

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-29 DRAFT



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Liveable Port Phillip

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Community Amenity Local Law 2023

Dog Off-Leash Guidelines 2025

Public Space Strategy 2022-2032

Council Plan 2021-2031

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Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025

Acknowledgement

Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their legacy and spiritual connection to the land and waterways across the City of Port Phillip and pay our heartfelt respect to their Elders, past, present, and future.

Mayor's message

To be included in final draft.

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Introduction

Purpose

The DAMP is a four-year Plan that provides a strategic approach to promoting and encouraging responsible pet ownership, the welfare of dogs and cats and the protection of the community and environment from nuisance dogs and cats.

This document explains how Council currently manages programs and sets out actions to improve and grow the ways in which Council delivers domestic animal management programs.

These objectives and guidelines aim to create a place where pets and the community can live together, without adversely impacting on the environment or community amenity.

Statutory requirement

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (Act), every Victorian local government must prepare a Plan every four years, outlining how it will manage dogs and cats within its municipal boundaries.

Every Council must review its Plan annually and publish an evaluation of its implementation in its Annual Report. The Plan must:

- Set out a method for evaluating whether animal control services provided by Council are adequate to give effect to the requirements of the Act and regulations.
- Outline programs for the training of authorised officers.
- Outline programs, services and strategies to:
 - Promote and encourage responsible ownership of dogs and cats.
 - Ensure that people comply with the Act, regulations and legislation.
 - Minimise risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.
 - Address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.
 - Encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats.
 - Minimise potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.
 - Effectively identify all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and ensure that these dogs are kept in compliance with Act and regulations.
 - Provide for review of existing orders and Local Laws made under the Act.
 - Provide for review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats.

Strategic alignment

Supporting pet owners to care for their pets and be responsible pet owners enhances the safety and wellbeing of the wider community. This is an endorsed major initiative in the City of Port Phillip Council Plan 2021-31 which also incorporates the Health and Wellbeing Plan.

The DAMP aligns with the City of Port Phillip Dog Off Leash Strategic Guideline 2024. This document outlines Council's position on the provision, distribution and management of dog facilities in public open spaces. It is used to guide decisions on the planning for all dog off-leash areas and parks.

Process

This new DAMP builds on the current DAMP that has successfully guided the delivery of animal management services across Port Phillip.

It was developed in consultation with Council's Animal Management Team, and informed by community consultation, research and benchmarking. It seeks to balance community and stakeholder needs, whilst ensuring compliance with requirements of the Act.

Our consultation

How we engaged

The engagement process, conducted from **9 May to 6 June 2025**, aimed to inform and involve the community in shaping policies for responsible pet ownership, animal welfare, and public safety within the municipality.

Council implemented a comprehensive engagement strategy including posters, newsletters, social media, emails, a dedicated Have Your Say page, surveys, pop-up events across nine neighbourhoods, and meetings with relevant groups.

Who we heard from

Approximately 450 community members participated across various engagement activities, with 223 completing detailed surveys. Engagement was strongest among residents aged 35-69 years, predominantly female, and mainly from Port Melbourne, St Kilda, Albert Park, and Elwood. Diverse voices were sought, including LGBTIQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, multicultural communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, though some barriers to participation were acknowledged.

Key themes from the community feedback

Responsible pet ownership

There was strong community support for promoting responsible pet ownership, with emphasis on enhancing enforcement of existing rules, particularly dog leash laws and waste management. Many respondents advocated for stricter cat curfews (including suggestions for 24-hour containment), increased accountability through registration and identification, and more effective education and training programs. The importance of practical and visible communication, including signage and multi-channel education, was highlighted.

Cat curfew and wildlife protection

Feedback revealed a strong desire for more stringent containment of cats, balancing wildlife protection with practical enforcement challenges. Suggestions included 24-hour curfews, indoor containment, and support programs for cat owners to comply with regulations.

Dog waste management and funding

While there was broad support for providing dog waste bags in public spaces, opinions were divided on funding mechanisms such as increasing dog registration fees. Nearly half of respondents opposed fee increases, citing personal owner responsibility and cost concerns.

Reducing euthanasia and overpopulation

The community expressed strong backing for proactive measures such as subsidised desexing and veterinary care for low-income households, Trap-Neuter-Release programs for feral cats, behavioural support for pets, and incentivising adoption through reduced registration fees. Concerns were raised about the Council's role and partnerships, with calls to prioritize 'no-kill' organisations and transparency in euthanasia data.

Management of dog attacks and dangerous dogs

Safety was a dominant concern, with calls for increased owner accountability, stronger enforcement of leash laws, and immediate action against dangerous dogs. Education and training were also seen as vital preventative tools. Criticism of current Council effectiveness and demands for evidence-based approaches and transparent reporting were noted.

Dog walking permits and Domestic Animal Businesses

Professional dog walkers strongly opposed the proposed reduction from six to four dogs per walker, citing economic impact and lack of justification. Feedback urged nuanced regulations considering dog size and walker experience. There was general support for regulating domestic animal businesses with clear definitions and avoiding excessive bureaucracy.

Training for Authorised Officers

Community members emphasised the need for officers to have strong soft skills, practical enforcement training, knowledge of dog behaviour, and ethical conduct. Some scepticism was expressed about conference attendance and resource allocation.

Other matters

Calls for stricter enforcement of existing laws, more and better off-leash dog areas, balancing community access, and concerns about the environmental impact of pet ownership were expressed. The importance of Council-community partnership and transparent communication was stressed.

Submissions from Key Stakeholders

Dog walking professionals urged maintaining the six-dog limit and called for transparent consultation to avoid economic hardship.

The Lost Dogs' Home supported cooperative efforts focused on responsible pet ownership, cat containment, and support for vulnerable pet owners.

The City of Port Phillip Dog Network advocated for positive messaging about pet ownership benefits, boosting pet registration, providing dog waste bags, regulating dog walking permits, improving signage, addressing behavioural issues, and promoting successful partnerships

Port Phillip at a glance

Community

Port Phillip is located between 2 and 8km from the Melbourne CBD and covers an area of 21km². It has over 178 hectares of public open space available, including 11km of foreshore, 10 hectares of indigenous vegetation, 24 significant parks, 70 neighbourhood parks, 54 playgrounds and 15 sporting ovals. Open spaces are highly valued and highly utilised by pet owners and non-pet owners alike. 91% of the estimated 109,515¹ people live in medium to high density housing.

Port Phillip is home to people from over 163 birthplaces, with our residents speaking 114 different languages. While there is no typical resident, about three in five are aged 18 to 49 years. It is likely our community will continue to feature many people aged 18 to 49 years; however, the largest growth is expected to be in those aged over 60, suggesting many residents will retire and age within our community. Forty-one per cent of households belong to singles and there is a high proportion of renters.

Dogs and cats in Port Phillip

The following table provides a snapshot of dogs and cats across Port Phillip. Further details are provided in the body of the DAMP.

Key Data	2016-17	2020-21	2023-24
Population	109,523	103,438	109,515
Complaints or requests annually	3,532	2,643	3,626
Registered dogs	6,772	7,901	8,254
Registered declared dogs	0	1	4
Dog attack or rush	100	108	160
Registered cats	2,906	3,659	4,031
Registered Domestic Animal Businesses	12	6	9
Keeping of animals / excess animals permits issued	86	49	8
Number of infringements	121	54	143
Number of successful prosecutions	2	33	13
Dogs impounded	120	69	91
Cats impounded	159	90	134

The future

Port Phillip's population is forecast to grow by more than 60,000 residents by 2041. Increased resident population has a flow on effect on the number of pets in Port Phillip. This impacts the number of animal registrations, dogs being walked in public open spaces, cats needing to be contained to properties, dogs potentially barking, and much more.

Our parks and waterfront will need to be welcoming to all members of the community, including pet owners, and cater for various and increased use as they become residents' 'backyards'.

¹ ABS resident population 2023.

This includes responding to an increased number of domestic animals residing in the municipality and living in apartments, as well as providing a balanced approach to ensuring that our limited open spaces are well managed and shared between dog owners and non-dog owners.

Liveable environments, and sharing our lives with pets, create a foundation for good health and wellbeing for everyone. This includes well-designed places that have safe access to quality open spaces, amenities and services.

Although mandatory cat desexing and night-time curfew regulations are already in place, unowned and feral cats will continue to be both a nuisance for the community and an environmental problem without adequate management. Council will focus on continued promotion of responsible cat ownership.

Local laws, orders and other domestic animal controls

In addition to The Act, Council enforces the provisions of the City of Port Phillip Community Amenity Local Law 2023 and Council Orders which relate to animal management as outlined below.

Keeping dogs and cats

The maximum number of dogs and cats allowed to be kept in houses is three dogs and two cats. However, if you live in a unit, townhouse or flat, the maximum number allowed to be kept is two dogs and two cats.

Animal housing

Owners are required to ensure that animal housing is appropriate for the number and type of animals, minimises noise and other nuisances, and does not adversely impact the amenity of the area.

Animal litter

Pet owners are required to both carry a bag and remove their animals' excrement when left in a public place.

Dogs on / off leash

Unless designated otherwise, all public areas across Port Phillip are on-leash. There are a number of parks and beaches where dogs are permitted off leash. Some areas change at different times of the day or the year. There are also some areas where dogs are prohibited.

Dogs must also be on lead within twenty metres of an organised sporting event or training; and are prohibited within five metres of any children's playground, public barbeque or exercise equipment.

Commercial dog walkers

A person must not, without a permit, walk, exercise or otherwise be in control of seven or more dogs on Council land.

Desexing cats

Newly registered cats over the age of three months must be desexed. Cats exempt from desexing include:

- Cats that have been registered with Council before 14 April 2022.
- The owner is a registered breeder and meets all the requirements under the legislation.
- The owner is a current member of an applicable organisation and the animal is registered with that organisation.
- The owner of the cat has written veterinary advice that the health of that cat would be impacted if desexed.

Cat curfew

A Council Order is in place where cats must be confined to the owner's premises from 9pm to 6am.

Current programs and activities

Our current domestic animal management programs and activities.

Program	Service Level to Community
Identification and Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual registration renewal notices and follow up process. • A free initial registration incentive program for owners who register their microchipped pets within 4 weeks of taking ownership. • Refund for owners who paid full fee but have their dog or cat desexed within the first 6 months of registration. • Free transfer of registration when moving registered animals from other Victorian municipalities. • Lifetime registration tags. • Online registration forms and system for both renewals and new registrations. • Periodic cross reference of Central Animal Records (CAR) database with Council's animal registration database. • CAR request to register letter sent to all residents who microchip a new pet. • SMS registration reminders. • Routine registration checks during patrols.
Dog attack (against people or animals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate response.
Dangerous dog complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response within 24 hours.
Animal Nuisance Complaints (including barking dogs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response within 24 hours. • Online help information. • Barking Dog Management Kit. • Online system for lodging complaints.
Patrols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine patrols of parks and foreshore areas. • Proactive patrols in focused areas as required. • Extended patrols during peak / summer periods - with particular focus on foreshore areas. • Partnership with Summer Amenity Team to provide presence from 6.30am to 9.00pm. Extends to 11pm on New Year's Eve. • Recording of all patrols in online system and collection of data to determine where resources are focused, and problem areas
Pound Facilities Lost Dogs Home 2 Gracie Street North Melbourne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost Dogs Home is open to the public from 10.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday and 9.00am to 12.30pm weekends (closed Christmas Day and Good Friday). • Online 'lost dog' and 'lost cat' search facility. • Community and animal welfare-based outcomes wherever possible –reuniting animals with owners as first priority.
Education and Promotion of Responsible Pet Ownership	<p>Communication plan in place, including a range of activities across the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular social media campaigns. • 'Pets of Port Phillip' flyer in registration renewal notices.

Program	Service Level to Community
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration packs for all new registrations. • Barking Dog Management Guide. • Pet registration guide • Online information on responsible cat and dog ownership through Council website • Dog Attack Reporting and Prevention Guide. • Promotion of 'Safe Cats, Safe Wildlife' campaign • Website information.
After hours services (Call 8290 1333)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/7 emergency after hours service. • On-call Council Officer.
Animal welfare / cruelty matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASAP, but no less than same day response. • Online system for lodging complaints. • Our Officers are not authorised under POCTAA (Protection of Cruelty to Animals Act) and as such we liaise with and report animal welfare / cruelty matters to the RSPCA for their investigation and action (e.g. dog baiting reports).
Wandering cat complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat traps are available for the public to utilise, to confine nuisance, unowned or feral cats. • Strict protocols are in place governing the use of these traps to ensure that the welfare of the confined cats is protected. • Online system for lodging complaints.
Domestic animal business inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual inspections in accordance with Act legislation. • Issue annual registration certificates. • Respond to and investigate complaints. • Actively seek and identify illegal domestic animal businesses and prosecute where appropriate.
Declared Dogs (dangerous / menacing or restricted breed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual inspections are undertaken in accordance with the Act legislation.
Prosecutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Officers prosecute breaches of the Act.
Dogs on / off-leash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orders are in place restricting dogs off-leash to designated areas and times in certain parks and foreshore areas. • Orders are in place prohibiting dogs in certain parks and foreshore areas. • Dogs must be on-leash within twenty metres of an organised sporting event or training. • Dogs are prohibited within five metres of a children's playground, public barbeque or exercise equipment area.

Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership

Healthy and happy pets can bring life and vibrancy to a family, and community. They provide companionship and improve well-being through supporting physical exercise and mental wellness. These benefits rely on responsible pet ownership. Council promotes an owner onus approach to responsible ownership of dogs and cats through a range of communication and education initiatives.

We understand the increasing demand for council services to be delivered online, and for engagement through social media and other digital means. However, we also acknowledge the power behind face-to-face interactions and that successful education and communication campaigns require a multi channelled approach.

Responsible pet ownership includes animals being trained and exercised, microchipped, desexed and registered with owners who comply with regulations and signage.

Communication and education campaigns with clear and simple messaging are delivered to support responsible pet ownership, as well as increasing awareness of cat curfew requirements and dog off-leash and dog prohibited areas. Council manages signage for dog-leash regulations in public places through the Strategic Dog Off-Leash Guideline 2024.

What we currently do

- Communication plan in place, including a range of activities across the year:
 - Regular social media campaigns.
 - ‘Pets of Port Phillip’ flyer in registration renewal notices.
 - Registration packs for all new registrations.
 - Barking Dog Management Guide.
 - Dog Attack Reporting and Prevention Guide (online or via ASSIST).
 - Pet registration guide provided to apartment buildings, vets and in mailed correspondence.
 - Website information.
 - Use of QR codes on renewal notices as an information source.
- Proactive patrols of parks and foreshore areas.
- Extended patrols during peak / summer periods - with particular focus on foreshore areas.
- Partnership with Summer Amenity Team to provide additional support during peak times.
- Signage in parks and foreshore areas detailing dog controls.
- Education initiatives aimed at improving community awareness and reducing dog attacks.
- Information provided to promote dog off leash and dog prohibited areas including maps.
- Promotion of ‘Safe Cats, Safe Wildlife’ campaign to educate owners on their pet’s impact on wildlife.

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 1: Promote responsible pet ownership through strong and simple messages, delivered through multiple channels.			
1	Activity	When	How we will measure
1.1	Review and update communications and education plan targeted towards promoting responsible pet ownership.	Ongoing	Delivery of communications and education materials through multiple channels.
1.2	Advocate to primary schools to participate in free Animal Welfare Victoria dog behaviour education program.	Annual	All Port Phillip primary schools contacted and encouraged to participate.
1.3	Develop a new Council-specific pet ownership guide that combines all relevant information.	2026	New pet ownership guide is available for new registrations and adoptions.
1.4	Investigate the opportunity to develop a 'Pets of Port Phillip' portal and newsletter.	2027	Investigation completed with recommendations about portal and newsletter.
1.5	Investigate opportunities for educational activities by participating at established community events (e.g. annual Pet Fest event).	Ongoing	Work together with community associations and organisations to support and attend 4 events per year.
1.6	Develop an infographic depicting how registration fee income is allocated and make this available to the community via registration notices, online and other Council publications.	2026	Development and roll out of infographic.
1.7	Develop and deliver communication materials to support the 14-month trial implementation of dog waste bags, dispensers and signage at selected locations. Messaging to focus on 'owner onus', and the Local Law requirement to carry a bag to pick up after your dog. Council-supplied dog waste bags will be promoted as a backup, for where a dog walker is caught out.	2026	Delivery of communication materials through multiple channels.

Objective 2 Promote and encourage responsible cat ownership			
2	Activity	When	How we will measure
2.1	Review and update communications and education resources that explain the welfare benefits of cat containment and how it can be achieved.	2026	Resources reviewed and updated.

2.2	Investigate ways Council can support the community to build or buy cat enclosures.	2027	Council to investigate grant opportunities and apply, or support organisations to apply, where appropriate.
2.3	Change cat curfew times to 'sunset to sunrise', in an effort to further reduce predation. Current cat curfew is 9pm to 6am.	2027	Council Order implemented.

Reducing overpopulation and euthanasia

Impoundments occur when pets escape from their properties or are dumped or surrendered by owners. Council's priority is to achieve positive community and animal welfare outcomes and return pets to owners from the field wherever possible, without taking them to the Lost Dogs' Home animal shelter. Council has a contract with the Lost Dogs' Home to collect uncontained dogs and cats and assist them in being returned to their owner or where this is not possible - to be rehomed.

Dog and cat impoundments especially litters of cats have increased since the last DAMP was developed. This is likely a reflection of an increased number of surrendered animals – partially due to unwanted COVID 'pet purchases' in 2020-21 and increased cost of living pressures.

The Lost Dogs' Home's goal is to reunite healthy and treatable animals with their owners or adopt them into new homes. They rehome and reunite the majority of dogs and cats that come into their care. Animals are only euthanised as a last resort. "If the health condition is chronic and pain cannot be alleviated or quality of life is acutely impeded, it is considered humane to relieve an animals' suffering with compassionate euthanasia."²

Impoundments	2016-17	2020-21	2023-24
Dogs impounded	111 (1 surrendered)	69 (3 surrendered)	91 (21 surrendered)
Dogs returned to owner	106 (95.5%)	63 (91.3%)	45
Dogs rehomed	3 (2.7%)	2 (2.9%)	19
Dogs euthanised <i>Dogs being assessed at time of report</i>	2 (1.8%)	4 (5.8%)	18 9
Cats impounded	132 (16 surrendered)	90 (2 surrendered)	134 (34 surrendered)
Cats returned to owner	27 (20.5%)	41 (45.5%)	39
Cats rehoused	28 (21.2%)	28 (31.1%)	55
Cats euthanised <i>Cats being assessed at time of report</i>	77 (58.3%)	26 (28.9%)	36 4

It is Council's aim to reduce the euthanasia rates and overpopulation levels by working with the community to increase the number of desexed, microchipped and registered animals in the municipality, with a particular emphasis on cats.

'The Lost Dogs' Home has introduced the Home Together program, which provides support to pet owners seeking alternatives to surrendering their pet. In partnership with the Lost Dogs' Home, surrendering owners are now offered the opportunity to complete a thorough questionnaire to determine any other options to that their pet is appropriately rehomed.

Council does not register pets that are not microchipped and ensures animals are registered prior to releasing them once impounded. When Council becomes aware of an unregistered cat or dog (through field patrols, owner contact to Council etc), follow up is conducted and assistance provided to ensure the pet gets registered.

² [Lost Dogs Home – Our Goals – Alleviating Suffering](#)

What we currently do

- Council contracts its animal collection and pound services to The Lost Dogs' Home which is open to the public every day (except Christmas Day and Good Friday).
- Online 'lost dog' and 'lost cat' search facility through the Lost Dogs Home.
- Promotion of pets available for adoption through the Lost Dogs Home.
- Partner with Lost Dogs Home 'Home Together' program to provide support to owners to keep their pets and minimise surrenders; and facilitate the rehoming of pets.
- Council-loaned cat trap system to confine and impound nuisance cats.
- Liaise with and report animal welfare / cruelty matters to the RSPCA for action (e.g dog baiting reports).
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the number of animals that can be kept on a property without a permit.
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the responsible breeding of dogs and cats.
- Enforce Council orders governing:
 - Mandatory desexing of newly registered cats.
 - Requirement for all cats to be contained to owners' premises 9pm to 6am.
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests.
- Enforcement actions include notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecutions.

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 3 Increase Council's capacity to improve welfare of domestic animals.			
3	Activity	When	How we will measure
3.1	Continue to partner with the Lost Dogs' Home to support the Home Together program which focuses on helping owners keep their pets and minimise the number of surrenders. The program supports pet owners to explore options to help them keep their pets.	Ongoing	Reduction in surrendered animals.
3.2	Facilitate pet adoption days in partnership with the Lost Dogs' Home to promote rehoming of pets and reduce the number of animals in the shelter.	2026, ongoing quarterly	Quarterly adoption day held.
3.3	Investigate opportunities to reward people who adopt pets from partner shelters.	2027	Investigation completed. Reward opportunities implemented.
3.4	Partner with Pets of the Homeless to help keep vulnerable people and their pets together by alleviating the burden of providing essential pet care during times of hardship.	2026	Partnership implemented.

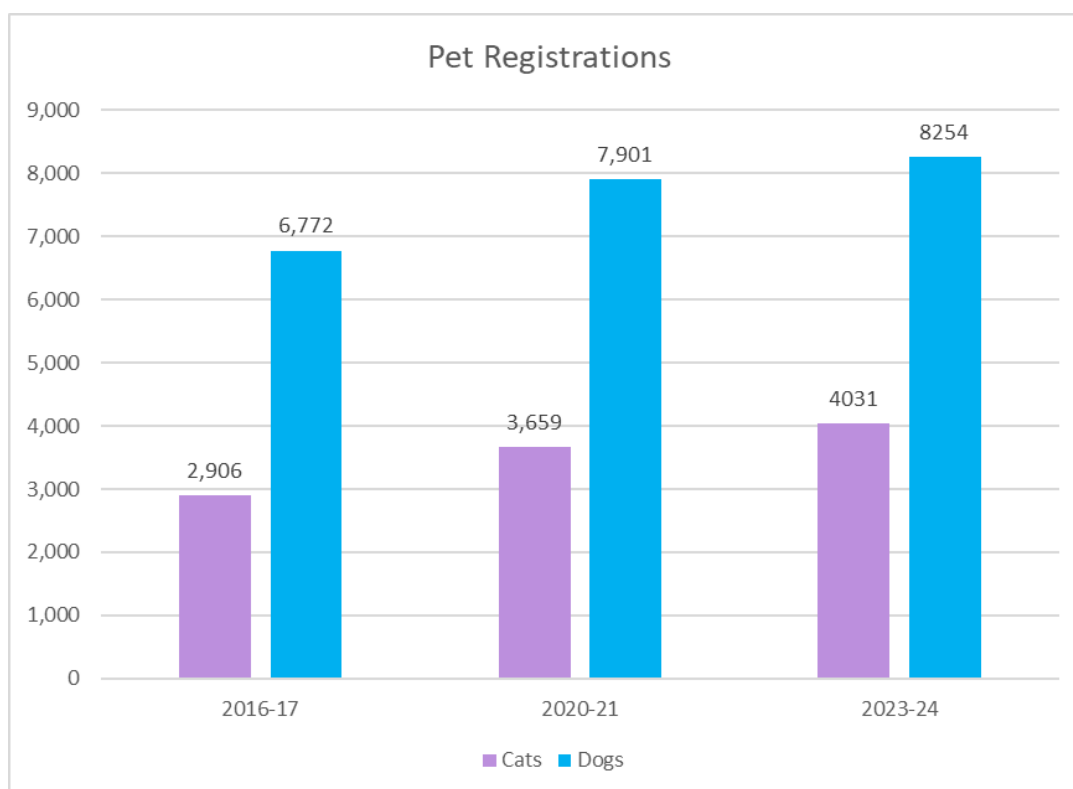
Registration and identification

The registration and identification of dogs and cats is important in demonstrating responsible pet ownership and in caring for the welfare of animals. As well as being a legal requirement, an animal found with current registration and microchip has a much higher chance of being reunited with its owner.

All dogs and cats three months and over must be microchipped and registered with Council. Newly registered cats are also required to be desexed. Registrations must be renewed annually by 10 April.

A portion of all registration fees charged goes toward funding responsible pet ownership programs, education, supporting the safe return of pets to their owners, as well as the provision dog off leash areas. Information on 'what pet registration fees pay for' is available on Council's website and is also included with animal registration renewal notices.

There has been a steady increase in registrations, showing a possible trend towards increased pet ownership. The increase in registrations can also be attributed to increased resident population and the success of previous DAMP activities which focused on increasing pet registrations in the community.



What we currently do

- Annual registration renewal notices and follow up process.
- A free initial registration incentive program for owners who register their pets within 4 weeks of taking ownership.
- Refund for owners who paid full fee but have their dog or cat desexed within the first 6 months of the registration year.

- Free transfer of registration when moving registered animals from other Victorian municipalities.
- Lifetime registration tags.
- Online registration system for both renewals and new registrations.
- Registration packs for all new registrations.
- Periodic cross referencing of Central Animal Records (CAR) microchip database with Council's animal registration database.
- CAR request to register letter sent to all residents who microchip a new pet.
- Council microchipping days.
- Registration door knock activities.
- Registration checks during patrols.
- Animals in the Lost Dogs' Home must be registered prior to release.
- Proactive patrols in the community, where registration is checked and followed up for all interactions officers have with members of the public.
- Partnering with vets to ensure all reunited pets through a vet are reported to Council to ensure they are currently registered.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.

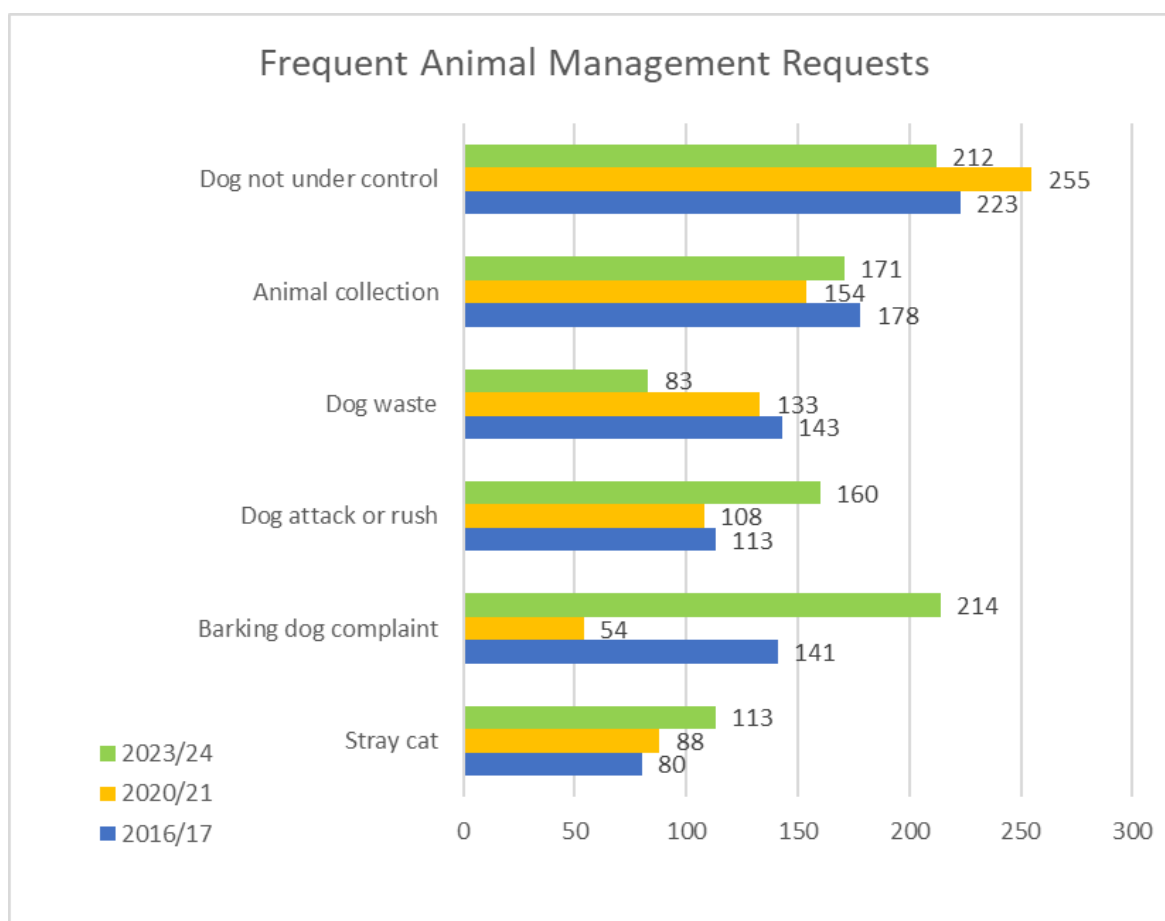
Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 4 Animals are microchipped, desexed, registered and wearing tags.			
4	Activity	When	How we will measure
4.1	Review and simplify pet registration renewal process.	2027	Process efficiencies implemented
4.2	Implement staged pro rata pet registration rates.	2027	Additional staged pro rata pet registration rates Implemented.
4.3	Support discounted vet care to pet owners from low-income households through the Lost Dogs' Home mobile low-cost vet clinic.	2026 and ongoing	Program implemented. Number of pets desexed and receiving veterinary treatment. Customer feedback.
4.4	Work with local providers to develop subsidised or free desexing and microchipping programs.	2026 and ongoing	Concession card holders can access free or subsidised microchipping and desexing.
4.5	Continue microchip audits and audits of animals adopted.	Annual	Audits complete.
4.6	Partner with shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders to promote Council registration and updating of microchip details.	Annual	Shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders contacted.

Nuisance

We hope to encourage people to manage their pets in a way that protects the health and welfare of the animal, maximises the companion benefits of their pet, and minimises potential for nuisance or harm to others.

In 2023-24, Animal Management Officers responded to 3,626 domestic animal requests. The most frequent animal management requests are detailed below.



Barking dogs, dogs not under control and dog attacks are the most prevalent request types and the areas of greatest concern in the community.

Dogs not under control or on lead in areas that are required to be onlead is the other leading request. Although regular and proactive patrols are undertaken, community education and voluntary compliance are critical as only a small portion of public open space areas can be patrolled at a time.

There is an opportunity to increase community awareness and level of comfort with the dog incident reporting process, including assured anonymity.

Our Officers respond to barking dog complaints by working with the dog owner in the first instance to help them identify the root cause of the barking and suggest ways to manage this. We take an educational approach before enforcing as we find dog owners are often willing to resolve the barking issue if they become aware of its impact and are provided tools to manage it. Council has several noise recorders that can be installed, and the recordings professionally assessed to determine the severity of barking dog nuisance and provide workable information to the dog owner.

of where they need to make changes. When the owner is unwilling to work with us, we take enforcement action.

Dog waste that is not cleaned up by the owner is also identified as an issue. Previous suggestions to reduce the problem included the provision of dog waste bags/bins, public education and awareness, and better enforcement by Council. The suggestions to provide dog waste bags in selected locations has been considered during development, including the experiences of neighbouring Councils, and is proposed to be progressed initially as a limited 14-month trial. This is because our research indicates that it does not effectively reduce dog waste in public places, with most waste found in local streets and on nature strips. There are also concerns about the very high costs, generation of litter, theft and vandalism, and the conflict with the principle of responsible pet ownership. Further, it has been tried before in Port Phillip without success and was discontinued.

Supporting communications will continue to focus on 'owner onus', and the Local Law requirement to carry a bag to pick up after your dog. Council-supplied dog waste bags will be promoted as a backup, for where a dog walker is caught out.

Stray cats also continue to be a concern. Domesticated cats are currently required to be confined to owners' premises from 9pm to 6am. Unowned and feral cats will continue to be both a nuisance for the community and a negative environmental impact without adequate management into the future. Council will focus on responsible cat ownership.

What we currently do

- Proactive patrols of parks and foreshore areas. Reactive patrols in focused areas as required.
- Extended patrols during peak / summer periods - with particular focus on foreshore areas.
- Increased patrols and attendance at events.
- Partnership with City Amenity Team to provide additional patrols.
- Partnership with the Lost Dogs' Home to run Dogs in the Park dog training events.
- Signage in parks and foreshore areas detailing dog controls
- Signage in parks and foreshore areas notifying that there's wildlife in the area, and to take care.
- Promotion of 'Safe Cats, Safe Wildlife' campaign increase education and awareness amongst pet owners on the potential impacts their cats and dogs can have upon wildlife.
- Cat traps available for the public to utilise to contain nuisance cats.
- Information provided to reduce nuisance and promote dog friendly spaces:
 - Dog off leash and dog prohibited area maps
 - Pets of Port Phillip flyer
 - Barking dog management guide
 - Dog attack reporting and prevention guide
 - Online resources
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the number of animals that can be kept on a property without a permit.
- Enforce Council orders governing:
 - Mandatory desexing of newly registered cats.

- Requirement for all cats to be contained to owners' premises 9pm to 6am.
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests regarding nuisance associated with dogs and cats.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.

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Objective 5 Provide a consistent approach to management of dogs in public spaces across Port Phillip.			
5	Activity	When	How we will measure
5.1	Continue to support Council's implementation of the Dog Off-Leash Strategic Guideline 2024.	Ongoing	Work together with Open Space Council team to support implementation.
5.2	Continue to partner with local providers to promote dog training events and activities (e.g. Dogs in the Park dog training event with the Lost Dogs' Home).	Ongoing	Facilitate four events annually. Feedback from attendees.
5.3	Trial the installation of dog waste bags, dispensers and signage at selected locations across Port Phillip.	2026 - 2027	Trial implemented. Post trial evaluation and recommendations provided to Council.

Objective 6 Increase patrols, education and enforcement activities.			
6	Activity	When	How we will measure
6.1	Review patrol schedule and activities (i.e. customer requests, registrations etc) to ensure adequate resourcing for patrols, education and enforcement activities during peak periods.	2027	Increase focus on patrols and officer presence in the field.
6.2	Review and improve processes for enforcement regarding animal management including barking dog nuisance, dog attacks, dogs off leash and cat containment.	Annually	Nuisance processes revised and improved.
6.3	Continue to work with apartment buildings to help prevent nuisance by providing registration information / barking / waste / training information to their residents.	Ongoing	Reduced complaint numbers regarding dog nuisance in apartment buildings.
6.4	Review and seek to improve the way Council collects, measures and reports on domestic animal requests (including identification of 'hotspots').	2027	Review completed and any improvements implemented.

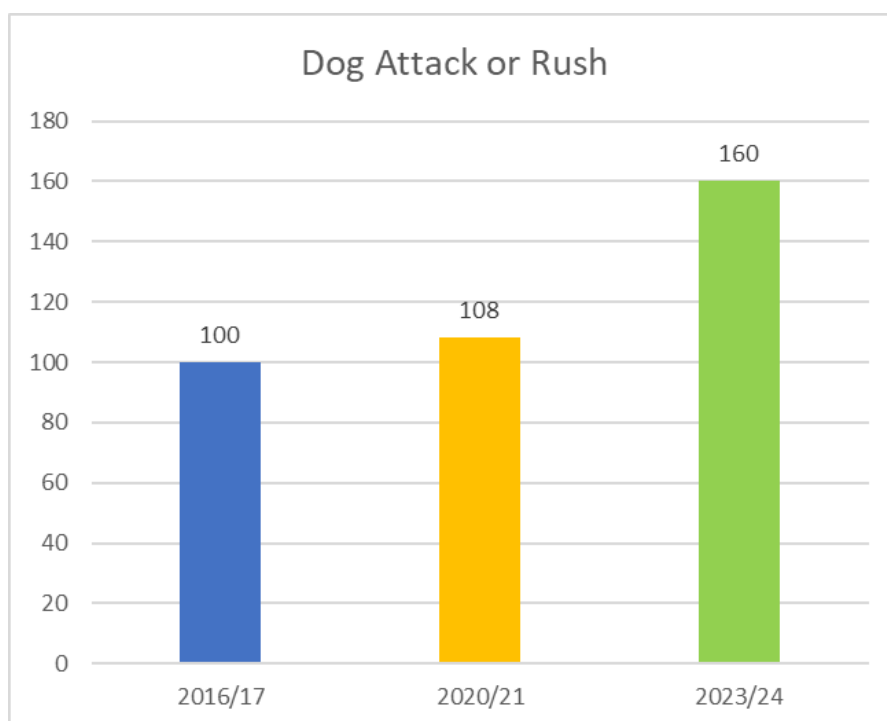
Dog attacks

Context and current situation

Council continuously looks for ways to minimise dog attacks on people and animals. We do this by means of a range of proactive communication initiatives and investigation and enforcement action against offending dog owners.

There has been an increase in reports of dog attacks or rushes³ over the last few years, some of this increase may be due to the ease of reporting through OneCouncil with a dedicated request category.

In 2023/24, Animal Management Officers investigated 160 reports of alleged dog attacks or dog rushes and Council successfully prosecuted 14 serious dog attacks and 5 dog rushes, equating to a 100% prosecution success rate.



Previous community consultation identified that some people witnessed a dog-related incident but had not reported it to Council. We recognise the opportunity to increase community awareness and level of comfort with the incident reporting process, including assured anonymity.

What we currently do

- An immediate 24/7 response to reports of dog attacks.
- Where the threat is not imminent, a response within 24 hours to reports of dangerous dogs,
- Signage in parks and foreshore areas detailing dog controls.
- Proactive patrols of parks and foreshore areas.

³ A dog attack is a bite or injury to a person, whereas a rush is where a dog has approached a person within 3 metres displaying aggressive behaviour (e.g. snarling, growling, barking, raising hackles).

- Dog Attack Reporting and Prevention Guide provides improved access to information on dog regulations and Council's investigation process.
- Information provided to reduce instances of dog aggression and promote dog friendly spaces including dog off leash and dog prohibited area maps.
- Pets of Port Phillip flyer (information on responsible pet ownership requirements in Port Phillip).
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests regarding dog attack, rush or aggression.
- Promote effective containment, effective control and leashing, as these simple measures have a significant impact on reducing the likelihood of a dog attack. Council promotes these aspects of responsible dog ownership through educational programs, online information, community engagement from our officers in the field and educational guides.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution

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Objective 7 Continue to deliver best practice in management of dog attacks.			
7	Activity	When	How we will measure
7.1	Continue to develop and improve processes in the way Council manages, investigates and prosecutes dog attacks to maintain best practice.	Annually	Review completed. Process improvements implemented where required.
7.2	Promote a strong reporting culture in the community regarding dog attacks (e.g. Council's Dog Attack Reporting and Prevention Guide).	2026	Delivery of communications and education materials through multiple channels (also see action 1.1).
7.3	Provide a reporting structure for vets (i.e. dog attack form) to encourage reporting.	2026	Reporting structure for vets developed and communicated.
7.4	Assess dogs involved in attacks to determine if a menacing or dangerous dog declaration is warranted.	Ongoing	Assessments undertaken and documented.

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

Council seeks to minimise the risk to the community by administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act to identify and control dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

In 2024, Port Phillip has 4 declared dogs:

- Two declared as dangerous dogs;
- Two declared as menacing dogs; and
- Zero restricted breed dogs.

Our pet registration forms require owners to declare if their dog is a restricted breed, has been declared menacing or is a dangerous dog.

What we currently do

- Record all declared dogs on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry and conduct annual audits of properties and leasing and housing requirements.
- Conduct investigations in response to reports of declared dogs.
- Conduct Central Animal Records microchip audits to identify potential restricted breed dogs.
- Fact sheets on website and available at Council offices.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.

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Objective 8 Declared dogs in Port Phillip will be identified and appropriately managed.			
8	Activity	When	How we will measure
8.1	Conduct declared dog property inspections, ensuring compliance with the Act (e.g. security of fencing, animal housing and signage)	Annually	All declared dog property inspections undertaken annually
8.2	Continue to identify and declare dogs dangerous and menacing where required.	Ongoing	Dogs who are involved in non-compliance are declared.

Objective 9 Review Council procedures in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.			
9	Activity	When	How we will measure
9.1	Review Council procedures in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.	Annually	Review completed. Process improvements implemented where required.
9.2	Review declaration process and linkage to Court outcomes to improve efficiencies and outcomes.	2026	Review completed. Process improvements implemented where required.

Domestic animal businesses

Council works in partnership with Domestic Animal Businesses to make sure businesses are registered and complying with relevant regulations.

Port Phillip has nine registered Domestic Animal Businesses:

- Four boarding establishments / day care;
- Four dog training establishments.
- One pet shop (sells pet accessories only); and

Animal Management Officers inspect these facilities annually to ensure compliance with the relevant Code of Practice under the Act, prior to registration renewal.

Council has the ability to issue notices to comply, warnings, infringements, or to prosecute businesses that fail to comply with work plans and the relevant Code of Practice.

We actively seek to identify, investigate and prosecute any illegal Domestic Animal Businesses operating in Port Phillip.

What we currently do

- Fact sheets on website and available at Council offices.
- Provide all Domestic Animal Businesses with relevant Code of Practice.
- Conduct annual property inspections of registered Domestic Animal Businesses for compliance with legislation.
- Conduct investigations in response to complaints to ensure compliance.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.
- Actively seek and identify illegal domestic animal businesses and prosecute where appropriate.

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Objective 10 Domestic animal businesses in Port Phillip will be identified and registered.			
10	Activity	When	How we will measure
10.1	Monitor for businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses by reviewing advertisements, social media, local notice boards, etc and ensure they are compliant with legislation.	Annually	Annual monitoring completed.

Objective 11 Registered businesses are compliant with current legislation and relevant code of practice.			
11	Activity	When	How we will measure
11.1	Audit Domestic Animal Businesses in Port Phillip for compliance.	Annually	Annual audits completed.

Objective 12 Reduce community safety risks associated with walking multiple dogs at a time.			
12	Activity	When	How we will measure
12.1	Reduce the number of dogs that can be walked without a permit (cost of permit is free), with a permit up to six dogs can be walked - to support dog walkers being able to have effective control of their animals in public places and improve community safety outcomes. *	2027	Council Order implemented.

* Note: Alongside the regulatory changes, permit conditions will be amended to ensure the permit requirement supports the continued operation of commercial dog walking businesses. Permit conditions will be based around Council having records of commercial dog walking businesses, ensuring basic regulation of their business activity to manage community safety and animal welfare outcomes and providing clarity to commercial dog walkers through clearer wording. A step by step guide and 'concierge' program will be put in place to support these businesses through the permit process to ensure their business is supported by the permit requirement.

Training of authorised officers

Council's Animal Management Team are part of the Safety and Amenity department. The Team regularly works with key partners and stakeholders including Victoria Police and aim to build relationships with these partners and the community by providing advice, support and regulatory services.

Council employs four Animal Management Officers, who during 2023-24 responded to 3,626 requests. Animal Management services are provided 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. An emergency 24/7 after-hours telephone service operates via the Council's main telephone number. On-call rostered Animal Management Officers responds to urgent requests. Council's Summer Amenity program provides seasonal support and a presence in our parks and foreshore areas of an evening during Summer.

What we currently do

Animal Management Officers are required to have a Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation or equally appropriate and applicable qualifications and experience.

New staff are required to complete specific training including a Council induction on policies and standard operating safety procedures and introduction to Council's Animal Management procedures and programs. Regular team training and refresher courses and ongoing on the job training and coaching is provided.

Staff are encouraged to represent Port Phillip on industry bodies and committees where appropriate. Internal procedures and processes are regularly reviewed and updated.

The Team maintains a training register, detailing all the qualifications and training courses completed by each team member. Performance reviews and professional development plans are also undertaken annually. Team members currently receive on average 29 hours of animal management training per year.

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 13 Ensure that Animal Management Officers have the knowledge and skills to administer their role.			
13	Activity	When	How we will measure
13.1	Support Animal Management Officers to further develop their skills as part of the annual performance development process. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal handling Animal behaviour Restricted breed identification Customer interactions 	Ongoing	Training incorporated into individual employee plans.
13.2	Partner with the Lost Dogs' Home to provide training support and real-life animal handling experience.	2026 and ongoing	Training partnership implemented.
13.3	Animal Management Officer attendance at conferences, industry training and networking.	Ongoing	Attendance / participation at major conferences and training.
13.4	Continue to review and update Animal Management processes.	Annually	Processes reviewed and updated.

Other matters

Actions in this section address The Act by providing for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in Port Phillip

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 14 Seek funding opportunities to support domestic animal management programs.			
14	Activity	When	How we will measure
14.1	Investigate opportunities for external funding towards the development of domestic animal management programs.	Ongoing	Grant opportunities identified and, where appropriate, applications submitted.

Objective 15 Leverage new technology to continuously improve council services.			
15	Activity	When	How we will measure
15.1	Investigate and incorporate new technologies to provide improvements in Council's Domestic Animal Management services and communications materials.	Ongoing	Review undertaken and new technologies implemented if appropriate.

Review and evaluation

Section 68A(3) of The Act requires that every Council must:

- a) review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the Plan;
- b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the Plan and any amendments to the plan; and
- c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the Plan in its annual report.

Performance monitoring and evaluation process

Council will monitor performance of the objectives that are detailed throughout the DAMP by reporting annually through Council's established reporting systems, in accordance with the requirements of The Act and the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework.

A new DAMP will be completed on or before 30 October 2029.



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