

ITEM 2. HUGO STREET RESERVE OFF-LEASH PROPOSAL**FILE NO: S057589****SUMMARY**

This report recommends that the southern section of Hugo Street Reserve, Redfern be designated as an off-leash area at all times. The Reserve is comprised of three distinct sections:

- Northern section – an open grass area with garden beds (400 square metres);
- Central section – an enclosed asphalt surface basketball court (450 square metres); and
- Southern section – an enclosed lawn area (300 square metres).

In April 2014, the City received a petition containing 139 signatures requesting that dogs be allowed off-leash in the southern section of Hugo Street Reserve at all times, and in the basketball court when not being used for sport.

It is considered inappropriate for dogs to enter the City's enclosed sports courts for public health reasons, and the City therefore consulted the community about their preferences for the southern section only to be designated off-leash at all times.

Residents within the park catchment area (approximately 400 metres) and park visitors were invited to comment on a proposal to designate the southern enclosed section of Hugo Street Reserve as an off-leash area. Eight written submissions were received, all of which were in support of the proposal. Two people called the City objecting to the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION

It is resolved that the southern enclosed section of Hugo Street Reserve, Redfern be designated an off-leash area at all times.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Aerial Plan of Hugo Street Reserve showing the extent of the recommended off-leash area

Attachment B: Image of the Southern Enclosed Section of Hugo Street Reserve

Attachment C: Assessment of Submissions

BACKGROUND

1. The City's parks and public open spaces provide for the diverse recreational needs of our community. We aim to ensure that local parks provide an equitable mix of recreational opportunity, including off-leash and on-leash areas for dogs.
2. The City is committed to providing locally accessible off-leash areas for the health and welfare of dogs and their owners. There are 45 off-leash areas within the City of Sydney Local Government Area (LGA), with the majority being off-leash at all times.
3. Hugo Street Reserve in Redfern (refer Attachments A and B) is located across the road from Redfern Community Centre and is comprised of three distinct sections:
 - (a) Northern section – an open grass area with garden beds (400 square metres);
 - (b) Central section – an enclosed asphalt surface basketball court (450 square metres); and
 - (c) Southern section – an enclosed lawn area (300 square metres).
4. Within the area surrounding Hugo Street Reserve, the following parks are designated as off-leash:
 - (a) Charles Kernan Reserve, grass section (500 square metres) off-leash at all times, 400 metres from Hugo Street Reserve;
 - (b) Gibbons Street Reserve, (5,000 square metres), off-leash at all times, 500 metres from Hugo Street Reserve;
 - (c) Prince Alfred Park, central grass area (2.5 hectares) off-leash at all times, 550 metres from Hugo Street Reserve;
 - (d) Victoria Park, (5 hectares) off-leash from 6pm until 8am, 600 metres from Hugo Street Reserve; and
 - (e) Redfern Park, (2 hectares) off-leash from 4.30pm until 9.30am, 850 metres from Hugo Street Reserve.
5. In the surrounding area, the following parks are on-leash:
 - (a) Yellowmundi Reserve (750 square metres) on Hugo Street;
 - (b) Redfern Community Centre Open Space (2000 square metres) on Hugo Street;
 - (c) Vine Street Reserve (150 square metres), 90 metres from Hugo Street Reserve,
 - (d) Pemulwuy Park (250 square metres), 100 metres from Hugo Street Reserve;
 - (e) Jack Floyd Reserve (300 square metres), 500 metres from Hugo Street Reserve; and
 - (f) Sydney University Park (1 hectare), 650 metres from Hugo Street Reserve.

6. Dogs are prohibited from playgrounds under the Companion Animals Act.
7. In April 2014, local dog owners submitted a petition, containing 139 signatures, requesting that dogs be allowed off-leash in the southern section of Hugo Street Reserve at all times, and in the enclosed basketball court when not being used for sport.
8. The City builds and manages sports courts for the health, wellbeing and sporting needs of the community. Dogs are not permitted within the City's enclosed sports courts. It is considered inappropriate for dogs to be exercised within sports courts, and allowing mixed use could lead to conflict between user groups.
9. The City consulted local residents and park visitors about their leash preferences for the southern section of the Reserve.

Summary of Submissions Received

10. Eight written submissions were received, all of which were in support of the proposal. The reasons cited in support of the proposal were:
 - (a) a perception that dogs were previously allowed to be off-leash in the park (5);
 - (b) the enclosed area provides a safe place for the exercise and socialising of dogs, particularly small dogs or puppies (3);
 - (c) dog ownership is popular in the local area (2);
 - (d) the park is convenient for local dog owners, many of whom prefer not to use surrounding off-leash parks or consider surrounding off-leash parks to be too far away (2);
 - (e) allowing dogs to be off-leash would enhance social opportunities for users of the park and local residents (2);
 - (f) general message of support (1);
 - (g) many local dog owners increasingly live in apartments with no access to gardens or yards (1); and
 - (h) many dog owners currently use the area to exercise their dogs both on-leash and off-leash and there have been no issues (1).
11. Two residents telephoned City staff to voice their opposition to the proposal, citing the noise nuisance generated by off-leash dogs when using the park and instances of conflict between dog owners and other local residents.
12. A summary of responses to the submissions is contained in Attachment C.
13. The following criteria are generally used by staff to determine the suitability of a park for off-leash arrangements:
 - (a) community wellbeing – supporters of the off-leash proposal indicate that an off-leash area will enhance social opportunity for local residents, dog owners and their pets;

- (b) size and safety – the enclosed section of the park provides a safe environment for the exercising and socialising of dogs in this small area;
 - (c) local access – there are four off-leash parks located within 600 metres of Hugo Street Reserve. The local area also contains a number of smaller pocket parks that are on-leash and playgrounds from which dogs are prohibited;
 - (d) suitability – the enclosed area of Hugo Street Reserve is 300 square metres and may struggle to accommodate off-leash dogs with other uses at the same time; and
 - (e) proximity to prohibited areas – Hugo Street Reserve contains an enclosed basketball court from which dogs are prohibited.
14. Periodic inspections (nine visits between June and August 2014) by City Rangers indicate no incidents or conflict with dogs at the Reserve.
15. Given the strength of community support and the relatively small number of objectors, it is recommended that the enclosed southern section of the park be designated off-leash at all times. Dogs would remain prohibited from entering the adjacent enclosed basketball courts.
16. The existing park signage would be modified to inform visitors of the respective leash requirements in each area of the Reserve.

KEY IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030 Vision

17. *Sustainable Sydney 2030* is a vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic direction:
- (a) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling – off-leash parks provide opportunity for dog ownership and dog walking. Dog walking is a popular activity which has health benefits for owners and their pets.

Organisational Impact

18. This proposal will not have any significant organisational impact. If Council approves the off-leash area, existing park signage will be modified, with no impact on current operational budgets.

Risks

19. Restricting off-leash dogs to the southern enclosed section of the Reserve will assist to reduce conflict between various users of the park and will reduce the risk of dogs running on to the nearby road.

Social / Cultural / Community

20. Off-leash parks create opportunity for community building and socialisation.

Environmental

21. The proposal will not have significant environmental impacts. Dog-tidy bags will be installed at the Reserve to assist owners to be responsible and pick up after their pets.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

22. The proposal has no budget implications. Existing signage will be modified within current operational budgets.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

23. The Companion Animals Act NSW (1998).

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

24. Residents living within the park catchment area (approximately 400 metres) were notified of the proposal by letter.
25. A notice inviting public comment on the proposal was installed near the entrance to the southern section of Hugo Street Reserve.

GARRY HARDING

Director City Operations

Mark Driver, Parks and Recreation Planner
Joel Johnson, Manager City Greening & Leisure