

# Have your say about the draft Access Areas for Dogs Policy

1 May 2023

Shoalhaven's Access Areas for Dogs Policy has been revised to better manage dog access areas in line with community expectations, environmental consideration and relevant legislation.

Everyone is invited to have their say about the proposed draft Access Areas for Dogs Policy that provides the process for deciding where dogs can and cannot go in the Shoalhaven, including where they are permitted to be off-leash in accordance with state and federal legal obligation requirements.

The draft policy provides for the adaptive management of each site, allowing Council to respond to changes in the conditions as they arise in off-leash or dog prohibited areas, such as shorebird nesting, biodiversity loss, indigenous heritage and community conflicts arising from high use. The proposed policy clearly outlines processes that will be followed and a framework for decision making in these instances.

Feedback received from the 1400 responses to community consultation undertaken in 2021 has been used to develop the draft policy.

"This is an important issue to many people in our community, for various reasons, and we look forward to approving a policy that gets the balance right," said Mayor Amanda Findley.

"It's important to hear a wide range of views and perspectives. People who are regular dog walkers, and those who aren't, should get involved and have their say on the proposed draft policy," Cr Findley said.

Important factors related to how Council designates dog access areas include state and federal legislation outlining responsibilities of dog owners, Council's responsibilities to protect environmental values, and the accepted health-related and social benefits dog off-leash areas provide to many in the community. The proposed draft policy aims to set the framework necessary to demonstrate Council's environmental and social due diligence.

The draft policy incorporates a colour-coded classification system, based on an easily recognisable traffic light approach (red, orange, green). This system will be used to clearly communicate the three types of dog access areas in public places. It will be used on all new signage to clearly identify dog access areas: red for dog prohibited areas, orange for dog on-leash areas and green for dog off-leash areas. The existing Access Areas for Dogs Policy will remain in place until a final version of the new policy is approved by Council. All existing off-leash and prohibited areas will be carried forward unchanged during this period.

The draft policy will be on exhibition for 6 weeks from 1 May until 11 June 2023. More information and survey available via the [Access Areas for Dogs Policy Get Involved](#) webpage.