



**10.1** DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2025

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** BRIAN TEE, ACTING GENERAL MANAGER, DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORT AND CITY AMENITY

**PREPARED BY:** LISA DAVIS, MANAGER SAFETY AND AMENITY  
SKYE PECK, TEAM LEADER ANIMAL MANAGEMENT AND CITY AMENITY  
DIRK CUMMINS, COORDINATOR LOCAL LAWS & ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

**1. PURPOSE**

1.1 To present the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025 for endorsement.

**2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

2.1 Council is required to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) in accordance with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. 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 in Council's Local Law No.1 (Community Amenity) 2013.

2.3 The DAMP has been informed by Councillor discussions, two rounds of community and stakeholder consultation, Animal Management Officers' experiences, research, and benchmarking. The actions build on the previous four-year DAMP that has successfully guided the delivery of animal management services across the City of Port Phillip.

2.4 Key new actions include:

- Incorporation of actions into the draft Public Space Strategy that respond to feedback on the need for additional dog off lead areas and fenced areas;
- Introduction of a Council Order requiring dogs within 20 metres of an organised sporting event or scheduled training to be on lead;
- Introduction of a cat curfew from 9pm to 6am daily;
- Introduction of mandatory cat de-sexing of newly registered cats, with exceptions as outlined in the Domestic Animals Act (1994);
- Installation of improved signage and installing footpath stencils in key areas;
- Introduction of new permit requirements for individuals/businesses wishing to walk more than 6 dogs at a time.



### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

- 3.1 Endorses the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025 in order to meet legislative requirements prescribed in section 68a of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.
- 3.2 Acknowledges and thanks the community engagement respondents for their input and feedback, and for assisting Council to develop actions that will balance the needs of pet owners and non-pet owners.
- 3.3 Makes the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-25 available on Council's website, and in Town Halls and Libraries.
- 3.4 Authorises the Chief Executive Officer, or delegate, to make final design or minor editorial changes that do not materially change the intent of the DAMP, prior to publication.
- 3.5 Provides the Secretary of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions with a copy of the endorsed Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025.

### 4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

#### **Pets in Port Phillip**

- 4.1 A total of 7901 dogs and 3659 cats were registered with City of Port Phillip in 2020-21.
- 4.2 In the four-year term of the current DAMP, the number of registered cats has increased 27%, from 2869 in 2017-18 to 3659 in 2020-21.
- 4.3 In the same period, the number of registered dogs has increased 15%, from 6831 in 2017-18 to 7901 in 2020-21.
- 4.4 The steady increase in registrations can also be attributed to increased resident population, purchase of "COVID pets", Council educational programs, incentives to register, and the introduction of proactive microchip data audits that identifies unregistered dogs and cats.

#### **Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-25**

- 4.5 Council is required to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) in accordance with the Domestic Animals Act 1994. The DAMP is a four-year plan that includes strategies, services and activities Council will implement to:
  - improve responsible pet ownership;
  - minimise the risk of dog attacks, nuisance pet behaviours and euthanasia;
  - encourage pet registration;
  - identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs and ensure they are kept in accordance with the Domestic Animals Act (1994);
  - enforce legislative requirements and compliance with its local laws related to animal management in Council's Local Law No.1 (Community Amenity) 2013.
- 4.6 Outcomes of Council's current DAMP (2017-21) include:



- A comprehensive review in 2018-19 of all foreshore and St Kilda Botanical Garden's dog restrictions, which was presented to Council on 17 April 2019 and resulted in the current dog restriction settings.
- Increased patrols of foreshore areas by City Amenity officers during summer months to educate owners and enforce dog restrictions.
- Creation of a Barking Dog Kit for owners and neighbours that has reduced the number of barking dog complaints by almost 70 percent, from 486 CRMs in 2018/19 to 54 in 2020/21.
- A targeted social media campaign aimed at responsible pet ownership.
- Increased dog registrations resulting from increased pet ownership and the introduction of microchip data analysis and audits;
- A 42% decrease in the number of dogs impounded, from 120 in 2016-17 to 69 in 2020-21.
- A 43% decrease in the number of cats impounded, from 159 in 2016-17 to 90 in 2020-21.
- A significant increase in the number of successful dog attack prosecutions from 2 in 2016-17 to 12 in 2020-21.

#### **Development of the new DAMP 2022-2025**

- 4.7 The new DAMP has been developed in consultation with Councillors via workshops, Council's Animal Management Team, stakeholders, and informed by community and stakeholder consultation, research and benchmarking activities. It builds on the previous four-year DAMP that guided the delivery of animal management services across the City of Port Phillip.
- 4.8 Two rounds of community consultation have been undertaken since April 2021 to inform the actions.
- 4.9 The majority (approx. 88%) of respondents in both consultation phases were pet owners.
- 4.10 Feedback from the consultation indicates:
- High satisfaction with Council animal management services, in particular the friendly and responsive communication with Council about animal related issues.
  - A desire for increased compliance with, and enforcement of, leash rules, off-leash areas and dog prohibited areas.
  - Concerns about the cost of pet registration fees, and a lack of transparency around how the fee is used to serve the needs of pets and pet owners.
  - A desire for solutions to address the problem of dog waste which is not picked up (provision of dog waste bags was the prevalent suggestion).
  - A desire for more off-leash areas, including more fenced and enclosed areas. In the second round of consultation, nine respondents requested that dogs have greater access to beaches in Port Melbourne in summer.
  - A need for increased awareness of the process and ease with which incidents involving pets (e.g. dog attack) can be reported.



- A desire for 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.

4.11 Details of the consultation approach and participation levels are contained in Section 6. The two Consultation Summary Reports are included in Attachments 2 and 3.

#### **Key Actions in the DAMP 2022-25**

4.12 Feedback received during the two consultation periods together with feedback from the internal stakeholders has been considered and used to develop the new DAMP.

4.13 Key actions include:

- Greater promotion of owners' responsibility through increased education, awareness and enforcement - especially in relation to dog waste, dog restrictions and encouragement for responsible pet ownership;
- Incorporation of actions into the draft Public Space Strategy that respond to feedback on the need for additional dog off lead areas, fenced areas and lighting (see 4.17 below)
- Use of QR codes to provide improved access to information on dog regulations;
- Development of a kit explaining how to report dog attacks and Council's investigation process;
- Develop an info-graphic depicting how registration fee income is allocated and make this available to the community;
- A targeted campaign to increase education and awareness amongst pet owners on the potential impacts their pets can have upon wildlife;
- Introduce a Council Order requiring dogs within 20 metres of an organised sporting event or scheduled training to be on lead; and prohibited from entering the ground/playing surface/training space while an organised sporting match or training is taking place.
- Publish scheduled sporting events and training on website and via QR codes (where feasible) to assist the community to understand dog controls.
- Introduce permit requirements for individuals/businesses wishing to walk more than 6 dogs at a time. The permit will contain conditions aimed at ensuring all dogs being walked are under effective control at all times, and the amenity impacts of a large number of dogs under the control of a walker in one place is managed. A standard permit condition will require all dogs to be on leash at all times when there are more than 6 dogs in the control of one walker.
- Installation of improved signage and installing footpath stencils in key areas;
- 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.
- Introduction of a cat curfew from 9pm to 6am daily;
- Introduction of mandatory cat de-sexing of newly registered cats, with exceptions as outlined in the Domestic Animals Act (1994);



- Implement “Pets of Port Phillip” Clinic offering free pet de-sexing to members of the community who may have previously not been able to afford to microchip or de-sex their pets (in partnership with Port Phillip Animal Hospital and DHHS).
- Continue to partner with the Lost Dogs’ Home, veterinary clinics and animal rescue organisations to optimise rehoming and adoption of dogs and cats, in order to reduce the incidence of euthanasia.
- Support Animal Management Officers to further develop their suite of skills through on the job training, networking, attendance at specialist industry training and conferences.

#### **Response to feedback on dog waste bags**

- 4.14 Dog waste bags are not provided in parks within the municipality. During the community consultation, there were many comments received in favour of their introduction.
- 4.15 Council ceased the provision of dog waste bags in local parks and along the foreshore approximately thirteen years ago due to costs and inappropriate use. At the time, bags were strewn in the open space, entered stormwater drains and waterways, and Animal Management Officers observed that there was little reduction in dog waste in off lead areas when bags were available.
- 4.16 Port Phillip Officers have discussed this issue with officers in neighbouring Local Government Areas where bags are provided. The feedback has been that provision of bags has had little effect in changing dog owner behaviour, and can lead to other challenges such as pollution, and an increased reliance upon the Councils to maintain bag supplies in parks rather than owners carry their own.
- 4.17 Provision of bags in Council’s off lead reserves is estimated to cost \$195,000 per annum; and provision in all Council managed parks is estimated to cost \$500,000 per annum.
- 4.18 Rather than reintroduce dog waste bags, Council will encourage dog owners to collect their dog’s waste; and take enforcement action if an owner/walker is observed not complying with this requirement.

#### **Response to requests for fenced areas and dog off leash parks**

- 4.19 Fencing in parks is used to segregate areas where required, however enclosed fences with gates is not generally recommended as it can encourage reduced supervision of dogs, may further restrict mixed use of parks, and can lead to increased park maintenance requirement as surfaces are damaged.
- 4.20 At this time, the City of Port Phillip has one fully fenced area in Eastern North Reserve, South Melbourne, used for dog off leash activities between 7.00am and 7:30pm.
- 4.21 During the community consultation, there were many comments received in favour of more fenced areas for dogs off lead. This is consistent with the feedback received for the draft Public Space Strategy in 2020.
- 4.22 The draft Public Space Strategy is Council’s primary strategy for guiding how the open spaces will be used and aims to balance the needs of all open space users. It is due to be presented to Council early in 2022.



- 4.23 For this reason, and to ensure a holistic approach to open space management, the draft Public Space Strategy contains actions that respond to requests for fenced areas, additional off lead areas, and design of spaces to cater for all users.
- 4.24 Actions in the draft Public Space Strategy to address the feedback received about dogs in open spaces, include:
- *“Investigate opportunities for new, and review permitted times in existing, dog off-leash areas*
  - *Prepare an overarching framework to support Council in managing the shared use of public open space, including, but not limited to, formal and informal sport and recreation, commercial uses, festivals, events and activations, dogs, community gardens and public space infrastructure*
  - *Deliver a new fenced dog off-leash area in Moran Reserve.*
  - *Prepare a landscape masterplan for Cook, Fennell, Gill, Hester, Howe, Page, Smith, Turner and Walter Reserves to increase the diversity of unstructured recreation and social facilities, investigate if a fenced dog off-leash area can be supported, protect mature trees and strengthen the indigenous vegetation values along the light rail corridor.”*
- 4.25 The DAMP references these actions, while focussing primarily on Council's legislative responsibilities for pet welfare; responsible pet ownership; and protecting the community and the environment from nuisance dogs and cats.

## 5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

### Round One consultation (April - May 2021)

- 5.1 The aim of the first round of engagement completed for the draft DAMP was 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, and what could be improved.
- 5.2 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).
- 5.3 Of 1,624 survey responses received, the majority of respondents were Port Phillip residents (1424; 87.8%) and/or pet owners (1421; 87.7%).
- 5.4 We promoted the engagement opportunity to our 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.
- 5.5 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.

### Round two consultation (Aug-Sept 2021)

- 5.6 The aim of the second round of engagement was to seek community feedback on the draft DAMP actions.
- 5.7 The engagement ran from 7 August to 5 September 2021. A total of 561 community members were engaged primarily via an online survey (537), as well as online forums (14), email responses/written submissions (10).





- 5.8 Of the 537 survey responses received, the majority were Port Phillip residents (89.0%), and/or pet owners (88.5%).
- 5.9 We promoted the second engagement opportunity to our community using a range of online and offline channels, including Have Your Say, social media, and a targeted email to registered pet owners and key stakeholders.

## **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 Council 2020-2021 budget.
- 7.2 Indicative cost estimates for implementation of proposed DAMP actions have been prepared, with the total cost of initiatives estimated at \$50,000 over the four years. These will be funded through Council's annual budget process.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

- 8.1 The actions in the DAMP are anticipated to have positive impacts on the environment by facilitating responsible pet ownership, thereby protecting the cleanliness, safety and amenity of the municipality.

## **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 DAMP aims to strike the right balance and seek positive social outcomes for both pet owners and not-pet owners, noting that pet ownership is a contribution 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 businesses and support dog owners through the period of economic and social recovery post pandemic.

## **10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY**

- 10.1 The DAMP is aligned with Strategic Direction 2, *Liveable Port Phillip* and Strategic Direction 5, *Well Governed Port Phillip*.

## **11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

### **11.1 TIMELINE**

- 11.1.1 Once adopted, the DAMP document will be designed and published.
- 11.1.2 DAMP actions will be implemented progressively over the next four years and be reported in CEO reports and the Annual Report.



# MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL 3 NOVEMBER 2021

## 11.2 COMMUNICATION





11.2.1 Copies of the DAMP will be made available on the website, Town Halls and Libraries.

11.2.2 A copy of the DAMP will be sent to the Secretary of Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

## 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. DAMP 2022-2025  [Download](#)
2. DAMP Engagement Summary Report Phase 1  [Download](#)
3. DAMP Engagement Summary Report Phase 2  [Download](#)
4. DAMP 2022-2025 Action Costings  [Download](#)