



# Planning and Designing for Dogs – A Townsville City Council Case Study



# INTRODUCTION

- » Today's briefing has been designed to provide an overview of how Townsville City Council developed its long-term strategy for Dog Off-Leash Areas.
- » This strategy examined usage, design and location of current and possible future dog off-leash areas.
- » The strategy was supported by a large community engagement program throughout mid 2014
- » This briefing will look at what we did, how we did it and what was the outcome of this project.
- » Finally the briefing will discuss what Townsville City Council will be doing into the future on Dog Off-Leash Areas.



# IDENTIFIED GAPS

- » Based on a review of the current dog off leash facilities within Townsville the following suburbs had an identifiable gap in their service provision of this facility:
  - North Ward
  - Belgian Gardens
  - West End
  - Rowes Bay
  - Garbutt
  - Mount Louisa
  - Kelso
  - Bushland Beach
- » However, it should also be noted that area's such as Magnetic Island, Deeragun, Kalynda Chase, Douglas and Wulguru also have limited local access to dog off leash facilities.



# SUITABLE PARK LOCATIONS

- » Dog-off leash facilities are installed in accordance with the provisions within the planning scheme; manufacturer specifications; applicable Australian Standards; applicable legislation; and council by-laws.
- » The following types of parks have been determined within to be appropriate for the location of dog off leash areas.
  - District (e.g. Charles Moroney, Peggy Banfield, Murray Paw Park)
  - Regional (e.g. Riverway and The Strand)
  - Corridor (e.g. Parks along the Ross River - Riverside Park Cranbrook)
- » Even within a park of appropriate hierarchy, other specific matters need to be considered before deciding to locate an off-leash area such as: available suitable space, accessibility, other current users, proximity to residences, flood proneness, proximity to other off-leash areas etc.



# DIFFERENT STANDARDS OF PARKS

- » To provide a cost effective network of dog off-leash facilities it is proposed that the following 3 different standards be incorporated:

Premium Facility



Standard Facility



Free Run Facility



# PREMIUM FACILITIES

- » Characterised by a grassed area that is entirely enclosed by fencing at 1.5m in height.
- » The size of these facilities will be greater or equal to 4000sqm.
- » Entry will be through a two gate system to reduce canine escapees from the enclosure.
- » Amenities within these enclosures will include seating, shade sails / trees, irrigation, signage with the associated dog faces bags, dog water bowl and agility equipment (10 pieces).



# STANDARD FACILITIES

- » Characterised by a grassed area that is entirely enclosed by fencing ranging from 1.2m – 1.5m in height.
- » The size of these facilities can range from 1500sqm through 4000sqm.
- » Entry is commonly through a two gate system to reduce canine escapees from the enclosure.
- » Amenities within these enclosures can include seating, trees, shade sails, signage with the associated dog faeces bags, irrigation and dog water bowl.



# FREE RUN FACILITIES

- » Free running areas are where dogs are permitted to be exercised off leash in an open and unfenced area.
- » Often these locations are pieces of parkland or beaches that are not used by the community and or have very little existing recreation value. These areas should be large so that there is ample room for recreation with suitable distance from roads.
- » Amenities within areas for dog owners can include seating, landscaping, trees and shade. Amenities for the dog can include dog water bowls.
- » Signage with the associated dog faeces bags should also be located in these areas.





# CONSULTATION

- » The greatest challenge in determining the demand requirements of dog off-leash facilities was that council's has no usage and current trend information.
- » Specifically, there is nothing to support the proposition that neighbouring large dog densities would lead to a high level of dog off leash area usage.
- » Understanding the usage rates, attractors and underlying behaviours allowed council to obtain a better understanding of dog off leash facilities.
- » This in turn allowed council to develop a more targeted strategy.
- » This strategy was based on direct consultation with the local community.

# WHY - CONSULTATION

- » Lack of gap and demand information
- » Lack of usage and current trend information
- » Need to establish council's level of embellishment and standard of service, based on user feedback
  - This makes it difficult to plan for and justify the installation of future facilities
  - This makes renewal of existing assets challenging (meeting community expectations?)
  - Once we know what we want we can provide advice to the development industry

# CONSULTATION STRATEGY

- » Online Survey (Running during June and July 2014)
- » Advertisement at the bottom of the Dog Registration Renewal Notices
- » Onsite Consultation
- » Stall at the Pet Expo
- » Promotion through council publications and on-line media

We want to hear from you about the future of Dog Off-Leash Exercise Areas.

Please complete our quick online survey on council's website.

Also, come along to the  
**Townsville Pet Expo**  
21 June, 10am - 4pm  
86 Thuringowa Drive.

For more information  
[www.townsville.qld.gov.au](http://www.townsville.qld.gov.au)



# HOW WE GOT RESPONDENTS

- » An on-line survey was placed on council's website (online media promotion)
- » An advertisement was placed on the bottom of all dog registration renewal notices
- » There was a booth at the pet expo
- » Direct consultation of 12 dog parks for 90 minutes
- » Publicity through the on-line media and an article in Townsville Sun



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# WHAT WE ASKED

- » A survey was used to collect resident information on:
  - Usage rates, times, day and popular locations within the existing dog off-leash area network
  - Resident travel modes, distance travelled and stay lengths at dog off-leash facilities
  - Satisfaction rates with equipment, park furniture and dog park size
  - Advice on what we could improve
- » The survey contained 19 questions, generally of a quantitative nature



# WHAT WE GOT BACK

- » The survey ran from mid June through till the end of July
- » Council received almost 1000 responses (963 usable responses)
- » 513 responses indicated that they regularly utilised dog off-leash facilities
- » The following results have provided valuable insight into this type of recreation facility

# RESULTS

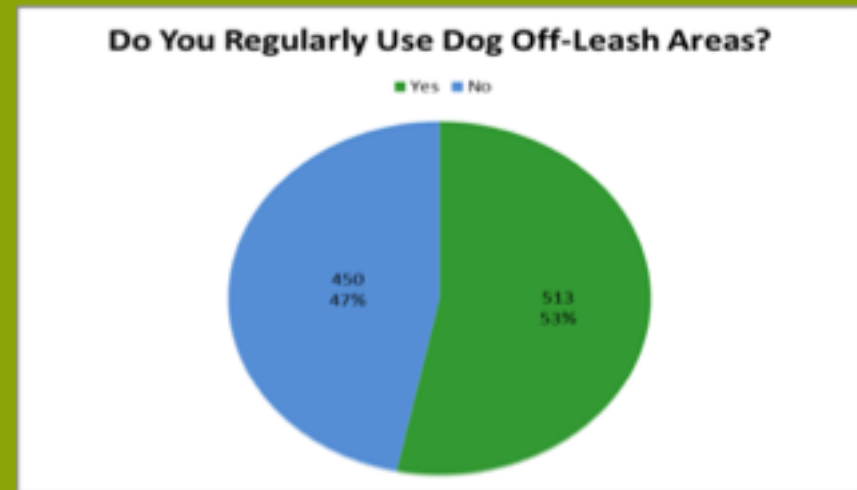
- » 963 respondents – 70% female, 30% male
- » Wide suburb response rate across the city.
- » Wide age range response rate: 15-24 years 11%; 25-34 years 29%; 34-44 years 22%, 45-54 years 18%; 55-64 years 13%; and 64+ years 4%

# RESULTS

- » How often respondents exercised their dog: 90% of respondents exercised their dog at least 3 times a week (53% indicated daily)
- » How long respondents exercised their dog: 74% of respondents would exercise their dog between 30-60 minutes
- » Where respondents preferred to exercise:
  - Around suburb 30%
  - Dog Parks 22%
  - Beaches 18%
  - Along Ross River 10%
  - At Local Park 9%
  - At the Strand/Jezzine 8%

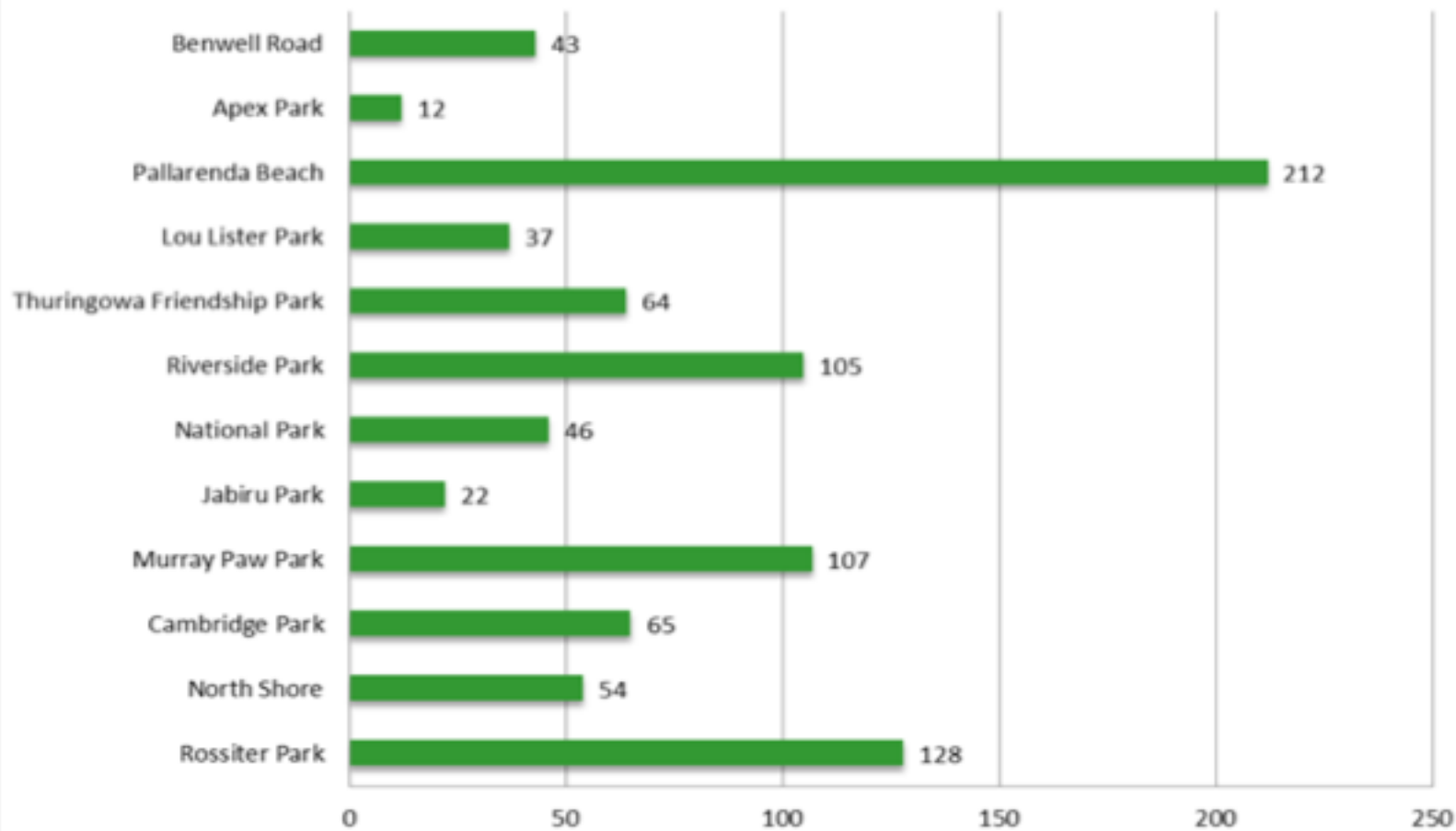
# RESULTS

- » Do you regularly use a dog off-leash area: Yes 53%, No 47%
- » Reasons for not using dog off-leash area: Long distance to travel 28%, conflict with other dogs 22% (50% of the concerns)



# RESULTS

**Which Dog Off-Leash Facilities Do You Regularly Use?**



Pallarenda  
Beach - 24%

Rossiter Park  
– 14%

Murray Paw  
Park – 12%

Riverside  
Park - 12%



# RESULTS

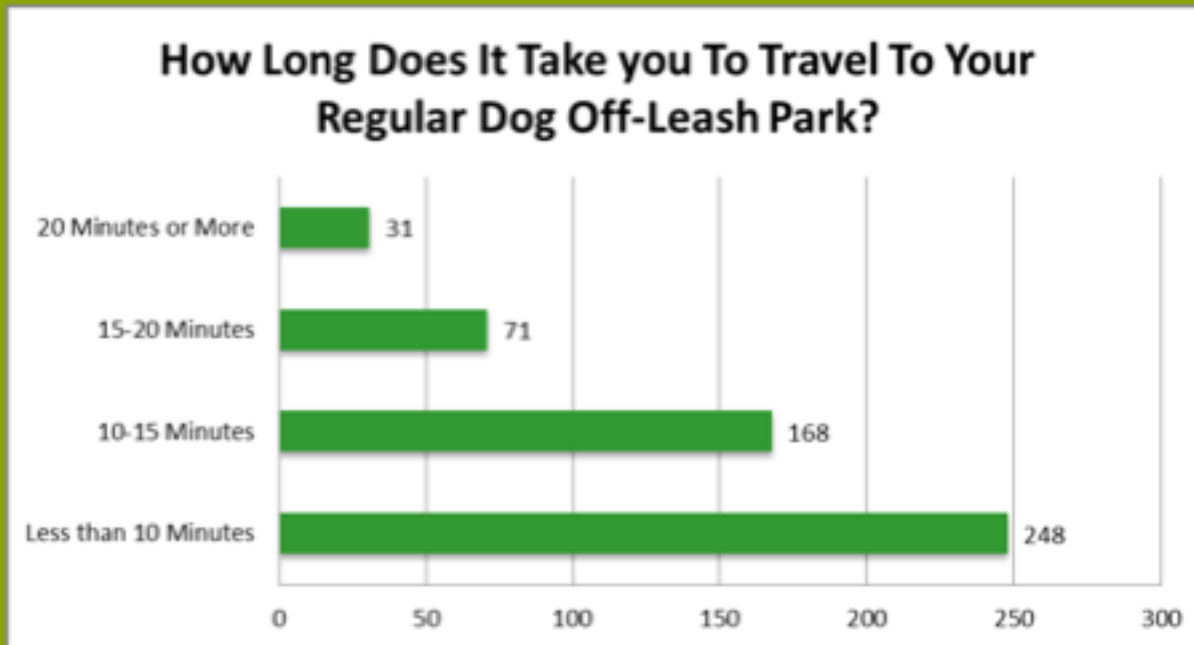
How often respondents went to dog off-leash areas	Total percentage
Daily	14%
4-5 times a week	17%
2-3 times a week	30%
Once a week	22%
Less Often	17%

- » One third of Townsville residents walk to dog parks.
- » Results suggest that there is no need to install bike racks at dog parks.

- » Over 80% respondents are going to a dog off-leash area at least once a week.
- » Over 50% are going more than twice a week.

How respondents travelled to dog off-leash areas	Total percentage
Car	62%
Walk	34%
Cycle	1%
Other	3%

# RESULTS



## Total Percentage

20 min – 6%

15-20 min 14%

10-15 min 32%

< 10 min 47%

- » Very few people will travel more than 15 minutes to get to a dog park.
- » The closer the dog park the more likely residents will walk to the facility.

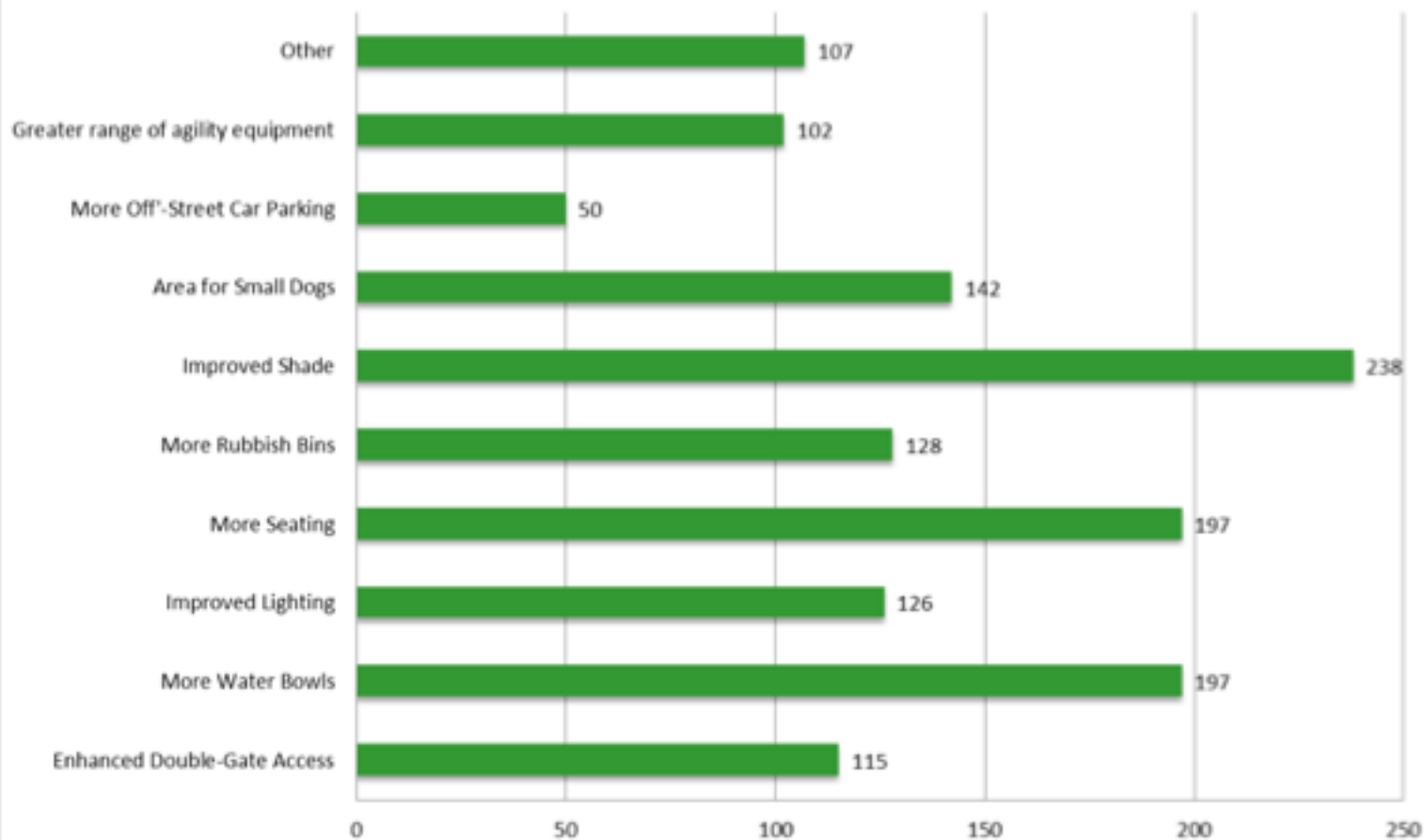
# RESULTS

- » Restrictions from visiting a dog park – Over 50% are beyond council's control.
- » Lack of seating, shade and travel distance do restrict usage rates.
- » Sunday and Saturday are the most popular days to visit the dog park.
- » Tuesday the least.

Restriction	Total Percentage
Poor Weather	22%
Lack of Time	14%
Travel Distance	9%
Conflict with other Dogs	17%
Lack of Seating	9%
Lack of Shade	13%
Lack of Small Dog Off-Leash Area	7%
Lack of Parking	3%
Other	6%

# RESULTS

How Could Dog Off-Leash Parks be Improved?



## Total Percentage

Shade 17%

Water Bowls 14%

Seating 14%

Small Dogs 11%

Lighting 9%

Bins 9%

Double-Gate 8%

Agility Equipment 7%

Other 7%

Parking 4%

# HOW COULD THEY BE IMPROVED

- » Generally, respondents want more embellishments: natural shade (trees), seating, water bowls, bins and water bowls
- » Visual observation did not support the need for lighting and agility equipment.
- » Dog parks were empty by 6:15pm and few dogs were observed using agility equipment.
- » These results point to the need for a standardised level of service.



# OVERALL SATISFACTION

Dog Park Size	Total Percentage
Too Big	Almost Zero %
About Right	74%
Too Small	26%

- » The bigger the area the better when it comes to dog parks.
- » When the area of the park is between 3000-4000 sqm the size satisfaction rate increases.

- » Over 90% of respondents thought that dog parks were at least of a satisfactory standard.
- » This is a good result for council and our standard of service.

Level Of Satisfaction	Total Percentage
Very High	10%
High	41%
Average	41%
Low	6%
Very Low	2%

# WHAT WE ALSO LEARNT

- » Two dog parks have their own Facebook pages run by members of the public.
- » Residents are developing strong social networks and making friendship at dog parks.
- » They may not know each others names, but they know each others dogs.
- » Residents who use dog parks are terrified that council is going to take away their park
- » Residents who use dog parks are conducting routine maintenance

# WHAT DID WE FIND OUT – SUMMARY

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- » Usage Rates of Dog Parks
- » Travel Time and Travel Mode to Dog Parks
- » Times of Patronage and Usage Duration
- » Required Embellishment Standard
- » Preferred Size of Dog Parks
- » Where our Facilities Could be Improved
- » Which Facilities are the most Popular with Residents

# WHAT WE DID WITH THE INFORMATION?

- » This information was utilised to develop a comprehensive strategy that provided guidance on:
  - Preferred Dog Off-Leash Area Embellishment Standards (Design Guideline was developed)
  - Determine the Level of Community Expectation for Dog Off-Leash Areas (Planning Principles were proposed)
  - Determine Suitable Locations for Future Dog Off-Leash Areas (Future Location were identified)
  - Council developed a Sustainable Program of Works
  - These works were Prioritise against other upgrade works within our Parks Upgrade Programs.

# SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- » The majority of dog park users will travel less than 15 minutes to access a facility.
- » All efforts should be made to locate dog parks within close walking distances.
- » Socialisation is a big factor in why people go to dog parks.
- » Residents want to go to places where there are other residents.
- » There needs to be a balance between promoting walkability, serviceability and affordability.



# SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- » Currently the hypothesis is that a spatial arrangement of 3-4km of diameter will provide an adequate level of service.
- » This would require 8 additional dog parks to be built in Townsville. The following areas have been identified as network gaps:
  - Bushland Beach - Free run (current financial year) and Peggy Banfield Park (2016 – funding reliant)
  - Kelso - Charles Moroney Park (current financial year)
  - Mount Louisa - High Vista Park (proposed for 2015/16)
  - Bohle Plains (Kalynda Chase)
  - Wulguru; (likely location – Wulguru Park or Edison Park)
  - Garbutt; (Harold Phillips Park – currently unplanned)
  - Cosgrove
  - Deeragun

# Spatial Arrangements Cont.

- » This is not to suggest that all of these dog parks will necessarily have to be built by council.
- » Opportunities for the creation of dog parks by a developer needs to be pursued. (In particular at Kalynda Chase and Cosgrove)
- » On completion of the Townsville Dog Park Design Guidelines and review of the survey data , Infrastructure Services will commence internal discussion with Planning and Development regarding dog parks.

# MODIFYING OUR PLANNING SCHEME

- » The current planning scheme advises that dog off-leash areas may be desirable and/or conditioned, dependent on location, need and adjacency to other infrastructure / services in Corridor, District Recreation and Regional Recreation Parks.
- » Consideration needs to be given to allowing a small proportion of dog parks in selected District Sport Parks
- » It is not proposed that dog parks would be allowed within Regional Recreation Parks (North Shore possible exception)

# UPGRADING CURRENT FACILITIES

- » Council needs to balance new facilities against the wants of users to upgrade existing facilities;
- » Natural shade, seating, double gate access, water bowl and drinking facilities across the existing network need to be improved.
- » Survey results on the need for 'small dog off-leash areas' are inclusive. Further investigation required.
- » These facilities also need a different fencing product, as a specific number of small dog breeds can run through the fencing.

# CONCLUSION

- » The dog off-leash survey has provided a large amount of data, which will guide the development and management of the dog off-leash network for many years to come.
- » Recently, Council adopted the strategic direction on dog off-leash facilities proposed on this work
- » Works are continuing with our Planning and Development area regarding developers building dog off-leash areas, modifying the embellishment standards and the adoption with the Planning Scheme of the Townsville's Dog Park Guidelines.



# CONCLUSION

- » Overall this work help to develop an appropriate long-term strategy that has informed key decision makers, so that adequate planning can be put in place so that a future dog off leash network is affordable for council and it will meet the needs of local residents.

