

**STRATEGY AND POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE**  
**2 JUNE 2008** **POLICY AND PLANNING**

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**A3** **DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT  
PLAN AND OFF LEASH REVIEW**

**LOCATION/ADDRESS:**

**RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** **GEOFF OULTON - EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING**

**AUTHOR:** **KIRSTEN HUGHES – COORDINATOR  
LOCAL LAWS**

**FILE NO.:**

**ATTACHMENTS:** **DRAFT DOMESTIC ANIMAL  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. The Domestic Animal Management Plan Draft (the plan) summarises the service commitment by the Animal Management unit of Council.
- 1.2. The plan is a legislative requirement and must be in place by November 2008.
- 1.3. As part of the development of the plan, consideration is required to be given to Council Orders (ie off leash areas), and the review of these has been incorporated into the plan.
- 1.4. It is recommended that no changes occur to the current off leash areas
- 1.5. Prior to final approval, the draft of the plan should be advertised for public comment.

**2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

- 2.1. Under the provisions of the *Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* (the Act), there is a requirement for all Councils in Victoria to have a plan, which illustrates how the Council intends to promote responsible animal ownership within the municipality.
- 2.2. The draft plan was developed after consultation with various stakeholders and has links with the CoPP *Open Space Strategy 2006*.
- 2.3. The plan is required to be in place by 1 November 2008.
- 2.4. Every Council must prepare a plan at 3 year intervals.
- 2.5. The plan must include a method to evaluate animal management services and whether they are adequate to give effect to the provisions of the Act and regulations.
- 2.6. The plan must outline training programs for authorized officers to ensure they can adequately enforce the requirements of the Act.
- 2.7. According to the Act, the plan must outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue –
  - 2.7.1. to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats;
  - 2.7.2. to ensure compliance with the Act and regulations;
  - 2.7.3. to minimize the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals;
  - 2.7.4. to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
  - 2.7.5. to encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats;
  - 2.7.6. to minimize the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance;
  - 2.7.7. to accurately identify all menacing, dangerous and restricted breed dogs within CoPP, and to ensure they are all kept in compliance with the Act and Regulations.
  - 2.7.8. to provide for review of any relevant Council Orders and local laws;
  - 2.7.9. provide for the periodic review of any program

**3. RECOMMENDED OPTION**

The recommendation is that council adopt the draft domestic animal management plan in its current form, and then publish it for public comment. The plan includes a recommendation that no changes occur to the current off leash areas.

**3.1. Criterion for recommendation**

The plan was developed taking into account the current resources and concerns facing the animal management unit. Much of the plan is documenting and planning current services and activities. The strategy contained within the plan is to promote registration, in particular, and provide a range of activities that will provide education around responsible animal

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ownership. It was also important to ensure the plan was achievable, with budget and staffing constraints considered.

The plan had to be developed within the guidelines provided by the Bureau of Animal Welfare and within the timeframe guided by the applicable legislation.

**3.2. Sustainability assessment**

<p>Social Pillar</p>	<p>The draft plan provides a range of incentives to encourage responsible animal ownership. These incentives are aimed at benefiting a broad cross section of the community, whilst also encouraging an increase in animal registrations.</p> <p>The collaborative new program 'Pets in the City' improves access to veterinary and information services for a significant number of people housed in community housing. It also provides a range of networking opportunities for those people to provide them with stronger community connections, as a result of their animal ownership.</p> <p>There are a number of activities that promote animal ownership that will be available to the whole of the community.</p>
<p>Economic Pillar</p>	<p>The program of activities to be undertaken by the animal management unit are funded by its current budget. The programs that are aimed at increasing registration should provide an increased revenue stream in the future.</p> <p>Current registration rates are very low, and incentives to increase registrations should assist in identifying the animals for future years, thereby increasing our ability to provide a good animal management service.</p>
<p>Environmental Pillar</p>	<p>The plan gives due consideration to the environmental impact of animals using public open space. Long term drought has made an impact on our parks and reserves and the need to occasionally rest those areas has been highlighted in the plan.</p> <p>Further education and enforcement with respect to disposal of dog poo will also assist the environment.</p>

Cultural Pillar	The plan provides a strategy for promoting the benefits of responsible animal ownership to all sectors of the community.  There will be regular events that promote the benefits of animal ownership to the diverse areas of the community.  The 'Pets In the City' program fosters community growth and participation. If successful it can be rolled out into various other areas of the municipality.
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### **3.3. Policy and legislative implications**

The final version of the Domestic Animal Management Plan must be in place by 1 November 2008.

According to the Act, every Council must:

- 3.3.1. review its domestic animal management plan annually, and amend the plan if required;
- 3.3.2. provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan;
- 3.3.3. publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

### **3.4. Risk implications**

There are no obvious risks in adopting the draft plan. The plan provides a clear strategy for reducing risks to the public as a result of dog attacks. The plan is also achievable.

### **3.5. Resource implications**

The current Animal Management resources will be utilised in a more strategic and planned manner to implement the programs within the plan.

Costs associated with the implementation of the plan would be drawn from the normal animal management budget.

#### 4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

##### 4.1. Alternative 1

Council can adopt the draft plan with alterations.

##### 4.1.1. Sustainability assessment

Social Equity Pillar	This would depend on the nature of any changes.
Economic Viability Pillar	This would depend on the nature of any changes.
Environmental Responsibility Pillar	This would depend on the nature of any changes.
Cultural Vitality Pillar	This would depend on the nature of any changes.

##### 4.1.2. Policy and legislative implications

This should not be affected if there were any modifications to the plan.

##### 4.1.3. Risk implications

This should not be affected if there were any modifications to the plan.

##### 4.1.4. Resource implications

Providing any alterations were minor, resources should not be affected.

#### 5. PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

##### 5.1. Internal

5.1.1. The people who have been engaged with in relation to this issue are:

- Stephen Cooper, Manager Health and Amenity
- Animal Management officers
- Dwayne Carter, Coordinator Open Space Planning and Landscape and Urban Design
- Belinda Hayes, Communications Consultant

5.1.2. The focus of the plan was to document the current activities and ensure they are in line with feedback from the Open Space Strategy 2006 and took into account comments received from the public with respect to the use of public open space by dogs.

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Advice regarding 'resting' off-leash parks has been taken into consideration in the plan.

**5.2. External**

5.2.1. The external people and/or organisations who have been engaged with in relation to this issue are:

- RSPCA (Vic)
- Port Phillip Community Group
- Parks Victoria
- Local veterinarians
- Bureau of Animal Welfare
- Various community members

A number of submissions were also received by a number of lobby groups with respect to the development of the plan (ie Cat Crisis Coalition, Australian Veterinary Association, RSPCA (Vic)).

5.2.2. We have consulted with the various groups to enable the plan to be developed, giving consideration to issues raised by the various interest groups. It was decided during initial consultations and after receiving various submissions, that the primary focus of the plan should be the increase in registrations.

5.2.3. Consultation was in a variety of ways, including in person meetings, via email correspondence, small meetings held on site at council or via telephone.

5.2.4. The service commitment has not substantially changed as a result of the consultation. However greater incentive for new registrations have been provided and a range of activities initiated to achieve this goal.

**6. IMPLEMENTATION**

6.1. The plan shall be implemented as follows:

<b>DATE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
June 2008	Draft plan adopted by Council
July 2008	Draft plan released publicly for comment via advertising in local media and on web site.
August 2008	Collate any submissions with respect to the plan.
September 2008	Final plan to be presented to Council for adoption.

**7. COMMUNICATION**

- 7.1. Communication of the draft plan shall be via the council website. Public notices shall be placed in the local media advising of the availability of the draft online. Hardcopies shall be made available at Assist. Further communication will be required when the draft plan is finalised. This will be the subject of a future Council Report.

**8. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Strategy and Policy Review Committee recommend that Council resolve:

- 8.1. That the Council resolve to adopt the draft domestic animal management plan, and release it for public comment.
- 8.2. That no alterations are made to Council Order No 2 in relation to off leash areas.