

23 April 2018

Ms D Lenson  
Divisional Manager Environment Services  
Eurobodalla Shire Council  
PO Box 99  
MORUYA NSW 2537

## COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (CAMP) 2015-19 REVIEW

Dear Deb

I refer to your letter of 13 April 2018, advising our Association of the CAMP review, and our chat at the community drop-in session at Mossy Point on the same day. As you are aware, the proposal to change dog access and exercise areas at Rosedale is a significant issue of concern for our members. It was raised at our AGM on Easter Saturday, with 89 people in attendance. There was overwhelming support for our Committee to follow up the issue with Council.

In your letter, you invited our thoughts on how responsible pet ownership could be improved and advised that Council was undertaking the CAMP review “in response to community interest”. There is no indication of what that community interest entails and what the policy objectives are of the new proposal. We emailed Council on 4 April 2018 asking for evidence of any issues with Rosedale’s current dog access arrangements. Our request for information on the number of complaints, complainants and fines issued at Rosedale was not addressed in Council’s response of 12 April 2018. We would appreciate the requested information as soon as possible, so we can try to understand why Council would propose such a significant change to current dog access and exercise areas at Rosedale.

**General Recommendations:** Council should reconsider the need to allocate funds to the introduction of a whole new system regarding dog access and exercise areas across the Shire. Other options could be considered, including ways to make Rangers more visible to not only enforce the rules but to also improve communication and education regarding dog access arrangements. This extends to improving dog access signage to send clear and consistent messages and eliminate confusion. We acknowledge that incidents do sometimes occur, which usually involve dog owners not complying with the requirement for their dog to be on leash and under control. Efforts to improve communication and education of dog owners would help reduce the risk of incidents occurring. The Rosedale Association would be happy to assist Council by circulating information to our members, so they are clear on their obligations as responsible dog owners. Members could also be encouraged to display the information in their holiday cottages to inform visitors.

Council should reconsider its preference for the traffic light system, which has been applied in other Shires with highly populated beaches. Council could instead consider relaxing restrictions and facilitating access to recreational spaces outside of busy holiday periods, recognising that Eurobodalla beaches are often deserted outside of these times. In any case, the restrictive three ‘traffic light’ system could not be applied at Rosedale, as we would need a fourth category that allowed for an ‘off leash time share’ arrangement.

While there is no appreciable environmental degradation of Rosedale Beach as a result of the current dog access arrangements, it would be helpful if Council continued to provide bags for local and visiting dog owners to pick up after their dogs, if needed.

**Recommendations for Rosedale:** We recommend that Council revise its proposal for new dog access and exercise areas at Rosedale Beach and remove the North Rosedale beach from Dog Exercise Area Maps. Serious erosion issues and a degraded track have made access to that beach dangerous for several years. We lodged a successful submission to the draft ROSS 2017, with beach access track and stair projects for both North and South Rosedale incorporated into the finalised ROSS as *High Priority* projects. In a meeting on 29 March 2018, Council's General Manager advised us that the anticipated project timeframe was 18 months to 2 years. Until both projects are finalised, there is no safe access to the beach in North Rosedale, or through public land to Nuns Beach in South Rosedale, so it would be irresponsible for Council to include either beach in Dog Access Area Maps at this time.

Our submission to the draft ROSS welcomed:

- the emphasis on removing barriers to accessing the natural environment;
- the focus on the benefits of open space to personal health, communities and the environment; and
- Council's acknowledgement that safe accessibility to open spaces is fundamental to achieving these benefits for residents and visitors.

Walking was identified as one of the most popular recreational activities by ROSS survey respondents. This is certainly true at Rosedale where people of all ages, and with a range of physical limitations, walk laps of the beach. The beach is safe and accessible for walking, including for visitors accessing the beach from the carpark. Closing off half the beach to some members of the community (i.e. dog owners wanting to exercise with their animals) goes against efforts to remove barriers and make it easier for people to access the natural environment and enjoy the benefits of open space. A total ban on dog access on any part of Rosedale Beach is, therefore, not acceptable.

**Background:** Our members have a strong connection to Rosedale and Rosedale Beach, with now fourth generation families appreciating the characteristic amenity values of the hamlet. We are very proud of the beach, which forms a major part of our lives, and we are dedicated to maintaining it. For example, grandparents, parents and loads of children planted more than 200 native species on the sand dunes last year after they were affected by storms, with follow up work done this Easter. In the past we have won regional and state honours in a NSW Clean Beach Challenge (organised by Keep Australia Beautiful NSW), including first prize in the Beach Spirit Award category. The beach is also the focal point for recreational activities and provides a pedestrian thoroughfare between North and South Rosedale to visit friends and family. Banning access to certain parts of the beach to any member of the community, including people walking with their dogs, would significantly compromise this activity. It would also prohibit people walking between Rosedale and Guerilla Bay via the beach with their dogs. This activity has been enjoyed by members of both communities for generations.

**Ongoing Consultation:** The Rosedale Association welcomes the chance to provide feedback on Council's CAMP review and seeks feedback from the CAMP review surveys in due course. In the meantime, I invite you to meet with me in Rosedale to walk around the hamlet and better understand the issues at Rosedale. I also seek your assurance that we will have the chance to comment on any revised plan for Rosedale, as the CAMP review progresses.

**Summary of Recommendations:** Our assessment is that the current arrangements are generally acceptable in Rosedale and RAI recommends that Council:

- Excludes the beach in North Rosedale (and Nuns Beach in South Rosedale) from the proposal, given there is no safe access to these locations;
- Avoids prohibiting dogs from any section of the beach;

- Reconsiders its preference for the 'traffic light' system, as implemented at more highly populated beaches, as it is too restrictive for the less populated Eurobodalla beaches;
- Maintains a 'time share off-leash' option for dog access and exercise areas;
- Focuses efforts on clearer signage and increased visibility of Rangers to enforce the rules, particularly during busy holiday periods; and
- Creates opportunities to inform and educate people on the rules and their responsibilities as dog owners, including in collaboration with community groups.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Boardman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Boardman

*President*

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