



7.1 Petition - Dog Park Upgrade at Eastern Road Reserve

A Petition containing 407 signatures, was received via change.org.

The Petition states the following:

The dog park at Eastern Road Reserve is in desperate need of crucial maintenance and an overall upgrade. Its current condition is unsafe.

This park is the only completely fenced dog park in the City of Port Philip. It is used daily by a huge number of locals who rely on it for secure exercise and socialisation of their pets.

As it stands, the condition of the park is as follows:

- *Unreliable, unsecure gates*
- *Fencing not secure for smaller dogs (puppies, Italian Greyhounds, toy Cavoodles etc.)*
- *Condition of the grass extremely poor, risk to health*

What we are petitioning for:

- ***Immediate repair/ replacement of all gates and fencing to ensure security and safety***
- ***A plan to upgrade the dog park and resurface/replace the grass to ensure a better and more sustainable quality***

On the 24th of August 2021, the condition of the poorly maintained gates and fencing to Eastern Road Reserve led to a whippet being hit by a car on Eastern Road. We implore you to take action to ensure no further accidents.

We, the locals who use and depend on this dog park, petition you, the City of Port Philip, to address these issues immediately and in consultation with the community.

OFFICER COMMENT

Eastern Reserve North is located at 148-160 Park Street South Melbourne.

In 2014, Council approved the park to become a designated Off Leash dog park, following a trial.

Records of enforcement activity, current condition of the park and reports from residents indicates that the dog park receives very high use.

There are currently 8747 registered dogs in the City of Port Phillip. Council's registration records show that there are a high number of dogs registered in the surrounding area as follows:

834 dogs in South Melbourne

- 747 within 1km radius from Eastern Reserve
- 3879 within 3km radius from Eastern Reserve
- 6561 within 5km radius from Eastern Reserve

It is the only fenced dog park in the area. Other off leash areas servicing this community include Lagoon Reserve, Gasworks Arts Park and Albert Park Lake, however they are all unfenced.

Dogs are current serviced by 31 off leash areas and one (soon to be 2) fenced dog parks in the municipality.

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Suitability as a dog park

There are ongoing concerns from some residents on the impact of the park on amenity and the suitability of it's ongoing use as a dog park.

Review of Off Leash Dog Parks and Restrictions is currently underway and are due to be considered for adoption at the end of 2023.

The review includes development of Port Phillip Dog Off Leash Strategic Guidelines which will outline Council position on the provision, distribution, design and management of dog facilities in public open spaces. This work would consider the future of all our dog off leash areas and parks.

Eastern Reserve North Condition

Shade and high usage present a continued issue when trying to maintain the grass surface in the reserve. Grass will only grow in Spring/Summer and at this time the trees are shading out the growth.

The park condition has deteriorated significantly over winter and the following has been trialed at the reserve to improve the surface:

- Rotational fencing-off of sections to allow grass recover
- Artificial turf installation (portions of the reserve)

A ground audit and review was undertaken in September, it showed that shade, heavy usage, poor drainage and irrigation system contributed to the parks poor condition. The main impact is shade, which means that it will not be possible to establish turf on the reserve for an extended period of time.

The current fence has also been assessed as part of the September ground audit and review. The fence and gates are all compliant with no damage.

The park now has bins at every exit/entry point after new bins were installed in early October.

Surface Options

Dog parks across the state have a variety of surfaces, which could be considered at Eastern Reserve North Dog Park. Surface options include the following:

Surface	Assessment
Bark	Not a preferred option As it could lead to splinters in paws, needs regular maintenance, is more difficult to clean up dog waste and would displace easily over time.
Synthetic turf	Not a preferred option Due to the high install costs and maintenance requirements (it needs to be regularly 'flushed' of dog urine and odors). It would be hot in summer, non-porous and prone to smelling. Hybrid turf on the site has not been successful.
Instant turf	Not preferred option While turf is the most used surface for dog parks it would need to be relayed regularly and requires a minimum of four weeks to establish (during which time the park would need to be closed). Therefor, given the high demand for the park, it is not the recommended option.

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Granitic Sand (recommended)	<p>Recommended option</p> <p>Granitic sand is a hardy solution that works well in shaded areas and is a popular option in other dog parks. It is easy to maintain and remove dog waste. This is the recommended option due to the difficulty of maintaining a grass surface at this site and would eliminate potential heat issues.</p>
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Options to Upgrade the Reserve

Two options have been considered for upgrades of the reserve:

- Option 1 – Maintain the current surface
- Option 2 – Upgrading the Reserve through Installing Granitic Sand

	Pros	Cons
<p>Option 1 Maintenance</p> <p>Annual cost \$15-20K</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would require no exclusion period from the park • Grass/mud may be a preference for some dogs/dog owners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is proving very difficult to 'grow' turf on the site and for extended periods of the year the site is likely to have little to no grass. • Doesn't address the drainage or irrigation needs. • The need to rotate fencing while regrowing grass is leading to heavy use and impact on the open side of the park – and less space for dogs. • Continued high maintenance requirements with poor outcome.
<p>Option 2 Granitic Sand</p> <p>\$140K</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to maintain than turf due to the shady location. • Hardy solution. • Provides natural drainage. • Pet waste can be easily removed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive to install. • Could get hot in the sun. • Would still need regular maintenance to address holes and coverage. • Untested in Port Phillip.

Fencing Upgrade - \$60K

The fencing is currently in good condition and is suitable for the usage of the park. It is a requirement of using dog off-leash areas across the municipality that dog owners must still carry a leash at all times and dogs must be under effective control. Greyhounds are required to be on-leash even in off-leash areas.

Recommendations

Recommendation – Site suitability

It is recommended that Eastern Reserve North remain as a Dog Off Leash Park and be considered as part of the Dog Off Leash Review. The site:

- is a well used/valued dog park
- is surrounded by residents with dogs
- has operated as a fenced dog off leash park for 7 years

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- is not located near another fenced dog off leash area which could service the current catchment.

Recommendation – Park Condition

It is recommended that Council progress with community consultation on Option 2 - Upgrading the Reserve through Installing Granitic Sand. The project will include vegetation as an additional 'play' element for dogs and as a buffer from houses.

- This surface is hardy and more appropriate for an area which is shaded and where it is difficult to maintain grass coverage.
- Testing the granitic sand surface at this location will provide an opportunity to test it as a possible surface for new dog park locations.

The upgrade will be partnered with an education communication plan which will focus on responsible dog ownership, and local laws patrols.

Recommendation – Fencing

It is not recommended that the fence is upgraded at this time. The fence is in good condition and owners are responsible for the effective control of their dogs while in the park and all public space across the municipality.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Petition.
2. Thanks the petitioners for their Petition.
3. Notes that that Eastern Reserve North Dog Park is heavily used and has been in place for over seven years.
4. Notes that while the park is well used some members of the community have concerns about it's ongoing use as a dog park.
5. Notes that the development of the new Dog Off Leash Guidelines will consider the future use of all dog off leash areas across the municipality including Eastern Reserve North.
6. Requests the CEO to commence engagement on upgrading the surface of Eastern Reserve Dog Park to Granitic Sand, additional vegetation and 'play' element for dogs.
7. Approves \$140,000 to upgrade Eastern Reserve to Granitic Sand, based on the outcomes of the community consultation.
8. Declines the request to upgrade the fence at Eastern Reserve Dog Park at this time and directs officers to include assessment of fencing for fenced dog parks in the development of the Off Leash Dog Guidelines.
9. Requests the CEO to commence an assessment of current local laws resource levels to determine whether they are at suitable to match the increased dog ownership across the municipality.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil