



# Off Leash Dog Exercise Area Strategy

SEPTEMBER 2013

maitland  
city council





## Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Aims and Objectives .....	1
2. Legislative Framework .....	2
3. Benefits of Pet Ownership .....	2
4. Trends in Planning for Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas (OLDEA) .....	3
5. Planning Context/Overview .....	3
5.1 Design Guidelines for Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas .....	5
5.2 Planning Areas .....	5
5.3 Existing OLDEA's - Location .....	6
5.4 Site Analysis .....	9
5.5 Dog ownership in Maitland .....	15
5.6 Benchmarking Exercise .....	15
6 Demand for OLDEA .....	16
6.1 Community Profile .....	16
6.2 Trends in Recreation & Sport Impacting on Provision of OLDEA .....	17
6.3 Community Consultation .....	17
7. Supply vs Demand .....	19
7.1 Summary of Outcomes for Existing OLDEA's .....	19
7.2 Proposed New OLDEA's .....	20
7.3 Summary of OLDEA's Proposed for the Maitland LGA .....	23
7.4 Registered Dog Training Club Activities .....	23
7.5 Large dog events and dog training activities .....	23
8 Action Implementation Plan .....	24
Appendix 1 .....	28
Off Leash Dog Exercise Area Design Guidelines .....	28

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Maitland Local Government Area covers 396km<sup>2</sup> and is one of the fastest growing inland regional cities in Australia with a current population of 71,547 (Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy 2012). This figure is expected to grow to more than 80,000 by 2023. Of the existing 71,547 population, approximately 17% have dogs.

Following the introduction of the Companion Animals Act 1998, Maitland City Council developed a Plan of Management for Dog Exercise Areas (1999). This document was developed mainly to address Council's legislative responsibilities such as the requirement for designated Dog Exercise Areas within Local Government Areas.

A comprehensive review of Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas has not been undertaken since the establishment of the Plan of Management (over 14 years ago) and in this time the recreational context in which dog exercise areas were initially planned for in Maitland has significantly changed. This can be seen in regards to population growth, a proportional increase in dog ownership levels, individual sport and fitness activities on the rise (as opposed to team organised sports), and indirect factors such as household size and private yards decreasing.

This Off Leash Dog Exercise Area (OLDEA) Strategy aims to take a strategic, structured and integrated approach towards planning and managing dog exercise areas across the city of Maitland.

## 1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Maitland City Council has developed a long-term vision statement, in consultation with the community, to describe the desired future for the City. The community's Long-Term Vision has been defined as:

"We strive for our community and recreation services and facilities to meet the needs of our growing and active community" (Maitland +10, 2013)

Keeping this vision in mind, specific objectives have been developed for this strategy and include:

- To balance the needs and wishes of dog owners with the needs of the community for accessible and safe parks
- To review existing Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas and supporting infrastructure
- To identify gaps in the provision of Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas and ensure equitable distribution across the city;
- Plan for Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas across the city in line with expected population growth

## 2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In planning for Dog Exercise Areas, requirements of the Companion Animals Act 1998 need to be acknowledged and incorporated into the strategy as all Local Councils have a responsibility to productively manage dog exercise in their areas. The Act provides the following direct and indirect legislative obligations on Maitland City Council in relation to 'open space areas':

- There must be at least one public place in the area of the local authority that is an off leash area
- It is the duty of a local authority for a place that is commonly used for exercising dogs (including an off leash area) to provide sufficient rubbish receptacles for the proper disposal of the faeces of dogs that defecate in the place
- Dogs are prohibited within 10m of playground equipment
- Dogs are prohibited within 10m of food preparation and eating areas such as BBQ's and picnic tables

Aside from the legislative requirement to provide dog exercise areas, there is also documented research outlining health benefits to those who have pets/dogs. This data further supports the benefits to be gained in establishing dog exercise areas.

## 3. BENEFITS OF PET OWNERSHIP

There is a significant amount of documented research that outlines the benefits of pet ownership. This further highlights the need for OLDEA's. The Australian Animal Companion Council (2010) confirm that:

- People who own pets typically visit the doctor less often and use less medication
- Pet owners on average have lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure
- Pet owners recover more quickly from illness and surgery
- Pet owners deal better with stressful situations
- Pet owners show lower levels of risk factors associated with heart disease
- Elderly pet owners report an increased quality of life and companionship
- Pet owners are less likely to report feeling lonely

Of particular relevance to this strategy is the research cited in living well together, a publication by the Petcare Information and Advisory Service (2009), which highlights the growing body of research that shows how dogs are likely to contribute to the health and well-being of dog owners and their families:

- Dog walkers are more likely to experience social contact and conversation than those that walk alone
- Dogs motivate their owners to walk more often and meet recommended levels of physical activity
- Children who own dogs are less likely to become overweight or obese
- Young girls who own a dog spend more time per day in physical activity and as a result achieve half the recommended level of physical activity for children just through the activities they undertake with their dog
- 5 -6 year olds are 50% less likely to be overweight or obese compared who with those who did not own a dog

## 4. TRENDS IN PLANNING FOR OFF LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS (OLDEA)

Following an extensive review of a broad range of planning studies/reports on OLDEA's across numerous LGA's, the following key points have been highlighted:

- Local Councils across Australia have adopted varying approaches to accommodate off leash activities in an attempt to reduce conflict between users, some examples include time –share areas where dogs are permitted off a leash but only at certain times, dogs permitted on leash and designated off leash areas
- There are no set standards of provision for OLDEA's. Standards are generally determined by levels of dog ownership in each LGA, demographics, open space available etc.
- Many Councils are now starting to plan for OLDEA the same way they would for a local park, playground, i.e. design guidelines are developed and significant thought is given to where these spaces should be located within the open space network
- Although the Companion Animals Act still acts as a guideline for what Local government should be doing, many Councils are going above and beyond what their legislative requirements are in providing OLDEA's (e.g. shade and seating, agility equipment).
- There is generally an increase across the board in demand for OLDEA's, this could be linked to a recent trend in moving away from organised sports and an increased participation in walking/walking the dog.

These current trends and practices have informed the development of Maitland City Council's (MCC) OLDEA strategy.

## 5. PLANNING CONTEXT/OVERVIEW

It is important that the Off Leash Dog Exercise Area Strategy be applied in a context, which is consistent with other planning documents supported by Council. The table below lists the relevant Council reports/strategic plans as they are relevant to the dog exercise strategy.

STRATEGIC PLAN	LINKS TO OFF LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREA STRATEGY
Plan of Management for Dog Exercise Areas (1999)	This document identifies existing off leash areas but is out-dated in regards to management of these areas into the future. The existing plan needs to be reviewed and updated to reflect the contents of this strategy.
Maitland +10 Delivery Plan (2013-2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Listed as one of the 19 community outcomes within this plan is - Our community and recreation services and facilities meet the needs of our growing and active communities. Our recreation, sporting and leisure facilities will evolve and change to keep pace with community needs. Improvements to Council's OLDEA directly relate to these outcomes</li> </ul>
Maitland Open Space Strategy 2011 (Draft)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· There will be an increasing demand for walking, dog socialising</li> <li>· The most common activities undertaken in public open space are walking or walking the dog, followed by sport.</li> <li>· In regards to the catchment hierarchy, it is stated that OLDEA's should be provided for within social/family recreation open space areas categorised as Local Planning Area open space (areas that generally serve a group of suburbs).</li> </ul>
Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy (2012 Edition) (Draft)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· This document discusses future population growth within the Maitland LGA which has a direct impact on the provision of OLDEA's. This data is discussed later in the document.</li> </ul>

STRATEGIC PLAN	LINKS TO OFF LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREA STRATEGY
City Wide Section 94 Contributions Plan (2006-2016) Review of Open Space and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Identified that dog ownership in the city was high with 1 in 8 persons having a registered dog.</li> <li>· The plan also states there is a need for additional off leash areas in the new developing areas of the city.</li> <li>· Need to improve number, quality and ancillary facilities supporting off leash areas – a coordinated strategy.</li> </ul>
Section 94 Contribution Plan City Wide (2006) and Section 94A Contribution Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Council's adopted Section 94 plans (Citywide, S94A, and Thornton) make provision for additional open space areas as well as the embellishment of existing. There may be opportunities to draw upon these plans in regards to the implementation of the strategy.</li> </ul>
Maitland Social Plan (2009)	<p><b>Young people 12-25 years</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Priority 5 – art, culture, and recreation – Strategy 6.3 – enhance the quality and availability of affordable sport and recreation facilities (including OLDEA's)</li> </ul> <p><b>Older persons over 55 years old</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Priority 2 – health. Strategy 2.4 – design safe, private and public physical environments that promote physical activity for older people.</li> <li>· Priority 7 – Recreation, culture, heritage &amp; lifelong learning. Strategy 7.2 enhance and develop safe and accessible recreational facilities and public spaces that provide for an ageing population</li> </ul> <p><b>People with a disability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Priority 6 – physical access – strategy 6.2 – design, improve and maintain physical environments that meet Australian Standards for accessibility</li> <li>· Priority 6.3 – remove barriers for physical access to existing community facilities</li> </ul>
Lochinvar Structure Plan (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Identify the community facilities and open space required by the incoming population</li> </ul> <p>The Structure Plan identifies two (2) OLDEA's as part of the Lochinvar Urban Release Area-one on each side of the New England Highway.</p>
Lower Hunter Regional Strategy (2006) – The strategy was re-endorsed in 2010, a new plan is currently being developed	<p>Maitland is identified as a major regional centre with anticipated population growth. As such, additional recreation facilities (such as OLDEA's) will be required to support the growing population.</p>
NSW 2021 State Plan	<p>The provision of OLDEA's relate to the following goals within the NSW 2021 State Plan:</p> <p>Goal 11 – Keep people healthy and out of hospital</p> <p>Goal 27 - Enhance cultural, creative, sporting and recreation opportunities</p>
Future of Australian Sport – CSIRO (2013)	<p>This CSIRO report states that people are fitting sport into their increasingly busy and time fragmented lifestyles to achieve personal health objectives. Participation rates in aerobics – running and walking as well as gym memberships – have all risen sharply over the past decade. These findings suggest that demand for infrastructure such as off leash areas may also see an increase.</p>



## 5.1 DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR OFF LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS

Design guidelines have been developed to support the development of OLDEA's and further guide Council in the types of infrastructure which should be provided. These can be found in Appendix 1.

## 5.2 PLANNING AREAS

From a planning perspective the Maitland LGA is characterised by large areas of flood prone land that has led to a dispersed urban development pattern, with each urban area having its own unique character and identity. Based on this dispersed urban development pattern, planning areas have been established by MCC. In order to be consistent with previously adopted Council documents, the OLDEA strategy has adopted the planning area approach. This approach enables Council to analyse locality specific demand for, and availability of, open space for OLDEA.

For the purposes of this strategy, there are 10 Planning Areas that will be considered when reviewing the supply/ demand of OLDEA's. These include:

1. Lochinvar, North Rural
2. Rutherford North, Aberglasslyn, Oakhampton
3. Telarah, Rutherford South, Farley
4. Gillieston Heights, Mount Dee
5. Central Maitland, Lorn, South Maitland
6. Bolwarra Heights, Largs, Rural North
7. Morpeth, Raworth, Berry Park, Rural East
8. Metford, Thornton, Woodberry
9. East Maitland, Tenambit
10. Green Hills, Ashtonfield, Rathluba

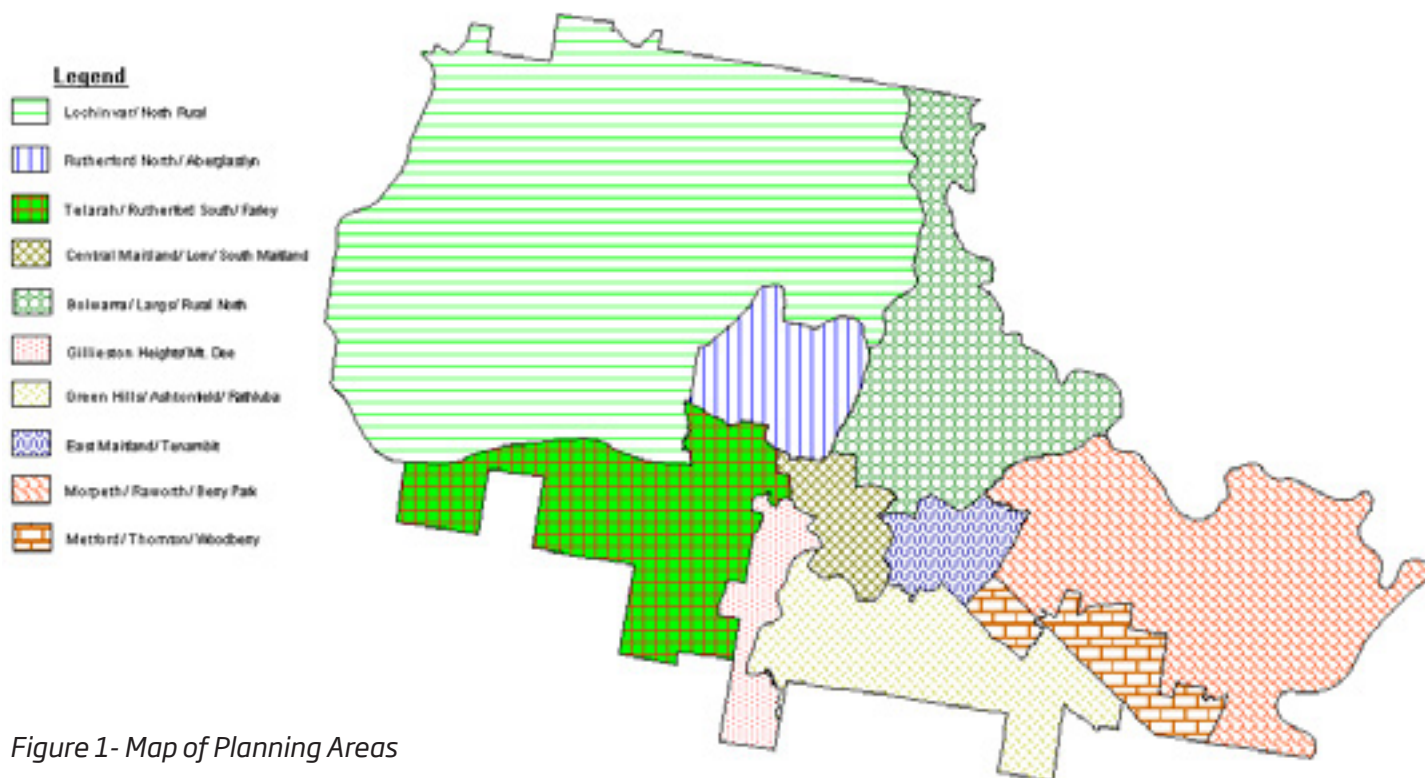


Figure 1- Map of Planning Areas



### 5.3 EXISTING OLDEA'S - LOCATION

Maitland City Council requires all dogs when away from your property to be controlled on a leash (except in Council's designated OLDEA's). Council currently has six (6) designated OLDEA's across the LGA. These are located at:

- Vi Denny-Bowtell Netball Courts (Telarah);
- Verge Street (Telarah);
- Bakers Brickyard Quarry (Raworth);
- Greenhills Gardens (East Maitland);
- Beryl Humble Oval (Tenambit); and
- A&D Lawrence (Thornton).

Aerials are provided for each of these sites on the following pages.



*Vi Denny-Bowtell- Telarah*



*Verge Street- Telarah*





*Beryl Humble- Tenambit*



*Greenhills Gardens- Greenhills*



*Bakers Brickyard Quarry- Raworth*







A&D Lawrence- Thornton

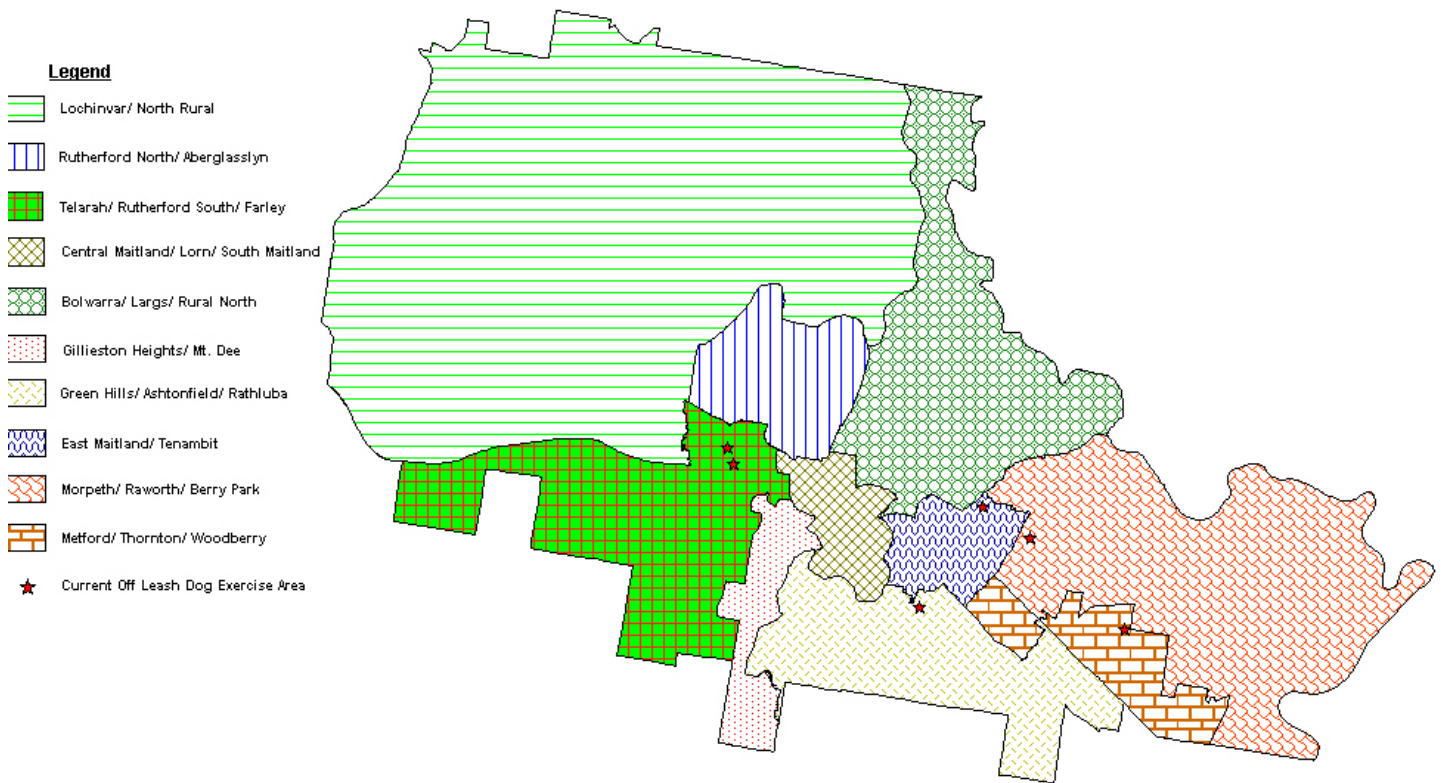


Figure 2- Location Analysis - Current Off Leash Dog Exercise Area Distribution



## 5.4 SITE ANALYSIS

Provided below is a summary outlining each of MCC's existing OLDEA's. These have been analysed based on the Planning Areas they refer to.

OFF LEASH AREA	SUBURB AND PLANNING AREA	LOT AND DP	ZONING	SIZE
Vi Denny-Bowtell	Telarah  Telarah/ Rutherford South/ Farley	Lot 8 DP38959 9	RE1	11,200m2 (1.12Ha)
Greenhills Gardens	East Maitland  Greenhills/ Ashtonfield/ Rathluba	Lot 54 & 67 DP243010, DP262743	RE1	30,740m2 (3.074Ha)

SITE DESCRIPTION	GENERAL COMMENTS
<p>The site contains relatively level terrain and incorporates asphalt netball courts and a playground.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· This parcel of land forms part of Council's regular maintenance program and is well maintained</li> <li>· This facility is centralised and close to a large number of residents</li> <li>· In line with the Companion Animals Act – a 10m buffer zone is required between the OLDEA and the playground. This is not currently in place.</li> <li>· There is Koppers log fencing between the OLDEA and roadway. This type of fencing however, is considered inefficient as it does not pose a significant barrier to dogs within the reserve.</li> <li>· Overall, the boundaries of the OLDEA are not clear which has the potential to cause conflict among the varying users of the public reserve</li> <li>· Based on site inspections and consultation with the community this OLDEA receives minimal use</li> <li>· There is a lack of infrastructure at the site – access to water, bins, seating</li> <li>· There is another OLDEA within 200m, based on the close proximity and duplication of facilities, consideration should be given to decommissioning this site</li> <li>· The signage at the site is out-dated and is not clear in regards to which portion of the reserve is the OLDEA.</li> </ul>
<p>This parcel is a long, narrow area that is heavily planted with trees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· There are large amounts of natural shade</li> <li>· Large open space area</li> <li>· Interesting, varying terrain which may be attractive to dog walkers</li> <li>· This facility is centralised and close to a large number of residents.</li> <li>· Easy access via roadways and footpath network</li> <li>· Off street parking is provided</li> <li>· The area runs along Mitchell Drive which can be a busy road during peak times.</li> <li>· Overall, the boundaries of the OLDEA are not clear which causes confusion for potential users</li> <li>· There is a lack of infrastructure at the site – access to water, bins, seating, improved fencing</li> <li>· The signage at the site is out-dated and is not clear in regards to which portion of the reserve is the OLDEA.</li> <li>· Given the lack of infrastructure at the site and the close proximity to very busy roads, consideration should be given to decommissioning this OLDEA.</li> </ul>

OFF LEASH AREA	SUBURB AND PLANNING AREA	LOT AND DP	ZONING	SIZE
Bakers Brickyard Quarry	Raworth Morpeth/ Raworth/ Berry Park/ Rural East	Lot 63 DP859622	R1	51,160m2 (5.116Ha)
A&D Lawrence	Thornton  Metford/ Thornton/ Woodberry	Lot Number 1537-38 DP832922, Lot Number 1487 DP825224, Lot number 1436 DP825223, Lot Number 1340 DP817761, Lot Number 1180 DP813806, Lot Number 8884 DP786883, Lot Number 887 DP719518 and Lot Number 849 DP703278	RE1	21,230m2 (2.123Ha)
Beryl Humble	Tenambit  Eats Maitland/ Tenambit	Lot 7005 DP1057112	Multi	3,024m2



SITE DESCRIPTION	GENERAL COMMENTS
A large, level open space area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Large open space area</li> <li>· Off street parking is available</li> <li>· This facility is centralised and close to a large number of residents.</li> <li>· Varying terrain which may be attractive to dog walkers</li> <li>· There is a lack of infrastructure at the site – access to water, bins, seating, shade, fencing</li> <li>· The site is located within a flood prone area which limits other uses</li> <li>· The parcel of land does not have a regular maintenance regime and as a result is not well maintained</li> <li>· The site is not fenced which is a major concern as it is located directly alongside Morpeth Road which does become busy at times</li> <li>· A new play space is proposed for the site, additional fencing and signage will need to be considered</li> <li>· The signage at the site is out-dated and is not clear in regards to which portion of the reserve is the OLDEA.</li> <li>· This OLDEA may be suitable for larger scale events and registered dog training club activities.</li> </ul>
A large sloping parcel of open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· This facility is centralised and close to a large number of residents. The site is relatively easy to access with numerous access points</li> <li>· Sited away from heavily trafficked roads</li> <li>· Formalised car parking is available (shared parking for multi-use sports precinct)</li> <li>· Part of a larger recreation hub (the site is large enough for multiple uses without conflicts)</li> <li>· This site is currently being considered for future expansion (off site development works associated with Thornton Shopping centre). An OLDEA will still be provided but needs to keep this in mind</li> <li>· Boundaries of the dog exercise area are not currently defined</li> <li>· There is a lack of infrastructure – bins, fencing, shade, access to water</li> <li>· A drainage area traverses the site</li> <li>· The OLDEA is a fair distance from entry points and there are no internal pathways</li> <li>· There is a lack of infrastructure at the site – access to water, bins, seating, shade, fencing</li> <li>· The signage at the site is out-dated and is not clear in regards to which portion of the reserve is the OLDEA</li> <li>· This OLDEA may be suitable for larger scale events and registered dog training club activities.</li> </ul>
A large open space area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Through site inspections, consultation with the community &amp; key stakeholders, the site is generally not utilised as a OLDEA</li> <li>· The OLDEA is not well located within no clear connections within the open space network</li> <li>· The site borders a fairly busy road at one end</li> <li>· There is a lack of infrastructure at the site- fencing, shade, access to water, bins</li> <li>· The signage at the site is out-dated and is not clear in regards to which portion of the reserve is the OLDEA.</li> <li>· Based on lack of use by the community and site constraints, Consideration should be given to decommissioning this site.</li> </ul>

As demonstrated by the site analysis undertaken for each existing OLDEA, some general themes are recurring within each of the OLDEA's, these include:

- The majority lack appropriate infrastructure to accommodate off leash dog exercising effectively;
- All are poorly sign posted.
- Boundaries of the OLDEA's are not clear; and
- Distribution across the city is not great.

In regards to the location analysis (Map 2), at present, the OLDEA's are not evenly distributed across the LGA with all six (6) OLDEA's located in only five (5) out of the ten (10) planning districts. This current level of provision is at odds with Council's Planning Area approach for OLDEA's and will be addressed later in the strategy.

## 5.5 DOG OWNERSHIP IN MAITLAND

According to the Companion Animals Register, in 2013 there are 12,184 dogs registered in the Maitland LGA, which equates to 17 dogs for every 100 residents. This translates to 17% of the population, this figure represents significant portion of the population but is not as high as the national average which states that approximately 40% Australian households own dogs (ACAC 2010).

## 5.6 BENCHMARKING EXERCISE

When reviewing the supply of OLDEA, Council completed a benchmarking exercise with Hunter Council's to get a general indication as to how Maitland is fairing in regards to the supply/provision of these areas. Although population is only one (1) factor to consider in determining provision levels, it still serves as a useful tool when examining the number of OLDEA's currently provided.

*Figure 3- Benchmarking Exercise - Hunter Councils*

COUNCIL	POPULATION (As at 2012)	NO. OF OFF LEASH AREAS	RATE OF PROVISION Based on population	TOTAL NO. OF DOGS
Maitland City Council	71,547	6	1:11925	12,184
Cessnock City Council	50840	6	1:8748	16,257
Lake Macquarie City Council	189,006	29	1:6500	Information not available
Newcastle City Council	148,535	17	1:8737	26,635
Port Stephens City Council	64,807	11	1:5892	Information not available
Muswellbrook City Council	15,791	2	1:7896	Information not Available
Gloucester Council	4,877	1	1:4877	942
Great Lakes Council	34,430	15	1:2295	8,179
Upper Hunter	13,754	5	1:2750	Information not available

Based on the information provided above MCC has a lower level of provision than its Hunter Council's counterparts.

## 6 DEMAND FOR OLDEA

### 6.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

As identified in the Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy (MUSS) in 2012 there were 71,547 people living in the Maitland LGA. The MUSS also identifies that in the years 2001-2006 Maitland was among the 10 fastest growing Local Government Areas in regional NSW with population increasing at an average annual rate of 2.1% over that period. It is predicted that by 2023 the population of the Maitland LGA will be an estimated 80,700 (MUSS 2012). The expected major growth corridors for residential development during the period 2001-2023 are located at Thornton North, Lochinvar, Farley & Gillieston Heights, with additional areas such as Aberglasslyn, Louth Park & Anambah (MUSS 2012).

Sustained population growth up until the 2030's will mean the population will remain relatively young overall, however the number of people over 65 years is likely to be larger (24,700) in 2036 than the 0-15 years age group (20,400). As a result it will be important to ensure that OLDEA's can cater for the needs of older adults as well as younger people. Provisions such as safe and easy access within OLDEA's need to be considered.

Demographic projections for the Hunter Region suggest that population structure will begin to change over the next 25 years, with an ongoing trend towards an aging population (HVRF, 2003). The proportion of the population aged over 65 years will continue to increase.

Predicted Population growth as outlined in the Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy (2012) identifies growth in each of the ten planning areas in the period up to 2031. The growth in population for each of the planning areas is outlined below (projected population figures for 2031)\* Current and Projected.

*Figure 4 - Projected population growth for planning areas in MCC*

PLANNING AREA	PROPOSED POPULATION (2031)
Lochinvar, North Rural	39,456
Rutherford North, Aberglasslyn, Oakhampton	8853
Telarah, Rutherford South, Farley	12,273
Gillieston Heights, Mount Dee	7873
Central Maitland, Lorn, South Maitland	6090
Bolwarra, Largs, Rural North	9832
Morpeth, Raworth, Berry Park, Rural East	17,236
Metford, Thornton, Woodberry	15 366
East Maitland, Tenambit	12 010
Green Hills, Ashtonfield, Rathluba	5286

Based on existing dog ownership levels in Maitland (17% of residents) and taking into consideration the above population projections, it is likely demand for OLDEA's will continue to increase.



## 6.2 TRENDS IN RECREATION AND SPORT IMPACTING ON PROVISION OF OLDEA

In 2009/2010 walking for exercise attracted the largest number of both male (16%) and female (30%) participants (ABS 2011 – 4156.0). This data is supported by a report prepared by the Premiers Council for Active Living (PCAL) regarding walking for travel and recreation in NSW. The report notes that “just over half of all New South Wales adult residents obtain the recommended, health enhancing, 30 minutes of physical activity per day. Walking is the nearly universal physical activity to reach this target.” This demonstrates the value of open space such as OLDEA's.

The Future of Australian Sport (2013) is a recently completed consultancy report by CSIRO for the Australian Sports Commission. The report identifies megatrends that propose to affect the sporting sector over the coming decades. Of these proposed ‘mega trends’, consideration needs to be given to ‘Perfect Fit’ in regards to council’s OLDEA's. This mega trend discusses the fact that individualised sport and fitness activities (as opposed to organised sport) are on the rise and that people are fitting sport into their increasingly busy and time-fragmented lifestyles to achieve personal health objectives. Participation rates in aerobics, running and walking have all risen sharply over the past decade while participation rates for many organised sports have held constant or declined (Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport, 2010).

These statistics demonstrate that aside from existing demand for OLDEA outside factors such as high participation rates in walking will directly impact on the provision of OLDEA's.

## 6.3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

In order to determine the needs of local communities, consultation sessions were held at Bakers Brickyard Quarry Raworth, Greenhills Gardens East Maitland, and A&D Lawrence Sporting Fields Thornton.

Council's overall strategy for community consultation included an online survey, onsite consultation in four of the six OLDEA's in addition to face to face surveys of citizens at the 'Maitland Taste Festival'. Media advertisements for the onsite consultation were placed in local newspapers prior to the sessions taking place, with information about the online survey in the advertisements.

### Online Surveys

The online survey attracted 111 responses in total over the space of the 6 week period that the survey was “live”.

Of the 111 respondents, 56 (50.5%) stated that they currently use OLDEA's within Maitland, leaving 55 (49.5%) of the respondents who don't utilise OLDEA's for various reasons.

From the online surveys the key findings to emerge were:

- Fencing is the main request for improvements to OLDEA's
- General awareness of the OLDEA's is not great.
- Council's current brochures are not informative enough and are confusing.
- That most of our OLDEA's are too close to busy roads.

Overall, the findings at all consultation sessions and from the online survey were similar. Feedback given to Council included:

- Poor signage
- Community awareness of OLDEA's is not great
- Maintenance at all facilities was below acceptable standards
- The feedback trainers regularly receive from qualified trainers is that they personally would not use Council's OLDEA's
- Lack of access to water on sites- perhaps a stainless steel bowl on a bubbler
- A lack of fencing at all facilities
- Lack of shade
- There are no places to sit

## Meeting with Key Stakeholders

Meetings were held on site, and within the Council administration building with Telarah & Largs Dog Clubs. Feedback from these meetings was consistent with previous consultation undertaken with a heavy emphasis on lack of supporting infrastructure within the designated areas and the majority of Council's existing OLDEA were not utilised by the dog club as they did not meet their needs.

The following areas were identified during the consultation period for new OLDEA's

### THE FOLLOWING AREAS WERE IDENTIFIED DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD FOR NEW OLDEA'S

- Aberglasslyn/Rutherford
- Lorn side of Belmore Bridge
- River Bank near the Melville Ford Bridge
- Anywhere north of Belmore Bridge
- McKeachies Run Estate (Aberglasslyn)
- Tenambit (replace Beryl Humble)
- Tenambit oval training field
- Gillieston Heights
- Smyth Field
- Telarah
- South Maitland
- Rathluba Lagoon

Following a review of the areas suggested above for OLDEA expansion the following areas were not chosen for various reasons as outlined below.

**McKeachies Run (Aberglasslyn):** Due to a lack of appropriate Council owned land in the McKeachies run development, a site was not able to be identified. An alternate site has been identified within the Rutherford North, Aberglasslyn, Oakhampton planning area and is discussed in section 7.2.

**River bank Melville Ford Bridge:** Land surrounding Melville Ford Bridge is not owned by Council and therefore an OLDEA would be difficult to develop. As above, an alternate site has been identified within the Rutherford North, Aberglasslyn, Oakhampton planning area and is discussed in section 7.2.

**Tenambit/Tenambit Oval Training Field:** Due to potential conflict/impact on user groups at the Tenambit training field this option was not explored further. In keeping with the planning area approach an OLDEA has been identified within the East Maitland/Tenambit planning area and is discussed further in section 7.2.

**South Maitland:** Due to a lack of appropriate Council owned land in South Maitland a site for a potential OLDEA was not able to be identified. An alternate site has been identified to cater for the planning area that South Maitland is located within and is discussed further in section 7.2.

## 7. SUPPLY VS DEMAND

At present Maitland City Council's current level of provision for OLDEA's (1:11925) is significantly lower than all of the neighbouring LGA's. In addition to this there is a clear demand for OLDEA's which is illustrated through the community consultation undertaken and identified future population growth.

As Outlined in section 5.2, a planning area approach is being undertaken in this strategy which aside from the demand identified, proposes that 'spatially' there is currently an undersupply of OLDEA's in the Maitland area.

The planning area approach for OLDEA's aims for there to be at least one (1) OLDEA in each of the 10 planning areas, altering Council's level of provision of OLDEA's from 1:11925 to 1:7154. Council is satisfied with this proposed level of provision as it brings Council on par with neighbouring Council's and is more reflective of dog ownership levels in the LGA.

After reviewing Council's current supply, pet ownership levels, findings of community consultation & projected population growth it is believed Council's planning area approach for OLDEA's is justified.

### 7.1 SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FOR EXISTING OLDEA'S

Prior to outlining Council's revised approach in planning for OLDEA's, a comment needs to be made regarding Council's existing network of OLDEA's. There are two (2) main changes proposed to Council's existing OLDEA's:

- As identified in section 5.4, there is currently an oversupply of OLDEA's in the Telarah/ Rutherford South/ Farley planning area with two (2) OLDEA's located within close proximity to each other. In addition to the close proximity, the Vi Denny- Bowtell OLDEA is co-located on the same site as a playground and two asphalt netball courts and boundaries are not clearly defined. Further to this, it has been determined by Council Officers that playgrounds and netball courts are not ideal facilities to border a OLDEA if this can be avoided (especially when attempting to balance the needs and wishes of dog owners with the needs of the community for accessible and safe parks). To address this situation, it is recommended that the Vi Denny-Bowtell OLDEA be decommissioned as an OLDEA and revert to a passive recreation area.
- Greenhills Gardens OLDEA was identified throughout community consultation as being underutilised as an OLDEA due largely to proximity to busy roads and lack of infrastructure- such as fencing. Due to the feedback and nature of the site, it is proposed to decommission this OLDEA.
- Beryl Humble OLDEA is the least appropriate site for an OLDEA in the LGA. The site is long and narrow and slopes sharply down towards a drainage gully that runs through the middle of the reserve. Due to the nature of the site, maintenance is extremely difficult so the site is often extremely overgrown with long grass. Based on these factors, it is proposed to decommission this OLDEA.

It is recommended based on consultation with the public and following assessments of all existing OLDEA's that three (3) of the current six (6) OLDEA's be retained.

Based on the above, the existing OLDEA's are servicing three (3) of the ten (10) Planning Areas:

1. Verge Street- Telarah/ Rutherford South/ Farley
2. Bakers Brickyard Quarry- Morpeth/ Raworth/ Berry Park/ Rural East
3. A&D Lawrence Sporting Fields- Metford/ Thornton/ Woodberry

This highlights that the Planning Areas of Lochinvar/Rural North, Rutherford North/Aberglasslyn/Oakhampton, Gillieston Heights/Mount Dee, Central Maitland/Lorn/South Maitland, Bolwarra/Largs/Rural North, East Maitland/Tenambit and Greenhills/Ashtonfield/Rathluba are not currently supplying OLDEA's as per the planning area approach adopted within this strategy.

## 7.2 PROPOSED NEW OLDEA'S

As there is currently an undersupply of seven (7) OLDEA's in the Maitland LGA (in line with the planning area approach), outlined below is a table proposing new locations for OLDEA's in the relevant Planning Area.

PLANNING AREA	PROPOSED SITE DETAILS	COMMENTS RELATING TO PROPOSED NEW SITES
Lochinvar, North Rural	As per the Lochinvar Structure Plan- 2 sites. Zoned (no zoning available as site yet to be allocated)	Currently no provision of OLDEA however two (2) OLDEA's are proposed within the Lochinvar Structure Plan in line with planned residential development. Despite decommissioning Vi Denny-Bowtell in Telarah due to having two OLDEA's in the one area, the two identified sites in Lochinvar are justified as they are separated by the New England Highway which is a heavily trafficked road. Once these OLDEA's are established an assessment will be undertaken as to their suitability to cater for larger scale events and registered dog training club activities.
Rutherford North, Aberglasslyn, Oakhampton	As part of the proposed Anambah sporting fields development	Currently no provision for an OLDEA however a site is identified as part of the proposed development of the Anambah Sporting Fields. Once the OLDEA is established an assessment will be undertaken as to the suitability to cater for larger scale events and registered dog training club activities.
Gillieston Heights, Mount Dee	Les Circuit, Lot 914 DP1157275 Zoned: R1	With limited open space available in this planning area, Les Circuit was identified as the most suitable space for an OLDEA. The site drops down a level from the roadway and would experience minimal passing traffic as the street loops around the parcel of land.
Central Maitland, Lorn, South Maitland	Lorn side of Belmore Bridge, Lots 1, 2 and 3 DP5394 Zoned: RU1	This site was identified throughout community consultation as one that is already being informally used by large numbers of residents for off leash activities. The site provides a large area of open space with natural linkages to the riverbank. Fencing of the site and additional supporting infrastructure will need to be investigated further.
East Maitland, Tenambit	Alliance Street, Lot 1 DP346931 and Lot 1 DP122375 Zoned: R1	This site offers an easily accessible parcel of land that is central to large numbers of residents. The site offers good vision for dog owners to monitor and control their dog while using the OLDEA.
Greenhills, Ashtonfield, Rathluba	Rathluba Lagoon, Lot 119 DP838632 Zoned: Multi	This site offers a large parcel of open space with ample off street parking. The land is relatively flat and currently provides some natural shade through the existing trees on site. Rathluba was identified throughout community consultation as an area ideal for OLDEA development. This OLDEA may be suitable for larger scale events and registered dog training club activities.



At this stage, a suitable site has not been identified to service the Bolwarra/Largs/Rural North Planning Area. This planning area has a shortage of suitable open space that can adequately support an OLDEA. Council will continue to monitor demand for an OLDEA in this area and this will be revisited in future reviews of the strategy.

Images of the proposed new OLDEA's can be found on the following pages.



*Alliance Street- East Maitland*



*Rathluba Lagoon- Rathluba*







The Esplanade- Lorn



Les Circuit- Gillieston heights

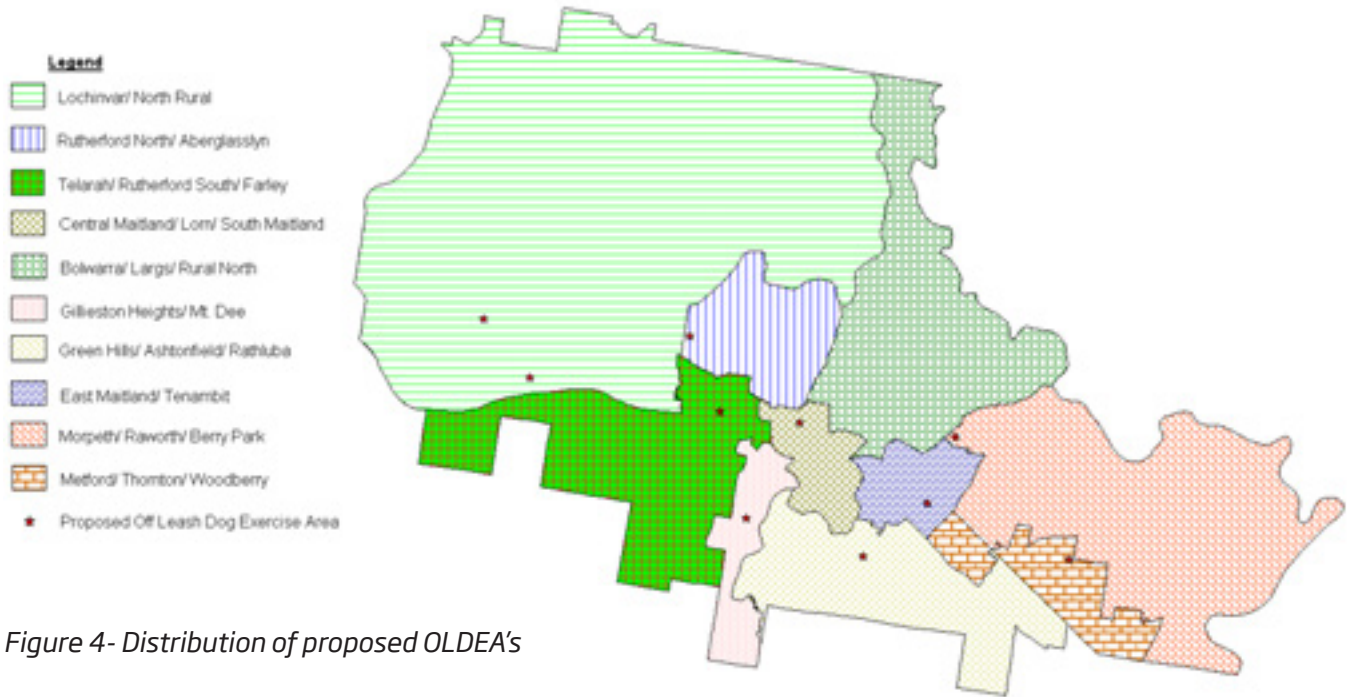


Figure 4- Distribution of proposed OLDEA's

## 7.3 SUMMARY OF OLDEA'S PROPOSED FOR THE MAITLAND LGA

### Off Leash Dog Exercise Areas

PLANNING AREA	COMMENTS RELATING TO PROPOSED NEW SITES
Morpeth/ Raworth/ Berry Park/ Rural East	Bakers Brickyard Quarry (Raworth)
Telarah/ Rutherford South/ Farley	Verge Street (Telarah)
Metford/ Thornton/ Woodberry	A&D Lawrence Sporting Fields (Thornton)
Greenhills/ Ashtonfield/ Rathluba	Rathluba Lagoon
Lochinvar, North Rural	Lochinvar (to be determined)
Rutherford North, Aberglasslyn, Oakhampton	Anambah Sporting Fields (Anambah)
Gillieston Heights, Mount Dee	Les Circuit (Gillieston Heights)
Central Maitland, Lorn, South Maitland	Lorn Side of Belmore Bridge (Lorn)
East Maitland, Tenambit	Alliance Street (East Maitland)

## 7.4 REGISTERED DOG TRAINING CLUB ACTIVITIES

Maitland City Council currently has two registered and approved dog training clubs that operate on Council sporting fields. Telarah Dog Training club operates at No.2 Sportsground in Central Maitland and Maitland Dog Obedience Club operates at Ernie Jurd Oval in Largs. At present these two clubs are the only approved users of sporting fields for off-leash activities within the Maitland LGA. All dogs are to be on-leash at all times when on Council sports fields unless participating in the above mentioned dog training activities.

## 7.5 LARGE DOG EVENTS AND DOG TRAINING ACTIVITIES

This strategy recognises that following the upgrade to Council's off leash areas this may result in requests for the use of these sites to cater for large one off dog events. Council Officers also recognise that existing dog clubs (as well as new dog clubs), may wish to utilise the off leash areas provided throughout the city.

The majority of off leash areas are designed to support the local catchment area only, and do not provide the infrastructure required to support large events or ongoing use by dog training activities (due to constraints with car parking, storage requirements etc).

With this in mind, sites have been identified below, which upon request, could be investigated for future expansion for use by dog clubs, or support large dog events if required.

OLDEA	TRAINING OR CLUB ACTIVITY
A&D Lawrence	Registered Dog Club training days or large scale events
Bakers Brickyard Quarry	Registered Dog Club training days or large scale events
Rathluba Lagoon	Registered Dog Club training days or large scale events
Verge Street Reserve	Suitable for registered dog training club activities. Suitable for Retriever ability test training.

## 8. ACTION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The actions below provide the framework for the management and future development of off leash dog exercise areas across the city. The actions listed are consistent with anticipated availability of resources.

The priorities in this implementation plan have been determined through community consultation and recreation planning data and are subject to the availability of resources.

The time frame of this PoM covers a 10 year period however some actions for the strategy may take longer to achieve. Nevertheless the commencement of management actions could occur within the first 10 year period, after which the strategy will be reviewed and any new management strategies included into the document.

To provide more flexibility and to facilitate future reviews of Council's finances, the actions of this strategy are framed around three priority timeframes. These priority timeframes are:

<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>MEANING OF PRIORITY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
<b>High</b>	Action is relatively urgent	0-3 years
<b>Medium</b>	Action will improve the current usage	3-5 years
<b>Low</b>	Action is a long term goal to improve	5-10 years

It is important to note that actions in this strategy do not imply that MCC has sole responsibility for funding and implementation. While MCC may contribute to many of the management actions, funds may also be sourced through external grants, animal service providers, and in some cases Section 94 funds. In addition, the priority of each management action may change based on available funding and external contributions and will be assessed by MCC on an annual basis during the preparation of the Delivery Plan.



**OBJECTIVE 1: TO BALANCE THE NEEDS AND WISHES OF DOG OWNERS WITH THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY FOR ACCESSIBLE AND SAFE PARKS**

ACTION	MEANS OF ACHIEVEMENT	RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTNERS	PRIORITY
Ensure boundaries are clarified at each OLDEA, particularly where the OLDEA forms part of a larger recreation hub.	Fencing is installed where boundaries are not clear	Infrastructure Strategy & Works Programming  NSW Sport & Recreation (Grants)	High
Ensure that signage within off leash areas is prominent, clear and easily understood	Signage clearly demonstrates location of OLDEA and 'rules of use'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	High
Council to develop educational material and promote Council's OLDEA's. Ensure this material is easily accessible.	Educational & promotional material is developed for OLDEA's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Marketing and Communications</li> <li>· Customer Service</li> </ul>	High
Update Council's website to clearly outline OLDEA's and where they are located	Council's website is updated	Information Technology	High
Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Dog bite prevention day/week	A Dog Bite Prevention Day/week is investigated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Environmental Health</li> <li>· Council Rangers</li> <li>· Largs Dog Club,</li> <li>· Telarah Dog Club</li> </ul>	Medium
Establish partnership with animal providers such as RSPCA to assist in developing education programs for use of Council's OLDEA's	Partnerships developed with animal providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· RSPCA</li> <li>· Telarah Dog Club</li> <li>· Largs Dog Club</li> </ul>	Medium
Update and review OLDEA in line with legislative changes for OLDEA	OLDEA is reviewed every three years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> <li>· Environmental Health</li> <li>· Local Dog Clubs</li> </ul>	Medium

## OBJECTIVE 2: TO REVIEW EXISTING OFF LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS AND SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

ACTION	MEANS OF ACHIEVEMENT	RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTNERS	PRIORITY
In line with OLDEA design guidelines, provide adequate infrastructure within Council's existing OLDEA's	Verge Street (Telarah) - Updated signage Installed, replace green dog waste bin with standard Sulo bin, 2x bench seats installed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> <li>· Environmental Health</li> </ul>	Medium
	Bakers Brickyard Quarry (Raworth) - Fencing with double entrance gates is installed, new signage is installed, Sulo bins are installed at main entrance points		High
	A & D Lawrence Sporting Ovals (Thornton) - Update and move signage to new OLDEA, Sulo bins at entrance points, 1 bench seat. Fencing not required		Medium
The OLDEA at Beryl Humble reserve (Tenambit) is decommissioned based on its poor usage and site constraints	OLDEA is decommissioned at Beryl Humble Reserve (Tenambit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	High
The OLDEA at Telarah is decommissioned based on its poor usage and site constraints	OLDEA is decommissioned at Vi-Denny Bowtell (Telarah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	High
The OLDEA at Greenhills Gardens is decommissioned based on bordering busy roads, poor site layout.	OLDEA is decommissioned at Greenhills gardens (Greenhills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	High
Existing OLDEA are incorporated within Council's Maintenance Programs and the level of service is adequate	OLDEA's are maintained to a suitable standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Recreation Services</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> </ul>	High
Existing OLDEA are identified within Council's Asset Register and associated Asset Replacement Programs	OLDEA's are identified in appropriate registers and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> </ul>	High

**OBJECTIVE 3: TO IDENTIFY GAPS IN THE PROVISION OF OFF LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS AND ENSURE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION ACROSS THE CITY**

ACTION	MEANS OF ACHIEVEMENT	RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTNERS	PRIORITY
Implement and refer to Council's OLDEA design guidelines	OLDEA design guidelines are referred to when planning for OLDEA's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Development Assessment</li> <li>· Strategic Planning</li> </ul>	High
To address the undersupply of OLDEA's in the Maitland LGA	Two (2) OLDEA's are constructed in the Lochinvar, North Rural planning area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	Medium
	One (1)OLDEA is constructed in the Rutherford North, Aberglasslyn, Oakhampton planning area (Anambah Playing Fields, Anambah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	Medium
	One (1 OLDEA is constructed in the Gillieston Heights, Mount Dee planning area (Les Circuit, Gillieston Heights)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	Medium
	One (1) OLDEA is constructed in the Central Maitland, Lorn, South Maitland planning area (Lorn side of Belmore Bridge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	Medium
	One (1) OLDEA is constructed in the East Maitland, Tenambit planning area (Alliance Street, East Maitland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	Medium
	One (1) OLDEA is constructed in the Greenhills,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Infrastructure Strategy &amp; Works Programming</li> <li>· Construction &amp; Maintenance</li> <li>· Recreation works</li> <li>· Recreation Services</li> </ul>	
Investigate feasibility of establishing a OLDEA within the Bolwarra/Largs/Rural North Planning Area	Sites are investigated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Property Services</li> </ul>	Medium

**OBJECTIVE 4: PLAN FOR OFF LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREAS ACROSS THE CITY IN LINE WITH EXPECTED POPULATION GROWTH**

ACTION	MEANS OF ACHIEVEMENT	RESPONSIBILITY AND PARTNERS	PRIORITY
Ensure the design guidelines are referred to when commenting on new subdivisions	OLDEA design guidelines are referred to and referenced in Council responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Development &amp; Environment</li> <li>· Information Technology</li> </ul>	High
Continue to update and collate dog ownership levels and statistics to support future reviews of the strategy	Dog ownership/statistics are updated annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Customer Service</li> <li>· Australian Animal Companion Council</li> <li>· RSPCA</li> </ul>	Medium
Annually review Council's strategic plans (such as Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy (MUSS) to ensure proposed population growth in this strategy is reflective of actual growth.	Council's strategic documents reviewed annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Strategic Planning</li> </ul>	Medium



# APPENDIX 1

## OFF LEASH DOG EXERCISE AREA DESIGN GUIDELINES

ELEMENT	CORE- INCORPORATED IN ALL OLDEA	ADDITIONAL- MAY BE CONSIDERED IN VARIOUS OLDEA
Fencing		✓
Double Gated Entry	✓	
Sulo Bins at Entrance Points	✓	
Maintenance Access Gateway	✓	
Regulatory Signage	✓	
Pathways -Internal -Approach Pathways		✓ ✓ ✓
Seating	✓	
Tables		✓
Access to Water (for people and dogs)	✓	
Shade Structures		✓
Off Street Parking		✓
Rock Scramble Areas		✓
Open Ball Play Area	✓	
Agility/Educational Equipment		✓
Natural Shade/ Tree Plantings	✓	
Drainage		✓





**m**  
**maitland**  
city council

285 - 287 High Street  
Maitland NSW 2320

t 02 4934 9700  
f 02 4933 3209

[info@maitland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@maitland.nsw.gov.au)  
[maitland.nsw.gov.au](http://maitland.nsw.gov.au)