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2023 submission on Council's Draft Master Plan Pt Cartwright and La Balsa Park

Friends of Buddina make this submission relating to the *Draft Mater Plan for the Pt Cartwright and LaBalsa Park* recreation areas which was released by Council on 5 June 2023 for public consultation.

By email to:

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PtCartwright-LaBalsa-MasterPlan@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

cc Joe.Natoli@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Friends of Buddina (we) support the development of the draft Master Plan as an important step forward in managing the future of both these two recreational parks and congratulate Council in partially progressing selected elements of the liveability and environmental protection vision.

However, *Friends of Buddina* believe the draft plan does not support community expectations for a recreational park (with reasonable restrictions for matters of environmental significance) nor the vision of the Council's Environment and Liveability Strategy. Without significant changes to the proposed outcomes to resolve the contradictory outcomes, the draft plan, in its current form, is not supported.

- 1) In its current form, the *Proposed Changes to Pet Access* prohibit dogs, as mapped
 - (a) *prohibited*: on the northern beach (Carties BA196-BA197), the rocky foreshore (the headland BA197 to BA198) and the eastern beach (BA198-BA199);
 - (b) *prohibited*: along the northern beach pathway (Carties BA196-BA197) and hence no direct access along the northern beach pathway to the coastal pathway from (BA196);
 - (c) *prohibited*: along the designated John Dyason Walkway from the recreation park to the coastal pathway; andwith the only permitted access to the coastal pathway being from the river, via the Tully track via the central amenities block within the recreational parkland.
- 2) In its current form, the *Proposed Changes to Pet Access* also provides "an offset" being an extension of dogs off-leash along the Buddina nesting habitat (BA201-BA205) for endangered loggerhead turtles. This same section of beach is also a shore-bird resting area, particularly between BA201-BA203.
- 3) In its current form, the *Proposed Pet Access changes*, as mapped, do not reflect the recommendations in the Environmental Values report¹ and Recreational Values report².

Our position

Both the restrictive prohibition and the "offset" is not supported. Without appropriate amendment of the proposed plan, the negative impacts are considered unacceptable.

We note that the Pt Cartwright "reserve" is largely zoned Open Space and is a "reserve" in name only. It does not have the conservation zoning status that applies to the Buddina beach foreshore reserve which is both a "reserve" in name and as zoned³. The proposed prohibitions generally apply to designated *Environmental Management and Conservation Zones* (such as the Buddina beach foreshore reserve) and not to an Open Space zoning of a *district recreational park*, such as Pt Cartwright.

¹ PW. Environmental Values Report: Future-Plus Environmental, 2022

² DC: Recreational Values Report: Ross Planning, 2022

³ DC: Recreational Values Report: Ross Planning, 2022 {page 6, as numbered}



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Elements of the Proposed Draft Plan we consider warrant amendment

We acknowledge that provisions for dog access within the recreational park will change. We propose that Council adopt a middle-ground approach that supports environmental considerations, but without the harsh prohibitions. A more palatable outcome for the community, as a whole, might include dogs **on-leash, at all times, plus no "offset" whatsoever along the eastern turtle nesting habitat and shore-bird resting beach.**

In relation to various elements of the proposed changes, we propose that Council consider their Environment and Liveability Strategy and apply those principles to this draft master plan, and reflect on the proposed elements outlined below:

- 1. no "offset" along the eastern beach at Buddina BA201-BA205**, this area is currently ON-leash at all times. We do not support any extension of OFF-leash beach areas along the eastern beach, particularly along the Buddina nesting habitat for endangered loggerhead turtles which is also a shore bird resting area. We note the current State designated foreshore reserve zoning prohibits dogs in the dunes;
- 2. the fragile and environmentally sensitive eastern beach is inappropriate as an "offset"** for the proposed Pt Cartwright pet access changes. This "offset" was not recommended in the Environmental Values Report. Council ought to be aware this "offset" contradicts Council's own statements about environmental protection in the Guiding Strategies and Pet Access documents. Council identifies the proposed changes are to support protecting migratory shorebirds, turtles, the beach and other fauna (4 of 8 key areas for environmental protection with special consideration). Each of these 4 key elements are of significance on the eastern beach, particularly the endangered loggerhead turtles and their habitat for which Council has obligations to (1) protect and (2) a duty of care to ensure a safe and healthy workplace for TurtleCare volunteers;
- 3. no prohibited pathway access.** The Environmental Values Report recommends *exclusion of dog access from vegetated areas* and advises *the requirement for all dogs to be on leads and to remain with their owners while on the headland.*⁴ Therefore, dogs ON-leash, at all times, along all designated pathways provides appropriate access aligned with the report recommendations.
- 4. no prohibited sandy beach access** on the northern beach (Carties BA196-BA197). The Environmental Values Report is silent on recommendations specifically for the beach and rocky foreshore; it recommends exclusion of dogs ONLY in the vegetated areas. Given Council allows ON-leash access at some beach sectors and OFF-leash access at other beach sectors, the northern beach (Carties) access warrants reconsideration. The DES environmental MSES value of fauna is classified as "of least concern" on the northern beach in comparison to fauna classified as "endangered" on the eastern beach⁵. We support the retention of the current access and the existing restricted hours:
ON-leash 8am-4pm & OFF-leash 4pm-8am
- 5. no additional infrastructure** to support any commercial operations whatsoever within the Pt Cartwright recreational park ought to be documented within the draft plan as a firm commitment by Council;
- 6. no installation of any artificial lighting** along any pathway or any other area within Pt Cartwright recreational park and La Balsa Park including all vehicle parks;

⁴ PW. Environmental Values Report: Future-Plus Environmental, 2022 {page 39, as numbered}

⁵ PW. Environmental Values Report: Future-Plus Environmental, 2022 Map 3a {page 71 of 180}



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7. **update all existing lighting in La Balsa Park with sensor-activated lights which time-off at 8pm.** Reminder: artificial light at night negatively impacts the turtle nesting habitat along Buddina beach, migratory shorebirds and other fauna. In particular, the additional skyglow which deters nesting turtles and disorientates hatchlings;
8. **move the location** of the barge landing (#11) away from the amenities/toilet block, south to the boat ramp and pontoon area as an extension to the pontoon. This keeps all river access at the same location and avoids disrupting the nudibranch and other marine habitat that exists adjacent to the river rock walls. The relocation of the barge landing would likely provide more practical pick-up / drop-off opportunities given the vehicle access to the adjacent car parking area;
We support the provision of public transport to the recreational park at an appropriate landing site;
9. **move the location** of the river viewing platform (#7) from the middle carpark north to the amenities/toilet block replacing the proposed barge landing. Moving the viewing platform north will support disability access in an area where other opportunities are easily accessible (amenities block, children's play area and the entrance to river walk to the Pt Cartwright recreational area).
10. **move the potential bus stop** (#6) opposite *One On La Balsa café* further south to the southern side of the entrance of the middle car park to avoid the roundabout vehicle issues that already exist at Gulai St which is also an area of concentrated use (ie. amenities block, children's play area and the entrance to river walk). Harbour Parade is a relatively narrow street (when parked-up) and is quite congested on weekends; this congested area near the roundabout is best avoided for public transport.
We support the provision of public transport to the recreational park with stops at non-congested sites;
11. **reconsider how 2 potential bus stops might be reduced to just 1.** Any bus stop ought to be designated for electric buses only, given the street width and pollution from large diesel buses is neither environmentally friendly nor likely to be supported by local residents;
12. **redesign the middle carpark** to provide additional car parking spaces and add designated bike parking racks along the outside edge/border of car park to avoid the loss of any car park spaces and **line-mark designated motor vehicle parking spaces** along the riverside of Harbour Parade to provide additional car parking spaces on the road;
13. **informative signage** to provide education and direction to residents and visitors about the history, the flora and fauna combined with appropriate mapping of limited access areas (and why) is considered essential.
14. **revegetation** within the Pt Cartwright recreational park is considered essential and progressed directly.

Interactions between Turtles and Dogs are averted due to TurtleCare volunteer interventions

The Environmental Values Report references *The Sunshine Coast Turtle Nesting Technical Report (2005 – 2016)* and notes from that report *that existing mitigation measures have ensured disturbance from dogs on turtle nesting is minimal and this is not considered to pose a significant threat to turtle populations at present.*⁶

This stated position is based on, and is totally dependent on, interventions by TurtleCare volunteers who work hard to reduce potential confrontations between off-leash dogs and nesting turtles plus off-leash dogs and

⁶ PW. Environmental Values Report: Future-Plus Environmental, 2022 {page 25, as numbered}



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hatchlings. This does not mean there are no *disturbance from dogs* (off-leash) impacting the beach or the dunes, or other fauna (including shore-birds) or people. However, negative outcomes are generally attributable to the increasing numbers of irresponsible owners who do not have effective control of their pets.

Council has a duty of care and responsibility to ensure a safe and healthy workplace on the beach and in the dunes for their volunteers.

Confusing the above facts leads to incorrect conclusions about those relationships.

Some Statements in Council documentation for the Draft Plan are inconsistent

1. There is **no** recommendation in either the Recreational Values Report or the Environmental Values Report for the proposed “offset” to be located on the environmentally fragile eastern turtle nesting and shore-bird resting beach.

The Recreational Values report highlighted the need to protect the environmental values of the site,⁷ however it does not suggest nor support surrendering the environmental value the eastern beach or the recreational value of this on-leash area (BA201-BA205).

The Environmental Values Report recommended various actions to be undertaken by Council⁸ however it does not suggest nor support surrendering the environmental value the eastern beach nor the recreational value of this on-leash area (BA201-BA205).

Council’s proposed “offset” is inconsistent with both the Recreational Values Report and the Environmental Values Report. The likely source of these recommendations and inconsistencies with advice provided by the consultants has not been disclosed. This appears to lack transparency and therefore ought to be disclosed.

2. There is **no** recommendation in the Recreational Values Report or the Environmental Values Report for the proposed prohibition along the northern beach (Carties) BA196-BA197 or the rocky foreshore BA197-BA198 or the eastern beach BA198-BA199 as mapped.

Council’s proposed extended “prohibition” beyond the vegetated areas (littoral forest) is inconsistent with both the Recreational Values Report and the Environmental Values Report. The likely source of these recommendations and inconsistencies with advice provided by the consultants has not been disclosed. This appears to lack transparency and therefore ought to be disclosed.

3. The **Proposed Changes to Pet Access Information** document states that new areas of environmental and cultural protection will be in place. These areas include the rocky foreshore, north facing beach, and vegetated areas and will be prohibited to pets⁹ yet the external consultants in the two “Values” reports did not support this extended variation to the recommendation to exclude dogs from vegetated areas. This conflict ought to be resolved.

4. The **Guiding Strategies** document states Council promotes amending dog access throughout the reserve to protect the ecology, cultural heritage, reduce park user conflicts and improve amenity and extending the dog off-leash area on Buddina Beach¹⁰

⁷ DC: Recreational Values Report: Ross Planning, 2022 {page 9}

⁸ PW. Environmental Values Report: Future-Plus Environmental, 2022 {pages 31-39, as numbered}

⁹ No author. Proposed Changes to Pet Access Information: SCRC, 2023 {page 2}

¹⁰ No author. Guiding Strategies: SCRC, 2023 {page 2}



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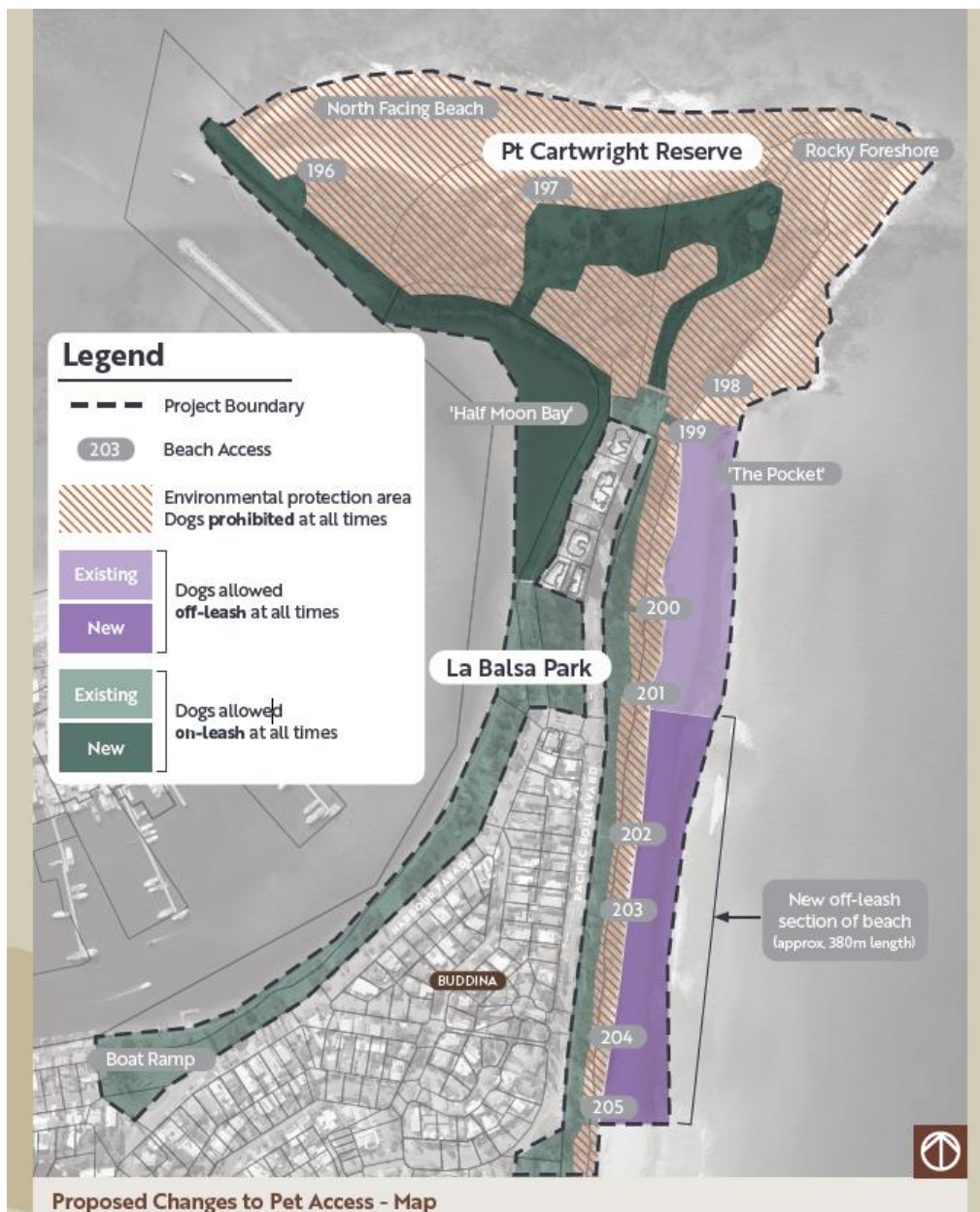
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The document also promotes establishing environmental protection areas prohibited to pets to minimise impacts to endangered migratory shorebirds and other vulnerable flora and fauna.¹¹ There is **no** recommendation in the Environmental Values Report for the extensive proposed prohibition, rather the recommendation is for dogs on-leash at all times. It is contradictory to then propose off-leash at all times on the eastern beach which is also a shore-bird resting area. This conflict ought to be resolved by the removal of the “offset” which was not supported nor recommended by the external consultants in the “Values” reports.

Proposed Pet Access changes, as mapped, are not as recommended

The proposed changes to Pet Access prohibits dogs in some areas **not recommended by the consultants**. The proposed changes also include “an offset” **not recommended by the consultants**, as mapped below. These inconsistencies are contrary to the recommendations of the two external consultants’ reports. The source of these “confused” recommendations and inconsistencies has not been disclosed which lacks transparency.



¹¹ No author. Guiding Strategies: SCRC, 2023 {page 6}



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Appendix A The Environmental Values Report- The Study Site, Recommendations and MSES

The Study Site

The Environmental Values Report provides mapping of the study site as being inclusive of the area from BA206 to BA198 along the sandy beach north to Pt Cartwright, west along the rocky foreshore to BA196 at the river mouth, then south along the river. The site includes La Balsa park and the Pt Cartwright recreational park (excluding residential land within the outline) and the beaches in the polygon outline. For example, *Figure 1* on page 5 and *Figure 9* on page 27 and all others indicate the same outline.



Figure 1. Site Land Tenure (Source: QLD Globe 2022)



Figure 9. Sea Turtle Nesting Area (Source: MyMaps 2022)

Recommendations

The key recommendations of the Environmental Values Report are outlined from page 31-39 and focus on vegetation areas, fauna habitat values (omits the loggerhead sea turtle habitat?), fencing and dog access.

The report states, pages 38-39 with reference to 5.6 Dog Access:

Information provided by Council indicates that the presence of dogs within Point Cartwright Reserve remains a contentious issue There are a multitude of factors to be considered with regard to dog access, including social, public use, hygiene and safety. From an environmental perspective, there are potential adverse impacts to both flora and fauna values associated with unrestricted (off leash) dog activity that may require appropriate management.

*.... exclusion of dog access from vegetated areas within Point Cartwright Reserve at all times would be consistent with the other recommendations of discouraging public access to enable the environmental values to be retained and enhanced. Therefore, **the requirement for all dogs to be on leads and to remain with their owners while on the headland would assist in improving and preserving fauna and flora values associated with vegetation within the reserve.***

MSES: Matters of State Environmental Significance

Map 3a - MSES - Species - Threatened (endangered or vulnerable) wildlife and special least concern animals, extract from page 71 of 180 of the Environmental Values Report (noted as page 12 within the mapping)



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The **red** polygon outlines the area of interest being La Balsa and Pt Cartwright recreational parks, the foreshore reserve, the sandy beach and the inshore waters.

The **gold** shaded habitat for **endangered** or vulnerable wildlife ought to be subject to the highest level of protection, not a lower level than the **blue** lined habitat for special least concern wildlife.

The indicators on this map **support protection of the eastern beach for turtles and shorebirds over and above the fauna within recreational park fauna and the rocky shore area.** WHY has this been ignored?



MSES - Species Threatened (endangered or vulnerable) wildlife and special least concern animals

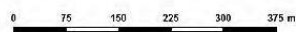
Area of Interest

- polygon
- Towns
- Freeways/Highways
- Secondary roads
- Major rivers/creeks
- Wildlife habitat (special least concern)
- Wildlife habitat (endangered or vulnerable)



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