

Alliance between local government and dog owners delivers long-term benefits to both



Community members and groups that are able to identify shared objectives and work together provide an excellent model of social capital in action. Outcomes are also more likely to be sustainable if the processes have been 'owned' by the various interested parties.

An alliance between The Holdfast Bay Dog Owners Association (HBDOA) and the Holdfast City Council in South Australia resulted in strong social capital and community benefits for all.

When the City of Holdfast Bay Council revised its by-laws to close beaches previously open to dogs, there was an unhappy response from the dog owning community. However, the outcry resulted in a surprisingly positive outcome for all parties.

Doug Kenny became a member of the dog owner's association after the by-law revision and soon recognised that taking positive action would result in Council and public support.

"We got members to take extra plastic bags when they were dog walking. If we saw a person that didn't pick up their dog's poo, we would offer a bag. It meant we were helping the Council and not being a bunch of whingers."

Doug Kenny, Local resident

The Council and the HBDOA developed a working relationship with the Council assisting the Association's dog training classes move to a better facility at a disused bowling club. Originally dog training classes were conducted on a local oval where usage times were restrictive and facilities poor. The bowling club offered unlimited use, a fenced training area, an indoor puppy training area and inexpensive doggy day care.

Doug says that other initiatives have been developed to complement the dog training and day care such as the "Three Cs – Canines, Coffee and Conversation", a gathering of people and dogs for those who are already enrolled in or have completed basic training but don't necessarily need or want to undertake further training.

"The Dog Association is a place that we can send people to if we have any behavioural issues with the dogs," says Ken O'Neil the Regulatory Services Manager of Holdfast City Council. "We find that about 70% to 80% attend and respond positively."



"It's a combined effort and a brilliant idea. Our area has a population of 35,000 with 4,000 registered dogs. We're right on the coast and have had a lot of unit development. The partnership between the Council and the Dog Association means that we can cater to those dogs and dog owners effectively."

Ken O'Neil, Holdfast City Council

Benefits of partnerships and voluntary compliance

- Enables Council contact to owners of new puppies and dogs
- Forges better relationships between Council and dog owners
- Encourages fewer dog complaints on the foreshore
- Decreases dog attacks
- Provides a mechanism to resolve dog behavioural issues

Tips

- Encourage formation of a dog owners group and provide them with facilities, services and assistance
- Develop a sound relationship and work together to resolve issues

Web Links

Holdfast Bay Dog Owners Association
- www.holdfastdogs.org.au

Holdfast City Council - www.holdfast.sa.gov.au