



# Councils partner with local dog walkers to deliver widespread community benefits

## Benefits of local dog walking groups and voluntary compliance

- Encourages dog owners to exercise, improving the health of both humans and dogs
- Provides a vehicle to promote local rules and regulations and other responsible dog ownership strategies
- Creates a social network within the community
- Decreases nuisance behaviours in dogs that receive regular exercise

Walking is the most common and readily accessible form of physical activity in Australia, but is not always so accessible for those who want to take a dog as a companion. However, the dual benefits of dog walking for human fitness and the health and contentment of dogs are being increasingly recognised. Similarly, it is widely acknowledged that group events and activities encourage and facilitate voluntary compliance within the community.

An innovative example of healthy communities in action is the partnership between the Kingborough Dog Walking Association (KDWA) in Hobart, the Kingborough Council and the Hobart City Council who have collaborated to develop accessible off leash dog areas and create the “dogwalkinghobart.info” website.

The website was created in response to the steadily increasing public demand for comprehensive information on dog walking activities, parks and tracks within the greater Hobart area. The site also promotes social dog walking activities while encouraging responsible dog ownership through initiatives such as “Clean up the

Beach Day”. Events like this play a key role in linking and strengthening communities and in developing positive relationships.

*“It comes down to peer group pressure; people begin to feel like outsiders when they do the wrong thing.”*

*Merry Conway, Kingborough Dog Walking Association*

The KDWA now has a membership of around 150 and sends out at least six newsletters a year that further keep the community up to date on social activities and dog related events.

“We might run a new bush track walk for members on a Saturday morning. It’s nothing grand, but it gathers people together to enjoy themselves,” said Merry.

While it is dogs that have brought KDWA members together, Merry believes that it is the relationships that are formed, along with the community activities that lubricate discussion and develop interest in other community issues in the area.

*“We’ve garnered a wealth of support from different areas of the community, including the local vets, and have also managed to build great relationships with the Council staff. It’s meant we can have healthy conversations concerning many things in the region, and can bring about positive change for everyone.” Merry Conway*

## Web Links

Kingborough and Hobart Dog Walking Groups  
- [www.dogwalkinghobart.info/index.htm](http://www.dogwalkinghobart.info/index.htm)

Hobart City Council - [www.hobartcity.com.au](http://www.hobartcity.com.au)

Kingborough City Council - [www.kingborough.tas.gov.au](http://www.kingborough.tas.gov.au)

## Tips

- Create new relationships and work with existing dog owner walking groups
- Prepare dog walking maps of the local area detailing a number of walks that will appeal to a range of interests and fitness levels
- Use websites and flyers to promote walking groups and other social activities and to remind dog owners of their responsibilities

