



# Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029

Community Consultation Report March 2025

Working towards a safe and liveable community



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# Introduction

## Background

*The Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires all Councils to prepare or renew a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every four years. Council reviews actions in the plan on an annual basis.

The DAMP identifies issues that Maroondah City Council will consider and address over the next four years. It provides the service planning and delivery framework for animal management services and includes the timeframe during which Council will address priorities identified in the plan.

Residents are able to provide feedback on the plan at any time, however this report details the methodology and outcomes of the most recent community engagement process undertaken to collect community feedback on the priorities that could be included in the DAMP.

## Objectives

Council recognises dogs and cats have an impact on health, wellbeing and lives of the whole community. Our objective is to encourage people to look after pets in a way that protects the health and welfare of the animal; maximises the companion benefits of their pet; and minimises potential for nuisance or harm to others.

Council has undertaken consultation with the community, pet owners and non-pet owners, to get their views on animal management in Maroondah.

The key objectives for the community engagement process were to gain an understanding of issues that are important to residents with regards to domestic animal management, and to establish:

- general concerns residents may have about domestic animal matters
- ideas and resources that could assist residents in caring for their pets
- suggestions to ensure animals and people live together harmoniously
- if information provided by Council about pets and animal management addresses community needs.

# Methods

## Community members

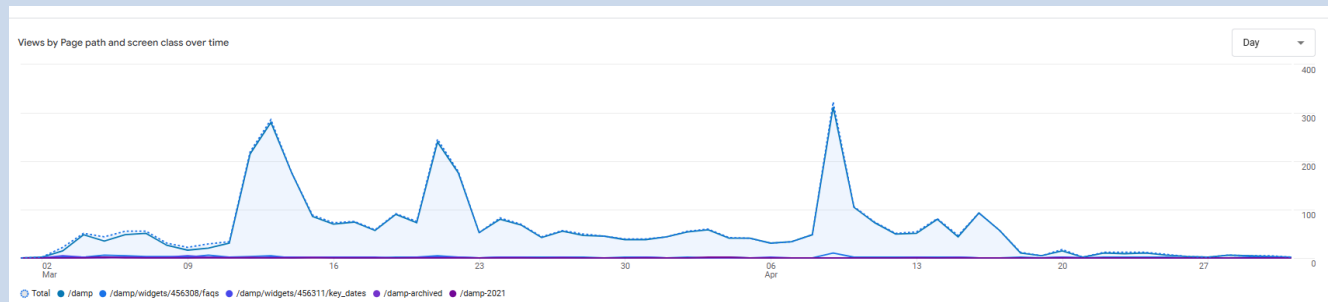
Consultation with community members was undertaken between 12 March and 17 April 2025.

| Engagement methods   | Outcomes  |
|--|---|
| Online survey via Your Say Maroondah                             | Engaged participants: 1,043<br>Informed participants: 1,463<br>Aware participants: 2,613<br><br>Survey visitors: 1,396<br>Survey contributors: 1,043<br>Survey contributions: 1,059<br><br><b>Total contributions at close: 1,059</b><br><br>Top three traffic sources: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Facebook (958 visits)</li><li>2. Maroondah City Council website (106 visits)</li><li>3. Google (89 visits)</li></ol> |
| Face-to-face pop-up events.                                      | Raised awareness and assisted with online survey.   |
| REALM - 20 March 2025, 11am to 1pm                               | Engagements: 9  |
| 'Dogs Day Out' (Parkwood Dog Park)<br>22 March 2025, 11am to 3pm | Engagements: 60+  |
| Main St Croydon - 27 March 2025, 11am to 1pm                     | Engagements: 10   |
| Railway Ave Ringwood East - 2 April 2025, 11-1pm                 | Engagements: 15   |
| Eastfield Dog Park - 8 April 2025, 11am to 1pm                   | Engagements: 8  |
| HE Parker Reserve - 14 April 2025, 4.30 to 6pm                   | Engagements: 7  |
| Liveability Safety and Amenity Committee - 28 May 2025           | Written response to questions provided  |
| Kerrabee Centre participants - 31 March 2025                     | 30 Engagements<br>4 hard copy survey submissions  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Animal Aid - 20 May 2025   | Report on recommendations provided  |
| Consultation with <b>internal stakeholders</b><br>30 June 2025                     | <p><b>Bushland Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary concern is people not picking up after their dogs or bagging poo and then throwing it into the bushland.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parks and Open Space</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above.</li> <li>Experiencing a spike in dogs being allowed to run up to staff or running in front of machinery being used to maintain open space. Owners are then aggressive when staff request the dog be controlled.</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions items for consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further education of dog owners (more targeted).</li> <li>A review of signage, both locations and messaging.</li> <li>Increased compliance and enforcement action (in selected locations).</li> <li>Reviewing out on/off leash parks and reserves and consider making premier sporting ovals no dog allowed.</li> </ul> |
| Consultation with internal stakeholders<br>11 July 2025                            | <p><b>Sport, Recreation and Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dogs off-leash on premier sporting ovals and causing damage eg: turf wickets</li> <li>Dogs off-leash at organised sporting events and/or training.</li> <li>People not picking up after their dogs on and around sporting facilities.</li> <li>Dogs at dog free events eg: Maroondah Festival and Carols by Candlelight</li> </ul> <p><b>Actions items for consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to implement education, compliance and enforcement activities at our high use, problematic parks and reserves.</li> <li>Consider making our premier sporting ovals dog free areas as part of a holistic review of the Council order and on/off-leash areas.</li> </ul>  |
| DAMP cards on display at customer service centres and facilities across Maroondah. | 2,000 cards were ordered. Unknown number taken.   |



## Website traffic



Time span: 1 March to 1 May 2025

Total views: 3,715

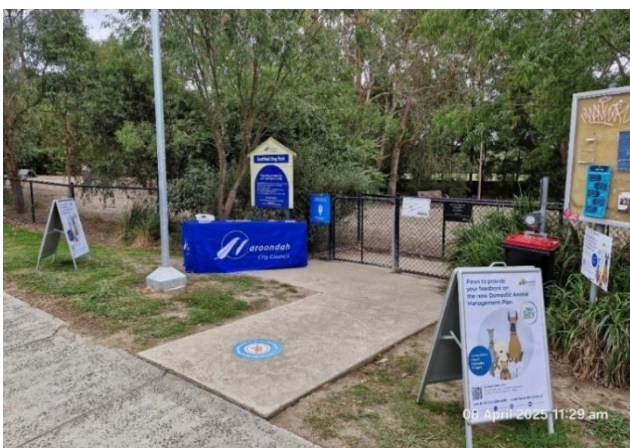
Peak views: Wednesday 9 April (322 views)

### Traffic source - top 10

- Facebook / paid-social (1063 views)
- (direct) / none (819 views)
- General campaigns / email (382 views)
- Maroondah City Council / email (352 views)
- EngagementHQ/ email (214 views)
- Google / organic (164 views)
- Poster / A2 (117 views)
- Facebook / organic - social (89 views)
- M.facebook.com / referral (85 views)
- Poster / A6 (55 views)

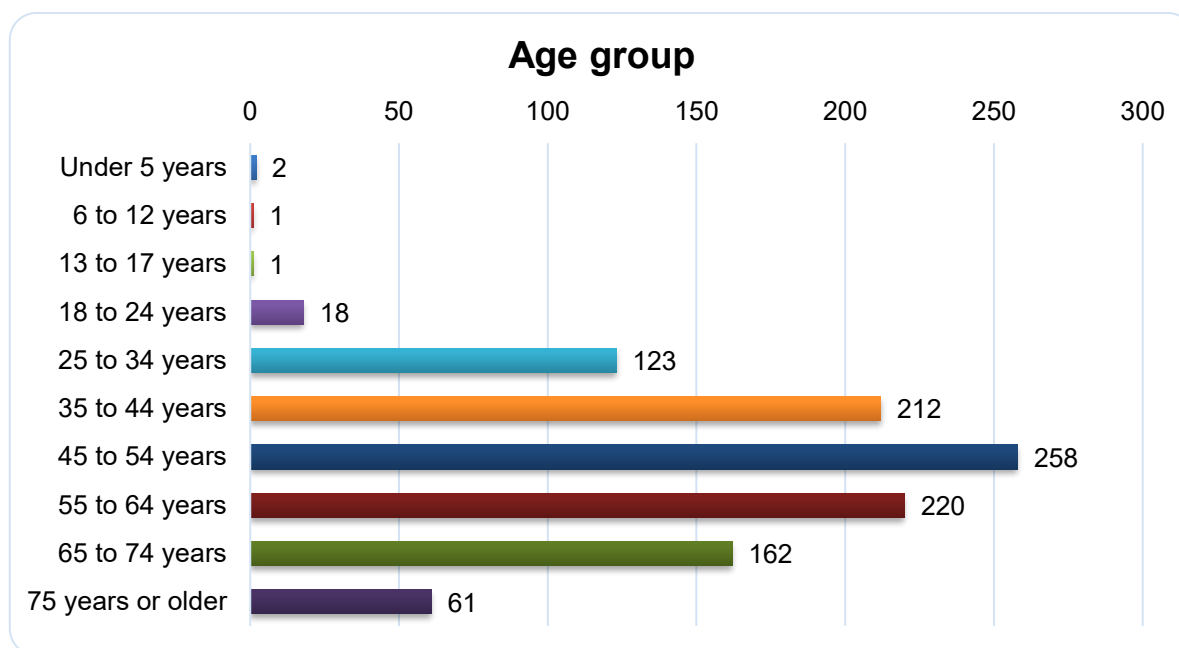
### Comments

- Paid socials were main source of website referrals with 28.6% from paid Facebook ads.
- Good click throughs from Engagement HQ emails and MCC direct emails.
- 117 referrals from the A2 poster is exceptionally high for print collateral - this would usually sit between 5-10. This could indicate that the poster was put up in a great/high traffic location.



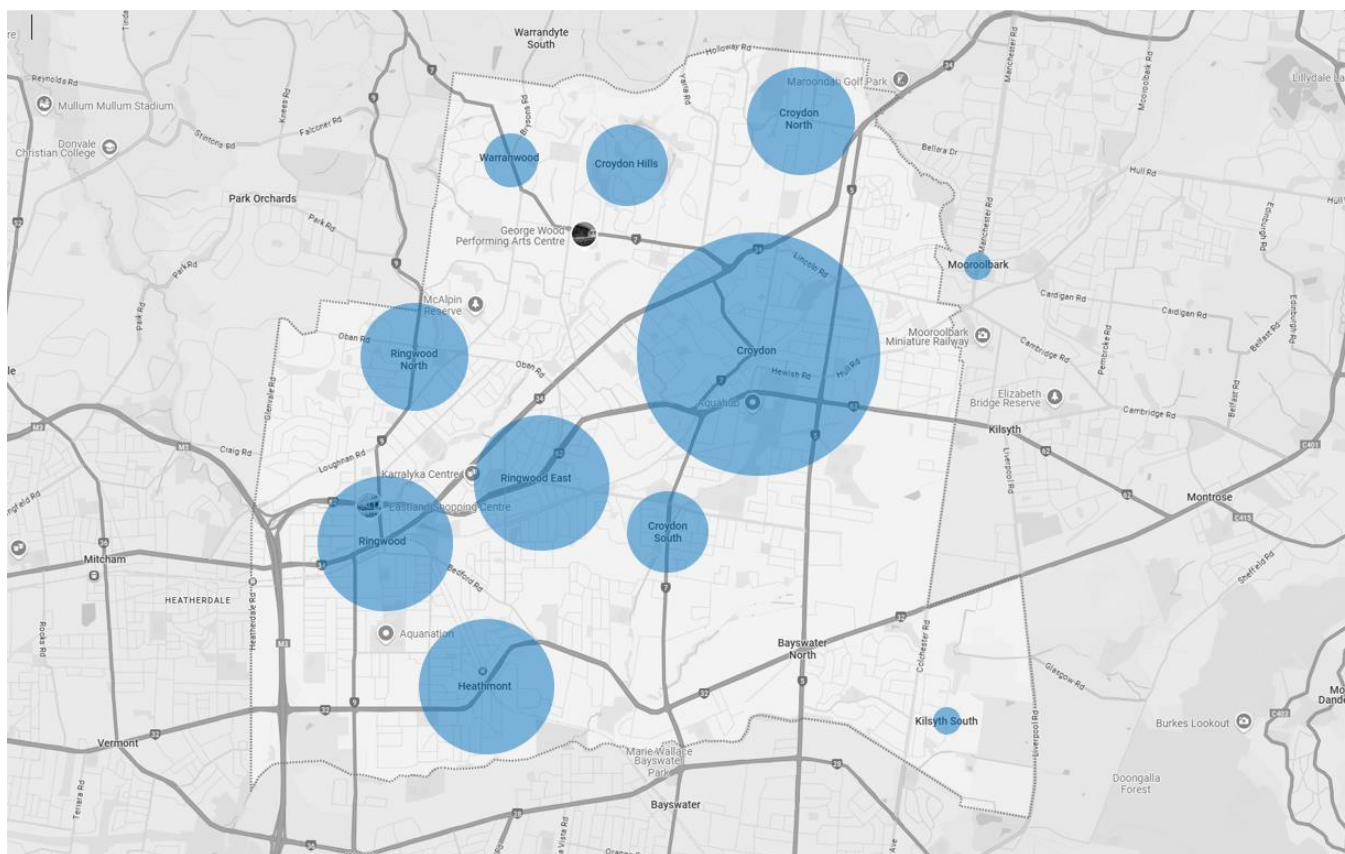
## Survey Participants

Highest level of participation was in the 45-54 age bracket with 258 respondents (24% of participants).



## Location

Participants came from 10 of the 11 suburbs in Maroondah with the highest representation from Croydon (20% of participants). There were also 58 participants from 33 suburbs outside Maroondah.



| Suburb          | Participants |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Croydon         | 215          |
| Ringwood East   | 123          |
| Ringwood        | 102          |
| Heathmont       | 101          |
| Ringwood North  | 84           |
| Croydon North   | 78           |
| Bayswater North | 78           |
| Croydon South   | 70           |
| Croydon Hills   | 64           |
| Warranwood      | 42           |
| Kilsyth South   | 21           |

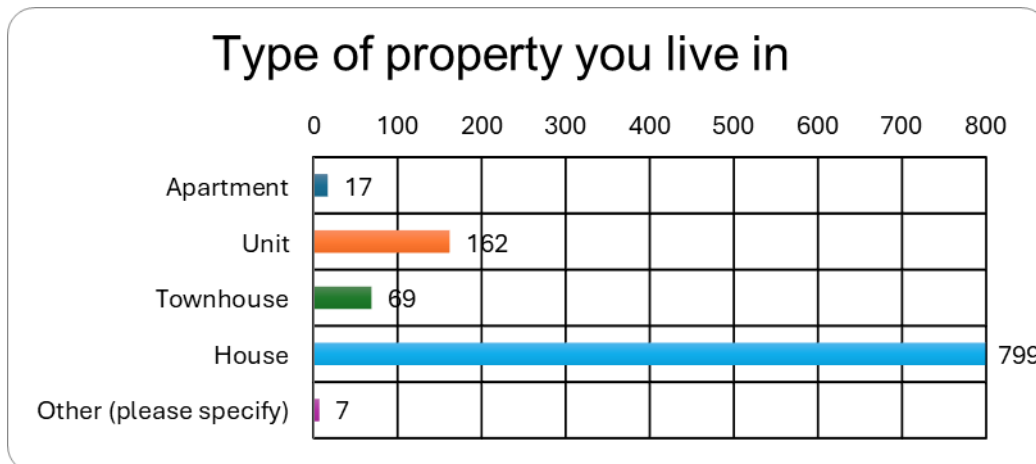
#### Suburbs outside Maroondah

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Kilsyth   | 22                     |
| Mooroolbark, Vermont  | 5 from each (10 total) |
| Ringwood NSW, Donvale   | 4 from each (8 total)  |
| Boronia, Rowville   | 3 from each (6 total)  |
| Lilydale, Blackburn, Vermont South, Bayswater, Blackburn North, Warrandyte South, Warrandyte  | 2 from each (14 total) |
| Wantirna South, Burwood, Nunawading, Montrose, Nunawading BC, Ferntree Gully, Rooty Hill NSW, Yarra Glen, Wantirna, Mitcham, Box Hill North, Wonga Park, Healesville, Chirnside Park, Badger Creek, Mount Evelyn, Sassafras Gully, Ferny Creek, Warburton, Doncaster East | 1 from each (20 total) |



## Type of property

Most participants that completed the survey live in a house (76%).



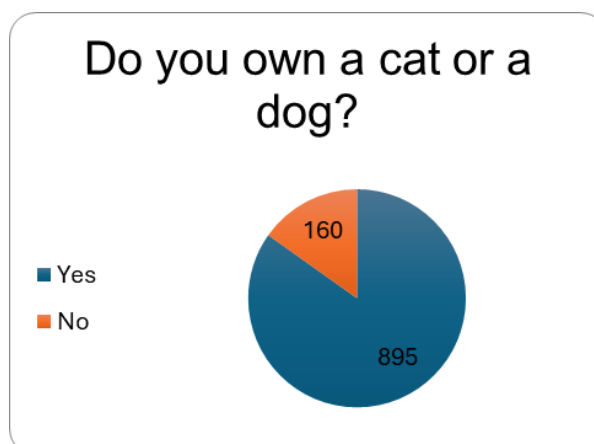
## Language

The majority of participants (88%) speak English at home.



## Pet ownership

Most participants (85%) in the survey own a pet.

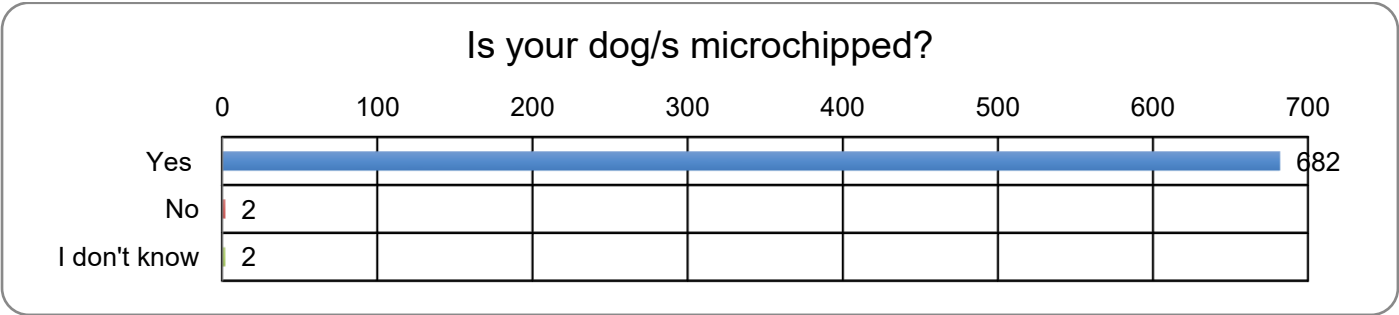


Just under 700 participants currently own a dog, with most participants owning one (72%).

|                      | Total owned | One owned | Two owned | Three owned | more than three |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|
| Number of dogs owned | 690         | 72%       | 26%       | 1%          | 0%              |
| Number of cats owned | 366         | 58%       | 36%       | 4%          | 2%              |

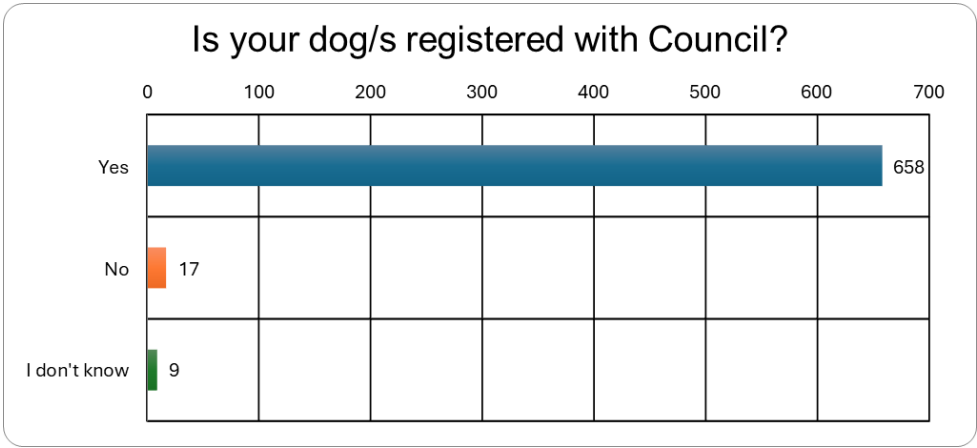
Pet ownership

A requirement of animal registration is that the pet is microchipped, 99% of participant dog and cat owners have their pet microchipped. This is consistent with Council records that indicate that less than 0.09% of registered animals are not microchipped.



Of the two participants that said no, one commented that their “dog was traumatized early due to unknown condition and now is anxious around vets”

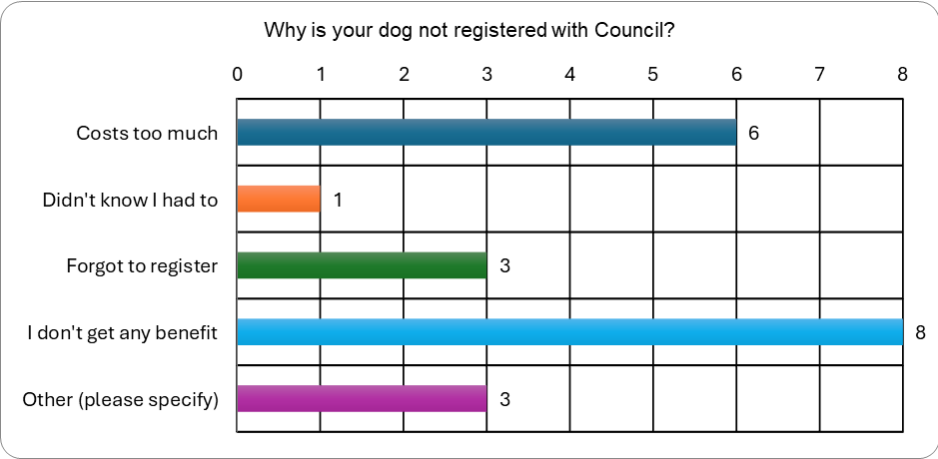
96% of dog owners have their dog registered with Council.



Of the 9 participants that answered ‘I don't know’ there were no comments.

Of the 17 participants that said ‘no’ the top two reasons were

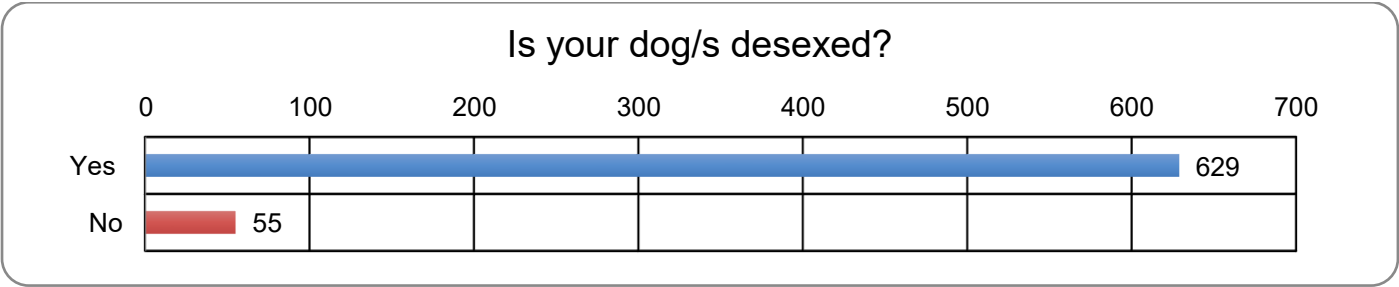
- 1. I don’t get any benefit
- 2. It costs too much



Other reasons included

- “Too young”
- “I’ve been waiting to avoid payment twice in a year”
- 

92% of dog owners have their dog desexed.



The top three reasons owners said ‘no’ were.

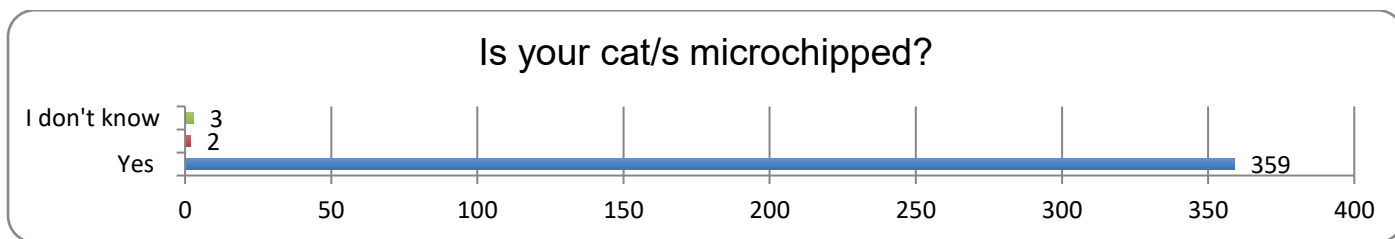
1. ‘Other’
2. My dog is too young
3. I plan to breed.

Other comments included

- There was no need
- It was better for the dog’s health
- Owners planned to breed

## Cats

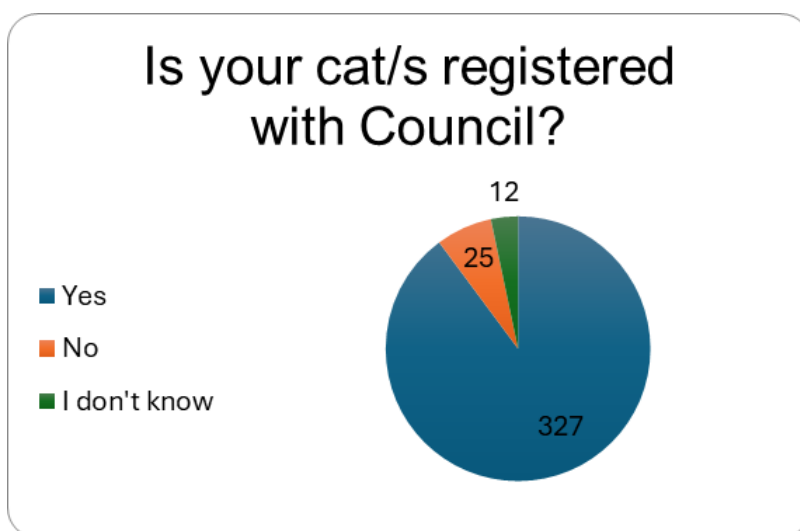
Over 350 participants currently own a cat, most owning one (58%).



Of the two participants that said 'no' they commented that it was:

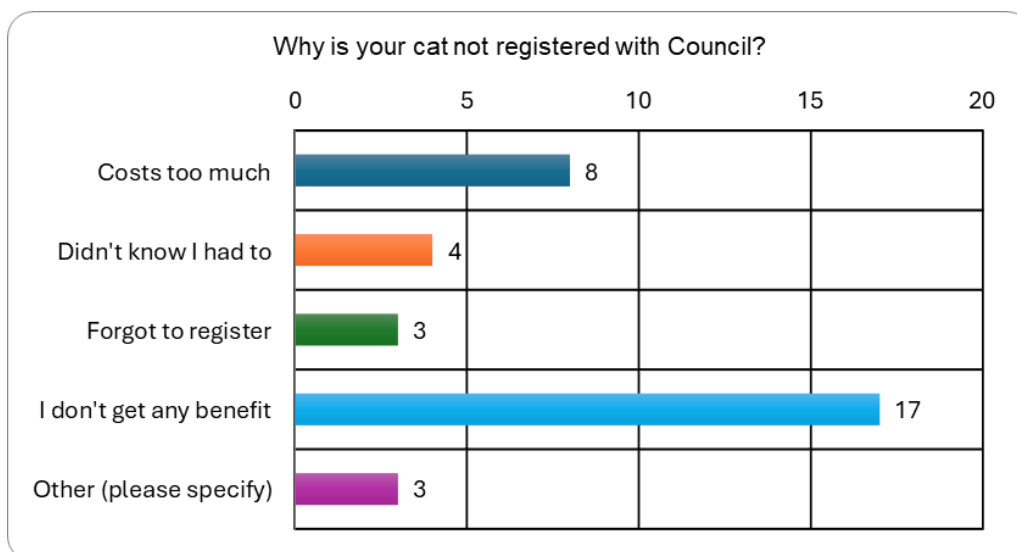
- "Too expensive"
- "Cat lives in a secured apartment so not necessary".

90% of cat owners have their cat registered with Council.



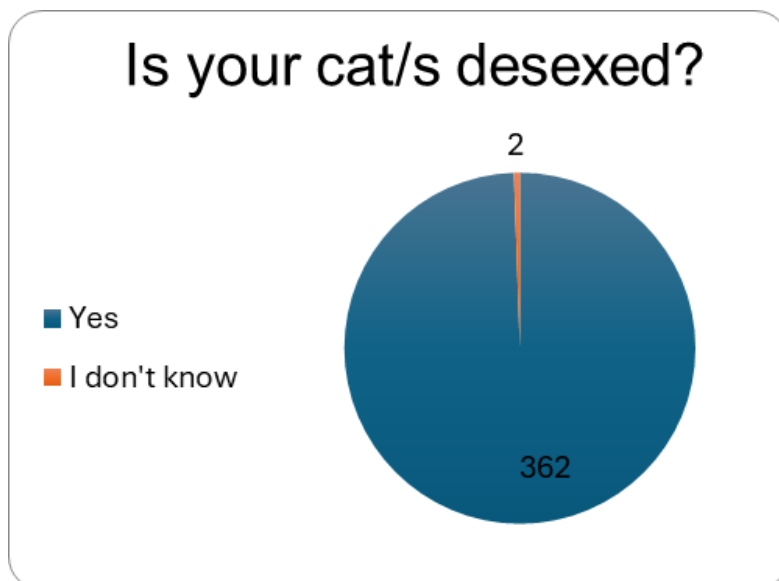
Of the 25 participants that said 'no' the top two reasons were.

1. I don't get any benefit
2. It costs too much.





99% of cat owners have their cat desexed.

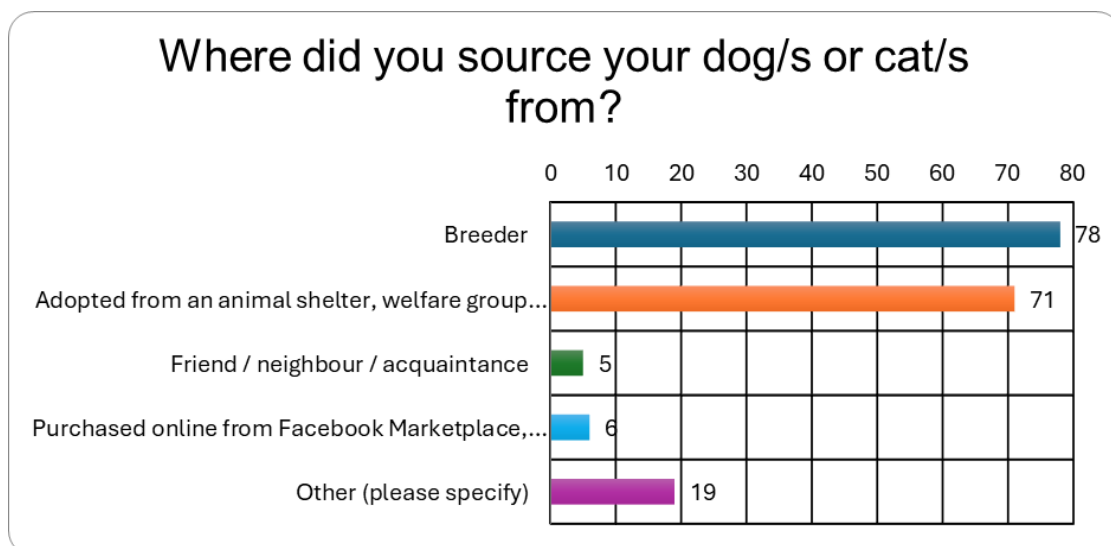


*Offering free pet registration for both cats and dogs in their first year would be a positive step towards increasing pet registration and promoting responsible pet ownership (Animal Aid).*

## Pet source

The top three places that owners sourced their cat/s or dog/s.

1. Breeder (44%)
2. Adopted from an animal shelter, welfare group or organisation (40%)
3. Other (11%)

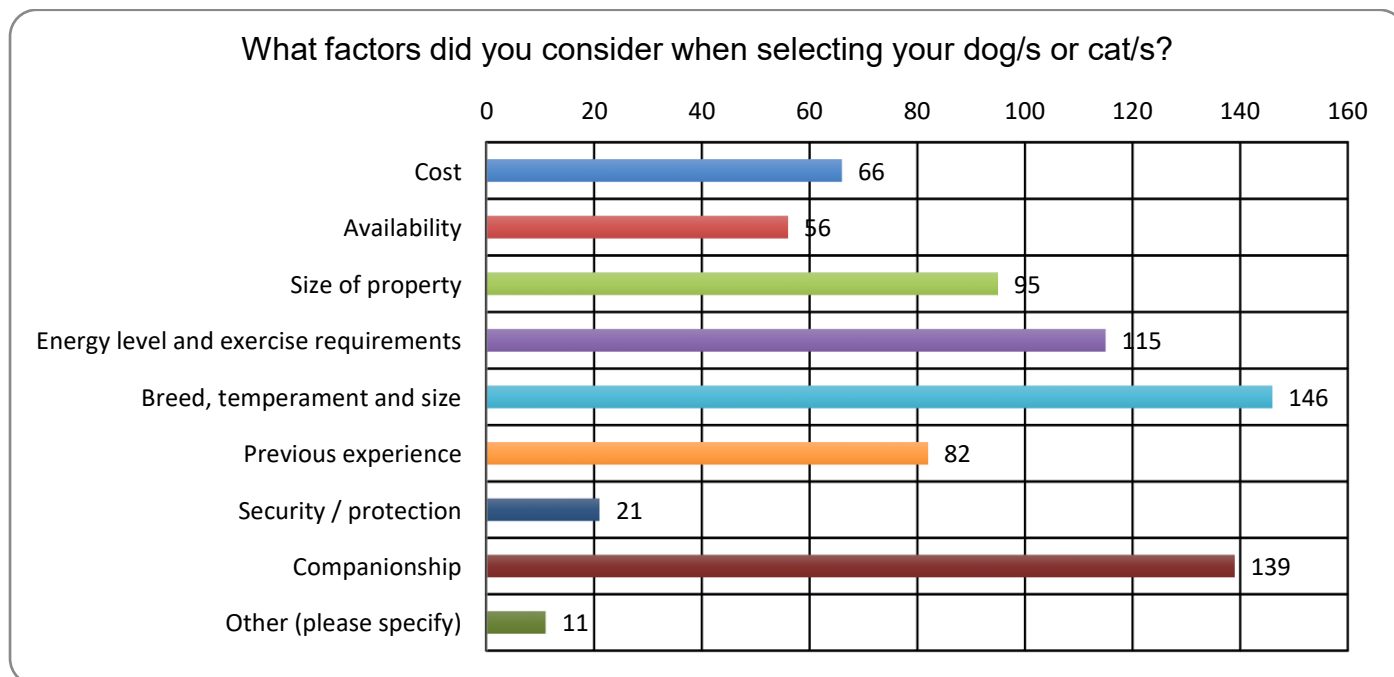


Other places included

- pet shops
- local farm
- rescued
- inherited from a friend or family member.

When selecting their cat/s or dog/s the top three factors were.

1. Breed, temperament and size (20%)
2. Companionship (19%)
3. Energy level and exercise requirements (16%)



Other comments included

- “we wanted to rescue an animal”
- “needed a hypoallergenic, non-shredding pet”
- “all of the above”
- “dog sporting competitions”

## Participation

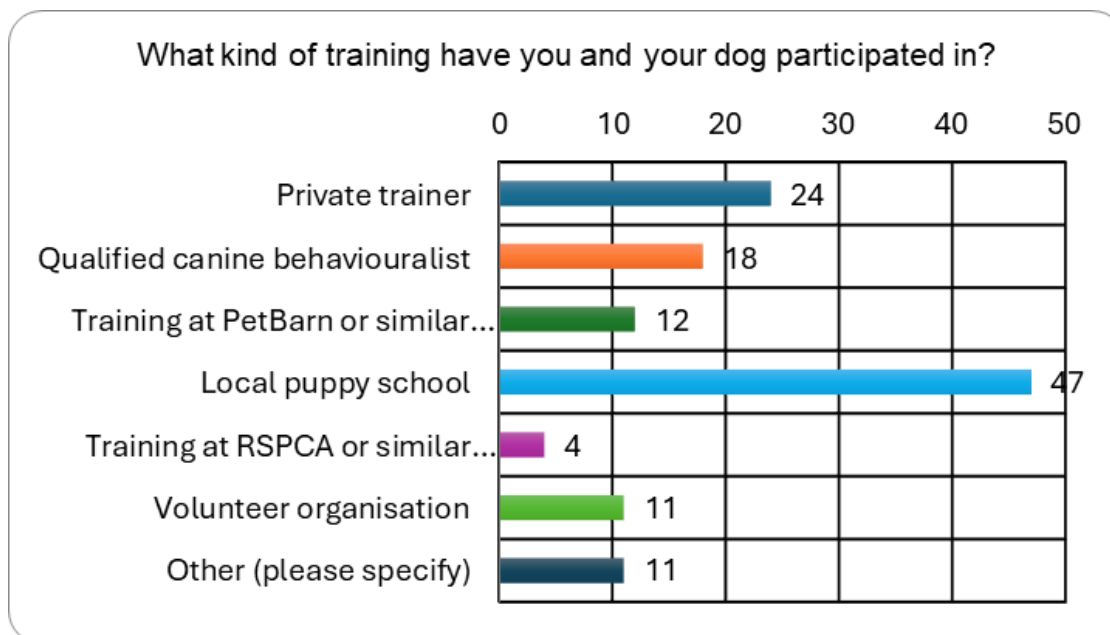
128 survey respondents have participated in formal socialisation, puppy schooling or obedience training.

The top three kinds of participations included

1. Local puppy school (37%)
2. Private trainer (19%)
3. Qualified canine behavioralist (14%)

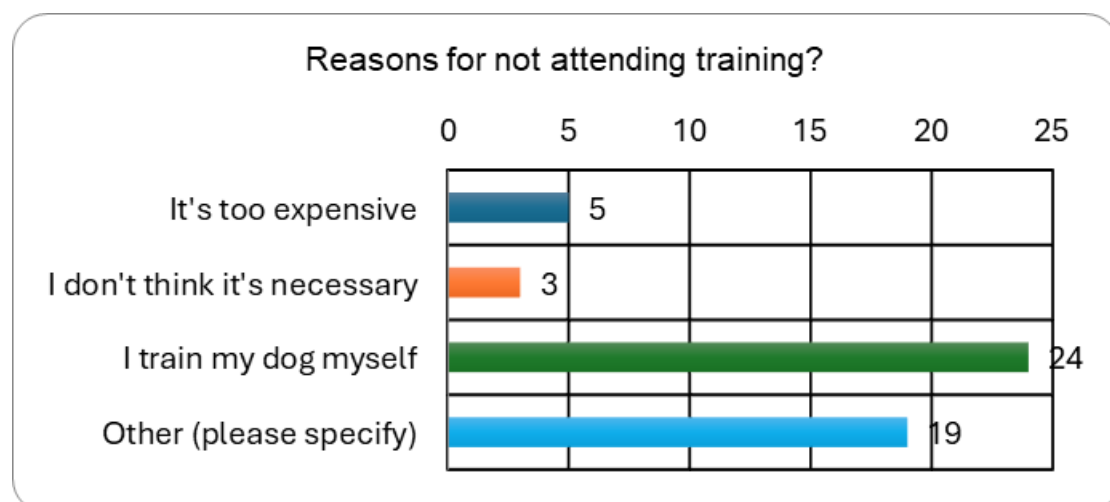
Other training included

- “online course”
- “local dog park”
- “local club”
- “border control training”
- “Silcock reserve”



Top three reasons owners haven't participated included.

1. I train my dog myself
2. Other
3. It's too expensive.



Other comments included

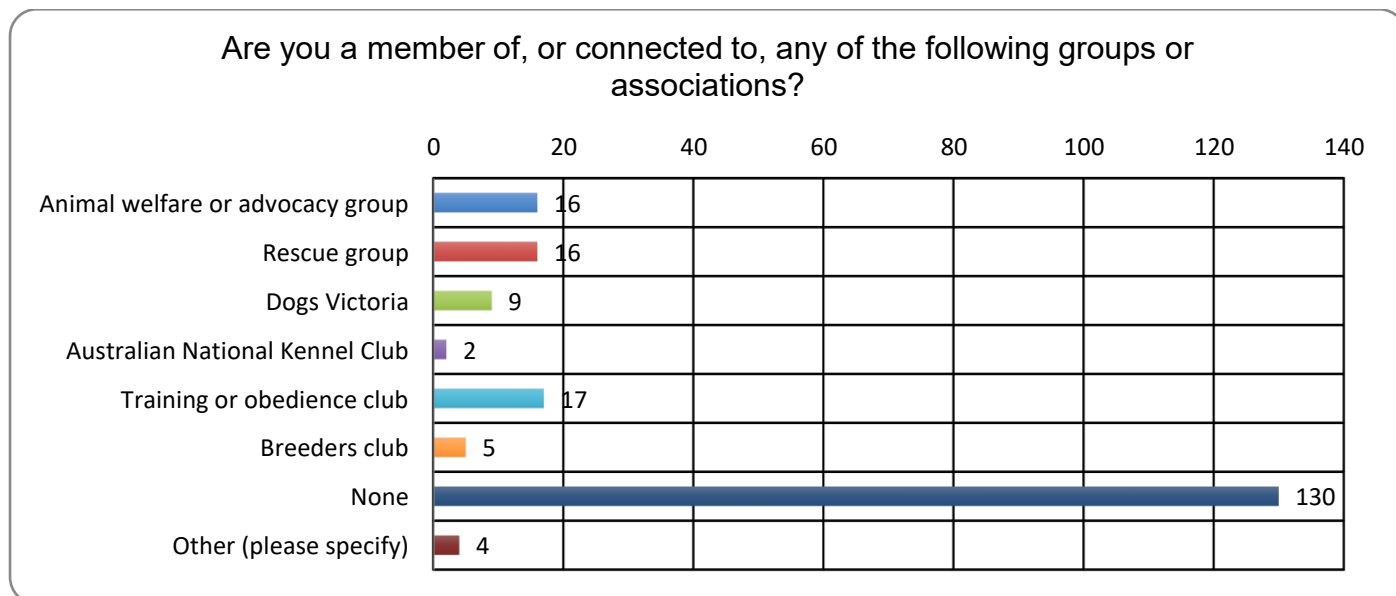
- "wasn't available"
- "tricky as I'm in a wheelchair"
- "couldn't travel"
- "training already completed"

Nine of the participants didn't own a dog.

A total of 200 participants answered the question about being a member or connected to groups and/or associations.

Of 36% that were connected, their top three were:

1. A training or obedience club (9%)
2. An Animal welfare or advocacy group (8%)
3. A rescue group (8%)



Other organisations included

- Parkwood dog park
- gun club / deer hunting club
- Guide Dogs Australia
- Australian sledding sports association.



# Animal management services

These questions applied to both pet owners and not pet owners.

For most questions the highest response was either 'neutral' and/or 'agree'. These results are very similar to the last consultation process.

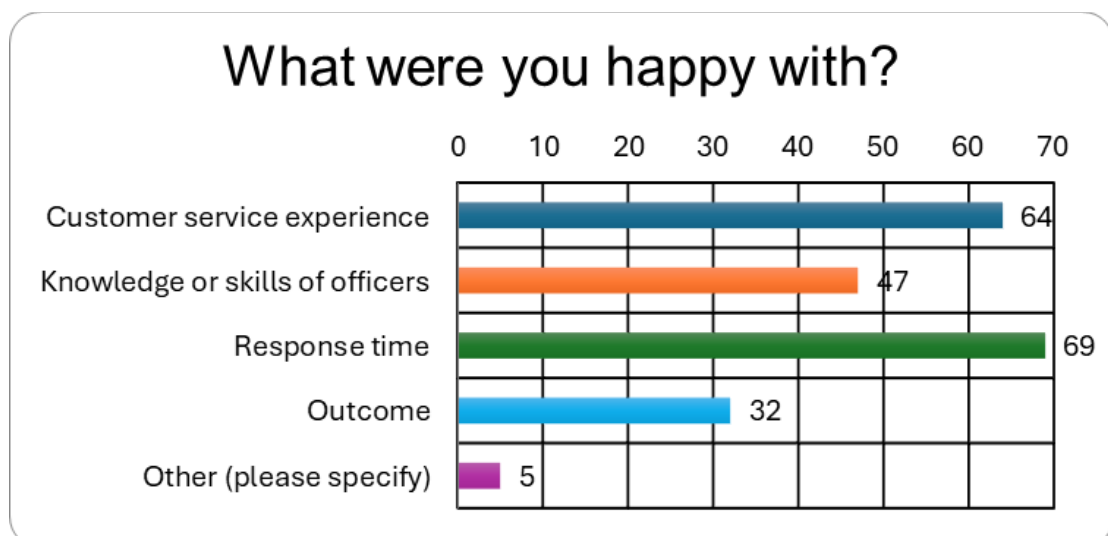
|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral or don't know |
|--|----------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Council animal management staff are informative and knowledgeable                                  | 5%             | 16%   | 73%                   |
| Council animal management staff are responsive   | 6%             | 18%   | 67%                   |
| Council's website provides relevant information and resources for pet owners about caring for pets | 6%             | 44%   | 43%                   |
| Council provides relevant information on the benefits of microchipping cats and dogs               | 9%             | 45%   | 41%                   |
| Council provides relevant information on the benefits of desexing cats and dogs                    | 10%            | 43%   | 43%                   |

In order of priority the animal management services that Council should focus on include.

1. Responding to nuisance dogs (for example excessive barking)
2. Responding to cat complaints (for example roaming)
3. Providing more dog off-leash areas.

A total of 13% of participants had reported an animal issue to Council's Animal Management team in the past 12 months. A total of 64% of those respondents were happy with the level of service received. Respondents top three reasons included:

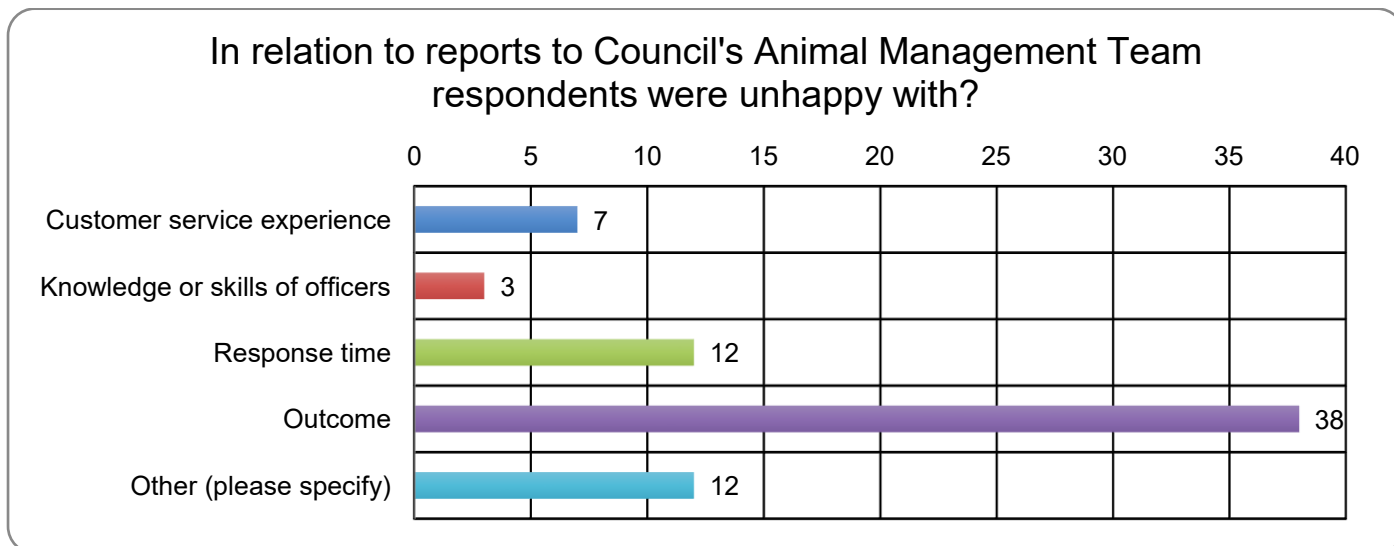
1. Response time (32%)
2. Customer service experience (29%)
3. Knowledge or skills of officers (22%)



Other comments included

- “happy with the experience but still have a recurring problem”
- “response from Councillor”
- “rangers and customer service are brilliant at responding to lost dogs but less so with roaming cats”

Of the 36% that were not satisfied with the service, the main reason related to the outcome of the issue.



Other comments included

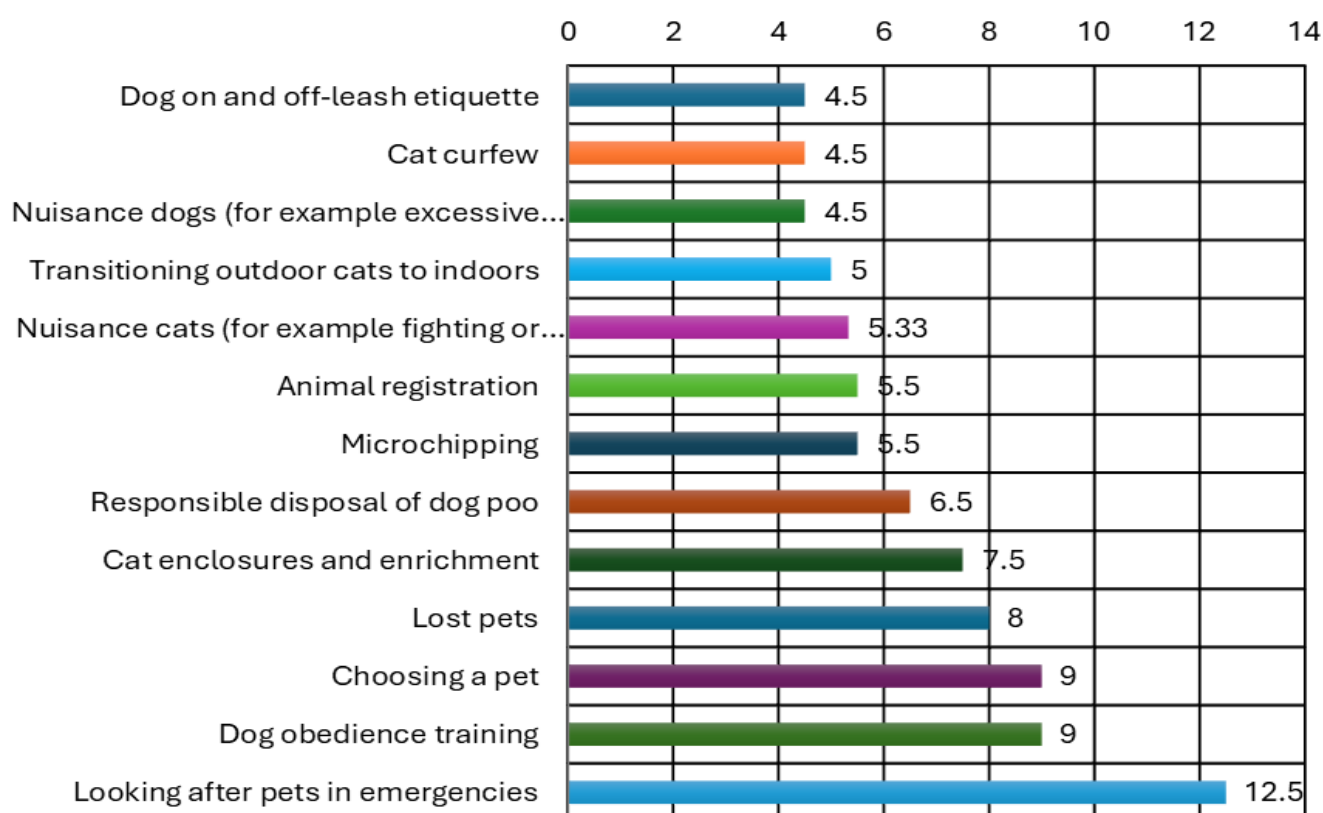
- “unknown if the issue was closed out/dealt with”
- “there isn’t enough staff to police the issues”
- “the need for a 7-day diary is ridiculous”
- “still waiting”
- “still have an issue”

*“Today’s doggo’s social [Dog’s Day Out event] is a great success wondering if council would consider organising every season - Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. Thank you to the council staff member they are approachable and friendly.”*

The top 5 topics that participants think Council should focus on for community education include.

1. Dog on and off-leash etiquette (672 responses)
2. Responsible disposal of dog poo (587 responses)
3. Cat curfew (499 responses)
4. Nuisance dogs (for example excessive barking or aggression) (433 responses)
5. Dog obedience training (363 responses)

## When thinking about community education, what pet ownership topics should Council focus on?



### Comments on animal management from Animal Aid.

To better manage incoming animal surrenders and support both the community and shelter capacity Animal Aid propose a structured three-stage process.

- Stage one: Initial inquiry
- Stage two: Owner completes a behavioral and health questionnaire
- Stage three: Admission into care

This triage system slows the surrender process in appropriate cases, allowing for early intervention and more thoughtful outcomes for both people and their pets.

Research shows that registered pets have higher reclaim rates compared to unregistered pets and that pets with microchips were significantly more likely to be reunited with their owners. Considering the current cost of living pressures, one way to reduce barriers is to offer a free reclaim for registered pets within a 24-hour period.

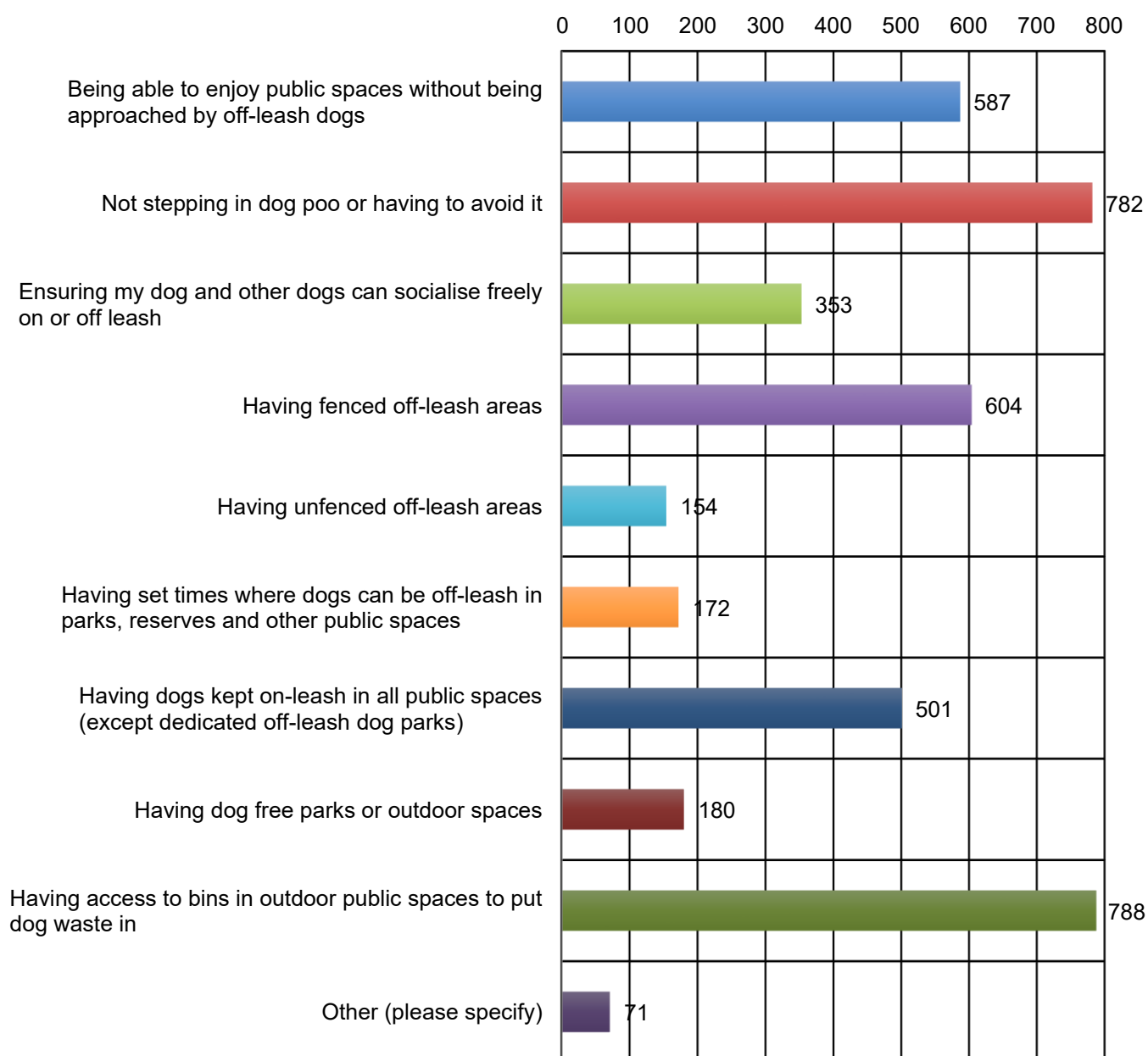
To improve reunification rates Council could expand their approach to include the after-hours collection team. Providing training to this team could increase the chances of pets being returned and help alleviate the strain of shelter resources during non-business hours.

## Public spaces

When using parks and public spaces the top 5 most important factors for participants included.

1. Having access to bins in outdoor public spaces to put dog waste in (788)
2. Not stepping in dog poo or having to avoid it (782)
3. Having fenced off-leash areas (604)
4. Being able to enjoy public spaces without being approached by off-leash dogs (587)
5. Having dogs kept on-leash in all public spaces (except dedicated off-leash dog parks) (501)

When using parks and public spaces what is most important to you? Select up to 5 options.





The top five other responses included issues relating to.

1. Providing bins / poo bags at off leash parks
2. Safety (not being attacked or approached)
3. Access to animal water fountains
4. Owners that can handle and/or control their dog and be responsible
5. No policing or enforcement of rules

*“Not sure how you might achieve this, but I can't walk in McAlpine Park anymore, with my dog, due to off leash dogs. Which also chase the birds, which is not good. I have had several dogs come at me, one with its hackles up, only that my dog happened not to react did we get out of that OK. I think McAlpine is one park that should be on lead for the sake of people, children and wildlife.”*

The following table describes how frequently participants have experienced issues related to dogs in public spaces.

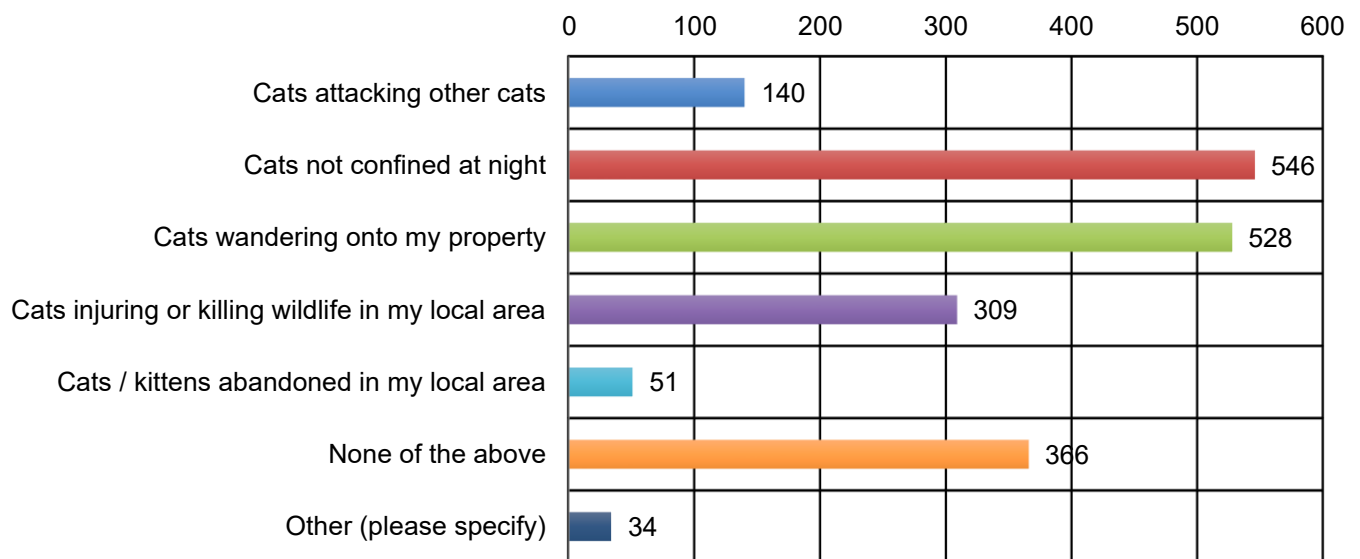
| Experience  | Very frequently | Frequently | Highest response |
|---|-----------------|------------|------------------|
| Owners not cleaning up their dogs' poo in public spaces                   | 19%             | 33%        | Sometimes        |
| Owners picking up their dogs' poo but not disposing of it in a bin        | 6%              | 17%        | Sometimes        |
| Owners letting their dog/s annoy other dogs or people                     | 11%             | 19%        | Sometimes        |
| Dogs running through my/my child's sport, training, competition or events | 2%              | 3%         | Never            |
| Dogs damaging parks and sportsground (like digging holes)                 | 1%              | 1%         | Never            |
| Dog/s not being controlled in on-leash areas                              | 13%             | 18%        | Sometimes        |
| Being unable to locate a bin to dispose of my dog/s poo                   | 12%             | 25%        | Sometimes        |
| Dog/s not being controlled in off-leash areas                             | 10%             | 16%        | Sometimes        |
| Dogs off-leash in on-leash areas  | 18%             | 22%        | Sometimes        |
| Barking dogs  | 11%             | 18%        | Sometimes        |
| Dogs killing wildlife   | 0%              | 1%         | Never            |

Over the last 12 months participants have experienced the following issues related to cats.

*“Lot of times designated off leash areas could not be used as there are others enjoying it for games etc. So there is no place for the pups even though it's designated off leash area.”*

*“There's laws that I abide but others do not for example having dogs off lead when the signs clearly state dogs on lead, I do not want to be approached by another dog when I have my dog on a lead. People are often aggressive if you state the obvious, ie that it's an on lead area”*

Over the last 12 months have you experienced an issue with any of the following?



The biggest issue was cats not being confined at night followed by cats wandering onto properties.

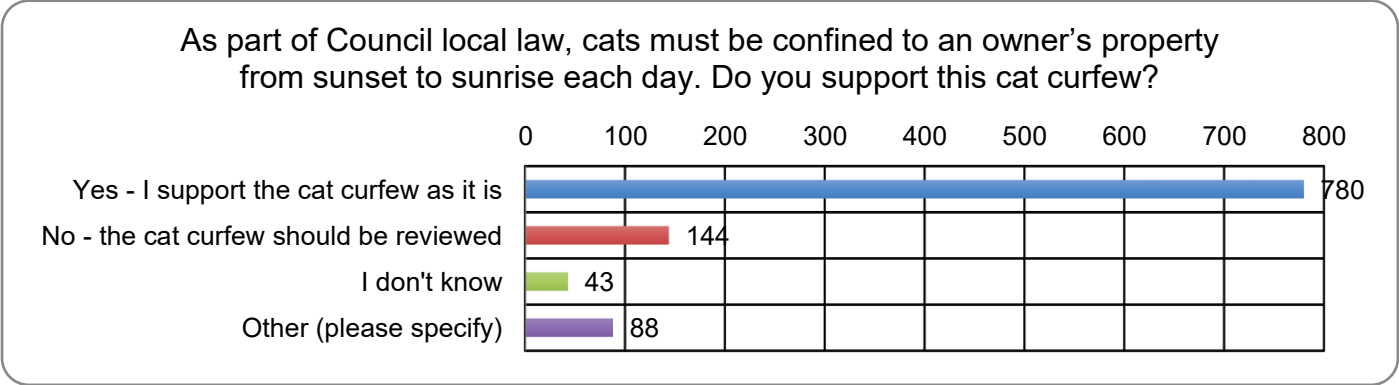
Other comments included

- “cats using my yard / house as a toilet”
- “cats annoying or attacking my own cat or dog”
- “cats hassling wildlife”
- “cats damaging vegetation or property”

Cat curfew

74% of survey participants support a cat curfew.

*‘My cats are kept inside at night for theirs and wildlife safety. They enjoy being in our garden during the day. But I’m happy to transition them to full curfew eventually’.*



The top three other responses included.

- 1. Curfew should be 24/7
- 2. Cats should be confined to their property or kept in an enclosure
- 3. Cats shouldn't be outside at all

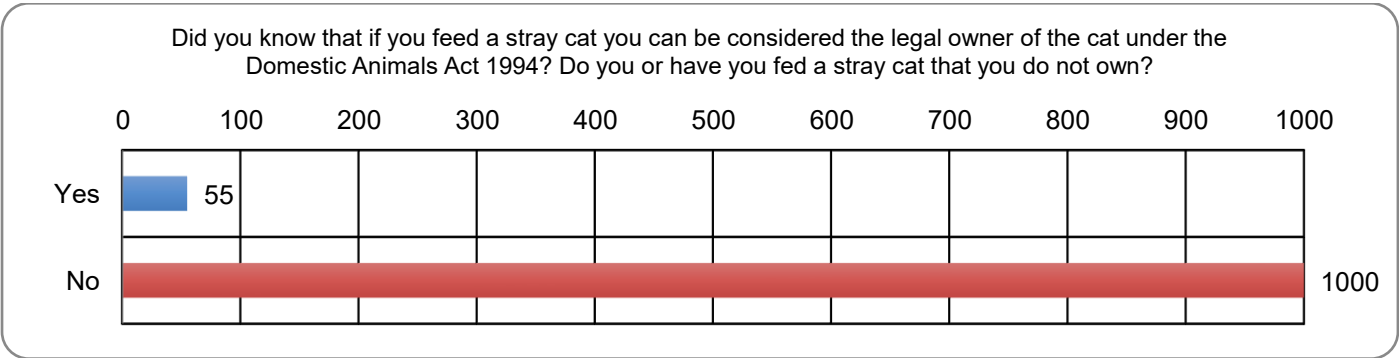
Top five themes regarding feedback on the cat curfew included

- 1. Cats should be contained or confined to their property
- 2. The curfew should be 24/7
- 3. Wildlife suffers
- 4. Cats should be inside
- 5. There shouldn't be a curfew

The following themes were also picked up in the comments

- safety for cats
- cats need outside time
- it depends on the cat
- curfew timing should be revised
- cats are good for keeping vermin numbers down
- curfew isn't enforced nor followed
- it's impossible to comply

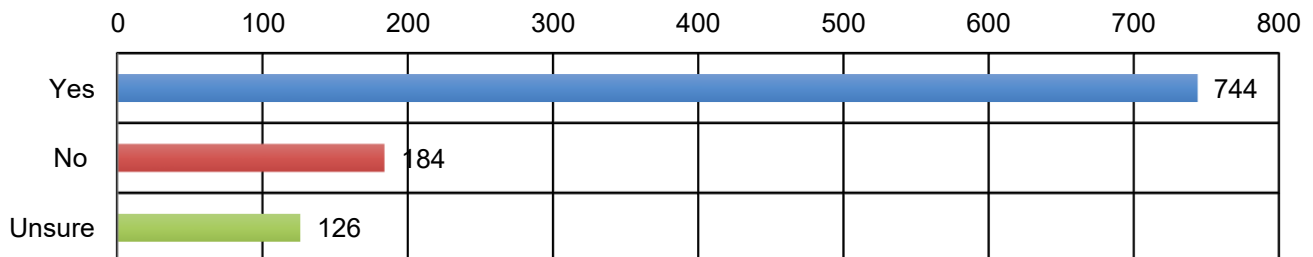
95% of participants have not fed a stray cat.



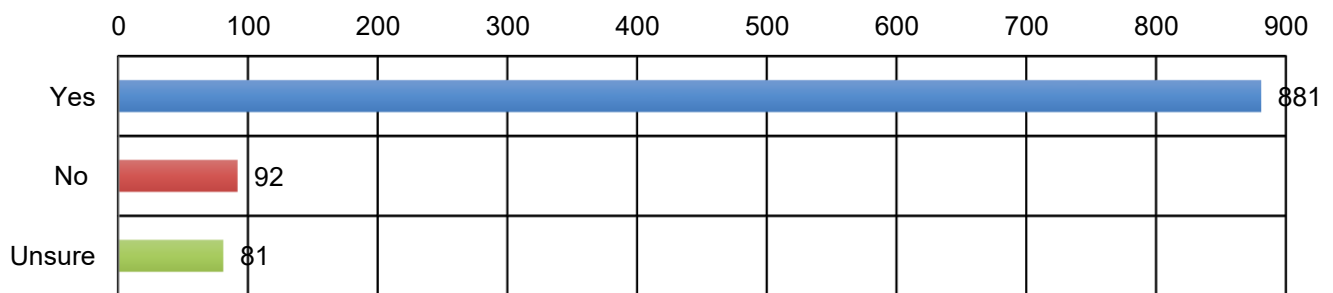
## Desexing

Most participants believe that dogs and/or cats should be desexed.

Currently, animal shelters are experiencing a high intake of homeless dogs due to unplanned litters. Do you believe desexing dogs should be compulsory?



Currently, animal shelters are experiencing a high intake of homeless cats due to unplanned litters. Do you believe desexing cats should be compulsory?



Animal Aid recommend that 'implementing compulsory desexing for cats in the Maroondah municipality is a vital step toward reducing stray populations, improving animal welfare outcomes, and supporting positive community relationships with domestic cats.'

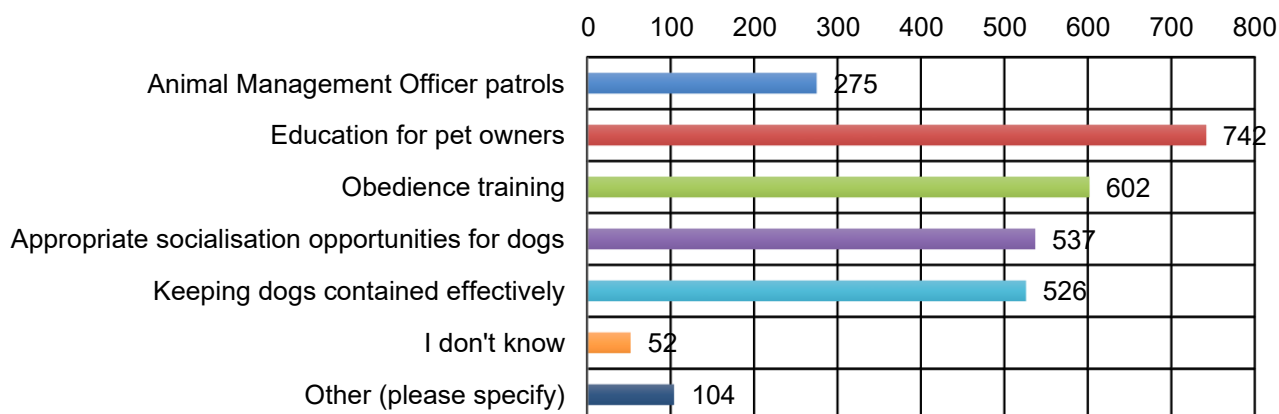
## Dog attacks

In the past 12 months 29% of participants or their pets have been involved in a dog attack or felt threatened by a dog in Maroondah.

Participants believe that the best way to reduce dog attacks include:

1. Education for pet owners
2. Obedience training
3. Appropriate socialisation opportunities for dogs
4. Keeping dogs contained effectively

### What do you think is the best way to reduce dog attacks?



*“Offer free obedience training or extra reduced price for struggling families.”*

*“Off leash dogs should not approach on leash dogs. Owners should be more responsible and consider others. I don't believe dogs should be off leash, all animals can be unpredictable and not everyone likes other animals coming up to them. It's dangerous and unnecessary.”*

*“Better control of people having dogs off lead in on lead areas and restricting use of retractable leads.”*

Top themes in the comments included:

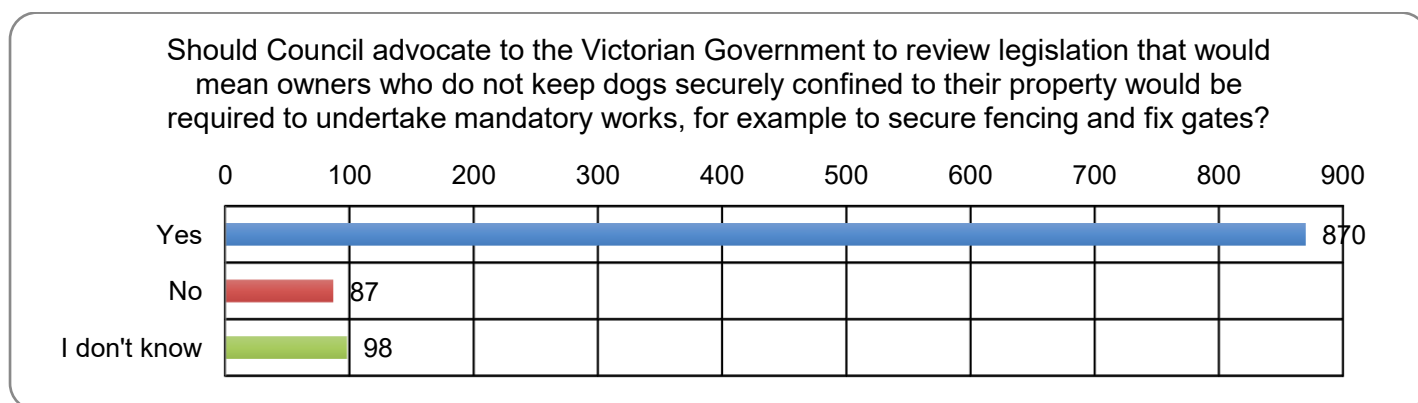
1. Penalties and/or fines
2. Dogs being on a leash (unless in a dog park)
3. Responsible ownership
4. Education for owners and non-owners
5. Needs to be patrolled and enforced
6. Regulation on breeds

Other themes and comments included:

- It's bad humans, not bad dogs
- socialising and training are important
- the definition of attack is not understood
- financial assistance needed
- having a dog license
- dogs not contained in yards
- division within dog parks for smaller breeds
- more space for dogs

Partnering with a professional and credible pet training team to conduct regular, free dog training sessions in the City of Maroondah would significantly enhance responsible pet ownership and help reduce dog attacks (Animal Aid).

83% of participants believe Council should advocate to the Victorian Government to review legislation that would mean owners who do not keep dogs securely confined to their property could be required to undertake mandatory works, for example to secure fencing and fix gates.



Comments from the Liveability Safety and Amenity Advisory committee on animal management and considerations for the DAMP 2026-2029 are as below.

Top three activities that Council could consider focusing on:

1. Dog obedience training to include more accessible options and trainers
2. Responsible disposal of poo including bins in every reserve with self-composting bags. New developments should be built near open green / dog parks.
3. Nuisance dogs. Focus on pet matching / education and having appropriate yards / spaces for dogs.

Top three focus areas that Council could consider in relation to public spaces:

1. Dogs on leash due to safety issue for families and children
2. Being able to enjoy public space without being approached by off-leash dogs - physical and psychological safety.
3. Not stepping in dog poo or having to avoid it for hygiene reasons.

## To contact Council



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