

SUBMISSION ON DOG CONTROL BYLAW SEPTEMBER 2020

NAME and ADDRESS of SUBMITTER: Guy Boddington, [REDACTED]
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BACKGROUND

This submission relates entirely to the Blenheim area.

For the past 18 years I have walked, run and cycled on the pathways in the entire Taylor River Floodway Reserve (the Reserve). The area I am very familiar with is from Burleigh Bridge (on New Renwick Road) downstream to the Beaver Road Bridge. To access this latter area, I park at the Burleigh Road carpark, Leitrim Street, Monro Street carpark and Beaver Road carpark.

I estimate that I have walked this reach of the Reserve with several generations of Beagle dogs on c. 300 days each year and almost always twice each day, in the morning hour 7.30 to 8.30 and late afternoon hour 17.00 to 18.00. These two periods are arguably the highest use times by the dog walking, walking/running and cycling public. I regard myself as very familiar with how this area works with the different user groups.

Observations on the use of this area:

- I have never seen a dog off-leash "incident" involving a cyclist, runner or walker. An "incident" is either a collision, a close-miss or any other form of harassment;
- I see on every visit, the on-ground evidence (dog faeces), showing a total disregard of "the law" by some dog owners. Often, when some owners consider there to be no-one watching, they fail to pick up faeces. The faeces are often within one metre of the concrete pathway; and
- I frequently experience cyclists travelling too fast (and not slowing) on a behind approach and failing to give either verbal or bell warning (notwithstanding MDC's clear and excellent signage in this regard).

Over the past 18 years, on the other c. 60 days each year I have walked my dogs at the following Blenheim locations:

- the upper Taylor Floodway Reserve, that is the area upstream of the Burleigh Road Bridge, past Brayshaw Park on the right bank and the RSA olive grove on the left bank, past the Wither Road west carpark and on up to Meadowbank Bridge and Taylor Dam;
- Harling Park;
- area downstream from the left bank confluence of the Opaoa River with the Taylor River, past Marshall Place;
- Pollard Park (not in Churchill Glade or Witherlea Gardens);
- the entire reach of Sutherland Stream, from the Redwood Street carpark down to Alabama Road.

Observations on the use of these areas:

- no dog "incidents" with other users have been witnessed;
- dog faeces: not as prevalent, except at the Wither Road west carpark and immediate pathways;
- the cyclist/other user conflict issue upstream from Burleigh Road Bridge needs urgent action. The cyclists travel particularly fast, believing they are out of the high use area and "own" the paths. On weekdays, this is an after 5 pm issue, on weekends, any hour of daylight.

COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO DRAWING UP THE MDC DOG CONTROL BYLAW 2020

On 27 October 2020, I requested from Council under S10A(2) of the Dog Control Act, information related to the decade 2009 to 2019, for the Taylor River Floodway Reserve (the Reserve), Burleigh Bridge to Beaver Road (as described above) and three smaller, less important areas. The purpose of my request was to ascertain if Council had any evidence of dogs causing *danger, distress or nuisance* to the community and general public in these areas, particularly the high use part of the Reserve.

I have since received the following information from Council, relating to the Taylor River Reserve for the period 2009 to 2019:

- Complaints: 203.....therefore approximately 20 p.a.
- Attacks/rushes by dogs: 58.....therefore approximately 6 p.a.
- Dog nuisance: 145.....therefore approximately 15 p.a. or c. 1 per month.

Time and resources have not allowed Council staff to examine in greater detail the raw data related to *nuisance*.

MY SUBMISSION

1. In the absence of more compelling evidence indicating that dogs, particularly those off leash are causing *danger, distress or nuisance* to the community and general public, it is unclear how the demarcation of the proposed on and off-leash areas of the Taylor River Floodway Reserve has been derived.

In my opinion, Schedules 2 and 3 (Taylor River) should be amended to permit dogs to be off leash but under control anywhere in the Taylor River Reserve. For the avoidance of doubt, **there should be no dog on leash area from the Taylor River upper limit (Taylor Dam) downstream to include river reserve near Marshall Place.**

2. I am opposed to the Schedule 1 Prohibition on dogs in the area to the west and south west of the athletics track as indicated in "Athletic Park". In high summer, this densely treed area provides a great place to walk in the shade and should at the very least, be a dog on leash area.

3. I am opposed to the Schedule 1 Prohibition on dogs in the Pollard Park part of the Pollard Park, Churchill Glade and Waterlea Gardens area. At the very least, Pollard Park should be a dog on leash area.

OBSERVATIONS ON DOG CONTROL

As indicated above, I have a fairly good understanding of the use of the Taylor River Reserve in its entirety. I applaud Council for its management of this multi and high use area – it is truly a wonderful asset. Not many towns can boast a spring-fed, crystal clear and permanent river running through parkland in the CBD.

Dogs fouling...the provision of collection bins:

More regular clearance of the bins should be considered: at least on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Dogs fouling....the erection of signage:

While ignorance of the law is no excuse, I believe Council should be considering the erection of clear signage regarding owner responsibility to pick up dog faeces anywhere within the Taylor River Reserve...this includes areas away from the highly used paths. Such signage should be considered for the Burleigh Road carpark, Leitrim and Rogers Street entries to river reserve, Monro Street carpark, Beaver Road carparks (2), Henry Street carpark and, if there is reconsideration of the status of Pollard Park, one at that location.

I would like to speak at a hearing.