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**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY

**Dog parks in Molonglo Valley and Woden Town Centre - Options report -
Assembly Resolution of 28 October 2025 - Government Response**

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Options Report:

Dog Parks

– Woden Valley and Molonglo Valley

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Executive Summary

Overview of proposal

This Options Report assesses opportunities for the provision of dog park infrastructure within the Woden Valley and Molonglo Valley districts of the Australian Capital Territory. The assessment considers current and future demand, existing and planned provision, site constraints, strategic alignment, and the role of dog parks within the broader open space network. The purpose of the report is to inform decision-making regarding the appropriate scale, location, and timing of any future investment in dog park facilities.

Key findings

The assessment identified differing service contexts across the two districts. In the Molonglo Valley, current demand for dog exercise facilities is met through the proximity of the existing district level Duffy Dog Park and will be complemented by the addition of a new local-level dog park which is planned as part of Denman Prospect Stage 2. Together, these facilities are expected to adequately meet current and medium-term demand in this high-growth area. It is recommended that planning for the new suburbs in the north of the Molonglo Valley will include additional dog park facilities.

The Woden Valley is a well-established district with increasing residential density, particularly in and around the town centre. While residents have access to dog exercise areas, opportunities exist to enhance local provision to better serve nearby medium- and high-density housing. The feasibility assessment found a local-level dog park could provide a proportionate and context-responsive addition to the open space network. Further feasibility work should be conducted to explore potential sites in suburbs close to the town centre.

Feasibility conclusion and recommendations

In the Woden Valley, it is recommended that consideration be given to a local-level dog park designed to service the higher-density residential areas. Any such facility would be subject to further detailed site assessment, community engagement, and planning approval to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses and alignment with Territory Plan requirements. Further feasibility should be conducted on surrounding Woden suburbs.

In the Molonglo Valley, there is planned delivery of a new local-level dog park within Denman Prospect Stage 2 by Capital Estate Developments and further planning works should explore opportunities for a local- or district-level dog park in the new suburbs of Molonglo Valley.

Overall, this approach supports equitable access to dog exercise facilities, reinforces responsible dog ownership, and enhances the functionality of Canberra's open space network while responding appropriately to differing local contexts.

Introduction

Purpose of the feasibility report

This feasibility report assesses the viability of developing new dog parks within the Woden Valley and Molonglo Valley districts of the Australian Capital Territory. It considers site opportunities, strategic alignment, community demand, environmental and planning factors, risks, and implementation considerations to inform future investment decisions in dog park infrastructure.

Background and strategic context

Dog parks play an important role within urban open space networks by supporting community wellbeing, social interaction, and responsible dog ownership. Population growth across both established and emerging suburbs, coupled with increasing dog ownership, has contributed to growing pressure on existing dog exercise areas. Expanding the provision of purpose-built dog parks is being considered to improve access, reduce conflicts in shared open spaces, and enhance recreational opportunities for residents.

The Woden Valley is a well-established district supported by a mature open space network, while the Molonglo Valley is a rapidly developing area with a younger population and evolving recreational infrastructure. Assessing both districts provides insight into differing levels of demand, site availability, and planning constraints across contrasting urban contexts.

Scope of assessment

The report evaluates the feasibility of potential dog park sites in each district through consideration of:

- Strategic and policy alignment
- Community need and demand
- Site suitability and constraints
- Environmental and planning considerations

The assessment aims to identify preferred options, highlight key issues for further investigation, and outline recommended next steps should the projects proceed.

Dog parks in Canberra

Canberra currently has nine fully fenced, off-leash dog parks distributed across the city's main districts. These include facilities in Belconnen (Lake Ginninderra), Gungahlin (Casey, Forde and Franklin), the Inner North (O'Connor), Tuggeranong (Point Hut and Greenway), Weston Creek (Duffy), and the Inner South (Yarralumla). This distribution provides generally good access to dedicated dog exercise areas across most town centres.

In addition to fenced dog parks, Canberra offers an extensive network of unfenced off-leash areas within urban parks and selected reserves. These areas are regulated under the Domestic Animals Act 2000 and mapped by the ACT Government to support responsible dog recreation throughout the city.

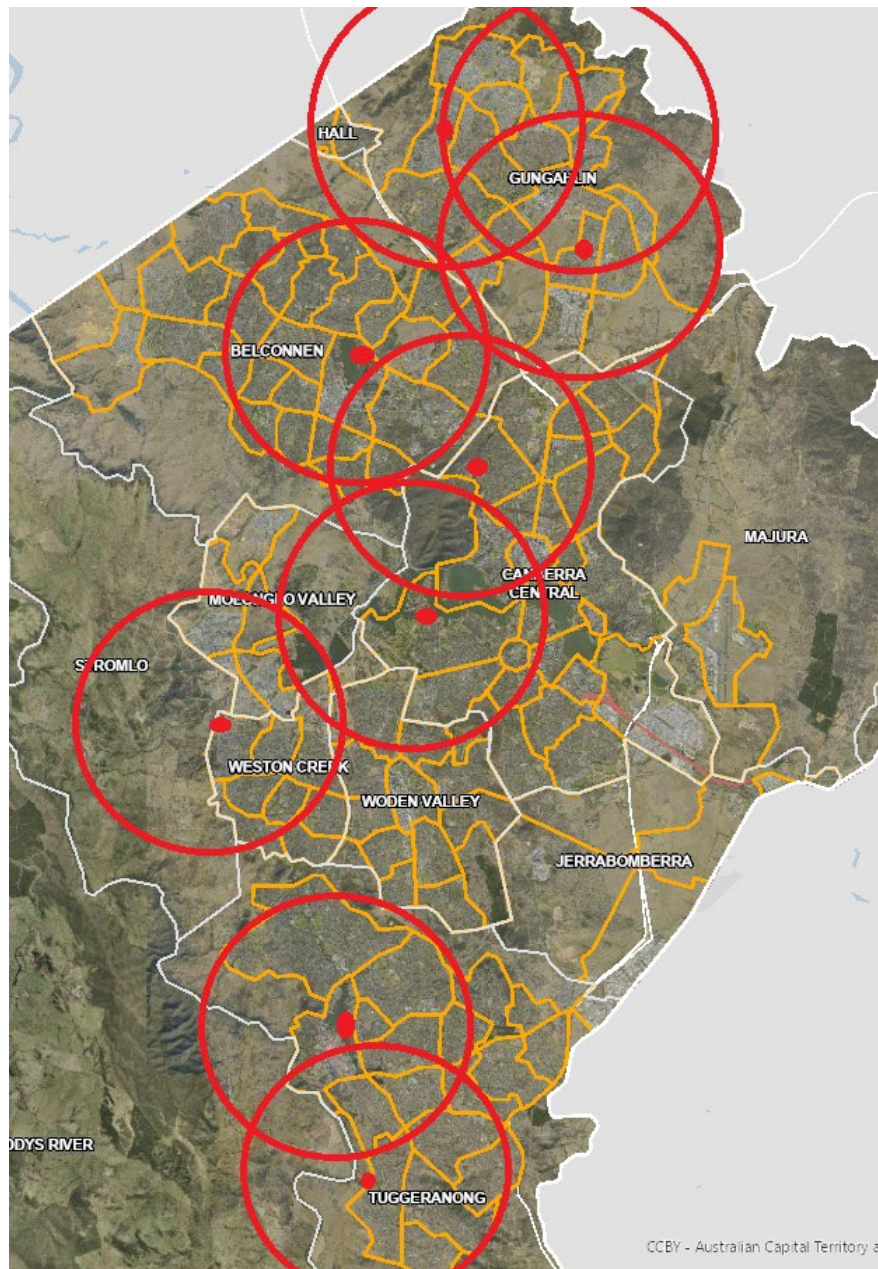


Figure 1 Dog Park locations with 4km radius

Strategic and Policy Context

Alignment with ACT Government strategies and plans

Any proposed development of dog parks in the Woden Valley and Molonglo Valley aligns with ACT Government objectives relating to community wellbeing, liveability, and equitable access to public open space. High-quality recreational infrastructure supports healthy, active lifestyles and contributes to social cohesion by providing safe, inclusive spaces for informal recreation and social interaction.

Dog parks are an increasingly recognised element of urban open space networks, offering designated areas for off-leash exercise while helping to reduce pressure and potential conflict within shared parks, sporting fields, and conservation areas. Expanding dog park provision supports strategic goals to improve access to recreational opportunities across both established districts and growth areas.

Community wellbeing and social outcomes

Dog parks contribute to positive physical and mental health outcomes by encouraging regular outdoor activity and creating opportunities for social connection. They often function as informal community hubs, benefiting a broad range of residents including older people, families, and those new to an area.

Providing dedicated dog exercise areas also improves overall open space amenity by managing competing uses, supporting non-dog owners, and encouraging responsible dog ownership through appropriate, purpose-designed facilities.

Open space and recreation policy considerations

ACT planning and open space policies emphasise the need for a diverse, well-distributed network of recreational facilities that responds to changing community needs. Purpose-built dog parks contribute to this network by accommodating increasing dog ownership and evolving recreational preferences.

In growth areas such as the Molonglo Valley, timely delivery of recreational infrastructure is important to meet demand and avoid future service gaps. In contrast, the Woden Valley's established open space system presents opportunities for renewal and optimisation of existing assets. Assessing dog park provision across both contexts supports a balanced and strategic approach to open space planning.

Animal management and community wellbeing objectives

ACT animal management frameworks promote responsible pet ownership, safety, and animal welfare. Purpose-designed dog parks support these objectives by providing secure, accessible locations for off-leash activity, reducing reliance on informal or non-compliant use of other public spaces.

Additional dog parks can also assist with compliance with leash requirements and help minimise environmental impacts, particularly in sensitive or high-use areas.

Planning and land use considerations

The identification of suitable dog park sites must align with planning controls, land use zoning, and environmental policies under the Territory Plan. Careful consideration of site context ensures facilities are accessible, appropriately located, and compatible with surrounding uses.

Integrating dog parks within existing and planned open space networks supports efficient land use, effective asset management, and reduces the potential for land-use conflict over the long term.

Overview of Demand for Dog Parks

Demand for purpose-built dog parks has increased across the ACT in recent years, driven by population growth, higher rates of dog ownership, and changing expectations around access to high-quality recreational spaces. Dog owners increasingly seek designated facilities that provide safe, secure environments for off-leash exercise while minimising impacts on other park users.

Where dedicated dog parks are limited, greater pressure can be placed on shared open spaces, sporting fields, and environmentally sensitive areas, potentially leading to user conflict, amenity impacts, and ongoing compliance challenges.

Current provision of dog parks in Woden and Molonglo

Provision of formal dog parks differs between the Woden Valley and Molonglo Valley, reflecting their contrasting development profiles.

In the Woden Valley, access to dog parks and designated off-leash areas is uneven, with some facilities located outside key residential catchments, particularly areas with higher-density housing. Capacity constraints during peak periods can also reduce functionality and user experience, indicating scope to enhance local provision over time.

While there are currently no purpose-built dog parks within the Molonglo Valley, Duffy Dog Park provides interim coverage, serving much of the district within a 4 km catchment. A new local-level dog park is planned as part of Denman Prospect Stage 2. Together, these facilities are expected to adequately meet medium-term demand as the district continues to grow. Further, additional dog park facilities are planned for Molonglo 3 future development.

Dog ownership trends

Dog ownership remains a significant and growing characteristic of the ACT population, playing an important role in household wellbeing by encouraging physical activity, outdoor engagement, and social interaction. These benefits are best supported where appropriate infrastructure is available to enable safe, convenient, and responsible dog exercise.

In higher-density and newer housing areas, private outdoor space is often limited, increasing reliance on public dog exercise facilities. In growth areas such as the Molonglo Valley, early provision of dog parks helps establish positive usage patterns and reduces the likelihood of informal or non-compliant off-leash activity in unsuitable locations. In established areas such as the Woden Valley, long-term dog ownership combined with demographic change can place increasing pressure on existing public spaces, reinforcing the importance of facilities that can accommodate regular and ongoing use.

Identified gaps in service provision

Analysis of current open space provision (refer Figure 2), together with projected population growth, highlights gaps in access to suitable dog exercise facilities, particularly for residents living in unit and apartment dwellings where reliance on public open space is higher. This trend is evident across both the Woden and Molonglo Valleys as residential density continues to increase.

Key considerations include:

- Limited availability of designated off-leash areas, leading to reliance on informal use of shared open spaces
- Increased potential for conflict between dog owners and other park users in multi-use areas such as sporting ovals and general parkland

The planned delivery of a new dog park in the Molonglo Valley will help address these issues and respond to the needs of a growing higher-density population. Additional provision within the Woden Valley would similarly improve equity of access, support responsible dog ownership, and assist in managing competing open space uses.

Woden Valley needs

Factors informing future consideration of dog park provision in the Woden Valley include:

- Ongoing increases in residential density, particularly in and around the town centre

- An established community with long-term patterns of pet ownership
- Gradual increases in use of district and neighbourhood parks as multi-purpose spaces
- Interest in well-located dog exercise facilities within walking distance or a short drive of residential areas

Over time, the introduction of a dedicated dog park within the Woden Valley could enhance local accessibility, support responsible dog ownership, and assist in managing shared use of existing open spaces. Such a facility would represent an opportunity to strengthen the functionality and inclusivity of the district's open space network as the area continues to evolve.

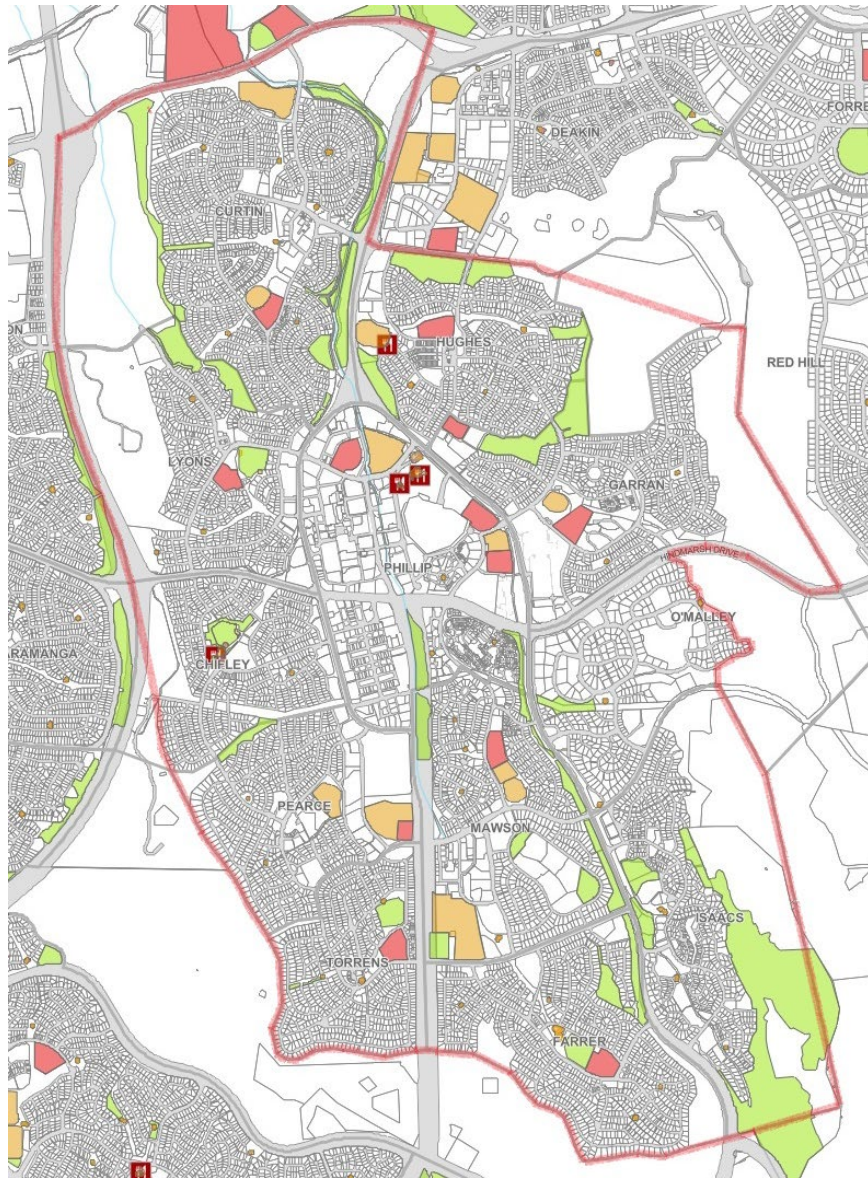


Figure 2 current dog exercise location within the Woden Valley off-leash areas green, on-leash areas orange and dogs prohibited red.

Molonglo Valley needs

The Molonglo Valley is one of the ACT's fastest growing districts, with ongoing residential development and a relatively young population profile. New residents are typically high users of public open space, including dog owners seeking convenient off-leash exercise opportunities close to home.

Open space provision in the Molonglo Valley continues to evolve. While significant land has been allocated for parks and nature reserves, purpose-built dog parks are not yet located within the district.

The planned delivery of a local-level dog park as part of Denman Prospect Stage 2 represents an important next step in strengthening local provision. Early integration of dog park infrastructure in the valley supports:

- Meeting increasing demand as new suburbs are developed
- Establishing appropriate open space use behaviours from the outset
- Reducing unauthorised off-leash activity in conservation, drainage, and other sensitive areas
- Creating local focal points that support social connection in emerging neighbourhoods

Looking ahead, the future development of Molonglo 3 is also likely to require the provision of a district-level dog park, or smaller local-level facilities. Planned growth on the northern side of the river corridor will significantly increase the resident population beyond the effective walking and short drive catchment of existing and proposed facilities. Providing additional dog park provision within Molonglo 3 would help ensure equitable access to dog exercise opportunities as the district expands, while also managing pressure on surrounding open space and environmentally sensitive areas.

Together, the existing Duffy Dog Park, the planned Denman Prospect facility, and future provision in Molonglo 3 will support the development of the Molonglo Valley's recreational network and provide adequate access to dog exercise facilities as the district continues to grow.

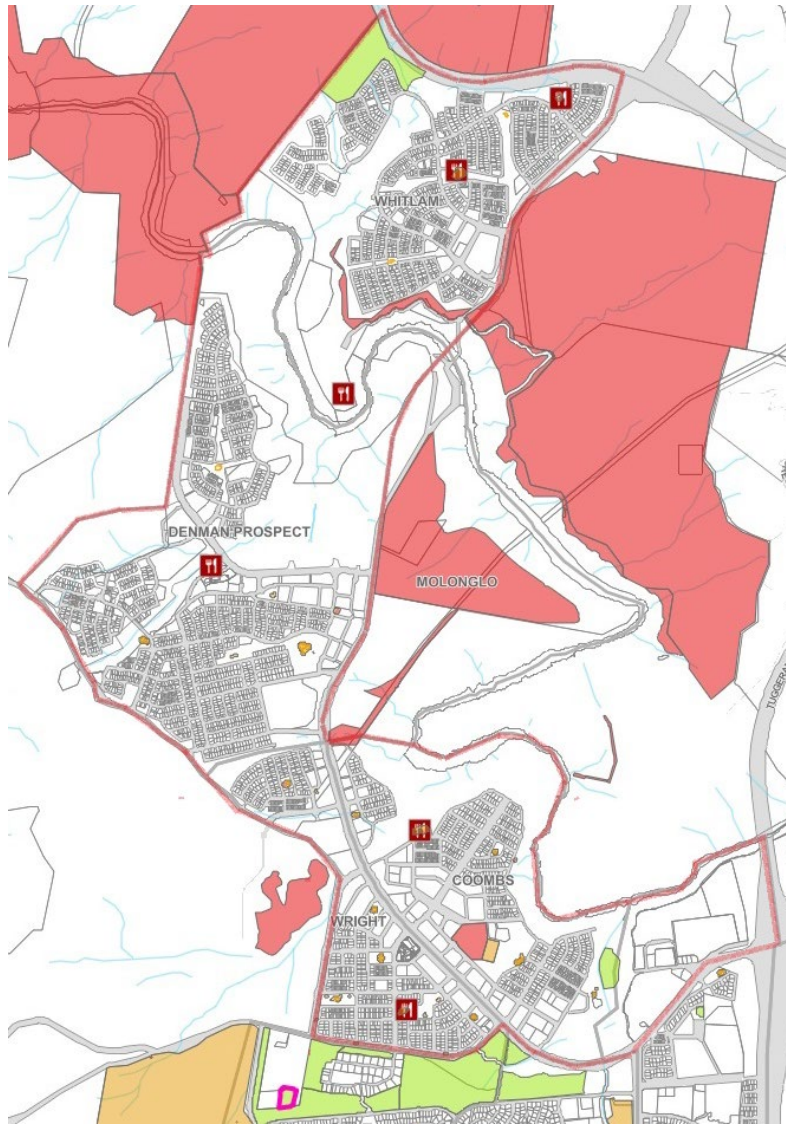


Figure 3 current dog exercise location within the Molonglo Valley off-leash areas green, on leash areas orange, dogs prohibited red and the Duffy Dog Park in pink.

Equity and accessibility considerations

Providing dog parks in both an established district (Woden Valley) and a growth district (Molonglo Valley) supports a more equitable distribution of recreational infrastructure across the Territory. Locating dog parks within reasonable walking or short-drive catchments improves access for residents who may have limited mobility or transport options.

Well-designed dog parks also support inclusion by:

- Accommodating a range of dog sizes and abilities
- Providing accessible paths, seating, and shade
- Offering safe environments for older residents and families

Woden Valley Candidate Site(s) and Site Suitability Assessment

Assessment of potential sites in the Woden Valley indicates that a full-scale, district-level dog park will be explored. Constraints in established suburbs include competing open space uses, proximity to sensitive land uses, and limited site capacity to accommodate high-intensity off-leash activity without adverse impacts.

There is potential to accommodate a local-level dog park in the Woden Valley, intended to serve nearby medium- and high-density residential areas. A facility of this scale would be designed to minimise land-use conflict through careful siting, appropriate buffers, and supporting landscape treatment. Any preferred option would be required to demonstrate consistency with Territory Plan controls, environmental policies, and amenity considerations.

Overall, a modest, locally focused dog park represents a proportionate and context-responsive option that could enhance local amenity while respecting the established character and function of the Woden Valley open space network.

Design and Functional Requirements

Accessibility and inclusion considerations

Dog parks should be designed to support inclusive use and be accessible to a broad range of users, including older residents, people with disability, and carers. Key considerations include:

- Accessible paths, entrances, and circulation routes that comply with relevant standards
- Even surfaces and appropriate gradients
- Seating provided at suitable intervals and in shaded locations
- Clear sightlines to support safety and passive supervision
- Convenient connection to pedestrian networks and, where feasible, nearby parking

Design should also consider the needs of dogs of varying sizes, ages, and abilities, and accommodate different patterns of use throughout the day, while remaining responsive to site constraints and surrounding land uses.

Maintenance and durability considerations

Design decisions will directly affect the long-term maintenance and operational performance of the dog parks. Materials, layouts, and fittings should be selected to withstand high levels of use, weather exposure, and wear associated with dog activity.

Key considerations include:

- Durable fencing, gates, and fixtures suitable for public environments
- Ground surfaces that minimise erosion, mud, and dust
- Planting resilient to trampling and urine exposure
- Layouts that allow for efficient cleaning, inspection, and repair
- Minimising elements that require frequent replacement or specialist maintenance

Designing for durability will support lifecycle cost efficiency, reduce ongoing maintenance demands, and ensure the facilities remain safe and attractive over time.

Environmental Considerations

Flora and fauna impacts

The development of dog parks has the potential to impact local flora and fauna, particularly where sites are located within or adjacent to natural or semi-natural open spaces. Increased human and dog activity can disturb wildlife, affect habitat quality, and introduce pressures such as trampling and informal track creation.

Site selection and design must therefore consider:

- Proximity to known or potential habitat areas
- Avoidance of environmentally sensitive or conservation land
- Clear delineation of dog park boundaries to discourage encroachment into surrounding areas

Where potential ecological impacts are identified, mitigation measures such as buffers, fencing, signage, and controlled access routes should be incorporated to minimise disturbance.

Tree protection and landscape impacts

Existing trees and landscape elements contribute significantly to urban amenity, shade, and environmental value. Dog park development should seek to retain mature trees where possible and integrate them into the design to provide natural shade and character.

Key considerations include:

- Identifying and protecting existing trees during design and construction
- Avoiding soil compaction and root disturbance in high-use areas
- Locating high-traffic zones away from tree trunks and sensitive root zones
- Supplementary planting to replace or offset impacts where unavoidable

Landscape design should balance durability with environmental outcomes, using hardy species suitable for high-use public spaces.

Noise and amenity impacts

Dog parks can generate noise associated with barking and increased activity, particularly during peak usage periods. While generally acceptable within an open space context, noise impacts require consideration where dog parks are found close to residential areas, schools, or other sensitive uses.

Amenity impacts may be mitigated through:

- Appropriate site setbacks from residences refer to MIS and MITS standards
- Use of vegetation buffers and landform where available
- Locating entry points and higher-activity areas away from sensitive boundaries
- Clear signage promoting responsible dog management and behaviour

Balancing accessibility with amenity protection is a key consideration in site suitability and design.

Erosion and drainage

High levels of use, particularly by dogs, can place pressure on ground surfaces, increasing the risk of erosion, compaction, and drainage issues. Poorly managed surfaces can lead to dusty areas or in rainy conditions muddy conditions, water pooling, and sediment runoff into surrounding areas.

Design responses should address:

- Selection of durable ground surfaces suitable for high foot and paw traffic
- Effective drainage design to manage stormwater and reduce runoff
- Avoidance of steep slopes where erosion risk is elevated
- Provision for surface maintenance and rehabilitation

Managing erosion and drainage effectively supports both environmental performance and user experience.

Climate resilience

Dog park design should account for changing climate conditions, including increased heat, prolonged dry periods, and more intense rainfall events. Climate-responsive design enhances the long-term functionality and sustainability of the facilities.

Key climate resilience considerations include:

- Adequate shade through tree retention and built structures
- Heat-appropriate materials that reduce surface temperatures
- Water-efficient design, including drought-tolerant planting
- Stormwater infrastructure capable of managing extreme rainfall

Incorporating climate-resilient design principles ensures that dog parks remain safe, functional, and comfortable for users over time.

Community and Stakeholder Considerations

Anticipated community benefits

The development of dog parks within the Woden Valley and Molonglo Valley has the potential to deliver a range of community benefits. Dedicated dog exercise areas support physical and mental wellbeing by encouraging regular outdoor activity, social interaction, and engagement with local open spaces.

Dog parks can also function as informal social spaces, facilitating interaction among residents of different ages, backgrounds, and household types. In emerging communities such as the Molonglo Valley, they can contribute to neighbourhood identity and social cohesion, while in established areas such as the Woden Valley, appropriately scaled facilities can enhance the functionality and diversity of the existing open space network.

Additional benefits include improved management of dog exercise activity, reduced reliance on informal off-leash use in shared public spaces, and positive outcomes for animal welfare through the provision of safe and well-designed off-leash environments.

Potential impacts and concerns

While dog parks provide clear benefits, their development may also raise concerns among some community members. Potential issues commonly associated with dog parks include:

- Noise impacts arising from barking, particularly near residential areas
- Perceived or actual safety concerns, including dog behaviour
- Increased foot traffic and parking demand
- Impacts on local amenity, including perceptions of cleanliness or maintenance

These concerns can be mitigated through careful site selection, sensitive design, clear signage, and ongoing management. Transparent communication and early engagement with the community are also critical to addressing concerns and building confidence in the proposal.

Planning, Approvals and Regulatory Considerations

Territory Plan considerations

The development of dog parks must align with the provisions of the ACT Territory Plan, which establishes the statutory framework for land use and development across the Territory. Dog parks are generally considered a form of municipal or recreational infrastructure and are typically located within public open space.

Key Territory Plan considerations include:

- The compatibility of dog park use with the designated purpose of the land
- Protection of environmental, landscape, and community values
- Consideration of site-specific overlays or constraints, such as environmental significance or transport corridors

Early identification of any applicable Territory Plan provisions or precinct-specific controls will be essential to confirming development feasibility.

Land use and zoning

Potential dog park sites within the Woden Valley and Molonglo Valley are expected to be located on land zoned for open space or community purposes. Zoning considerations will influence the permissibility of dog park use, the scale of development, and the level of infrastructure that can be provided.

Relevant considerations include:

- Whether dog parks are a permissible use within the applicable land use zone
- The relationship between proposed dog parks and surrounding land uses, including residential areas, schools, and conservation land

Where sites are located near sensitive uses, additional design or operational measures may be required to ensure compatibility.

Approvals pathway

The approvals pathway for dog park development will depend on site characteristics, scale, and the nature of proposed works. In most instances, any new dog parks may be delivered as low-impact municipal works on unleased Territory land, simplifying approval requirements.

Depending on the site, approvals may include:

- Development approval where required under the *Planning Act 2023*
- Environmental or heritage-related approvals for constrained sites
- Utility coordination and service approvals

Clarifying the approvals pathway early in the design process will assist in project planning, timeframes, and risk management.

Compliance requirements

The planning, construction, and operation of dog parks must comply with relevant legislation, policies, and standards. Key compliance requirements may include:

- Workplace health and safety regulations during construction and maintenance
- Environmental protection requirements, particularly in relation to vegetation, drainage, and waste management
- Accessibility standards to ensure inclusive use of public facilities
- Animal management and public safety requirements

Ongoing compliance considerations will also apply during operation, including maintenance, signage, and enforcement of dog management rules.

Findings and Recommendations

Summary of feasibility outcomes

The feasibility assessment identified differing levels of need and opportunity across the two study areas. In the Molonglo Valley, current demand for dog exercise facilities is expected to be adequately met through the combination of the existing Duffy Dog Park and the planned local-level dog park within Denman Prospect Stage 2. As development progresses, future consideration may also be given to additional dog park facilities (district- or local-level) within Molonglo 3 to support population growth on the northern side of the river corridor and maintain convenient access to facilities within walkable catchments.

In the Woden Valley, the assessment found that there is potential for a local-level dog park to service nearby medium- and high-density residential areas, where reliance on shared public open space is greater. Further feasibility will occur in Woden Valley suburbs for a potential district-level dog park.

Preferred option(s)

- **Molonglo Valley:** Proceed with the planned delivery of local-level dog park within Denman Prospect Stage 2.
- **Molonglo 3:** Plan for the future provision of additional district- or local-level dog park(s) to support population growth on the northern side of the river corridor, ensuring equitable access to off-leash dog exercise opportunities and reducing pressure on environmentally sensitive open spaces as development progresses.
- **Woden Valley:** Consider the development of a modest, local-level dog park, subject to detailed site assessment and planning approval.
- **Woden Valley:** Explore feasibility of the Woden Valley suburbs for a district-level-dog park.