

PRESIDENTS REPORT 2025

I accepted this role with reticence, My husband had just retired and his wish was for me to follow in the relinquishment of duties so we could be free. His was a nice idea, but I thought I'd just be doing a favour to keep KDWA alive, just some minor KDWA upkeeping tasks, no hassle, I thought.

So, pretty much on day 1 of my supposedly low-maintenance position, we were told by the Kingborough Council that we were to lose the dog exercise areas at Kingston View Drive due to the AFL High Performance Centre and Jack-Jumper plans.

Gears were put in place and the work began to find alternatives. Kingborough Council have been very clear and consultative, working with us and promising to deliver a like-for-like off-lead dog area. This includes the 3 spaces: 1 for active dogs, 1 for small puppies, shy or injured dogs and a Greyhound area... (which I should stress is only one of 2 in southern Tasmania. Greyhounds are still forbidden to be off-lead unless in a specified greyhound area).

We are not permitted to make any official announcements yet about the next space (which has not placated our social media flurries), but if you ask we can answer and let you know what is very likely to happen.

This year, KDWA joined the Kingborough Community Forum, a collaborative group of clubs and associations such as ours. We meet quarterly and have only attended one so far, with the next meeting being next week. This has provided us with a helpful communication link to the Council in the absence of regular meeting with the Mayor (these stopped in early 2024). Our first meeting was a great success with many questions appropriately answered. One such question was whether we could progress on something we have been asking for over some time, that being the development of a Dog Strategy.

I am very happy to announce that this process has begun after a most satisfying meeting with Su Sprott and Scott Basham. The purpose of the Strategy (that is not its official name) is to build a framework for Council to work within so the future of dog's needs are protected over the years by developing accessible, safe and well-maintained infrastructure that supports responsible pet ownership and fosters positive interactions between dogs, their owners and the broader community, and to enhance Kingborough's reputation as a dog friendly community. It will evaluate existing parks and assess their strengths and weaknesses, ensure the continued identification of potential spaces to be developed, determine design criteria and facilities, recommend actions and engage the community.

We feel this strategy is especially important as we consider the ongoing growth of Kingborough (8000 more residents projected over the next 10 years), the extension of

residential growth around Margate and Snug, the infill development of urban areas and the decrease in size of the average house. Given the popularity of dogs is unlikely to wane, preservation of areas for their exercise need to be on the blueprint of any housing development. The Strategy's completion will take a while but we'll be sure to share it widely once it's ready for comment.

We have had 3 membership drives over summer to recruit more members, mainly to ensure the continuation of this association with fresh committee members to share the workload. These were a lot of fun (held at Kingston Beach) and we made a lot of new friends, driving membership numbers from 40 to 66 over the year. (Not bad considering Hobart Dog Walking Association have 48 members and they include Glenorchy and Clarence). Surely this is proof that Kingborough are a responsible and active dog owning community!

On that topic, our association made it twice into the Sunday Tasmanian with a heart-warming story about a young girl who created a dog library (a publicly accessible and shareable basket of balls and toys for dogs) at Kingston Beach. The other story was about our history and being the first dog walking association in Tasmania, established in 1998.

Thanks to a generous bequest last year, we decided to make some donations to worthy causes including the Dogs' Home of Tasmania when they faced a cut in sponsorship and an influx of labradoodles, and to Pets in the Park, a charity which provides free veterinary care to the homeless.

We created a new logo which we shared with you in the last newsletter. We hope to have some merchandise displaying this available soon for you to purchase.

Projects underway include re-writing our popular Dog Owner's Handbook (freely available on the website and at Council), updating the Constitution and including KDWA donations as an option for choosing when depositing your bottles and cans in the recycling scheme.

One other exciting project we are hatching is a dog memorial at Kingston Beach. This will be a site for thoughtfulness, reminiscence and thanks for our invaluable dogs. We hope to make this a site where a token of remembrance can be left (such as a name tag) as a lasting personal memento of a passed friend.

This AGM has not been organised without some drama. We had our vice-president, Deb Fleming OAM (a Walkley and Logie winner for journalism) lined up to give us a history of the greyhound industry and its potential demise and why that might relate to us as dog owners or welfare advocates. This had been arranged prior to our Premier's announcement of the ban, but since this happened, social media got spicy and threatening enough for our committee to decide it unwise to continue with the topic.

KDWA is not politically aligned, but we exist for the welfare of dogs and therefore will continue our support to end a sport that uses sentient dogs, putting them in obvious physical harm, purely for monetary gains. It is why we also contribute to the Animal Welfare Act to ensure the safety of breeding dogs, herding dogs, companion dogs and assistance dogs and continually advocate for force-free and positive reinforcement training methods.

Back to having no speaker, we then received contact from Dr Katrena Stephenson, working with the Kingborough Council to determine their new Strategic Plan up to 2035. She was eager to meet with community members so I gladly invited her to our meeting, which she accepted, but then realised she had double-booked herself and could not back out of a prior commitment.

I must admit a bit of me died with that news. I have learnt how to use Wix for our website and Mailchimp for our emails and newsletters. I have uploaded and downloaded documents for linking to agendas seemingly on rotation. I have used AI for the first time to make a cartoon. I have managed Square reader on my phone and wrangled banners in 10 knot winds on the beach- we even witnessed a punch up! But to have to recreate a 5th AGM email, with yet another cancellation of our speaker....that was just too much. So I sincerely apologise if you feel you are here under false advertising.

I can't thank the committee enough. You've been fantastic during a roller-coaster of a year. Every one of you has brought a fresh perspective and an added skill to our team. We've expanded from 5 to 7 on our committee, but anything could change tonight. We really need more of you and I can't express what potential contribution each member can make to the future of this association, no matter how limited you are for time, just one idea or minor ability can make all the difference.

So where am I now with my husband? Still together. His patience has been tested, he gets a strong pass.