

Ballad Avenue Recreation Reserve

Development Options Paper



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Ballad Avenue Recreation Reserve and key recreational facilities/grounds in the immediate surrounding area.
Aerial map prepared and provided by Waratah-Wynyard Council

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Executive Summary

Ballad Avenue Recreation Reserve consists of two titles measuring approximately 2ha. The land is owned and managed by the Waratah-Wynyard Council and is accessed from Ballad Avenue, and located in a picturesque setting with both cleared areas and native bushland.

The reserve has unique environmental features, including its proximity to the Inglis River and associated river-side walking trails.

The Council has identified that the reserve is currently underutilised and is exploring options for activating the space to meet the needs of community members and visitors alike.

The reserve is located in a relatively low-density residential area, less than 2km from the Wynyard township, with established connectivity through walking trails and footpaths. In response to requests from community groups and visitors, Council officers believe the reserve may be the idyllic spot for establishing an off-leash dog park and for self-contained, 'freedom' camping.

Off-Leash Dog Park

Off-leash dog parks are recognized as extremely important community facilities, not only for the dog but also their owners. In the report *'Animal Welfare In A Changing Climate'*, the RSPCA promotes off-leash parks by providing dogs with a range of benefits such as the opportunity to exercise, socialize, be exposed to fresh air, practice training techniques, play games, burn off energy and increase mental stimulation,

which helps prevent the development of problem behaviours such as destructiveness and excessive barking.

The report says that the parks are just as beneficial for dog owners for much of the same reasons, providing exercise, opportunities to meet and socialize with like-minded people, even making new friends, which can become more difficult as people grow older.

Councils across Australia establish off-leash dog parks as part of their urban animal management. Residential densities increase and land sizes become smaller, resulting in dogs living with owners without sufficient space to exercise at home.

Freedom Camping, better known as RV'ing or Caravanning, is the fastest-growing holiday type in Australia, emphasized further during the Covid pandemic due to the inability to travel overseas. The average age of the RV holiday-maker is 65+ years, meaning they are likely retired and have more time to spend exploring and staying longer in areas they like. David Hammond of Business Lab's report reveals that Freedom Camping injects over \$358,000 into the Waratah-Wynyard municipal area per year. Given that the accommodation costs are relatively low, this is money spent directly in shops, café's, restaurants and tourism experiences.

Council is exploring whether formalizing a freedom camping space will assist with managing incidents of non-compliant parking, public complaints and potentially unsafe practices.



Existing site: (top) looking toward proposed dog park, (bottom) looking toward area identified for self-contained camping

Project Background

In early 2021, the Waratah-Wynyard Council (the Council) undertook a public consultation process to determine whether to sell the Ballad Avenue Recreation Reserve under Section 178 of the *Local Government Act*. At the ordinary Council meeting held on 21 April 2021 the Council resolved to sell the land subject to a range of favourable determinants through the statutory due diligence process. These factors included but were not limited to Planning, Bushfire and Natural Values/Environmental assessments and review.

A field assessment was carried out on 6 October 2021. A subsequent report prepared by Sally Scrivens and Astrid Ketelaar of RMCG listed six points of recommendation for the Council to consider. In summary, the recommendations included:

- ensuring any future development did not impact on the threatened vegetation communities identified on-site and that a survey be carried out to identify potentially threatened species located on the site;
- Consider whether future use or development might impact on potential foraging habitat of the Swift Parrot;
- That habitat corridors and connectivity with surrounding vegetation is maintained where possible;
- The opportunities to introduce weeds to the area are minimized, and that weed management of the whole site is incorporated into future plans for use and development.

In receipt of this information, the Council resolved at the ordinary meeting held on 15 November 2021 to: *defer the expression of interest for sale or development of the land for residential purposes and to undertake an assessment of the site's suitability for other public recreational uses while preserving the natural values identified in the flora and fauna assessment*. The Council acted on advice from the community by commissioning a flora and fauna assessment after the Wynyard Landcare Group brought to Council's attention that the site contained two patches (0.3h and 0.1ha) of the threatened vegetation community, *Eucalyptus Brookeriana* (Brookers gum).

The officer's recommendation to the Council within the 15 November 2021 report was to assess the site's suitability for a dog exercise area (off-leash dog park) and freedom camping. These recommendations can be directly linked to suggestions and requests from the community through various surveys and public consultation processes, in addition to a range of professionally commissioned reports and strategic planning exercises.

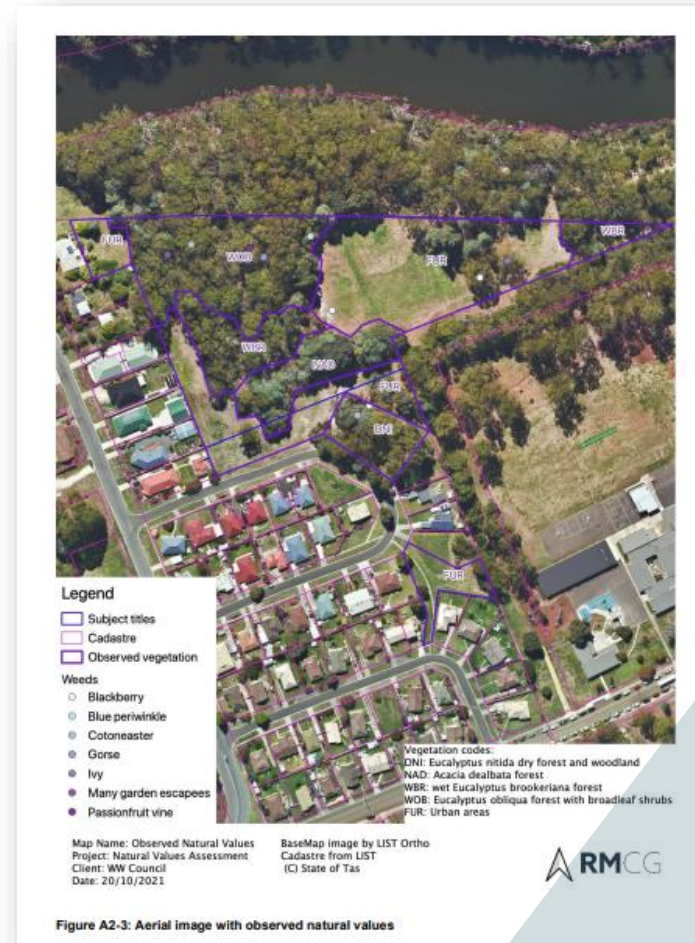


Figure A2-3: Aerial image with observed natural values

RMCG Aerial Image with observed natural values

Scope of Work

This report aims to:

- Provide an options paper for Council to inform decision making around the concept of establishing freedom camping and/or an off-leash dog park at the Ballad Avenue Recreation Reserve;
- Identify relevant Council policies that support or conflict with the proposal;
- Identify relevant statutory Legislation to inform Council's position;
- Activate a dormant public space that aligns with the local natural beauty, unique environment and cultural features to facilitate high levels of community and visitor use;
- Provide a Land Use Planning overview of the suitability of the proposed use and for any future proposed works required at the site;
- Provide an outline of the estimated development (capital) costs of works required to establish freedom camping and an off-leash dog park for Council's use considering budgets;
- Provide a list of further actions that the Council should consider before undertaking the proposal;
- Provide a Concept plan that can be 'shovel ready' for inclusion in Council's priority projects list when seeking grant funding.
- Identify potential funding opportunities



Freedom Camping Overview

The Caravan and Campervan Data Report, released in December 2020 by the Caravan Industry Association of Australia, reports that caravanning and camping is Australia's most popular holiday type. It accounts for 44% of all holiday nights across Australia. Campervans (motorhomes) ownership has grown by 23.4% over the last five years and 64.9% over ten years. Predictions are that this growth will increase as people move toward more flexible and affordable holidays. Tasmania has the highest combined caravan and camper registration rates at 43 in every 1,000 people, with the majority of ownership being with those aged 65 years and over. This is not surprising given the significant drop in annual income for retired, resulting in them looking for options to 'holiday' in an affordable way. With the increase of RV's and self-contained caravans, people can choose to 'freedom camp', but this can lead to safety and enforcement issues for Councils because of parking that occurs where it is not permitted. It can be advantageous when this is happening for a Council to identify an area they have identified as both safe and suitable for parking while not formally establishing a caravan park. From a management point of view, a Council considering freedom camping is often a creative solution to a problematic social issue, where the visitors are transient but potentially impact the permanent community and environment. By providing a viable alternative, the Council can control the narrative while benefiting the permanent community through increased spending in the region, which supports local businesses. From a resourcing and risk point of view, freedom camping with self-contained motorhomes/RV's is relatively low maintenance and cost for both visitors and the Council. The risk is reduced because the predominant 65+ age demographic is statistically less likely to cause social problems, more responsibly aware of their surroundings and environment, and more likely to follow and even enforce campsite rules.

The Australian caravan and camping industry are a \$23 billion industry that creates 60 million visitor nights across the Country each year.

While the site costs for camping are generally quite low, the research found that over 6.5 million caravan and domestic camping visitors ate out at a restaurant or cafe, making it the most preferred activity. Other popular activities included going to the beach (4.4m) and sightseeing (4.2m).

These activity choices not only highlight the interests of many caravan and campers, but also demonstrate the value of caravan and camping in connecting Australians to nature-based experiences in our beautiful Country.

The National Visitor Survey conducted by Tourism Research Australia in 2019 stated that 36% of 'holiday nights' (accommodation) on the North West Coast is made up of campervanning and camping. This is considerably higher than other Tasmanian cities, with Launceston at 18% and Hobart (and the South of Tasmania) at 13%. From that data, it would be reasonable to interpret that both inter and intrastate caravanning and camping visitors prefer the North West Coast as a holiday destination.

The Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) produced a position paper in 2018 that discusses the Local Government's move to formally recognize and manage low-cost, self-contained RV accommodation as part of their tourist accommodation infrastructure. The article highlights how between 2011-2017, 120,000 RV's were manufactured in Australia, a figure representing 70% of the total number of vehicles sold during that period. These self-contained vehicles are marketed as 'freedom machines' because it provides the owner with affordable holidaying, 'wherever they choose'.

Several Tasmanian Councils, including Waratah-Wynyard, have wisely identified that camping and caravanning, particularly self-contained caravanning (motor homing) are key development opportunities within their local tourism development plans.

The benefits to the community are numerous, so the question Council is not whether they should facilitate freedom or low-cost camping, but how to do it in a manner that has minimal impact on the environment and residential amenity, requires limited resources from Council once established and does not directly compete with the existing caravan and camping businesses.

Off-Leash Dog Parks Overview

Australia has one of the highest rates of dog ownership in the world. With 39% of households owning a dog, according to a paper prepared for the State of Australian Cities Conference in 2015 titled: Don't fence me in: Understanding local government decisions to allocate and fence public open spaces for dogs in Melbourne.

The article reports: *Allocating public open space in favour of dogs benefits both dogs and humans. Dogs have a "social lubricant" effect where the length of conversations between strangers in public increases significantly when a dog is present (Messent 1983), with dogs both expanding and defining social networks. The benefits of this kind of interaction make a community more close-knit as acquaintances transition from the public to private realm (Jacobs 1989, pp.63-4). Dog parks, being parks that are primarily intended for use by dogs and their owners, provide an incubator for these kinds of social interaction (Tissot 2011) and have attracted contemporary attention primarily in their role as a human social construction (Graham & Glover 2014; Jackson 2012; Matisoff & Noonan 2012).*

In layman's terms: Australians LOVE dogs because, as we know, the feeling is reciprocated with much enthusiasm. When a Council sets aside public land for the dedicated use of off-leash dogs, they are acutely aware that the dog is not just feeling the benefit but that the whole community is potentially strengthened through socially inclusive interactions. People of all ages and backgrounds coming together in a united appreciation and enjoyment of their pets.

With Australian backyards, and dwellings, becoming smaller and rules and regulations becoming stricter about containing pet dogs, while dog ownership levels continue to rise, there is a growing need for community-provided spaces where dogs can exercise and socialize external to the home.

Allocating open space for dogs can be controversial, particularly if it is located in an area that has been regularly used for another public use OR when it is co-located with a non-compatible use. In this instance, the Ballad Avenue Recreation Reserve has been identified by Council officers as underutilized and lacks suitable passive surveillance, which lends itself to anti-social behaviour. This was evident when there was evidence of tree 'hocking' and dumping of rubbish, including a car engine, on a recent site visit to the reserve. These activities would likely be eliminated with increased use of the site. The proposal to co-locate an off-leash dog park with freedom camping will be appealing to the users of the camping site, remembering that the predominate users will be people in the 65+ age range, who travel with their pets and also to Council because of the increased passive surveillance and monitoring of the usage of the park.

Several reports have been prepared that provides Councils with a manual for designing and managing Dog Parks. One such guide: *Design, Planning and Management of Off-Leash Dog Parks*, written by Bob Holderness-Roddam, is promoted by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT). It suggests that determining the location of dog parks is not as simple as one might initially think and that in addition to being sufficiently located away from Residential Dwellings, it must also have a buffer between any natural waterways, be of a sufficient enough size for dogs to run and play freely, have plenty of parking and ideally have natural shade and shelter. The Ballard Avenue Reserve meets these ideal features, although the report mentions being mindful of not placing dog parks within wildlife roosting, nesting and foraging areas. While the reserve likely does contain these natural features and habitats, the centre of the reserve where any activity is proposed to be contained has predominantly been cleared of vegetation.

Detailed reference is made to the subject site's flora and fauna identified on and around the site.

Strategic Document & Policy Review

The following section includes key extracts from relevant Waratah-Wynyard policy documents pertaining to the proposed use and development.

Corporate Strategic Plan 2017-2027

The Corporate Strategic Plan sets out the aspirations of the Council, categorized into seven goals;

Goal 1 outlines the Council's commitment to Leadership and Governance, focusing on transparent, inclusive and community-focused decision making.

Goal 2 looks at organizational support, which identifies that nurtured employees, operating in a positive and supportive culture, are not only dedicated to their employer and community, evident in retention rates but are also more likely to foster innovation and deliver best practice customer service.

Goal 3 of the strategic plan focuses on Connected Communities. There is a focus on ensuring community members feel included and valued and have input into Council facilities, services and programs. Liveability, social gathering and connectivity are key elements that are repeated throughout the document.

Goal 4 seeks to strengthen Community Recreation and Wellbeing. The desired outcomes include providing recreational activities for the whole community, providing for all ages, abilities and cultures, promoting connectivity and equity in the allocation and use of open space by providing quality and safe places and spaces, including shared and multi-use facilities.

Goal 5 aims to achieve a sustainable economy that creates jobs and long-term regional and local benefits that consider the environment and improve liveability.

Goal 6 ensures that roads, traffic management, and infrastructure are sustainable and fit for purpose.

Goal 7 focuses on the environment and ways to celebrate and utilize the region's natural assets while facilitating community education, monitoring climate change, and encouraging innovative thinking and sustainable design when developing community assets.

Liveable Waratah-Wynyard Settlement Strategy 2021

The Settlement strategy for the Waratah-Wynyard LGA addresses several challenges related to population retention and growth, an aging population, employment levels, economics and health-related issues.

A survey carried out as part of the process of developing the strategy identified, amongst other things, that the community value the ability to take dogs to the beach but there were some concerns about having them there during peak times (summer) and about cleaning up after them. Several answers to the question *"We think liveability would be enhanced by...."* included the desire by the community to establish off-leash dog parks and free camping. Investigating the proposal is, therefore in line with this strategy.

Age-Friendly Communities Plan 2019-2024

Solidifying several of the Strategic Plan Goals, Council developed the Age-Friendly Communities Plan in 2018/2019. The priorities of this plan cover outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information and community and health services.

The Council have identified that by 2037 nearly one-third of the population will be over 65. These statistics are in line with that of the Tasmanian demographic, and Council intends to ensure that older people feel valued, welcomed and safe. Council demonstrates

that it understands that assessable communities will be essential for local community members and visitors alike. The priorities of the Age-Friendly Communities Plan closely align with the strategic plan's goals. Priority 4: Social Participation includes actions that promote and encourage older people to have their pets on outings, such as dog watering stations outside cafes. It also recognizes the therapeutic benefits of owning a dog, particularly as companionship for older people who often live alone. A dog park brings many social inclusion benefits to a community, particularly for older people.

Open Space Sport and Recreation Plan 2017-2027

This strategy mentions 'dogs' eight times. It is evident throughout the strategy that the Council recognizes the high percentage of dog ownership within the community and that visitors are often looking for somewhere they can legally and safely provide their dog with exercise.

The document's recommendations include providing spaces for spaces where dogs and their owners can exercise and fenced dog parks to assist those with a disability to ensure their dogs are contained. The recommendation states that when choosing a site for play or dog exercise, ensure it is an area where the whole park can be fenced.

This document also provides a 'camping issues' paper and looks explicitly at Freedom Camping. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Council's position to date on Freedom Camping is that it does not want to directly operate camping grounds, that they are aware that there are mixed views within the community but that it is a way of attempting to control or regulate where self-contained motorhome operators park. The plan lists thirty-one recommendations to guide Council should they determine to establish a site for freedom camping. These recommendations are revisited later in this report.

Strategic Document & Policy Review continued

Wynyard Destination Action Plan - 2017-2020

The Destination Action Plan (Dap) identifies strategies and actions to make Wynyard a primary visitor destination. While the document does not specifically mention Motor Homes or Campers, it does refer to increasing accommodation variety.

One of the challenges listed referred to the North West region's competitiveness for visitor numbers. From earlier statistics provided within this report, we know that 36% of visitors to the North West are using Camping/RV's. Therefore, it is surprising that this document does not consider freedom or low-cost camping. When updating this document, it is recommended that freedom-camping be considered for inclusion.

Freedom Camping Options Report – 5 May 2019

David Hammond – Business Lab

The Council engaged a consultant in 2019 to explore the provision of freedom camping within the municipal area. With highly sought out locations such as Boat Harbour and Sisters Beach within the municipal area, freedom camping has been occurring informally, as it does within most beachside hamlets across Australia. This creates a situation that the community expects Council to manage.

While the report indicates that freedom camping contributes to the Municipalities economy by an estimated \$358,904 per year, it also points out that Council's By-Laws currently prohibits campervan overnighting on Council owned/maintained land and roads. Further, the report states that it is the writers view that the impact of the Economic Regulator's provisions will reinforce that Council's strategy is not to provide supply but to mitigate congestion.

In these circumstances, it may be that Council is considering a utilitarian approach by opening up a suitable area to permit freedom camping and, in return, reducing unlawful and unsafe behaviours elsewhere, thereby achieving a better outcome for the broader community.

Waratah Wynyard By-Law No.1 of 2016

Highway, Public Reserves, Parking Areas and Stormwater By-Law was gazetted in August 2016. As is often the case with By-Laws, the intention to develop is sound, but the implications associated with resourcing enforcement can be unrealistic and unachievable. Further, unless amended regularly, the By-Laws can become outdated and not reflect the current needs and issues within the community.

While the By-Law does not specifically address freedom camping, Part 4 addresses all manners of issues associated with 'Parking', including exceeding maximum periods and the use of parking areas 'for other purposes. Further, the By-Law restricts the use of furniture in public reserves for outside dining. Additionally, it restricts them from using the rubbish bins to dispose of food waste. While this was likely written to restrict food services for setting up outside dining in public reserves, it technically would restrict 'normal' activities by those participating in caravanning.

Should the Council resolve to progress the freedom camping proposal, it must amend/ update By-Law No.1 of 2016.

Waratah-Wynyard Interim Planning Scheme 2013

The following sections of the planning scheme are relevant to the proposed use and development associated with the freedom camping and off-leash dog park concept.

Use Categorisation

The subject site is zoned General Residential and is located within the operational airspace overlay. The proposed uses associated with the proposal include Passive Recreation (dog park), which does not require a permit, and Visitor Accommodation, which is a discretionary use unless contained within a building and limited to 16 people. The application will need to be advertised for public consultation, although it is recommended that the Council carry out community consultation prior to resolving to progress the project.

Given there are no proposed structures and the works involved are not significant, the assessment of the application will focus on consistency with the local area objectives and desired future character statements while minimising the likelihood for adverse impact on the amenity of the uses occurring on adjacent properties. The application will also need to address traffic movements to and from the site and operational hours.

Parking review

The subject site is sufficient to accommodate the required parking under the Traffic Generating and Parking Code (E9) contained within the Waratah-Wynyard Interim Planning Scheme 2013.

The freedom camping site is limited in use to self-contained motorhomes which do not generate a specified amount of parking, other than one space per unit. It is recommended that the TIA obtained considers the area and the design of parking and material types to determine the capacity.

Strategic Document & Policy Review continued

Parking continued

Parking for the off-leash dog park will be determined by the Council's classification of the activity. Passive recreation is generally the 'use' assigned to Council parks and reserves. The definition provided within the scheme is 'use of land for informal leisure and recreation activities principally conducted in the open' with examples including playgrounds and public parks. Passive recreation does not trigger a parking requirement; however, should Council determine the use to be 'Sport and Recreation', which includes outdoor recreation facilities, the calculation for parking would be 15 spaces per 'field' (the fenced dog park area) or eight spaces per 100m² of the gross site area, whichever is the greater. Given the space proposed to be set aside for the dog park is 1800+m², the parking requirement would be 18 spaces.

Signage

The signage required for the proposal will include direction, information and identification signage. Council staff have advised that signage for the Dog Park will be exempt under E7.4.2 (e) and (g) (limited to an area not greater than 2m². Information/ Identification signage may require a discretionary application given it is not necessary for identification of the site management or risk/ safety management.

From an internal Council policy perspective, the signage development needs to be per the *Signage Strategy and Design Guide 2021* and the Brand and Signage Policy.

Management of Public Reserves Policy

This policy applies to all public reserves and buildings owned or managed by Council. The following clause may conflict with the proposed use and development:

3.5: Camping on Council controlled or managed land shall only be permitted at a:

a) permanently marked campsite as indicated by signage which includes the terms and conditions of use; or

Given the proposal will include signage, it is recommended that the signage is designed to ensure it complies with this policy.

Dog Management Policy

This policy has been developed in accordance with Council's obligations under the *Dog Control Act 2000*. It outlines Council's commitment to the Waratah-Wynyard community regarding effective dog management and responsible ownership.

Developing a fenced, off-leash dog park is consistent with several clauses within the policy, including, but not limited to:

3.1 The Council understands the importance of dog companionship with the Waratah-Wynyard Municipal Area;

3.6 The Council will provide dog exercise areas that recognize the needs of people and their dogs, taking into account any negative impacts on the environment;

The policy provides a map of declared dog areas, showing where dogs can/ cannot go and whether they need to be on a lead. Should the off-leash fenced park proceed, this policy and the associated declared dog areas should be updated to include the Ballad Avenue Recreation Reserve dog park.



Example of Dog Park Rules Signage (content to be determined)

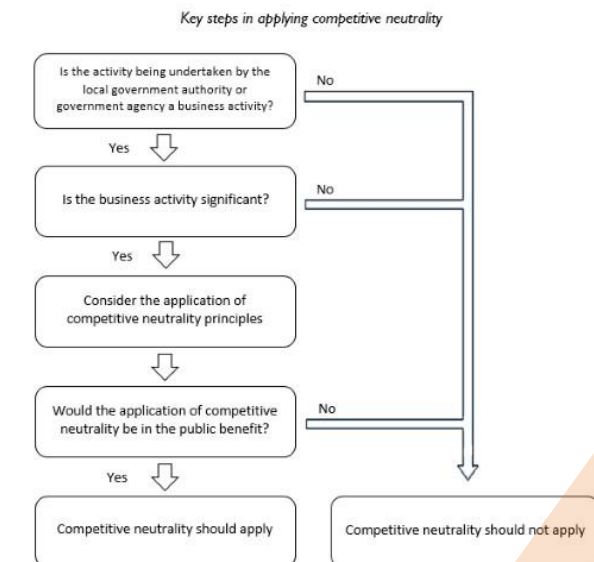
Strategic Document & Policy Review continued

National Competition Policy: Applying Competitive Neutrality Principles to public camping in Tasmania – January 2019

In summary, the key points of this document for Councils to understand the implications are:

- Competitive Neutrality Principles (CNPs) are designed to prevent unfair advantage and ensure that government-owned businesses and private operators compete on fair and equal terms, where it is in the public interest to do so. However, there are some exceptions to the application of CNPs.
- Competitive neutrality principles require public entities involved in significant business activities to compete on fair and equal terms with private sector businesses when there is a net public benefit in doing so.
- This document is Tasmania's policy statement for the application of competitive neutrality principles to the provision of public camping facilities by public entities.
- Complaints regarding alleged breach of competitive neutrality are investigated by the Economic regulator and can be lodged by business operators who believe their business is detrimentally affected by a **significant business activity conducted by a public entity**.
- The Tasmanian Government recognizes the role of Local Government in pursuing regional and economic development interests and notes that these activities must be achieved without restricting or preventing private sector business.
- The effect of this policy statement is that all local government public camping activities **that comprise more than 10 per cent of the relevant market within a 60 KM drive from the public camping facility** must be reported in the Councils annual report.
- While not mandated, the Government has requested that Local Government reports all public camping activities
- This policy provides a new process for the Treasurer to issue a Ministerial Statement regarding a specific camping site, which has the effect of exempting the site from full cost attribution principles where a public benefit assessment has demonstrated it is appropriate

- A public benefit assessment provides the opportunity for Council's to consult with their communities to test whether there are net public benefits in providing camping without applying full cost attribution to the public camping facilities
- If the public benefit assessment demonstrates that there are net benefits to the community in providing free or below cost public camping above the 10 percent market share threshold, the public entity may choose to operate the public camping facility without applying full cost attribution pricing principles
- If the Treasurer is satisfied that the public benefits case is made, the Treasurer may issue a Ministerial Statement. The public entity will then have certainty that it can provide free or below-cost public camping in that location, subject to the terms of the Ministerial Statement.
- The Policy Statement contains a checklist for applying full cost attribution principles and a guideline for undertaking a public benefit assessment.
- The Department of Treasury and Finance can provide assistance and support, upon request, to public entities who wish to undertake a public benefit assessment under the Policy Statement.



Site Analysis

Topography

The Ballard Avenue Recreation Reserve (the subject site) is zoned General Residential and measures 3ha. The site extends across two titles. CT 130500/6 measures 2.5ha+/- and CT130501/1 is 0.5ha +/- . The land has a gentle northern slope with flatter, cleared areas located on the larger title. Approximately two-thirds of the site is covered in native vegetation.

The land adjoins Crown-owned land to the North, zoned Environmental Management and borders the Inglis River. A vegetated road reserve bounds the subject land to the east/south-east and forms a buffer between the reserve and the Table Cape Primary School zoned for *Community Purpose*. Land to the West and South is zoned residential and developed with residential dwellings.

Use – current and proposed

The subject site is identified in Council's Open Space, Sport and Recreation strategy used for '*relaxation and contemplation*'. However, given it is not easily accessible by vehicle and has no public infrastructure that facilitates community use, the site is underutilized. The site's primary use appears to be a throughway to the walking tracks along the river for those who reside in the area. There is also evidence that wood hocking and rubbish dumping occur on both the reserve and the adjoining crown land. Increased passive surveillance and regular use of the area would significantly reduce these anti-social/opportunistic activities.

The site's location, less than 2klm from the Wynyard township, along well used and established walking tracks used by many to exercise their dogs, would likely prove popular as a 'destination' should an off-leash park be developed.

The increased use of the site for free-camping by self-contained motorhome operators would likely result in a synergetic relationship.

The adjoining locations of both uses would not only increase the use of the off-leash dog park, given the statistics around those who now travel with their pets but also prove to be a unique facility, attracting both intra and interstate visitors to the area.

While the list of pet-friendly camping sites is growing, this would potentially be the first to provide a fenced off-leash area for dogs.

Once the site is established and Council has a better understanding of use and visitation numbers, there is scope within the zoning to consider providing an area for local self-sufficient food and/or coffee vans to enhance the visitation experience for locals and tourists alike. This could support local businesses or offer new local businesses to establish, which would add to the catering options offered within the region. Both have been highlighted as goals within the Destination Action Plan and Council's Strategic Plan.

Protection of Natural Values on site

The Flora and Fauna report commissioned by Council delineates the areas that need to be protected and those that need to be managed. The proposed location for the establishment of the dog park and freedom camping sites has been identified by Council staff with the report's recommendations in mind. There is no vegetation required or proposed to be removed to establish either use and development of both can be achieved in a sympathetic manner that observes the natural environment without impacting upon it. Once developed, responsible use of the site will further protect the natural values through the use of established rules of use and increased surveillance.

Traffic

Ballad Avenue is a Council owned and maintained road and is fronted by 28 titles, including two strata titles and two titles owned by the Council, one of which provides pedestrian connectivity from Beamish Avenue.

While called an Avenue, it is actually a crescent which is a U- shaped road that is accessible from either end of the same originating road, in this case, Hales Street.

Ballad Avenue is quite narrow for a residential street, measuring just 5.5m wide and is not line marked.

If the freedom camping proposal was to go ahead, it is likely that changes would be required to the road in order to facilitate the additional traffic from Self-contained motorhomes, which can be up to 12.5m in length, 2.5m wide and 4.3m high (maximum limits in Australia).

At 12m wide, there is scope for Ballad Avenue to be widened. It would be recommended that the Council obtain a Traffic Impact Assessment to determine whether to widen the road or perhaps turn Ballad Avenue into a one-way street.

A new road opening and access is required from Ballad Avenue to provide entry onto the site. A site inspection by PDA staff identified that the best location would be between number 17 and 19b Ballad Avenue due to the location of existing driveways and sight distances of approximately 74m to Hales Street to the West and approximately 40m to the North East. Given the slow movements associated with some heavier motorhomes entering and exiting the site, this may be another argument for converting Ballad Avenue into a one-way street and should be included in the TIA for assessment and recommendation by a suitably qualified professional.



Ballad Avenue – subject site access point on the left

Below is a list of key elements of the reserve and associated recommendations for these areas:

Bushland and habitat of Ballad Avenue

The Flora and Fauna assessment completed by RMCG consultants make several recommendations to the Council regarding the site's management, particularly if the site is to be developed or has increased usage. While the threatened vegetation community, Eucalyptus brookeriana forest (brookers gum) is clearly mapped and site use can likely occur without impact, the assessment recommends that the Council carry out further surveys to identify whether the site is habitat for Chiloglottis trapeziformis (commonly known as the broad lip bird orchid) and Chiloglottis valida (commonly known as the large bird orchid or common bird orchid).

The assessment also recommends that habitat corridors and connectivity to surrounding vegetated areas should be maintained and that weed management of the whole title should be incorporated into any future use and development of the site.

Given the natural values of the site, it is recommended that the off-leash areas for dogs are limited to the fenced park and that on-lead dog walking is limited to established trails, with the inclusion of an extension to the trail for the purpose of providing access to the dog park.

Additional actions that could be taken to protect the natural environment include installing signage to provide clear information about off-lead zones and the responsibilities of dog owners, improving landscape buffers, utilizing existing native vegetation species, to improve separation between the dog park and the freedom camping site. It is also understood that there has been a request from the school administration for the Council to be mindful of the two sites' proximity and consider a way to create effective separation. While the obvious solution would be to erect a fence, increasing the density of the existing vegetation buffer may be just as effective, considering the school would not be fenced

Accessibility

It is recommended that an accessibility overview be undertaken to identify the slope characteristics throughout the reserve. This analysis would assist in guiding decision-making around feasible and accessible locations for future infrastructure.

In addition to new access/egress from Ballad Avenue, Council should consider the provision of accessible pathways into the reserve, from car parking leading to the off-leash dog park and existing walking trails along the river. As part of this process, determine the best locations for seating and rest stops for elderly or sight-impaired visitors. The lighting location should also be carefully factored into this process to ensure visibility in shorter daylight months without impacting neighbouring residential areas.

Circulation

Provide an accessible path of travel from accessible car spaces to the off-leash dog park. Ensure unsealed path surfaces suit older adults, people pushing prams, and those using a mobility aid.

Future Picnic Areas and Infrastructure

While the intention is not to install park furniture, shade structures, or toilets, the community will likely request these facilities with increasing site use. It is recommended that the Council identify where the most suitable locations would be for this infrastructure to include in future planning and budget processes. These facilities could potentially be purchased through community focussed grants.

Car parking

Whilst compacted gravel may be used for car parking in the initial development phase, the spaces should be formalized by adding line-marking to improve capacity and efficient use of space.

Provide several car spaces next to the off-leash dog park for people with a disability and emergency vehicles and provide an appropriate number of accessible spaces to serve the park.

Lighting

Consider the provision of lighting to internal park roads and the carpark areas.

Consider sound attenuation methods between the developed site to minimize any negative impact on adjacent residents (noise pollution).

Signage

Provide advisory signage and path symbols that guide pedestrians on safe routes through the park and connections beyond.

Provide wayfinding signage at the Ballad Avenue/Hale Street intersection to notify drivers about the freedom camping and off-leash dog park.

Provide educative interpretive signage on the natural features of the site, including bushland and sensitive flora/fauna.

Drainage

Formulate a drainage management plan that ensures that water is adequately drained in high rainfall events with consideration toward ensuring potential contamination from the dog park does not flow directly into the river without some form of aeration or filtering.

Waste management

Freedom Camping

As previously mentioned in this report, WCC By-Laws restrict the use of rubbish bins to dispose of food waste. While this was likely written to restrict food services for setting up outside dining in public reserves, it technically would restrict 'normal' activities by those participating in caravanning.

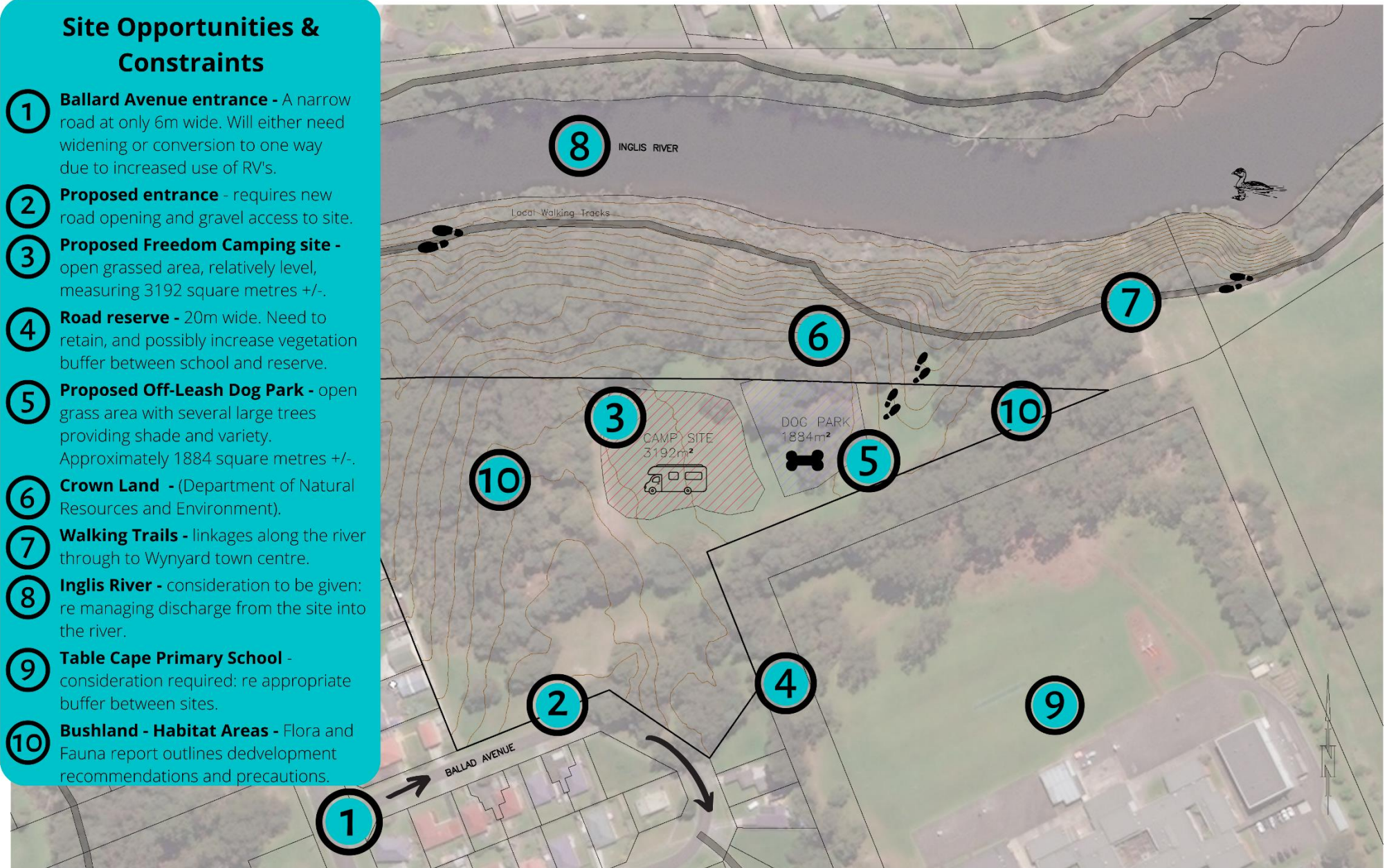
Should the Council resolve to progress the freedom camping proposal, it may require By-Law No.1 of 2016 to be updated.

Off Leash Dog Park

'Bag and Bin' is the most efficient way of dealing with dog waste at off-leash parks but requires monitoring to ensure compliance and the minimisation of contamination entering nearby waterways. It is recommended that two bins are installed to separate dog waste from general waste.

Site Opportunities & Constraints

- ① **Ballard Avenue entrance** - A narrow road at only 6m wide. Will either need widening or conversion to one way due to increased use of RV's.
- ② **Proposed entrance** - requires new road opening and gravel access to site.
- ③ **Proposed Freedom Camping site** - open grassed area, relatively level, measuring 3192 square metres +/-.
- ④ **Road reserve** - 20m wide. Need to retain, and possibly increase vegetation buffer between school and reserve.
- ⑤ **Proposed Off-Leash Dog Park** - open grass area with several large trees providing shade and variety. Approximately 1884 square metres +/-.
- ⑥ **Crown Land** - (Department of Natural Resources and Environment).
- ⑦ **Walking Trails** - linkages along the river through to Wynyard town centre.
- ⑧ **Inglis River** - consideration to be given: re managing discharge from the site into the river.
- ⑨ **Table Cape Primary School** - consideration required: re appropriate buffer between sites.
- ⑩ **Bushland - Habitat Areas** - Flora and Fauna report outlines development recommendations and precautions.



E		NOTES		SURVEYOR N/A		GEOC/NIL N/A		BALLAD AVENUE RECREATION RESERVE		3/23 Brisbane Street, Launceston, Tasmania, 7250		SCALE: 1 : 750		DRAWN: (A3)	
D				CROWN AB		CHECKED JB		WARATAH WYNYARD COUNCIL		www.pda.com.au Also at Hobart, Burnie, Devonport & Kingston		JOB NUMBER		DRAWING	
C				DATE 16/12/2021				130501/1 & 130500/6		PDA Surveyors		48593 P01			
B										Surveying, Engineering & Planning					
A										PHONE: +61 03 6331 4039					
REV		AMENDMENTS								FAX: +61 03 6331 3036					
										EMAIL: pda.tn@pda.com.au					

The Implementation Plan details the anticipated Capital Works Costs for the recommendations to assist with informing Council's long-term financial planning

Item No.	Description	Qty	Unit	Rate	Amount ex. GST
Estimated Establishment Costs					
1.00	Dog Park				
1.1	Perimeter Fencing – 2.1m black powder coat, chain mesh – (.3m dug into ground)	180	LM	\$280	\$50,400
1.2	Gates – double entry (2 per entry)	4	Item	\$500	\$2,000
1.3	Maintenance gate (access for lawn mower- 3.5m width)	1	Item	\$2,000	\$2,000
1.3	Dog bag dispenser	2	Item	\$150	\$300
1.4	Bin enclosure – 240L	1	Item	\$1,500	\$1,500
1.5	Drinking fountain with dog bowl	1	Item	\$2,780	\$2,780
1.6	Water Connection & extension	1		\$2,500	\$2,500
1.7	Signage – Dog Park Welcome and Rules	2	Item	\$1,000	\$2,000
1.8	Gravel hard stand for parking	4 vehicles		\$5,000	\$5,000
1.9	Labour	1.5	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$7,500
	Subtotal				\$75,980
2.00	Freedom Camping				
2.1	Gravel hard stand for RV parking	20	Item	\$1,000	\$20,000
2.2	Signage – Freedom Camping Rules	1	Item	\$1,000	\$1,000
2.3	Directional Signage	3	Item	\$350	\$1,050
2.4	Drainage	1	Item	\$30,000	\$30,000
2.5	Bollards to restrict access to protected	40	Item	\$30 + treatment	\$2,000
2.6	Labour	1.5		\$7,5000	\$7,500
	Subtotal				\$61,550
3.00	Access				
3.1	New road cross over	1	Item	\$8,000	\$8,000
3.2	New internal gravel road to RV camp site and dog park and connective walking paths	150m long x 300mm d		\$35,000	\$35,000
3.3	Labour	1.5	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$7,500
	Subtotal				\$50,500
	Combined Total				\$188,030

Item No.	Description	Qty	Unit	Rate	Amount ex. GST
Future upgrades subject to funding					
4.0	Lighting				
4.1	Power extension				TBC
4.2	Light poles or bollards				TBC
5.0 *	Dog Park Equipment	1	Set	\$8,000	\$8,000
6.0	Shelter structure and seating	1	Prefab	\$15,000	\$15,000

* Collaboration with community group or other organisation for donation of suitable equipment/furniture.

The costs shown associated with the initial set-up are not exhaustive. Depending on Council utilising their labour and materials, these costs are estimated to be between \$180,000 and \$200,000. At the time of writing this report, quotations from TasNetworks had not been received but it is estimated that the lighting installation could be between \$15,000 – \$25,000. Solar power would likely be a suitable alternative; however, there are no existing structures to mount traditional solar panels. Although each RV will be self-contained and have its own power source, lighting of public areas will be required for safety purposes.

While not insignificant, it is not inconceivable that the economic investment resulting from the development will exceed the establishment costs within the first year. The Freedom Camping Options report prepared for Council by David Hammond, Business Lab, in 2019 states that the contribution estimate toward the Municipality's economy from freedom camping is potentially **\$358,904 per year**

Future Funding Opportunities

Potential funding sources include:

Federal and State Elections – during the election process, political parties often seek input from Councils to identify and understand the electorate's needs. It is prudent for Councils to have a priority projects document ready to provide to candidates.

Department of State Growth – Community Infrastructure – Provides assistance to support community infrastructure initiatives throughout Tasmania.

Tasmanian Community Fund – provides grants to community organizations to support positive social change and meet community needs.

Communities Sport and Recreation Grants – the Department of Communities Tasmania offer a range of grant programs that assist organizations with community and sport and recreation-focused projects and events. The grant rounds often change, and it is recommended that Councils subscribe to be notified with new rounds open.

Department of Infrastructure and Transport – Provides financial assistance grants to all Councils to assist with maintenance and construction of road assets.

Community Support Levy – a percentage of gaming profits in Tasmania are paid into the community support levy, which assists sport and recreation clubs and charitable organizations with a range of grants to fund recreational activities.

Federal Government Grants – grants provided by the Australian Government can be found through the website Grant Connect. This site enables the user to search for current and forecasted grant opportunities. Users of this site can nominate the types of grants they are looking for and be notified when a grant that matches becomes available.

Stronger Communities Program – this is a community-focused grant program provided in 'rounds'. The current round closes on 27 January but has a grant funding of \$150,000 for up to 20 community infrastructure projects in each electorate. Invitations to apply for these grants must be through the electorates local MP.

Building Better Regions Fund – is another Federal Government grant which supports infrastructure projects and community investments. Both of these grant rounds are currently open and have opportunities to assist with infrastructure projects.



Stock Images



Further Actions Required to Progress

Should the Council resolve to develop the site for freedom camping and an off-leash dog park, some additional suggestions are provided for consideration before commencement.

1. Community Consultation

- Provide consultation opportunities directly with the neighbouring residential properties and Table Cape Primary School;
- Provide consultation opportunities for the broader LGA and RV/motorhome communities;
- Signage at the park to be reviewed, particularly in relation to:
 - the shared use of zones, (e.g. grassland areas used by both dogs and by children/ families) and priority uses (e.g. dog off-lead)
- the control and management of dogs by owners (e.g. in line with local law
- requirements (control), protection of wildlife, risk management re snakes and water quality)
- 'Responsible' use of shared pathways that adjoin and lead to the reserve;
- Clear designation of on and off-leash areas/ boundaries for users and compliance staff
- Consult with the dog owning community re: establishing 'rules' for off-leash park usage;
- Consult with the RV Communities re establishing rules for freedom camping;
- Consult with commercial caravan/camping sites to obtain input and address concerns;
- Obtain professional advice re competitive neutrality issues;
- Invite consultation groups to continue providing feedback when/if the park is established in order to monitor the use and/or impact.

2. Concept Design for Dog Off-lead Area

- Prepare a Concept Design for the dog off-lead zone that will consider inclusions such as:
 - landscape and vegetation buffers
 - dog activity/sensory elements
 - amenities such as seating, play/training equipment and drinking fountain with dog bowl
- seek input from local subject matter experts;
- Utilise existing resources to guide the development process, such as the checklist contained in: *Design, Planning and Management of Off-Leash Dog Parks*, written by Bob Holderness-Roddam
- Consider waste management issues

3. Policy Creation and Amendment

- Review and amend Council By-Law
- Insert an 'Off-Leash Dog Park' section within the WWC Dog Management Policy outlining how Council will deal with issues that may arise with use of the park;
- Include the Dog park on the Declared Dog Area maps;
- Further the development of policy relating to Freedom camping in line with the suggested Scheme contained within the Freedom Camping Options report prepared in 2019 by David Hammond, Director Business Lab.

4. Insurance

- Research Insurance requirements for establishing an off-leash dog park and freedom camping on Council owned land.

5. Obtain Planning Permit

- Planning application required for discretionary use.

6. Consider using volunteer resources

- Given Council's limited resources, utilising community volunteers can be an effective way of managing social infrastructure.
- Regular users of the Off-Leash Park may consider volunteering to assist with the upkeep and general tidiness of the park, including reporting any maintenance issues. Local Community groups with a focus on dogs or animal welfare may also like to become involved

7. Risk Management

- Carry out a comprehensive risk management assessment for both the freedom camping and the off-leash dog park.
- Reach out to other LGA's to assist with identifying not only the risks but the frequency and nature of incident types to ensure thorough due diligence;
- Provide process through signage for users of the site to report issues;
- Include environmental risks to the reserve within the assessment.

