

6.3. MM03: Fishing for a solution

In 2019, I presented a Mayoral Minute to Council after hearing the heart-breaking story of Golden Retriever Posy who swallowed a fishhook with bait at Sawmillers Reserve. Posy had to undergo emergency surgery. Sadly, that incident was not the first time it had happened to her or to other dogs in our community.

In response to the Mayoral Minute, Council tried a number of different approaches. We installed signage to increase awareness in fishing spots across our LGA. We installed special bins where fishhooks could be safely discarded (which instead were misused) and we even tried to talk to the fishers one-to-one because we hoped an education campaign would suffice.

While most fishers are doing the right thing, Council is still getting numerous reports of these dangerous fishhooks and lines being littered and not disposed of properly. A few weeks ago, Federal Member for North Sydney Trent Zimmerman wrote to Council after his dog almost swallowed a hook on his regular walk at Sawmillers Reserve. I have come across a fair share of littered fishhooks when my partner and I have been out walking. I couldn't tell you how many people have contacted me and told me this was a problem that still needed to be addressed.

I have heard some people say owners should take better care of their dogs. I do not believe it is fair to put the blame on the dog or dog owner, for someone else's selfish negligence. Our parks and harbour foreshore are for everyone to share. Councillors may be surprised to learn that in the 2018/19 period we had 225 dog registrations but in 2019/20 we had 797 registrations. This is an extraordinary increase in dog ownership and I believe we have an obligation to rethink the services for the dog owners.

I agree that fishing is an important recreational activity for many who enjoy this leisurely pastime. I'm therefore proposing we continue our education campaigns and seek further assistance from NSW Fisheries on patrolling problem areas and perhaps push for harsher penalty infringements for offenders who are ruining it for everyone else.

As Sawmillers Reserve seems to be the largest problem area, I also propose we trial making the reserve fishing free. This will give our dog community a designated place to exercise and socialise with other dogs in safety.

I therefore recommend:

1.THAT Council thank the Parks and Rangers staff for the work they have already done in signage, bins, monitoring our parks and educating fishers about the safe disposal of fish hooks.

2.THAT Council write to NSW Fisheries seeking additional patrols of our fishing areas and requesting an increase in the penalty that applies to offenders.

3.THAT a brief report be prepared for Council outlining the steps and costs involved in trialling a fishing ban in Sawmillers Reserve.

**COUNCILLOR JILLY GIBSON
MAYOR**