



MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL

4 AUGUST 2021

10.2 DRAFT DAMP FOR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025 (the DAMP) for endorsement, prior to proceeding to the final stage of community consultation.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Council is required to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) in accordance with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act). Council's current DAMP 2017-2021 sunsets in December 2021.
- 2.2 The DAMP is a four-year Plan that provides Council with a strategic, balanced approach towards promoting responsible pet ownership and the welfare of dogs and cats in the community; and protecting the community and the environment from nuisance dogs and cats. The Plan also outlines how Council will enforce legislative requirements and compliance with its local laws related to animal management contained in Council's Local Law No.1 (Community Amenity) 2013.
- 2.3 The draft DAMP has been informed by Councillors, community and stakeholder consultation, Animal Management Officers' experiences, research, and benchmarking. The DAMP builds upon the current four-year DAMP that has successfully guided the delivery of animal management services across the City of Port Phillip.
- 2.4 The draft DAMP outlines a comprehensive list of actions that Council proposes to take to fulfil its legislated responsibilities and respond to community and stakeholder feedback about the management of dogs and cats in Port Philip.
- 2.5 Pending Council's endorsement, community consultation on the draft DAMP will be completed, to enable the community to have their say on the proposed actions in the Plan. The final DAMP will be presented at an Ordinary Council Meeting in November for adoption.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Endorses the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan for release for community consultation.
- 3.2 Notes that consultation on the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan will occur in August and September, and that feedback will be considered prior to finalising the Plan.
- 3.3 The Domestic Animal Management Plan will be presented to Council for adoption in November 2021.



4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 Council is required to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) in accordance with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act). Council's current DAMP 2017-2021 sunsets in December 2021.
- 4.2 The DAMP is a four-year Plan that provides Council with a strategic, balanced approach towards promoting responsible pet ownership and the welfare of dogs and cats in the community; and protecting the community and the environment from nuisance dogs and cats. The Plan also outlines how Council will enforce legislative requirements and compliance with its local laws related to animal management contained in Council's Local Law No.1 (Community Amenity) 2013.
- 4.3 In preparing the draft DAMP, pet registration trends and customer requests to Council have been analysed.
- 4.4 Pet registrations
- 4.5 Pet registrations in Port Phillip have increased over the past eight financial years as shown in the graph below.
- 4.6 Since 2012/13 dog registrations have steadily increased. Since 2018-19 there has been a 19% increase in the number of registered dogs, and this is reflected in some of the feedback from the Phase 1 community consultation around the need for more dog off leash areas, fenced dog areas and greater compliance by owners with dog restrictions, and increased enforcement by Council.
- 4.7 Cat registrations have also increased over the past eight years, by 30% since 2018/19.
- 4.8 These increases demonstrate a trend towards increased pet ownership, particularly in "COVID pet" purchases during the pandemic.
- 4.9 Customer Requests to Council
- 4.10 During the 2020-21 financial year, Animal Management Officers responded to 2,643 community requests.
- 4.11 During the term of the current DAMP, the frequency of most animal management requests has reduced from 2016-17 to 2020-21. Dogs not under control and dog poo continue to be the most prevalent request types and the areas of greatest concern in the community. This was reflected in the recent community engagement feedback received during development of the draft DAMP.
- 4.12 Barking dog requests have reduced by 90% from 486 in 2018/19 to 53 in 2020/21. This was largely attributed to the implementation of a Barking Dog Management Kit, which provides a step-by-step guide for owners and neighbours on the process to manage and lodge barking dog complaints.
- 4.13 Collection rates for dogs and cats 'at large' in the community reduced by 26% for dogs and 9% for cats in 2020/21. This may reflect more people working at home during the pandemic. The percentage of those animals rehomed stayed at 93% for dogs this financial year however, the rehoming rate for cats slightly declined from 88% to 82%. This is attributed to the outbreak in fatal Giardia disease found in cats taken to the Lost Dogs Home. (Council has a contract with the Lost Dogs Home to collect uncontained dogs and cats on our behalf).



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- 4.14 In 2020/21, Animal Management Officers investigated 108 reports of alleged dog attacks or dog rushes. As a result, we successfully prosecuted 10 serious dog attacks and two non-serious dog attacks.
- 4.15 Benchmarking
- 4.16 Council's Animal Management Service participated in a benchmarking exercise in preparation for the development of a new DAMP. Services and initiatives provided by 11 Councils were compared, including Mornington, Surf Coast, Queenscliffe, Frankston, Bayside, Port Phillip, Glen Eira, Stonnington, Manningham, Geelong and Golden Plains Councils.
- 4.17 Benchmarking data and direct discussions with participants identified that:
- All municipalities along Port Phillip Bay and Westernport Bay foreshores have cat confinement controls in place (either night-time curfews or 24-hour confinement). The exception to this is the City of Port Phillip and Hobsons Bay. Some Councils with existing cat confinement controls are seeking to have these further strengthened to 24 hours.
 - Mornington Council has had mandatory cat desexing in place since the 1990's. Other Councils with this control include Stonnington, Kingston and Wyndham.
 - The only municipalities along Port Phillip Bay and Westernport Bay foreshores to provide dog waste bags are Kingston and Bayside. Stonnington also provide this facility. Consultation with counterparts at Bayside and Stonnington reveal that this initiative has not been successful, with the notion of owner onus eroded and the provision of dog waste bags becoming an expectation in the community.
 - Most Councils benchmarked provide enclosed or fenced dog off leash areas. Some provide specifically designed dog parks and have areas where small or quiet dogs can exercise separately from larger dogs.
- 4.18 Synopsis of Phase 1 Community Consultation Feedback for the draft DAMP
- 4.19 Community consultation was completed from 30 April to 31 May (refer to section 4 of the report). Responses were heavily weighted towards dog and cat owners with 88% of respondents indicating that they were pet owners.
- 4.20 A summary of the feedback received by Council and included in Attachment 1 is provided below:
- The high engagement in the survey from pet-owners demonstrates a high level of interest in animal management and commitment to responsible pet ownership in the City of Port Phillip.
 - Many community members are satisfied with Council animal management services, and in particular the friendly and responsive communication with Council about animal related issues was noted.
 - The need for increased compliance with and enforcement of leash rules, off-leash areas and dog prohibited areas.
 - Concerns around the high cost pet registration fees, and a lack of transparency around how the fee is used to serve the needs of pets and pet owners.



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- The need for solutions to address the problem of dog waste which is not disposed of properly.
- The need for more off-leash areas, including more fenced and enclosed areas.
- Increased awareness of the process and ease with which incidents involving pets (e.g. dog attack) can be reported.
- Consideration of public education and awareness campaigns to increase the level of compliance with local laws regarding pets, including encouraging the community to call-out fellow community members if they see the wrong thing happening.

4.21 Proposed DAMP actions

4.22 The feedback and research were considered, and an action plan was developed to improve animal welfare outcomes and to encourage responsible pet ownership. Key actions in the draft DAMP are summarised below, with full details included in Attachment 2.

- Further promote owner responsibility approach through increased education, awareness and enforcement of the requirement to carry waste bags and pick up after their dogs;
- Ensure the needs of dogs and their owners are incorporated into the draft City of Port Phillip Public Space Strategy (PSS) through delivery of:
 - MO Moran Reserve Dog Park
 - Investigation of a fenced dog off leash area along the light rail trail in Port Melbourne and at Clarke Reserve in Elwood
 - Developing criteria for dog off leash parks and using these to investigate opportunities for new dog off leash areas.
- When Council is developing Landscape Master Plans, consider:
 - Ways to provide separate fenced areas for small and large dogs
 - Provision of lighting of popular dog walking areas
 - Feasibility of incorporating dog agility equipment.
- Engage with Lost Dogs Home to provide two “Dogs in the Park” training events per annum.
- Develop a Dog Attack Kit, including clear outline of the investigation process and assurances of privacy.
- Develop an info-graphic depicting how registration fee income is allocated and make this available to the community.
- Develop a targeted campaign to increase education and awareness amongst pet owners on the potential impacts their pets can have upon wildlife.
- Introduce permit requirements for people/businesses wishing to walk more than six dogs at one time.
- Introduce a Council Order requiring dogs within 20 metres of an organised sporting event or training to be on lead; and prohibited from entering the



ground/playing surface/training space while the sporting event or training is taking place.

- Explore the use of QR codes, footpath stencils and additional signage to improve access to information on dog regulations.
- Investigate opportunities for non-food businesses to identify as dog friendly by providing a 'door sticker'; and ways in which footpath traders can indicate they are dog friendly.
- Conduct increased Authorised Officer patrols to monitor / enforce dog restrictions and Local Laws in parks and open spaces.
- Introduction of a cat curfew from 9pm to 6am.
- Introduction of mandatory cat de-sexing of newly registered cats, with exceptions for breeders.
- Implement "Pets of Port Phillip" Clinic offering free de sexing for pets of vulnerable and homeless people, in partnership with Port Phillip Animal Hospital and DHHS.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Consultation has occurred internally with staff from Local Laws and Animal Management, City Amenity, Sport & Recreation; Foreshore; Public Space Planning; City Design; Parks Maintenance; Waste Management Services; Street & Beach Cleaning; Waste Futures; Economic Growth & Activation; and Health Services.
- 5.2 Consultation has occurred externally with our pound services provider (The Lost Dogs Home), specialist community providers, vets and animal business located in Port Phillip.
- 5.3 The community and stakeholders have been engaged to understand what our community perceives as the most prevalent animal issues and what aspects of animal management services provided by Council are valued and are working well, as well as what could be improved.
- 5.4 The engagement ran from 30 April to 30 May 2021. A total of 1,717 community members were engaged primarily via an online survey (1,624), as well as hardcopy surveys (6), face-to-face pop ups (89), and email responses (4).
- 5.5 Of the 1,624 survey responses received, most respondents were Port Phillip residents (1424; 87.8%) and/or pet owners (1421; 87.7%).
- 5.6 The engagement opportunity was promoted to the community using a range of online and offline channels, including Have Your Say, social media, corflute signage in parks and local activity centres, and posters at Council-managed facilities and in shopfronts at local activity centres (where possible).
- 5.7 Emails with information about the consultation were distributed to all registered pet owners and key industry stakeholders, and through Divercity Online and Have Your Say newsletters.
- 5.8 Phase two consultation on the draft DAMP will be undertaken in August-September.



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6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 All Local Government authorities are required to develop a DAMP in accordance with Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 Council's Animal Management Services are funded in the approved Council 2020/2021 budget.
- 7.2 Recommendations for a future program of works/initiatives, with cost estimates, will be included in the final DAMP that is reported to Council in November 2021, following the final stage of community consultation.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 The actions in the DAMP are anticipated to have positive impacts on the environment and local wildlife by facilitating responsible pet ownership, thereby protecting the cleanliness, safety and amenity of the municipality.
- 8.2 This includes the decision to continue to place the onus of responsibility on dog owners and walkers for collection of dog waste, rather than introducing a new service to supply plastic waste bags in parks and streets.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 Pet owners and the broader community look to Council for guidance and support to assist them by providing a balanced approach to safe, well maintained open spaces for animals to exercise, play and be trained.
- 9.2 The community expectation is that Council maintains registration systems for cats and dogs, community education, and collection of lost pets whilst balancing the needs of the greater community.
- 9.3 The Animal Management Team is committed to providing high quality, responsive and effective services to meet the community's needs.
- 9.4 The draft DAMP aims to strike the right balance and seek positive social outcomes for both pet owners and non-pet owners, noting that pet ownership is a contributor to people's wellbeing.
- 9.5 Some proposed actions such as the investigation into dog friendly businesses and outdoor dining are designed to improve support for local business and support dog owners.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 The DAMP is a core strategy under the *Liveable Port Phillip* Strategic Direction in the Council Plan 2021-2031.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

- 11.2 The following steps and timeline will be implemented to complete the DAMP:

- Council Meeting 4 August Ordinary– release of draft DAMP for consultation.
- Mid-August to mid-September Consultation period – draft DAMP.



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- October 13 Briefing to Councillors on final document and stage 2 consultation feedback.
- November - Ordinary Council Meeting to adopt DAMP 2021-2025.

11.3 COMMUNICATION

11.4 The draft DAMP will be released for community consultation and communicated through a range of social media, stakeholders, Council's website and direct contact with pet owners to seek the broadest possible feedback.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any material or general interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

1. **Attachment 1 DAMP Community Engagement Report July 21**
2. **Attachment 2 DRAFT DAMP for Stage 2 Consultation**