



Draft
Domestic Animal Management Plan
2022-2025



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GLOSSARY OF TERMS			
Term	Definition for the purpose of this document	Term	Definition for the purpose of this document
AIAM	Australian Institute of Animal Management	DAMP Survey	Stonnington DAMP Survey, 2021
AMO	Animal Management Officer	LGA	Local Government Area
Authorised Officer	Person authorised by Council under section 224 of the Local Government Act 1989 to administer /enforce legislation	Public place	Includes all streets, roads, footways, reserves, lanes, parks, schools, public halls etc.
AVA	Australian Veterinary Association	Local Laws	Legislation/laws made by Council pursuant to the VLGA
DAA	Victorian Domestic Animals Act, 1994	Orders in Council	Legislation/laws made by Council pursuant to the DAA
CoS	City of Stonnington	RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
DAMP	Domestic Animal Management Plan	VLGA	Victorian Local Government Act 2020
Designated off-lead area	Areas where dogs can be exercised off-lead		

Our Service Objective

A community that recognises the importance of pets and treats them humanely; and where pets live in harmony with people, other animals and the environment.

Council Aims

The principles that will guide the delivery of Animal Management Services:

- We strive for professionalism that is underpinned by:
 - a legal responsibility to ensure residents and Council comply with State Government legislation and Council policy relating to pets
 - a passion for the wellbeing of animals
 - a need to balance the needs of pet owners and non-pet owners
 - a desire to work with the community to explore new initiatives that optimise outcomes for people and pets.
- We aim to be approachable, fair and helpful
- We will provide a service that is based on industry good practice and substantiated social and scientific research
- We recognise the need for our service to consider opportunities to engender inclusion and respect
- We appreciate:
 - that pets are an important part of many households and many residents attribute health and wellbeing benefits to their pets
 - that pet owners have a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of their pets and to ensure they do not impact adversely on other people, other pets and the environment in which they live and interact
 - that some people do not want to interact with animals in private or public places and this is to be respected.
- We recognise that some of the issues we need to address and find resolution on are often challenging and need the good will of the community to address and resolve.

1. Background information

1.1 About the Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan)

The Plan establishes a policy and planning framework that will guide the delivery of Animal Management Services for the next four years. It identifies matters that currently impact the service and those that are likely to emerge over the life of the plan.

The Plan addresses specific matters relating to the management of cats and dogs as required by the *Domestic Animals Act (DAA)*¹. These include requirements to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of the service and associated programs
- review local laws and orders
- ensure residents and Council comply with the DAA, particularly in relation to:
 - the identification and registration of cats and dogs
 - the training of staff
- minimise risk and nuisance associated with:
 - dogs, including dog attacks, barking dogs, wandering dogs, dogs defecating in public spaces, and dogs that are declared as 'menacing' or 'dangerous'
 - cats, including cats trespassing
- address euthanasia rates for cats and dogs
- plan for the care of pets in times of disaster/emergency.

The Consolidated Action Plan (section 9) includes:

- the stakeholders who should be involved in the implementation of the Action
- the departments that should take the lead in addressing the Action
- resourcing requirements.

1.2 How the Plan Aligns with Other Strategic Planning and Policy Documents

Council worked with the community to prepare the Community Vision 2040 (Community Vision) and Council Plan 2021-25 (Council Plan) which together form a single document – Future Stonnington.

The Community Vision articulates the community's aspirations for the future of the city and comprises an overarching vision statement and six supporting principles. The Council Plan outlines how Council aims to achieve the Community Vision over the next four years.

Future Stonnington will guide the development of service plans and policies including the Plan. In particular, the Plan will contribute to achieving safe, inviting and well-maintained neighbourhoods (Objective 1.3), creating public spaces for everyone (Objectives 2.2 and 2.3) and ensuring Council meets its regulatory obligations and provides services aligned to community needs (Objective 3.4).

Relevant research, findings and recommendations from other Council service planning documents have been incorporated into the Plan where relevant, including information from Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan, Open Space and Positive Ageing Strategies.

Council recognises that there are opportunities to build on the health and wellbeing and social capital benefits afforded through pets and pet ownership. This will be achieved through a well-integrated service planning process that understands opportunities associated with these benefits.

The Plan particularly emphasises the need to explore and develop expanded relationships with the following service areas in order to address issues and opportunities in common:

- Community Services
- Customer Operations
- Social and Community Planning

Examples of documents reviewed for the Plan:

- *Local Government Act, Vic, 2020*
- *Domestic Animals Act, Vic, 1994*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Gender Equality Act, Vic, 2020*
- Future Stonnington (Community Vision 2040 and Council Plan 2021-25)
- Stonnington Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, 2017-2021
- Public Realm Strategy 2010 (Under Review)
- Stonnington Positive Ageing Strategy, 2018-21

¹ *Domestic Animals Act*, Section 68A, Victorian State Government.

- Environment and Open Spaces
- Recreation Services

2. What Did We Achieve from the 2017-2021 Domestic Animal Management Plan?

The highlights from the 2017-2021 Plan and service achievement from the last 4 years include:

- Restructure of the Animal Management Unit and appointment of an additional Animal Management Officer (AMO)
- Purchase of electric caddy van to assist with community education and compliance initiatives
- Reduced initial registration fee for dogs and cats purchased from an animal welfare organisation
- Full review of the Local Law and associated Keeping of Animals Policy
- Enhancement of online facilities/eServices including a registration and payment portal
- Introduction of mobile apps and equipment that allow AMOs to:
 - work from the field
 - record park patrols
 - check animal registration details
 - access and monitor customer requests and complaints.

3. What is the Focus of the 2022-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan?

The Plan will ensure that Council complies with its obligations in line with the DAA with a particular focus on matters relating to:

- service effectiveness, including the training of staff; reviewing of policies, procedures and local laws and orders
- encouraging responsible pet ownership attitudes and behaviours
- increasing rates of pet registration
- ensuring people who own or care for pets, and animal related businesses comply with their obligations
- minimising risk and nuisance associated with pets
- initiatives to reduce abandonment of pets and euthanasia rates of pets, particularly in relation to cats.

This Plan recognises the broader community and personal context relating to pets and the matters that need to be better understood and addressed. As a result, this Plan will also consider issues and opportunities associated with:

- provision for dogs on and off-leash
- pet ownership in medium-high density living environments
- opportunities to partner with community groups to optimise community strengthening outcomes relating to pets
- support to vulnerable pet owning families.

4. What Research Says About Pets

The DAMP Survey clearly demonstrates how significant Stonnington pets are to their owners. Written responses also emphasise the importance of pets in terms of companionship, unconditional affection, connection with community, and for people living on their own or dealing with mental health challenges.

An overwhelming number of respondents referred to the importance of their pets during COVID/COVID lockdown and reinforced that 'pets are family'. 64% of survey respondents said they choose their recreation activities based on being able to take their pets with them.

According to Animal Medicines Australia (AMA)² 61% of households are likely to own a pet/s with, on average 40% of households owning at least one dog and 27% owning at least one cat. AMA reports that cat and dog ownership remained consistent between 2016 and 2019. This compares with an increase in the average number of fish, birds and small mammals per household and a decrease in the average number of reptiles.

Pet owners in Australia are more likely to be:

- families with children (80%) rather than empty nesters (45%)
- 18-24 and 40-54 year olds (68%) rather than 70+ year olds (59%)
- people living in free standing households (69%) rather than in apartments (61%)
- people in rural communities (70%) rather than those living in urban environments (46%)
- women (64%) rather than men (42%)³

There is significant research that indicates that pet owners experience greater health and wellbeing benefits than non-pet owners, including⁴:

- greater physical health and fitness
- a greater sense of happiness and higher self-esteem
- lower levels of loneliness, anxiety, fearfulness and blood pressure
- greater resilience when dealing with negative life events and closeness to other people.⁵

A joint USA and Australian project concluded that pets are an under-recognised conduit for building social capital. The project also highlights that benefits are not restricted to dog owners and walkers but also to other types of pets/pet ownership.⁶

Responses	%
Pets are an important part of my family	99
It is important for me to have a pet in my life	96
My pets give me great comfort in times of need	93
My pet is important because they give me unconditional affection	90
Pets give me a strong reason for living	74
My pet is important because they give me peace of mind	65
* % of DAMP survey respondents selecting 'Agree'+'Strongly Agree'	

Type of pet	Household penetration (%)	Total owner H'holds (000)	Animals per H'hold (av)	Total Animals (000)
Dogs	39.9	3,848.2	1.3	5,104.7
Cats	27.0	2,602.4	1.4	3,766.6
Fish	11.0	1,056.8	10.7	11,331.7
Birds	9.0	867.9	6.4	5,569.4
Small mammals	2.7	257.8	2.4	614.5
Reptiles	2.0	194.5	1.9	364.2
Other pets	2.0	194.8	9.2	1,785.3
Total Pet Owners	61.0	5.9 m		28.5 m
Total Non-pet Owners	38.9	3.7 m		

Ref: Pets in Australia; A National Survey of Pets and People

² Pets in Australia; A National Survey of Pets and People, p6

³ Pets in Australia; A National Survey of Pets and People, p6

⁴ Pets, touch, and COVID-19: health benefits from non-human touch through times of stress; Journal of Behavioural Economics for Policy, Vol. 4, COVID-19 Special Issue 2, 25-33, 2020

⁵ We Are Family: Viewing Pets as Family Members Improves Wellbeing July 2019; Anthrozoos A Multidisciplinary Journal of The Interactions of People & Animals 32(4):459-470

⁶ Social Capital and Pet Ownership – A Tale of Four Cities; L. Wood, K. Martin et al, SSM - Population Health, Vol. 3, Dec 2017, Pages 442-447

The impact of pets on the economy is demonstrated by the increase in Australian's spend on their pets. In the 6 years between 2013 to 2019 pet owners increased their spend by 5 billion dollars or 62%. Research demonstrates that despite the economic downturns associated with the Global Financial Crisis and the COVID pandemic the pet economy has remained extremely resilient.^{7 8}

Since 2016 the increase in spend relates primarily to vet services and pet insurance. The decrease in spend on pet food is attributed to the increase in online purchasing and associated price competitiveness.

5. Animal Management Services in Stonnington

5.1 Overview

Animal Management Services is part of the Liveability and Compliance Department and the Planning and Place Directorate.

The Animal Management Team is comprised of a small number of staff authorised to respond to animal management issues in line with the *Domestic Animals Act*⁹. This includes:

- Management of service planning and compliance adherence
- Field staff (AMOs) who primarily work out within the community responding to customer service requests; patrolling public spaces; ensuring compliance with legislation and Council policy; incidental community education; and service administration
- Administrative support to the service

The Save-A-Dog Scheme (SADS) provides Stonnington's pound services and operates out of a Council owned facility in Glen Iris. SADS also provides a rehoming service for unclaimed pets from the Glen Iris facility and through their other facility in Yarrambat.

5.2 'Local Laws' and 'Orders'

The *Domestic Animals Act* (DAA) permits Council to put in place animal management regulations¹⁰ to ensure the peaceful co-existence of animals with the rest of the community. The following is a summary of these requirements:

Part 15 of the Stonnington General Local Law specifies:

- the number of cats and dogs that can reside at any one residence
- that animals must not pose a nuisance
- that people walking dogs must carry a device for the collection of dog litter and responsibly dispose of the litter
- that property fencing must be adequate to contain dogs.

Animal	Houses	Units, Townhouses, Apartments, Flats
Cats	2	2
Cats under 3 months	12	2
Dogs	2	1
Dogs under 3 months	12	1

The Council Order adopted by Council in 2019 ('Orders' pursuant to section 26 of the *Domestic Animals Act*:

- identifies 29 designated areas where dogs are permitted to be off the leash
- requires that dogs be on a leash of no more than 3-metres in length when in a public place other than 'designated' off-leash areas
- permits dogs to be off the leash in 'designated' off-leash areas
- Prohibits dogs from:
 - sports grounds during sports club and school training as well as match times
 - children's playground areas.
- Requires dogs to be 'under effective control' when off the leash, that is they:
 - must not threaten, worry or injure people, other animals or property
 - must respond to owner's voice or hand control and remain in constant sight of their owner
 - must not dig, or disturb grassed areas

⁷ www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/republicans/2016/7/the-secret-economic-life-of-pets

⁸ www.euromonitor.com/pet-care-in-australia/report

⁹ Designated as 'Authorised Officers' in the *Domestic Animals Act*, sections 71/72

¹⁰ Known as 'local laws' and 'orders' in Council

- be prevented from damaging Council assets.

6. Priorities for the Plan

This section provides an overview of the findings from consultation and research carried out for the Plan and incorporates findings from other Council planning projects. It also provides a summary of new initiatives that will be addressed over the term of the Plan.

6.1 Service Management and Training of 'Authorised Officers'

6.1.1 Service Objectives

- A well-integrated and efficient Animal Management Service that has the capacity to address community needs
- An organisation:
 - that is well-versed with the changing complexities relating to pets in the community
 - that employs strategies to address issues on scientifically based research and methodology
 - that balances the needs of pet owners and the needs of other people.

6.1.2 Background Information

The DAMP Survey indicates that Council Animal Management Service staff are well-regarded and 96% of respondents say the annual Pets in the Park expo is a "great event". Similarly, survey and written responses show a high regard for staff at SADS and the organisation overall¹¹.

The next 4 years will be critical for the service in terms of responding to a growing population, changing community expectations of the service, and addressing emerging issues that require greater integration between Animal Management Services and other Council service areas.

The Animal Management Team has a primary compliance role and is currently resourced on this basis. However, Council recognises the changing community expectations for the service and the need to develop different, targeted and community-led strategies to address a number of service priorities. AMOs have expressed a strong desire to change perceptions around their role and to introduce initiatives that allow them to engage with the community other than through compliance related matters.

The Plan has highlighted opportunities for greater integration of the service with other Council service areas, particularly in relation to pets and safety in the home; community education initiatives; planning of off-leash areas; support of vulnerable pet owners; and providing for pet owners in medium-density residential environments.

Written feedback from the benchmarking exercise and information from other DAMP research¹² indicates that LGAs are experiencing heavy workloads, and increasing community expectations of animal management services particularly in relation to:

- patrols and enforcement of owners who do not control their dogs in line with requirements/poor dog behaviour in off-leash areas
- conflict between dog off-leash activities and other open space activities
- compliance with registration requirements/large numbers of unregistered pets
- dog litter
- pets in apartments
- animal welfare e.g., euthanasia rates of cats and the need for proactive management of stray cat populations.

A key focus for the team over the next 4 years will be on documenting, reviewing and refining service procedures and systems.

Appendix 3 lists the qualifications of staff and their ongoing training and education schedule.

DAMP Survey respondents say:

- Council Animal Management staff are helpful and courteous (89%)
- staff care about the welfare of animals (89%)
- Council understands and recognises the importance and value of pets (87%)
- Staff at the pound are helpful and courteous (90%)

Ref: Stonnington DAMP Survey, 2021

¹¹ As a percentage of respondents who offered an opinion, i.e. did not select 'I don't know'

¹² Research by LMH Consulting 2018, 2021

6.1.3 Actions to Address Emerging priorities

	Actions - Service Management and Training of 'Authorised Officers'	Year of Plan
1.	Review Animal Management Services resourcing requirements to reflect the demands on the service, particularly in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ systems and administrative requirements ▪ the actual number of cats and dogs estimated to reside in the municipality ▪ compliance and associated community development initiatives associated with pets in apartments ▪ community expectations relating to the control of dogs and associated education of dog owners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ targeted community information and education initiatives recommended in the Plan. 	Yr 1 (Ongoing) \$25,000
2.	Review and update procedures and administrative processes, and where relevant document new procedures.	Yrs 1-4 Review within operational budget Implementation support \$15,000
3.	Review staff training requirements and personal development opportunities that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ incentivise roles in line with staff professional aspirations and area of interest ▪ develop expertise in response to changing service demands 	Yrs 1-4 Within operational budget
4.	Liaise with other key service areas to ensure an understanding of the existing and emerging matters relating to pets in the community, and the need for a Council-wide approach to addressing service priorities.	Yr 1-4 Within operational budget

6.2 Responsible Pet Ownership**6.2.1 Service Objective**

- Communication strategies that specifically target priority matters relating to the care and management of pets in the community.

6.2.2 Background Information

All of the actions recommended in the Plan are aimed at ensuring the wellbeing of cats and dogs and that owners understand their obligations to their pets and the community. Council recognises that the term 'responsible pet ownership' is broad and encompassing and does not define the legal and community expectations relating to the care and management of pets.

Research undertaken in 2019¹³ highlights that the definition of a 'responsible pet owner' can differ markedly within the family environment, let alone the difference that prevails in the wider community. This research identifies 4 factors that are likely to result in less responsible attitudes and behaviours by, in the case of the research, dog owners:

- an overly close or overly weak relationship with the dog. This can result in emotionally and very personalised reactions to pet related issues and conversations
- differing understanding or interpretation as to what is best for the dog. For example, the belief that 'socialising' a dog means it has to run off-leash with other dogs, when this is a small component of dog socialisation

13 The Responsible Dog Owner: The Construction of Responsibility; Anthrozoos: A Multidisciplinary Journal of The Interactions of People & Animals 32(5):631-646; September 2019; C. Westgarth

- difficulty predicting and avoiding potential conflict situations. For example, when owners do not understand or interpret dog body language appropriately and fail to take action to avoid potential conflict
- differing levels of tolerance of negative dog behaviour. This is evident where some people find uninvited advances by dogs as acceptable and others do not.

The research goes on to note that the term 'responsible pet ownership' may have been effective as a marketing tool. However, because it lacks specifics and is open to wide interpretation it has not been effective in communicating clear messages and requirements. This situation can be further complicated when generational and diverse cultural differences exist.

In order to create greater clarity and understanding of pet owner responsibilities, this Plan has a focus on clear and specific messaging about pet owner responsibilities rather than generic references to 'responsible pet ownership'.

6.2.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Promotion of Responsible Pet Ownership and Compliance with Legislation	Year of Plan
5.	Review the Community Education Calendar to ensure messaging focuses on addressing priorities and issues identified in the Plan and is in line with Action 5.	Yr 2
6.	Establish clear protocols for communicating messages and information about pet owner responsibilities. This will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ eliminate/minimise the use of the generic term 'responsible pet ownership' ▪ focus on targeting/reinforcing a smaller number of priority/specific issues at a time through multiple channels, rather than generic messaging of multiple issues/matters ▪ require context specific messaging and information ▪ require information/education for Council staff, Councillors etc. so: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ there is a strong organisational understanding of the need for/benefits of direct, and non-generic messaging as to reduce/eliminate the use of the term in Council documentation	Yrs 2-3

6.3 Overpopulation of Pets

6.3.1 Service Objective

- Information and data that identifies areas where matters relating to stray urban cats may need to be addressed, and proactive and well-informed strategies to address these occurrences.

6.3.2 Background Information

Council recognises the animal welfare and human toll of pet overpopulation and associated rates of euthanasia, and notes the following matters are of particular concern to residents¹⁴:

- puppy farms/illegal breeders (99%)
- abandonment of pets (99%)
- the treatment of impounded animals (98%)
- people not desexing their pets (79%)
- sale of animals online (76%)
- unowned cats that people feed but don't take full responsibility for (64%)
- high euthanasia rates of cats and kittens (64%).

Cat and dog surrender via SADS, and stray cats do not appear to be as significant an issue in Stonnington as in some other communities. However, written comments by survey respondents suggest likely pockets of stray cats. Research also indicates that the number of stray cats in the municipality is likely to be higher than is suggested by the pound intake.¹⁵

¹⁴ Stonnington DAMP Survey, 2,451 respondents

¹⁵ Managing Cats Humanely and Scientifically to Reduce Cats, Wildlife Predation and Costs, J. Rand; G2Z Summit

Australian and international surveys showed that, on a daily basis, between 10-20% of respondents fed a cat they did not perceive they owned. It is estimated that only 20% of semi-owned cats are desexed and 30% are likely to have had kittens. This compares to owned cats at 80-90% and 7% respectively.¹⁶ It is critical that proactive action is taken to inform the community of the necessity to prevent negative animal welfare and community outcomes relating to stray cats. This is particularly important given the rates at which cats can breed.

Nine per cent of DAMP Survey respondents indicated they feed a stray cat, and 16% said they have adopted a stray cat and had it desexed. Concern that a stray cat will be euthanised if taken to the pound is likely to deter up to 80% of respondents from surrendering a stray cat.

Save-A-Dog Scheme (SADS) recognises industry 'good practice' and gives cats 1-2 weeks to overcome the trauma of trapping/surrender before being temperament tested. SADS notes that the majority of cats impounded from Stonnington are consequently assessed as suitable for rehoming. Only a small number of cats have been euthanised for health or temperament reasons over the past 4 years.

This indicates that most impounded cats have had significant contact with humans, and are primarily 'stray' or 'semi-owned' and not 'feral' cats. There is an opportunity to proactively work with organisations such as 'Getting to Zero' (G2Z), the 'Community Cat Program'¹⁷ and the local community to ensure the suggested pockets of 'stray' and 'semi-owned' cats does not increase, and preferably is reduced or eliminated. Longitudinal research programs undertaken in Australia clearly establish that the only way to reduce the euthanasia rates for cats is to employ strategies that prevent stray and semi-owned cats from breeding and entering pounds and shelters.

Definitions of different cat populations:

Owned cat

Cats that receive full care by owners.

Urban stray cats

Typically are lost or wandering owned cats, abandoned cats, or semi-owned cats receiving some care (e.g. food) from humans.

Semi-owned cat

Cats that have been given some form of long-term care (generally food) by humans. Estimated to be 33% of surrenders.

Feral

Cats which do not obtain any food or shelter from humans. Estimated to represent only 10% of cats entering pounds.

Ref: Managing Cats Humanely and Scientifically to Reduce Cats, Wildlife Predation and Costs, J. Rand

6.3.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions – Overpopulation of Pets	Year of Plan
7.	Using GIS, track/identify neighbourhoods where there is potentially populations of cats that are not 'fully owned' and/or stray	Yrs 2-3
8.	Investigate opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inform the community of the negative animal welfare outcomes associated with feeding stray cats encourage the full ownership/adoption of stray cats being fed by residents promote and encourage access to discount/free community desexing programs.	Yr 3 Within operational budget
9.	Work with SADS to ensure the following information is collected when animals are taken in. This will identify areas that can be targeted to address specific issues/ needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intake information e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intake type e.g. AMO pick-up, surrender, finder stray, trapped, involved in incident Address where animal came from/was collected from If registered and microchipped at time of intake Reasons for surrender 	Yr 1 Within operational budget

¹⁶ Managing Cats Humanely and Scientifically to Reduce Cats, Wildlife Predation and Costs, J. Rand; G2Z Summit

¹⁷ <https://petwelfare.org.au/community-cat-program-2/>

6.4 Registration and Identification of Pets

6.4.1 Service Objective

- A level of pet registrations that is more closely in line with industry estimations of actual likely pet ownership.

6.4.2 Background Information

At the time of writing the Plan there are 8,937 dogs and 3,118 cats on Council's registration database, an increase of 1,295 (18%) and 477 (18%) respectively between 2016 and 2021.

According to Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) the 'owned' dog and cat populations in Australia are likely to be significantly higher than those reflected on LGA data bases.

AMA research and information suggests there are likely to be 29,409 dogs and 21,378 cats residing in Stonnington households¹⁸. If estimations are applied to future household numbers, then in 2026 dogs could number 31,000 and cats 23,000.

According to Council's registration data base, Malvern East followed by Toorak, Malvern and South Yarra are home to the largest populations of dogs. The highest cat populations reside in Malvern East, South Yarra, Prahran, and Toorak.

Random checks of registrations at dog off-leash areas by Animal Management Officers (AMO) reveal a high proportion of dogs are not registered with Council. Feedback from AMOs supports AMA data that suggests a significantly higher dog population than is on Council's registration database.

Anecdotal feedback indicates some pet owners do not see the personal benefits associated with registering their pet, and do not appreciate the wider community benefits associated with the service.

In some cases, LGAs have introduced policy that has countered strategies aimed at increasing registration levels. G2Z reports that mandating the requirement for cats to be desexed before they can be registered has been ineffective in addressing the issue it was intended to address – the overpopulation of cats. It has also resulted in some fully owned but undesexed cats from being registered.

Table 4 – Cat and Dog Registrations

	2016	2021
Dog registrations	7,642	8,937
Estimated dog ownership	26,574	29,409
Difference btw dog registrations & est. dog population	18,932	20,472
Cat registrations	2,641	3,118
Estimated cat ownership	19,317	21,378
Difference btw cat registrations & est. cat population	16,676	18,260

Some key Stonnington pet registration/pound statistics:

- There has been a fluctuation in the number of cats impounded from a high of 166 in 2017 to a low of 101 in 2019, increasing again to 127 in 2020
- There has been a decrease in the number of dogs impounded in 2017 (167) compared to 2021 (82), however COVID may have impacted 2020/21 data
- In 2021:
 - 89% of registered dogs and 99.5% of registered cats were desexed
 - more dogs (70 of 78 impounded dogs) were returned to an owner, compared to only 21 of 112 impounded cats.

6.4.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Proposed Actions – Registration and Identification of Pets	Year of Plan
10.	Cross-reference microchip databases with Council's registration database	Yrs 1/4
11.	Map cat and dog ownership on Council's GIS system to identify areas of low registration (compared to industry estimations of ownership) and target as part of annual door knock	Yr 2

¹⁸ Based on 1.3 dogs for 40% of households and 1.4 cats for 27% of households, pgs. 6&9; Pets in Australia; Animal Medicines Australia

12.	<p>Liaise with other LGAs to identify successful strategies to increase compliance with registration requirements and consider opportunities associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ targeted and localised information campaigns ▪ social media ▪ increasing service profile in media ▪ promoting the benefits that accrue to all pets, including less fortunate pets, via pet registrations. 	Yr 3
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6.5 Nuisance Issues

6.5.1 Service Objective

- Reduced complaints (per household/per head of population) as a result of localised and targeted messaging, particularly in relation to:
 - the control and behaviour of dogs in public places
 - dog litter
 - barking dogs
 - stray cats

6.5.2 Background Information

Council appreciates that pets and people can live harmoniously alongside each other even in areas where housing is relatively compact. This requires pet owners to be particularly aware of their obligations, to address any adverse impacts and avoid any transgression of pet control laws.

The largest number of complaints received by Council relate to barking dogs, reaching a high of 336 (47.7% of all complaints) in 2019. In 2021 there were 223 complaints representing 41.6% of cat and dog complaints. Complaints during COVID decreased, however this should not necessarily be interpreted as a positive trend. LGAs report differing local trends relating to the COVID lockdowns. Some LGAs report a spike in complaints as more people worked from home, while other LGAs report a spike post lockdown because of dog separation anxiety as owners return to work.

The City of Port Adelaide Enfield has implemented an innovative program that has reduced dog barking complaints. The program follows the same previous protocols for receiving and discussing community concerns. In addition, and if there is agreement between the stakeholders, the assistance of a dog behaviourist is offered. The benefits include a reduction in costs associated with staff time; reduced staff stress; and the ability to rebuild community/neighbourhood relationships.¹⁹

Complaints relating to wandering cats has steadily increased in number from 52 in 2017 (9.6% of complaints) to 89 in 2020 (13.8% of complaints). This is consistent with an increase in requests for cat traps. Matters relating to managing pockets of stray cat populations, as identified in the DAMP Survey, is discussed more fully in section 6.3 (Overpopulation of Pets).

Complaints relating to wandering dogs has increased from 58 in 2017 (10.7% of complaints) and 102 in 2020 (15.8% of complaints). There was a decrease to 75 (14.4% of complaints) in 2021, assumed to be as a result of more people working from home during COVID restrictions.

Dog litter is likely to cause more community anguish than any other cat and dog management issue, even though there are very few complaints logged via Council. Sixty-four per cent of DAMP Survey respondents identified dog litter as a current issue, with only 22% perceiving it to be a significant issue in the past.

A number of research projects indicate that anywhere between 40-60%²⁰ of dog owners do not always pick up their dog's litter and 9% are likely to never pick it up.

Inspired by a Boston²¹ project, Worcestershire Council in the UK has installed its first lamp fuelled by bio-gas from dog litter. This has resulted in a reduction of dog litter along a major public walking trail.²²

¹⁹ Dog Behaviourist For Barking Dog Complaints; Brenton Thomas, City Port Adelaide and Enfield

²⁰ Dogs in Parks; Managing the Waste, Nov 2018; R. Dolesh; LMH Pet Surveys, 2018; Dirty Dog Study, Milbemax 2013

²¹ parksparkproject.com

²² www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-42565633

DAMP Survey results and written feedback from the survey demonstrate that the lack of compliance with on-leash regulations is causing significant frustration. The areas of primary concern relate to:

- dogs being off the leash on residential footpaths
- dogs being off the leash in on-leash parks and reserves
- owners who do not/cannot control their dogs in line with dog control orders and who let their dogs annoy other people or other dogs
- rude/aggressive dog owners.

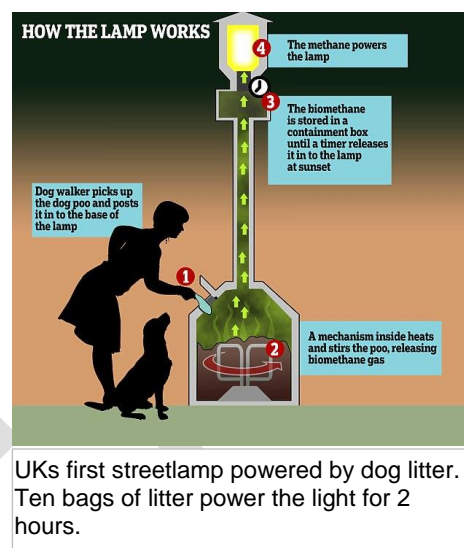
The above responses are primarily from dog owners so it could be expected that there might be a higher level of grievance in the wider community. Feedback also indicates concern with the number of dogs associated with commercial dog walkers, many of whom are perceived not to be attentive to the dogs in their charge.

The Charles Sturt Council in South Australia is taking an educational rather than compliance approach to messaging and information about dog control responsibilities. This LGA has employed a community engagement and education officer who is an animal behaviourist and dog trainer who engages with dog owners at key sites. The outcome has:

- been a public relations success
- is building strong and positive relationships with dog owners
- has reduced conflict between dog owners, dogs and other members of the community
- resulted in dog owners:
 - having better control of their dogs
 - having a better understanding of the benefits of 'controlled exercise'
 - understanding and respecting the rights of other open space users.

In addition, the LGA has re-focused and re-written pet owner information that has a focus on education²³, its animal management services website, and introduced a 'Dog Blog'.

In relation to attended dog obedience classes, 20% of respondents to the DAMP Survey say they have attended dog obedience classes when their dog was older. This suggests that 80% of adult dogs have not been involved in obedience training. In addition, 66% of survey respondents say there have been times when their dogs have not responded to their recall commands, and 59% would like to know of obedience classes they could attend with their dogs.



6.5.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Nuisance Issues	Yr of Plan
13.	Consider researching relevant LGAs to identify the financial and public relations benefits of commissioning an animal behaviourist to assist Council in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ barking dog complaints (priority 1) dog control/compliance with leash regulation (priority 2)	Yr 2 Within operational budget
14.	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a registration system for commercial dog walkers ▪ limiting the number of commercial dog walkers using a site 	Yr 2
15.	Develop information and advice for body corporate associations and developers to provide guidance to assist them in dealing with nuisance animal issues	Yr 2 Within operational budget
16.	Using GIS plot the location of barking dog complaints to identify areas/dwellings types (e.g. apartment complexes) where incidents may be concentrated/more prevalent.	Yrs 2/3
17.	Consider commissioning and trialing a bio-gas generator fueled by dog litter	Yr 4

23 www.extras.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/ebooks/amk/; <https://www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au/services/pets-and-animal-management>

6.6 Dog Bites, 'Rushing', and Attacks

6.6.1 Service Objective

- Decreased incidence of dog bites, attacks and rushes (per household/per head of population).

6.6.2 Background Information

Council is committed to maintaining safe and appealing public environments, including in parks and reserves; and along trails and residential footpaths. To help achieve this, Council has put in place a 'dog control order'. This order defines the type and level of control owners must have over their dogs, and ensures other people have peaceful use of open spaces. It also minimises the likely incidence of inappropriate and undesirable dog behaviour, including dog attacks and rushes in public places.

Appropriate education of dogs will ensure they understand behavioural boundaries and respond to their owners in a timely manner if any transgression of these boundaries occurs. This will minimise the likelihood of the family dog rushing at/annoying people or other animals with the possibility of incurring a 'menacing dog' or 'dangerous dog' declaration. This is a distressing outcome for families/ owners of the dog.

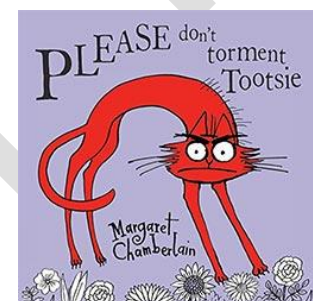
Council recognises that the majority of dog attacks and bites occur in the home and is committed to understanding strategies that will prevent these incidents. The Australian Veterinary Association identifies that 73-81% of dog attacks/bites occur in the home environment and the victim is generally a member of the family or a friend of the family.

Children are at least three times more likely than other age groups to need medical attention for a dog bite, which is generally to a child's head and/or neck. Of important note is that bites to children in the home normally occur when there is no adult supervision of the child's behaviour around and towards the dog.²⁴

A dog's tendency to bite depends on at least five interacting factors: heredity, early experience, socialisation and training, health, and the behaviour of the victim.²⁵ In order to decrease dog bites and attacks, particularly those that occur in or near the home, strategies need to address all of these matters.

Between 2017 and 2021 complaints relating to dog attacks and dogs 'rushing' at other people or dogs have fluctuated. Complaints relating to dog attacks range from a high of 78 in 2019 and a low of 41 in 2021 and for 'dog rush' complaints from a high of 56 in 2021 and a low of 25 in 2017. Incidents of dog attacks and rushing are likely to be significantly higher than denoted in Council's complaints records.

Menzies Institute for Medical Research states that 'injuries due to dog bites are a largely unrecognised and growing public health problem' and estimates that over 100,000 people are bitten by dogs in Australia each year. Twelve to fourteen thousand incidents require medical attention, and 1,200-1,400 incidents require hospitalisation.²⁶ It also notes that for all age groups under 54, males have a higher incidence of dog bites and hospitalisations for dog injuries than females. Records relating to dog bites and attacks are based on medical/hospital records so actual incidents are likely to be much higher than is recorded.



Targeted educational resources for children, parents and libraries.

Table 5 – Reported dog attacks and 'rush' complaints

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Dog attacks	67	32	78	65	41
Dog rushes	25	53	42	31	56

²⁴ Australian Veterinary Association; 'Dangerous Dogs – A Sensible Solution'

²⁵ <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/how-can-we-help-to-prevent-dog-attacks-in-the-community/>

²⁶ The Incidence of Public Sector Hospitalisations due to Dog Bites in Australia 2001-13; 2017

6.6.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Dog Attacks	Year of Plan
18.	Encourage pre-schools and primary schools to participate in the Victorian State government programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pet Town learning tool ▪ We Are Family program ▪ Kindergarten Program Primary School Program 	Yrs 1-4
19.	Consider a communication strategy to increase awareness of appropriate behaviours around dogs with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ management of dogs in household/residential settings ▪ dog behaviour in different settings ▪ approaching dogs in public places ▪ control of dogs in public settings ▪ dealing with uninvited approaches by dogs in the public environment. 	Yr 3
20.	Consider the promotion/profiling of children's books that teach appropriate behaviour around dogs and/or consider the commissioning of a local children's writer.	Yr 4

6.7 Dangerous, Menacing, and Restricted Breed Dogs

6.7.1 Service Objective

- Enhanced and targeted information highlighting dog behaviour that can result in dogs being 'declared' in order to ensure owners of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs:
 - are aware of their obligations
 - comply with all legislated requirements for the keeping of these animals.

6.7.2 Background Information

Council discourages ownership of 'restricted breed dogs' in line with Victorian 'Breed Specific' Legislation (BSL) introduced in 2005. However, Council recognises Australian and international research that demonstrates that BSL has not had the desired or expected outcome of reducing the frequency of dog attacks.

A Danish study²⁷ found no decrease in the frequency of dog bites in the 5 years following the introduction of BSL. Similarly, in the UK hospital admissions for dog related injuries increased by 76% in the 10 years to 2016 despite the introduction of BSL.²⁸

In Australia, hospitalisations have also continued to increase post the introduction of BSL primarily because the legislation is focused on the public domain and not on the private domain (and immediate environment). The majority of attacks occur in the home and the dog involved is generally known to the victim.²⁹

RSPCA Australia is concerned that a focus on dog breeds has diverted attention away from the fact that any dog of any size, breed or mix of breeds has the potential to be dangerous. Each individual dog should be assessed based on their behaviour. The Australian Veterinary Association³⁰ reinforces the need to be

- 'Menacing Dog' - A dog can be declared as a 'menacing dog' if it has 'rushed' at a person/animal or inflicted a non-serious bite injury to a person or animal.
- 'Dangerous Dog' – Council can declare a dog as 'dangerous' if it has incurred 2 'menacing dog' violations or caused the death of or serious injury to a person or animal. Dogs are automatically declared 'dangerous' if they are trained to attack or used as guard dogs.

27 www.companionanimalpsychology.com/2019/02/breed-specific-legislation-had-no.html

28 www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/may/28/hospital-admissions-for-injuries-caused-by-dogs-up-76-over-past-10-years

29 Australian and NZ Journal of Public Health; The incidence of public sector hospitalisations due to dog bites in Australia 2001–2013, 16 July 2017

30 Australian Veterinary Association; 'Dangerous Dogs – A Sensible Solution'

vigilant around all breeds of dog, not just 'restricted breed' dogs, particularly when they are around children.

This highlights the need for information and education strategies that target residential and family environments, particularly in terms of:

- behaviour around dogs, including dogs people are familiar with
- safety of children around dogs
- training/discipline of dogs
- restraint of dogs and securing of properties.

6.7.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Dangerous, Menacing, and Restricted Breed Dogs	Year of Plan
21.	Prepare a process for regular cross-reference microchip database information with the current Council registration database for potential restricted breed dogs.	Yr 1/ Ongoing
22.	Review and update Council procedures and checklists for declaring a dog as 'dangerous', menacing' or a 'restricted breed'.	Yr 1

6.8 Domestic Animal Businesses

6.8.1 Service Objectives

- Domestic Animal Businesses (DAB) compliance with registration requirements and with relevant Codes of Practice
- All DABs in Stonnington identified and registered as per requirements.

6.8.2 Background Information

Agriculture Victoria defines 7 categories of Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) that must be registered with Council. These are:

- Cat and/or dog breeders. This excludes 'micro breeders'³¹ and 'recreational breeders'³² who are members of a relevant organisation
- Dog training enterprises/facilities
- Pet shops that sell animals
- Animal shelters/adoption facilities
- Animal pounds
- Cat and/or dog boarding establishments/enterprises e.g., overnight stay and, day-care.

Mandatory Codes of Practice relevant to Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs)

- Private Keeping of Cats
- Private Keeping of Dogs
- Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses
- Operation of Boarding Establishments
- Operation of Dog Training Establishments
- Operation of Pet Shops
- Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters or Pounds

There are 7 Domestic Animal Businesses registered with Council. These include:

- 1 Pound/shelter establishment
- 3 Boarding establishments
- 3 Pet Shops

Council carries out annual inspections of all DABs to ensure compliance with all relevant mandatory codes of practice and to offer any support and advice. Council also liaises with businesses and organisations that are unaware of their registration obligations to offer advice and assistance to ensure compliance.

6.8.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Domestic Animal Businesses	Year of Plan
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³¹ Breeders with less than 3 fertile female cats or dogs and breed to sell

³² Breeders with up to 10 fertile female cats or dogs and breed to sell as long as they are registered with a relevant member organisation

23.	Carry out a desktop search for DABs that may not be aware of their obligations to register with Council, and support their registration process and ensure registration.	Yr 1/ Ongoing
24.	Review information for and about DABs on Council's website	Yr 3

6.9 Town and Open Space Planning

6.9.1 Service Objective

- Town planning and open space planning and policies that acknowledge and address matters relating to pet owners and pets.

6.9.2 Background Information

6.9.2.1 Town planning

Animal Medicines Australia research indicates that most pet owners are likely to live in free-standing dwellings. However, 39% of people who live in apartments or units are still likely to own a pet. A US study found similar results with 25-30% of apartment dwellers owning pets. These findings are particularly relevant in Stonnington because of the significant growth in medium and high-density dwellings. Between 2011 and 2016 there was a 9.7% decrease in free-standing houses and a 9.1% increase in medium-high density dwellings.

Changes in tenancy laws around Australia are now making it easier for people to own a pet in rental and apartment properties. In Victoria, the landlord has to justify why it's not appropriate for an animal to be kept in a property. Approval still has to be sought from the body corporate if one exists. However, a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) ruling in 2016 states³³ that blanket rules prohibiting residents from having pets are invalid.

Consistent with animal registrations overall, anecdotal feedback from AMO staff suggests there are more pets living in apartments and units than are on Council's database. Callouts to dog barking complaints in apartments has revealed other animals in nearby apartments that are not registered with Council.

There is an increasing number of developers who are actively targeting the pet-owner market. Some are forming partnerships with animal welfare organisations to help potential resident dog owners make informed decisions about breeds of dogs best suited to apartment living and how to train dogs so they are 'good neighbours'.³⁴ A Melbourne developer states that the majority of tenants buying into their current development own pets, and emphasises the need to plan for pets in apartments.³⁵

6.9.2.2 Open Space Planning

Council's [Open Space Strategy](#) identifies the need to acquire more land for open space and recommends advocating for green roofs as both public and private open space, particularly in areas of increased densification.

The growth of medium and higher density living environments is increasing the demand on Council's limited open space, including by dog owners who expect access to areas where they can exercise their dogs off-leash.

There are 29 areas in Stonnington where dogs can be off the leash, of which 11 are on sports grounds. In 2020 Council installed additional lighting at 5 sports grounds. This allowed extended access for casual recreation activities, including off-leash activities, and extended usage over longer hours so as to minimise overcrowding.

Council recognises the conflict that can occur in mixed use areas, particularly where dogs are allowed to run off-leash. This conflict is significant on sports grounds where expectations relating to access can differ between dog owners and sports clubs, and because some dog owners do not pick-up dog litter. It is also significant in popular and smaller parks where dog owners do not control their dogs in line with dog Control Orders and approach people and other dogs uninvited.

33 www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-06/tenants-union-welcomes-vcat-body-corporate-pet-ban-ruling/7818656

34 www.theurbandevolver.com/articles/melbournes-first-high-rise-dog-park

35 www.realestate.com.au/news/pets-planning-in-melbourne-highrises-should-be-mandatory-caydon/

A 2020 research report identifies that problematic dog behaviours are a severe welfare issue for the dogs concerned. It also states that the fear due to a lack of socialisation with the urban environment and unfamiliar people, as well as factors such as poor socialisation during puppyhood and infrequent participation in training activities, can impact on problematic dog behaviours.

In Stonnington, dog owners are required to have their dog on a lead in all public places except for the 29 designated off-leash sites. Provision for dogs off-leash in the municipality is challenged by a lack of open space, a growth in demand for access to sport and casual recreation activities, and because planning for dogs off-leash is relatively new to local government town and open space planning.

Therefore LGAs have attempted to accommodate dog owners and their dogs in and around other parkland activities, and often in small areas.

Council recognises the value of dog off-leash areas in terms of dog socialisation and exercise and also in terms of the community support and friendship networks that result from interactions via the pet dog. However, Council also recognises the needs and interests of other parts of the community that may not wish to interact with dogs in public places. This includes park users with small children seeking public open spaces free of dogs.

A significant number of respondents to the DAMP Survey requested additional fenced off-leash areas. Fencing of off-leash areas essentially creates a 'single-purpose space' because it is generally used by people with dogs or by people who want to be around dogs. This limits the use of the space by the wider community, particularly families with young children. Fencing is overwhelmingly requested on the basis that it will contain dogs that owners do not, or cannot control, in line with regulations.

The technical manual 'Planning, Design and Management of Dog Off-leash Areas'³⁶ highlights the need for LGAs to have a Dog Off-Leash Policy before committing to the fencing of off-leash areas. Fencing of these areas requires a sound understanding of dog and human behaviour in fenced and unfenced off-leash environments, and the resources required for managing and monitoring these spaces.

6.9.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Town and OpenSpace Planning	Year of Plan
25.	Consider opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to engage with developers for inclusion of pet friendly design and amenities in high density developments to encourage developers to include private and public open space in development designs as per the recommendation on the Open Space Strategy. 	Yr 1
26.	Prepare a Dog Off/On-Leash Policy and Provision Plan that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a provision rationale a review of existing provision, including suitability of sites direction in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> distribution/accessibility alternatives to existing options fencing levels of service for inclusions e.g. landscaping, public amenities, sensory elements for dogs ongoing management requirements e.g. maintenance, compliance monitoring, complaint resolution, risk management community education/information requirements. 	Yr 2
27.	Prepare concept and detailed signage information and templates for off-leash areas in line with recommendations from the Dog Off/On-Leash Policy and Provision Plan when completed.	Yr 3
28.	Refer recommendations in section 6.2 Responsible Pet Ownership in relation to targeted messaging strategies about dog control requirements.	

³⁶ Extracts from Planning, Design and Management of Off-Leash Areas Technical Manual (including Fenced Off-leash Areas, L. Humphreys, 2019)

6.10 Community Support and Strengthening

6.10.1 Service Objective

- The needs of pets owners are recognised and addressed in Council service planning processes (e.g. community services, health and wellbeing, town planning, open space service planning) in recognition of:
 - the importance of pets to families
 - the health and wellbeing and community strengthening benefits associated with pets
 - specific support needs for pets and pet owners in times of crisis.

6.10.2 Background Information

Council has made a strong commitment to addressing the underlying matters of gender and social inequity, and understanding the lesser-known impacts and causes of distress.

Some demographics are at greater risk of family violence than others with a high correlation between low socio-economic status and incidents of domestic violence.³⁷ However research warns against the assumption that women in affluent communities do not face domestic abuse.³⁸

One of the most significant but relatively unrecognised issues that delay a family member leaving a domestic violence situation relates to the family pets. Ninety-two per cent of DAMP Survey respondents are concerned about the welfare of animals in domestic violence situations and the need for services to ensure the safety of these pets.

Council recognises the need to ensure that pets are addressed in future Council, regional, and state planning for families needing support when leaving domestic violence.

Over recent years there has been a proliferation of volunteer pet support groups and government funded programs. These bring together volunteers and pet owners who may be older, physically incapacitated or time poor. Dogshare,³⁹ similar to the UK 'Borrow My Doggy' brings dog owners and people who want to walk a dog together and has over 24,000 members. Feedback highlights the community strengthening and networking outcomes that are occurring from this community-led initiative. The DAMP Survey also reinforces the community networking that occurs as a result of pets. Of all DAMP Survey respondents:

- 40% said they have looked after a neighbour's pet and 40% said a neighbour had looked after their pets
- 18% said they had borrowed a dog for some 'dog company'.

LinkPETS is a Commonwealth Health Support Program⁴⁰. The program involves volunteers who assist with a range of pet care needs including dog walking, cat and dog hygiene clean-ups and grooming. It also provides social interaction for the pet owner.

The Animal Welfare Plan (AWP) is a sub-plan of the Municipal Emergency Animal Management Plan and identifies the role of Animal Management Services during times of emergency. The AWP will be reviewed over the next 4 years.

6.10.3 Proposed Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Community Support and Strengthening	Year of Plan
29.	Identify staff to undertake CRAF (Common Risk Assessment Framework) or similar training (Family Violence).	Ongoing
30.	When Preventing Violence Together; A Strategy for the Southern Metropolitan Region (2016-2021) is reviewed, ensure that consideration is given to the needs of pet owners.	As required
31.	Work with domestic violence organisations to help promote awareness of assistance for pet owners experiencing domestic violence.	Yr 2

³⁷ Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia; AIHW, 2018 /Economic Stress and Domestic Violence; Centre for Research on Violence Against Women; Claire M. Renzetti; University of Dayton

³⁸ Managing Secrecy and Disclosure of Domestic Violence in Affluent Communities: Domestic Violence in Affluent Communities; <https://www.researchgate.net/journal/Journal-of-Marriage-and-Family->

³⁹ www.dogshare.com.au/

⁴⁰ www.linkhc.org.au/pet-program

	Actions - Community Support and Strengthening	Year of Plan
32.	Review the Animal Welfare Plan (a sub-plan of the Emergency Management Plan Sub-Plan).	Yr 2
33.	Ensure that all Council's strategic planning processes and documents recognise issues and opportunities relating to pet owners.	Ongoing
34.	Investigate opportunities to profile community-led community support initiatives e.g. neighbourhood dog walking support groups	Yr3

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7. Development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan

Research for the Domestic Animal Management Plan has taken into account the research and consultation carried out for other strategic plans, including Stonnington 2040, the Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the Open Space Strategy.

Consultation and community engagement carried out specifically for the Domestic Animal Management Plan involved:

- an online survey (2,451 respondents)
- submissions from various stakeholders (6)
- a Council staff workshop and interviews, including with staff from community development, town planning, infrastructure, sustainability, recreation, and parks and open spaces.

8. Implementation and Review of the Domestic Animal Management Plan

The Action Plan identifies the year in which Council proposes to address the recommendation. However, priorities in the Plan may change over the life of the plan depending on:

- changing Animal Management Service demands and priorities
- other Council service delivery priorities
- partnership opportunities
- external funding opportunities.

In line with the requirements of the DAA:

- Council will review the Plan annually to ensure actions and priorities are still relevant and can be completed within available resources
- Council will undertake a major review of the plan in 4 years.

9. The Consolidated Action Plan⁴¹

This section provides a Consolidated Action Plan including:

- the stakeholders who should be involved in the implementation of each of the proposed actions
- the departments that should take the lead in addressing the proposed actions
- resourcing requirements.

	ACTION	YEAR OF PLAN/ RESOURCING	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURES
	Service Management and Training of 'Authorised Officers'			
1.	Review Animal Management Services resourcing requirements to reflect the demands on the service, particularly in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ systems and administrative requirements ▪ the actual number of cats and dogs estimated to reside in the city ▪ compliance and associated community development initiatives associated with pets in apartments ▪ community expectations relating to the control of dogs and associated education of dog owners ▪ targeted community information and education initiatives recommended in the Plan. 	Yr 1 (Ongoing) \$25,000	LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review undertaken ▪ Report to SMT advocacy for funding
2.	Review and update procedures and administrative processes, and where relevant document new procedures.	Yrs 1-4 Review within operational budget Implementation support \$15,000	LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timeline prepared for review of procedures and systems ▪ Reviews/updating completed in line with agreed timelines and resources

⁴¹ Action Plan Legend: **Lead Department in Bold.** A=Aged/Diversity/Community Planning, AC=Active Communities, AMP=Asset Management & Planning, CET=Customer Experience & Transformation, C=Community Services, CO=City Operations, CS=City Strategy, DM=Digital & Marketing, CE = Communications & Engagement LC=Liveability & Compliance, OS=OpenSpace, SP=Strategy & Performance,

Action Plan Legend: **Lead Department in Bold.** A=Aged/Diversity/Community Planning, AC=Active Communities, AMP=Asset Management & Planning, C=Community Services, CE=Communications & Engagement, CET=Customer Experience & Transformation, CO=City Operations, CS=City Strategy, DM=Digital & Marketing, LC=Liveability & Compliance, OS=OpenSpace, SP=Strategy & Performance, TE=Technology Enablement

	ACTION	YEAR OF PLAN/ RESOURCING	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURES
3.	Review staff training requirements and personal development opportunities that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ incentivise roles in line with staff professional aspirations and areas of interest ▪ develop expertise in response to changing service demands ▪ areas of professional development interest. 	Yrs 1-4 Within operational budget	LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training program reviewed and modified in line with service demands
4.	Liaise with other key service areas to ensure an understanding of the existing and emerging matters relating to pets in the community, and the need for a Council-wide approach to addressing service priorities.	Yr 1-4 Within operational budget	LC, A, CS, OS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore opportunities for communicating Animal Management functions across Council ▪ Consider a briefing paper to key service areas
	Responsible Pet Ownership			
5.	Review the Community Education Calendar to ensure messaging focuses on addressing priorities and issues identified in the Plan and is in line with Action 5.	Yr 2 \$25,000	LC, CE, DM, CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community Education Calendar reviewed to optimise the reinforcing of key educational messages ▪ Reviewed calendar implemented
6.	Establish clear protocols for communicating messages and information about pet owner responsibilities. This will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ eliminate/minimise the use of the generic term 'responsible pet ownership' ▪ focus on targeting/reinforcing a smaller number of priorities/specific issues at a time through multiple channels, rather than generic messaging of multiple matters ▪ require context specific messaging and information ▪ require information/education for Council staff, Councillors etc. so: 	Yrs 2-3 Within operational budget	LC, CE, DM, CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare a briefing paper for management/the organisation that outlines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the shortfall of generic messaging in relation to animal management communications e.g. 'responsible pet ownership' ▪ the need for an integrated PR/comms plan that involves key stakeholders e.g., schools, dog owners ▪ a focus on 'hot spots' e.g., non-compliance within specific on-leash areas; a specific neighbourhood with stray cats.

	ACTION	YEAR OF PLAN/ RESOURCING	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is a strong organisational understanding of the need for/benefits of direct, and not generic messaging to reduce/eliminate the use of the term in Council documentation. 			
	Overpopulation of Pets			
7.	Using GIS, track/identify neighbourhoods where there is potentially populations of cats that are not 'fully owned' and/or stray.	Yr 1 Ongoing	LC, TE G2Z, Westside Desexing Inc. Local vets, SADS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cat nuisance complaints and hire of cat cages tracked using GIS to identify 'hot spots' Work with key stakeholders to develop a targeted strategy to increase desexing rates among fully owned and semi-owned cats.
8.	Investigate opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inform the community of the negative animal welfare outcomes associated with feeding stray cats encourage the full ownership/adoption of stray cats being fed by residents promote and encourage access to discount/free community desexing programs. consult with the community to consider the introduction of a cat curfew 	Yr 3 Within operational budget	LC, CE, DM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities for joint initiatives with adjoining LGAs and key stakeholders Identify extent of issues in adjoining LGAs and benefits and opportunities to work together Explore opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> address issues by encouraging ownership develop targeted education and promotional strategies.
9.	Work with SADS to ensure the following information is collected when animals are taken in. This will identify areas that can be targeted to address specific issues/ needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intake information e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intake type e.g. AMO pick-up, surrender, finder stray, trapped, involved in incident Address where animal came from/was collected from 	Yr 1 Within operational budget	LC, SADS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review protocols with SADS to ensure that the information reported on incoming and outgoing animals enables Council to make informed decisions about service priorities.

	ACTION	YEAR OF PLAN/ RESOURCING	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If registered and microchipped at time of intake ▪ Reasons for surrender ▪ Outgoing information e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reclaimed, adopted, transferred to other facility/rescue group ▪ If euthanised, the reason. 			
	Registration and Identification			
10.	Cross-reference micro-chip databases with Council's registration database.	Yrs 1/4 Within operational budget	LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual cross-checking
11.	Map cat and dog ownership on Council's GIS system to identify areas of low registration (compared to industry estimations of ownership) and target as part of annual door knock.	Yr 2 Within operational budget	LC, TE, SP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Areas of low registration rates in comparison to industry estimated registration (by household) identified ▪ Targeted campaign implemented ▪ Increase in registration rates.
12.	<p>Liaise with other LGAs to identify successful strategies to increase compliance with registration requirements and consider opportunities associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ targeted and localised information campaigns ▪ social media ▪ increasing service profile in media ▪ promoting the benefits that accrue to all pets, including less fortunate pets, via pet registrations. 	Yr 3 Within operational budget	LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liaison with other LGAs undertaken ▪ Trial and localised strategy options identified ▪ Localised strategy trialed ▪ Strategy evaluated ▪ Trials rolled out on a location-by location basis according to agreed plan and timelines.
	Nuisance Issues			
13.	<p>Consider researching relevant LGAs to identify the financial and public relations benefits of commissioning an animal behaviourist to assist Council in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ barking dog complaints (priority 1) 	Yr 2 Within operational budget	LC Charles Sturt LGA (SA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Liaison with relevant LGAs undertaken ▪ Sample number of behaviourists to establish fees/costs including discounted fees ▪ Costs and benefits quantified and analysed

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	ACTION	YEAR OF PLAN/ RESOURCING	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURES
	dog control/compliance with leash regulations (priority 2).			▪ If considered feasible/of benefit resourcing case presented to SMT
14.	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a registration system for commercial dog walkers ▪ limiting the number of commercial dog walkers using a site. 	Yr 2	LC	
15.	Develop information and advice for body corporate associations and developers to provide guidance to assist them in dealing with nuisance animal issues	Yr 2 Within operational budget	LC	
16.	Using Council's GIS, plot the location of barking dog complaints to identify areas/dwellings types (e.g. apartment complexes) where incidents may be concentrated/more prevalent.	Yrs 2/3 Within operational budget	LC, TE, SP	▪ GIS plotting of barking dog complaints undertaken on an annual basis.
17.	Consider commissioning and trialling of a bio-gas generator fuelled by dog litter	Yr 4 Within operational budget \$20,000 (feasibility assessment)	CO, AM, OS, LC	▪ Cost-benefit considered by Council.
Dog Bites and Attacks				
18.	Encourage pre-schools and schools to participate in Victorian State government programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pet Town learning tool ▪ We Are Family program ▪ Kindergarten Program Primary School Program 	Yrs 1-4 Within operational budget	LC, C, CE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify if and how many pre-schools are involved in educative/informative programs, and the type of program ▪ Investigate reasons for non-involvement and what might encourage school involvement ▪ Determine Council's role ongoing
19.	Consider a communication plan to increase awareness of appropriate behaviours around dogs with a focus on:	Yr 3 Within operational budget using material/information	LC, CE, DM, CET,	▪ Status of schools and pre-schools with relevant educational programs identified (e.g. schools with Ag Vic programs, own school-based programs, other)

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	ACTION	YEAR OF PLAN/ RESOURCING	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management of dogs in household/residential settings dog behaviour in different settings approaching dogs in public places control of dogs in public settings dealing with uninvited approaches by dogs in the public environment. 	available through relevant sources e.g. Ag Vic; DET		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools interested in working with Council identified Educational material identified and sourced Participating schools promoted as part of the program via mainstream and social media Advocacy to Ag Vic for increased resourcing of schools/pre-schools educational programs.
20.	Consider the promotion/profiling of children's books that teach about appropriate behaviour around dogs and/or consider the commissioning of a local children's writer.	Yr 4 Within operational budget	LC, CC, DM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant book opportunities explored Consider promoting educational books/information e.g. via mainstream and social media, and Council website.
	Dangerous, Menacing, and Restricted Breed Dogs			
21.	Prepare a process for regular cross-reference microchip database information with current Council registration database for potential restricted breed dogs.	Yr 1/ Ongoing Within operational budget	LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process and timelines developed Reporting of discrepancies between Council's registration database and other data bases.
22.	Review and update Council procedures and checklists for declaring a dog as 'dangerous', menacing' or as a 'restricted breed'.	Yr 3 Within operational budget	LC, CE, DM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures reviewed and updated in line with agreed timeline.
	Domestic Animal Businesses			
23.	Carry out a desktop search for DABs that may not be aware of their registration obligations with Council, support their registration process and ensure registration.	Yr 2 Within operational budget	LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research completed Non-compliant DABs registered Annual checks undertaken
24.	Review information for and about DABs on Council's website.	Yr 3 Within operational budget	LC, CE, DM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information updated

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	ACTION	YEAR OF PLAN/ RESOURCING	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURES
	Town and Open Space Planning			
25.	Consider opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ to engage with developers for inclusion of pet friendly design and amenities in high density developments ▪ to encourage developers to include private and public open space in development designs as per the recommendation on the Open Space Strategy. 	Yr 1 Within operational budget	CS OS, LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interdepartmental workshop undertaken to discuss issues and opportunities ▪ Council considers opportunities to address accommodation of pets in new subdivisions/apartment developments.
26.	Prepare a Dog Off/On-Leash Policy and Provision Plan that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a provision rationale ▪ a review of existing provision, including suitability of sites ▪ direction in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ distribution/accessibility ▪ alternatives to existing options ▪ fencing ▪ levels of service for inclusions e.g. landscaping, public amenities, sensory elements for dogs ▪ ongoing management requirements e.g. maintenance, compliance monitoring, complaint resolution, risk management ▪ community education/information requirements ▪ signage. 	Yr 2 \$40,000	OS, LC, CS, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding allocated for Dog Off/On Leash Policy and Provision Plan ▪ Plan prepared ▪ Implementation of the plan in line with recommendations and available Council resources.
27.	Prepare concept and detailed signage information and templates for off-leash areas in line with recommendations from the Dog Off/On-Leash Policy and Provision Plan when completed.	Yr 3 \$20,000	OS, LC, CS, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding allocated for preparation of signage information and templates ▪ Information sourced and templates prepared

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	ACTION	YEAR OF PLAN/ RESOURCING	STAKEHOLDERS	MEASURES
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding allocated for manufacture and installation of signage in line with available Council resources.
28.	Refer recommendations in section 6.2 Responsible Pet Ownership in relation to targeted messaging strategies about dog control requirements.	Within operational budget		
Community Support and Strengthening				
29.	Identify staff to undertake CRAF (Common Risk Assessment Framework) or similar training (Family Violence).	Ongoing Within operational budget	LC, C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All relevant staff have completed CRAF training by year 2 All staff completed CRAF review course in line with training program requirements.
30.	When Preventing Violence Together; A Strategy for the Southern Metropolitan Region (2016-2021) is reviewed ensure that consideration is given to the needs of pet owners	As required Within operational budget	A, C, LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Input to the strategy when the review is undertaken.
31.	Work with domestic violence (DV) organisations to help promote awareness of assistance for pet owners experiencing domestic violence.	Yr 2 Within operational budget	A, C, LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with DV organisations to identify issues and opportunities to better support pet owners in DV environments Liaise with SADS to identify any capacity for the organisation to be part of a support network.
32.	Review Animal Welfare Plan (sub plan of the Emergency Management Plan).	Yr 2 Within operational budget	LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal Welfare Plan reviewed
33.	Ensure that all Council's strategic planning processes and documents recognise issues and opportunities relating to pet owners	Ongoing Within operational budget	All departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer Action 4
34.	Investigate opportunities to profile community-led community support initiatives e.g. neighbourhood dog walking support groups.	Yr3 Within operational budget	A, C, LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to encourage and profile community-led initiatives that support pet owners.

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – The Domestic Animals Act requirement of Council

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act*, every Council must prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan, as follows:

68A Councils to Prepare Domestic Animal Management Plans

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (*of the Department of Primary Industries*), prepare at 4-year intervals a *Domestic Animal Management Plan*.
- (2) A *Domestic Animal Management Plan* prepared by a Council must—
 - (a) set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this *Act* and the regulations; and
 - (b) outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this *Act* in the Council's municipal district; and
 - (c) outline programs, services and strategies, which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - (i) to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats
 - (ii) to ensure that people comply with this *Act*, the regulations and any related legislation
 - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals
 - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
 - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats
 - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
 - (vii) to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this *Act* and the regulations
 - (d) provide for the review of existing orders made under this *Act* and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable
 - (e) provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary
 - (f) provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
- (3) 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
 - (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

Appendix 2 – Key statistics

Summary of Animal Management Service Key Data			
	2016 DAMP	2022 DAMP	Difference
RELEVANT DEMOGRAPHICS			
Resident Population	111,606	123,031	11,425
Number of households	56,556	60,646	4,090
DOG DATA			0
Number of registered dogs	7,642	8,988	1,346
per 100 people	6.85	7.31	0.46
Household penetration based on 40% of households owning av. of 1.3 dogs	26574	29409	2,127
Difference btw registrations and likely actual registrations	18,932	20,472	1,489
Number of dangerous dogs	Unknown	0	-
Number of desexed registered dogs	Unknown	7,966	-
% of registered dogs		88.62	-
Number of impounded dogs	167	78	-89
Number of impounded dogs returned to owner	144	70	-74
% of impounded dogs	86.2	89.7	3.52
Number of dogs rehoused	20	8	-12
% of impounded dogs	12.0	10.3	-1.73
Number of dogs euthanised	3	0	-3
% of impounded dogs	1.8	0.0	-1.80
CAT DATA			0
Number of registered cats	2,641	3,118	477
per 100 people	2.37	2.53	0.16
Household penetration based on 27% of households owning av. of 1.4 cats	19317	21,378	1,546
Difference btw registrations and likely actual registrations	16676	18260	1,332
Number of desexed registered cats	Unknown	3,104	-
% of registered cats		99.55	99.55
Number of impounded cats	166	112	-54
Number of impounded cats returned to owner	26	21	-5
% of impounded cats	15.7	18.8	3.09
Number of cats rehoused	133	91	-42
% of impounded cats	80.1	81.3	1.13
Number of cats euthanised	7	0	-7
% of impounded cats	4.2	0.0	-4.22