

I am an avid user of the local national park in Thornleigh and regularly walk and run on the Great North Walk.

I am also a mountain biker (MTBer) and dog owner.

I accept that MTB riding in national parks needs to be carefully managed because of potential injuries to different park users by way of collision. I also accept that single track riding may damage trails, and should be monitored. However, I think that some firetrails are not adequately linked in the area and wonder if this can be better managed. Biking is a potentially great resource for the community in areas free of motorised traffic and within the parks.

The major issue I have is with the recent decision to exclude dogs on leashes from the Great North Walk. Apparently this was the subject of years of public consultation. I saw no signs, nor any advertisement in the local paper, of such consultation during the last two years I have lived and walked my dog in the national park.

The scientific basis of such a ban is not clear to me. Canine coliform in water would occur naturally with dingo populations in the area (assuming natural to mean pre-Western influence), assuming this is a reason. If the level is high and there is damage to indigenous fauna or flora, where is this explained? I would appreciate knowing more.

I accept some dog owners are irresponsible, but surely fining them is the appropriate response not banning all responsible dog owners from enjoying the great beauty of the parks.

I greatly resent this ban and feel that it represents a lack of respect for all dog owners in the area by National parks, with whom I would normally feel a great alignment of ideas and ideals.

Thank you for your time

Andrew Eckhold