

8.7 EDWARDES LAKE PARK DOG OFF LEAD COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOME

Author: Community and Environment Special Projects Officer

Reviewed By: General Manager Operations and Capital

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the community consultation outcomes for the Edwardes Lake Park dog off-lead area and includes an updated draft concept design for Council's consideration and endorsement.

The draft concept design was developed and released for public consultation between the 23 September and 17 October 2021. The site is currently used as an informal dog off-lead area.

This project seeks to improve the amenity of this site, activate the area and provide dog owners an opportunity to exercise and socialise their dogs in an enriching off-lead environment. The design also seeks to address improvements for the site which were identified in the existing Edwardes Lake Masterplan which was reviewed with community feedback between 2016 and 2017.

The draft concept design includes sniff and explore sections, an enclosed shy dog area, significant rewilding, seats, dog bag dispensers and waste bins to support all park users.

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

- (1) Notes the amendments to the concept design based on community feedback and endorses the attached design for the Edwardes Lake Park dog off-lead area
(Appendix C).
 - (2) Updates and thanks community members who participated in the consultation via the Your Say page and direct correspondence to all registered users.
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BACKGROUND / KEY INFORMATION

In 2016 and 2017, Council sought input from the community to review the existing Edwardes Lake Park Masterplan. This review resulted in a new play space being designed for the park. Through the masterplan review and the subsequent engagement for the play space, the community asked for a dedicated dog off-lead area to be established at this location.

Darebin currently has 40 designated dog off-lead areas, a mixture of open lawn areas (e.g. A.G. Davis Park), partially fenced (e.g. Hayes Park) and one fully fenced (e.g. Bundoora Park).

Darebin is rapidly becoming denser, more urban and more populated, placing further pressure on access to public open spaces. In alignment with Council's Breathing Space

Strategy, this project seeks to activate an underused and underdeveloped area within Edwardes Lake Park, encouraging increased community use and improved amenity while enhancing biodiversity in the area through significant regeneration and replanting at the perimeter.

In early 2020, Council applied for a State Government grant via the Local Parks Program and was successful in securing \$275,000 (excluding GST) to construct a new dog off-lead area at Edwardes Lake Park in Reservoir West. A draft concept design (**Appendix A**) was developed and was released to the community for consultation in accordance with the approved Community Engagement plan for this project.

Some amendments are proposed following community consultation including:

- Additional perimeter fencing
- Additional natural shade cover – increasing the canopy cover in the park
- The removal of white sand areas.

The proposed final design including amendments is provided as **Appendix C**.

ALIGNMENT TO 2041 DAREBIN COMMUNITY VISION

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

ALIGNMENT TO 2021-25 COUNCIL PLAN

Strategic Direction 2: Prosperous, Liveable and Flourishing

ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2.1 We will deliver equitable and accessible infrastructure to provide opportunities for our community to live well

2.2 We will design and create public spaces where our people feel safe, welcome, and respected, including improving lighting and safety for people walking, wheeling, cycling and driving

4.4 We will ensure major changes in our city achieve significant improvements in our City

DISCUSSION

Engagement activities for the Edwardes Lake Park dog off-lead area were all conducted online and by mail, with opportunities to provide feedback by completing a survey (hard copy or online), by phone, or by email. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, face-to-face engagement activities could not be conducted, however corflutes and posters were distributed in the local area to encourage participation by visitors to the site.

The draft concept design for the Edwardes Lake Park Dog Off-Lead Area (**Appendix A**) included the following elements:

- A separated area for small or shy dogs.
- Drinking fountains for humans and dogs.
- Open grassed area as well as features for dogs to sniff and explore.

- Nature play for dogs and a variety of surfaces for dogs – e.g. logs, boulders, gravel and grass
- Seating for humans.
- A circular pathway around the perimeter of the open area

Engagement on the concept plan found strong support overall and the above elements have been incorporated into the proposed final design. Whilst the majority of the feedback received supported the creation of a dedicated dog-off lead area, two additional matters were raised;

1. A desire for fencing to be extended around the perimeter of the site

The draft concept design included partial fencing around the shy/small dog area only. Community feedback identified an enclosed shy dog area as one of the most important features to be included in the final design. However, many respondents also requested additional fencing around the entire perimeter of the site. Comments calling for the site to be fully fenced referenced concerns that some dog owners would be unable to effectively protect/prevent their dogs from running onto adjacent roads.

Recommendation:

To alleviate concerns and respond to community calls for a fully fenced area, officers have included additional fencing around the perimeter of the dog off-lead area. The updated concept design now features two fully fenced areas for both shy and energetic dogs.

2. A desire for a greyhound off-lead area

A total of 37% respondents called for a dedicated off-lead area for greyhounds. Officers are aware that during the community consultation period, there was a campaign to encourage greyhound owners from across metropolitan Melbourne to provide this feedback.

Officer response: Victorian laws prohibit greyhounds being off-lead in open space, including in Council designated off-lead areas, except for designated off-lead spaces for greyhounds-only. Noting that these areas must be fully enclosed and are unable to be accessed by other dog breeds.

Of the 12,801 dogs registered in Darebin, 3% are greyhounds. One of the key challenges in Darebin is around quantity of open spaces across the municipality. This deficiency is projected to grow as the population increases. Therefore, Council's main priority in future development of passive and active open space is to create spaces that can be enjoyed by the broader community.

Recommendation: Officers do not recommend this dog-off lead area be constructed for exclusive use of greyhounds. Council will continue to monitor the number of registered greyhound owners in Darebin and investigate ways in which future project may support greyhound friendly spaces.

Officers recognise that regular exercise and social interaction is important for all animals including greyhounds. Council supports greyhounds accessing these areas to socialise with other dogs *on-lead*. As a greyhound friendly area, greyhounds will be able to benefit from socialisation with other breeds in this area in a controlled way.

Additional Comment:**White sand**

Officer response: The draft concept design included white sand to be installed in both the small/shy dog area and large/energetic dog area. Concern about bacterial transmission and the likely attraction of cats and other wildlife to these areas has resulted in this element being removed from the final design.

OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**Option 1 (recommended):**

That Council endorses the final detailed design for the Edwardes Lake Park Dog Off Lead Area (**Appendix C**).

Option 2 (not recommended)

Council could undertake further consultation. This is not considered necessary given the strong engagement from the community on the draft concept plans.

CONSIDERATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (2020) PRINCIPLES**Financial Management**

In early 2020, Council applied for a State Government grant via the Local Parks Program and was successful in securing \$275,000 to construct a new dog off-lead area at Edwardes Lake Park, along Seaver Grove in Reservoir West. The grant will deliver all design elements shown in the final design.

Community Engagement

The key engagement activities undertaken as part of the community engagement on the concept design were:

- A letter box drop and local advertising to promote the engagement survey within 1km of Edwardes Lake Park
- A dedicated Your Say page which includes a community survey to test the draft concept designs and invite feedback
- A social media campaign on multiple Darebin Facebook groups, Instagram, Council newsletters
- Posters were strategically placed in the local area and were distributed to pet stores, vet clinics, and signage in the park.
- Posters in multiple languages were available on the Your Say page and distributed to community leaders in the area.
- A direct stakeholder engagement email was sent to various entities who had demonstrated interest in Council's open spaces.

The Community Engagement Summary Report and detailed demographic data is available in **Appendix B** of this report.

Overarching Governance Principles and Supporting Principles

- (b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;

Public Transparency Principles

- (a) Council decision making processes must be transparent except when the Council is dealing with information that is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act;

Strategic Planning Principles

- (b) strategic planning must address the Community Vision;

Service Performance Principles

- (a) services should be provided in an equitable manner and be responsive to the diverse needs of the municipal community;

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**Environmental Sustainability Considerations (including Climate Emergency)**

Included in the budget and final design is a significant regeneration and rewilding effort at the perimeter of the site. This feature will serve as a natural barrier from the road as well as a sniff and explore area for dogs. This rewilding effort will positively contribute to increased biodiversity to address the global biodiversity crisis as well as increased canopy cover to address the urban heat island effect.

Equity, Inclusion, Wellbeing and Human Rights Considerations:

An equity impact assessment has been undertaken for this work. Equity, inclusion and wellbeing considerations are an essential consideration for all open space projects. Council aims for equitable access to open space in alignment with the principles of the Breathing Space Strategy, the EIA assisted project planners by strengthening the communication strategy to ensure effective reach of the consultation information to diverse target audiences.

Operational Impacts

Ongoing maintenance and servicing would be provided for in Council's annual operating budgets.

Legal and Risk Implications

The draft concept design and any revised drafts adhere to all State Government regulations attached to the grant. The concept design also adheres to Council's commitments to sound design with accessibility features.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

Should Council endorse the proposed concept design and construction of the dog-off lead area at Edwardes Lake Park, construction will take place in 2022. Officers will notify consultation participants on the outcome of the consultation via a Community Engagement Outcome Report on the Your Say page, and those who registered to receive updates will be contacted with the outcome via email

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Breathing Space: the Darebin Open Space Strategy
- Enhancing Open Space and Implementing Breathing Space
- Responsible Pet Greyhound Ownership Responsibilities and Guidelines – Agriculture Victoria

Attachments

- Edwardes Lake Park Original Draft Concept Design (**Appendix A**) [↓](#)
- Edwardes Lake Park Community Engagement Summary Report (**Appendix B**) [↓](#)
- Updated Concept Design - Edwardes Lake Dog Off Lead Area (**Appendix C**) [↓](#)

DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Section 130 of the *Local Government Act 2020* requires members of Council staff and persons engaged under contract to provide advice to Council to disclose any conflicts of interest in a matter to which the advice relates.

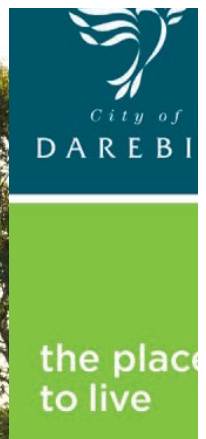
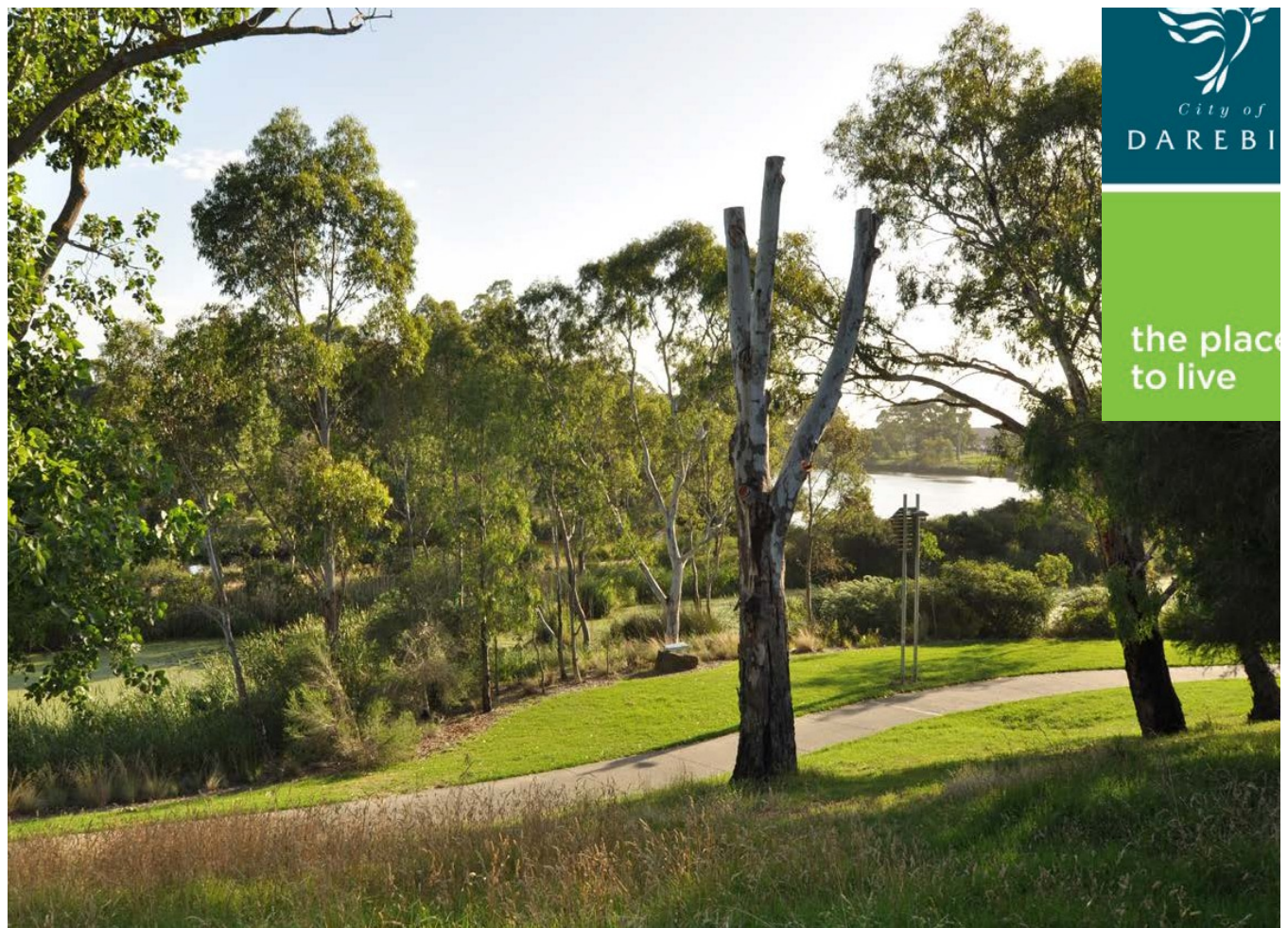
The Officer reviewing this report, having made enquiries with relevant members of staff, reports that no disclosable interests have been raised in relation to this report.



LEGEND

-  Concrete pedestrian entry
-  Dry creek area
-  Open grassed area
-  Grantic sand
-  Sand pit for digging
-  Mulched area
-  Timber logs
-  Rock boulders
-  Seating along path with bubbler + dog bowl
-  Mass planting
-  Pedestrian entry with double gates
-  New tree planting
-  Existing tree planting





Edwards Lake Park Dog Off Lead Area

Community Engagement Summary Report

November 2021

Summary Report

03 July 2013 - 09 November 2021

Your Say Darebin

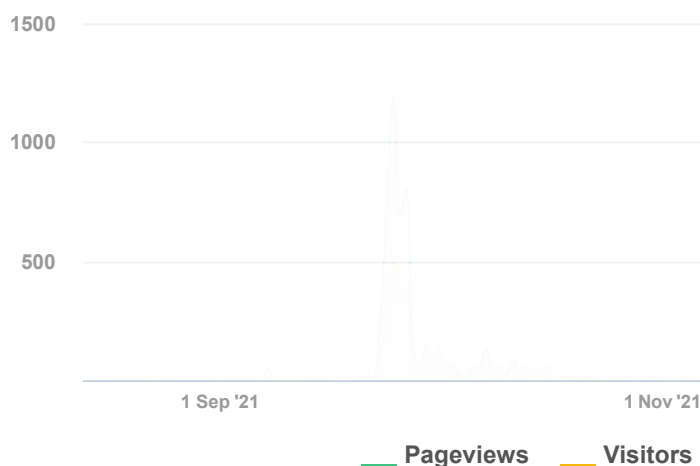
PROJECTS SELECTED: 1

Edwardes Lake Park Dog Off-Lead Area

FULL LIST AT THE END OF THE REPORT



Visitors Summary



Highlights

TOTAL VISITS	MAX VISITORS PER DAY	
2.5 k	487	
NEW REGISTRATIONS		
6		
ENGAGED VISITORS	INFORMED VISITORS	AWARE VISITORS
90	852	2.1 k

COVID-19 Restrictions and Impact

Throughout the course of the consultation period, regions in metropolitan Melbourne faced stage four COVID-19 restrictions. These requirements saw all community centres, libraries and customer service centres, closed to the public and prevented Council from engaging in traditional face to face consultation practices. During the development and planning phase of this project, Officers explored different strategies to maximise community reach in a COVID-safe way and incorporated a range of different community engagement methodologies including;

Engagement Method	Target Audience	Delivery Method	Number of participants/ people engaged
Social Media Campaign, Instagram and Facebook	Darebin Community members.	Digital Delivery	<p>Darebin corporate page: 128 Comments on the post, 19 Shares, 111 Reactions (84 likes 27 love) This post reached 7,449 people and had 476 engagements overall (clicks, likes, reactions, comments) 91 people clicked through the link.</p> <p>Lost dogs in Darebin Post: This post reached 2408 people with 15 reactions (14 like and 1 love.) 82 people clicked through to the consultation link.</p> <p>Darebin Libraries post: This post reached 1,161 people and engaged 46 people who clicked through to the consultation link.</p>
Flyers distributed to 2000 homes in Reservoir West	Local community residents.	Face to Face	2000 within 1km of the site.
Stakeholder engagement emails.	Engaged residents, local community groups, CALD	Digital Delivery	40 participants.

	community members, older residents, Friends of Edwardes Lake Park, Darebin Nature Trust, Local Vets and groomers.		
Promotional posters distributed in Reservoir.	Local residents.	Face to Face	Difficult to quantify, noting 35 posters were strategically placed in high traffic areas in Edwardes Lake Park, Crispe Park, along Broadway and in Darebin Libraries windows for residents using the click and collect service.
8 promotional corflutes strategically placed at Edwardes Lake Park and Crispe Park.	Edwardes Lake Park visitors and local residents.	Face to Face	Difficult to quantify, noting that the corflutes have been strategically positioned in high traffic areas including at various entrances of Edwardes Lake Park, athletics track, gyms.
Darebin Newsletter in the community news, sustainable Darebin newsletter, Family Services newsletter.	Darebin Residents	Combination of online and hardcopy paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1581 families are subscribed to the What's on for Families newsletter and received an invitation to participate in the consultation process. • The number of people subscribed to the Sustainable Darebin newsletter is 3,279. The October edition which featured the consultation information was opened by 1,187 readers. • The number of people subscribed to the Darebin Community Newsletter is 1035. Subscribers received an invitation to participate in this consultation.

Priority Group	Inclusion in the engagement process
People - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	<p>Traditional Owners /First Nations People were advised of consultation process and invited to provide feedback through strategic stakeholder emails to relevant groups in the area.</p> <p>1.7% of all respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.</p>
People – CALD Communities	<p>Promotional material for this project was translated into the 5 most commonly spoken languages in this area of Darebin, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greek - Italian - Arabic - Cantonese - Hindi <p>Key community leaders were advised of this process through a stakeholder email and encouraged to pass on this information through their networks.</p> <p>In response to mid-consultation review, additional measures were undertaken to enhance CALD engagement. This included additional outreach to community leaders, the Darebin Ethnic Community Council, additional translated material placed on location.</p> <p>8% of all respondents indicated that they were from a CALD community.</p>
People - Age	<p>In response to mid-consultation review, additional measures were undertaken to enhance engagement with older residents. This included additional outreach through key Council contacts working with older community cohorts.</p> <p>Of the total number of respondents 2.8% indicated they were over 65 years of age.</p>
People - Disability	<p>6.3% of respondents have identified they have a disability.</p>

Community members were invited to have their say about the proposed design via letter drops to residents within 1km radius of the park, corflutes and advertising material on site as well as to local vets and the RSPCA. The engagement process allowed officers to reach a large and diverse group of residents to have their say and help shape the design of the proposed off-lead area.

The breakdown of the consultation participants are as follows;

- Over 8,797 people visited the Your Say page during the engagement period.
- 622 responses were recorded for the survey.
- 77.7% of respondents live in Darebin.
- 22.3% of respondents were visitors to Darebin.
- 40% percent of respondents live in Reservoir.

A total of 28% percent of responses received agreed with the draft concept design as presented. Comments in support of the draft design had similar themes including;

1. "Love that there is a separate area for shy dogs."
2. "It's a great and much needed idea!"
3. "Love it! Well worth the wait. Looks amazing and practical. Can't wait."
4. "The proposal looks really fantastic, I'm really looking forward to bringing my little Pomeranians here!"
5. "This is really fantastic, I'm so glad you are putting this here and the design is amazing. Clearly alot of thought has been put into this."

A total of 69.5% percent of responses sought changes and/or additions to the draft concept design with responses summarised into the following themes:

1. Calls for a greyhound specific area approximately 37%.
2. Requests for extended fencing around the entire perimeter of the site 18%.
3. Calls for a shelter for hot/rainy days 3.5%
4. Requests for agility equipment approximately 2.4%
5. Requests for a water feature to be included 0.48%
6. Calls for a long open grass area 1.4%

Only 0.2% of responses indicated they did not support the project and preferred that this project not proceed.

As part of the consultation, respondents were asked to rank the most important design features to be included in the final design. The highest-ranking features (and which have been incorporated into the design) include:

5. What do you think are the most important features of a dog off-lead area? Please rank the following from 1 to 5 with 1 being the most important. Rank at least one of the features. Please note that bins and dog waste bag dispensers will be incorporated in the final design so they are not on the list.

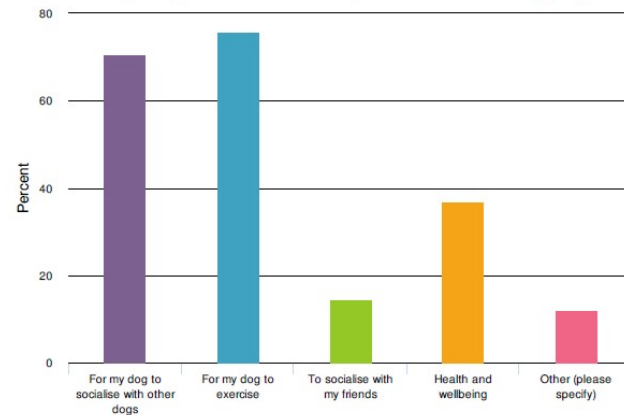
Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
A separated area for small or shy dogs	1		1,528	418
Drinking fountains for humans and dogs	2		1,486	433
Open grassed areas	3		1,261	383
Features for dogs to sniff and explore	4		1,100	361
Nature play for dogs	5		740	275
A variety of surfaces for dogs - mulch, gravel, grass, etc.	6		716	260
Seating for humans	7		537	203
A pathway around the perimeter	8		481	181
Pathways through the area	9		346	143






Lowest Rank Highest Rank

Question 3: What is your main reason/s for visiting dog off-lead areas?

The majority of responses for this question were that people visited dog parks to exercise and socialise their dogs. This is aligned with the presented draft concept designs that utilises the space for dog-centred activity, rather than human-centred comfort or design.

6. What is your main reason/s for visiting dog off-lead areas? (choose all that apply)



Value		Percent	Responses
For my dog to socialise with other dogs		70.6%	416
For my dog to exercise		75.9%	447
To socialise with my friends		14.6%	86
Health and wellbeing		36.7%	216
Other (please specify)		12.1%	71

Question 4: How are you most likely to travel to and from the area?

The majority of responses to this question were ‘in a motor vehicle’. There is ample parking adjacent and nearby to the site of the dog off-lead area. If it becomes apparent over time that people are riding more, Council can investigate the installation of bike parking.

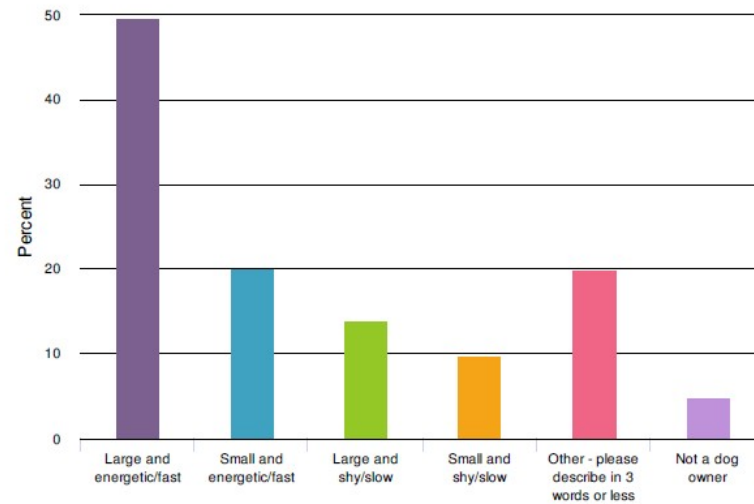
Question 6: To help us understand what types of dogs will visit the new off-lead dog area, please choose the best description for your dog/s

There was a mix of responses to this question. 49.6% of respondents described their dogs as large and energetic compared to 20% small and energetic. Of respondents whose dogs were described as shy/slow dogs (both large and slow) there was a total of 23.6%.

As demonstrated in the detailed response to question 2 (provided above), support for separated spaces for dogs with different temperaments was listed overall as the most important feature in the draft concept design. This feature has been included in the recommendation for the final design.

A detailed summary of responses to this question is provided in the table on the following page;


8. To help us understand what types of dogs will visit the new off-lead dog area, please choose the best description for your dog/s




Value		Percent	Responses
Large and energetic/fast		49.6%	292
Small and energetic/fast		20.0%	118
Large and shy/slow		13.9%	82
Small and shy/slow		9.7%	57
Other - please describe in 3 words or less		19.9%	117
Not a dog owner		4.8%	28



LEGEND




Concrete pedestrian entry




Dry creek area




Open grassed area




Grantic sand



Timber logs



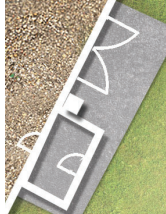
Rock boulders




Seating along path with bubbler + dog bowl



Mass planting



Pedestrian entry with double gates



New tree planting



Existing tree planting



City of
DAREBIN



the place
to live

