

DOGS OFF-LEASH AT MACKENZIES BAY: SAFETY

Is Mackenzies Bay safe?

Mackenzies Bay is a relatively hazardous location. This is due to the presence of large and slippery rocks, some of which are submerged, strong currents and strong waves. Dogs are also exposed to these risks as they cannot readily avoid the rocks and, like swimmers and surfers, could get caught in the strong currents and waves.

All visitors to Mackenzies Bay – whether with or without dogs – must take extreme care at all times particularly because there are no lifeguards at this location.

Some visitors may also have safety concerns regarding access to Mackenzies Bay: the bay isn't readily accessible as the stairs from the Coastal Walk give onto large rocks that are often wet and slippery.

Would the safety risk be different during a dogs off-leash trial?

Council would need to advertise an off-leash dog trial at Mackenzies Bay. This would attract more dog owners and their pets to the area. A higher number of users naturally leads to higher risks, particularly in a relatively hazardous location like Mackenzies Bay.

The safety risk would likely be greatest for new users who may not be as familiar with Mackenzies Bays conditions as current local users. New and existing users may not know how to keep themselves and their dogs safe near water, both in general and in hazardous locations.

Have there ever been any incidents involving dogs at Mackenzies Bay?

To date, lifeguards and rangers have not received reports of dog aggressions or any other incidents involving dogs at Mackenzies Bay.

Would dogs off-leash lead to conflicts with other users during a potential trial?

The conflict with other users would likely be minimal as dogs and their owners are currently one of the main users of Mackenzies Bay along with surfers. However, there could be an increasing conflict as the bay becomes more popular, particularly when there is sand, which we cannot predict and tends to attract a greater number of swimmers and sunbakers.

Dog-inflicted injuries in off-leash dog areas are rare, though some people may still perceive a risk of being bitten. However, there is a real risk that children could be bitten in a dedicated off-leash dog area if children are unsupervised. As cited by the South Australian Dog and Cat Management Board in 2013, 'many dog bites occur when children are playing around dogs. Their high pitched noise and uncoordinated attempts at showing affection may cause the dog to feel threatened and it may act defensively or trigger a chase response'.

The consultation on a potential trial of dogs off-leash at Mackenzies Bay runs until 20 September 2020. Head to haveyoursay.waverley.nsw.gov.au.