

## Dog walkers turn out in large numbers (Val Payne; 18 July 2004)

Concerned dog owners and walkers gathered at either end of Kiwi Esplanade on Sunday afternoon, 18 July. Their annoyance with the Manukau City Council draft dog policy (changing dog access status in several areas) was obvious as they voiced their protest to those they were walking with. Numbers increased as others with dogs on their leads joined from side streets, meeting up at the Mangere Boating Club Point.

Several people walked 2 dogs. There were people in motorised wheelchairs who enjoy exercising their pets along the foreshore path. There were probably 100 dogs and slightly more people, who joined to express their support to all dog walkers in the area.

A variety of dogs, sizes, ages and shapes intermingled as they were addressed by Peter Chambers, a Mangere Bridge resident. The presence of many a plastic bag demonstrated that it is not the responsible dog walker who leave their animal's mess behind. These same people have for years picked up rubbish left behind by picnickers.

The dogs are allowed off leash at the Boat Club, keeping the rat population in check, and enjoying a swim off the boat ramp long before families are present to have their weekend picnic. It was obvious that the Council employees did not know the bylaws for this area as one of the dog walkers had been charged for walking his elderly dog under control off leash in this area.

Although Councillors were invited, none of them used the opportunity to gauge the intensity of feeling expressed by the residents, who will soon be casting their votes. Those living close by the bird refuge have stories to tell about visitors to the area letting their children and dogs run through the birds gathered. Who is to blame here, the dogs, children or irresponsible adults?

The big response to the call for protest on Kiwi Esplanade showed that the residents of Mangere Bridge and adjoining areas want the status quo to remain so that they and their dogs can maintain their health walking along the Esplanade. They have enjoyed the foreshore walk with their animals for many decades (edited/abbreviated; Peter Dentener).