



8.3	DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017-2021
WARD:	WHOLE OF MUNICIPALITY
GENERAL MANAGER:	FIONA BLAIR, INFRASTRUCTURE & AMENITY
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TRIM FILE NO:	04/01/62
ATTACHMENTS:	1. DAMP 2017-21 Consultation Summary 2. Final Draft DAMP 2017 - 2021

PURPOSE

To present the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021 (DAMP, Attachment 2) to Councillors for adoption after an extensive period of community consultation and engagement.

I. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 1.1 Endorses the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-21 to meet State Government legislative requirements, prescribed in Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.
- 1.2 Writes to submitters to thank them for their feedback, and assisting Council to develop actions that will balance the needs of pet owners and non-pet owners.
- 1.3 Makes the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021 available on Council's website, Town Halls and Libraries.
- 1.4 Authorises the Chief Executive Officer or his delegate to make final design or minor editorial changes prior to publication.
- 1.5 Provides the Secretary of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources with a copy of the endorsed Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Pets in Port Phillip

A total of 9,678 dogs and cats are registered with the City of Port Phillip. The percentage of pets registered has increased by 14 per cent since 2008 and a further 8 per cent since 2012. This increase can be attributed to increased dog registrations (+30 per cent) as the number of cat registrations has declined (-10 per cent).



2.2 Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021

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; and
- identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs and ensure they are kept in accordance with The Act.

Outcomes of Council's DAMP 2012-2016 include the following:

- increased foreshore patrols along all beaches during the summer months and engaging with over 500 dog owners promoting compliance with provisions of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*;
- improved overall pet registration campaigns and programs, resulting in 9% more pets registered over the past four years;
- introduction of a seamless on-line pet registration processes to make it easier to register pets; and
- targeted education programs in hotspot areas throughout our City, which resulted in positive behaviour change for non-compliant dog owners and improved their understanding of their obligations under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

3. KEY INFORMATION

The draft DAMP was developed in consultation with Council's Animal Management Team, 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.

Two rounds of external consultation with the community and stakeholders was undertaken primarily through online surveys on Council's Have Your Say web page.

- Round 1 – the survey provided qualitative and quantitative data to inform development of the strategies and priorities in the proposed Plan.
- Round 2 – the community and external stakeholders were encouraged to view the draft Plan and provide feedback, including suggestions for anything else that they would like to see in the Plan.

Key external stakeholders were contacted directly by email and invited to participate in the consultation processes.

1818 responses were received to the initial online survey, 74% owned a dog, 29% owned a cat and 7% did not own a dog or cat.

A further 85 people provided feedback on the draft Plan. Outcomes of the feedback was used to inform refinement of strategies outlined in the draft DAMP.

OUTCOMES

Feedback from the community indicates that the top six pet related issues of highest concern are:



- Dog poo not being picked up;
- Dogs off leash when they should be on leash;
- Dogs in off leash areas who won't obey their owners' commands;
- Dogs annoying or intimidating other dogs;
- Unclear signage about dog restrictions in parks; and
- Dogs annoying other people in parks or on the beach.

A summary of consultation findings is included in Attachment I to this Council report.

3.1 Key actions included in the Draft DAMP 2017-2021 presented to Council for Adoption, include:

The community feedback obtained during the two consultation periods, received by Council along with the feedback from the internal stakeholders has been considered and used to develop actions included in the final draft DAMP 2017-2021 (Attachment I). The draft DAMP has been developed in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR).

Key actions included in the draft DAMP 2017-2021 include:

3.1.1 Pet Registration

- Develop strategies to provide new residents (particularly those in apartment developments) with animal registration and responsible pet ownership information.
- Develop a pet registration kit for use by vets, domestic animal businesses, body corporate associations, real estate agents and the public housing sector.
- Develop information resources for body corporate associations and developers to provide guidance regarding dealing with nuisance animal issues.
- Develop a strategy to support increasing greyhound ownership.
- Continue to implement programs that make it easier for residents to register their pets.
- Undertake activities to better identify registration non-compliance.

3.1.2 Minimising Nuisance Behaviours and Dog Waste

- Educate the community about the environmental impacts of dog poo.
- Investigate the feasibility of implementing separate dog waste bins in Council parks and reserves, including composting capability.
- Utilise the Summer Amenity Program as an opportunity to provide education and advice regarding dog on / off leash requirements, identify unregistered pets and enforce compliance with regulations.
- Partner with domestic animal businesses to promote the benefits of dog training initiatives to the community.



- Continue partnership with Australia Post to report dog issues.
- Develop a new education resource for new pet owners to increase their understanding of responsible pet ownership, dog barking and dog walking opportunities within the municipality.
- Review Council's Local Laws, Orders and Processes. This may include:
 - Review multiple pet permit conditions and processes.
 - Review barking dog protocols and processes.
- Assist pet owners to reunite with their pets by using Council's website, social media and the Lost Dogs Home's website.

3.1.3 Dogs on Beaches and Reserves

- Explore options to provide dog off leash areas along the beaches from 5.30-9.30 am where it is currently prohibited including Sandridge Beach (Sandridge), Middle Park Beach (Middle Park), New Beach (Beacon Cove), West Beach (St Kilda), Port Melbourne Beach (Port Melbourne), St Kilda Beach (St Kilda), South Melbourne Beach (South Melbourne), Elwood Beach (Elwood).
- Explore the option to provide consistent zones from 1 November to 31 March at the South Melbourne and Middle Park Beaches.
- Explore options to extend the dog off leash area from the rock groyne south of Point Ormond to the rock groyne at Elwood Sailing Club, to avoid confusion for dog owners.

Any changes to dog off leash areas along the foreshore will require extensive community consultation with local residents.

- Investigate fencing on Council owned and managed reserves as part of Council's Public Space Strategy.
- Partner with Council's Recreation teams to explore the enhancement of effective responsible pet ownership features at parks and beach areas, including environmentally friendly options for dog waste disposal.
- Explore the opportunity to provide a dog off leash area in Fisherman's Bend.
- Investigate the development and introduction of an interactive 'app' for dog on and off leash areas in the municipality.

3.1.4 Cats and minimising risks of euthanasia

- Utilise the 'Who's for Cats' Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resource (DEDJTR) campaign to raise community awareness about feral / semi-owned cat population, and expand our cat cage program.
- Promote the benefits of adopting animals to the community.
- Provide education on managing feral cats.
- Improve rates of lost cats being reunited with their owners.



3.1.5 Continuous improvement

- Foster relationships with other Councils and government departments to share ideas, data and information and identify partnership opportunities.
- Support Animal Management Officers to further develop their suite of skills, and undertake detailed workforce planning to ensure effective animal management resourcing into the future.
- Review the media and communication plan to ensure its effectiveness and continue to include key messages for the community on animal management issues. Include development of a pet e-newsletter.

3.1.6 Fences in parks

At this stage, additional fences are not proposed to be introduced to separate dog off leash areas from other mixed use areas (eg. off leash / sports fields / playgrounds etc). Council's Open Space Strategy is scheduled for review and will consider fences in open space.

Fencing in parks is used to segregate areas where required however enclosed fences with gates is not recommended as it can encourage reduced supervision of dogs and may further restrict mixed use of parks.

Gates were removed at Alma Park East Oval approximately 12 months ago as dog owners were not supervising their dogs and/or leaving their dogs unsupervised in the enclosed area. This enclosed space is also used by school children.

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.

In accordance with Council Order No. 3, dogs need to be under effective control whether on lead or off lead, and owners who can't maintain effective control should keep their dogs on a lead. Patrols and education by Animal Management Officers will continue to be provided to encourage responsible pet ownership in parks.

3.1.7 Dog Poo Bags

Dog poo bags are not provided in parks within the municipality. Council ceased the provision of dog poo bags in local parks and along the foreshore approximately nine years ago due to bags costs and inappropriate use. Bags were strewn in the open space, entered stormwater drains and waterways, and Animal Management Officers observed that there was little reduction in dog poo in off leash areas when bags were available.

Plastic bag use can have a detrimental impact on the environment. The Environment Protection Amendment (Banning Plastic Bags, Packaging and Microbeads) Bill 2016 seeking to restrict the supply and sale of plastic bags and plastic and polystyrene packaging, and therefore prohibit the supply and sale of plastic microbeads is being considered by the State government.

Rather than reintroduce plastic bags for dog poo collection in Council's dog off leash areas, an alternative action has been added to the draft DAMP, to investigate the feasibility of implementing separate dog waste bins in Council parks and reserves, inclusive of composting capability.



FURTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

4.1 Strategic Direction 4 – We are growing and keeping our character

- The draft DAMP 2017-2021 is identified as a key plan in Council's Plan 2017-27, aligns with performance targets included in the Plan and will enable Council to improve Animal Management Services and ultimately outcomes for the community.
- The draft DAMP 2017 – 2021 embraces the need of both pet owners and non-pet owners to achieve a harmonious relationship of people and pets sharing open space throughout the municipality.
- The draft DAMP 2017 – 2021 is designed to explore opportunities to optimise the levels of cat and dog registrations throughout the municipality, promote responsible pet ownership, welfare and maintain the safety and health of the community.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

The draft DAMP was developed in consultation with Council's Animal Management Team, informed by community and stakeholder consultation and research and benchmarking activities. To develop a Plan that best meets community needs, feedback was sought from key stakeholders such as pet owners, animal welfare agencies, veterinarians, dog obedience groups, sporting groups and the wider community.

The consultation to develop the Plan included:

- 5.1 A survey was posted on Council's Have Your Say website from 17 July 2017 to 7 August 2017. A separate survey was sent to professional organisations providing services to pet owners and other key stakeholders. Animal Management Officers also promoted the survey whilst conducting their patrols.

Council received 1,818 responses during the community consultation which means the results of the survey are statistically significant. Based on the City of Port Phillip's population of 100,863 (ABS, 2016) a minimum of approximately 400 responses was required.

- 5.2 A draft DAMP 2017-2021 was developed and further consultation on this document was conducted. A questionnaire was developed and made available via Council's online survey tool, Have Your Say, from 25 September to 9 October 2017. The community was asked if they would like to see anything else in the Plan, or if they would like to make further comments or suggestions.

Eighty five people provided their feedback on the Draft DAMP, including 81 via Have Your Say and one uploaded submission and three email submissions. Comments provided by the community have been individually categorised into comment themes. This has been undertaken to enable Council to more easily analyse the verbatim comments provided by the community.

- 5.3 The community's feedback was used to refine actions included in the draft DAMP 2017-2021 presented with this report.



- 5.4 Advertisements were published in The Leader Newspaper and on Council's social media pages; signs were displayed in local parks and along the foreshore and correspondence was sent to owners of registered dogs and cats.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 All local government authorities are required to develop a DAMP, section 68A Domestic Animals Act 1994.
- 6.2 This DAMP 2017-2021 complies with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.
- 6.3 All dogs and cats must be registered at the Council in which they reside.

7. SUSTAINABILITY – Triple Bottom Line

7.1 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1.1 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.

7.2 SOCIAL & CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.2.1 Pet owners look to Council for guidance and support to assist them by providing safe, well maintained open spaces for their animals to exercise, play and be trained.
- 7.2.2 The community expectation is that Council maintains registration systems for cats and dogs, community education, collection of lost pets whilst balancing the needs of the whole community.
- 7.2.3 Animal Management Services is committed to providing high quality, responsive and effective services to meet the community's needs.
- 7.2.4 The proposed clauses will have positive social benefits for the community as they balance the needs of both pet owners and non-pet owners.

7.3 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

- 7.3.1 The DAMP is directly referenced in the City Of Port Phillip Council Plan and provides a sound basis and direction from which Council can plan and make future decisions over the next four years, and relates back to the wider Council policy context.

7.4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.4.1 Council's Animal Management Services are funded in the approved Council 2017-2018 budget.
- 7.4.2 The actions identified in the draft DAMP can largely be funded in the operational budget. Additional resources may be required in subsequent financial years for implementation of digital solutions, updating resources or signs, conducting further consultation for dog off leash reviews along the foreshore or implementing an innovative solution to address dog poo waste.



8. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

8.1 TIMELINE

8.1.1 The actions and activities included in the endorsed DAMP will be completed from 2017-2021.

8.1.2 Key internal and external stakeholders will be provided with information on the DAMP.

8.2 COMMUNICATION

8.2.1 A copy of the endorsed 2017-21 will be available at Council's Town Halls, Libraries and website.

8.2.2 Submitters, where details are known, have been provided with updates regarding the draft DAMP and the date the Plan will be presented to Council for adoption.

9. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

9.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.