

**KDWA's response to the
PROPOSED DOG MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**Presented to Kingborough Council
April 11, 2017**



Introduction:

Thank you for providing the Kingborough Dog Walking Association with the opportunity to talk with you about the proposed Dog Management Policy.

We will focus on three aspects of the proposed policy:

1. The Restricted Areas related to beaches in Kingborough
2. The change of status from Exercise Areas to Restricted Areas for tracks and bush areas in Kingborough.
3. The basis on which the Kingborough Council has made the decisions outlined in the proposed policy.

Restricted Beach Access

The key issue here is the impractical nature of the hours of access.

The restricted hours proposed for beach access mean that the only time dogs could be walked in daylight hours would be between **5am and 7am, for four months of the year.**

Given that dog-walkers include school children, working adults and retired people, how many will be able to walk their dogs in the morning? Extending the access hours to 9 or 10am would make this possible.

SUNRISE & SUNSET TIMES FOR HOBART

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight walking minutes
April 1	7.26am	7.01pm	0
May 1	7.00am	5.15pm	0
June 1	7.31am	4.45pm	0
July 1	7.42am	4.46am	0
August 1	7.22am	5.11pm	0
September 1	6.37am	5.45pm	23
October 1	6.44am	7.17pm	16
November 1	5.44am	7.54am	76
December 1	5.27am	8.32pm	93
January 1	5.35am	7.54pm	85
February 1	6.16am	8.35pm	44
March 1	6.49am	7.55pm	11

Reference: <https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/australia/hobart>

HOW DOES THE KINGBOROUGH COUNCIL'S PROPOSED ACCESS COMPARE WITH OTHER COUNCILS' ACCESS?

*No other council requires dogs to be off the beach by 7am.
No other council keeps dogs off the beach until after 9pm during Daylight Savings time and after 7pm during the rest of the year.
No other council has a 'blanket' ban on off-lead access.*

1. Bicheno

Dogs are prohibited between **10am and 6pm** during summer months (**Dec 1 to March 1**) but, even at those times, dogs can be lead from one beach to another.

On-lead access is allowed at all other times through the year. *This approach could be used in Tarooma, where local people would like to be able to move along Hinsby Beach in order to access the coastal path where they are entitled to walk their dogs.*



2. Nutgrove Beach

Dogs must be on-lead from **9am to 7pm** during Daylight Savings Time

Dogs on lead from **9am to 3pm** for the rest of the year
Off-lead access at all other times.

This is an example of a popular suburban beach where people are successfully sharing the use of a highly valued community resource.

3. Clarence Council

Clarence has many beaches and has put a great deal of thought into the management of these areas:

- Eight beach areas have the following restrictions:
 - *Dogs are prohibited between 10am and 6pm from December 1 to March 1.*
 - *At all other times, they can be off-lead (but under effective control).*
- Two other beach areas (managed by Parks & Wildlife) have on-lead restrictions as well as the time restrictions
- Seven beach areas are prohibited to dogs; most of these are managed by Parks & Wildlife.



Beach use throughout the year

Beaches are most heavily used by the general public during the months of December, January and February. Outside of those three months, the general usage dwindles away dramatically.

How do other councils manage access to Restricted Beaches?

1. Clarence and Glamorgan Councils limit dog access to Restricted Beaches only during the **three summer months**.
2. The Central Coast Council allows unrestricted access except for the **three summer months** when access is from **7pm till 9am**.
3. Hobart Council restrictions apply to the **Daylight Savings** period but dogs can access the beach from **7pm to 9am**. At all other times, **dog access is unlimited & off-lead**.
4. The Circular Head Council summer restrictions apply during **Daylight Savings** with access limited to **7pm to 10am**, when they must be on-lead.
For the rest of the year, dog access is **unlimited & off-lead**.

Kingborough applies restrictions—on-lead, 7am to 9pm—to the full **six months Daylight Savings period**. **Why?**

Council	Months	Access period	Daily access time
Clarence	Dec, Jan, Feb	6pm to 10am	16 hours
Glamorgan	Dec, Jan, Feb	6pm to 10am	16 hours
Circular Head	October-March (6 months)	7pm to 10am	15 hours
Hobart	October-March (6 months)	7pm to 9am	14 hours
Central Coast	Dec, Jan, Feb	7pm to 9am	14 hours
Kingborough	October-March (6 months)	9pm to 7am	10 hours

Reference: <http://www.lgat.tas.gov.au/page.aspx?u=225>

A TAROONA RESIDENT'S COMMENT ON THE SURVEY QUESTION: "ARE THERE ENOUGH OFF-LEAD AREAS?"

"Not in Taroona. We need one of the beaches to be off-lead (Taroona-beach is very rarely used for swimming) and the one everyone from Taroona (and many from other areas of Hobart) uses for swimming, -Hinsby Beach, -should be completely dog-free.

Taroona Beach should then be off-lead for part of the day—until 9am and after 5pm—year round; this would make a huge difference for walkers of energetic dogs, and dogs which swim, like ours, but give others the chance to be on the beach without sharing it with dogs.

Other beaches used by kids, such as Dixons Beach near the High School, could be dog free, like Hinsby. I think people are currently flouting the laws and walking dogs on the beaches on and off the lead because there is nowhere else close by to walk dogs off lead...and so they can give their dogs a swim without driving to Tyndall Beach.

NB we don't walk our dogs on any Taroona Beach, but would very much like to."

Loss of Track and Bush Exercise Areas

In this narrow context we are probably focussing on the Alum Cliffs Track and the Tinderbox track but also on the statement at the end of the Policy review:

*Any other beach, track, trail, Council Reserve or Park, or any area surrounding any of the aforementioned areas, or any public place as defined by the Police Offences Act 1935, managed or controlled by Council, **that are not listed in the above**, are by virtue of their name or designation deemed Restricted for the purposes of this document, and **dogs must be on a lead at all times.***

This statement effectively leaves the 11 designated Dog Exercise Areas as the only places where dogs can run free, so let's look at them.

Each Exercise Area deserves comment:

- 1 **Taroona Apex Park** – satisfactory but not very large for dogs to run around
- 2 **Tyndall Beach (sand only)** – excellent and very popular area but why do we need to ban dogs from the small bush track at the back of the beach.
- 3 **Maranoa Heights Reserve** – a curious area surrounded by houses in suburbia
- 4 **Flowerpoint Point Reserve** -very small
- 5 **Soldiers Rock Reserve** – not sure where this is as the map shows it as the same area as Suncoast Dog Park so maybe there is a duplication on the list
- 6 **Esplanade Road Middleton** – a very small area adjacent to a road
- 7 **Kingston View Drive** -OK
- 8 **Suncoast Dog Park** – excellent
- 9 **Dru Point** – excellent
- 10 **Clarks Beach** – very small
- 11 **Piersons Point Reserve** -a small area around the tennis court

Of these 11 areas, 1 may be a duplication, 4 are very small, 1 is smallish 2 are satisfactory and 3 are excellent

Apart from the Middleton Exercise Area, there is nothing further South than Coningham. Bruny Island is effectively “Dogs on lead all the time”. Is this really what you intended? A lovely area in the countryside but your dog must remain on a lead unless on your own property!

Are you sure that the Council is providing for the Objectives as stated:

b) actively promote responsible dog ownership

c) provide for the reasonable exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners.

I submit that these 2 objectives should be marked as failures at this point in time.

Some years ago I was asked by the Chairman of the Tracks and Trails committee (our current Mayor) what was needed for dog walking. My reply was: “Nothing over that required by people walking without a dog”. Our requirements are simple.

We come back to the 2 tracks mentioned at the start:

1. **The Alum Cliffs Track** is not a good track to walk dogs off-lead as there is always a danger of a dog falling over a cliff but I submit that this decision should be made by the dog walker.
2. **The Tinderbox Hills Track** has always been a lovely track to walk dogs on and off-lead all year round. Yes – there are lots of native animals and birds up there but I submit that very few get damaged by dogs. Are we going to ban cars from roads because far more native animals get killed on the roads than by dogs on Tinderbox Hills or elsewhere? It seems to me that someone has the intention of turning this area into a Nature Reserve and before long there will be a move to ban people from going up there. I know this track well and could accept that there are a few sections where dogs should probably be on lead but to ban dogs for 9 months of the year seems excessive. We seem to be allowing people to build houses in this area and that upsets birds and native animals far more.

Are we saying that native animals and birds are so important that “Man’s best friend” should be restricted to being on the end of a short rope?

Many people want to go for a reasonable walk with their dog off-lead but under effective control. I, for one, have always found that one of the great pleasures of life is to take your dog for a walk off lead and to watch your dog bouncing around, sniffing the ground and enjoying himself as you walk along a bush track. This, you are making impossible.

To sum up:

- 1) Is the intention to ban dogs off-lead except in the 11 designated exercise areas?
- 2) The dog exercise areas are too few and many are too small
- 3) Kingborough Council is not achieving at least 2 of its stated objectives
- 4) We need far more designated Exercise Areas
- 5) We need to be able to walk our dogs from A to B over a reasonable distance off lead and not just in a circle, repeated over and over until we all get bored.

Please bear in mind that dog walkers are taking time out from their busy schedule to exercise their dog and themselves, exactly as the medical profession recommends. Dog walkers care for their environment. They notice when something has happened and generally tell Council staff.

I’d like to finish by reminding Councillors that Tyndall Beach, Dru Point Dog Exercise area and Suncoast Dog Park were all Council decisions made after discussions with KDWA & all fully supported by us. We would welcome on going discussions to try and achieve the “Middle Ground”.

Tony Walch
Member
KDWA Inc

Issues relating to Council's Decision-Making

I refer to:

DRAFT DOG MANAGEMENT POLICY (POLICY 4.3)

OBJECTIVE 2.1

The objective of the Dog Management Policy is to ensure owners of dogs in Kingborough comply with the requirements of the Act so as to:

c)"provide for the reasonable exercise and recreational needs of dogs and their owners.

- How do council take the view that restricting dog owners to walking their dogs in the dark is "reasonable"?
- It cannot be considered reasonable, as it is unsafe and unfair.
- Therefore your proposed restrictions (the hours) are in conflict with this key objective contained in your draft policy. This may serve to agitate considerable conflict within the community, and subsequent criticism of council, which council may not be able to effectively defend.
- The hours proposed are in fact conceived on the assumption that dogs and people should not co-exist in a public space.

I refer to:

THE KINGBOROUGH COUNCIL DOG MANAGEMENT SURVEY

- The multiple choice section (6) locks respondents into providing answers that are not necessarily representative of their actual views. In fact it does not enable respondents to provide an answer that doesn't accord with the outcome council appear to be seeking.
- This means that the data you will receive as council will not be properly representative of the community (irrespective of the ability to make comments).

DATA ISSUES

1. The lack of quantifiable data on who actually uses the beaches and when.
2. Application of webcams over a 6 month period on all beaches.

Stuart Tanner

Member

KDWA Inc

Conclusion

Our first recommendation is that a small committee be set up, with the aim of sorting out an amicable and fair system for dog management in the municipality.

It should be chaired by a Councillor, with representatives from KDWA Inc, Council dog management staff, and other interested community members (including anti dog people and a bird person to get the balance right). That way all can have input to it, resulting, hopefully, in a big problem being solved and the community reasonably happy.

If that is not acceptable, we would make the following specific recommendations:

For Restricted Beach Areas:

- 1 Make the Summer Time period the three months of summer, not the six months of Daylight Savings
- 2 Allow dogs on restricted beaches from 8pm in the Summer Time period and from 5pm for the rest of the year
- 3 Allow dogs on restricted beaches until 9am each morning, year round
- 4 Allow dogs off-lead access in the three winter months (June-August)
- 5 Provide one beach Exercise Area in Tarooma

For Track and Bush Restricted Areas:

- 1 Review the areas that have been changed from Exercise Areas to Restricted Areas and identify those where this change is truly justified
- 2 Return all remaining areas to their former status as Exercise Areas

For Issues Relating to Decision-Making:

Ensure that Council decisions are based on valid data by utilising reliable data-collection strategies such as:

- 1 Installing web-cams to record beach use by dog-walkers and others
- 2 Commissioning a professionally-developed survey to accurately canvass ratepayers' views so that future decisions can be based on quantifiable data

Thank you for listening. I hope our presentation will help you to find that elusive 'middle ground' that we all seek.

KDWA has enjoyed a constructive working relationship with the council for the past 17 years; this has led to positive outcomes for both dog walkers and the wider community, and we hope this continues.

Members of this group would be very happy to meet, perhaps over a coffee, to chat with any councillors who would like to continue this discussion.

Venie Phillips

President KDWA Inc.