

Turning theory into practice Banyule City Council

Virginia Jackson

ABSTRACT

In 1996 Harlock Jackson Pty Ltd was commissioned to review the open space opportunities for dogs in the City of Banyule, in Melbourne. The review was based on recommendations contained in the report Public Open Space and Dogs: A Design and Management Guide for Open Space Professionals and Local Government and involved extensive consultation with the local community. The process, outcomes and lessons learned are of value to everyone interested in improving approaches to urban animal management.

INTRODUCTION

In September, 1996 my firm was commissioned by the City of Banyule in Melbourne to consult with the community on the question of dogs and their access to public open space. The review was prompted by local government amalgamations which brought together, in this case, three quite different approaches to the way dogs were accommodated in the public realm. In addition the new Victorian Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act had been in place for six months, providing councils with express power to make declarations about where dogs could and couldn't go and under what conditions. The ensuing consultation was heated and at times quite bitter. The dog owners were angry. They felt victimised. They were also organised, establishing a group to 'fight' the council on any changes to local conditions. The final recommendations were put to council in February this year and are now being implemented progressively by different council departments.

Looking back on the process and final strategy I can say the review achieved three important outcomes. First, the consultation was genuine. The recommendations were not a fait accompli as people said they would be at the beginning. We hadn't made up our mind before we began and, by the end, I think most people came round to this view. Second, the recommendations were improved substantially by the input received. While this is always the aim we all know how easily the process can get watered down by the realities of local politics. I learned a great deal as well. It emphasised to me the point I've made repeatedly over the years -that every community really is different and needs to be treated on its own merits. There is no such thing as a universal model for dog access. Finally, while the review did for a time polarise the Banyule community, in the end, I think, there was greater understanding of the needs of both sides of this important issue.

In this paper I want to take you through the case study. I will start with necessary background material before tracing the main elements of the study and its recommendations. In the concluding section I will concentrate on the wider lessons learned for urban animal management (UAM).

'PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND DOGS: A DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT GUIDE FOR OPEN SPACE PROFESSIONALS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT' BY HARLOCK JACKSON PTY LTD

The review was based on the findings of this report, prepared by my firm in 1995. It examines the role that strategic planning and design can play in better dog management and answers such questions as:

- Why do dogs and their owners need access to public open space?
- What types of open space best meets their needs?
- What conflicts are posed by their presence in public places?
- How do we best integrate dogs and their owners with other park users?

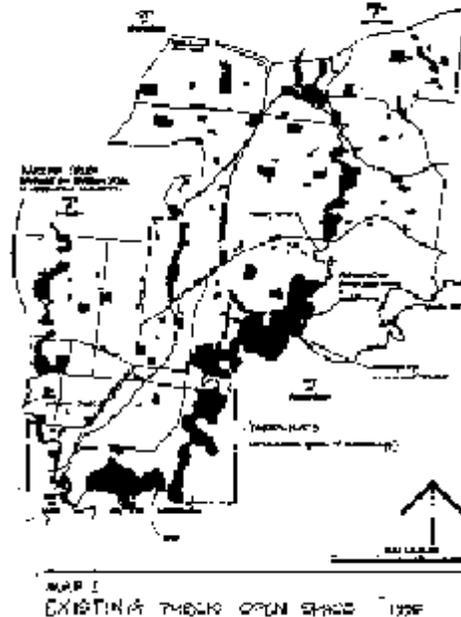
The central tenet of the study is the concept of a hierarchy of access opportunities for dogs and their owners that provide for daily, regular and occasional use. Practical advice is also offered, such as guidelines for the siting and design of free running areas, suggestions for faeces management and tips for park design that increase the enjoyment of both dogs and owners whilst passively encouraging compliance with leash laws and responsible behaviour.

BANYULE CITY COUNCIL

Banyule City Council was created on 15th December 1994 from the amalgamation of parts of the former Shires of Diamond Valley and Eltham and the former City of Heidelberg. The new municipality is located 12 kilometres north east of Melbourne and covers an area of 63 sq km (refer Map 1).

The municipality serves an estimated 116,500 residents with 18,670 households owning pets. Map 2 illustrates the distribution of pet owning households which is fairly even across the municipality.

Much of the area's detached housing on quarter-acre blocks developed after the second World War, although older areas exist to the south and south west and rural-residential development remains in the south-east, close to the Yarra River. The Eltham area in the north-east is prized for its integration with the topographic and natural environment.

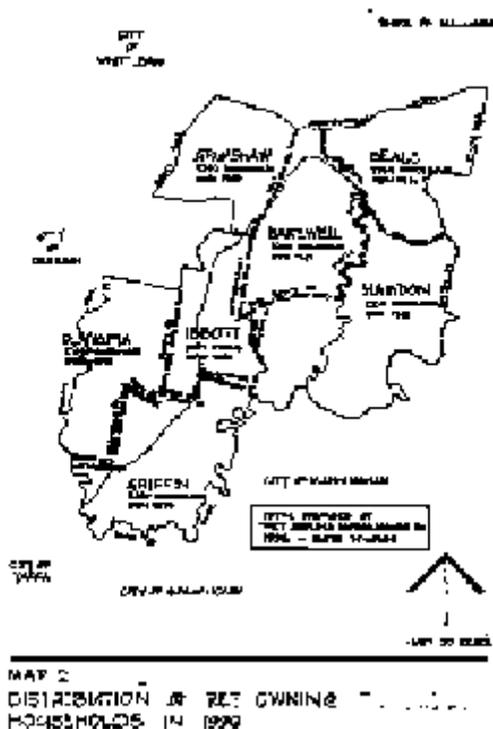


The area is well provided with public open space although some gaps exist in older areas. There are three linear open space networks along the Yarra River, the Plenty River and the Darebin Creek.

All three have well established paths (called 'shared pathways' in Victoria and accommodating both cyclists and walkers). The Main Yarra Trail is of metropolitan significance and passes through extensive and diverse tracts of open space. Degraded over the years, these areas are gradually being rehabilitated and revegetated.

The legal framework

The Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act which came into operation throughout Victoria on 19th April, 1996 gives councils responsibility for managing dogs and cats



The new Act provides for a range of matters to do with the control of dogs and cats and companion animal businesses. It also makes provision for councils to make local laws and orders in relation to animal welfare and control. Prior to the review dogs were allowed off-lead in any public place in the municipality providing they were maintained under 'effective control'. This is a common requirement but council officers were finding it problematic to enforce because it was not defined.

Complaints

In the 12 months to November 1996 Council received 664 complaints about dogs. Table 1 illustrates their breakdown.

Table 1: Complaints received about dogs (December 1995- November 1996)

Wandering at large	
Park	19
Street	396
School	9
Shopping centre	5
Private land	35
Total	464
Attacks (against person or animal)	
Park	3
Street	47
School	1
Shopping centre	-
Private land	10
Total	70
Rush and worry (person or animal)	
Park	2
Street	61
School	9
Shopping centre	-
Private land	6
Total	78
Barking	45
Defecating	7
Total Number Of Complaints	664

The overwhelming source of complaints was about dogs wandering at large, especially as the attacks and rush and worry complaints do not distinguish between dogs wandering at large and those in the presence of their owner. Interestingly very few incidents occur in public parks.

ELEMENTS OF THE REVIEW

Public places

'Public places' were taken to mean all publicly accessible land that is owned and managed by the City of Banyule including:

- public open space (parks, reserves, ovals etc);
- streets, footpaths, shopping centres and public car parks;
- electricity easements.

What about cats?

While the review was essentially about outings by dogs with their owners it nevertheless seemed sensible to consider access by cats to public places in the same context. However it was recognised that the whole question of urban cat management is complex and was not one that could be dealt with in this review.

Steering committee

A Council Steering Committee was established comprising representatives of municipal laws, leisure and recreation planning, parks maintenance and conservation. The Steering Committee also worked closely with the Bushland Management Co-ordinator for the Yarra and Plenty Rivers and the Darebine Creek. The inter-departmental nature of the committee was important in allowing different perspectives, issues and priorities to be taken into account. It also played an educative role in alerting different departments to the importance of pets generally and the need to take them into account in future planning.

Discussion paper

A discussion paper was prepared to assist people preparing comment on the review. It outlined relevant issues and included preliminary recommendations.

Four options were suggested that were to become the basis for the ensuing discussion. They were:

- Option 1: Dog-off-lead ie no change from existing provisions.
- Option 2: Dog-off-lead with designated areas where they are banned and/or required to be on-lead.
- Option 3: Dog-on-lead throughout the municipality.
- Option 4: Dog-on-lead with designated areas where they are banned and/or allowed off-leash.

The concept of setting aside priority areas for dogs was also introduced. These are areas where dogs and their owners are given some priority in planning, design and management. They are not an alternative to free-running areas but something additional that a Council can do to support its dog owning community.

After a full consideration of the issues the Steering Committee thought Option 4 may be the one that best meets the needs of all members of the community while accounting for any conflicts. Seventy-five free running areas were then selected based on the criteria contained in *Public Open Space and Dogs*.

It was suggested that dogs and cats be banned from only five parks. This list was developed in consultation with the locally based Environment Advisory Committee. The areas are the most environmentally sensitive in the municipality mostly wetlands and billabongs along the Yarra River.

It was also recommended that dogs and cats be banned in the immediate vicinity of children's play equipment as suggested by both the RSPCA and the Cat Protection Society.

Consultation

Public feedback on the discussion paper was sought in the following ways:

- focus group meetings were held with (i) local dog clubs and (ii) local 'Friends-of groups (eg Friends of Rosanna Parklands);
- written submissions were sought from interested groups and individuals; .a public meeting was held on 14 November, 1996;

- relevant Council Advisory Committees were asked to comment on the discussion paper (ie the Environment Advisory Committee, the Leisure, Sports and Recreation Advisory Committee and the Disability Reference Group). These Committees comprise members of the local community and are a conduit for communication between Council and the community;
- I also met with Grade 2/3 at Banyule Primary School and members of Greensborough Senior Citizens as a way to better uncover the perspectives of children and the elderly - two groups whose views may not have been represented by other consultation mechanisms.

FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Some said it was the hottest issue for 20 years. Others called the discussion paper abhorrent. Many others were calling for a referendum. I was the focus of much of the anger and was called everything from 'that woman' to an ignoramus. Dog owners could not see what the problem was and, to be fair, they had a point. If you were relying on the statistics alone, there *wasn't* any problem.

However through the course of the review a lot of the anger dissipated. Part of this had to do with fleshing out the conflicts in greater depth. Also important was, I think, my firm conviction about the benefits of owning pets and their central place as legitimate users of public open space. It was, for me, a *planning* exercise -an exercise in accommodating the needs of different groups with conflicting needs. It wasn't an exercise in eliminating the 'problems caused by irresponsible dog owners ' and giving them whatever was left over after everyone else had been accommodated. The difference here is critical and is probably the most important element in an exercise of this kind. The following discussion describes the feedback from each element of the consultation program.

Meeting with the Dog Clubs

Forty-five people attended this meeting representing six local dog clubs.

The clubs wanted to know what the problem was. They didn't see a problem and wanted more statistics. They sought details about who the complainants were. Education was seen to be the key in the longer term and support for this work was sought. In the meantime it was thought that the existing provisions should be better enforced. They said the parameters of effective control needed to be spelt out more clearly.

Most accepted the case for dog-on-lead declarations, however they were unanimous in the need to identify on-lead areas not the other way around ie Option 2 not Option 4. It was surprising to note the extent of support from dog club leaders for on-lead controls in streets.

Of the list of proposed dog-off-lead areas, the group was concerned that the parks were too small and too few in number. Areas for walking off-lead were required. It was thought sporting grounds should be included because of their size and intermittent use. Concern was expressed that the list would be reduced over the years.

There was a lot of support for the establishment of a dog priority area. Price Park and Poulter Reserve were suggested as possible sites.

The clubs were very hostile at the start of the meeting but as we demonstrated a willingness to take their concerns into consideration many of them came round not necessarily to Option 4 but to a willingness to give some ground. Importantly they were to take a leadership role at the subsequent public meeting.

Written submissions

A total of 136 written submissions were received. Twelve were from community groups, clubs and other institutional interests. The remaining submissions were from individuals and families.

A quantitative analysis of the submissions is set out below:

Generally oppose restrictions	16 submissions
Oppose Option 4, support Option 1	13 submissions
Oppose Option 4, support Option 2	18 submissions
Support dog-on-lead in streets, not in parks	10 submissions
Objection to specific recommendations	19 submissions
Sub-total opposed to Option 4	76 submissions (56%)
No stated objection but general comment	10 submissions
Sub-total neutral	10 submissions (7%)
Support Option 4 (with or without modification)	42 submissions
Specific concerns	4 submissions
Sub-total supporting Option 4	46 submissions (34%)
Not directly relevant to review	4 submissions (3%)
TOTAL	136 SUBMISSIONS

Submissions opposing Option 4

Virtually everyone in this group talked of the majority who didn't want the restrictions, the fact that there is no problem and that council should concentrate on enforcing the existing 'effective control' provisions. The following cross-section of quotes reflects the range of views obtained.

- I can say that in all that time (35 years) I have never witnessed any problems with unleashed dogs.
- From what we have observed in Warringal Swampland and the billabongs along Banyule Flats, dogs rarely seem to disturb the wildlife.
- We strongly believe that the promotion of responsible dog ownership is the solution to allay current concern in the community regarding dog incidents-
- My main concern is that the proposed off-lead areas are inadequate.
- Certainly have a law that says dogs should be on-lead on the streets, near playgrounds and environmentally sensitive areas, but let dog owners and their dogs enjoy free running exercise in all parks-
- Where will pensioners be able to take their dogs for exercise if they are not fortunate enough to live near designated areas; they are certainly unable to afford to transport their dogs to such parks.
- The minority who for some reason cannot tolerate animals in part of their area should be allocated a small percentage of the parkland for their leisure.
- When deciding where (to locate free running areas) we believe most dog owners prefer access to parks with trails or walking tracks rather than unstructured areas. We like to go on a round trip when exercising our dog.

Submissions supporting Option 4

Most people in this group recognised the needs of dog owners for areas where their dogs can run freely off the leash however they said the effective control provisions weren't working and that they see many incidents involving dogs. The following is a cross-section of quotes.

- Few dogs have reached a level of obedience that permits voice control-
- My child has had the unfortunate experience of standing in, and falling in dog faeces adjacent to the playground equipment.
- It is not good enough, in terms of my child's safety and enjoyment of the park, to be told by owners (if present) that "the dog is OK, he doesn't bite".
- Neither I nor any of my friends who have also been intimidated by dogs have reported any incidents and therefore do not consider the statistics to be representative of actual dog attacks.
- I support the setting aside of areas to be free of dogs, not only to protect wildlife but also because many people prefer to enjoy parks and other areas without the presence of dogs.

The public meeting

The public meeting was attended by 112 people. The majority were opposed to the restrictions. Most supported Option 1, some supported Option 2, no one supported Option 3 and some supported Option 4 (it was not practicable to determine precise numbers).

Feedback reflected the concerns raised in the written submissions and the meeting held with dog clubs ie what is the problem, you are penalising the responsible majority, define effective control and enforce it, the free running areas are inappropriate.

Some councils shy away from holding public meetings because of the highly charged nature of the issues. However I think they are important. They give elected officials (in this case the Commissioners) a chance to hear the range of views held in an open public forum. Even I would not have fully appreciated the depth of feeling from other consultation methods alone. They also give the community a better sense that their views have-been heard.

As the meeting progressed and as more people had their say, it seemed that the disparate views began to coalesce into a group view that progressively became more reasonable. That's not to say people weren't still angry and didn't want things to remain as they were.

However the fringe or radical element who thought people should be locked up if they didn't like dogs became more isolated and lost some of their leadership status. I'm not sure why this happened. I was not trying to 'sell' the preliminary recommendations. I was there to listen. There were a few compelling anecdotes about people's adverse experiences with dogs that silenced the radical element, if only for the moment. Contributions from local veterinarians also provided some authoritative evidence about the need for some controls. Important too was the leadership role assumed by the dog clubs in seeking a co-operative approach, a change from their earlier hostile reaction. I also believe my emphasis on treating dog owners as legitimate users of public open space made a difference. It has to do with choice of words, your demeanour and whether you are prepared to demonstrate a willingness to listen.

The Environment Advisory Committee

The no dog/cat areas proposed in the discussion paper were first suggested by this committee. Importantly some members of the Environment Advisory Committee also owned dogs and were loath to see excessive restrictions placed on dogs. The Committee later made the following key points:

- the Committee recognised the need to balance the pleasure people get from exercising their dog off-lead against the need for some restrictions to protect flora and fauna of regional, national and in some cases international significance. Taking a dog out on-lead is not the same as taking it out off-lead. However, providing there were sufficient off-lead areas provided, the concept of dog-on-lead as the basic framework was supported;
- sports ovals should be considered as dog-off-lead areas. There are health concerns, however ovals are clear, well known and understandable.

Through the discussion about the relative merits of the different options this committee suggested additional restrictions. In the end this committee sought banning and on-lead restrictions in more areas than was eventually provided.

The Leisure, Sport and Recreation Advisory Committee

The Committee considered the discussion paper and made the following key points:

- It is essential that dogs are on-lead on shared paths. Some cyclists are riding very fast and unleashed dogs are a hazard.
- Faeces are found on sporting ovals but it is not perceived by players, clubs or parents to be a significant problem. Ovals are ideal for free running dogs except on days of play. This was valuable advice from a group representing sporting interests.
- Owners need to be able to see their dog at all times in off-lead areas.

The Disability Reference Group

The Group considered the discussion paper and made the following key points:

- Some disabled people prefer to have their dog with them outside the home for security and companionship.
- Dog-off-lead areas need to be well spread to ensure proximity to homes -maximum walk of 4-5 blocks.
- One disabled person was approached in the park by an unleashed dog. She didn't know the dog and its owner was some distance away. She felt vulnerable and anxious because she had no way to protect her child.
- Autistic children can become particularly anxious around dogs or barking sounds.
- Dogs should not be off the lead near play equipment.
- Dog faeces on shared footways are a problem. A sight impaired person has difficulty avoiding them.
Suggested track duplication.

Greensborough Senior Citizens

I met with 12 members of the Greensborough Senior Citizens Club on 19th November, 1996. The members had no objection to the proposed strategy. They felt that most senior citizens were responsible dog owners.

Banyule Primary School

I also met with grade 2/3M at Banyule Primary School. The class had followed the progress of the study as part of a class project and had lodged individual submissions and a petition.

The children were concerned that they would not be able to take their dogs to their local park. They said their parents wouldn't let them walk any further and wouldn't drive them to the designated off-lead areas, except on the weekends.

The children also wanted their dogs let into playgrounds - they like to play on the play equipment with their dogs.

ANALYSIS OF KEY THEMES

There is/there isn't a problem

For several reasons defining 'the problem' was complex:

- council's complaints recording system did not provide a complete picture of the complaints made against dogs;
- many incidents go unreported- people mentioned incidents that didn't warrant medical attention or reporting;
- some adults and children are afraid of dogs, others aren't sure whether a dog is friendly or not. Other people don't like dogs. These are valid concerns especially if they constrain people's recreation choices.

It is therefore not true that no conflict exists. It is the magnitude of the conflict that is in question. Formal statistics are important and council needs to improve its recording procedure, but they are only part of the definition of the 'problem'. It was nevertheless thought that it may be premature to introduce the magnitude of change anticipated by Option 4 and that Option 2 should be introduced instead, with an opportunity for review within 12 to 18 months.

On lead/off lead

This was arguably the key issue in the debate (ie it was more contentious than the proposed bans). Dog owners said they were in the majority and were being penalised by concerns of the minority. While it was generally conceded that there should be some areas where dogs are banned and/or required to be leashed, they were adamant that the proposed free running areas were too small, too few in number and too often located alongside arterial roads. They also wanted more areas for walking ie linear off-lead networks. These concerns also influenced the shift to Option 2.

Streets and shopping centres

For the safety of dogs, humans and motorists the Steering Committee maintained that dogs should be leashed in public streets, shopping centres and car parks. Most people accepted this idea including the Dog Clubs.

Bicycle paths

Cyclists figured prominently in the debate and were clear in their opposition to dogs on shared pathways. A conflict does exist between cyclists and free running dogs because of the greater potential for injury and the relative unpredictability of dogs around moving objects. However that is not to say that dogs should be excluded from any park with a bicycle path or that bicycle paths should be developed in future without any reference to the needs of dog owners. Many people were critical of cyclists who they say travel too fast, don't ring bells on approaching, are inconsiderate of pedestrians and dogs and don't live in the local area. They failed to see why they should keep their dogs leashed in the vast expanses of open space through which the main paths travel.

One compromise considered was to declare the declared shared paths dog-on-lead and have free running areas declared at regular intervals. Another was to declare only the path and 5m either side dog-on-lead - not ideal but it was thought to be fairer and more consistent.

This issue is one-that will need more attention in the future as more bicycle paths are developed. If dogs are not integrated into the planning process and better design mechanisms used, they will begin to be excluded (unfairly) from areas where bicycle paths are developed as complaints against them start to be made.

Ovals

Ovals are ideal for free running dogs. However the potential health risks from dog faeces are magnified on sports ovals, since owners are less likely to retrieve faeces when their dogs are unleashed. However, apart from one submission from Diamond Valley Football Club, this was not perceived to be a significant concern. On balance, therefore, it was considered that ovals should remain free running areas.

No dog/cat areas

Environmentally sensitive areas

Banyule is an area of extremely high environmental sensitivity. However Banyule Flats, Warringal Swampland and Wilson Reserve, three areas where dogs were proposed to be banned, were also popular with dog owners. The Steering Committee spent part of the consultation phase looking for ways to minimise the restrictions on dogs and their owners while providing sufficient protection for vegetation and wildlife. We looked at multi-zoning the parks with areas of dog-on-lead, dog-off-lead and areas where dogs and cats are banned. We held on-site meetings with council staff and community representatives. We also looked at management plans and ways that good design could alleviate the need for restrictions on dogs. A key design criteria was the need to accommodate the community's obvious desire for off-lead linear networks for walking and this may be incorporated in future management plan development.

Playgrounds and barbeque facilities

On balance, there was broad acceptance for dogs and cats to be kept away from play equipment and barbeque facilities.

However the presence of play equipment or barbeques should not render an entire park a no dog/cat area. Instead it was decided that a minimum radius be established (eg 5 metres) within which dogs and cats would be banned.

Dog priority areas

Some people thought this idea was a waste of Council resources, others saw it as a bribe to sell Option 4. However the majority thought it was an excellent idea and council is now examining possible sites.

FINAL REPORT

The final report was put to council in December 1996. It recommended that council adopt Option 2, given the strong response from dog owners and the magnitude of change anticipated by Option 4. It was further recommended that there be an opportunity for review within 12 to 18 months. The basis for enacting Option 2 was as follows:

- Dog-off-lead would apply in parks and open space (except in areas where they are banned or required to be leashed).
- No dog/cat would apply within 5 metres of any play equipment or public barbeque facility and to environmentally sensitive areas as designated by signs in Brown's Reserve, Greensborough; Annulus Billabong in Yarra Flats; Banyule Flats wetland and Banyule Billabong; Horseshoe, Reedy and Bailey Billabongs in Wilson Reserve and Warringal Swampland.

- Dog-on-lead would apply in streets, public car parks and public shopping centres and within 5 metres of a declared shared pathway as defined by the Road Safety (Traffic) Regulations 1988. For environmental reasons dog would also be required to be leashed in areas designated by signs in the following parks and reserves:
 - Annulus Billabong in Yarra Flats;
 - Banyule Flats wetland and Banyule Billabong;
 - Horsehoe, Reedy and Bailey Billabongs in Wilson Reserve;
 - Warringal Swamplands;
 - Yandell Bush Reserve;
 - St Helena Bush Reserve;
 - Dalvida Bush Reserve;
 - Kalparrin Gardens wetlands, Greensborough;
 - Binnak Park wetlands;
 - Harry Pottage Reserve; and
 - Rockbeare Park, Darebin Parklands.

It was also recommended that council define 'effective control' with greater clarity -in particular that there be a maximum distance from which a dog can be separated from its owner. Council eventually resolved that a dog will be deemed to be under effective control of its owner if:

- it is within 75 metres of its owner, and
- it will return to its owner upon command.

It was also suggested that council commit to the installation of more dog toilets and a major education campaign requiring financial commitment to both capital costs and on-going maintenance.

Important too were implications for closer liaison with other departments and organisations:

- The consultants preparing Council's Open Space Strategy were requested to examine the needs and issues associated with dogs' use of public open space and to include some questions on dog-related issues in the community survey.
- Parks Victoria were advised of council's resolution, especially the reasons for the decision in relation to declared shared pathways-
- It was recommended that park management plans should, in the future, be prepared in consultation with the local laws department to ensure the needs and issues associated with dogs, use of public open space are integrated into the planning process. The future development of the bicycle network should similarly occur in consultation with the local laws department.

Final adoption was deferred by council until February to give people the opportunity to comment on the final recommendations. Thirty-five additional submissions were received and a supplementary report was put to the February meeting. However the additional comments did not warrant any changes to the recommendations and council adopted the report in its entirety.

CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

Overall the result we achieved in Banyule was successful. A number of lessons were learned which, in conclusion, I would like to share.

1. Avoid seeing the UAM world in terms of dualisms ie dog owners versus non-dog owners, dog owners versus the environment, the council versus the community. If you do it will perpetuate the divisions and promote the view that all dog owners are rabidly self-interested and that all non-dog owners are dog haters; that dog owners don't care about the environment and that all environmentalists want to increase the restrictions on dogs and cats; even that a council can't learn anything through genuine consultation with the community. There are in fact many overlaps as was demonstrated in this case study.

2. Every community, and even sections within it, really is different. Fundamentally what the Banyule community wanted was linear off-lead networks along the main watercourses. They were less interested in free running pockets for unstructured play.
3. I strongly advocate that you establish a Steering Committee and that it comprise members of appropriate council departments including laws and animal control people, recreation and open space planning, park maintenance and conservation. I would be reluctant to undertake another review without such a committee. It not only improved the final recommendations but also served an educative function in getting the needs of dog owners better understood by other council departments.
4. Have your statistics and a clearly defined concept of the problem ready before you go out to consultation. Otherwise you can be sure dog owners will be asking what is the problem. Even if you are not looking to do a review in your area, consider amending your record-taking procedures to provide you with the information you will require when you eventually do a review.
5. You will gain a more co-operative approach if you truly treat dog owners as legitimate users of public open space. This means moving away from 'solving the problem' to 'managing the conflict' - a quite different task. You need to think about the way you approach the exercise, the words you use, even your demeanour in dealing with dog owners.
6. Each element of the consultation program was important and served a different function. Don't shy away from holding a public meeting. It is one of the few chances you will get for two-way interaction with the broader community. Acknowledge at the outset that you are looking to accommodate different needs - it is not a win/lose contest. Be aware too that dog owners will come out in force and that you may need to find ways to encourage other interests to comment on the proposals.
7. Part of the reason for the heated division was due to barriers in perception. Dog owners genuinely could not see what the problem was and, judging by the formal statistics alone, they were right. Because they are dog lovers they can't understand how some people are frightened of or just don't like dogs. One comment- "*they frequently think you should be charmed by their dog slobbering all over your little ones*" - exemplifies this point well. It was not until we started fleshing out some of these intangibles in greater depth that many of the dog owners came round to a less extreme viewpoint.
8. Your local laws staff need training in the reasons for any restrictions, particularly those imposed for environmental reasons, to give them authority and confidence in dealing with people in the field in a friendly manner.
9. Remember that it will take considerable time to mark the areas that need signage and to get the signs made up. You may need interim controls until the infrastructure is in place.
10. The benefits of using a consultant were, I think, evident to the council. We were independent (which also meant we could take much of the flak!). We were also familiar with the full breadth of UAM approaches used in other municipalities and states. Also, as town planners, we were able to treat it as a town planning exercise, utilising specialist research and negotiation skills in resolving competing demands for the use of land.
11. The next step is public education. Council needs to be committed to it and aware of the financial commitment.
12. Finally it doesn't stop once the review is done. You need to think about planning for the future as well. The whole Yarra River open space network will ultimately be subject to management plans. Dogs will be squeezed out unless we start to integrate their needs into management plan development. This *can* be done, as we have shown in the Banyule case, and will hopefully spread to other parts of the Yarra River open space network as well as to other cities.

REFERENCES

Harlock Jackson Pty Ltd 1995. *Public Open Space and Dogs: A Design and Management Guide for Open Space Professionals and Local Government* Petcare Information and Advisory Service, Melbourne.

Jackson, V. 1996b. *Dogs (and Cats) in Public Places: A Discussion Paper* Banyule City Council, Melbourne.

Jackson, V. 1996b. *Dogs (and Cats) in Public Places: Final Report* Banyule City Council, Melbourne.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Virginia Jackson

Harlock Jackson Pty Ltd

Urban Policy Analysts and Town Planners 19 Victoria Grove

HAWTHORN EAST VIC 3123 Tel/fax: (03) 98826065 Mobile: 0418 141598

Email s- vssj@eduserv .its.unimelb.edu.au

Virginia is an urban policy analyst and town planner with experience working in state and local government and, since 1987, as a consultant to government, the private sector, community groups and individuals. She has been conducting research in urban animal management for 6 years including a review of town planning policies and regulations for their impact on pet ownership (1991), preparation of guidelines for pet friendly housing (1992), the report Public Open Space and Dogs (1995) and work on compliance in UAM (1995/6). She has also made preliminary investigations into the role that pets will play in cities of the future. Virginia now has an international profile in UAM and is regularly asked to speak in a range of different forums.

[UAM 1997 Index page](#)