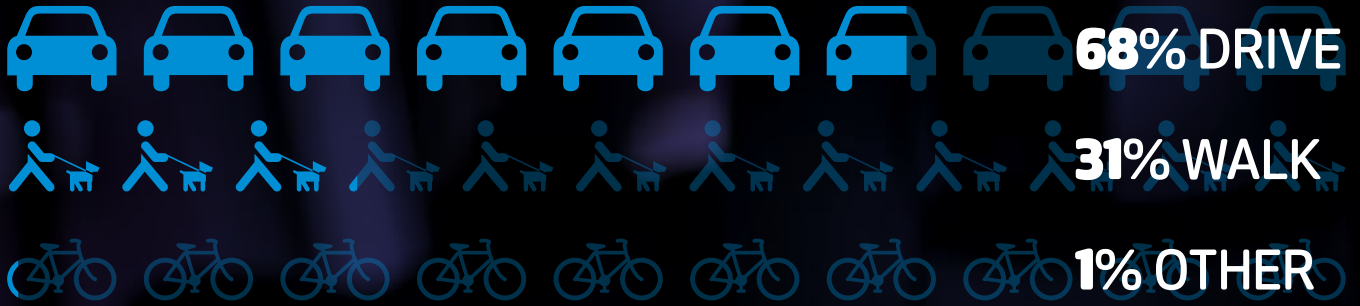
It is useful to consider locating a dog park near other community facilities as this can deliver other benefits including:

- Improved casual surveillance as the more people 'out and about' in the park, the safer it can be. This is also consistent with the South Australian Police, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles (CPED)
- Shared infrastructure and associated costs such as parking, lighting and public toilets
- Opportunities for families to enjoy a range of activities at a single location.

This practice is sometimes known as co-location. In South Australia, some dog parks are co-located near other facilities such as walking trails, reserves or other recreational spaces including ovals, tennis courts, playgrounds, outdoor gyms, skate parks and BBQ/picnic areas. Some of these facilities and activities are more compatible with a dog park than others.

The compatibility of a dog park with other activities is important, particularly en-route to the park. For instance, it is not a good idea for activities that may cause potential conflict to be located near dog parks such as BMX tracks, ball play areas or unfenced children's playgrounds. In these circumstances, it is important that adequate measures be in place to minimise potential conflict.

HOW DO PEOPLE TRAVEL TO A DOG PARK?



Source: Dog Park Survey (Hazel & Thomsen, n.d.)



SIZE

There is no simple formula for an ideal park size, and in many circumstances the size of the park is influenced by the amount of land available or the type of open space (i.e. local, district or region) proposed for the park.

A major consideration in determining an appropriate size is the expected number of users although this may be difficult to ascertain and may be influenced by the number of other off-leash parks in surrounding areas. In addition, a park that caters for the travelling community in a rural town would not require as much space as a destination park that gets regular, high use from external visitors to the area (e.g. North Adelaide Dog Park).

However size does matter and generally, larger parks are better.

‘The area should be big enough for dogs to run around and space themselves out. If there’s not enough square footage available, a park can easily get crowded. Crowding can lead to tension among dogs and, as a result, fights can erupt’ (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2013:n.p).

The design and layout of the space also has a major influence on the effectiveness of the park as a dog park.

Also see [Section 3 Design](#).

Examples of dog park sizes in South Australia

Some examples of dog park sizes (based on approximations) include:

- North Adelaide Dog Park, North Adelaide – 17,000 m² (includes section for small and large dogs)
- Pooch Park, Flinders Park – 7,000 m²
- Bentley Dog Park, Holden Hill – 5,000 m² (includes section for small and large dogs)
- Stebonheath Dog Park, Andrews Farm – 2,800 m²
- Jack Watkins Park, Kilburn – 2,400 m²
- Puppy Park, Renown Park – 2,200 m²
- Broadview Dog Park, Broadview – 2,000 m²
- Four Paws Park, Hectorville – 1,800 m²
- Dog Exercise Area, Tintinara – 400 m²
- Dog Exercise Area, Coonalypn – 100 m².

Source: Dog Park Audits (De Rosa, 2013)

Advantages of **larger sized parks** include:

- Less wear and tear of ground surfaces
- Reduced overcrowding of dogs
- Less stressful for dogs
- Cater for more park users
- Provides a destination park, particularly if co-located with compatible activities
- Provides opportunities to create different activity zones within the dog park.

Also see [Section 3 Design](#).

Disadvantages of **larger size parks** include:

- Increased costs for core infrastructure (e.g. perimeter fencing, ground surfaces)
- More maintenance required
- High visitation and overuse encouraged
- Greater demands on parking
- Traffic issues in surrounding streets
- Generation of community resistance by using significant sections of open space.

Advantages of **smaller sized parks** include:

- Provide a local community focus
- Provide off-leash opportunities in inner city locations
- Cost less to construct
- Address specific needs e.g. a dog park for the travelling community.

Disadvantages of **smaller sized parks** include:

- Lead to overcrowding and potential dog to dog conflict
- Be overused, leading to deterioration of ground surfaces
- Inattentive owner behaviour.

‘A small fenced area does not encourage people to walk with their dogs, but rather to stand around socialising. This increases the risk of inadequate supervision of dog behaviour’

(McArthur, 2007:85).

EXAMPLES OF DOG PARK SIZES (BASED ON APPROXIMATIONS)

North Adelaide Dog Park, North Adelaide **17,000 m²**

Pooch Park, Flinders Park **7,000 m²**

Bentley Dog Park, Holden Hill **5,000 m²**

Stebonheath Dog Park, Andrews Farm **2,800 m²**

Jack Watkins Park, Kilburn **2,400 m²**

Puppy Park, Renown Park **2,200 m²**

Broadview Dog Park, Broadview **2,000 m²**

Four Paws Park, Hectorville **1,800 m²**

Dog Exercise Area, Tintinara **400 m²**

Dog Exercise Area, Coonalypn **100 m²**

Source: Dog Park Audits (De Rosa, 2013)



SHAPE

The shape of a dog park is usually determined by the site availability, topography, vegetation, site boundaries and adjacent land uses and activities. The shape can have a significant influence on the layout and circulation patterns within the park.

Also see [Section 3 Design](#).

Linear and non rectangular shapes should be considered as they offer more opportunities to encourage park users to move and be more active through the park.

Linear shapes encourage people to move through a space and promote exercise by walking rather than standing in one spot. This has the additional benefit of reducing the concentration of dogs in one location by dispersing dogs and people throughout the park.

Irregular (odd) shapes work better than rectangles. They provide more opportunities to create spaces for dogs to 'get out of the main flow of traffic and ways to take a break from or avoid high-energy body-slaming canines' (Smith, 2007: 26).

These issues are further discussed in [Section 3 Design](#).





SECTION 3 DESIGN

The design of a dog park does not have to be complicated but it does need to be well considered. Just as designing a good playground for children requires a sound understanding of how children play, explore and learn, the design of a dog park requires an understanding of dogs' needs and their behaviour.

At this stage of the process, it is very important to link dog behaviour with design as this influences how dogs interact with each other and with humans in the park. If this link is not considered it can impact on dog behaviour, maintenance, wear and tear of surface materials and costs associated with the park.

PARK LAYOUT

Park layout is one of the most important elements in the design of a dog park as this can influence the interactions within the dog park. It influences how dogs interact with each other, with people and how people interact with each other.

'Many dogs may be sociable and friendly in one park but less so in another and the reason will often reflect the dog park's design'

(Larsen Bridge, 2007:n.p).

ACTIVITY ZONES

A variety of spaces or activity zones should be created within the dog park.

- Activity spaces or zones offer dogs a range of opportunities including active running as well as quieter environments where they can sniff, play and interact with their owners, and play one-on-one with other dogs away from the high running areas.
- Activity zones also help in dispersing the dog and human traffic throughout the park, and the spread of wear and tear on the ground surfaces.
- Activity zones can be created by using earth mounding or vegetation to create visual barriers within the park to interrupt dogs from running towards each other and body slamming each other (King and Long, 2004). They also provide a natural refuge where dogs can get away for 'time out.' It is not recommended to have fenced areas within the dog park for 'time out' zones.

CIRCULATION PATHS

Walking paths and/or trails within the park encourage dog owners to walk with their dogs rather than standing in one place. This helps reduce congestion and the concentration of dogs in one particular location and the potential for dogs to form into loose groups (Smith, 2007).

'Many older dogs are really not that interested in playing with other dogs but do love to run and explore. Paths that encourage owners and dogs to keep walking are best for enhancing the dog/owner relationship and preventing dog to dog conflict' (Larsen Bridge, 2007:n.p).





FENCING

Secure perimeter fencing should be provided to discourage dogs escaping under, over or through the fence.

- The fence should be around 1.7-1.8m in height to discourage dogs jumping over it. Susyn Stecchi (n.d.) has audited over 100 dog parks in the United States and recommends the fence to be at least six feet (1.8 m).
- Constructing the fence with a concrete plinth will also assist with maintenance and prevent smaller dogs escaping under the fence. For example, Minkarra Dog Park, Flagstaff Hill located near a busy road used a chain mesh fence 1.7m high with a concrete plinth. The plinth also serves as a mow strip.
- Moveable fencing may also be considered to close off areas of the park for events, or to allow for maintenance and/or turf regeneration.
- It is desirable to select a fencing material that provides good visibility so that park users can see activity inside and around the park.

ENTRY/EXIT POINTS

Providing multiple entry/exit points serves to minimise dog and human congestion at these locations and reduces wear and tear on surface materials. If there is only one main entry/exit point, dogs tend to converge on the newcomer, which can be a potential source of conflict.

- Entry/exit points should be clear of physical structures and amenities such as shelters, benches or drinking fountains to discourage dogs and people congregating.
- A separate entry for maintenance/service vehicles (i.e. council and emergency vehicles) should be provided away from the main entry/exit gates.

GATES

Double-gates should be provided to prevent dogs escaping from the park. The double gates provide a 'safety airlock' where park users transition from the external, on-leash environment to the internal, off-leash environment of the dog park.

- The safety airlock is a high traffic area and surface materials need to be durable to withstand high usage and be dog friendly (Also see surface materials).
- Gates should be fitted with self-closing child-proof locks to prevent dogs escaping and unsupervised children entering the park.
- Screening the entry gates from other dogs within the park can help avoid the potential for dog conflict when entering.



SURFACE MATERIALS

Surface material choice can have a big impact on the appearance and experience at the dog park. This is a difficult issue to provide advice on because there is limited research on suitable ground surfaces for dog parks.

- A combination of surface materials should be used to match the activity zones (also see park layout) and corresponding intensity.
- All surface materials must be 'dog friendly'. Asphalt is not considered a suitable option because it can get 'too hot in summer for dogs to walk on, and can possibly tear or burn the pads of their feet' (Stecchi, n.d.:03-13).
- Surfaces should be selected to deter dogs from moving too fast and getting up too much speed in the park.
- Well drained, durable, all weather materials are required for high traffic areas such as the safety airlock.

What kind of surface materials are best?

Different materials have their own advantages and disadvantages and when selecting a surface material for an activity zone the intensity of use should be considered along with drainage, topography and maintenance requirements.

For example, grass has shown to be a poor surface for high running areas (active zones) in a dog park as it tends to deteriorate quickly, dust forms, and requires repair or replacement.

Concrete may be appropriate for surfacing in the safety airlock, a high traffic area.

Some of the different surface materials used in existing dog parks in South Australia includes:

- Grass or turf
- Sand
- Concrete
- Bare earth
- Gravel
- Asphalt
- Mulch/bark chips.

PLANTING

Landscaping and plants add to the amenity of the park, but it is important to ensure that plants are non-toxic and non-irritating to dogs.

- There are many plants that have seeds, stems, leaves, fruits or flowers that are irritating and/or toxic to dogs, and these plants should not be used either inside or on the way to a dog park.
- Consider introducing plants with various textures to enrich the dogs experience at the park.

Also see [Section 5 Resources; Selecting plants.](#)

Some questions to guide the selection of surface materials include:

- Is it dog friendly?
- Can the material withstand the wear and tear of dogs running?
- Can the surface help reduce dogs getting up too much speed?
- Does the material emit dust and if so, how will the dust be controlled?
- Is the material durable, will it last in a high activity area?
- What maintenance will be required?



ESSENTIAL AMENITIES

Drinking water and shade

Drinking water for both dogs and humans is required inside the dog park. Dogs cannot cool themselves as efficiently as humans, therefore, they must have access to water and shade. It is recommended that more than one drinking water fountain be provided in the park. It is common in South Australian parks to have combined drinking fountains and water bowls catering for both dogs and humans.

In providing drinking water bowls/fountains, it is important to consider:

- Adequate drainage around the water bowl to reduce water logging and mud
- Location of the water bowl away from the main entry gates to discourage dogs congregating in high traffic areas
- Suitable water bowls that are large enough for all dogs to use and easy to clean and maintain.

Shade should be provided so dogs can rest, cool themselves, and protect themselves against the weather. Trees as a natural source of shade are preferable, although they may need protection from urinating dogs until established.

Seating

Seating location and materials are an important consideration in the design stage. Some considerations include:

- Seating should be located away from entry/exit gates to avoid congestion
- Keep seating to a minimum, as people tend to sit down, socialize, and do less interacting with their dog. It is better to encourage dog owners to keep moving through the park, interacting and staying connected with their dog (also see circulation paths)
- Seating should be positioned to provide unobstructed views of the dog play areas
- Benches that surround trees are a good choice because they help protect the trees from dog urinating.

Waste disposal

Bag dispensers and waste bins should be considered at appropriate locations in and around the park for cleaning up after dogs.

- Consider bag dispensers with a locking device to prevent bags being pulled continuously and scattered in the park.
- Provide waste bins of a sufficient size and number to accommodate the expected demand.

Also see [Section 4 Management and Operations; Waste management](#).



Signs

Directional signs should be located in areas of high visibility to clearly direct park users to the designated dog park. Information signs should be located within the park to prompt appropriate park user behaviour.

Park rules should be located in high visibility areas en route to the park but at a distance from the main entry gates to avoid congestion, but not too far as that will discourage people from walking over to read them.

Park rules should be presented in a friendly, easy to read and positive manner with consideration given to users who may not have English as their first language. Consider using signs that convey positive language or tone and icons or diagrams to reinforce key messages.

Some key messages

- Pick up after your dog
- Always supervise your dog
- Dogs must be under effective control at all times
- All dogs must have up-to-date vaccinations
- Report all dog attacks
- Close the gate properly
- Remove your dog if it annoys, intimidates or becomes aggressive towards other dogs
- All children entering the park must be actively supervised by an adult
- Park not suitable for puppies
- Number of dogs allowed per person

Clear simple messages using symbols on attractive signs will gain attention and engage dog owners.

Also see [Section 4 Management and Operations; Dog park rules and etiquette.](#)



Clean up after your Dog



Maximum Fine
\$125

BY ORDER OF:

DOG & CAT MANAGEMENT ACT 1995

Further information call
8405 6560 or email
customer.service@portenf.sa.gov.au

OPTIONAL AMENITIES

Site lighting

Site lighting is sometimes provided to extend hours of park use, particularly during winter months. However, lighting should be compatible with adjacent land uses, particularly in residential areas.

- For example, site lighting has been installed in some dog parks in South Australia including: Happy Home Dog Park, Salisbury; Broadview Dog Park, Broadview (solar lighting) and Pooch Park, Flinders Park.

Dog equipment

Providing equipment for dogs to practice their natural skills can be a bonus and this could include: tyres, logs, boulders, tunnels and other elements to enrich a dog's experience at the park.

- Dog equipment such as jumps, bridges with sloping sides and A-Frames can present issues if dogs and their owners have not been trained in their proper use, and may pose a safety problem to dogs (McArthur, 2006).
- Audits of over 160 dog parks in the United States found that agility equipment:
 - falls into rapid decay from non-use or misuse
 - are used by very few people for their dogs
 - is used by children as a playground
 - is a waste of space and money unless you have users who are committed to using them (Stecchi, n.d).
- It is recommended that puppies under 12 months of age do not use this equipment as puppies have soft bones and joints, which are easily injured (McArthur, 2006).
- If dog equipment is considered it should be located away from entry/exit points and high running areas (active zones).

Facilities

Providing facilities such as public toilets should be considered where appropriate.

Notice board

Providing a public notice board can assist park users to obtain useful information on animal health, welfare and safety and community events in the dog park e.g. dog park education sessions. A notice board also provides an opportunity for the community to exchange information.

- Notice boards for public use should be located outside the park and away from the main entry gates. They could be situated alongside the park rules (also see signs).

Picnic tables

Picnic tables should not be located inside the dog park as they encourage food in the park.

- These facilities must be accommodated outside the dog park, at a good distance from the dog park entry gates.

A husky dog with light brown and white fur is standing on a green metal ramp in a dog park. The ramp has a textured surface and is supported by green metal legs. The dog is looking down and to the right with its mouth open. The background shows a sandy area and a line of trees.

TOP 5 - MOST LIKED DOG PARK ATTRIBUTES ACROSS COUNCILS

- 1 Space/size
- 2 Fences/gates
- 3 Dog socialising
- 4 Water availability
- 5 Location/access

Source: Dog Park Survey (Hazel and Thomsen, n.d.)

SECTION 4 MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

Ongoing management and efficient day to day operations or maintenance are essential to the long term success of a dog park. Although timely and regular maintenance is a key factor in the successful operation of any open space, dog parks have some unique characteristics and requirements that need to be addressed to provide a positive experience for both dogs and their owners.

MAINTENANCE

Allocating a budget for monetary costs and staff resources for ongoing maintenance is essential. It is ideal that this be given consideration at the planning stage (also see Section 2 Planning; Costs). Although good design and sound construction may entail higher initial project costs this needs to be considered in balance with higher long term maintenance costs associated with poor choices of materials and/or inappropriate placement of amenities.

Regular and effective monitoring of the spaces and the elements within it is important as it helps identify existing and emerging issues associated with a dog park including:

- Deterioration of surface materials
- Poor drainage
- Site amenities in poor or unsafe condition
- Ineffective gate closures and fencing.

It is suggested that a regular maintenance program be developed for each dog park site that outlines activities that need to be undertaken and the frequency they need to occur: daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually.

Some of the key maintenance activities include:

- Picking up uncollected dog waste from the site
- Emptying waste bins
- Re-supplying dog waste bags
- Fixing broken or weathered signs
- Filling holes dug by dogs
- Pruning of plants
- General cleaning and deodorising
- Maintaining and replacing surface materials
- Deficiencies in facilities e.g. drainage and erosion
- Repairing perimeter fencing and gate locks
- Repairing, replacing, park furnishings and dog equipment.

The engagement of park users in the day-to-day maintenance of a dog park is a model that could be considered as this can facilitate a sense of ownership and provide a more immediate response to issues that arise. This has the added benefit of reducing council costs and staff resources. For example, the Alexandrina Council has implemented a program 'Adopt a Dispenser' where community members take responsibility for looking after a dog bag dispenser including re-stocking of plastic bags.

Technology such as 'apps' for park users to report issues with physical site conditions and maintenance needs could be considered to provide timely monitoring of maintenance or management issues e.g. Snap Send Solve.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Parks should be fitted with dog waste bag dispersers and bags, and bins to allow the correct disposal of faecal material and other waste.

Waste bins should be emptied more frequently than a conventional council bin, especially during warm to hot weather when unpleasant odours can be a problem.

DOG PARK RULES AND ETIQUETTE

Establishing a consistent set of dog park rules that apply to all dog park sites within a council area can help increase compliance amongst park users. However, rules can only go so far and should be part of an overall education program to promote good dog park etiquette and culture amongst park users (also see section on Dog Park Education).

- Promoting park rules and etiquette by distributing brochures with dog registration mail-outs to rate payers and residents should also be considered as an effective communication and educational tool.
- Dog park rules should be located in high visibility areas en route to the park at a distance from the main entry gates to avoid congestion but not too far that people are discouraged from walking over to read them.
- Rules should be presented in a friendly, easy to read and positive manner.

Also see [Section 3 Design; Essential amenities.](#)

Below are some examples of dog park rules and etiquette in Australia and the United States.

Belconnen Dog Park, Lake Ginninderra, ACT, Australia

Please Do

- Keep walking - this will reduce territorial behaviour
- Stay alert and focused on your dog at all times
- Keep your dog under effective control and leave if it becomes aggressive
- Bring plastic bags and clean up after your dog – bins are provided
- Limit dogs you bring to two per owner if possible

Please Don't

- Come into the park if your dog is unvaccinated, aggressive or on heat
- Bring puppies that have not completed their vaccinations
- Come into the enclosure if it is already crowded
- Bring in food and toys
- Bring in children without careful adult supervision

Dog parks.com, USA

- Never leave your dog unattended and always keep your attention on your dog
- Desexed animals are recommended
- Do not bring more than two or maybe three dogs. It subjects parks to overuse, and if they are not your dogs, you may not have full control over them. It is hard enough for many people to watch one dog!
- Keep your dog on-leash until you get to the off-leash area. This is not just respectful to other park users, it's much safer for your dog
- If you must bring children to a dog park, supervise them closely
- Do not smoke or eat while at the park. Cigarette butts and food wrappers are tempting treats to dogs, but bad for them
- Always clean up after your dog

The Marin Humane Society, Dog Park Rules, USA

- Dogs must be healthy and vaccinated
- Dogs under 4 months of age are prohibited
- Children are not allowed in the enclosed areas unless accompanied by an adult. Small children should not be brought into the dog parks, as they are at risk of inadvertent harm from playing dogs. While in the dog park, children should not scream, chase, or run around the parks. Children should not be left unattended in the dog parks at any time
- Dogs must be desexed
- Dogs must not be left tied outside the dog parks
- Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and upon leaving the enclosed park areas
- Dog guardians must have a leash in hand at all times, so that they may quickly remove a dog from the park if it behaves inappropriately
- Guardians must be in the park, within view of, and able to maintain voice control over their dogs at all times
- Guardians must clean up after their dogs
- No smoking or alcohol permitted in the dog parks

Also see [Section 5 Resources; Dog park rules and etiquette.](#)

DOG PARK EDUCATION

Dog parks are established on the concept that park users will police themselves and each other rather than be subject to law enforcement personnel. Therefore, investing resources into education sessions for park users on what constitutes good dog park etiquette and how to stay safe is important, and provides an opportunity to address issues in a more positive manner.

- Dog park education sessions are common in some jurisdictions in the United States. In these jurisdictions, the sessions are mandatory for all dog park users, and only upon completion are they granted access to the park via a swipe card.
- In South Australia, dog park education is slowly being recognised as an important element of dog park management.

‘Many dog guardians don’t know how to recognise if their dog is being bullied or being the bully or what good and bad play looks like. Dog park education needs to address concepts such as: basic park manners and skills, how to read dog body postures, and how to keep both dogs and people safe’

(Debra Millikan, 2013, pers. comm., 6 September).

EVALUATION

As dog parks continue to be developed it is important to know how effective they are from a social, physical, economic and dog behaviour perspective. Some questions that may need answers include:

- Do dog parks really work?
- How is the effectiveness of dog parks measured?
- What can we learn from existing parks?
- How can existing dog parks inform the development of new and upgrade of existing parks?

Some indicators of effectiveness could include:

General

- Complaints, calls and feedback received by councils
- Monitor the number of dog park users to assess if the park is overused or underused e.g. gate counter
- Regular visits to the dog park while people are using it can tell you a lot about the park culture, dynamics and interactions.

Safety

- Nature and number of reported incidents to council inside and outside the dog park.

Maintenance

- Amount of uncollected dog faeces inside and outside of the dog park
- Condition of surface materials and infrastructure (e.g. before and after photos are a good way to document changes)
- Feedback received from parks and maintenance staff and maintenance contractors.

Costs

- Review annual costs associated with maintenance of the dog park.

Community Feedback

- Feedback from park users and neighboring residents (e.g. annually or bi-annually) is a simple yet effective way to determine their satisfaction or otherwise with a dog park.

For example, the Adelaide City Council surveyed users of the North Adelaide Dog Park and surrounding residents to better understand their physical activity levels and park satisfaction (also see Section 5 Resources; Local council resources).

Evaluation is usually the most forgotten aspect of any project, yet is arguably the most important factor in planning for future projects. Evaluating the success of dog parks is no exception.



SECTION 5 RESOURCES

VISITING A PARK

A visit to a dog park can be an invaluable part of research and a good way to see what a dog park looks like, how they work and who uses them. A site visit can tell you a lot about what surfaces work or not, and how the dogs and their owners use the space.

Many parks have a dog related park name as this is generally helpful in differentiating designated off-leash areas from general recreation areas.

Consider visiting some of the enclosed dog parks described in this Guide. A lot can be learnt from experiencing the space first hand. Page 41 (opposite) is a list of all known enclosed dog parks in South Australia (as of August 2013).



ENCLOSED DOG PARKS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Local Government Area	Name	Address
Metropolitan Council Areas		
Adelaide City Council	North Adelaide Dog Park	Medindie Rd, North Adelaide
Adelaide Hills Council	Wright Road Dog Park	Wright Rd, Crafers
Campbelltown City Council	Four Paws Park	Cnr Montacute & St Bernards Rd, (behind petrol station) Hectorville
City of Charles Sturt	Puppy Park	Bolingbroke Ave, Renown Park
City of Charles Sturt (partnership with City of West Torrens)	Pooch Park	Findon Rd, Flinders Park
City of Marion	Hazelmere Road Reserve	Cnr Hazelmere & Oaklands Rd, Glengowrie
City of Mitcham	CC Hood Reserve	Cnr Eliza Place & Springbank Rd, Panorama
City of Onkaparinga	Minkarra Dog Park	Cnr Happy Valley Drive & Manning Rd, Flagstaff Hill
City of Playford	Pooch Park	Jabez Way, Blakeview
City of Playford	Stebonheath Dog Park	Davoren Rd, Andrews Farm
City of Pt Adelaide Enfield	L G Lewis	Just off Grand Junction Rd, Northfield
City of Pt Adelaide Enfield	Jack Watkins Reserve	Churchhill Rd, Kilburn
City of Prospect	Broadview Dog Park	Collingrove Ave, Broadview
City of Salisbury	Baltimore Reserve	Oleander Drive, Parafield Gardens
City of Salisbury	Bolivar Road	Bolivar Rd, Bolivar
City of Salisbury	Canterbury Reserve	Canterbury Drive, Salisbury Heights
City of Salisbury	Dry Creek Linear Park	Park Way, Mawson Lakes
City of Salisbury	Golding Oval	Cnr Redhill Rd & Kalina Ave, Para Vista
City of Salisbury	Happy Home Reserve	Waterloo Corner Rd, Salisbury Nth
City of Salisbury	Jenkins Reserve	Saints Rd, Salisbury Park
City of Salisbury	The Paddock Reserve	Maxwell Rd, Para Hills West
City of Salisbury	Unity Park	South Tce, Pooraka
City of Tea Tree Gully	Bentley Reserve Dog Playground	Gentilly St, Holden Hill
City of Tea Tree Gully	Pet Park	Bicentennial Drive, Golden Grove
Rural Council Areas		
Coorong District Council	Dog Exercise Area	Dukes Hwy, Tintinara
Coorong District Council	Dog Exercise Area	Railway Tce, Coonalypyn
Coorong District Council	Dog Exercise Area	Railway Tce, Tailem Bend

The list is based on information available at the time of publication. Source: Dog Park Audits (De Rosa, 2013)

LOCAL COUNCIL RESOURCES

The following are selected council dog park documents. All documents are available online.

Consultation Reports

- Campbelltown City Council (2010) [Proposed dog park location and suggestions for design features – Community feedback document](#), May, South Australia.
- City of Mitcham (2008) [CC Hood Reserve Dedicated Dog Park Collated Survey Responses – Report](#), January, South Australia.

Evaluation Reports

- Adelaide City Council (2012) [Evaluation Report for the North Adelaide Dog Park](#). Prepared by Noble I. and Jeroff, B. University of South Australia, November, Adelaide.

Feasibility Reports

- City Council of Hume (2011) [Feasibility Study, Dog Parks in Hume City](#), December, Victoria.
- City of Onkaparinga (2010) [Enclosed Dog Exercise Area Feasibility Study for the Northern Area, Final Report](#), June, South Australia.

HELPFUL LITERATURE

Key sources include:

- [Public Open Space and Dogs: A design and management guide for open space professionals and local government](#), Petcare Information and Advisory Service
- [Healthy Spaces and Places: A national guide to designing places for healthy living](#), an overview, Planning Institute of Australia
- [Healthy by Design: A planners' guide to environments for active living](#), National Heart Foundation of Australia
- [Streets for People: Compendium for South Australian Practice](#), South Australian Active Living Coalition.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Sites that might be helpful include:

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

www.asPCA.org/Pet-care/poison-control/plant-list-dogs.aspx

Association of Pet Dog Trainers, Australia (APDT)

www.apdt.com.au

Australian Companion Animal Council (ACAC)

www.acac.org.au

Petnet

www.petnet.com.au

Planning Institute of Australia

www.planning.org.au

RSPCA (NSW)

www.rspcansw.org.au/education/pet_care/health/Toxic_Plants

SELECTING PLANTS

Websites listing plants that are toxic and non-toxic to dogs include:

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

www.asPCA.org/Pet-care/poison-control/plant-list-dogs.aspx

The RSPCA (NSW)

www.rspcansw.org.au/education/pet_care/health/Toxic_Plants

DOG PARK RULES AND ETIQUETTE

The Marin Humane Society

www.marinhumanesociety.org/site/c.ailOI3NLKgKYF/b.7727935/k.B618/Dog_Parks__Campus_Facilities.htm

Dog Park.com

www.dogpark.com/dog-park-etiquette/

Dr. Sophia Yin, Dog Park Etiquette: Rules to Help Dogs Get Along

www.drsophiayin.com/blog/entry/dog-park-etiquette-rules

DOG PARK SURVEY

The Dog and Cat Management Board commissioned the collection of annual dog park visitation surveys in the Adelaide region from 2010-2012 by the University of Adelaide. The data was collected by the Bachelor of Science (Animal Science) students enrolled in the course 'Companion Animal and Equine Studies' under the supervision of Dr Susan Hazel, Lecturer in the School of Animal and Veterinary Science.



REFERENCES

- Allen, L. (2007) **Dog Parks: Benefits and Liabilities**. ENV5 699 - MES Capstone Seminar. Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Environmental Studies 2007. Department of Earth and Environmental Studies University of Pennsylvania, United States.
- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (2011) **Toxic and Non-Toxic Plant List – Dogs**. [Online, accessed 20 April 2011] www.asPCA.org/Pet-care/poison-control/plant-list-dogs.aspx
- American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (2013) **Dog Parks**. [Online, accessed 4 July 2013] www.asPCA.org/Pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-articles/dog-parks
- Arhant, C. Huber, U. Troxler, J. (2011) **Opinions of dog owners about characteristics of off-leash areas and risk factors related to conflicts between dogs and dog injury**. Journal of Veterinary Behaviour: Clinical Applications and Research 6(1):75-76.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (21 January 2005) **Australian home size is growing**. 1301.0 -Year Book Australia. [Online, accessed 21 July 2011] www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1301.0Feature%20Article262005?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1301.0&issue=2005&num=&view=
- Australian Companion Animal Council Inc. (2009) **The power of pets. St Leonards, New South Wales**. [Online, accessed 4 July 2013] www.acac.org.au/pdf/PowerOfPets_2009_19.pdf
- Australian Companion Animal Council Inc. (2010) **Contribution of the pet care industry to the Australian economy**. (7th Ed.). St Leonards, New South Wales. [Online, accessed 12 August 2011] www.acac.org.au/pdf/ACAC%20Report%200810_sm.pdf
- De Rosa, F. (2013) **Dog Park Audits, 2012-13. South Australia** (unpublished data).
- Government of South Australia (1995) **Dog and Cat Management Act 1995** [Online, accessed 9 July 2013] www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/Dog%20and%20Cat%20Management%20Act%201995.aspx
- Hall, T. (2007) **Where have all the gardens gone? An investigation into the disappearance of back yards in the newer Australian suburb**. Urban Research Program, Research Paper 13. Griffith University, Brisbane.
- Hayward, M. (2004) **Risk of zoonoses from dogs on sporting fields**. Urban Animal Management Advisory Group, Australian Veterinary Association: ACT. [Online, accessed 3 June 2011] www.litter.vic.gov.au/resources/documents/Zoonoses_Sport_Fields.doc
- Hazel, S. Thomsen D. (n.d.) **Utilisation of Fenced Dog Parks in the Adelaide Region**. The University of Adelaide, Roseworthy, South Australia, prepared for the Dog and Cat Management Board, South Australia.
- Jackson, V. (1995) **Public Open Space and Dogs: A design and management guide for open space professionals and local government**, prepared for the Petcare Information and Advisory Service, Australia.
- King, T. Long, T. (2004) **Dog Parks: The good, the bad, and the ugly**. Chronicle of the Dog, Association of Pet Dog Trainers United States, November/December Vol. XI, No. 6.
- Larsen Bridge, K. (2009) **Dog Parks: Paradise or Purgatory**. Dogs Life Magazine, January. [Online, accessed 4 July 2013] www.dogslife.com.au/dog-news/dog-training/dog-parks-paradise-or-purgatory
- Lee, H. (2007) **A study of use patterns, user satisfaction and willingness to pay for off-leash dog parks**: post-occupancy evaluations of four dog parks in Texas and Florida. A dissertation, submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of Texas A&M University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, August 2007.

McArthur, G. (2007) **Why is the toilet the smallest room in our house? How does this question affect the success or not of off-leash dog parks?** AIAM Annual Conference on Urban Animal Management, 85-89.

McArthur, G. (2006) **Meet and Greet**. Published by Gwen McArthur, Keperra, Queensland.

Millikan, D. (2013) pers. comm., 6 September.

National Heart Foundation of Australia, Victorian Division (2004) **Healthy by Design: a planners' guide to environments for active living**, National Heart Foundation of Australian (Victorian Division).

Petcare Information and Advisory Service (2012) **Pets and Community Health: How do companion animals help improve the lives of people?** A research summary prepared by Petcare Information & Advisory Service. [Online, accessed 30 July 2013] www.petnet.com.au/sites/default/files/pias_animal__community_health_brochure.pdf

Planning Institute of Australia (2012) **Growth Facts Feed Fido Friendly Planning**, Media Release, 19 July. [Online, accessed 04 July 2013] www.planning.org.au/documents/item/4203

Planning Institute of Australia (2013) **Healthy Spaces and Places: A national guide to designing places for healthy living**, an overview, Kingston ACT.

Royal Children's Hospital (1997) **Dog's 'n' kids: A resource kit for health professionals promoting dog bite prevention and socially responsible dog ownership**. 3rd Edition, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne.

RSPCA NSW (2011) **Toxic plants for pets**. [Online, accessed 12 August 2011] www.rspcansw.org.au/education/pet_care/health/Toxic_Plants

SA Police (2013) **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design**. [Online, accessed 29 July 2013] www.police.sa.gov.au/sapol/home/search.jsp?xcid=4955&type=and&rpp=10&rst=all&orderby=rank&daysold=&str=cpted

Shyan, M.R. Fortune, K.A. King, C. (2003) **'Bark Parks' A study on interdog aggression in a limited-control environment**. Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 6(1): 25-32.

Smith, C. (2007) **Visiting the Dog Park: Having fun, staying safe**. Dogwise Publishing, Washington.

Stecchi, S. (n.d.) **So You Want To Build a Dog Park?** A comprehensive guide for municipalities and private entities (8th Edition), DogParks USA.

The Australian (20 November 2010) **'How big is my castle?'** reported by Martin Kelly. [Online, accessed 21 July 2011] www.theaustralian.com.au/news/executive-lifestyle/how-big-is-my-castle/story-fn6njxlr-1225955384646

Wood, L. (Ed.) (2009) **Living Well Together: How companion animals can help strengthen social fabric**. Petcare Information & Advisory Service Pty Ltd and the Centre for the Built Environment and Health (School of Population Health), The University of Western Australia.

South Australian Active Living Coalition (2012) **Streets for People, Compendium for South Australian Practice**. [Online, accessed 30 July 2013] www.saactivelivingcoalition.com.au/wp-content/uploads/16649%20StreetforPeopleCompendium_full.pdf

DOG PARK SIGN SUGGESTIONS

TYPE

Entrance sign

LOCATION

Near the park entrance but not so close as to cause congestion at the gate

MESSAGE

- Park rules
- Emergency contact numbers

APPROX. SIZE

600mm wide x 900mm high



TYPE

Large totem sign

LOCATION

Centre of park

MESSAGE

- Information about becoming a good dog owner
- Laser cut icon on top indicates whether the park is off-leash, on-leash or dual use

APPROX. SIZE

200mm wide x 2500-3000mm wide

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Includes laser cut icon on top
- Sign could include tap and dog drinking bowl



TYPE

Medium totem sign

LOCATION

Various locations around park

MESSAGE

- Reminder about picking up after your dog

APPROX. SIZE

200mm wide x 1000mm high

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sign has a poo bag dispenser mounted on it



TYPE

Small totem sign

LOCATION

Various locations around park

MESSAGE

- Reinforce appropriate behaviour
- Can contain message on top

APPROX. SIZE

200mm wide x 800mm high

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Can double as a seat or leaning post



DOG PARK CHECKLIST

PLANNING

- How to get started
- Potential demand
- Stakeholder engagement
- Costs
- Location
- Parking and accessibility
- Connections to existing paths and trails
- Other facilities
- Size and shape

DESIGN

PARK LAYOUT

- Activity zones
- Circulation paths
- Fencing
- Entry/exit points
- Gates
- Surface materials
- Plants

ESSENTIAL AMENITIES

- Drinking water and shade
- Seating
- Waste disposal
- Signs

OPTIONAL AMENITIES

- Site lighting
- Dog equipment
- Notice board
- Picnic tables

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

- Maintenance
- Waste management
- Park rules and etiquette
- Dog park education
- Evaluation



For further information please contact:

Dog and Cat Management Board

GPO Box 1047

Adelaide SA 5001

Telephone: (08) 8124 4962

Facsimile: (08) 8124 4648

E-mail: dcmb@sa.gov.au

www.dogandcatboard.com.au

ABN: 48 100 971 189