



DOGS OFF-LEASH AT MACKENZIES BAY: POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF DOGS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Dogs can impact the environment in various ways. These impacts are generally more severe when dogs are off-leash as owners have less control over their pets. Some of the potential impacts dogs could have on the environment at Mackenzie's Bay are described below.

What is the impact of dogs of local wildlife?

Mackenzies Bay is located in the Bondi Intertidal Protected Area (IPA) where seashore animals benefit from a special type of protection. It is also an important location for coastal birds to stop and rest on the rocks.

While dogs are not prohibited from IPAs, the NSW Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries advises against permitting dogs in IPAs, particularly off-leash dogs as they are not actively controlled by their owners and could disturb the marine wildlife.

Off-leash dogs are known for chasing birds and scaring them away. This has already been observed at Mackenzies Bay. This behaviour would likely increase during an off-leash dog trial and could have a long-term impact where birds could learn to avoid the area due to the risk dogs pose to them, and would thereby lose an important resting spot on the coast.

What is the impact of dogs on local vegetation?

There is a small parcel of remnant vegetation, mainly native marine grass, at Mackenzies Bay. This parcel of vegetation has reduced significantly over the years. However, as the original soil remains, there is an opportunity to regenerate the remnant vegetation.

Some dogs, particularly those who are not on-leash and actively controlled by their owners, exhibit behaviour

that can be damaging to both native and planted vegetation (eg. digging). This type of behaviour could increase during an off-leash dog trial and could affect the opportunity of regenerating the remnant vegetation at Mackenzies Bay.

There is also the risk of increases in dog faeces in the area. Although most dog owners do the right thing and pick up after their dog, sometimes the dog may be too far away and they don't see. The likelihood of this happening could also be higher during an off-leash dog trial as a greater number of dog owners would likely come to the area. This too would have an impact on vegetation as dog faeces alter soil's nutrient profile. The impact of this is highest for the original soil as it could affect ability of remnant native vegetation to regenerate.

What is the impact of dogs on water quality?

It is likely that an off-leash dog trial will result in more fecal contamination of soil and vegetation as well as the IPA and receiving aquatic areas. This has the potential to impact the health of swimmers and surfers at Mackenzies Bay and Tamarama Beach. Increased fecal contamination could also further disrupt marine biodiversity, which is highly sensitive to increased nutrient loads and contamination.

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.