



Cassowary Coast
REGIONAL COUNCIL

DOG OFF LEASH TRIAL *feedback*



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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About the Project

Dog Off Leash Areas (DOLA) are designated areas of public land, where dogs may legally be taken without a leash. In other areas, these areas are usually a mix of fenced in and unfenced areas within Council owned parks or other Council managed land.

Users of DOLAs do not need to keep their dog on a leash while in the designated area, but they are responsible for:

- Keeping their dog under effective control at all times. Effective control means your dog responds to your command.
- Picking up and removing dog waste.
- Being considerate of other users of the DOLA and nearby residents.
- Ensuring their dogs are registered with Council and kept fully up to date for their immunisations.
- Keeping their dogs out of areas that are not designated for use by dogs.

There are well documented benefits for dogs, people and the broader community for the creation of DOLAs. Some of the benefits for dogs include:

- Physical and mental exercise, which may contribute to a reduction in behaviours such as barking.
- Socialisation with other dogs.
- A safe area to explore and play.

Benefits for dog owners include:

- A safe space for visitors and residents to exercise their dogs.
- Social and emotional wellbeing through connectivity and creation of social networks with other dog owners.

Benefits for the wider community include:

- A free and accessible option for residents to visit.
- Providing a rest area for visitors where their dogs can exercise safely, which will encourage more time spent in our community.
- Support for responsible dog ownership by providing a safe place for dogs to exercise and reducing the likelihood of dog owners letting their dogs off leash in other areas.

At the Local Government Meeting on 15 December 2022, Council endorsed the below locations to become DOLA based on the feedback and concerns provided by the community during engagement. The locations that then proceeded for a trial of (up-to) three months period were:

- Boustead Park, Kurrimine Beach;
- Wildsoet Park, Tully;
- Coral Sea Park, North of shared path termination to Coral Sea Drive, Cardwell;
- Foreshore, Mission Beach between Miter Street and Pacific Parade – Esplanade access;
- Foreshore, South Mission Beach between Kennedy Esplanade boat ramp and the beach access 100m North of Jackey Jackey Street; and
- Wrights Park, Webb.

The trial commenced on Monday 30 January 2023, with the feedback period closing Sunday 30 April 2023.

Council acknowledges and thanks all contributors for the time taken to provide feedback on this during the feedback period.

This report identifies and captures feedback associated with the consultation and serves as a public document to close the loop on the engagement process. The findings contained herein are presented in their entirety and draw no conclusions or recommendations on project or strategy outcomes going forward.

Background – Community Engagement

Proposed DOLA Trial Consultation

During the original round of consultation, 467 residents, community groups and Cassowary Coast visitors joined the conversation on the region's DOLA trial.

Overall, the survey showed positive sentiment, with 72% of respondents in favour of the proposed DOLAs or would support the DOLA trial with further facilities in place or alternate locations.

Wrights Park, Webb Consultation

The Wrights Park consultation commenced Wednesday 21 December 2022 and concluded on Sunday 22 January 2023, which generated feedback with 22 contributions from 21 contributors.

Introduction – Community Engagement During Trial

Effective community engagement is a contribution process that is the foundation for genuine community development. This process allows our community to voice their support, concerns, and identify the appropriate responses and solutions to the issues that affect them.

The Cassowary Coast region is diverse and includes people of different backgrounds, needs, values and expectations. Inclusive community engagement has been identified as a priority of Council to ensure all residents have an opportunity to have their voice heard.

The DOLA was identified as a topic of interest for the community and Council provided an opportunity for community members to provide feedback on the trial.

Council planned activities throughout the three months to create an opportunity for residents and visitors to have their say. This feedback was monitored, and if required, feedback was escalated for attention. Activities included QR codes located on signage at the off leash areas, reminder in the Community Connect lift out, Your Say webpage and social media campaign with a link to the survey page.

It is noted that feedback via the Your Say portal occurred primarily at the beginning and end of the feedback period.

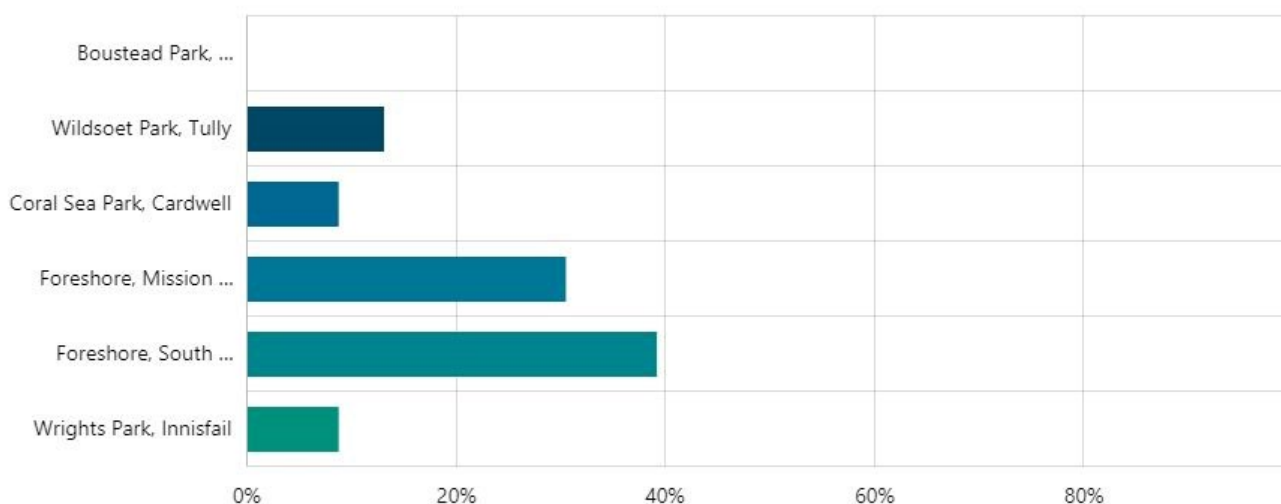
Community Consultation Outcomes

Feedback was varied with sentiment both for and against the trial. It was noted that feedback for extra facilities such as fencing, dog waste bags and water were a consistent theme.

Your Say – Key Findings

The Your Say survey included three questions.

Question One: Which off leash area are you providing feedback on?



Question Two: What date did you attend the DOLA?

Respondents indicated that they had attended on various dates throughout the trial.

Ten respondents indicated that they had attended every day, numerous times a week or regularly throughout the trial. Four attended in January. Three in February and three in March with only two respondents indicating that they had attended in April.

Question Three: What feedback would you like to provide?

Sentiment



Data was reviewed by considering feedback on the DOLA trial as a whole, rather than the individual locations. It is noted that many of the mixed and neutral sentiment would be supportive with changes, such as different locations, fencing or extra facilities.

Based on how the data was evaluated, it is recommended that data be independently reviewed depending on if the reader is looking at the trial in its entirety, or feedback on individual locations.

Feedback Provided by Email

Below is a summary of feedback provided by email and captured in Council's Enterprise Content Management system.

During the feedback period, Council received 13 incoming enquiries concerning the trial.

Feedback provided was primarily negative in nature, ranging from reports of dogs impacting nearby wildlife to requests for variations of location and requests for more facilities. One incoming provided positive feedback for the Local Laws Officer.

ECM Document Details

Precis	Date Registered
Stakeholder B - feedback on Dog Off Leash Area (DOLA) trial - expressing frustration that the Have Your Say portal only allows one submission per person & that Comms hasn't fixed that yet - noting this has blocked a lot of feedback data about the trial.	28-Apr-2023 09:08:38
Stakeholder D - requests information on what beaches are dogs allowed to be off leash.	11-Apr-2023 08:12:28
Stakeholder E - to Cr Baines - concerns for wild cassowaries in the bush near where the Cardwell Dog Off Leash area is in Coral Sea Park - this should be a consideration in the evaluation of the trial - Cr Baines response included.	02-Mar-2023 11:12:02
Stakeholder F - concern again for a Beach Stone Curlew being chased by an off leash brown dog in the ON leash area south of Miter St towards Porter Creek, Mission Beach - people are not adhering to DOLA guidelines - what is needed is protection for wildlife.	01-Mar-2023 10:54:51
Stakeholder C & Stakeholder H - update on dog off leash trial at South Mission Beach - reporting that the trial is not working & that there are regular times that dog owners are not obeying the by-laws or prepared to try the DOLA - asking for on-the-spot fines.	21-Feb-2023 16:18:35
Cr T Tschui on behalf of Stakeholder G - reporting off leash dog ran into the water chasing him on his horse at the beach.	06-Jan-2023 10:23:35
Stakeholder I - Feedback to proposal of Off Leash Dog Area's.	05-Jan-2023 16:29:06
Stakeholder J - complaint regarding more off leash dogs in area attaching photo - requesting more assistance from Council.	03-Jan-2023 11:04:19
Stakeholder F - reporting unleashed dogs chasing shore birds in the on-leash area of Mission Beach - giving negative feedback on the dogs off-leash area (DOLA) trial - querying trial's assessment criteria - asking for stricter enforcement.	28-Apr-2023 07:57:55
Stakeholder K - comments re South Mission Beach dog off-leash area being underwater during high tide - have started petition to extend area one street north to opposite Douglas St - asking to be called on XX.	16-Mar-2023 12:43:12

Stakeholder B - reporting non-compliance in relation to dog off-leash areas at Mission Beach - describing one occasion - suggesting council provide a method for citizens to report such incidents as they occur so the DOLA trial has validity.	22-Feb-2023 08:39:49
Stakeholder L - feedback on East Innisfail dog off-leash park - noting that the area needs to be fenced so dogs can't run onto the road - needs shade & water & perhaps bins & doggie bags.	13-Feb-2023 08:31:54
Stakeholder A - comments on dog off-leash areas at Mission Beach - commending dog catcher for info and great attitude.	06-Feb-2023 15:42:40

Social Media Campaign and Feedback

A social media campaign to educate and create awareness of the DOLA trial commenced on 29 January 2023. From 29 January until 30 April 2023, there were 21 posts related to the trial. This ranged from educating DOLA visitors on appropriate off leash area behaviours, to where off leash areas were located and how feedback could be provided throughout the trial.

The highest reach throughout the three-month trial was post reach at 4,569 and post engagement at 460.

Overall, the highest comment left on the Facebook posts related to wanting fenced off leash areas.

On review, key themes from comments left on the Facebook posts were as follows*;

- Positive sentiment: 5
- Negative sentiment: 6
- Environmental concerns: 3
- Request for fenced areas: 13
- Request for Poo bags, water facilities and bins: 4
- Request for alternative locations at Frogs Hollows, South Mission Beach from the surf club north, Wheatley Park south, Bali Hai north, Castaways south- noting that there was commentary against these areas due to wildlife.
- No dog zones: 2

**Noting that that some of the comments covered more than one theme and excluding counting similar comments by the same individual.*

Next Steps

The Stakeholder Engagement report will reach key internal and external stakeholders and will be available on Council's Your Say website. Project updates will be provided at key intervals, such as at commencement of trial, to identified key stakeholders and project registered email addresses.

Key insights were identified and summarised in this report. From these insights, Cassowary Coast Regional Council could consider and implement recommendations and identify outcomes for the trial, how they engage with stakeholders and the topics which require further attention.

Acknowledgement

This document has been prepared by Cassowary Coast Regional Council – Communications Team. All information presented in this report has been presented in an accurate and unbiased manner and makes no recommendation on any project actions going forward. This report has been approved by the Chief Executive Officer. For further information, please contact Council at 1300 763 903 or email enquiries@cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au.

Appendix: Feedback

Please note that provided emails from the Your Say website and IP addresses have been removed from the below.

- A) Your Say feedback (as provided by stakeholders). Please note all comments are as provided and have not been edited for spelling or punctuation.

Area need to be extended, the area from clump point to the Dawson creek should also be an off leash area.
Alternatively make the whole beach off leash between the hours of 5am to 8am and again from 3pm to dark, this would then mean your dog catchers cant don't need to work so hard.
Needs to be longer also bins to put our poo bags and the plastic rubbish we pick up every day One bin at the boat ramp is not enough and usually full of domestic or fishing rubbish
There should be a off leash dog area where not many humans live. Eg in front of Wheatley park down to the MBSL and from Bali hai to porters creek. Dogs love to swim and run free. Thankyou
A longer stretch of beach would be advantageous. At high tide there is nil beach. Not much area for active dogs. A grassed area would also be great
No parking, not a big enough area, clashes with walking track and dogs on lead not happy to meet dogs heading on lead to beach. This beach area for dogs is quite small, we gave up and went back to Wongaling north of Bali Hai Caravan park
Inadequate signage! Unless you are local you don't know there us an off leash area. The small signs are difficult to spot unless one is accessing the beach next to the sign! It should be signposted from the village and by castaways. Also maybe not best area.... North of the village green would be a better location People from caravan site bring dogs! Need another at Wongaling beach. Also need poo bins! But good to be able to let dog off for a run and

socialise, the majority of owners/dogs are well behaved and need this

The park is a great size for dogs and it's lovely in the afternoon, after the sun goes behind the mountains.

However:

- The park is not usable for several days after it has rained. That means it's unusable for months at a time in Tully.
- It needs suitable drainage to be able to access the park and to keep the ground relatively dry, even in Tully.
- There needs to be fencing to separate the dog area from the playground and to allow for off-lead training for new dogs.
- There should be a bin and dog bags, otherwise it discourages owners to not pick up after their dogs.

Wildsoet park COULD be a great dog park, or a great park in general. Unfortunately just saying the place is a park does not make it a good one.

There are no bins, no poo bags, no safe parking, no safety measures in place to separate the childrens play area from the dog area, the ground is uneven from years of cars driving over it and i would not let a child or dog run there due to the high risk of injury due to this. And thats not even mentioning the lack of fence since its on a MAIN road.

Things that need to be done (Minimum)

1. Flattening the ground to remove the lumps and holes in the dirt.
2. One Public Bin. Just 1.
3. At least 2 Concrete paths.

Things that SHOULD be done

1. Fence around childrens play area OR around dog area to separate them.
2. Fence blocking off park from road.
3. Poo Bag dispenser
4. Educational Sign on dog behaviour at dog parks.

It would help a lot as well to put in a concrete path from one end to the other, this is due to the high levels of rain making the mud hard to walk through.

I have high hopes for the council taking these recommendations on board as the entire cassowary coast area is in DESPERATE need of dog safe areas due to the high levels of National parks. Doing

<p>this right would protect out native wildlife as well as out pets and people.</p>
<p>At the time I walked my dog, the tide was so high that there was no beach to walk on, so there was no DOLA to take advantage of. This is regularly the case, and I think adds to the argument to make the DOLA area the other side of the SLS hut or club, which is less residential. Owners with dogs which are not socialised, or who don't feel comfortable having their dogs off leash, can easily avoid it.</p>
<p>Fabulous interactions with both dog owners and non dog owners that frequent the trial area. Dogs are obviously being able to be trained on educate and recall in a safe and controlled environment, making great ground for a well socialised and controlled dog behaviours. This can only be a good thing, long turn for all dog owners and and dogs will gain public educate behaviour through exposure.</p>
<p>Excellent area for dogs to run and play on sand and in the water. We have visited many times with our two dogs, as well as dogs we are providing sitting and walking services for. We have not encountered any issues with other dogs or their owners while on the beach. We have, however received abuse from older, local residents living in Conch Street who are opposed to the trial. These residents have yelled at us and I have observed them yelling at other dog owners. These residents have intentionally tried to make dogs bark, and call dogs into the on leash area so that they can photograph and record them.</p>
<p>This area is way to small and non existant on most high tides. There is only one safe access point to this area which is at the very northern end. This area needs to be extended to the original length first made public in the proposals which was north to the area designated as casuarina park. Thus allowing access to exercise dogs during most high tides and offering safe access at several points along its length. This will also reduce locals people's need to drive to a specific area. Where there is no safe parking. This being the only beach walk way which accesses this area.</p>
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*Unfenced.

*Needs to be regularly mowed for the benefit of small dogs. I am still uneasy about unfamiliar large dogs mixing with small dogs. But...it is a good place for dogs to socialise.

*Could Council provide a post with poo bags and a bin for their disposal. This is necessary as this park is used for sporting events.

I live at XX Coral Sea Dr opposite the DOLA. At least 3 cassowaries live in the bush between us and Meunga Crk. One visits my garden regularly. Yesterday he crossed the road and into the park several times. Interaction with dogs and cassowaries could create a big problem. I have put up a sign in front of my house advising caution. Just making sure Council is aware of the cassowary habitat near the DOLA.

What is the point of having DOLA when the other areas are not policed. Absolute waste of time as several dogs wander the beach north of castaways not on lead. Won't change until you commence policing the local laws.

Specifically Saturday 11/02/23-great concerns for a beach stone-curlew chased by an off-leash brown dog outside of DOLA area. Towards Porter Crk just south of Miter St-bird potentially protecting nest to rear of beach. Dog with two women off leash-in fact they walked right past the Miter St DOLA sign. Dog not under control and aggressively chased bird-owners disinterested. I am not prepared to confront these people as they have an aggressive, out of control dog and obviously don't care. Not my job to do this-is councils-still never seen an animal management officer on beach even though are there almost everyday. Dog faeces in stinger net area, dogs rushing up to people and other dogs and plenty dogs off leash down towards Porter Crk area-well within On leash zone-many walking straight past tiny sign. Maybe owners are blind or illiterate-they certainly ARE irresponsible! These are just a few examples that occur everytime I go out walking. I hope observation isn't the only parameters being used to 'assess' this 'trial'. In Cr Baines own words it has failed "I am asking dog owners to do the right thing ..." well they obviously aren't and they don't care what the community or it seems the council say or think. Dog owners were allowing their dogs to run off lead in both the on and off lead areas. Little heed was taken of the sign designating the boundary.

I googled it, found Wildsoet St but not the park. I spent about 40 minutes driving around and then asked someone who said her neighbour said there was one on Bryant St. I found it, got tooted when I turned into it, someone obviously thought I was going bush bashing in my Kia hatchback. The track was overgrown and there was no parking. I had to go right to the end, behind some houses and do a 7 point turn to safely exit. If I had let my dog off she would not be seen as the grass is 30 to 60 cm high. How anyone could pick up their dogs poop is beyond me as they would not be able to find it. The park is not fenced and with no parking, only someone who lives in close proximity to it would access it. I have been to off leash parks in other towns. They are all fully fenced, provide a parking area, are mowed and provide poo bags and bins.

You can see how the CCCouncil considers the Tully and surrounds ratepayers when you look at this travesty of a park. I suggested council provide an off leash area on the beach at the Heads. There is one in Mission. What about tourists who would like to let their dogs have a run.

The grass was way too long.

Tonight at 6.15pm I witnessed v2 women with 3 large dogs on South Mission Beach outside the DOLA area.

I have video to prove it.

Great to see my dogs running, swimming and playing with their new chum Harry.

Is it fenced? If not should be