Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021

Working towards a safe, healthy and active community



2040 MAROONDAH

Maroondah City Council



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Introduction

In Victoria, councils have a wide range of responsibilities for the management of domestic animals – primarily dogs and cats – pursuant to the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (DAA). These responsibilities include a requirement to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every four years.

In addition to reporting on activities performed when fulfilling responsibilities under the *Domestic Animals Acts 1994*, section 68A (2) requires that each Council's DAMP will:

- Set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services it provides are adequate to give effect to the requirements of the DAA and the subordinate regulations.
- Outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of the DAA.
- Outline programs, services and strategies the Council intends to pursue to:
    - promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats
    - ensure that people comply with the DAA, the subordinate regulations and any related legislation
    - minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals
    - address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
    - encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats
    - minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
    - effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in the municipality and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with the DAA.

- Provide for the review of existing orders made under the DAA and the local law with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats are desirable.
- Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in its municipality that the council thinks necessary.
- Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the Plan.

Council is required to review and, if appropriate, amend the DAMP on an annual basis and to include an evaluation of the implementation of the plan in the Annual Report.

About our Domestic Animal Management Plan

Pets play an important role in the lives of many Maroondah residents. Our most recent animal registration data shows a total of 13,720 dogs and 5,904 cats were registered in the City of Maroondah as of July 2021 – or around one pet per 2.4 households.[1] It is important that Maroondah's DAMP addresses the needs of our many pet owners, while also promoting responsible pet ownership and effectively managing the potential for domestic animals to have a negative impact on public amenity, our neighbours and the environment.

The development of our 2021 to 2025 DAMP has been informed by:

- animal management data collected by Council
- survey responses from local veterinarians
- demographic forecasts and population data
- stakeholder working groups
- community consultation.

[1] .id consultants estimate the number of households in Maroondah in 2021 is 47,021.

About the City of Maroondah

The City of Maroondah spans an area of just over 61km2 in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The suburbs of Bayswater North, Croydon, Croydon Hills, Croydon North, Croydon South, Heathmont, Kilsyth South, Ringwood, Ringwood East and Warranwood are contained within Maroondah's municipal boundary, as well as parts of Kilsyth, Park Orchards, Ringwood North, Vermont and Wonga Park. There is a diverse mix of housing types across these suburbs, from high-density apartment living in central Ringwood, to semi-rural acreages in Wonga Park and Warranwood.

Australian census data shows Maroondah's resident population was 110,376 in 2016 and is estimated to have grown to around 122,609 by mid-2021.[2] Over the same period, the number of households in Maroondah rose from 43,329 to an estimated 47,021, while the average size of households declined marginally – from 2.60 residents per household in 2016 to an estimated 2.56 residents per household in 2021. These movements in household size and number have been accompanied by a shift in new dwelling approval types, which in the 2020 saw 201 approvals for new houses compared to more than 680 approvals for other dwelling types.

Changes in new dwelling types and average household size in Maroondah are consistent with planning controls established under the Maroondah Planning Scheme that are intended to promote higher densities of residential development in central areas of Ringwood and Croydon. Over time, these trends can be expected to lead to increased demand for access to public open space in these neighbourhoods – including spaces suitable for exercising pets.

Domestic Animal Ownership in Maroondah

In 2020, the annual *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey* of 17,000 Australians asked respondents questions about their pets for the very first time. The responses show that pet ownership rates in Australia are quite high, with almost 62 percent of survey participants reporting that they owned at least one pet.[3]

From the HILDA survey, we know that dogs are by far the most popular pet; more than 70 percent of pet-owners have a dog. Cats are the next most popular pet, with around 37 percent of pet owners having a cat. Only 16 percent of pet owners have a bird; 18 percent have a fish; 3.6 percent have a horse; and 17 percent have some other type of pet.

The popularity of dogs and cats as pets is reflected in the number of animal registrations Council processes each year. As shown in Table 2, dog registrations have increased by around 5 percent since 2017, while cat registrations have grown more by around 17 percent over the same period.

Table 1 - Number animal registrations in Maroondah

Animal registrations in Maroondah	2017	2021	Change (%)
Dog registrations	13,065	13,720	+5.0 %
Cat registrations	5,033	5,904	+17.3 %

[2] .id Consultants, *Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2041*, February 2019.

[3] Roger Wilkins, Ferdi Botha, Esperanza Vera-Toscano and Mark Wooden (2020) *The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 18*. Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research, University of Melbourne.

This increase in cat registrations follows a series of Council initiatives to promote responsible pet ownership that targeted semi-owned and unregistered cats, including:

- animal registration promotional campaigns
- provision of animal registration information in new resident welcome packs
- a highly publicised increase in nuisance cat trapping activities by Council's Animal Management team
- procedures requiring all reunited and adopted cats to be microchipped and registered before leaving Council's animal pound.

Pleasingly, growth in the number of registered cats in Maroondah has been accompanied by an 8.4 percent reduction in the number of stray cats impounded by Council.

Domestic Animal Management in Maroondah

Maroondah City Council performs a wide range of activities to promote responsible pet ownership and provide for the appropriate management of domestic animals pursuant to the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Council reviews these activities annually and reports on our performance to the Victorian government Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. A snapshot of the annual domestic animal management services provided by Council is shown in Table 3.

Table 2 – Snapshot of domestic animal management services provided by Council in 2020-21

Animal registrations	Service level or measure
Dog registrations	13,720
Cat registrations	5,904
Domestic animal businesses in Maroondah	14
Animals brought into a pound facility by Council officers	
Dogs brought in	164
Dogs reunited with owner or adopted	96%
Cats brought in	143
Cats reunited with owner or adopted	86%
Customer requests responded to	
Nuisance dogs	323
Dog attacks	80
Dog rushing / menacing	19
Dog barking	220

Stray dogs contained for collection / dogs wandering	478
Nuisance cats	108
Cats contained for collection	141

Council also monitors its performance in the delivery of domestic animal management services relative to other local government areas. A comparison of Maroondah City Council's performance and other local government areas is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Comparative performance of Maroondah's animal management services in 2020-21[4]



[4] Source: *knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au*

Our consultation

What we did

Consultation with community members was undertaken between 19 June and 11 July 2021. A full version of the community consultation results is available on Maroondah City Council's online engagement platform, Your Say Maroondah.

Engagement methods	Outcomes
Online survey via Your Say Maroondah	Visitors: 458 Contributors: 398 Contributions: 414 **Total contributions at close: 406** (8 late surveys will be reported separately to this report).
Hard copy survey delivered to vets across Maroondah	10 vet clinics
Hard copy submissions sent in by post	11
Face to Face pop ups Eastfield Dog Park 21/06/21 10am-12pm McAlpine Reserve 22/06/21 10am-12pm Arndale shops 24/06/21 9am-12pm Realm 28/06/21 10am-1pm Railway Ave 29/06/21 10am-1pm Ringwood Lake 29/06/21 2.30pm-4pm Croydon Main St 01/07/21 10am-1pm McAdams Square 02/07/21 10am-1pm	 Engagements: 20 Engagements: 6 Engagements: 8 Engagements: 8 Engagements: 15 Engagements: 2 Engagements: 12 Engagements: 4 **Total engagements: 75**
Letterbox drops Near Brentwood Reserve Near Silcock Reserve South of Eastfield Reserve Golf Links Estate East of Eastfield Reserve	 250 400 200 300 125 **Total mailboxes: 1,275**

Engagement methods	Outcomes
Social media campaign Maroondah City Council Facebook Maroondah Youth Services Facebook Maroondah City Council Twitter Maroondah City Council Instagram Maroondah Youth Services Instagram	 Reach: 3,196 Engagements: 276 Reach: 111 Engagements: 1 Impressions: 1,256 Engagements: 14 Reach: 264 Likes: 3 Impressions: 282 Reach: 113 Likes: 6 Impressions: 138 **Total reach: 4,940** **Total engagement/impressions 711**
eNews (17 June, 1 July and 9 July)	**Total recipients: 18,609** **Total clicks:111**
Vacation Care (school holiday program) consultation	**33 participants**

What we found

Feedback provided through these consultation activities highlights the overwhelmingly positive attitude our community has towards pet ownership, while still underscoring the need for effective animal management strategies.

Some of the key observations and issues raised by community members and stakeholders through the consultation activities delivered by Council are summarised in Table 1.

Table 3 - Key observations and issues from community and stakeholder consultation

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total
Pets are an important part of the family	93%	6%	99%
Pets provide comfort	84%	14%	98%
Having a pet in one's life is very important	81%	16%	97%
	Very Frequently	**Frequently**	**Total**
Owners not picking up after their dogs	28%	26%	54%
Dogs allowed to annoy other dogs or people	14%	16%	30%
Dogs not controlled in on-leash areas	16%	16%	32%
	Very Important	**Important**	**Total**
People needing to take responsibility for their pets	87%	12%	99%
Stopping puppy farms/unauthorised breeders	79%	14%	93%
Welfare of animals in domestic violence situations	65%	22%	87%

	Yes	No	Unsure
Should there be more fenced dog parks?	66%	12%	22%
Should desexing of cats be compulsory?	81%	9%	10%
Should Council's cat curfew be extended to require cats to be confined 24 hours per day?	39%	45%	16%

Of the Vacation Care school holiday program 97% of vacation care students believe animals are an important part of the family because:

- they make me feel happy, excited and special
- they are fun and keep you from bugging Mummy and Daddy
- my cat meows when she wants to go outside at night
- they are so adorable and cute
- when I am sad she will come and see if I am OK
- they keep your home safe
- they are fluffy and leaving them makes me sad
- they give me hugs and play with me. I have a friend in them
- they make me exercise.

Maroondah's Animal Management Principles

Maroondah City Council recognises the important role pets play in the lives of many residents and is working to deliver domestic animal management services that ensure people and pets can live in harmony with each other and that animals are treated with respect and compassion.

Council has established four principles to guide the delivery of domestic animal management services in Maroondah. These principles were included in our previous DAMP and continue to shape the approach we take to fulfilling our duties under the DAA.

Principle 1: Council seeks to strengthen our relationship with pet owners and the wider community to ensure the wellbeing of pets living in Maroondah.

What this principle means:

- Council seeks to work in partnership with the community to assist pet owners and their pets in times of crisis.
- Council seeks support from the community to address the less positive behaviours and attitudes of some pet owners.
- Council seeks to identify and support community groups, opportunities and initiatives associated with pets in our community.

Principle 2: Council is required by law to ensure our residents comply with Victorian Government legislation, but we also acknowledge the changing needs of our service and expectations of our community.

What this principle means:

- Council has a primary obligation to ensure that pet owners comply with Victorian Government legislation, the Maroondah Local Laws, and orders made pursuant to the DAA.
- Council seeks to highlight the potential personal, social and economic benefits of pet ownership.
- Council will advocate for the welfare of pets and provide access to public spaces.

Principle 3: By owning a pet, pet owners accept that they have an obligation to ensure the wellbeing of their pet and must comply with all relevant laws and policies relating to the ownership of their pet.

What this principle means:

- Pet owners must ensure their pet is treated humanely and with compassion.

Principle 4: Council understands that pets are important to many of our residents and visitors to Maroondah.

What this principle means:

- Council has an obligation to manage its service in line with relevant legislation and policies and to promote responsible pet ownership while being responsive to the needs of pet owners.

Our Animal Management Team

Domestic animal management services in Maroondah are delivered by Council's Local Laws team. They are 'Authorised Officers' for the purpose of the DAA, Maroondah local laws and other relevant legislation.

All of Maroondah's Local Laws Officers are trained in key aspects of domestic animal control and regulation. In addition, three members of Council's Local Laws team are designated Animal Management Officers who have undergone additional animal management training and are responsible for conducting more detailed inquiries and specialised tasks required by the DAA.

Some of the animal management tasks Council's Local Laws team routinely provide include:

- collecting stray animals, animals being contained for collection, and lost pets (daytime and after-hours service)
- reuniting lost pets with their owners
- administration of pet registrations, and annual renewal of pet registrations, including restricted breed, dangerous and menacing dogs
- issuing of permits
- enforcing state legislation and the Maroondah Local Law - for example dog attacks, seizure of dogs, issuing infringements, appeals and prosecutions
- patrols of on-leash and off-leash areas in parks and reserves
- providing advice to pet owners and delivering community animal education sessions
- inspecting Domestic Animal Businesses and premises housing animals with special registration requirements
- ensuring pets in public places – such as parks and walking trails – are being responsibly managed by their owners
- responding to customer requests and complaints about domestic animals, such as barking dogs
- overseeing Council's contract for the provision of pound services and related programs.

Council has established a range of internal operational procedures to help ensure its domestic animal management services and are delivered in a safe, efficient and consistent manner in accordance with the DAA, the Maroondah local laws and other relevant legislation. These internal operational procedures are reviewed annually and when any changes are made to the legislation that inform or authorise our animal management activities. To ensure the safety of our community and our Local Laws team, operational procedures are also reviewed following any critical incident.

Maroondah Local Laws and Council Orders

The DAA allows Councils to make local orders to better manage dogs and cats in their municipality. Pursuant to section 71 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council is also authorised to make local laws in relation to domestic animal management in the City of Maroondah.

Maroondah City Council has enacted a series of such ordinances, which are aimed at promoting responsible pet ownership, as well as limiting the potential for pet animals to negatively impact neighbourhood amenity and community safety. These ordinances are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 - Summary of Maroondah City Council's animal management ordinances

Ordinance	Purpose
Local Law 11, Section 40: Limits on the number of animals kept.	• Specifies the number and types of animals that may be kept on properties of 0.5 hectares or less without a permit: – Dogs: 2 – Cats: 2 – Domestic Birds: 20 – Poultry (not Roosters): 5 – Pigeons: 20 – Ferrets, Guinea Pigs, Rabbits, Rodents: 5 • No more than four different types of animal may be kept. • Roosters, large birds, horses, donkeys, cattle, sheep, alpacas, llamas, goats, pigs and agricultural animals must not be kept without a permit.
Local Law 11, Section 41: Removal of animal faeces.	• A person in charge of an animal must remove that animal's faeces from any road, Council land or land owned by another person and ensure it is disposed of appropriately. • A person in charge of an animal on a road or Council land must carry a suitable litter device for cleaning up the animal's faeces and must be able to produce the litter device when requested to do so by an Authorised Officer.
Local Law 11, Section 42: Animal housing.	• Requires the provision of animal housing suitable for the animal's welfare needs, kept in a sanitary condition and good repair, free from materials that may harbour vermin and built separately to boundary fences.
Local Law 11, Section 43: Provision of effective fencing to contain animals.	• Requires land on which animals are kept be adequately fenced to prevent the animal from escaping.
Order pursuant to Section 26(2) of the DAA	• Stipulates how dogs must be controlled in all public places. • Dogs must be on leash within 15 metres of playgrounds, picnic facilities, BBQs, sporting events, and in accordance with signage. • Identifies designated 'leash free' areas in Maroondah. • Identifies designated dog and cat free areas in Maroondah. • Cats to be confined to the owner's property from sunset to sunrise.

Consistent with principles of good governance, Maroondah City Council conducts reviews of the Maroondah Local Laws and orders made pursuant to section 26(2) of the DAA to confirm their ongoing necessity and effectiveness. The current Local Order 26(2) will be reviewed in Year One of the DAMP plan.

Local laws about animal management in Maroondah are contained in Maroondah Local Law 11, which was made under section 111 of the *Local Government Act 1989* and remains in force pursuant to section 71(6) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. Unless repealed earlier, Maroondah Local Law 11 will cease operation on 31 December 2025.

Prior to the cessation of Maroondah Local Law 11, Council will conduct a major review and refresh of its local laws, including those sections related to animal management; this work is scheduled to occur in years one and two of the DAMP. As required by section 73(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, this work will involve extensive community input consistent with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

A vision for domestic animal management in Maroondah

Our Focus Areas

Council has developed a comprehensive program of activities and initiatives it will pursue over the life of the DAMP to ensure animal management services in Maroondah continue to meet the objectives of the DAA and are responsive to the needs of our community. This program is structured around six focus areas as highlighted in the DAA, and two additional focus areas:

- Authorised Officer training
- Promoting responsible pet ownership and compliance with applicable ordinances
- Minimising the risk of dog attacks
- Encouraging animal registration and addressing issues of dog and cat overpopulation
- Minimising the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
- Identifying and managing dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

Activities and initiatives under each focus area have been developed with reference to the requirements of the DAA, the Maroondah Local Law and orders made under the DAA, related legislation, and industry best practice approaches to animal management services.

Importantly, actions under the plan reflect the results of community consultation conducted by Council in June and July 2021, which captured a broad range of views about animal management in Maroondah, animal welfare, and the needs of pet owners across the municipality. The consultation program has helped Council to identify ongoing and emerging animal management issues, as well as opportunities to address service demands through actions included in the DAMP.

Focus area 1 - Authorised Officer training

Outcomes

- Ensuring that employees possess or attain the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their role safely and successfully under the requirements of the DAA to meet the community's needs.
- To help foster innovation and maintain the high quality of our animal management services, Council invests in ongoing training and education for our Local Laws team.

What the evidence tells us

Maroondah City Council has a strong commitment to the safety and development of the skills for all Animal Management Officers. Table 5 outlines the core competencies required of Council's Authorised Officers, as well as identifying additional training provided to our designated Animal Management Officers. This ongoing training builds upon the extensive experience of our Local Laws team and reinforces Council's commitment to ensuring Maroondah's animal management services reflect industry best practice and up-to-date information.

Qualification / Training	Frequency
Certificate IV in Government or equivalent	Upon appointment or within 12 months
Certificate IV in Animal Control & Regulation	As required
Animal Handling Behaviour & Animal Assessment	As required
Customer service / OH&S training including: • conflict resolution • managing aggressive customers • communication / public speaking • situation awareness.	Annually, as required
Breed identification (restricted)	As required

What the community has told us

	Strongly agree	Agree	Total	n/a
Council animal management staff are responsive	8%	21%	**29%**	**67.6%**
Council animal management staff are informative and knowledgeable	7%	19%	**26%**	**70.7%**

Very few responses (less than 4%) disagreed with Council's performance in various aspects of animal management, however many of the responses were marked 'Not applicable' or 'Neither agree nor disagree'.

These results provide opportunities for Council to raise awareness about Council's animal management service and to review and promote the content and information available to residents.

Priority actions

Key activities related to the training of Council's Local Laws team that are scheduled to occur over the life of the DAMP are summarised in Table 6.

Table 5 - Summary of Maroondah Local Laws Services team training activities

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Ensure Authorised Officers receive adequate training in line with operational requirements including attending industry conferences, regional professional meetings, participation in formal training and information workshops.	Deliver	Completion of training by Authorised Officers	Ongoing
Maintain accurate staff training register.	Deliver	Register maintained	Ongoing
Identify additional training requirements in response to service demands, legislative change, and emerging risks.	Develop	Training completed	Annually

Focus area 2 - Responsible pet ownership

Outcome

Promoting and encouraging responsible pet ownership in Maroondah will provide a more positive environment for all community members.

What the evidence tells us

Council plays a central role promoting and encouraging responsible pet ownership in Maroondah. While a significant part of this role relates to the enforcement of laws, regulations and other ordinances requiring animals to be properly managed, Council is also involved in promoting animal welfare and educating pet owners and other community members to encourage more positive and rewarding relationships with pet dogs and cats.

Research shows a marked change in the role of dogs and cats in Australian households in recent years. Australians are disclosing that they have a far more personal relationship with their pets now, than in the past. This is indicated by the significant increase in the proportion of owners who see their pets as a member of the family rather than as merely companions.

Our community appreciates the pet friendly atmosphere provided in Maroondah. The range of local parks, reserves, and recreational facilities in Maroondah is strongly valued by the community. It is felt that enhancements to our local parks and reserves in the future will help to ensure they cater for a broad range of age groups and abilities for pet owners and non-pet owners alike.

What the community has told us

Through community consultation, we know that there is strong support for initiatives that aim to address pet welfare issues in Maroondah. While From survey responses, we also know that more can be done to inform our community about the responsibilities that come with owning a pet and the work our Local Laws team is doing to promote responsible pet ownership in Maroondah.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Total
Council provides relevant information on the benefits of microchipping pets	13%	47%	**60%**
Council provides relevant information on desexing of pets	11%	45%	**56%**
Council's website has relevant information about caring for pets	6%	38%	**44%**

More than a third of responses agreed that there should be:

- events delivered specifically for pets in Maroondah

- more information on joining dog obedience or dog friendly activities on Council's website
- more information about adopting pets from animal shelters on Council's website.

Priority actions

Actions to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with applicable ordinances over the life of the DAMP are presented in Table 7.

Table 6 – Promoting responsible pet ownership and compliance with animal management ordinances

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Develop a communication program for responsible pet ownership, raising the profile and awareness of the scope of Council's animal management service. This may include: • review information currently provided on Council's website • develop an annual communications program through a range of channels and different media, including social media, videos, hard copy, footpath stencilling • provide accessible information including languages other than English • addressing significant number of new and possibly first time pet owners during COVID. Issues to build awareness: • dogs on leash • pick up after your dog • keeping children safe around pets • appropriate selection of pets • relevant pet care/welfare information • criteria that determines "having effective control" of their dog	Develop Deliver	Communication plan developed Communication plan implemented	Year 1 Year 2- 4

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
• benefits of preventing cats from wandering.			
Actively work with schools to increase the number of students exposed to relevant programs including: • 'Living Safely with Dogs' program (kindergartens) • Pet Town (kindergartens and primary schools) • The Responsible Pet Ownership Primary School Program.	Deliver	Program developed Number of schools visited by DJPR increases	Year 1 Years 2- 4
Piloting a pet-friendly event with a focus on: • profiling the scope of the animal management service and other local businesses, community support groups and agencies • building community relationships to address key service issues e.g. control of dogs in off leash areas • neighbourhood social connection and active participation • consider COVIDSafe events such as online photo competition or informative webinars.	Develop	Event scoped Event completed	Year 2 Year 3
Deliver community awareness programs: • about the benefits of adopting from animal shelters • to dispel myths about animals that come from shelters	Deliver	Information researched in conjunction with relevant stakeholders Information prepared and promoted	Annually / Ongoing
Actively encourage the adoption of animals from animal shelters and	Deliver	Promotion undertaken as per	Ongoing

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
promote adoption opportunities available to Maroondah residents		Communications Plan	

Focus area 3 - Minimising the risk of dog attacks

Outcome

To minimise the risk of dog attacks on people and animals within our community.

What the evidence tells us

Dog attacks are a serious issue. Contrary to common perceptions, most dog attacks will occur in the home and frequently involve children – many of these dog attacks will go unreported. Council data shows that a total of 80 dog attacks were reported in 2020/21 – 26 more than in 2016/17, but four fewer than in 2012/13.

It is important to understand that any dog is capable of behaving in an aggressive manner. Animal professionals advise that any dog's tendency to bite is influenced by these characteristics:[5]

- heredity – the dog's breed and individual breeding
- early experience – including the environment the dog was exposed to as a pup
- socialisation – helps dogs to stay calm when exposed to new things
- training – being taught how to behave
- health – dogs can feel threatened when unwell or injured
- behaviour of the victim – people (especially children) may not be accustomed to interacting with dogs and noticing the dog's behaviour

Maroondah City Council is committed to minimising the risk of attacks on people and animals within our community. As a result, Council's animal management officers investigate all allegations of dog attacks and aggressive behaviour displayed by dogs as quickly and efficiently as possible. Officers utilise their tools and skills to investigate and remove the risk from the community.

What the community has told us

	Very frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Total
Owners letting their dog/s annoy other dogs or people	14%	16%	38%	**68%**
Dog/s not being controlled in on-leash areas	16%	16%	28%	**60%**
Dog/s not being controlled in off-leash areas	11%	17%	31%	**59%**

Nearly two thirds of survey respondents highlighted issues with dogs in public places, not being controlled by their owner/handler. Another 18 respondents also highlighted concerns with untrained/aggressive dogs.

[5] Australian Veterinary Association, 2012 – *Dangerous dogs – a sensible solution.*

Priority actions

While education is key to reducing the incidence of dog attacks, it is also important for Council to thoroughly investigate all reports of dog attacks and to take appropriate enforcement action. Table 8 outlines actions Council will take over the next four years to minimise the risk of dog attacks.

Table 7 - Actions to minimise risks of dog attack

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Review the data collected relating to dog attacks in order to identify if there are any patterns/trends that could be addressed via targeted strategies	Deliver	Data reviewed, and additional data collected if required	Annually
Investigate the benefits of promoting Court outcomes of dog attack investigations to as a way of raising awareness to prevent dog attacks	Deliver	Number of media stories released	Ongoing
Timely and thorough investigation of all dog attacks and dog rushes and appropriate enforcement action taken	Deliver	Number of investigations Number of successful court outcomes	Ongoing

Focus area 4 - Animal registration and overpopulation

Outcome

- Maximising the number of pets that are registered in Maroondah, increases opportunities for higher rates of reunification and provides more targeted education and awareness campaigns about the welfare and health benefits of desexing animals.

What the evidence tells us

Animal registration is central to the effective management of pet cats and dogs in Maroondah. Not only does animal registration provide a ready means for reuniting pets and owners if their dog or cat is brought in to Council's pound, but registration fees also help support the provision of:

- animal management services by Council's Local Laws team
- stray cat collection
- pet facilities, including dog parks and animal pound services
- community education campaigns and pet owner information
- audit and compliance activities for domestic animal businesses such as pet shops, breeders, kennels and catteries
- payment of a levy to the Victorian Government that supports responsible pet ownership programs to be provided in schools and kindergartens.

Pleasingly, the number of cat registrations in Maroondah has increased by more than 17% since 2017, while number of stray cats impounded by Council has fallen by 8.4%. The proportion of animals brought in to pound that could not be reunited with an owner or rehomed and were euthanised remained relatively stable (7%).

What the community has told us

	Strongly agree	Agree	Total
Council provides relevant information on the benefits of microchipping pets	13%	47%	**60%**
Council provides relevant information on desexing of pets	11%	45%	**56%**

Priority actions

Actions proposed over the life of the DAMP to encourage animal registration and address overpopulation are outlined in Table 9.

Table 8 - Actions to encourage animal registration and address overpopulation

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Research successful strategies employed by other LGAs to increase compliance with registration requirements and consider how they might be applied in Maroondah. Consider strategies associated with: • targeted educational programs (e.g. localised programs) • social media • newer technology and continuous improvement of registration/renewal processes	Facilitate	Strategies investigated/ researched Initiatives to increase rates of registration implemented	Annually
Ensure Council's registration database is maintained and accurate by: • cleansing records of all deceased / relocated pets etc. • cross referencing with microchip databases • annual registration door knock, SMS and email reminders • cross referencing with State Government Pet Exchange Register to identify any Domestic Animal Breeders that require registration	Deliver	Updating of database undertaken Annual renewal process more efficient	Annually / Ongoing
Development of 'new owner' pet ownership pack (show bag)	Deliver	Pet ownership pack developed	Year 2-3
Assess if more appropriate (smaller) cat registration tags would improve incidence of being worn as legislated.	Deliver	Cat tags purchased	Year 3

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Continue to advocate through Municipal Association Victoria for the Federal Government to develop a single industry microchip and registration database, and funds to develop the database.	Advocate	Advocacy undertaken	Ongoing
Continue to advocate to the State Government requesting legislated options to reduce registration fees (for example) for dogs: • that have completed obedience training • adopted pets • adopted older pets.	Advocate	Advocacy undertaken	Ongoing
Monitor data for all impounded and surrendered animals captured through Animal Aid, for trends that could assist in developing new projects, as well as understanding any impacts from COVID-19 (increase in pet ownership)	Develop	Improved record keeping within Council database to assist the collection of statistics for animal related matters	Annually
Consider opportunities that will reduce overpopulation through the three areas of microchipping, desexing initiatives and increasing registration rates. This could include: • recognising good behaviour of pet owners • free microchipping day • desexing initiative • incentives for cat owners to register cats • further incentives for dog/cat owners to desex their animal.	Deliver and support	Opportunities/benefits considered Events/activities implemented (depending on funding) Available State and Federal Grants for desexing programs applied for	Year 2 - 4

Focus area 5 - Nuisance dogs and cats

Outcome

- To understand key issues impacting residents in relation to nuisances caused by pets, and to identify the best ways to minimise the impact of those issues.

What the evidence tells us

Despite the many benefits of pet ownership, there is always potential for cats and dogs to cause a nuisance to others that detracts from neighbourhood amenity. The total number of customer requests related to animal management issues in 20/21 was 1,369 – a reduction of 256 since 2017. Of these requests, 323 (23.5%) related to nuisance dogs, such as dogs at-large; 220 (16.1%) were for barking dogs; and 249 (18.2%) were for nuisance cats or cats being held for collection.

What the community has told us

While the overall reduction in animal management request since 2017 is pleasing, community consultation and the increased use of local parks and reserves through the COVID lockdowns tells us that there are additional opportunities to lessen the impact of nuisance animals. Survey participants reinforced the need for pet owners to take responsibility for their pets, with key issues being irresponsible dog owners and aggressive dogs at off leash parks; owners not picking up after their dogs; and cats being allowed to wander onto neighbouring properties and being out at night.

Priority actions

Actions proposed to address nuisance animal issues over the next four years are presented in Table 10.

Table 9 - Actions to address nuisance animal issues

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Review information resources for use by Council and pet owners in relation to barking dog complaints, that has been reviewed by an animal behaviourist	Deliver	Information resources reviewed	Year 1
Investigate partnership opportunities with community-based and dog training providers to develop initiatives and incentives that encourage dog owners to attend dog training and obedience classes	Facilitate	Promotion of providers/programs	Year 2 - 4
Undertake a review of extent of litter issues caused by incorrect disposal of dog litter	Deliver	Benchmarking, cost analysis and consultation complete	Year 2
Investigate provision and cost of litter bags, bins, and waste bin collections in specific public reserves to reduce the impact of dog litter	Deliver	Benchmarking, cost analysis and consultation complete	Year 3 - 4

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Routine patrolling of public places such as reserves, retail precincts, trails etc., , with a particular focus on addressing 'high complaint' parks	Deliver	Patrol schedule completed	Ongoing
Investigate successful industry/sector programs that have achieved reduced incidents of cat trespass/wandering	Facilitate	Investigation/research undertaken Initiatives considered for implementation	Year 2 Year 3 - 4
Promote the benefits of preventing cats from wandering to reduce cat nuisance complaints	Deliver	Number of cat nuisance complaints reduced	Year 2 - 4
Promote the cat cage service provided by Council to assist dealing with nuisance complaints	Deliver	Cat traps acquired if demand warrants	Ongoing
Gauge community sentiment for further restrictions on current cat curfew times	Deliver	Review/community consultation undertaken	Year 3 - 4
Update information resources for cat owners whose cats are the subject of cat trespass complaints	Deliver	Information reviewed and made available	Year 2
Consider incentives for cat owners who build in and secure their cats to their property 24/7	Deliver	Incentive program scoped	Year 3 - 4
Work with Animal Aid or other neighbouring Councils to: • improve information to the community about managing and addressing the semi-owned cat population • establish programs to address issues associated with the un-owned and semi-owned cat populations.	Facilitate	Partnership established Target programs established, including key performance measures	Year 2 - 3
Enhance promotion/distribution and/or develop information that assists residents to make appropriate pet selection, particularly in relation to dogs.	Deliver	Information more widely promoted in conjunction with promotional partners	Year 2 - 4

Focus area 6 - Dangerous dogs

Outcome

- Ensure owners of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs are aware of their obligations and to comply with all legislated requirements for the keeping of these declared dogs.

What the evidence tells us

Effective identification and management of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs is a key responsibility for Councils under the DAA, which also establishes standards for how these declared dogs must be housed and controlled. There are currently four declared 'menacing' dogs registered in the City of Maroondah, and no declared 'dangerous' dogs. This is half the number of 'declared' dogs that were on Council's register in 2017. It is important to ensure all dog owners are aware of the potential for all dogs to exhibit dangerous and/or menacing behaviour, not just restricted breed dogs.

What the community has told us

There wasn't a specific question in the recent community survey relating to dangerous dogs, but there was significant feedback regarding owners not being in control of their dogs, allowing them to annoy other dogs or not being handled properly when being aggressive.

Priority actions

Actions to ensure Council is fulfilling its duties in relation to 'declared' dogs are shown in Table 11.

Table 10 - Management of 'declared' dogs in Maroondah

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Review and enhance information for dog owners to ensure there is a clear understanding as to dog behaviour that may lead to their dog being 'declared' as a dangerous or menacing.	Deliver	Information reviewed and promoted more widely	Annual
Review and distribute information to owners of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs, to ensure they are aware of current requirements and inspect premises to ensure compliance	Deliver	Information provided Inspections conducted	Annual
Cross reference microchip details of all dogs reported as missing from the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.	Deliver	Cross referencing completed	Annual
Undertake planned patrols in industrial estates and other appropriate areas for guard dogs and following up on any compliance action required.	Deliver	Patrols completed Number of dogs found to be not registered	Annual

Focus area 7 - Off-leash areas

Outcome

- To plan and manage dog off-leash areas in consideration of the needs of all park users including dog owners.

What the evidence tells us

Council is committed to continually improving the services it provides to the City of Maroondah and invests in service reviews, community consultation, good governance and strategic partnerships to help achieve this goal.

There are currently 35 public reserves determined in Council's Local Order that are designated as off- leash. Council has received Victorian Government funding to establish a new fenced dog park in Maroondah. Planning and community consultation for this, will begin late 2021. The Local Order as permitted under s26(2) of DAA, will be reviewed and updated in 2022.

What the community has told us

Through consultation conducted to inform the development of the DAMP, we know that there is strong support for Council to take a more active role in promoting animal wellbeing and responsible pet ownership in Maroondah. We also know that our community is interested in identifying opportunities for new dog off-leash areas.

Priority actions

Table 12 provides a summary of action planned over the life of the DAMP.

Table 11 - Actions to deliver on updating current ordinances

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Dog off-leash areas			
Review and update Council's Local Order that stipulates the reserves in Maroondah that have 'dog off-leash' areas, or "on-leash" only, and other restrictions within that public place.	Deliver	Community consultation completed Order is reviewed and adopted by Council	Year 1 - 2
Construct a new off-leash dog park at Parkwood Reserve based on community consultation and engagement.	Deliver	Dog park completed	Year 1
Undertake an audit of all signage in reserves to ensure clear understanding of any restrictions for dogs in that reserve, particularly on sportsfields.	Deliver	Signage audit completed	Year 1-2
Investigate use of QR scan codes at reserves to provide easy information. regarding any off-leash or on-leash areas	Deliver	Review completed Signage rollout completed	Year 2 Year 3-4
Maroondah Local Law			

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
Review and update Maroondah Local Laws related to animal management.	Deliver	New Maroondah Local Law enacted	Year 2

Focus area 8 - Pets and people

Outcome

- To recognise and optimise health and wellbeing opportunities associated with pets.
- To strengthen networks that support pet owners and pets in crisis.

What the evidence tells us

Evidence shows that victims of domestic violence will choose to stay in that relationship if they are not able to take their pet with them. By providing an avenue for their pet to be housed and boarded while the victim finds suitable housing can often be the difference between them, staying or getting out of a domestic violence situation.

What the community has told us

Through consultation conducted to inform the development of the DAMP, we know that there is strong support for Council to take a more active role in promoting animal wellbeing in Maroondah. We also know that our community is interested addressing issues related to pet welfare in circumstances of domestic violence and other crises.

	Very Important	Important	Total
The welfare of animals in domestic violence situations, and how they can be made safe	65%	22%	**87%**

Priority actions

Table 13 provides a summary of action planned over the life of the DAMP.

Table 3 - Actions to deliver actions on emerging needs and acknowledging the importance of pets

Other matters			
In partnership with Animal Aid, develop an animal emergency accommodation policy for vulnerable residents that is built on the foundations of the EDVOS family violence program: • Animal Management Officers complete appropriate training on emerging risks, including (but not limited to) domestic violence, homelessness, mental health and drug use • Develop procedures to support victims and pets	Deliver	Policy developed Policy endorsed	Year 1 Year 2 - 4

Work with EDVOS to identify opportunities to better inform the community about the impact of domestic violence on pets and how to make them safe.	Deliver	Information updated Project plan scoped Project implemented	Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 - 4
Work with Animal Aid to identify strategies that address the root causes of animal abandonment.	Deliver	Opportunities identified and implemented	Annually
Maintain emergency management plans that facilitate the safety of pets during emergencies.	Deliver	Plan reviewed	Annually
Encourage other Council service areas to optimise health and wellbeing and community networking opportunities associated with pets for example inclusion in the Active Ageing strategy, pet therapy, improving physical health outcomes.	Deliver	Activities included in relevant strategies	Annually

Tracking our progress

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
- provide community with annual updates on the progress of actions in the plan
- undertake a major review of the plan in 2025/26.
- provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan
- provide the Secretary with an annual report highlighting progress against the actions and any amendments to priority actions.

To contact Council

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Translating and Interpreter Service
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