

**11.13 DOGS IN ISLAND SANCTUARY**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council exhibit a proposal to remove the 'no dog' signs at the pedestrian entries to the Island Sanctuary and receive a further report on the outcome of the exhibition.

**BACKGROUND**

The Deniliquin Masterplan (2018) (DMP) makes a recommendation regarding allowing dogs in the Island Sanctuary. This report proposes that Council exhibit a proposal to allow dogs in the Island Sanctuary.

**ISSUE/DISCUSSION**

The Island Sanctuary (attachment 1) forms part of a larger reserve encompassing Memorial Park. There are 5 pedestrian entry points into the Island Sanctuary which are shown on Attachment 1. The Island Sanctuary is fenced with the exception of the land beneath the bridge at the entry to Memorial Park. Of the 5 entry points into the Island Sanctuary, 3 have a sign indicating that no dogs are allowed. The remaining 2 entry points do not have 'no dog' signs erected. There are walking paths throughout the Island Sanctuary with the main path forming part of the beach to beach walk.

It is proposed that Council exhibit a proposal to remove the 'no dog' signs from the gates of the Island Sanctuary and allow dogs to be walked through this area. Anecdotally dogs are being walked through the Island Sanctuary and allowing dogs to be walked through would mean that users of the beach to beach walk could walk the entire length with their dogs.

Consultation

It is proposed that the exhibition of this proposal include notification in the local media and social media and Council would write interest groups including:

- Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre;
- Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council;
- Edward River Society of Model Engineers;
- Southern Riverina Field Naturalists Club;
- Memorial Park User Group; and
- Any other group identified.

**STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS****DMP**

Recommendation 7.4 of the DMP states that consideration should be given to removing the prohibition of dogs in the Island Sanctuary to allow dogs and owners to experience this environment. This is part of a number of recommendations relating to the Island Sanctuary area to improve the experience including seating, universal access, signage, removal of gates into Island Sanctuary to improve flow for bike riders etc. The long term vision is that the beach to beach will link with the lagoons walk to create approximately 5kms of walking/cycling paths.

**Crown Reserve 91035 Memorial Park and Island Sanctuary Plan of Management (2009) (PoM)**

The PoM was prepared to reinforce and conserve the values of the Crown Reserve and to gain acceptance of the concept plan. It applies to Memorial Park and the Island Sanctuary. The preparation of the PoM was overseen by a steering committee with representatives from the

Memorial Pak Users Group, the then Island Sanctuary Maintenance Committee, local resident groups, Council representatives and representatives of the reserves trust.

The PoM identifies the Island Sanctuary as bushland sanctuary with passive recreational opportunities such as walking tracks, picnicking and nature study and identifies that the Island Sanctuary forms part of the 'beach to beach' walk. There are a varying standard of tracks that have been constructed inside the Island Sanctuary. It is recognised as having significant cultural values by the local Aboriginal community. There are a number of 'scarred trees' within the Island Sanctuary along with food and medicinal plants used by the local Aboriginal groups.

The Island Sanctuary contains suitable habitat for native flora and fauna, including specific habitat that may be utilised by fauna for roosting, foraging, nesting and shelter, such as tall riparian vegetation. Local conservation groups have recorded fauna species in the Island Sanctuary. The vegetation at the site is composed of River Red Gum forest but has a number of introduced weeds. Due to the proximity of the site to the township it is likely that domestic (and wild) cats prey on native fauna and there are confirmed sightings of foxes. However the site should be considered an important community asset and an example of remnant floodplain vegetation for the area.

The recommendations of the PoM address both the environmental, Aboriginal cultural heritage and economic values of the Island Sanctuary including weed management, water quality management, waste management, develop local and regional tourism opportunities, accessibility, operation of the existing river weir to Tarangle Creek and stormwater.

### **Environmental Management Plan for the Island Sanctuary (2011) (EMP)**

The aim of the EMP is to provide practical and prescriptive information which will assist management to protect, and where possible enhance the natural values of the Island Sanctuary for the education and recreation of the local community and visitors. It provides a site analysis including Aboriginal cultural heritage, European heritage, landscape connectivity, flora and fauna. There are a number of management actions recommended including weed management, management of native vegetation, management of fire risk, improvements in habitat, the ongoing role of the community and the Island Sanctuary, mapping of the Island Sanctuary, operation of the weir and wetland management.

#### Comment

Both the EMP and PoM recognise the various uses of the Island Sanctuary. Neither plan makes references to dogs being in the Island Sanctuary. Signs prohibiting dogs in the Island Sanctuary would pre date both of these documents and it is unlikely that there was any consideration given to a change in the status quo.

### **COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

This proposal meets the following actions:

- 1.2 Our community is safe, happy and healthy, both physically and mentally;
- 1.3 Our community and public spaces are accessible and inclusive and reflect our history, heritage and culture; and
- 3.2 Our natural environment is protected and enhanced.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Nil.

### **LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

Section 13 of the Companion Animals Act (CAA) requires a dog that is in a public place to be under effective control of a competent person by means of an adequate chain, cord or leash that is attached to the dog and that is being held by or secured to, a person. It is an offence to have a dog in a public place and not under 'effective control' (as specified by the Act) and attracts a minimum fine of \$330.

If Council was to determine that dogs should not be allowed in the Island Sanctuary then it would be recommended to Council that it consider making an order under section 14 of the CAA. It prohibits dogs in certain areas and in this case, it would need to be an order of Council. Dogs can be prohibited in recreation areas and wildlife protection areas. A recreation area includes a public place for public recreation and a wildlife protection areas includes a public place set aside for the protection of wildlife. The CAA defines a public place as meaning any pathway, road, bridge, jetty, wharf, road-ferry, reserve, park, beach or garden and any other place that the public are entitled to use.

**ATTACHMENTS****1. Island Sanctuary**