



ORANA BAY DOG EXERCISE AREA

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD

Canberrans were invited to provide input into a review of the suitability of Orana Bay in Yarralumla as a dog off-leash exercise area from 1 February to 15 March 2022.

Orana Bay is a popular dog off-leash exercise area neighbouring Weston Park and the Yarralumla Dog Park. It is one of six off-leash swimming areas announced by the ACT Government in October 2019 to provide Canberrans with more options to safely exercise their dogs.

THE CONVERSATION

Online survey

An online survey was open on the ACT Government's YourSay engagement website during the consultation period to enable the community to provide input to the review. A total of 698 surveys were completed during the six-week consultation period.

Members of the community also provided feedback via Facebook and email including a group submission from Yarralumla residents living in Brown Street and Banks Street.

Pop-up sessions

Two pop-up sessions were held to promote the engagement and provide the community with an opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts. The first pop-up was at Yarralumla Dog Park on Wednesday 16 February and the second pop-up was at Orana Bay on Saturday 26 February. Approximately 150 people attended the pop-ups.

WHO WE ENGAGED

The consultation targeted all recreation users of Orana Bay including dog owners and Yarralumla residents.

90% of survey respondents identified themselves as regular users of Orana Bay visiting the area at least once a month with 47% visiting weekly or more to engage in a variety of recreation activities including:

- exercising their dog (86%)
- walking (41%)
- general recreation (16%)
- cycling (13%)
- swimming (11%)
- rowing (3%)
- sailing (1%).

Other recreation activities reported at Orana Bay include stand up paddle boarding, kayaking, launching boats, fishing, picnicking, bird watching and playing with children.

91% of those who filled out the online survey were dog owners and 17% were Yarralumla residents. We received feedback from all regions including the inner south (35%), inner north (12%), Tuggeranong (11.5%), Belconnen (11.5%), Woden (10%), Weston Creek (8%), Gungahlin (8%), Molonglo (2%) and regional NSW (2%).



Key insights from the community

Orana Bay is highly valued as a dog off-leash exercise area

1. There is strong support for keeping Orana Bay as a dog off-leash exercise area with 90% of survey respondents rating it important or very important to keep it as a dog off-leash area, including the majority of Yarralumla residents.
2. Orana Bay is highly valued as a dog off-leash exercise area for a variety of reasons including its central location, proximity to Yarralumla Dog Park and accessibility. It's one of the few places in Canberra with a gradual sloping beach that can be used by dogs to access water, including elderly dogs and dogs with health issues such as arthritis.
3. A strong sense of community connection and the opportunity to socialise with like-minded people and well-behaved dogs was also frequently mentioned as part of Orana Bay's appeal as an off-leash exercise area.

Signage, bins and seating

4. There's strong support for installing signage that clearly indicates where the off-leash area begins and ends and provides guidance to all recreation users on sharing the space with others.
5. There is also support for additional facilities at Orana Bay with more bins and seating the most sought-after facilities followed by more shade trees.
6. Some people would also like to see water refill stations installed at Orana Bay (for people and dogs) as well as dog waste bag dispensers. Additional car parking and toilet facilities were also mentioned by a handful of people.

Shared path safety

7. A number of dog owners, cyclists and local residents raised safety concerns with the nearby shared path, specifically the potential for accidents and collisions between off-leash dogs not under effective control and cyclists and pedestrians.
8. 8.5% of survey respondents reported having repeatedly witnessed dogs off-leash on the shared path and a further 27% reported having witnessed dogs off-leash on the shared path 'once or twice' despite the path and 10 metres on either side being a dog on-leash area. There were also a number of reports of collisions and near-misses between dogs (on and off-leash) on the shared path and pedestrians and cyclists (including cyclists riding at high speed and not giving way).
9. Suggestions for improving safety included installing signage to warn cyclists to slow down, restricting the off-leash area to the beach area and relocating the off-leash area entirely to another location further away from the shared path. We also received a number of comments about the potential advantages and disadvantages of installing a natural barrier or fencing to separate the off-leash area from the shared path.

Environment and wildlife

10. The beauty of Orana Bay was frequently mentioned by all recreation users as part of its appeal along with a desire to keep it clean and well maintained, particularly ensuring people clean up after their dogs.
11. A number of local residents and recreation users with a long-standing connection to the site noted that since Orana Bay was designated as an off-leash area there has been a reduction in swans and other birdlife, increased instances of algae in the water and a deterioration of the beach area and surrounding grassland in general.
12. Suggestions for improving the environment at Orana Bay included increasing the number of times it is mowed to make it easier for people to pick up after their dogs, increasing patrols by rangers to improve compliance, having more facilities on-site to promote responsible behaviour (for example bins, bags and signage) and returning Orana Bay to a dog on-leash area.

Reduced amenity

13. We heard from a number of local residents living immediately adjacent to Orana Bay about the impact of having such a popular dog off-leash area in close proximity to their homes. Increased noise from barking dogs and increased traffic were some of the issues contributing to reduced amenity. There were also reports of off-leash dogs straying onto private property and harassing people and dogs.
14. There was a strong desire expressed by some recreation users such as cyclists, residents and bird-watchers to move the off-leash dog exercise area to another more suitable location (i.e. further away from homes and the busy shared path) with 8% of survey respondents fully or mostly supporting making Orana Bay a dog on-leash area.



WHAT'S NEXT?

We will now explore areas for improvement at Orana Bay informed by community feedback. Any changes as a result of the review will be implemented on a trial basis, monitored and adjusted as required before being made permanent.

Updates will continue to be provided via the YourSay page. If you have any questions about this project or would like to be kept updated on its progress, please email communityengagement@act.gov.au.

Key Timings

1 February 2022: Community consultation starts

16 February 2022: Yarralumla Dog Park pop-up

26 February 2022: Orana Bay pop-up

15 March 2022: Community consultation ends

April 2022: Review the feedback received

6 June 2022: What We Heard report released [**we are here**]

Mid 2022: Identify areas for improvement at Orana Bay

Late 2022: Implement any changes as a result of the review on a trial basis

2023: Monitor changes and refine as required.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

928

we received a total of 928 items of feedback

698

a total of 698 people completed the survey

150

approximately 150 people attended our pop-ups

25

we received 25 submissions via email

6,500+

we received 6,564 page views on YourSay

3,000+

we received 3,165 visitors to the YourSay page

34,955

we reached an audience of 34,955 on ACT Government Facebook with 55 comments and 170 reactions

90%

keeping Orana Bay as a dog off-leash area is important to 90% of survey respondents