MELTON CITY COUNCIL

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2021-2025

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CITY OF MELTON

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition for the purpose of this document
AIAM	Australian Institute of Animal Management
AMOs	(Council) Animal Management Officers
Authorised Officer	Person authorised by Council under section 224 of the Local Government Act to administer /enforce legislation
AVA	Australian Veterinary Association
DAA	Domestic Animals Act, 1994
Designated off-lead area	Areas where dogs can be exercised off-lead
GEA	Gender Equality Act, Vic, 2020
LGA	Local Government Act
Local Laws	Legislation made by Council pursuant to the Vic. Local Government Act
Orders in Council	Legislation made by Council pursuant to the DAA
Owner	Registered owner of pet and/or carer of the pet
MCC	Melton City Council
Pet Survey	Melton Pet Survey 2021
POCTA legislation	Prevention of Cruelty to Animals legislation
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Public place	Includes all streets, roads, footways, reserves, lanes, parks, schools, public halls etc.

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

It's a pleasure to present Melton City Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-2025.

Pets play an important role in the lives of many of our residents, and Council recognises the importance of pets within the family unit. Their unconditional affection and emotional support in times of need bring great peace of mind to pet owners, improving mental health, decreasing stress, depression, and anxiety, and increasing social interaction.

To this end, Council is committed to providing quality services regarding domestic animal management to our community by applying a strategic and knowledge-based lens to the planning and provision of services and facilities.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan sets out how we manage dogs and cats within our municipality. It aims to promote welfare and responsible pet ownership, whilst protecting the community and environment from nuisance cats and dogs.

I'd like to extend my appreciation to the members of our community whose feedback helped inform the development of this plan. We are certain that it balances the competing needs of pet owners, the broader community and the animals that share our lives.

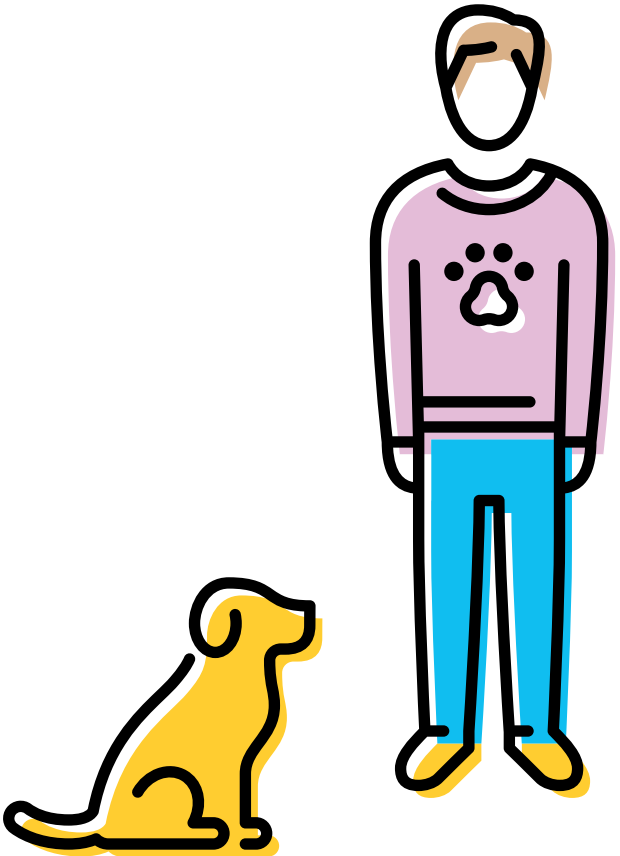
Cr Kathy Majdlik
Mayor, Melton City Council

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Melton City Council's Animal Management Services strives to create a service that responds to industry best practice when it comes to the care and management of pets, working closely with the community to ensure outcomes are optimal for pets, the environment, and the wider community.

The values we want our service to be recognised for:

- being approachable, friendly and helpful
- creating and maintaining safe environments for the community
- professionalism that is underpinned by knowledge and an openness to social-scientific research and innovation that will help address service needs
- consistency, even-handedness and understanding when applying Council and government policy legislation
- understanding:
  - the important role that pets play in City of Melton households and the social, emotional, mental and physical benefits of pet ownership
  - that pet owners have a responsibility to ensure their pets do not adversely impact on other pets, people or the environment; and to ensure their safety and wellbeing
  - some of our service challenges are complex and solutions may trigger competing interests and points of view
  - that we need the community to understand our service challenges and work with us to help resolve them
- openness to partnerships with key stakeholders to investigate opportunities to address service priorities and challenges.



A vibrant, safe and liveable City accessible to all

1. Background information

1.1 What is the purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan?

The purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is to provide Council with a framework for identifying and addressing matters associated with the management and wellbeing of cats and dogs over the next four years.

It identifies animal management compliance and education initiatives carried out by Council and new initiatives identified to address emerging issues. It also identifies opportunities for community and Council partnerships to tackle challenges associated with cats and dogs in the community.

State government legislation only requires Council to address matters relating to cats and dogs. However, Council recognises that residents have many other species of animals residing with them as companion animals, including small mammals, reptiles, horses and other animals such as ducks and chickens that have traditionally been considered only as 'livestock'.

1.2 The Victorian Domestic Animals Act

All Councils in Victoria are required to prepare a DAMP in line with the Victorian Domestic Animals Act[1], which specifies matters that Council must address as part of the plan. The Act requires Council to show how it will address requirements relating to:

- evaluating the effectiveness of their service
- the annual review and amendment of the DAMP where necessary
- the review of policies, local laws and orders
- the training of authorised officers
- the encouragement of responsible pet ownership
- minimising the risk of dog attacks
- minimising the incidence of nuisance such as trespassing cats and barking dogs
- ensuring cats and dogs are registered and identified
- animal welfare including the high euthanasia rates of pets, in particular cats
- the management of animals in times of disasters.

The Melton City Council DAMP recognises additional service priorities and opportunities in addition to those listed in state government legislation.

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

Examples of Council documents reviewed for the DAMP:

- Council & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
- Equality & Respect 2030
- Intercultural Plan 2017-21
- Open Space Plan 2016-26

State and Federal Acts relevant to the DAMP:

- Local Government Act, Vic, 2020
- Domestic Animals Act, Vic, 1994
- Disability Discrimination Act, Fed,1992
- Gender Equality Act, Vic, 2020

1.3 How the DAMP Aligns with Other Strategic Plans

Every four years Council prepares the Council and Wellbeing Plan (CWP)[2] which establishes objectives and strategies to achieve the outcomes envisioned for the city. Matters relating to pet owners and pets are not directly referenced in the CWP, however Council recognises that they:

- are a significant and valued demographic
- contribute to the social and economic fabric of the community
- **are often in need of support in times of hardship as are other members of the community**
- are represented across a diverse range of demographic groups that Council plans and provides services for.

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 an effective and integrated service planning process that recognises these benefits and not only the challenges associated with pets in the community. Pets, pet ownership and animal management services are particularly aligned to Council objectives relating to:

- community building and belonging
- family violence resourcing
- volunteering
- safety in different settings and among people
- open space use, planning and access
- facilities that are safe, accessible, fit for purpose, vibrant and well-maintained
- a prosperous and diverse economy
- planning for services based on a balance between community need and organisational capacity
- compliance with regulations/legislation.

As a result of the integrated planning approach to the DAMP, this document has identified matters relating to pets and pet owners that extend beyond matters the state government requires Council to address in the DAMP. This acknowledges the important role that pets play in the lives of many residents and the implications and opportunities this has for other service areas, including open space planning and management; aged, family and children's services; town planning; and community development.

2 Council and Wellbeing Plan, 2017-21

Matters that extend beyond the traditional role of animal management services, will require a whole-of-Council response if they are to be addressed effectively and opportunities optimised. This is likely to involve service areas such as community planning and strengthening; open space and recreation; family, aged and children; and environmental services.

The DAMP has been prepared in consideration of relevant Council plans and state and federal government legislation.

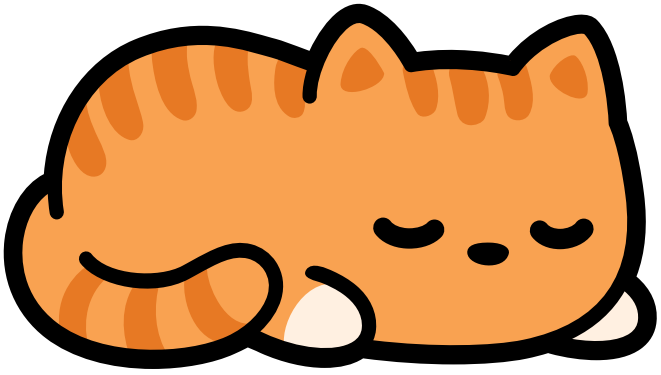
Of particular note is the new Gender Equality Act that came into effect in March 2021. The Act requires Councils to undertake a gender impact assessment (GIA) on all Council policies, programs and services that are deemed to have a significant impact on the community.

The GIA scan undertaken for the DAMP has highlighted the vulnerability of, primarily women and children, in situations of domestic violence, and the need for specific actions to address the needs of pet owners and pets in these situations.

What did we achieve from the 2017-2021 Domestic Animal Management Plan?

The highlights from the 2017-21 DAMP and service achievement from the last 4 years include:

- The review of animal management services to identify structural and cultural changes needed in order for the service to become more aligned with modern day animal management practices and community needs and expectations
- The restructure of the local laws service area to create a dedicated Animal Management Service team with well-defined roles, and alignment of skills and knowledge with service requirements
- Planning and concept designs completed for a modern animal holding and transfer facility
- Review of animal holding facility (pound) operational procedures
- A significant increase in animal registrations as a result of cross matching of registration and microchip records.

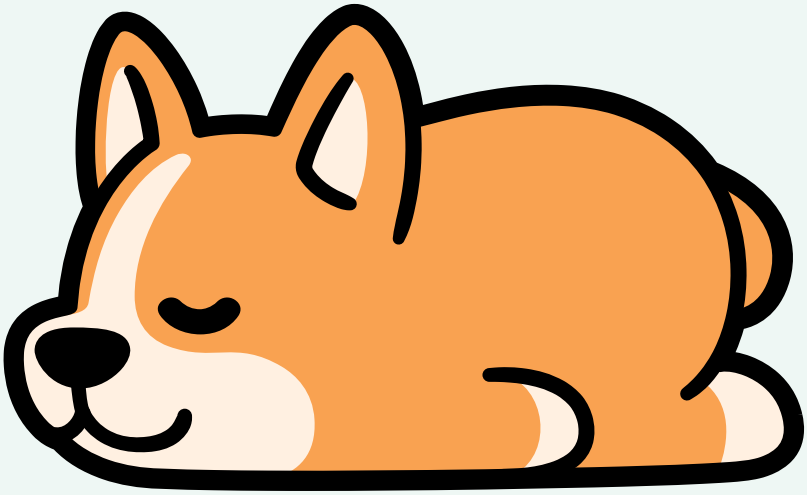


2. What is the focus of the 2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan?

As with previous DAMPs, this DAMP will have a primary focus on ensuring the requirements of the Act and relevant Council policies are adhered to.

This DAMP moves beyond the traditional scope of animal management services to investigate innovation and opportunities to recognise and embrace the real needs of pet owners and the value of pets. Actions that particularly highlight innovation in this DAMP focus on:

- Provision for dogs in open space and in particular, a more strategic and knowledge-based approach to the planning and provision of off-lead areas
- Working with community stakeholders to address matters associated with the overpopulation of stray and semi-owned cats and the high rates of euthanasia of cats
- Health and well-being program initiatives that capitalise on the pets
- Community support and strengthening initiatives in relation to pets in situations of domestic violence
- The implications for town planning in terms of pet ownership in higher density residential areas, and the need to make provision for pets, in particular dogs, in these environments
- The challenges associated with a diverse multi-cultural and socio-economic community that has different perceptions about pets, including the care and management of pets, and levels of experience and comfort when around dogs, particularly when in public places.



3. What Data Says About the Role and Benefit of Pets

Ninety-three per cent (93%) of Pet Survey[3] respondents report that pets are important because of their unconditional affection, support in times of need and because they bring them peace of mind. All respondents agreed that pets teach children about compassion and responsibility.

The Pets in Australia[4] survey found that pets are likely to be considered members of the family by dog owners (63%) slightly more so than cat owners (60%), and by younger dog owners (73%) than older dog owners (62%). The same survey highlights that people from non-English speaking backgrounds are likely to view pets as 'fun for the children' rather than members of the family. The role of pets as close companions is highlighted by Pet Survey respondents with 33% stating that they make recreation choices, and 40% holiday choices, based on being able to involve their pets.

There is a vast body of research[5] that talks to the personal health and wellbeing benefits of pets. Based on whether a medical or social sciences approach is taken to the research can often influence research outcomes and conclusions. However, there is significant quantitative and qualitative evidence to indicate the benefits.

The economic contribution of pets to the economy is significant with Australian households spending 12.2 billion dollars on pet products in 2016 an increase of 62%/5 billion on 2013. The Euromonitor International[6] reports that pet ownership in Australia increased significantly over the time of COVID and that multinationals in the pet care industry were among the most resilient during COVID and the recession. Other research affirms[7] [8] that pets also benefit the economy in terms of savings to the health sector.

What is increasingly being recognised are the community strengthening or social-capital benefits associated with pets. A large study undertaken in across the USA and Australia has identified that pets are an 'under-recognised conduit for building social capital'.

The study identified that pet owners score higher than not pet owners on social capital indicators regardless of the type of pet. In addition, dog walkers scored significantly higher than non-dog walkers.

3 Melton Pet Survey, 2021, (200 respondents)

4 Pets in Australia; A National Survey of Pets and People, p20

5 Companion Animal Economics; The Economic Impact of Companion Animals in the UK; S. Hall, L Dolling; CABI, 2017

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

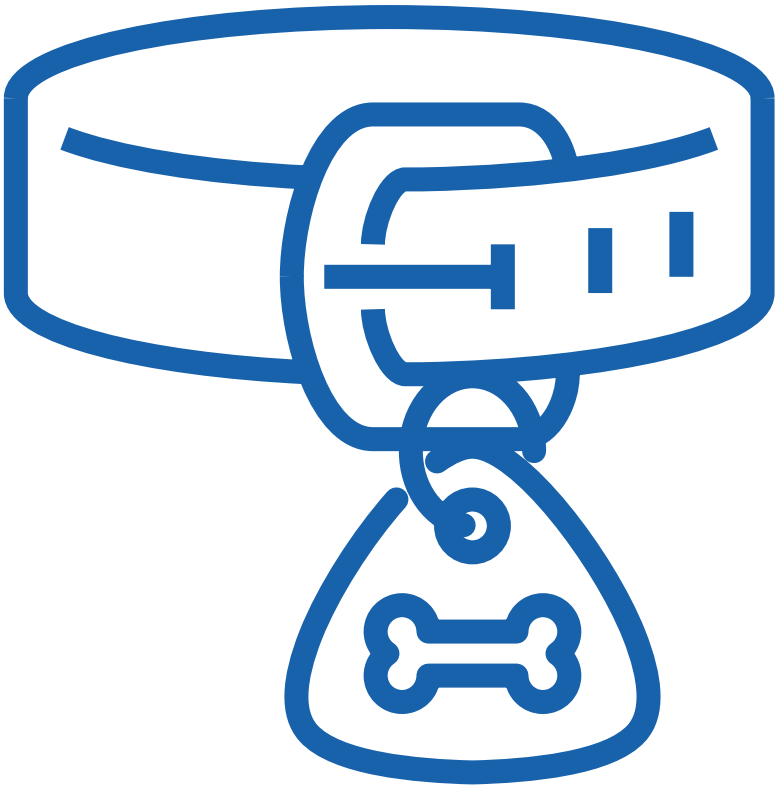
7 The Power of Pets: The benefits of companion animal ownership, Australian Companion Animal Council, 2009

8 http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0122085

This is particularly significant given as social capital is predictive of important social indicators pertaining to mental health, mortality, child development, crime and safety and economic resilience.[9] These benefits are in addition to the personal health and wellbeing benefits that have been attributed to pets.[10]

COVID-19 highlighted the importance of pets in times of distress. Rehoming organisations introduced waiting lists for dog adoptions, and dogs were adopted from shelters in half the usual time. Many rehoming groups reported not having enough dogs to satisfy adoption demands and the price of dogs from breeders has increased in light of the demand for dogs.[11] [12]

Pet survey respondents confirmed the role pets play in breaking down social barriers, by reporting that they talk to more people because they have a pet (78%) YR 78% / OEC Av. 73%). They also reported that they, or their family are likely to exercise more because they have a pet (@85%) (YR 78% / OEC Av. 68%). The importance of pets is even further reflected by the 63% of respondents who 'strongly agreed' with the statement that their pets give them a 'strong reason for living'.



9 Social Capital and Pet Ownership – A Tale of Four Cities; L. Wood, K. Martin et el, SSM - Population Health Volume 3, December 2017, Pages 442-447

10 Companion Animal Economics; The Economic Impact of Companion Animals in the UK; S. Hall, L Dolling; CABI, 2017

11 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-16/demand-for-dogs-soars-during-lockdown-prompting-a-price-surge/12626294

12 www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/16/dog-gone-eescue-pet-shelters-emptied-by-surge-in-demand-during-pandemic

Table 1: What Pet Survey respondents say about their pets

Melton**

Pets are an important part of my family

100% 93.3%

Pets teach my children about compassion and responsibility

100% 67.7%

My pets give me great comfort in times of need

99.5% 72.5%

* ‘Agree’+’Strongly’ Agree’
(‘strongly agree only’ in pink circle)

97.9% 75.6%

It is important for me to have a pet in my life

My pet is important because they give me unconditional affection

97.9%

75.6%

My pet is important because they give me peace of mind

97.9% 75.6%

Pets give me a strong reason for living

97.9% 75.6%

4. About Animal Management Services in Melton

4.1 Overview

Animal Management Services are delivered through the Animal Management Unit, which is part of Council's Community Safety Department and sits in the Planning and Development Directorate. The following provides an overview of the Animal Management team:

Animal Management

1 x Coordinator (FT) – This position is responsible for the overall management of the Ranger and Pound Services teams; budget control; marketing/promotion; officer training; community engagement; and project management

1 x Administration Support (FT) – This position is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the service including, data entry, customer enquiries, issuing of correspondence, animal registrations, and customer liaison

Ranger Services

1 x Team Leader (FT) – This position is responsible for the management of the Ranger Services team; service administration; assessing infield incidents, compiling incident reports and briefs of evidence and court matters; assisting with infield patrols; liaising with Domestic Animal Businesses; report writing; and community engagements/ liaison

2 x Rangers (FT) – These positions attend/investigate nuisance complaints and dog attacks; undertake park patrols; educate community about responsible pet ownership; collect stray animals; seize animals; and prepare briefs of evidence, attend community engagements as required, on-call after hours service).

Pound Services

1 x Team Leader (FT) – This position is responsible for pound operations; managing Animal Attendants, service administration, and report writing; developing and maintaining relations with rescue groups; assisting with pound operations; community engagement/liaison/relations

1 x Animal Attendants x1 (FT) – This position is responsible for pound operations including the care and welfare of animals and liaison with vets; service administration and reporting; attending community engagements as required; and liaison with rescue groups/shelters

3 x part time Animal Attendants x3 (.7 EFT)

The primary focus of the Animal Management service is on:

- Enforcing state legislation and Council policies relating to cats and dogs
- Attending to cats and dogs that have escaped their property, with preference to returning pets to their rightful owner
- Transferring of unclaimed pets to rescue and rehoming groups
- Management of the cat and dog registration database and the collection of registration fees
- Inspections of Domestic Animal Businesses and animals with special registration requirements
- Attending to complaints; investigating of incidents; and attending to court proceedings
- Responding to animal welfare reports and referral to relevant authorities
- Community and promotional events
- Overseeing the partnerships with the community, including with animal rehoming groups
- Encouraging and promoting pet related opportunities and networks
- Managing dog off-lead areas.

4.2 'Local Laws', 'Orders' and Planning Scheme Requirements

There are a number of local laws and orders that residents must comply with if they own or are responsible for the care of animals or operate animal related businesses. All local laws will be reviewed in 2022. The following provides a summary of these. Specific wording and details can be found in the relevant documents on Council's website.

Part 6 of the General Local Law 2015 pursuant to the Victorian Local Government Act relates to animal control.[13] The following sections are relevant to the DAMP:

- Section 80 – This section deals with owner responsibilities for the picking up of dog/animal litter in public places
- Section 81 – This section deals with the number of animals that can be kept on a property
- Section 83 – This section details requirements for the keeping of animals

Council has also made the 'orders' pursuant to section 26 of the Victorian Domestic Animals Act. These orders relate to:

- the compulsory desexing of cats
- the control of dogs when in public places
- the number of dogs people can have in their charge
- areas where dogs can be off the leash
- the collection and disposal of dog litter.

5. The issues and opportunities we will address over the next four years?

This section provides an overview of the findings from consultation and research carried out for the DAMP 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 DAMP.

The consolidated Action Plan in section 9 identifies the stakeholders and resources required to implement the action. Ongoing compliance and educational activities that are carried out as standard practice are outlined in Appendix 3.

5.1 Training of 'Authorised Officers' and Service Responsiveness

OBJECTIVES

To ensure staff have the skills and knowledge to respond to service demands in line with industry best practice and current research

To enhance Council's capacity to respond to changing service demands and community expectations.

5.1.1 What the research tells us

The Animal Management Services Unit consists of 7.7 (EFT) staff who are authorised[14] under the Domestic Animals Act. The unit is also supported by Authorised Officers from the wider Community Safety Department in response to service demands.
The Animal Management team has faced significant challenges over the last 3 years due to the restructure of the previous Compliance Department (now Community Safety Department) and the creation of a separate Animal Management team. This process required the creation of new roles and resulted in the turnover of 8 staff over the 3-year period.

Research undertaken for the DAMP identifies that community expectations of animal management services have changed significantly. While it is recognised that the service has a key compliance role, there is now the expectation that the service will have a more in-depth understanding of the complexity of issues and opportunities relating to pets, the research and strategies that most effectively address these matters, and the capacity to work collaboratively with the community as do other service areas (community support and development).

The compliance function of the team is under increasing pressure, particularly in relation to dogs in public places and associated litigation matters, park patrols, pound operations and the relationship with volunteer/rescue and rehoming groups.

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

Animal Management staff received strong positive feedback from Pet Survey respondents and attendees at workshops. However, feedback indicates a perception that the service is under resourced, struggles to deal proactively with service priorities, and does not have the resources to build partnerships with key stakeholders that can assist to address animal management issues of concern to the community.

Survey respondents say:

- Council animal management staff are helpful and courteous (84% strongly agree/agree)
- staff care about the welfare of animals (73% strongly agree/agree)
- Council understands and recognises the importance and value of pets (64% strongly agree/agree)

Ref: Pet Survey, 2021

The team currently has no capacity to responsibly and equitably address some of the requirements of the DAA, particularly as they relate to pet over-population, the relationship with volunteer rehoming groups; community education (e.g. control/behaviour of dogs); targeted programs to address matters that relate to specific socio-economic areas/ hotspots, cultural groups and at-risk populations (e.g. families and pets in domestic violence environments). Animal Management Services has not traditionally been resourced for these activities as have other service areas, and as the community is now expecting of the service.

This is challenging the team's efforts to build positive and proactive relationships with peak organisations and to take advantage of opportunities to work with these groups to achieve desired outcomes for the service and for the city. The DAMP planning process has initiated positive discussions with key community groups and there is an interest in these discussions to be furthered.

The team is also challenged by the lack of technology to support the service. There is a need for technology that allows the team to easily access service data and to log information relevant to specific locations and incident details.

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

5.1.2 Actions to address emerging priorities

	Actions – Training of 'Authorised Officers' and Service Responsiveness	Year of Plan
1	Continue to review and modify staff training schedules in line with service requirements.	Ongoing
2	Conduct a review of Animal Management Services resourcing requirements that better reflect the demands of the service, particularly in relation to: • the number of cats and dogs estimated to reside in Melton • park patrols in line with agreed/reviewed requirements • increased demands associated with litigation matters • the rehoming of pets • community education and promotional initiatives relating to the control and behaviour of dogs • hidden/transferred costs associated with the rehoming of pets • the planning and management for the new animal holding and transfer facility • supporting volunteers/volunteer groups.	Yr 1
3	Refer recommendation 46 in section 'Town and Community Planning and Pets'	Yr 1
4	Identify staff to undertake CRAF (Common Risk Assessment Framework) or similar training (Family Violence).	Ongoing
5	Prepare a brief that clearly articulates the service's IT/technology requirements, particularly as it relates to the plotting of incidents/ complaints and context information.	Yr 1

5.2 Promotion of Responsible Pet Ownership and Compliance with Legislation

OBJECTIVE

To optimise:

- community understanding of their obligations and responsibilities as pet owners
- opportunities to promote pet ownership responsibilities.

5.2.1 What the research tells us

Council recognises that pet owners have significant responsibilities and obligations in order to ensure:

- the wellbeing of their pets
- that pets do not adversely impact on other people, pets and the environment.

Council expects that pet owners will care for their pets not only in line with relevant legislation[15], but also in line with the expectations of a modern-day community[16].

The following sections of the DAMP outline in detail strategies to encourage pet owners and other stakeholders to comply with all relevant Council and state government legislation and codes of practice. Over the term of the DAMP Council will investigate all opportunities to raise awareness around responsible pet ownership including the promotion of industry literature and programs:

- via Council's website, pet expos and social media
- via schools and pre-schools
- and less traditional avenues such as community groups and sporting organisations

Of respondents who are aware of the Djerriwarrh Pet Expo, 87% say it is a great event. However, there is likely to be a large number of pet owners who are not aware of the event.

Ref: Pet Survey, 2021

15 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Vic, 1986

16 RSPCA Policy A01 Responsible companion animal ownership, https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/rspca-policy-a01-responsible-companion-animal-ownership/

5.2.2 Actions to address emerging priorities

	Actions - Promotion of Responsible Pet Ownership and Compliance with Legislation	Year of Plan
6	Identify responsible pet ownership material that is relevant to the Melton community and promote: • through Council's web site • to relevant organisations and agencies	Ongoing
7	Continue to attend the Djerriwarrh Pet Expo	Ongoing
8	Investigate other opportunities to raise awareness of: • pet owner obligations • community support organisations • community networking opportunities	Ongoing

5.3 Overpopulation (including euthanasia) and Abandonment of Pets

OBJECTIVE

To minimise the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted pets

To ensure that strategies to address the matters associated with semi-owned and stray cats are in keeping with industry best practice.

5.3.1 What the research tells us

Research undertaken for the DAMP demonstrates that there is a significant stray/unowned population of cats in Melton and that a disproportionate number of dogs being relinquished to rehoming groups in the region are bred in Melton.

Based on current industry modelling numbers there could be anywhere between 8,500 and 14,000 stray cats in the municipality.

In 2017 Council introduced the requirement that in order for cats to be registered they must be desexed, unless owners are registered breeders and therefore have an exemption from desexing requirements. This was a strategy introduced by approximately 25 of the 79 Victorian Councils, including Melton, on the basis that it would help reduce the number of undesexed and stray cats in the community. This is despite a desexing rate of 90% among registered cats.[17]

Research undertaken in 2015 and 2016 indicates that 9% (mostly females) of respondents daily fed a cat they did not perceive they owned, and a phone survey of Victorian residents found that 22% of households provided some care for a cat they said was not theirs. Of the primarily pet owners who responded to the Pet Survey in Melton 32% say they have fed stray cats in the past and 6% are saying that they are doing so now. These semi-owned cats are unlikely to be desexed and are 80-90% cats entering shelters or pounds.

Research shows that despite the introduction of compulsory desexing for registered cats there has continued to be a steady increase in the number of cats entering shelters and numbers being euthanised. Prior to compulsory desexing legislation the vast majority of registered cats were already desexed.
Consultation with cat rescue and rehoming groups; veterinarians; industry academics and institutions; and community desexing initiatives has highlighted the extent of the issue in

17 Engaging with Semi-Owners; Jacqui Rand Emeritus Professor, Executive Director & Chief Scientist, Australia Pet Welfare Foundation; Feline Futures Conference 2021

Melton and across the region. Melton has not participated in the National Desexing Network program of subsidised fees for desexing of cats and has not, until now considered the funding of initiatives that have been proven to improve desexing rates.

What Pet Survey respondents say about impounded cats:

- 81% believe others do not take stray cats to the pound for fear it will be euthanised
- 73% say they would not take a stray to the pound for fear it will be euthanised
- 62% believe cats that go to the pound are euthanised

Discussion of strategies that address the overpopulation of cats and kittens can elicit diverse and often extreme opinions. In order to best address issues there is a need to fully understand the psychology of the cat-human relationship; apply location specific strategies; and base strategies on independent outcome-based research. Research undertaken in Queensland demonstrates that a well-informed community-based approach will secure significant co-operation between stakeholders. Presenters at the 2020 Feline Futures18 Conference stress the need for clear definitions relating to different cat populations (e.g. fully owned, semi-owned, stray, and feral), a consistent use of terminology, and cat management strategies that are specific to managing issues relating to each classification of cat. Speakers warn against the common misuse of the term 'feral' to describe cats that are semi-owned or perceived as stray as it can provoke vigilantism. The Community Cat Program19 is viewed as the exemplar initiative in managing the overpopulation of cats and is founded on longitudinal research studies and successful trial programs. Pet Survey responses indicate residents are unlikely to take stray cats to the pound for fear they will be euthanised. Eighty-one percent of respondents stated they would take a cat to the pound if they knew it would not be euthanised. This is consistent with Community Cat Program data and highlights the ineffectiveness of current strategies to address the cat over population issue. The program also highlights best practice pound practices to reduce the incidence of pet euthanasia.20

A significant and overlooked issue is the impact of high euthanasia rates on people who work and volunteer in the sector. Studies of shelter staff veterinary professionals, and laboratory animal technicians have consistently shown that these people experience a higher than usual rate number of physical and psychological symptoms of stress. Other studies now suggest that workers whose occupations involve euthanising animals suffer additionally from their work.21

Melton and the north-west region of Melbourne is in a unique position because of community-based enterprises that are looking to mobilise and partner with Council; and a successful model program implemented by an adjoining Council that Melton can benefit from.

Council has rehoming agreements in place with 28 cat and dog rescue groups in Melton. In 2020 642 cats and 124 dogs were rehomed/transferred from Council's pound to rehoming groups an increase of 174 animals compared to 2016. However, Council recognises that this does not represent the true picture of pet homelessness because an increasing number of pets are being surrendered directly to volunteer-based rehoming groups.

Generally these groups do not receive funding from external sources, unlike larger not-for-profit organisations that have pound/shelter contracts with Councils. These latter organisations generally receive funding for holding animals for 8 days part of which can defray base operating costs associated with rehoming. Small rehoming groups bear the financial and emotional cost associated with the animals they care for and rehome.

18 Feline Futures Conference, 2020, co-ordinated by the Vic. RSPCA e.g. Dr. Sophie Riley, Legal Classifications as Social Constructions on the Place of Cats in Society

19 https://petwelfare.org.au/community-cat-program-2/

20 https://petwelfare.org.au/2017/07/13/best-practice-pounds-shelters-rescues/

21 Animal Euthanasia and Traumatic Stress; An underexplored Area of suffering?

5.3.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions – Overpopulation & Abandonment of Pets	Year of Plan
9	Conduct a briefing/information session for Councillors to inform decision-makers of the highly credited research and strategies for addressing the high levels of stray cat and kitten and associated high euthanasia rates	Yr 1
10	Partner with key stakeholders to establish a 'Melton Community Cat Program' with the purpose of: • developing an overall strategy for addressing cat and human welfare matters associated with stray/semi-owned cats based on proven and scientifically based trials and strategies • determine Council's role • determine target localities • encouraging community and sector involvement • informing the community of strategies and the basis for these • forming a collective of Councils and stakeholders in the region to address issues	Yr 2 Yr 2 Yr 2 Yr 2 Yrs 2-4 Yr 4
11	Consider an annual budget allocation towards cat desexing program: • as part of a strategic Melton Community Cat Program collective (new initiative) • to encourage involvement by the research/academic, peak association and community sector stakeholders	Yr 2 ongoing
12	Optimise existing opportunities for desexing of cats regardless of animal ownership. Initiatives may include: • mobile desexing services • free and discounted desexing initiatives • partnering with community-based initiatives	Yr 2-4
13	Work with all shelters, rehoming groups, veterinary clinics etc. to investigate the opportunity to establish a voluntary reporting protocol database for pets surrendered through these organisations. Information should include but not be limited to numbers; where animals come from; if they are desexed; and outcome (e.g. rehomed, euthanised etc.)	Yr 2
14	Promote adoption of pets from shelters and rehoming groups and associated benefits; and provide information that dispels the myths associated with pets in shelters (e.g. they are problem animals).	Yr 1 ongoing
15	Consider Council's current position on only registering desexed cats in order to encourage the registration of all cats including fully and semi-owned.	Yr 1

5.4 Registration and identification of pets

OBJECTIVE

To increase pet registrations in line with industry estimations of ownership in line with household numbers

5.4.1 What the research tells us

Table 2 – Cat and Dog Registrations

	2017	2021	Difference 2017-2021
Dog registrations	14,652	16,997	2,345/16%
Estimated dog ownership	23,576	30,470	NR
Difference between registrations and est. dog ownership	8,924/60%	13,473/80%	NR
Cat registrations	3,697	5,694	1,997/54%
Estimated cat ownership	17,138	22,150	NR
Difference btw registrations & est. cat ownership	13,441/360%	16,456/300%	NR

There are 16,997 dogs and 5,694 cats recorded on Council's registration data base, an increase of 8,294 (16%) and 1,997 (54%) respectively from 2017. The increase in registrations is primarily due to a concerted cross-referencing between Council's registration data base and industry microchip data bases, local promotional campaigns and the introduction of the online pet registration portal.

The task of cross-referencing microchip databases and Council's registration database is compounded because of the number of microchip databases used in the industry.

According to Council's registration data base Caroline Springs, Hillside, Kurunjang and Melton South are home to the largest populations of dogs. However, the densest populations of dogs appear to be in Grangefields, Northern Rural, Melton and Melton West.

Similarly, cat populations are highest in Caroline Springs, Kurunjang, Melton South and Hillside, and Melton. The greatest density of cats per 1200 residents are to be found in Rockbank, Deanside, Diggers Rest, Melton, and Melton South.

According to Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) the dog and cat populations are likely to be significantly higher than are reflected on Council's data base. AMA research suggests that there are likely to be 30,470 dogs and 22,150 cats residing in Melton22, and a 2026 likely dog population of 36,758 and a cat population of 26,720.

Written comments to the Pet Survey indicate an opportunity to consider benefits or incentives for pet owners who register pets, including free ride home or reduced fees for first transgression of Council orders relating to wandering pets, or reduced release fees. Anecdotal feedback indicates cat owners are less likely than dog owners to see the benefits of registration.

22 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

Some Councils have a higher registration fee for dogs in consideration of the opportunities that dog owners have to access public amenities and the proportion of work that relates to the management of dogs.

There is an opportunity to reconsider the registration, pricing and income/expenditure rationale and policy in Melton particularly in relation to:

- increasing dog (desexed and undesexed) registrations
- increasing cat (desexed and undesexed) registrations
- cat and dog registration fees in consideration of incentives and benefits to owners and the likely large unregistered dog population likely to reside in Melton

This will require a reconsideration of policy such that the community is encouraged to register all animal, including those that are not desexed. 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 over population of cats.

Some key pet registration/pound statistics for 2021:

- 63% of registered dogs are desexed
- 97% of registered cats are desexed
- a 2% decrease in the number of impounded cats returned to the owner and a 4% decrease in the number of impounded dogs returned to their owner
- a 9% increase in the number of impounded cats rehomed/transferred to rehoming organisations, and a 12% decrease in the number of dogs rehomed/transferred to rehoming organisations.

5.4.1 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions – Registration and Identification of Pets	Year of Plan
16	Investigate industry strategies that have been successful in increasing the level of cat and dog registrations, and identify initiatives that may help increase pet registrations in Melton	Yrs 1-4
17	Determine priority strategies for implementation over the next 4 years to increase cat and dog registrations, particularly in areas where registrations are low in terms of industry estimations of ownership	Yr 2 ongoing
18	Investigate opportunities to refine the online pet registration process/ portal	Ongoing
19	Review cat and dog registration fees in consideration of: anticipated increase in registrations over the life of the DAMP in line with industry estimations of likely real ownership dogs that undergo recognised education and behaviour training cost of securing increase registrations e.g. door knocks benefits that might accrue to dog vs cat owners funding of a Community Cat Program perceived benefit by the community	Yr 2
20	Review requirement for cats to be desexed before they are registered on the basis: • that this has not addressed the stray cat/cat overpopulation issue • has likely acted as a disincentive for undesexed and semi-owned cats to be registered.	Yrs 2

5.5 Nuisance Issues

OBJECTIVES

To minimise the number of complaints relating to pets, particularly in relation to:

- the control and behaviour of dogs in public places
- the collection of dog litter and appropriate disposal
- barking dogs

5.5.1 What the Research Tells Us

Council appreciates that most pet owners care for their cats and dogs in line with regulations, however, recognises that some pet owners are less responsive to their obligations.

In 20/21 the largest number of complaints were received in relation to dogs wandering at large (763) which comprised 74% of all complaints. Barking dog complaints increased by 32% and comprised 8.5% of all complaints. This increase is primarily attributed to more people being impacted because they are working from home due to COVID.

Table 3 – Cat and dog issues identified by Pet Survey respondents

Concern	Issue now	Issue in the past ^	Never been an issue
Owners not picking up their dogs' litter/ leaving litter bags behind	62.9%/95	18.6%/28	18.5%/28
Cats not confined to their property	56.2%/86	11.8%/66	32%/49
Owners letting their dog off-lead in on-lead areas	53%/79	14.9%/22	31.8%/47
Cats wandering into neighbours gardens	52.0%/79	11.2%/17	36.8%/56
Dogs that bark at front fences	43.7%/66	13.2%/20	43.1%/65
Owners letting their dog annoy other people's dogs	33.1%/48	11.8%/17	55.2%/80
Owners letting their dog annoy other people	33.1%/4816.6%/	16.6%/24	50.3%/73

Ref: Pet Survey, 2021

Compared to benchmark Councils, Melton had a significantly higher rate of complaints relating to wandering dogs (763/74% vs 266/ 28%) than benchmark Councils and a significantly lower rate of complaints relating to cats (4/0.4% vs 126/30%). The latter data has to be interpreted cautiously, particularly in light of anecdotal feedback from Pet Survey respondents and from the consultation process. This information indicates a need for targeted strategies to deal with matters relating to stray cats as discussed in more detail in section 6.3.

Cats not confined to their property was highlighted as a current or past issue for 68% of Pet Survey respondents. While Council has received a low level of complaints relating to cats it has experienced an increase in requests for cat traps.

In relation to dog litter, Pet Survey findings are consistent with other industry research. Findings by Milbemax indicates that as many as 50% of dog owners do not always pick up their dog's litter and a further 11% of men and 7% of women likely never to pick up their dog's litter. Owners not picking up dog litter is an issue for 63% of Pet Survey respondents.

It is a requirement under Melton Council policy23 for dog owners to carry a means by which to pick up their dog's litter and dispose of it appropriately. Dog owners not picking up their dog's litter was the issue of most concern to pet Survey respondents with 84% stating it was currently an issue and/or was in the past.

Council recognises the benefits of keeping cats indoors or confined to cat runs for their own wellbeing as well as for the safety of wildlife.

Peak associations such as 'Getting to Zero' highlight the need to have accurate data on incidents and complaints so that well-informed strategies can be developed to target specific issues and/or locations where they are more prevalent.

5.5.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions –Nuisance Issues	**Year of Plan**
21	Plot (GIS) the occurrence of each type of animal related incident and fully document context information to inform targeted remedies based on location, age of people involved etc.	Yr 1 Ongoing
22	Accurately determine the real cost of dealing with barking dog complaints and consider the cost benefit of partnering with animal behaviorists to work with Council to address issues. Consideration should be given to the PR benefits of this approach as well as to the economic/budget benefits.	Yr 2
23	Develop a whole-of-community approach (e.g. community, private and government sectors) to help develop strategies that will address issues associated with: • non-compliance with on-lead regulations • behaviour and control of dogs in public places • owners not picking up their dog's droppings	Yr 2-4
24	Enlist the support of the community, private and government sectors to help develop strategies that will address issues associated with: • stray (including semi-owned, unowned) cats • cats not confined to properties	Yr 2-4
25	Review schedule of park patrols and consider opportunity for parks maintenance crews to provide relevant reports/observation	Yr 1
26	Ensure: • the use of cat traps is monitored and in line with best industry practice in relation to the welfare and management of trapped cats • instructions for the ethical and appropriate use of traps is provided, and cats are immediately transferred to an appropriate care facility.	Yr 1

23 Section 26 Order in Council (Ref: Council minutes 9/6/09)

5.6 Dog Attacks

OBJECTIVES

To reduce the incidence of dog attacks and bites

To create greater awareness of safe behaviours around dogs.

5.6.1 What the Research Tells Us

Table 4 - Dog attacks and 'rushes'

	2018/19	2019/20
Dog attacks	83	156
Dog rushes	42	11

Local Government is required by the DAA[24] to develop initiatives that will minimise the likelihood of dog attacks which generally occur in the home and/or where the victim knows the dog.

The Australian Companion Animal Council estimates that in excess of 100,000 people are attacked by dogs in Australia each year, with an estimated 12,000-14,000 needing treatment and 1,200-1,400 being hospitalised for bites. [25]

Australia, 73% to 81% of attacks occur in the domestic environment and the victim is a member of the family or friend.[26] Children are at least 3 times more likely than other age groups to need medical attention for a dog bite, and bites to children in the home normally occur when there is no adult supervision. In the case of children, 84% of bites were from dogs of family, close friends or family. An additional 8% were from neighbour's dogs and only 8% by a stranger's dog. Current interventions primarily aimed at the control of dogs in public places is unlikely to reduce the incidents of dog bites in young age groups.[27] Rather the focus needs to be on pre-school and school education programs and parent education initiatives.

A review of admissions to public hospitals from 2001 to 2013 found dog bites were a largely unrecognized and growing public health problem, with as many as 26 bites per 100,000 population among children aged zero to four.[28]

In 2015 breed specific legislation was introduced in Victoria in an attempt to arrest the increase in dog attacks. Research undertaken in Sweden and Denmark[29] reports that after the introduction of breed specific legislation there was no abrupt decrease in the frequency of dog bites nor in the following 5 years.

A dog's tendency to bite is dependent on a number of key interacting factors:

- Heredity (genes, breed)
- Early experience
- Socialising and training
- Health (physical and psychological)
- The behaviour of the victim
- Gender and age of the dog

Ref: AVA Dangerous Dogs – A Sensible Solution'

24 Victorian Domestic Animals Act, 1994; section 68A(2)(c)(iii)

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

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

27 Prevention of dog bites: Evaluation of a brief educational intervention program for preschool children; Prevention of dog bites: Evaluation of a brief educational intervention program for preschool children; Journal of Community Psychology F. Wilson, F. Dwyer, P. Bennet

28 Do Breed-specific Laws Reduce the Number of Dog Bites?

29 Finn Nilson of the Department of Environmental and Life Sciences at Karlstad University in Sweden,

In Melton dog attacks represent the most significant increase in complaints/incidents with an 88% increase between 2016/7 and 2020/21. In 2020/21 dog attacks represent 15% of all complaints, with the peak in incidents occurring during the COVID 2020 lockdown. As a result, staff workload has increased dramatically because of associated litigation requirements.

It is estimated that it costs Council approximately 38 hours or $1,900 to deal with each reported dog attack. This notes that attacks are generally dog-on-dog attacks and relates only to dog attacks in public places. In 2020 this represented a $252,700 cost to Council and $277,400 in 2021. This is in addition to the financial and emotional costs borne by the owners of dogs involved in the attack. Melton and benchmark Councils have a similar incidence of complaints relating to dog attacks overall (156/15% vs 167/18%).

Twenty-nine percent of Pet Survey respondents say that dog attacks are currently an issue for them and/or has been in the past.

As with nuisance or risk issues associated with dogs, the plotting of location and other environmental factors may help to identify problem locations or neighbourhoods that can be specifically targeted for action.

The DAA makes specific requirements in relation to certain breeds of dog ('restricted breeds'), and dogs that are deemed 'dangerous' or 'menacing'. Council discourages the keeping of these dogs and notes that it is an offence to breed from these dogs. In line with the requirements of the DAA30 Council monitors the housing and management of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

Some definitions:

'Menacing dog' – Is a dog that has received a violation relating to 'rushing' or biting that resulted in a non-serious injury.

'Dangerous dog' – Is a dog that incurs 2 'menacing dog' violations or has caused a serious injury or death of an animal or person.

'Declared dog' – Include 'restricted breed' dogs; dogs that have been declared 'menacing' or 'dangerous'; any dog that has been trained as a guard dog or any dog residing at a commercial premises.

5.6.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions – Dog Attacks Actions – Dog Attacks	Year of Plan
27	Actively work with schools to increase the number of schools (students and parents) involved in programs focused on safe behaviours around dogs.	Yr 3
28	Develop and target programs/initiatives at identified target locations/ populations. Consider messaging options involving: • Schools • Pre-schools • Direct text messaging to dog owners with young children	Yr 4
29	Review opportunities to effectively inform parents and families, and the general community about: • Keeping children safe around pets • The appropriate selection of pets	Yr 2-4

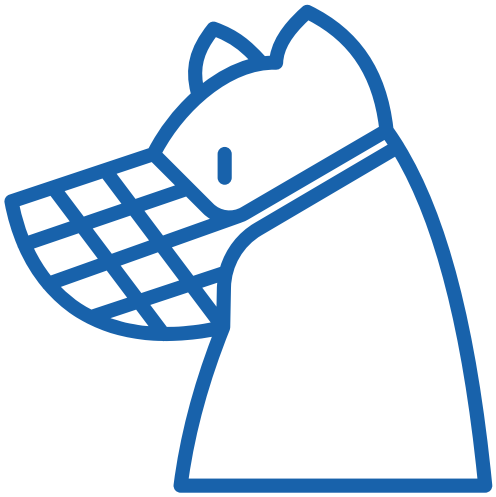
30 Domestic Animals Act, section 68A(2)

5.7 Dangerous, Menacing, and Restricted Breed Dogs

5.7.1 What the research tells us

Research undertaken in the USA indicates that at best 25% of dogs have attended dog obedience classes and that as few as 5% of puppies have attended socialisation classes.[31]

Responsible dog owners will ensure their dogs are trained and educated so they will immediately respond to voice and/or hand commands when off the leash. Alternatively, Council expects that dogs not appropriately educated will be kept on a leash.



Council is concerned about the escalation of complaints relating to dogs rushing at other dogs and people and skirmishes that have resulted in minor injuries to either dogs or people. A dog that has a predisposition to nervousness in public environments or is not properly socialised has a greater likelihood of anti-social behaviour that quickly escalates. This exposes the dog to a possible menacing or dangerous dog classification if behaviours persist without correction. Council makes every attempt to determine the nature and cause of all incidents but encourages dog owners to train their dogs appropriately and to keep dogs on lead when there is uncertainty around a public environment.

The Australian Veterinary Association[32] reinforces the need to be vigilant around all breeds of dog, not just 'restricted breed' dogs, particularly when they are around children.

5.7.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions – Dangerous, Menacing, and Restricted Breed Dogs	Year of Plan
30	Prepare a process for regular cross-reference microchip database information with current Council registration database for potential restricted breed dogs	Yr 1/ Ongoing
31	Review and enhance information for dog owners, particularly in relation to: • Criteria that determines if a dog owner has effective control of their dog • Dog behaviour that will potentially lead to a pet dog being 'declared' • Obedience training opportunities	Yr 2

31 2021-2022 APPA National Pet Owners Survey

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

5.8 Domestic Animal Businesses and Economic Contribution of Pets to the Economy

OBJECTIVES

To ensure that all Domestic Animal Businesses (DABS) comply with their legislative requirements and to strengthen partnerships with DABS.

5.8.1 What the research tells us

There are 12 Domestic Animal Businesses registered with Council. These include:

- 5 Pound/shelter establishments
- 3 Breeders
- 3 Pet/Vet Shops (selling pets)
- 1 Dog obedience school

The DAA requires for all Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) must be registered with Council, which will inspect DABs each year to ensure they comply with mandatory codes of practice and to offer any support and advice as may be necessary.

The average Australian dog-owning household spends an estimated $1,627 a year on their dogs and $962 on their cats. This represents a likely contribution to the local Melton economy of 83 million for services and products relating to cats and dogs.

Ref: AMA, p35

Council recognises that there is an opportunity to work with DABs as part of its economic development strategy to support and promote local enterprise. It also acknowledges that there are likely to be DABs that are unaware of their obligations under the DAA to register their business with Council and is keen to work with these businesses to assist them understand and comply with their obligations.

In addition, the DAMP recognises opportunities to work with the wider pet-related economy to support business diversity. A major platform of Council's Economic and Tourism Development Plan is to encourage business growth, and in particular a diverse range of local employment opportunities.

Ninety-five per cent of survey respondents said they were interested in knowing what dog obedience/education opportunities and/or activity groups were available in Melton

Council recognises, while not classified as domestic animal businesses under the Act, there are other community-based and private organisations that Council can also work with to address associated issues and opportunities. These may include dog obedience clubs, dog behaviourists and dog walking businesses.

The Victorian State Government introduced legislation in November 2017 that prohibits the sale of cats and dogs via pet shops unless they have come from an ethical source such as an animal shelter or pound, or a foster care organisation. From 1 July 2020, the source number of the breeder of any dog or cat, or the source number of the Council pound, animal shelter, pet shop or foster carer that owns the animal will be required when implanting a microchip into a dog or cat born after that date.

The Pet Exchange Register is an online database where individuals, organisations and businesses can register for a 'source number'.

This identifies where cats and dogs have come from and encourages responsible pet breeding and sourcing of pets from ethical avenues.

5.8.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions – Domestic Animal Businesses & Economic Contribution of Pets to the Economy	Year of Plan
32	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
33	Review information for and about DABs on Council's website	Yr 1
34	Initiate discussions with DABs to identify opportunities to work together to promote responsible ownership of pets.	Yr 4

5.9 Provision for Dogs in Public Places

OBJECTIVES

To ensure that all Domestic Animal Businesses (DABS) comply with their legislative requirements and to strengthen partnerships with DABS.

5.9.1 What the Research Tells Us

In Melton dog owners are required to have their dog on a lead in all public places except for 5 off-lead sites. Planning for dog owners and their dogs off-lead by local government has not been addressed as for other open space and community assets. As a result, provision has generally involved attempts to incorporate provision around or on existing park infrastructure that is often not compatible with dog off-lead activities.

Dogs can be off-lead in Melton at:

- Boronia Drive Reserve, Hillside
- Diggers Rest Recreation Reserve
- Fraser Street Reserve, Melton South
- Navan Park Reserve, Harkness
- Wireless Park, Aintree

Dogs must be on-lead elsewhere.

This is increasingly leading to conflict between dog owners, other users of parks and reserves and those with an interest in protecting sensitive environments. This is particularly relevant in relation to sports fields, natural areas, play spaces, picnic and BBQ areas, trails that may be within and off-lead area or adjoin it.

There is a frustration in the dog-owning community about the lack of dog off-lead areas and an associated lack of compliance with dog on-lead regulations as reported by Council staff. Council recognises the need to review provision for dogs off-lead as a priority and for the review of the Open Space Strategy to incorporate a framework for the effective planning and provision for dogs off-lead in the future.

There are significant community benefits to off-lead areas, particularly because they become hubs for community interaction, and as a focus for community development and strengthening initiatives associated with dogs, and the management and control of dogs.

'Off-lead areas are good for trained dogs. The problem is that many owners don't bother training them and expect them to be responsive and well-behaved.'

Pet Survey respondent, 2021

An industry Technical Manual[33] cautions against the rapid proliferation of fenced off-lead areas in the absence of a thorough understanding of dog and human behaviour in these

33 Extracts from Planning, Design and Management of Off-Lead Areas Technical Manual (including Fenced Off-lead Areas, L. Humphreys, 2019

environments, and the management, including risk management, matters that should be considered. The manual recommends that off-lead areas should be predominantly unfenced. It also recommends that fenced off-lead areas should be planned on a catchment basis, and be of a size, shape and design that best helps to manage dog behaviour.

Dog owners not picking up their dog's litter is/has been the primary issue of concern[34] to 81% Pet Survey respondents. This is followed by owners letting their dogs off-lead in on-lead areas (68% of respondents), owners letting their dogs annoy other people's dogs (45%) or other people (50%).

This is consistent with findings in previous surveys undertaken in the outer east of Melbourne. Anecdotal feedback from Pet Survey respondents reinforces community frustration about the control of dogs in public places.

Twenty-six per cent of Pet Survey respondents do not support off-lead areas, including 17% of dog owners, and 40% of respondents admitted to occasions when their dog has not responded to their 'recall command'. Of concern is the 33% of respondents who stated they go to fenced off-lead areas because they do not have to supervise their dog so closely. This highlights that many dog owners are not aware of the different dog behaviour that can occur in these enclosed environments and their legislated obligations to control their dog.

Pet survey respondents provide the following feedback in relation to fenced off-lead areas:

- they attract poorly controlled or behaved dogs (39% of respondents)
- they have stopped going to fenced off-lead areas because of poorly controlled dogs (38% of respondents), overcrowding (40%), or degradation of the site (33%)
- they have seen more aggression in fenced as opposed to unfenced off-lead areas (28% of respondents)

Council recognises that with the expected increase in dogs in line with the population increase that there will be a need to ensure dog owners fully understand their responsibilities. To this end Council will work closely with relevant community and commercial organisations to develop and encourage participation in dog training and control initiatives.

Council has recently entered into a new initiative with the Lost Dogs Home to run a series of educational programs that introduce dog owners to basic dog obedience techniques, encourage a better understanding of dog behaviour and body language, and behaviour management practices.

34 Of concern now or has been a concern in the past

5.9.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions – Provision for Dogs in Public Places	Year of Plan
35	Work with community-based and commercial dog training providers to develop initiatives and incentives that encourage dog owners to attend dog training and obedience classes.	Yr 3
36	Consider the need for a comprehensive Dog Off/On-Lead Policy and Provision Plan that addresses matters such as: • a policy rationale • the distribution of off-lead areas, including fenced off-lead areas • the type and level of provision • the pros and cons of shared spaces for off-lead activities e.g. sports fields • association/proximity of on/off-lead provision in relation to other open space assets e.g. play spaces, trails, BBQ/picnic areas.	Yr 1
37	Ensure that all off-lead areas are designated in line with the Victorian LGA requirements.	Yr 1

5.10 Pound Services and Facilities and Rehoming of Pets

OBJECTIVE

To ensure the proposed new pound facilities and services align with industry best practice, and optimise opportunities for partnerships with key community-based and professional organisations and stakeholders

5.10.1 What the research tells us

Council has resolved to upgrade its pound facilities in the 2021/22 financial year and has prepared preliminary plans that will ensure compliance with relevant codes of practice. Feedback from the Pet Survey indicates there is a low level of awareness of Council's plans to upgrade and modernise the pound facilities.

Survey respondents and anecdotal feedback supports the need for pound practices that are in line with community expectations and modern-day pound/shelter practices, and support Council's initiatives. This highlights an opportunity for Council to promote the progressive work it is doing in terms of the care and welfare of animals that come into its care.

Council recognises there is a negative perception in the community about animal pounds, the care and fate of animals who enter pound facilities, and the need to address terminology and practices around these facilities. Council also recognises the need to identify and optimise opportunities to rehome and/or transfer appropriate pets to rehoming facilities and organisations.

Currently Council has agreements with 28 rehoming organisations who rehome many animals from the Melton pound. Many of these groups are struggling because they do not receive any funding for their rehoming activities which generally incur direct costs associated with desexing, vaccinations, veterinary care, and feeding. Council is not currently in a position to rehome significant numbers of pets from its pound facility and relies on the good will of these groups in order to maintain positive statistics relating to the rehoming and low euthanasia rates of pets that enter the Melton pound.

There is a need to ensure accurate reporting of statistics relating to the rehoming of pets that are transferred to rehoming groups and to ensure that groups have the appropriate registrations and protocols in place.

Section 6.3 highlighted partnership opportunities to assist Council address pet overpopulation issues, and facility options that could optimise outcomes relating to these matters e.g. public-private-community partnerships/collaborations. Consideration could be given to opportunities to incorporate respective facilities in the design of the new pound and medium to longer term construction plans.

Pet Survey insights about the term pound and the plight of animals in pound. Of respondents:

- 72% believe the general public believe an 'animal pound' to be a place where animals are euthanised
- 55% associate an 'animal pound' as a place where animals are euthanised
- 54% are concerned they could not retrieve their animal before it was euthanised or rehomed
- 77% say the term 'animal pound' needs to change in order to better reflect the modern-day practices and care of animals impounded

Ref: Pet Survey 2021

'It's great you have a focus on rehoming.'

'We had a very positive experience of the pound when we found a stray kitten.'

'Current facility is dated and not sufficient for staff or animal needs'

Ref: Pet Survey comments

5.10.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Pound Services and Facilities and Rehoming of Pets	Year of Plan
38	Ensure relevant sector input to the new pound facility in order to: • ensure modern day design and functionality • optimise design outcomes relating to current needs and future expansion options • explore opportunities for integrated private and public funding for provision and operation	Yr 1- 3
39	Prepare a reporting template for all 84Y groups so that Council has accurate records as to the rehoming status of all animals transferred to these groups	Yr 1
40	Ensure all groups Council has an 84Y agreement with are registered with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits register (ACNC register) and are up to date with compliance reporting	Yr 2
41	Consider supplementary funding for each animal transferred to rehoming groups in consideration of the direct costs associated with the rehoming of pets from the Melton pound.	Yr 2 ongoing

5.11 Pets and Domestic Violence

OBJECTIVES

Enhanced organisation and community recognition of the contribution pets make to community life and personal wellbeing by:

- encouraging a balanced understanding of the community and family strengthening benefits of pets vs the challenges associated with pets
- identifying and building on health and wellbeing initiatives associated with pets
- recognising the importance of and need for support networks for pets and pet owners in times of crisis.

5.11.1 What the Research Tells Us

Council's Equality and Respect Strategy highlights that he City of Melton has the fourth highest rate of family violence in metropolitan Melbourne, and a rate of 1,468 incidents for 100,000 people, and the second highest incidence in the North-West Metropolitan Region. In addition, the city has the 10th highest number of family violence incidents in Victoria.[35]

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence[36] reports that up to 40% of domestic violence victims are unable to escape their abusers because they are concerned about the welfare of their pets and only 12% of domestic violence programs can provide shelter for pets. Another 24% provide referral services to local animal welfare organisations, however this leaves families separated from their pets and uncertain of their wellbeing.

An Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service (EDVOS) report states that:

- over 52% of women delay leaving a domestic violence situation out of concern for their pets
- 53 % of women in violent relationships reported pets being hurt or killed 46% reported their pets had been threatened.[37]

Ninety-seven percent of respondents to the Pet Survey said that the safety of pets in situations of domestic violence was important to them, with 70% saying it was very important to them.

Council provides some temporary support to a limited number of families in crisis. The opportunity to support families is extremely limited due to the capacity of the pound. In addition, Council recognises that the pound environment is not suitable for the medium to longer term accommodation of pets who are often traumatised by their experience and at being separated from their family.

Council recognises the need for the review of service planning documents to recognise and address matters relating to pet owners and their pets. This is in recognition of the importance of pets to their families and the need to optimise safe environments for pets.

Pet Survey respondents concerns about pets in relation to domestic violence:

- 93% - the number concerned about the welfare of pets in domestic violence situations
- 11% concerned about a pet in a current domestic violence situation
- 6% the number concerned about a pet in a past domestic violence situation

Ref: Pet Survey, 2021

35 Equality and Respect 2030, p16

36 National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Pets and Domestic Violence; Every Home A Safe Home

37 Royal Commission into Family Violence Submission: The Link Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse, Judy Johnson OAM

5.11.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions – Pets and Domestic Violence	Year of Plan
42	Work with relevant agencies to optimise networking between organisations that support pet-owning families in situations of domestic violence.	Yrs 3/4
43	Work with domestic violence organisations to help promote awareness of assistance for pet owners experiencing domestic violence	Yr 2
44	Review the Municipal Emergency Animal Welfare Sub-Plan to ensure all necessary procedures and protocols are detailed.	Yr 2
45	Ensure that the review of relevant Council strategies/documents, including the Equality and Respect Strategy, address matters relating to the pet-owning community, particularly in terms of domestic violence etc.	Ongoing

5.12 Town and Community Planning and Pets

5.12.1 What the Research Tells Us

Melton remains the fourth fastest growing LGAs in Australia and the second fastest growing LGA in Victoria, has a diverse mix of urban, semi-urban and rural households, and a large a diverse multi-cultural community. In 2016 nearly 30% of the population was born overseas with the largest changes in birthplace countries between 2011 and 2016 were for those from India, the Philippines, New Zealand and Sudan/ South Sudan.

The increasingly diverse ethnic population means there is likely to be different perceptions[38] and attitudes towards pets and contact with pets/dogs in public places. In addition, some ethnic groups, because of their lack of contact with dogs are more likely to be fearful of dogs, and not know how to respond to approaches from dogs.

According to the SEIFA index the City of Melton is not considered to have a significant level of disadvantage, however this contrasts significantly with suburbs within Melton that do experience disadvantage including Melton, Melton South, Melton West, Kurunjang and Brookfield.[39] Issues relating to pets are likely to more pronounced in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and complaints relating to pets in Melton are more prevalent in these communities.

Pet owners are generally families with children living in larger free-standing houses and are less likely to come from CALD backgrounds. However, 31% of pet owners will live in another form of accommodation including units and apartments and on small allotments.

While pet ownership is likely to be lower in apartments a survey conducted in the US found that 75% of renters owned pets, mainly cats and dogs. This was a significant spike from only 43% twelve months prior.[40] Recent rulings in Australia reject blanket bans on pets in rental accommodation on the basis that it discriminates against pet owners.[41]

38 https://hraf.yale.edu/unconditional-love-is-devotion-to-pets-a-cultural-universal/

39 https://profile.id.com.au/melton/seifa-disadvantage-small-area

40 https://www.aol.com/on/survey-most-renters-have-pets/

41 https://www.tenants.org.au/blog/pets-and-strata-win-its-only-first-step

The City of Melton has significant housing stock on small allotments. This places additional demands on open space for structured (e.g. sport) and unstructured (e.g. walking, play, dog off-lead areas) recreation activities because backyards are not able to accommodate family needs as in the past with larger allotments.

Planning for open space must consider the additional requirements that will naturally occur in areas with small residential allotments and/ or where houses accommodate more of the allotment. Currently the Open Space Strategy or the planning scheme make reference to off-lead provision for dog owners/dogs. Provision in new subdivisions should consider 0.5 - 2 hectares of open space for off-lead provision depending on the size of the catchment being catered for and the buffers required between off-lead areas and other parkland activity. Provision should be in line with Council's open space provision framework as for other types of open space.

5.12.2 Actions to Address Emerging Priorities

	Actions - Town and Community Planning and Pets	Year of Plan
46	Consider the appointment of a Community Development/Liaison Officer to support initiatives relating to: • control/obedience/training of dogs and associated partnerships with community stakeholders • dog owner responsibilities re control of dogs/dog etiquette • women/families with pets in domestic violence situations • Community Cat Program (including stray cat, cat containment and cat desexing initiatives) • localised initiatives to address pet related issues in target/ problematic locations.	Yr 1
47	Ensure Council's open space and urban/town planning processes consider the implications of dog ownership, particularly in medium and high-density residential areas	Yr 1 ongoing
48	Encourage residential developers to incorporate creative initiatives to accommodate pets. These may include options for cat runs.	Yrs 3/4

6. How We Prepared 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 the Council and Wellbeing Plan, Equality and Respect 2030, Intercultural Plan, and the Open Space Strategy. Consultation and community engagement carried out specifically for the Domestic Animal Management Plan involved:

- An online survey (210) including written comments
- Submissions (7)
- Council staff workshop and interviews, including with staff from community development, town planning, infrastructure, environmental, recreation, and open space
- Two community forums
- Consultation with benchmarking Councils
- Consultation with key industry groups, including Getting to Zero (G2Z), foster care groups, and veterinarians

7. How we will implement the Domestic Animal Management Plan

7.1 Setting Priorities for the Next Four Years

The action plan identifies the year in which Council proposes to address the recommendation. However, priorities in the Domestic Animal Management 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.

7.2 Council's Role in implementing the Domestic Animal Management Plan

Council will not necessarily perform the same function when implementing each of the recommendations in the Action Plan. The following outlines the various roles that Council may undertake in order to optimise use of Council resources:

- Infrastructure provision
- Service Management
- Advice and Information
- Partnership engagement
- Advocacy
- Innovation

The consolidated Action Plan identifies the primary role that Council will take when implementing the recommendation.

7.3 Monitoring and Reviewing the Plan

In line with the requirements of the Act:

- Council will review the Domestic Animal Management 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 year four.

8. The Consolidated Action Plan

	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
Training of 'Authorised Officers' and Service Responsiveness			
1	Continue to review and modify staff training schedules in line with service requirements.	Ongoing	**C**
2	Conduct a review of Animal Management Services resourcing requirements that better reflect the demands of the service, particularly in relation to: • the number of cats and dogs estimated to reside in Melton • park patrols in line with agreed/reviewed requirements • increased demands associated with litigation matters • the rehoming of pets • community education and promotional initiatives relating to the control and behaviour of dogs • hidden/transferred costs associated with the rehoming of pets • the planning and management for the new animal holding and transfer facility • supporting volunteers/volunteer groups.	Yr 1 $5,000	**C**
3	Refer recommendation 46 in section 'Town and Community Planning and Pets'	Yr 1	C, **CS**, **CP**, CD, PS
4	Identify staff to undertake CRAF (Common Risk Assessment Framework) or similar training (Family Violence).	Ongoing Within operational budget	

	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
5	Prepare a brief that clearly articulates the service's IT/technology requirements, particularly as it relates to the plotting of incidents/ complaints and context information.	Yr 1 Within operational budget	**C, IT**
Promotion of Responsible Pet Ownership and Compliance with Legislation			
6	Identify responsible pet ownership material that is relevant to the Melton community and promote: • through Council's web site • to relevant organisations and agencies	Yr 2+ Within operational budget	**C, E**
7	Continue to attend the Djerriwarrh Pet Expo	Ongoing Within operational budget	**C**
8	Investigate other opportunities to raise awareness of: • pet owner obligations • community support organisations • community networking opportunities	Ongoing Within operational budget	**C**
Overpopulation & Abandonment of Pets			
9	Conduct a briefing/information session for Councillors to inform decision-makers of the highly credited research and strategies for addressing the high levels of stray cat and kitten and associated high euthanasia rates	Yr 1	**C**

Action Plan Legend: **Lead Department in Bold**. C=Community Safety, CC=Community Care, CD=City Design & Strategy, CP=Community Planning, CS=Community Services, F=Finance, E=Engagement/ Advocacy, FC=Family & Children, IT=Info Technology, O=Operations, P=Planning Services, PD=Planning & Develt.'

	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
10	Partner with key stakeholders to establish a 'Melton Community Cat Program' with the purpose of: • developing an overall strategy for addressing cat and human welfare matters associated with stray/semi-owned cats based on proven and scientifically based trials and strategies • determine Council's role • determine target localities • encouraging community and sector involvement • informing the community of strategies and the basis for these • forming a collective of Councils and stakeholders in the region to address issues	These functions will be incorporated into the Community Development role Yr 2 Yr 2 Yr 2 Yr 2 Yrs 2-4 Yr 4	**C, CP**
11	Consider an annual budget allocation towards cat desexing program: • as part of a strategic Melton Community Cat Program collective (new initiative) • to encourage involvement by the research/ academic, peak association and community sector stakeholders	Yr 2 ongoing Within operational budget	**C, Council**
12	Optimise existing opportunities for desexing of cats regardless of animal ownership. Initiatives may include: • mobile desexing services • free and discounted desexing initiatives • partnering with community-based initiatives	Yr 2-4 Within operational budget	**C**
13	Work with all shelters, rehoming groups, veterinary clinics etc. to investigate the opportunity to establish a voluntary reporting protocol database for pets surrendered through these organisations. Information should include but not be limited to numbers; where animals come from; if they are desexed; and outcome (e.g. rehomed, euthanised etc.)	Yr 2 Within operational budget	**C, CP**

	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
14	Promote adoption of pets from shelters and rehoming groups and associated benefits; and provide information that dispels the myths associated with pets in shelters (e.g. they are problem animals).	Yr 1 ongoing	**C**, E
15	Consider Council's current position on only registering desexed cats in order to encourage the registration of all cats including fully and semi-owned.	Yr 1 Within operational budget	**C**, Council
Registration and Identification			
16	Investigate industry strategies that have been successful in increasing the level of cat and dog registrations, and identify initiatives that may help increase pet registrations in Melton	Yrs 1-4 Within operational budget	**C, Council**
17	Determine priority strategies for implementation over the next 4 years to increase cat and dog registrations, particularly in areas where registrations are low in terms of industry estimations of ownership	Yr 2 ongoing Within operational budget	**C**, F
18	Investigate opportunities to refine the online pet registration process/portal	Ongoing	**C**, IT
19	Review cat and dog registration fees in consideration of: • anticipated increase in registrations over the life of the DAMP in line with industry estimations of likely real ownership • dogs that undergo recognised education and behaviour training • cost of securing increase registrations e.g. door knocks • benefits that might accrue to dog vs cat owners • funding of a Community Cat Program • perceived benefit by the community	Yr 2 Within operational budget	**C**, F

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	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
20	Review requirement for cats to be desexed before they are registered on the basis: • that this has not addressed the stray cat/cat overpopulation issue • has likely acted as a disincentive for undesexed and semi-owned cats to be registered.	Yrs 2 Within operational budget	**C**
Nuisance Issues			
21	Plot (GIS) the occurrence of each type of animal related incident and fully document context information to inform targeted remedies based on location, age of people involved etc. (Dependent on access to relevant IT systems/ technology)	Yr 1 Ongoing Within operational budget	Yr 1 Ongoing Within operational budget
22	Accurately determine the real cost of dealing with barking dog complaints and consider the cost benefit of partnering with animal behaviorists to work with Council to address issues. Consideration should be given to the PR benefits of this approach as well as to the economic/budget benefits.	Yr 2 Within operational budget	Yr 2 Within operational budget
23	Develop a whole-of-community approach (e.g. community, private and government sectors to help develop strategies that will address issues associated with: • non-compliance with on-lead regulations • behaviour and control of dogs in public places • owners not picking up their dog's droppings	Yr 2-4 Within operational budget	Yr 2-4 Within operational budget
24	Enlist the support of the community, private and government sectors to help develop strategies that will address issues associated with: • stray (including semi-owned, unowned) cats • cats not confined to properties	Yr 2-4 Refer recommendation xx	Yr 2-4 **Refer recommendation xx**
25	Review schedule of park patrols and consider opportunity for parks maintenance crews to provide relevant reports/observation	Yr 1	Yr 1

	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
26	Ensure: • the use of cat traps is monitored and in line with best industry practice in relation to the welfare and management of trapped cats • instructions for the ethical and appropriate use of traps is provided, and cats are immediately transferred to an appropriate care facility.	Yr 1 Within operational budget	Yr 1 Within operational budget
Dog Attacks			
27	Actively work with schools to increase the number of schools (students and parents) involved in programs focused on safe behaviours around dogs.	Yr 3 Within operational budget	**FC**, C, CC, E
28	Develop and target programs/initiatives at identified target locations/populations. Consider messaging options involving: • Schools • Pre-schools • Direct text messaging to dog owners with young children	Yr 4 Within operational budget	**C, CC**, FC, IT
29	Review opportunities to effectively inform parents and families, and the general community about: • Keeping children safe around pets • The appropriate selection of pets	Yr 2-4 Within operational budget	**FC**, CC, C
Dangerous, Menacing, and Restricted Breed Dogs			
30	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	**C**

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	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
31	Review and enhance information for dog owners, particularly in relation to: • Criteria that determines if a dog owner has effective control of their dog • Dog behaviour that will potentially lead to a pet dog being 'declared' • Obedience training opportunities	Yr 2 Within operational budget	**C, E, CP**
Domestic Animal Businesses and Economic Contribution of Pets to the Economy			
32	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 Within operational budget	**C**
33	Review information for and about DABs on Council's website	Yr 1 Within operational budget	C, E
34	Initiate discussions with DABs to identify opportunities to work together to promote responsible ownership of pets.	Yr 4 Within operational budget	**C**
Provision for Dogs in Public Places			
35	Work with community-based and commercial dog training providers to develop initiatives and incentives that encourage dog owners to attend dog training and obedience classes.	Yr 3 Within operational budget	**C, CP**, E
36	Consider the need for a comprehensive Dog Off/ On-Lead Policy and Provision Plan that addresses matters such as: • a policy rationale • the distribution of off-lead areas, including fenced off-lead areas • the type and level of provision • the pros and cons of shared spaces for off-lead activities e.g. sports fields • association/proximity of on/off-lead provision in relation to other open space assets e.g. play spaces, trails, BBQ/picnic areas.	Yr 1 $40,000	**CD**, C, O

	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
37	Ensure that all off-lead areas are designated in line with the Victorian LGA requirements.	Yr 1 Within operational budget	**C**
Pound Services and Facilities and Rehoming of Pets			
38	Ensure relevant sector input to the new pound facility in order to: • ensure modern day design and functionality • optimise design outcomes relating to current needs and future expansion options • explore opportunities for integrated private and public funding for provision and operation	Yr 1- 3 Within operational budget	**C**
39	Prepare a reporting template for all 84Y groups so that Council has accurate records as to the rehoming status of all animals transferred to these groups	Yr 1 Within operational budget	**C**
40	Ensure all groups Council has an 84Y agreement with are registered with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits register (ACNC register) and are up to date with compliance reporting	Yr 2 Within operational budget	**C**
41	Consider supplementary funding for each animal transferred to rehoming groups in consideration of the direct costs associated with the rehoming of pets from the Melton pound.	Yr 2 ongoing Within operational budget	**C, Council**
Pets and Domestic Violence			
42	Work with relevant agencies to optimise networking between organisations that support pet-owning families in situations of domestic violence.	Yrs 3-4 Refer recommendation 46	**CS**, C

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	Actions	Year of plan/ resourcing	Stakeholders
43	Work with domestic violence organisations to help promote awareness of assistance for pet owners experiencing domestic violence	Yr 2 Within operational budget	**CS**, C
44	Review the Municipal Emergency Animal Welfare Sub-Plan to ensure all necessary procedures and protocols are detailed.	Yr 2 $25,000	**C**
45	Ensure that the review of relevant Council strategies/documents, including the Equality and Respect Strategy, address matters relating to the pet- owning community, particularly in terms of domestic violence etc.	Ongoing Within operational budget	**PD**, CC, C
Town and Community Planning and Pets			
46	Consider the appointment of a Community Development/Liaison Officer to support initiatives relating to: control/obedience/training of dogs and associated partnerships with community stakeholders dog owner responsibilities re control of dogs/dog etiquette women/families with pets in domestic violence situations Community Cat Program (including stray cat, cat containment and cat desexing initiatives) localised initiatives to address pet related issues in target/ problematic locations.	Yr 1 $75,000	**C, Council**
47	Ensure Council's open space and urban/town planning processes consider the implications of dog ownership, particularly in medium and high-density residential areas	Yr 1 ongoing Ongoing Within operational budget	**PD**, C
48	Encourage residential developers to incorporate creative initiatives to accommodate pets. These may include options for cat runs.	Yrs 3-4 Within operational budget	**PD**, C

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9. 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

Measure	2016/17	2020/21	Difference
Resident population [1]	141,420	185,471	44,051
Households	45,339	58,597	13,258
DOGS			
Number of registered dogs	14,652	16,997	2,345
per 100 people	10.4	9.2	-1
Estimated total dog population (based on 40% of households owning 1.3 dogs)	23,576	30,4706	6,894
Number of desexed registered dogs	-	10,708	-
As a % of registered dogs	-	63.0%	-
Number of registered 'declared' dogs	43	56	0
Number of impounded dogs	1,181	1,112	-69
Number of impounded dogs returned to owner	790	699	-91
As a % of impounded dogs	66.9%	62.9%	-4.0%
Number of dogs rehoused	307	150	-157
As a % of impounded dogs	26.0%	13.5%	-12.5%
Number of dogs euthanased	38	75	37
As a % of impounded dogs	3.2%	6.7%	3.5%
Number dogs not registered when impound	-	-	-
As a % of impounded dogs	-	-	-
CATS			
Number of registered cats	3,697	5,694	1,997
per 100 people	3	3	0
Estimated total cat population based on 27% of households owning 1.4 cats	17,138	22,150	-
Number of desexed registered cats	-	5,523	-
As a % of registered cats	-	97%	-
Number of impounded cats	676	1,251	575
Number of impounded cats returned to owner	46	60	14
As a % of impounded cats	6.8%	4.8%	-2.0%
Number of cats rehoused	256	587	331
As a % of impounded cats	37.9%	46.9%	9.0%
Number of cats euthanased	336	200	-136
As a % of impounded cats	49.7%	16.0%	-34%
Number cats registered when impound	-	-	-
As a % of impounded cats	-	-	-

Measure	2016/17	2020/21	Difference
CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUESTS/COMPLAINTS			
Cat nuisance	3	4	1
% of total requests			0.1
Dog – wandering	849	763	-86
% of total requests	81.4%	74.4%	-7.0%
Dog nuisance	0	5	5
% of total requests	0%	0.5%	0.5%
Dog attack	83	156	83
% of total requests	8.0%	15.2%	8.0%
Dog rush	42	11	42
As a % of all complaints	4.0%	1.1%	4.0%
Dog – barking	66	87	66
% of total requests	6.3%	8.5%	2.2%
Customer service requests/complaints - TOTAL	**1,043**	**1,026**	**-17 / 7.6%**
Customer service requests/complaints per 1,000 residents	**7.4**	**5.5**	**1.9**
INFRINGEMENT NOTICES			
Dog – wandering at large	849	763	-86
Dog and cat - failure to register	541	516	-25
Dog – nuisance	0	5	5
Infringement notices - TOTAL	**1,390**	**1,284**	**-106 / -8%**
Infringement notices per 1,000 residents	**9.8**	**6.9**	**-2.9**

Appendix 3 – Operational Information

1. Authorised Officer Training and Qualification Requirements

Qualifications/ Training	STAFF MEMBER									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	R1	R2	R TL	AA1	AA2	AA TL	AA3	AA4	AM(C)	AM(A)
Cert IV Animal Control/Gov't Reg./ Relevant Industry Experience	X	X	X			X			X	
Customer Service Training/ Dealing with Difficult Customers	X-	X-R	X-R	X-R	X-R	X-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	X-R	Yr 1-R
Animal Holding Facility/Shelter Operations				X-R	X-R	X-R	X-R	X-R		
Breed Identification	X-R	X-R	X-R	X-R	X-R	X-R	X-R	Yr 1-X	X-R	
Firearms Qualification/ Training	Yr 2-R	Yr 2 -R				X-R			X-R	
Aggressive Dog Handling Training	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R		
Bite Stick Training	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R		
Animal Assessment	Yr 2-R	Yr 2-R	Yr 2-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	X-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R		
Writing-Reports/ Procedures/General Correspondence	Yr 2-R	Yr 2-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 2-R	Yr 2-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 2-R	Yr 2-R	X-R	Yr 1-R
Investigation/ Prosecution/ Statement Taking Training	X-R	Yr 1-R	X-R			X-R			X-R	
Common Risk Assess't Framework (CRAFD)/ Domestic Violence Training	X-R	Yr 1-R	X-R	X-R	Yr 1-R	X-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	X-R	
Australian Institute of Animal Management- Annual Conference									X-R	
G2Z Conference			Yr 1-R			Yr 1-R			Yr 1-R	
Livestock Training	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R	Yr 1-R		

LEGEND: X = Completed; Yr # = Year To Be Completed; R = Revision;
A=Admin; AA=Animal Attendant; C=Co-ordinator; R=Ranger; TL=Team Leader

2. Key Service Activities

KEY SERVICE ACTIVITIES	FREQUENCY
STAFF TRAINING AND SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS	
Review of Animal Management staff training requirements in line with changing operational requirements and Council's continuous improvement policy	Annual
Maintain accurate skills and knowledge register	Ongoing
Ensure Council representation at the annual Australian Institute of Animal Management Conference	Annual
Review of the Municipal Emergency Animal Welfare Sub-Plan	Bi-annual
REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION	
Collection and processing of state government pet registration levy	
Targeted (e.g. district, suburb) program to identify unregistered cats and dogs e.g. door knocks, public relations/media campaign	
Registration notifications • Renewal notices sent out • Advertising in local media • Advertising in Council's newsletter • Advertising on Council's website • Renewal notices • Registration reminder notices • Text messaging e.g. registration renewal reminders	 Annual 1st week in April Quarterly Ongoing Early March Mid / late May As required
Micro chipping days and promotion at Djerriwarrh Pet Expo	Annual
Discount microchipping for pension card holders	TBC
Issuing of infringement notices	Ongoing
Discounted registration rates for desexed cats and dogs	Ongoing
NUISANCE ISSUES	
Provision of cat traps	As required
Investigation of complaints relating to excess number of animals	As reported

KEY SERVICE ACTIVITIES	FREQUENCY
DOG ATTACKS	
Liaison with pre-schools to ensure parents and children have access to dog behaviour awareness programs and information.	Bi-annual
Review information on Council's website relating to safe/appropriate behaviour of children round pets, and parental monitoring responsibilities, particularly in relation to dogs.	Ongoing
Patrols of public places such as reserves, retail precincts, trails etc., particularly during high use times such as community events	Ongoing
Investigation of dog attacks/dog rushes/menacing dogs etc.	Ongoing
Preparation of legal documentation for court proceedings relating to pet related incidents/liaison with legal representation/court attendance	Ongoing
DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS	
Assessment of all restricted breed, menacing and dangerous dogs and associated properties to ensure compliance with requirements	Annual
Review of registration and microchip databases to identify possible / suspect 'restricted breed dogs	Annual
Consultation with owners of dogs declared as 'dangerous', 'menacing' and/ or are a 'restricted breed' dog	Ongoing
OVERPOPULATION AND ABANDONMENT OF PETS	
Information in Council Newsletter	Annual
Information handed out at Djerriwarrh Pet Expo	Annual
Information to encourage pet owners to desex cats and dogs	Ongoing – Council website
Liaison with key interest groups, commercial and community sectors to address cat over population matters	Ongoing/Quarterly network meetings
DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES	
Annual inspection of DABs	Annual
Inspection of reported backyard breeders	As required
PROVISION FOR DOGS OFF-LEAD	
Monitoring of high use and problematic sites for compliance	Annual-targeted monitoring/patrols
Monitoring of community events and high use areas	As required

3. Education and Promotional Activities

CURRENT EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES S	FREQUENCY
RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP AND COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION	
Information provided online	Online - ongoing
As per information below	As per designated schedule
OVERPOPULATION (including euthanasia) AND ABANDONMENT OF PETS	
Information in Council Newsletter	Annual
Information handed out at Djerriwarrh Pet Expo	Annual
Information to encourage pet owners to desex cats and dogs	Ongoing – Council website
REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION	
Registration information on Council's website	Ongoing
New resident Pet Ownership Pack delivered to new residents	As required
Information brochure for pet owners on rural properties distributed	Annual
NUISANCE ISSUES	
Barking dogs – Information provided to relevant dog owners	Brochures – ongoing Online - ongoing
Liaison with commercial providers that can work with residents to address: • dog obedience control issues • barking dog issues	Annual consultation Promotion ongoing via Council website
Cat confinement - Information provided to relevant cat owners	Brochures – ongoing Online - ongoing
Djerriwarrh Pet Expo - Information and 'expert' presenters	Annual
Information on Council's web site on: • Desexing/benefits of desexing of pets • Managing barking dogs • Off-lead requirements	Online - ongoing
DOG ATTACKS	
Information for pre-schools to ensure parents and children have access to dog behaviour awareness programs and information.	Ongoing
Information on Council's website relating to safe/appropriate behaviour of children round pets, and parental monitoring responsibilities, particularly in relation to dogs.	Ongoing
Information provided at Djerriwarrh Pet Expo	Annual
Information available at Council offices and Council website	Ongoing
Media releases - Information about owner responsibilities relating to the control of dogs in public places	Annual

CURRENT EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES S	FREQUENCY
DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS	
Assessment of all restricted breed, menacing and dangerous dogs and associated properties to ensure compliance with requirements	Annual
Review of registration and microchip databases to identify possible / suspect 'restricted breed dogs	Annual
Consultation with owners of dogs declared as 'dangerous', 'menacing' and/or are a 'restricted breed' dog	Ongoing
Information provided at 'Pets in the Park' annual event about: • the implications of owning a restricted breed, dangerous or menacing dog • preventative measures	Annual
Information provided on Council website as to: • the appropriate housing of 'dangerous', 'menacing' and/or a 'restricted breed' dog • appropriate selection of dogs for the family and community environment	Online - ongoing
DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES	
Provision of written material provided by state government and peak associations at Council offices	Ongoing
Information on Council's website to support DABs comply with relevant legislation and best practice	Online - ongoing
PROVISION FOR DOGS OFF-LEAD	
Information on Council website: • about on and off-leash requirements, including orders • identifying off-leash sites and sites where dogs are prohibited	Online - ongoing

4. Procedures

Documented guidelines/work instructions/ procedures relating to the following are in place:

- Impounding of Domestic Animals
- Wandering animals
- Stock wandering/ pick up
- Dog attack/ rush
- Pound Operations
- Impounding of seized dogs
- Animal registration and renewal
- Barking dogs
- Seizing of dogs
- Dog attack prosecution investigation
- Issuing of Infringements notices
- Permit application – Excess animals
- Working in isolation – Rangers
- Feeding of Animals
- Pound Security
- Surrendered Animals
- Use of Catchpole
- Animal Adoption
- Animal Transport
- Cleaning/set Up of Animal Pens
- Cleaning of Pound
- Euthanasia of Animals
- Socialising of Cats
- Handling non-urbanised/feral Cats
- High Risk Dogs
- Animal Assessment
- Quarantining of Animals
- Ranger Responsibilities
- Re-Homing

5. Relevant Service Plans

Municipal Emergency Animal Welfare Sub-Plan

Melton Civic Centre
232 High Street, Melton
T 9747 7200

Melton Library and Learning Hub
31 McKenzie Street, Melton
T 9747 7200

Caroline Springs Library and Learning Hub
193 Caroline Springs Boulevard
Caroline Springs
T 9747 7200

CITY OF MELTON