



City of
Fremantle

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

DOG EXERCISE AND PROHIBITED AREAS POLICY

Summary of survey results

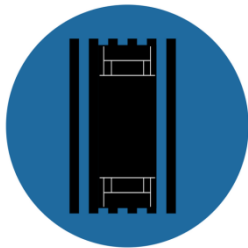
What we heard from people who took the survey



Most people support the dog on leash requirement in dog exercise areas when sports clubs are using the grounds for training.



Many people who exercise their dog at Samson Park are opposed to the idea of the bush forever sites becoming dog prohibited areas.



We received lots of ideas to resolve the issue of dogs causing damage to the cricket pitch at Stevens Street Reserve, from making the reserve a dog on leash area to creating separate areas for sports and dogs. Other suggestions included more education and signage, monitoring and enforcement.



Many of you would like to see the policy supported with better signage, amenities and community education by the City of Fremantle.

The City of Fremantle is proposing some changes to the *Dog Exercise and Prohibited Areas Policy*, which guides management of the City's dog exercise areas.

Proposed changes to the draft *Dog Exercise and Prohibited Areas Policy* include:

- A requirement for dogs to be on a leash in dog exercise area when the grounds are being used for training by registered sporting clubs.
- Making the bushland area in Sir Frederick Samson Park a dog prohibited area, to help conserve the remnant native vegetation and protect the wildlife that inhabits the area. The will remain a dog exercise area.

This report includes a summary of what we heard from our community survey on the proposed policy changes. The survey was opt-in and represents the views of those who chose to participate.

SURVEY FAST FACTS



200+ responses
Online and email



13+ postcodes
Within and outside of Fremantle
local government area



Open 4 weeks
9 November to 8
December 2017

Why we held the survey

The draft policy was presented to council in September 2107. Council deferred its decision on the policy to enable further information to be obtained on some of the issues raised when the policy was debated, including dogs in sporting areas, dogs in bushland areas and the enforcement requirements of the policy.

The survey asked people to tell us:

1. What are your thoughts about changing the policy to require dogs on a leash when the grounds are being used for sports training?
2. What are your thoughts about changing the policy to make the bush areas of Samson Park a dog prohibited area?
3. Do you think the policy adequately covers situations when you feel dogs should be on leash in a dog exercise area?

4. How do you think the issue of restricting dog access to the cricket pitch on Stevens Street Reserve could be resolved?
5. Are there any other changes that you think are important and would like to see included in the policy?

The information collected from the community survey will be presented to council, together with information from our discussions with various sporting clubs and will help inform our recommendation to council.

About the results and the analysis

The survey included multiple choice and open ended text questions.

The open text responses were analysed and themed according to topic. Examples of the comments we received have been included in this report.

Because the survey was opt-in, the results represent the values and opinions of those who chose to participate only.

Not everyone completed every question and some questions allowed people to choose more than one answer.

A question about Samson Park was added during the consultation and the time frame for comment extended, in response to complaints that a question about making the bushland a dog prohibited area was not included in the survey when first launched. Feedback about the proposed changes for Samson Park received prior to the inclusion of the Samson Park question were collated and included in the analysis of responses.

The % values in this report are for the responses we received for the question.

How we told people about the survey



Who took the survey

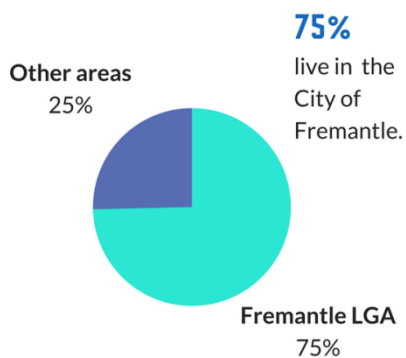
Within the sample of 213 survey respondents, the majority lived within the City of Fremantle (75% n = 159), with the highest number of responses coming from people living in Fremantle (24%, n = 51) and Samson (19%, n = 40).

We also heard from people who live in neighbouring localities (25%, n = 54), and use reserves in the City of Fremantle for dog exercise, sport and recreation.

RESPONDENT PROFILE



213
people took
the survey.



People from more than 13 suburbs
responded to the survey.

Fremantle (24%)	Beaconsfield (6%)
Samson (19%)	Hilton (6%)
White Gum Valley (7%)	North Fremantle (6%)
	South Fremantle (6%)
	O'Connor (1%)
East Fremantle (5%)	Other (15%)
Bicton (3%)	
Palmyra (1%)	
Hamilton Hill (1%)	

WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR INTEREST IN THE POLICY ?



DOG OWNERS

I regularly take my dog to dog exercise areas in the City of Fremantle.

29%



PLAY AND RECREATION

I like to use reserves in the City of Fremantle for play or recreation.

23%



RESIDENTS

I live near a dog exercise area in the City of Fremantle.

23%



SPORTING CLUBS

I'm a member of a sporting club in the City of Fremantle.

20%



OTHER

None of the above describe my interest in the policy.

3%

Proposed dog on leash requirement when grounds are used for sports training

We asked for your thoughts on changing the policy to require dogs be on a leash when the grounds are being used for training by sports clubs, in line with our revised definition of a sporting event in the draft policy.

Under the existing policy, dog exercise areas become a dog on leash area if being used for a council authorised activity, function or sporting event.

We wanted to know if the definition of a 'sporting event' to include organised games *and training* by registered sporting clubs, as described in the revised draft policy, was acceptable to sporting clubs, dog-owners and people who use the City's reserves for play and recreation.

- **58%** said that you support the change.
- **29%** said that you oppose the change.
- **13%** said that you weren't sure.

Support

Overall 58 % (n = 123) of respondents supported changing the policy to require dogs be on a leash when the grounds are being used for sports training. When we gave you more space to tell us *why* you support the proposed change you told us ...

It will make the grounds safer for all.

"I think this change allows for protection of both people and animals while the grounds are being used for sports training. The clarity will hopefully prevent any misdemeanours or injuries to either party using the grounds."

Shared use of the reserve requires everyone to show consideration.

"It is distracting at best and dangerous at worst for dogs to interfere with organised sporting activities."

"The sporting community has been very supportive of dogs on playing fields when not in use, I think dog owners need to let the players play without interference from dogs."

Owners are not in charge of their dog when they are off leash.

“It is a matter of time before a dog is seriously hurt at a cricket training session with the amount of balls and people around. Some dogs walk right through the middle of the main training areas at Stevens Reserve as the owner has no control of them when they are off the leash.”

Oppose

Around one-third of respondents (29 % n = 61) were opposed to changing the policy to require dogs be on a leash in a dog exercise area if the grounds are being used for sports training. Those who don't support the dog on leash rule when training is taking place told us ...

More rules are unnecessary because most people do the right thing.

“I love Freo's dog culture and don't like these blanket rules. I believe responsible dog owners should continue and there should be more accountability for irresponsible dog owners.”

“There does need to be this many rules. People need to use common sense and the minimal times this may occur will sort itself out.”

“More regulations make it more difficult to just get on with it, people are aware that dogs may get in the way when sports are on and take action themselves. We don't need time and effort put into this when people are already doing it on their own accord.”

Responsible dog owners are being marginalised for the actions of a few irresponsible owners.

“Dogs and their owners have just as much "right" to the use of exercise areas as others. Keeping in mind also that the dog owners are more likely to be local residents and hence significantly contributing to the amenities being enjoyed by the sporting clubs.”

“There are a lot of really strict rules about dogs which cater for all the badly behaved dogs. But it sucks for those of us with well-behaved dogs that don't actually need to be on the lead. So maybe dog owner education is better!”

Sports should not dictate use of the City's reserves. They are for everyone to use and enjoy at all times.

"There are limited times where dog owners can exercise their dogs generally after work which coincides with the time that sport teams train. For example Stevens street reserve is used by hockey all winter and cricket all summer. If the cricket nets are being used why on the other side of the park 100's of metres away should my dog be confined by a lead. There are more dog owners in the City of Fremantle than people who practice sport so they shouldn't be persecuted so people can practice their sport."

"Because there are so many dog owners within the City of Fremantle and they are just getting further and further pushed out by sports training. People have too much fear these days and complain way too much that ruins these beautiful parks for everyone - they are NOT only for sports activities."

Unsure

13% (n = 29) of respondents were uncertain about the proposed change. When asked why, some had concerns about how the proposed policy would be interpreted and applied, suggesting it was reasonable to require dogs to be on a leash if near a club training session, but unreasonable if they were well away from where training was taking place. Others said they did not exercise their dog in a reserve that was also used for sport, or did not comment.

"I exercise my dog at Gil Fraser reserve which is quite a large space. When football or cricket training is on, we make sure that we don't have dogs off a leash anywhere near the training and never off leashes on game days. It is unreasonable for dogs to have to be on a leash 3-400 meters away from sports training? Does this apply also to the gym that operates at the oval, whose participants often jog laps? Is that considered sports training?"

"It would depend on how much of the grounds were actually being used by the sporting activities. If there was still a large open area adjacent and the dogs were far enough away from the pitch/players, then why not let the dogs continue to be off the leash?"

"It makes sense that dogs should be on a leash when sports training occupies the whole space but not when it occupies just a small corner of a large area."

Dogs off leash in Samson Park bushland

Many people who exercise their dog at Samson Park are opposed to the bush forever sites becoming dog prohibited areas.

Approximately one-third of the survey respondents commented on the proposal to prohibit dogs in the bush areas of Samson Park and only allow dogs off leash in the central grassed area. Of the respondents who commented on Samson Park:

- **77%** say they are opposed.
- **19%** support the change.
- **4%** say they're not sure.

30% (n=63) of the survey respondents commented on the proposal to make the Samson Park bushland a dog prohibited area. Of this sample, 77% (n= 49) are opposed to dogs possibly being prohibited from the area. As reflected in the comments, many people in this cohort regularly walk their dog off leash on the bush trails. They told us ...

Dogs are not wholly responsible for environmental damage.

"Walking dogs on the tracks has caused less damage to the environment than the frequent spraying for weeds. Some sections of bush have remained bare following bushfires quite some time ago. The tracks are showing wear as no woodchip has been laid to prevent erosion for quite a few years. Native wisteria which was planted around the perimeter fence was allowed to establish and then whipper snapped by a worker tidying weeds."

"Non-dog walkers, runners and bike riders would all be contributing to any degradation that is occurring, laying the blame solely on dogs and their owners is rather unjustified and we, the dog walking community of Samson Park, should not be punished!"

"I live close to the park and often at night I can hear motorbikes being ridden though the park, this would have a more devastating effect than dogs."

Limiting dogs to the central grassed area of the park will congest this section with dogs and create problems.

“The grass area in the middle of the park is entirely too small to accommodate the number of dogs who enjoy this park. There is a wide range of dog sizes and temperaments, and the bush tracks allow room to separate dogs when necessary.”

The trails could be upgraded or managed differently to accommodate dog walkers and protect the bushland.

“In the north east corner the vegetation grows right up to (and sometimes onto) the trail. I believe the worse areas could be improved by introduction of small fences/barriers such as in the other trail areas. Alternatively some trails could be closed off, like the trail that runs from the south west corner to the concrete path (Sowden Drive to playground), as there are alternative trails in that area.”

“A further preventative measure is to put up fences to keep dogs out of the bush and on the dirt tracks. So many dogs already keep to the tracks, but if indeed damage is being done, this would be a more balanced solution than restricting us completely from this beautiful bush.”

Community education is the answer, not banning dogs

“The public need education in dog behaviour and control. Prohibition is an unnecessarily heavy handed and disappointing choice of management which seems ill considered. I strongly urge the Council to reconsider this policy.”

“It would be better to work with the users of the park if there are ongoing concerns, rather than just banning them.”

It would be a serious loss to the people who exercise their dog t Samson Park if the bush became a dog prohibited area.

“The dog walkers I have discussed this with in Samson Park are incredulous and unable to accept they won’t have access to take their dogs along those favourite paths.”

“I and many others don't want this to change.”

“This area has been off lead for dogs for many, many years, so it is an extreme measure to ban people from walking their dogs in the bushland completely. This leisure activity has great value to those that use it and the sense of community that is treasured by users is vital to the health of the local area.”

“The park is great place for dog owners and non-dog owners and part of the appeal is to be able to walk along the bush tracks and feel as though you are actually in the middle of the bush, not suburbia. I love my daily walks through the park with my dog, to see an end to this would be very sad indeed.”

19% (n=12) of the respondents who commented on proposed dog restrictions at Samson Park said they support the change. Those who support limiting the dog off leash area to the central grassed area of Samson Park, told us...

The conservation values of Samson Park are important and need to be protected.

“We need to protect what remaining bushland we have left in the City of Fremantle as a haven for flora and fauna that are native. I also believe that non dog owners should be able to have a safe bushwalk without the disturbance of dogs off a leash.”

“I own two dogs who love chasing birds if given the chance. Native fauna cannot compete with dogs or cats for that matter so protecting Samson Park flora and fauna is important.”

“We need to protect the bush areas as they are getting smaller and the wildlife needs to be kept safe.”

“When we first moved to Samson, ten years ago, there were lots of large bobtail lizards and skinks, they're all gone now, dispatched by the family 'staffie'. Some of the lizards were as big as I have ever seen, in fact I have never seen bigger, but they're all dead now. My neighbour tells me there used to be possums and quendas all long dead. I have a passion for wildflowers, we see less and less in the park every year. “

Dogs make the park unpleasant.

“The BBQ area smells of dog urine and the smell of dog faeces around the seating areas is disgusting. You can't sit on the grass as you're always within yards of someone else's mess. It's such a shame that it's basically a dog toilet. It would be nice to have a park that everyone can enjoy, not just those with dogs.”

A small number of respondents (4% n=3) said they weren't sure about the proposed changes, indicating that they do not use the park or were uncertain about how the dog restriction to the bush could be achieved without erecting fences or requiring dogs on leads at all times.

Policy scope

We asked if you thought the policy sufficiently covered situations when dogs in a dog exercise area should be on leash and half of the respondents thought it did. About one third said it didn't and we asked for your suggestions on how the policy could be changed to address your concerns.

We wanted to know if we had the right balance with the dog on leash rules in the revised policy, in response to concerns raised with us by some sporting clubs and the community.

- **49%** said yes.
- **29%** said no.
- **22%** said they weren't sure.

If you thought there were other situations where dogs should be on a leash in a dog exercise area, we asked you to tell us how you thought it could be addressed by the policy. 50 people responded to this question and the suggestions are listed in order of the number of times mentioned:

- Amend the draft policy and **delete the restriction to make the bushland area in Sir Frederick Samson Park a dog prohibited area.** (15)
- **Remove all sporting grounds from the list of dog exercise areas** in the policy – they should be dog on leash at all times or a dog prohibited area. (12)
- **Create separate areas for sports and dogs** at Stevens Street Reserve. (7)
- **Dogs should be allowed off leash if they are away from sports events.** (3)
- **Dogs should be on a leash near playgrounds** under the policy. (2)
- **More signage and enforcement is needed at the beaches** (South and Leighton) where many dogs are off their leash outside the designated dog exercise areas (2)
- **Stevens Reserve should be a dog prohibited area** (2)
- The **fenced playground in Samson Park should be extended** if the policy is changed so children are safe in an area which will have a greater number of dogs. (1)

A number of suggestions for additional dog-off leash areas were made, including:

- stretches of bush near Dick Lawrence Park.
- Booyeembara Park.
- Bathers Beach.

Stevens Street Reserve

We asked for suggestions to resolve the issue of dogs causing damage to the cricket pitch at Stevens Street Reserve. There were lots of ideas, from making the reserve a dog on leash area to creating separate areas for sport and dogs. Other suggestions included more education and signage, monitoring and enforcement.

As well as being a popular dog exercise area, Stevens Street Reserve is also home to the Fremantle Districts Cricket Club. The club raised concerns about damage to the pitch caused by dogs and we asked for suggestions to limit dogs going on to the pitch that would be acceptable to the cricket club and those who exercise their dog at Stevens Reserve.

109 people responded to this question and we received 121 suggestions (some had more than one suggestion). Your suggestions are themed and listed in order of frequency of mentions:

- **Dogs should be on a lead at all times** (31) because of digging, mess left behind and/or safety for children and players.

 “The cricket pitch can sometimes be covered owners are unable to control the direction their dogs run causing damage to the cover. Dogs off the lead are also impacting areas of grass cover during the winter and summer sporting seasons through digging leaving bare patches and holes in the turf. I am a dog owner and always walk my dog on a leash, I do not feel that my dog suffers because of it.”
- **Temporary exclusion** (more than a simple rope) to separate the wicket and pitch during the season or during matches to protect it and separate users (19).
- **Fully fenced permanent** dog exercise area to permanently separate uses, because it is used year-round for sport and is the only way to keep the two uses separate (17).
- **Move** dog exercise area elsewhere (15)
- **Education and signage.** More signage to tell people to keep their dogs on a lead during a game or stick to controlled area. The damage that is being done is explained/communicated to people. (15)
- **More monitoring and enforcement** or fines for owners that don't pick up their dogs mess or allow dogs into wrong area (10)

- **No change is required (7).**

“I know that everyone is very aware of the dogs not going onto the pitch and certainly make new dog owners to the park very aware that the roped off area is a totally no go zone. It’s an important meeting place for many and good for the mental health of the community. The amount of dogs going on the pitch is very minimal. The current roping system seems to work - dog owners seem to respect it. The current temporary fencing and signage should be sufficient.”

- **Owner management** – dogs need to be in control of owner at all times, owners need to stop them digging and clean up their mess. Owners need to take notice of the signs put up around the pitch areas and not ignore them (4).
- **Other amenities required.** Put in a tap and waste bin in this area to help keep animals hydrated and mess cleaned up, add more dog bags (3).

104 people skipped this question. Of those who skipped:

- 46 already thought the policy adequately covered situations when dogs should be on leash in a dog exercise area.
- 31 did not think the policy adequately covered situations when dogs should be on leash in a dog exercise area.
- The remainder weren’t sure or did not comment.

Other changes suggested by respondents

The final question in the survey asked respondents if there were any other changes they would like to see included in the policy.

The majority of respondents indicated that they did not support the proposed changes to the policy for Samson Park, and re-stated their concerns.

The majority of respondents also indicated that they did not accept dogs were responsible for environmental damage to the bushland, as indicated by the responses below:

- I feel the proposed banning of dogs in the bushland area of Sir Frederick Samson Park to be totally unfair!
- I do not understand how dogs walking through these areas on the trails that have been made will have an impact on the conserve of the remnant bush land. Humans using the areas can do just as much/if not more damage than dogs.
- I do not think dogs should be restricted from using bush paths in Samson Park - if the dog is not controllable (ie. goes into the bush/attacks wildlife) it should be on a leash on those paths but otherwise if they stay on the path they are not doing any damage, and definitely not more than a person walking.
- I don't believe it is necessary to make the bushland area in Samson Park a dog prohibited area. Whilst I know they contribute to the degradation I think it is probably human interaction that causes most damage.
- Majority of the tracks are fenced off anyway so no further damage should be done from dogs. People walking and taking prams etc through the area everyday do just as much damage.
- Please do not change the policy at Samson Park. I've going there for years with my dog and never had or seen any problems between the dogs and local wildlife.
- Why change something that is a pleasure for so many people and their dogs without any real evidence that damage is being done by the dogs themselves. It seems another example of bureaucracy just for the sake of it. Please, please, please rethink this policy change it would spoil the enjoyment of so many people's lives when it really does not seem at all necessary.
- I oppose the restriction you want to impose to the Park. There are so few areas left near the city in which to do this.
- Please rethink this aspect of the proposal before you get a deluge of complaints by both dog owners and non-dog owners finding the increased interactions by concentrating these groups together becoming problematic. The policy is actually quite contradictory. On one level, you are putting dogs on a lead where children are training for sport, but then you in the next breath, you are reducing the off-lead area to the only area that children in Samson can play with a ball.

- I would love to see any evidence of dogs being a problem at the park cyclists riding in the bush, rubbish and rainbow lorikeets would be the biggest threat to the park not the dogs.
- It would be good to see a trial of dogs on the lead at Sir Frederick Samson rather than prohibiting access altogether

Many respondents said they would like to see the policy supported with better signage, amenities and community education by the City of Fremantle. A number of people suggested that the policy required stronger enforcement by the City, particularly those with playgrounds. It was also suggested that more separation of uses (parks for play, parks for sport, parks for dog exercise), this would limit conflicts between different uses of the reserve. “All dogs should be on leash no matter how well behaved they are in park where children are around. If there are a few parks in the City of Fremantle that are JUST FOR DOGS, then parents will know that they enter the park knowing that there’s a risk of unleashed dogs.”

Respondents also suggested changes to the policy for the following reserves:

- The current dog on leash requirement at Booyeembara Park to be amended to allow dogs off leash, either in a designated area or at certain times.
- Opposition to the extension of the dog off leash area at Leighton Beach.
- Allowing dogs off leash at Bathers Beach, for the same hours they are allowed off leash on the Esplanade.
- Harvey Beach
- Freeman Loop (grass area).