

# Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan

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**2021/2025**  
**Strathbogie Shire**  
**Council**

## Acknowledgement of Country

Strathbogie Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Taungurung peoples of the Eastern Kulin nation and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We are committed to our reconciliation journey, because at its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, for the benefit of all.

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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 Act 1994, section 68A(2) requires that each Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan 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 housed 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 or required.
- 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 within 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 Strathbogie Shire residents. Our most recent animal registration data shows a total of 2039 dogs and 475 cats are actively registered in the Strathbogie Shire as of August 2021 - around one pet per 2.24 households.<sup>1</sup>

It is important that Strathbogie'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:

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<sup>1</sup> id consultants estimate the number of households in Strathbogie in 2021 is 5,652.

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

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## About the Shire of Strathbogie

The Shire of Strathbogie spans an area of just over 3300km<sup>2</sup> in the northeastern region of Victoria. The townships of Euroa, Nagambie, Violet Town, Longwood, Avenel, Strathbogie, Ruffy and Graytown are contained within Strathbogie's municipal boundary, as well as parts of Arcadia South and Murchison.

There is a diverse mix of housing types across these towns, from residential, rural residential and farming properties.

Australian census data shows Strathbogie's resident population was 10,274 in 2016 and is estimated to have grown to around 10,992 by mid-2020.<sup>2</sup>

The number of households in Strathbogie rose from 5,312 in 2016 to an estimated 5,652 in July 2021, while the average size of households declined marginally – from 2.20 residents per household in 2016 to an estimated 1.94 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 past four years has seen an increase in new dwellings being constructed for couples and families retiring to, and within the municipality.

### Domestic Animal Ownership in Strathbogie

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% of survey participants reporting that they owned at least one pet.<sup>3</sup>

From the HILDA survey, we know that dogs are by far the most popular pet; more than 70% of pet-owners have a dog. Cats are the next most popular pet, with around 37% of pet owners having a cat. Only 16% of pet owners have a bird; 18% have a fish; 3.6% have a horse; and 17% 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 1, dog registrations have increased by just over 4.7% since 2017, while cat registrations have grown by nearly 25% over the same period.

**Table 1: Number of animal registrations in Strathbogie Shire.**

Type of animal registrations	2017	2021	Change (%)
Dog registrations	1943	2039	+4.71
Cat registrations	382	475	+24.35

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

- provision of animal registration information in new resident information packs.

<sup>2</sup> .id Consultants, *Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2041*, February 2019.

<sup>3</sup> 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.



- a publicised increase in nuisance cat trapping activities by Council's Compliance 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 Strathbogie has been accompanied by a decrease in the number of cats required to be rehomed as an owner can now be identified.

## Domestic Animal Management in Strathbogie

Strathbogie Shire 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 2.

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

Animal registrations	Service level or measure
Dog registrations	2039
Cat registrations	475
Domestic animal businesses in Strathbogie	1
<b>Animal brought into a pound facility by Council officers</b>	
Dogs brought in	47
Dogs reunited with owner or adopted	89.3%
Cats brought in	141
Cats reunited with owner or adopted	9.2%
<b>Customer requests responded to</b>	
Stray dogs contained for collection / dogs wandering	141
Dog attacks	23
Dogs rushing / menacing	40
Dog barking	58
Nuisance cats	63
Cats contained for collection	141
Feral cats impounded	128

Council also monitors its performance in the delivery of domestic animal management services relative to other local government areas. A comparison of Strathbogie Shire Council's performance and other local government areas is shown in Figure 1 (over page).



**Figure 1 – Comparative performance of Strathbogie's animal management services in 2020-21<sup>4</sup>**

Performance area	Strathbogie Shire	Similar Councils	All Councils
Days taken to action animal management requests	1.9 days	1.5 days	1.71 days
Animals reclaimed from Council	23.95%	47.41%	47.25%
Animals rehomed	6.84%	39.1%	31.96%
Successful animal management prosecutions	0	17.65%	63.75%
Cost of animal management service per population	\$14.57	\$17.86	\$12.54

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<sup>4</sup> Source: [knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au](https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au)

# Community engagement

## What we did

Community engagement was undertaken between 29 July and 27 August 2021. A full version of the community consultation results is available on Strathbogie Shire Council's online engagement platform, Share Strathbogie.

Engagement methods	Outcomes
Online survey via: <a href="http://www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au">www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au</a>	Visitors: 218 Contributors: 61
Social Media Campaign:	Reached: 5507 Engaged: 452
Media Release:	Directed to: <a href="http://www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au">www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au</a>
Council's Website:	Directed to: <a href="http://www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au">www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au</a>
Posters:	Directed to: <a href="http://www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au">www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au</a>
Fact Sheets:	Directed to: <a href="http://www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au">www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au</a>
Letters to Key Stakeholders:	Directed to: <a href="http://www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au">www.share.strathbogie.vic.gov.au</a>

## 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 3.

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

Requires attention	
Owners not picking up after their dogs	61.40%
Dogs not under effective control in public spaces	42.11%
Dogs wandering or at large	49.12%
Very important	
More bag dispensers and bins in public open spaces	77.20%
More education around responsible pet ownership	38.60%
Increase in fines and enforcement for animals in public spaces	50.88%
Yes	
Should there be more fenced dog parks?	48.21%
Should the community be educated better on responsible pet ownership?	59.02%
Should Council provide information to the public via social media?	74.07%

# Strathbogie's Animal Management Principles

Strathbogie Shire 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 Strathbogie Shire. These principles have been developed and are included in our DAMP and intend 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 Strathbogie Shire.**

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 Strathbogie Shire Council's 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 Strathbogie Shire.**

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 Strathbogie Shire are delivered by Council's Compliance team. They are 'Authorised Officers' for the purpose of the Domestic Animals Act, Strathbogie Shire Local Laws and other relevant legislation.

Strathbogie's Authorised Officers are trained in the key aspects of domestic animal control and regulation. Officers have also 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 Compliance 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
- issuing of permits
- enforcing state legislation and the Strathbogie Shire Local Law
- 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 concerns and complaints about domestic animals
- overseeing Council's contract for the provision of pound services and related programs at the Greater Shepparton City Council pound facility.

Council has established operational procedures to ensure its domestic animal management services are delivered in a safe, efficient, and consistent manner in accordance with the DAA, the Strathbogie Shire Local Laws and other relevant legislation. These procedures include:

- impounding of animals
- animal registration and renewal
- barking dogs
- dog attacks
- seizing of dogs
- prosecutions
- injured animals
- issuing infringements
- appeals
- additional animal permits
- deceased animals
- surrender of animals
- restricted breed, dangerous and menacing dogs.

Council's operational procedures are reviewed annually, and whenever any changes are made to the governing legislation in relation to animal management activities. To ensure the safety of our community and our Compliance team, operational procedures are also reviewed following any critical incident.

## Strathbogie Shire 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 Shire of Strathbogie.

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

**Table 4 - Summary of Strathbogie Shire Council's animal management ordinances**

Ordinance	Purpose
Local Law No. 2 Section 39 - Limits on the number of animals kept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifies the number and types of animals that may be kept on properties without a permit.</li> <li>No more than twenty animals of any kind may be kept on a property less than 10,000m<sup>2</sup> without a permit.</li> <li>Roosters, peacocks, donkeys, pigs, and livestock must not be kept on any property less than 10,000m<sup>2</sup> without a permit.</li> </ul>
Local Law No. 2 Section 43 - Cleanliness of animal enclosure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An owner or occupier of land must ensure that any animal enclosure at the property is thoroughly cleansed as often as necessary and kept in a clean and sanitary condition.</li> <li>An owner or occupier of any land must remove any faeces or refuse from the land as frequently as required so as not to cause a nuisance or an offensive odour.</li> </ul>
Local Law No. 2 Section 44 - Animal excrement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A person in charge of a dog must not allow any part of the animal's excrement to remain on a road or council land</li> <li>A person in charge of a dog must carry a suitable receptacle for the removal of that animal's excrement from a road or council land.</li> </ul>
Local Law No. 2 Section 46 - Unleashed dogs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A person may unleash a dog in an area designated by council and sign posted for the purpose except that (a) the dog must remain under effective control of the handler; and (b) these provisions do not apply to greyhounds, declared dangerous dogs or restricted breed dogs.</li> </ul>

Consistent with principles of good governance, Strathbogie Shire Council conducts reviews of the Strathbogie Local Laws, and Orders made pursuant to section 26(2) of the DAA to confirm their ongoing necessity and effectiveness. The need for any order made under section 26(2) of the DAA will be scoped in year one of the DAMP plan.

Local laws about animal management in Strathbogie Shire are contained in Strathbogie Community Local Law 2020 No. 2, 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, the Strathbogie Community Local Law 2020 No.2 will cease operation on 7 October 2030.

Prior to the cessation of Strathbogie Shire Community Local Law No.2, Council will conduct a major review and refresh of its Local Laws, including those sections related to animal management. As required by section 73(2) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, this work will involve extensive community consultation.

## A vision for domestic animal management in Strathbogie

### Our focus areas

Council is developing a comprehensive program of activities and initiatives it will pursue over the life of the DAMP to ensure animal management services in Strathbogie continue to meet the objectives of the DAA and are responsive to the needs of our community. This program will be structured around six focus areas 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
- Off leash areas
- Pets and people

Activities and initiatives under each focus are being developed with reference to the requirements of the DAA, the Strathbogie Community Local Law and any Orders made under the DAA, related legislation, and industry best practice approaches to animal management services.

Importantly, actions under this plan will reflect the results of community consultation conducted by Council in July and August 2021, which captured a broad range of views about animal management in Strathbogie, 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 service, Council invests in ongoing training and education for our Compliance Officers.

### What the evidence tells us

Strathbogie Shire Council has a strong commitment to the safety and development of the skills for all Compliance Officers. Table 5 outlines the core competencies required of Council's Authorised Officers, as well as identifying additional training provided to our designated Compliance Officers.

This ongoing training builds upon the extensive experience of our Compliance team and reinforces Council's commitment to ensuring Strathbogie's animal management services reflect industry best practice and up-to-date information.

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

Additional Qualification and 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• conflict resolution</li><li>• managing aggressive customers</li><li>• communication / public speaking</li><li>• situation awareness.</li></ul>	As required
Breed identification (restricted)	As required



## Focus area 2 - Responsible pet ownership

### Outcome

Promoting and encouraging responsible pet ownership in Strathbogie 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 Strathbogie. 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 Strathbogie. The range of local parks, reserves, and recreational facilities in Strathbogie is strongly valued by the community.

It is felt that enhancements to our local parks and reserves in the future will 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 Strathbogie. 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 Compliance team is doing to promote responsible pet ownership in Strathbogie.

	Agree (%)
Council provides relevant information on the benefits of microchipping pets	90.20
Council provides relevant information on caring for pets	94.12
Council's website has relevant information about caring for pets	42.59

More than 50% of respondents agreed that in relation to 'Responsible Pet Ownership' there should be:

- More information provided on Council's website
- More information sent with registration renewals
- More information shared on social media platforms

### 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 6.

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

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review information currently provided on Council's website</li> <li>develop an annual communications program through a range of channels and different media, including social media, Council's website, hard copy, media releases</li> <li>provide accessible information including languages other than English</li> <li>addressing significant number of new and possibly first-time pet owners during COVID.</li> </ul> <p>Issues to build awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dogs on leash</li> <li>pick up after your dog</li> <li>keeping children safe around pets</li> <li>appropriate selection of pets</li> <li>relevant pet care/welfare information</li> <li>criteria that determines "having effective control" of their dog</li> <li>benefits of preventing cats from wandering</li> </ul>	<p>Develop</p> <p>Deliver</p>	<p>Communication plan developed</p> <p>Communication plan implemented</p>	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 2 to 4</p>
<p>Piloting a pet-friendly event with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>profiling the scope of the animal management service and other local businesses, community support groups and agencies</li> <li>building community relationships to address key service issues e.g. control of dogs in off leash areas</li> <li>neighbourhood social connection and active participation</li> <li>consider COVID Safe events such as online photo competition or informative webinars.</li> </ul>	Develop	<p>Event scoped</p> <p>Event completed</p>	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p>
<p>Deliver community awareness programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>about the benefits of adopting from animal shelters</li> </ul>	Deliver	Information researched in conjunction with	Annually / Ongoing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to dispel myths about animals that come from shelters</li> </ul>		relevant stakeholders Information prepared and promoted	
Actively encourage the adoption of animals from animal shelters and promote adoption opportunities available to Strathbogie residents	Deliver	Promotion undertaken as per Communications Plan	Ongoing

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## 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 23 dog attacks were reported in 2020/21, 33 dog attacks in 2019/20, and 34 dog attacks in 2018/19.

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:

- 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.<sup>5</sup>

Strathbogie Shire Council is committed to minimising the risk of attacks on people and animals within our community. As a result, Council's Compliance 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

	Surveyed respondents (%)
Owners allow their dog/s to wander and annoy other dogs or people in public spaces	91
Owners require more education in preventing aggressive behaviours	49

Just over half the surveyed respondents highlighted the need for additional enforcement and penalties in relation to dogs not under effective control in public places.

### 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 7 outlines actions Council will take over the next four years to minimise the risk of dog attacks.

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Veterinary Association, 2012 – *Dangerous dogs – a sensible solution*.

**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 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 Strathbogie, 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 Strathbogie. Not only does animal registration provide a ready means for reuniting pets and owners if their dog or cat is brought into Council's pound, but registration fees also help support the provision of:

- animal management services by Council's Compliance 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 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 Strathbogie Shire in 2021 has increased by more than 24% since 2017, while number of stray cats impounded by Council has fallen by 2.3% over the same period.

The proportion of animals brought into the pound that could not be reunited with an owner or rehomed and were euthanised in 2021 was 44.3% or 125 animals. Of those 125 animals, 97.6% or 122 of these animals were feral cats.

### What the community has told us

	Agree (%)
Council provides relevant information on the benefits of microchipping pets	90.20
Council provides relevant information on what registration fees provide for	62.75

### Priority actions

Actions proposed over the life of the DAMP to encourage animal registration and address overpopulation are outlined in Table 8.

**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 Strathbogie.	Facilitate	Strategies investigated and/or researched	Annually

Consider strategies associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>targeted educational programs (eg: localised programs)</li> <li>social media</li> <li>newer technology and continuous improvement of registration/renewal processes</li> </ul>		Initiatives to increase rates of registration implemented	
Ensure Council's registration database is maintained and accurately by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cleansing records of all deceased / relocated pets etc.</li> <li>cross referencing with microchip databases</li> <li>annual registration door knock, SMS and email reminders</li> <li>cross referencing with State Government Pet Exchange Register to identify any Domestic Animal Breeders that require registration</li> </ul>	Deliver	Updating of database undertaken  Annual renewal process more efficient	Annually / Ongoing
Development of 'new owner' pet ownership information pack	Deliver	Pet ownership pack developed	Year 2 to 3
Assess if more appropriate cat registration tags would improve incidence of being worn as legislated.	Deliver	Cat tags purchased	Year 3
Continue to advocate through Municipal Association Victoria (MAV) 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>that have completed obedience training</li> <li>adopted pets</li> <li>adopted older pets.</li> </ul>	Advocate	Advocacy undertaken	Ongoing
Monitor data for all impounded and surrendered animals captured through Council's pound provider, 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:	Deliver and support	Opportunities /benefits considered	Year 2 to 4



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognising good behaviour of pet owners</li> <li>• free microchipping day</li> <li>• desexing initiative</li> <li>• incentives for cat owners to register cats</li> <li>• further incentives for dog/cat owners to desex their animal.</li> </ul>		<p>Events /activities implemented (depending on funding)</p> <p>Available State and Federal Grants for desexing programs applied for</p>	
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## 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 594. Of these requests, 141 (23.7%) related to nuisance dogs, such as dogs at-large; 58 (9.7%) were for barking dogs; and 204 (34.3%) were for nuisance cats or cats being held for collection.

### What the community has told us

While the overall increase in pet ownership 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 wandering at large; 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 9.

**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	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 to 4
Investigate provision and cost of litter bags, bins, and waste bin collections in specific public areas to reduce the impact of dog litter	Deliver	Benchmarking, cost analysis and consultation complete	Year 3 to 4
Routine patrolling of public places	Deliver	Patrol schedule completed	Ongoing

such as reserves, residential areas and townships, trails etc., with a particular focus on addressing 'high complaint' areas			
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 to 4
Promote the benefits of preventing cats from wandering to reduce cat nuisance complaints	Deliver	Number of cat nuisance complaints reduced	Year 2 to 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 restrictions on cat curfew times	Deliver	Review/community consultation undertaken	Year 3 to 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 to 4
Work with Council's pound provider and our neighbouring Councils to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve information to the community about managing and addressing the semi-owned cat population</li> <li>establish programs to address issues associated with the un-owned and semi-owned cat populations.</li> </ul>	Facilitate	Partnership established  Target programs established, including key performance measures	Year 2 to 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 to 4

## Focus area 6 - Dangerous dogs

### Outcome

Ensure owners of dangerous, menacing, and restricted breed dogs are aware of their obligations and 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 is currently one declared 'menacing' dog registered in the Strathbogie Shire, and two declared 'dangerous' dogs. 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 10.

**Table 10 - Management of 'declared' dogs in Strathbogie**

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 dog.	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 Strathbogie Shire and invests in service reviews, community consultation, good governance and strategic partnerships to help achieve this goal.

There is currently one public reserve determined in Council's Local Order that is designated as off-leash. Council will investigate if any Victorian Government funding is available to assist in establishing further fenced off-leash dog parks within the municipality.

Planning and community consultation will be required when determining a suitable location for any future off-leash dog park. The Local Order as permitted under s26(2) of DAA, will be reviewed and updated annually if required.

### 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 Strathbogie.

We also know that our community is interested in identifying opportunities for new dog off-leash areas throughout other parts of the municipality.

### Priority actions

Table 11 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
<b>Dog off-leash areas</b>			
Review and update Council's Local Order that stipulates any area in Strathbogie that has '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 to 2
Provide a new off-leash dog park at Nagambie based on community consultation and engagement.	Deliver	Dog Park completed	Year 3 to 4
Undertake an audit of all signage in reserves and public walking tracks to ensure clear understanding of any	Deliver	Signage audit completed	Year 1 to 2

restrictions for dogs in that area, particularly around schools and sports fields.			
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 to 4
<b>Strathbogie Community Local Law</b>			
Review Strathbogie's Community Local Laws relating to animal management and seek amendment to the current Community Local Law if any deficiencies are identified.	Deliver	New Strathbogie Community Local Law enacted	Year 4

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## 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.

The service provided by Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) is available to all Strathbogie residents.

### 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 Strathbogie. We also understand our community is interested in addressing issues related to pet welfare in circumstances of a crises.

### Priority actions

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

**Table 12 - Actions to deliver actions on emerging needs and acknowledging the importance of pets**

Action	Role of Council	Measure	Timeframe
In partnership with Council's pound provider, develop an animal emergency accommodation policy for vulnerable residents that is built on the foundations of the DVRCV family violence program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compliance Officers complete appropriate training on emerging risks, including (but not limited to) domestic violence, homelessness, mental health and drug use</li><li>• Develop procedures to support victims and pets</li></ul>	Deliver	Policy developed Policy endorsed	Year 1  Year 2 to 4
Work with DVRCV 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 to 4



Work with Council's pound provider 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 in families.	Deliver	Activities included in relevant strategies	Annually

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## Tracking our progress

In line with the requirements of the Domestic Animals 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 2024/25.
- 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.

### Contact Strathbogie Shire Council

Phone 1800 065 993

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Visit our website at [www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au](http://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au)

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Strathbogie Shire Council is committed to removing barriers and increasing opportunities for people with a disability.

We are National Relay Service (NRS) friendly so if you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment, you can call through the NRS:

- TTY users can phone 133 677 then ask for (03) 5795 0000
- Speak & Listen (speech-to-speech) users can phone 1300 555 727 then ask for (03) 5795 0000
- Internet relay users can connect to NRS at [www.relayservice.com.au](http://www.relayservice.com.au) then ask for (03) 5795 0000.