



Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-25





Governance

Responsible Service or Department:

Safety and Amenity

Adoption Authorised:

Council

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Date Effective From:

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Manager Safety and Amenity

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This will be visible in the Annual Report.

Review date:

4 December 2022

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30 November 2025.

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Version 6 (draft)

Stakeholder review and engagement:

Community and stakeholder consultation have been undertaken in developing this Plan, in accordance with Council's Engagement Policy.

Relevant Legislation:

Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Victoria)

Associated Strategic Direction 4:

Liveable Port Phillip

Associated Instruments:

Port Phillip Local Law No. 1
(Community Amenity) 2013

Public Space Strategy 2021

Council Plan 2021-2031



Supersedes:

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-21

Requirement of Legislation or meeting the Industry Standards:

Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Victoria)

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Name	Content Manager File Reference	Date	Description of Edits
Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-25	#	DD/MM/YYYY	Description of changes



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About the Plan (Purpose)

We have created this Plan after engaging with our community to ensure it reflects the needs, priorities and aspirations of community members.

The Plan provides Council with a strategic, balanced approach towards promotion of responsible pet ownership, the welfare of dogs and cats in the community and the protection of the community and the environment from nuisance dogs and cats. The Plan also outlines how Council will enforce all legislative requirements and compliance with our local laws.

Knowing where we are heading and what we want to achieve are crucial to providing the best possible outcomes for our City and community, both now and over the longer-term.

Outcomes

The keystone of the Plan is a focus on partnering with the community to promote the welfare of dogs and cats and safety of the community, through the provision of a range of animal management services and requiring an owner onus approach to responsible pet ownership.

Council will support this approach through a series of initiatives designed to target education and awareness raising for pet owners, pet registration, managing nuisance and dangerous dogs, keeping dogs under control in shared public spaces, the management of pets so as not to adversely impact others, microchipping, de-sexing and encouraging owners to pick up after their dogs.

Legislative and Regulatory Context

Under the Section 68A of the **Domestic Animals Act 1994** (Act), every Victorian local government must prepare a Plan outlining how it will manage dogs and cats within its municipal boundaries. Every Council must review its Plan annually and publish an evaluation of its implementation in its Annual Report. The Plan must:

- Set out a method for evaluating whether animal control services provided by Council are adequate to give effect to the requirements of the Act and regulations.
- Outline programs for the training of authorised officers.
- Outline programs, services and strategies to:
 - Promote and encourage responsible ownership of dogs and cats;
 - Ensure that people comply with the Act, regulations and legislation;
 - Minimise risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals;
 - Address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
 - Encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats;
 - Minimise potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - Effectively identify all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and ensure that these dogs are kept in compliance with Act and regulations.
 - Provide for review of existing orders and Local Laws made under the Act.
 - Provide for review of any other matters related to management of dogs and cats.

Our Local Laws and Orders

In addition to the Act, Council officers enforce the provisions of the City of Port Phillip Local Law 1 (Community Amenity).

Keeping Dogs and Cats

Residents can keep a prescribed number of animals without a permit.

Type of animal	Maximum numbers allowed in houses	Maximum numbers allowed in units, townhouses and flats
Dogs (over 6 months old)	2	1
Dogs (under 6 months old)	4	1
Cats (over 3 months old)	2	1
Cats (under 3 months old)	4	1

Table 1. Maximum numbers of cats and dogs allowed in properties.

Animal Housing

Residents are required to house their animals in a manner that:

- Is appropriate for the number and type of animals.
- Minimises noise and other nuisance.
- Does not adversely impact the amenity of the area.

Animal Litter

People are required to both carry a bag and remove their animals' excrement when left in public place (e.g. streets, parks and foreshore areas).

Dog Controls

Dogs must be kept under effective control by the means of a chain, cord or leash held by the owner and attached to the dog while the dog is in a reserve or public place, except where otherwise signed as an off leash area. Reserves and beaches in the City of Port Phillip are designated dog on leash, off-leash, prohibited or timed under the Council order.

Annual Review and Reporting

This Plan will be reviewed annually with any amendments required submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, and published in Council’s annual report in accordance with Section 68A (3) of the Act.

Context

Dogs and Cats in Port Phillip

Key data	2016-17	2020-21
Number of complaints or requests annually	3,532	2,643
Number of registered dogs	6,772	7,901
Number of registered declared dogs (dangerous, menacing or restricted breed)	0	1
Number of dog attacks (including rush)	100	108
Number of registered cats	2,906	3,659
Number of registered Domestic Animal Businesses	12	6
Number of keeping of animals / excess animals permits issued	86	49
Number of infringements issued	121	54
Number of successful prosecutions	2	33
Number of dogs impounded	120	69
Number of cats impounded	159	90

Table 2. Key data from Council’s Animal Management Unit.



Community Profile

Our City's population is diverse. Port Phillip is home to people from over 163 birthplaces, with our residents speaking an impressive 114 different languages.

While there is no typical resident, about three in five are aged 18 to 49 years. It is likely our community will continue to feature many people aged 18 to 49 years; however, the largest growth is expected to be in those aged over 60, suggesting many residents will retire and age within our community. Forty-one per cent of households belong to singles and there is a high proportion of renters.

Port Phillip has over 176 hectares of public open space available, including 11km of foreshore, 10 hectares of indigenous vegetation, 24 significant parks, 70 neighbourhood parks, 54 playgrounds and 15 sports grounds. Open spaces are highly valued and highly utilised by pet owners and non-pet owners alike.

The Future

COVID-19

The COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020 and 2021 has presented unprecedented challenges for our community and for Council. The financial impact has been significant. We continue to seek efficiencies in our operations, including reviewing how and which programs and services are provided.

Population Growth and Density – how this relates to dogs and cats

Pre-COVID, projected growth between 2020 and 2041 was a 50 per cent increase in our population - almost 60,000 additional people (Source: Forecast ID). Given the events of 2020, we expect that Port Phillip's population growth is likely to be steadier if people choose to work from home in outer suburbs or regional areas. Slowed construction and migration growth, also related to the pandemic, are other factors likely to affect more immediate growth projections.

Although the resident population growth rate may have slowed for a while, it is still a key consideration in longer-term planning. High density and vertical living will place considerable strain on already well used public spaces and we have seen a trend towards increasing numbers of pets living in apartments.

Our parks and waterfront will need to be welcoming to all members of the community, including pet owners, and cater for various and increased use as they become residents' 'backyards'.

This includes responding to an increased number of domestic animals residing in the municipality and living in apartments, as well as providing a balanced approach to ensuring that our limited open spaces are well managed and shared between dog owners and non-pet owners.

Liveable environments, and sharing our lives with pets, create a foundation for good health and wellbeing for everyone. This includes well-designed places that have safe access to quality open spaces, amenities and services.

The onus is on the pet owner to demonstrate responsible ownership; complying with controls and considering the safety, amenity and needs of others. Council's animal management services promote responsible pet ownership and assists in tracing the owners of stray animals. A portion of all registration fees charged goes toward funding responsible pet ownership programs, education, supporting the safe return of pets to their owners, as well as the provision dog off leash areas.

Shaping the Plan

This Plan has been shaped and informed by Councillors, community and stakeholder consultation, Animal Management Officers' experiences, research, and benchmarking.

The Plan builds on the previous four-year Plan that has successfully guided the delivery of animal management services across the City of Port Phillip.

The results of the community engagement for two other key strategies of Council – the Public Space Strategy and the Council Plan 2021-2031 - have been reviewed and considered as we've developed this Plan.

In addition, specific consultation for this Plan was undertaken. The engagement approach includes two rounds of community engagement: consultation to inform development of the draft plan (May 2021); and consultation to gather feedback on the draft plan (August 2021).

As part of the first round of engagement to inform the draft plan we wanted to understand from our community what they perceive as the most prevalent animal issues and what aspects of animal management are working well, along with what could be improved.

The first-round engagement, involved Neighbourhood Conversation sessions run across the municipality, and a survey was made available from 30 April to 30 May 2021. The engagement was promoted via Council's communications channels, including Divercity Online, social media and e-newsletters. Corflute signage advertising the consultation was displayed in areas such as parks and local activity centres throughout the municipality. Emails were also distributed to all registered pet owners as well as a range of key stakeholders within animal organisations, inviting them to provide feedback.

1717 community members and stakeholders provided feedback on what they perceive to be the most prevalent animal issues and what aspects of animal management are working well, as well as what could be improved.

This feedback was used to develop the draft Plan, which was released for community feedback from 6 August to 5 September 2021. A total of 561 people were engaged primarily via an online survey, online forum and email.

There were 537 survey responses received, with the majority of respondents being Port Phillip residents (476; 89%) and / or being pet owners (470; 88.5%)

An online forum was set up with Council officers available at set times to respond in real time to any questions from the community. Twenty-seven responses were received from 14 community members through this channel.

The engagement was promoted via Council's online communications channels, including Divercity, social media and e-newsletters. Emails were also distributed to all registered pet owners as well as a range of key stakeholders within animal organisations, inviting them to provide feedback.

Engagement Summary Outcomes (Phase 1)

An engaged community

High engagement in the survey from pet owners demonstrates a high level of interest in animal management and commitment to responsible pet ownership in the City of Port Phillip.

Satisfaction with services

Many community members are satisfied with Council animal management services, in particular the friendly and responsive communication with Council about animal related issues was noted.

Compliance and enforcement

The need for increased compliance with and enforcement of leash rules, off-leash areas and dog prohibited areas.

Pet registration fees

Concerns around the high cost pet registration fees, and a lack of transparency around how the fee is used to serve the needs of pets and pet owners.

Dog waste

The need for new solutions to address the problem of dog waste which is not disposed of properly.

Off-leash areas

The need for more off-leash areas, including more fenced and enclosed areas, particularly in light of the increase in dog ownership which has occurred since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reporting incidents

Increased awareness of the process and ease with which incidents involving pets (e.g dog attack) can be reported.

Community education and awareness

Consideration of public education and awareness campaigns to increase the level of compliance with local laws regarding pets, including encouraging the community to call-out fellow community members if they see the wrong thing happening.

Engagement Summary Outcomes (Phase 2)

Phase 2 engagement on the draft Plan provided key findings that were consistent with those obtained during Phase 1.

The draft Plan was generally well supported with a high level of satisfaction across all themes, with no material changes made to the suggested actions.

Our Plan

Theme 1: Responsible pet ownership through information, education and services

Actions	Timing	Measures
<p>Promote owner responsibility approach through increased education, awareness and enforcement of the requirement to carry waste bags and pick up after their dogs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased patrols of parks including in peak times in hot spot areas. Increased education and awareness campaigns directed towards dog owners and encouraging self-regulation. <p>Consider installing signage/footpath stencils in problem areas.</p>	2022	<p>Reduced dog waste complaints</p> <p>Number of education and enforcement actions taken</p>
<p>Explore the use of QR codes to provide ease of access to online maps, dog restrictions and other relevant locational information.</p>	2022	<p>Investigation complete 30 June 2022.</p> <p>Implementation subject to funding by end December 2022.</p>
<p>Consider installing footpath stencils in high traffic areas - parks and streets - to depict dog regulations.</p>	2022	<p>Investigation complete 30 June 2022.</p> <p>Implementation subject to funding by end December 2022.</p>
<p>Conduct audit of existing signage and investigate improvement options to better communicate dog regulations.</p>	2023	<p>Audit complete by 30 June 2022</p>
<p>Engage with Lost Dogs Home to provide two “Dogs in the Park” training events per annum.</p>	TBC – subject to COVID-19 restrictions	<p>Number of events provided.</p> <p>Feedback from attendees.</p>
<p>Provide a register of dog training providers on Council’s website.</p>	2022	<p>Action implemented</p>
<p>Develop a dog attack reporting kit, including clear outline of the investigation process and assurances of privacy.</p>	2022-23	<p>Action implemented</p>

<p>Develop an info-graphic depicting how registration fee income is allocated and make this available to the community through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council website • Registration notices <p>Other Council publications as appropriate</p>	2022 and ongoing	Information provided and updated regularly
<p>Introduce SMS reminders for dog and cat registration renewals</p>	2022-23	Action implemented
<p>Develop a targeted campaign to increase education and awareness amongst pet owners on the potential impacts their pets can have upon wildlife. Work with partners such Park Victoria where required.</p>	2021 and ongoing	Implemented – as part of annual Communications Plan
<p>Develop an annual Communications Plan to target messaging about key issues and services, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated social media focus • Owner/community onus – what people can do • Positive values-based messaging • Promotion of dog friendly public spaces • Complaints processes • Investigations processes • Our role at Port Phillip • Impacts of not picking up dog waste • Impacts of dogs and cats upon native wildlife. 	Ongoing	Communication Plan reviewed and implemented annually.

Table 3. Actions, timing and measures for Theme 1: Responsible pet ownership through information, education and services.

Theme 2: Balancing the need for dog friendly areas with other open space uses

Actions	Timing	Measures
<p>Ensure the needs of dogs and their owners are incorporated into the draft City of Port Phillip Public Space Strategy (PSS) through delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MO Moran Reserve Dog Park • Investigation of a fenced dog off leash area along the light rail trail in Port Melbourne and at Clarke Reserve in Elwood; • Develop criteria for dog off leash parks and investigate opportunities for new, and review permitted times in existing, dog off-leash areas, in all public open spaces including beaches. 	Ongoing	Actions incorporated into final PSS.

<p>When developing landscape master plans, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways to provide separate fenced areas for small and large dogs; • Provision of lighting of popular dog walking areas. <p>Feasibility of incorporating dog agility equipment.</p>		
<p>Introduce a Council Order requiring dogs within 20 metres of an organised sporting event or scheduled training to be on lead; and prohibited from entering the ground/playing surface/training space while an organised sporting match or training is taking place. Normal restrictions apply to that area when there is no organised sporting event or team training taking place on the ground/playing surface/training space.</p> <p>Publish scheduled sporting events and games on website and via QR codes (where feasible) to assist the community to understand dog controls.</p>	2022	<p>Action implemented.</p> <p>Feedback from sporting clubs and oval users.</p>
<p>Introduce permit requirements for individuals/businesses wishing to walk more than 6 dogs at a time. The permit will contain conditions aimed at ensuring all dogs being walked are under effective control at all times, and the amenity impacts of a large number of dogs under the control of a walker in one place is managed.</p> <p>A standard permit condition will require all dogs to be on leash at all times when there are more than 6 dogs in the control of one walker.</p>	2022/23	Reduction in complaints

Table 4. Actions, timing and measures for Theme 2: Balancing the need for dog friendly areas with other open space uses.

Theme 3: Partnerships

Action	Timing	Measures
<p>Partner with vets, Domestic Animal Business, Owners Corps, Real Estate Agents, Public Housing providers etc to promote registration of dogs and cats and responsible pet ownership by providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration information • Pets of Port Phillip flyer • Barking Dog Kit • Pets in Apartments flyer 	2022-23	Complaint numbers
<p>Partner with Australia Post on dog attacks and other concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing system to identify problem dogs. <p>Information card / education on postie safety.</p>	Ongoing	To be confirmed



Foster relationships with other Councils and government departments to share ideas, data and information.	Ongoing	To be confirmed
Investigate opportunities for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- non-food businesses to identify as dog friendly by providing a 'door sticker'.- ways in which footpath traders can indicate they are dog friendly.	2022	To be confirmed

Table 5. Actions, timing and measures for Theme 3: Partnerships.

Theme 4: Pet regulation and compliance

Actions	Timing	Measures
Undertake activities to better identify pet registration non-compliances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue registration checks in the field • Continue Central Animal Records (CAR) microchip audits. Continue to encourage pet registration through proactive notifications to new owners upon notification of a pet sale.	Ongoing	Pet registration levels
Conduct increased Authorised Officer patrols to monitor / enforce dog restrictions and Local Laws in parks and open spaces.	2021	Number of patrols undertaken; data collated analysed and used to drive services. Enforcement actions taken
Document clear processes, based on best practice and legal advice, for declaring a dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dog; and any potential destruction of a dog.	2022	Processes developed and endorsed.
Conduct Central Animal Records microchip audits to identify potential restricted breed dogs.	Ongoing	Audit complete
Conduct annual declared dog property inspections for compliance with the Domestic Animal Act.	Ongoing	Inspections completed
Introduce a 9pm to 6am cat curfew	2023-24	Action implemented
Monitor for businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses by reviewing advertisements, social media etc and ensure they are compliant with legislation.	Ongoing	Regular monitoring Number of follow up actions taken.
Conduct annual property inspections of registered Domestic Animal Businesses for compliance with legislation.	Ongoing	Inspections completed

Table 6. Actions, timing and measures for Theme 4: Pet regulation and compliance. Theme 5: Minimising over population and animal euthanasia

Actions	Timing	Measures
Introduce mandatory desexing of newly registered cats, with exceptions as outlined in the Domestic Animals Act.	2023-24	Action Implemented. Number of de sexed cats found 'at large' reported at the LDH. Feedback from DHHS.
Implement "Pets of Port Phillip" Clinic offering free de sexing in partnership with Port Phillip Animal Hospital and DHHS	2021	Action Implemented Number of pets de sexed. Feedback from participants / delivery partners.
Partner with the Lost Dogs Home, veterinary clinics and animal rescue organisations to optimise rehousing and adoption of dogs and cats, in order to reduce the incidence of euthanasia.	Ongoing	Number of animals returned to owner. Number of animals re-homed.

Table 7. Actions, timing and measures for Theme 5: Minimising over population and animal euthanasia.

Theme 6: Staff training and support

Actions	Timing	Measures
Support Animal Management Officers to further develop their suite of skills as part of the annual performance development planning process including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal handling • Animal behaviour • Canine management • Restricted breed Hoarding/squalor	Ongoing	Training incorporated into individual employee plans.
Animal Management Officer attendance at conferences, industry training and networking.	Ongoing	Attendance / participation levels
Continue to review and update Animal Management Processes	Annually	Processes reviewed and updated

Table 8. Actions, timing and measures for Theme 6: Staff training and support.



Responsible Pet Ownership

Council must outline programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with the Act.

Context

We promote and encourage an owner onus approach to the responsible ownership of dogs and cats through a range of education and enforcement initiatives.

Recent community consultation outcomes show a desire for greater compliance with regulations and enforcement. In addition to increased Council enforcement activities, it was suggested that an owner onus approach to compliance could be explored.

Although 62% of respondents were happy with signage, an opportunity exists to provide clearer guidance to the community on dog regulations. Signage can be confusing as dog regulations are signed with other regulations (particularly at beaches).

We understand the increasing demand for Council services to be delivered online, and for engagement through social media and other digital means.

The promotion of dog friendly and dog prohibited spaces is important in increasing community awareness of where and when you are able to walk your dog. The future provision of interactive online tools has potential to offer improved community outcomes; the first step will be making it easier for owners to update their pet registration details online through our new OneCouncil online portal from August 2021.

Current Activities

- Communication plan in place, including a range of activities across the year:
 - Regular social media campaigns.
 - 'Pets of Port Phillip' flyer in registration renewal notices.
 - Registration packs for all new registrations.
 - Barking Dog Management Kit
 - Website information.
- Proactive patrols of parks and foreshore areas.
- Extended patrols during peak / summer periods - with particular focus on foreshore areas. Partnership with Summer Amenity Team to provide additional support during peak times.
- Signage in parks and foreshore areas detailing dog controls.
- Education initiatives aimed at improving community awareness and reducing dog attacks.
- Information provided to promote dog friendly spaces including dog off leash and dog prohibited area maps.

New Activities

- Promote owner responsibility approach through increased education, awareness and enforcement of the requirement to carry waste bags and pick up.
- Explore the use of QR codes to provide ease of access to online maps, dog restrictions and other relevant locational information.
- Consider installing footpath stencils in high traffic areas - parks and streets - to depict dog regulations.
- Conduct audit of existing signage and investigate improvement options to better communicate dog regulations.
- Engage with Lost Dogs Home to provide two “Dogs in the Park” training events per annum.
- Provide a register of dog training providers on Council’s website.
- Develop a dog attack reporting kit, including clear outline of the investigation process and assurances of privacy.
- Develop an info-graphic depicting how registration fee income is allocated and make this available to the community.
- Introduce SMS reminders for dog and cat registration renewals.
- Develop a targeted campaign to increase education and awareness of pet owners on the potential impacts their pets can have on wildlife.
- Investigate opportunities for non-food businesses to identify as dog friendly by providing a ‘door sticker’ / ways in which footpath traders can indicate they are dog friendly.
- Foster relationships with other Councils and government departments to share ideas, data and information.

What Pet Owners Can Do

- Be considerate of others, care for the community and environment.
- Report dog and cat incidents to Council.
- Carry waste bags, pick up after your dog and dispose of the waste responsibly.
- Walk dogs on a leash, unless in a signed dog off leash area. When in off leash areas, dogs need to be under control.
- Check signs or Council’s website for when and where you can walk your dog on the beach.
- Keep dogs off playing surfaces when sports games or training are underway.
- If your dog barks excessively, try to minimise the barking.
- Keep cats indoors at night and desex cats to reduce overpopulation, nuisance and impacts on native wildlife.
- Register and microchip pets so that if they become lost, we can more easily reunite them with owners.

Overpopulation and Euthanasia

Council must outline any compliance and education programs to address over-population and high euthanasia rates in dogs and cats.

Context

Council has a contract with the Lost Dogs Home to collect uncontained dogs and cats and assist in them being returned to their owner or rehomed.

Collection rates for dogs and cats ‘at large’ in the community have reduced significantly over the last four years. This may reflect more people working at home during the COVID-19 pandemic over the last 18 months. During the 2020/21 financial year, the proportion of impounded animals that are either returned to their owner or rehoused is 94% (dogs) and 82% (cats). The average time it took for a dog to be reclaimed by our residents was 2.61 days and 2.56 days for cats.

Over the term of the current DAMP the primary trends included the reduction in total animals found ‘at large’ in the community - a 37% decrease in dogs and 31% decrease for cats and a 50% reduction in the number of cats being euthanised per year.

Key data provided by the Lost Dogs Home

Impoundment statistics	2016 to 2017	2020 to 2021
Dogs impounded	111	69
Dogs returned to owner	106 (95.5 per cent)	63 (91.3 per cent)
Dogs rehomed	3 (2.7 per cent)	2 (2.9 per cent)
Dogs euthanised	2 (1.8 per cent)	4 (5.8 per cent)
Cats impounded	132	90
Cats returned to owner	27 (20.5 per cent)	41 (45.5 per cent)
Cats rehomed	28 (21.2 per cent)	28 (31.1 per cent)
Cats euthanised	77 (58.3 per cent)	26 (28.9 per cent)

Table 9. Impoundment statistics in City of Port Phillip from 2016 to 2021.

Results of the community consultation for this Plan show that 80% of respondents support mandatory cat desexing, and 70% support a night-time cat curfew. However, cat nuisance was not reported as a primary issue or concern by the community. There are also a relatively low number of cat-related requests reported to Council.

This Plan will allow members of the community who may have previously not been able to afford to microchip or desex their pets this opportunity, via the new "Pets of Port Phillip" Clinic. The Clinic will free de sexing in partnership with Port Phillip Animal Hospital and DHHS.

Current Activities

- Community and animal welfare-based outcomes wherever possible
- Council contracts its animal collection and pound services to The Lost Dogs Home which is open to the public every day (except Christmas Day and Good Friday).
- Online 'lost dog' and 'lost cat' search facility through the Lost Dogs Home.
- Promotion of pets available for adoption through the Lost Dogs Home.
- Cat traps available for the public to utilise to contain nuisance, unowned or feral cats.
- Liaise with and report animal welfare / cruelty matters to the RSPCA for action.
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the number of animals that can be kept on a property without a permit.
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.
- Provision of desexing vouchers for concession card holders.

New Activities

- Introduce mandatory desexing of newly registered cats, with exceptions for registered breeders.
- Introduce a 9pm to 6am cat curfew.
- Implement "Pets of Port Phillip" Clinic offering free de sexing in partnership with Port Phillip Animal Hospital and DHHS.
- Partner with the Lost Dogs Home, veterinary clinics and animal rescue organisations to optimise rehousing and adoption of dogs and cats, in order to reduce the incidence of euthanasia.

Registration and Identification

Council must outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.

Context

All dogs and cats three months and over must be microchipped and registered with Council. Registrations must be renewed annually by 10 April. As well as being a legal requirement, pet registration and displaying a registration tag assists with the reunification of lost pets.

There has been an ongoing steady increase in registrations, showing a trend towards increased pet ownership and particularly the COVID-19 ‘puppy purchases’. The increase in registrations can also be attributed to increased resident population as well as educational programs, incentives to register, and microchip audits.

Year	Cats	Dogs
2012 / 13	2701	5504
2013 / 14	2370	4967
2014 / 15	2500	5572
2015 / 16	2507	5772
2016 / 17	2906	6772
2017 / 18	2869	6831
2018 / 19	2818	6656
2019 / 20	3393	7543
2020 / 21	3659	7901

Table 10. The number of pet registrations in City of Port Phillip over the past nine years.

There is still some work to be done as we are aware that not all pets are registered. Through consultation, the community expressed a perceived lack of value in registration fees and a desire for more transparency about how registration fees are used to support animal management services.



Current Activities

We continually strive to improve registration rates; and ensure stray cats and dogs are reunited with their owners as soon as possible. Our supporting initiatives include:

- Annual registration renewal notices and follow up process.
- A free initial registration incentive program for owners who register their pets within 4 weeks of taking ownership.
- Refund for owners who paid full fee but have their dog or cat desexed within the first 6 months of the registration year.
- Free transfer of registration when moving registered animals from other Victorian municipalities.
- Lifetime registration tags.
- Online registration system for both renewals and new registrations.
- Registration packs for all new registrations.
- Periodic cross referencing of Central Animal Records (CAR) microchip database with Council's animal registration database.
- CAR request to register letter sent to all residents who microchip a new pet.
- Random registration checks during patrols.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

New Activities

- Undertake activities to better identify pet registration non-compliances.
- Partner with vets, Domestic Animal Business, Owners Corps, Real Estate Agents, Public Housing providers etc to promote registration of dogs and cats and responsible pet ownership.

Nuisance

Council must outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.

Context

During the 2020/21 financial year, Animal Management Officers responded to 2,643 requests. The frequency of most animal management requests has reduced from 2016/17 to 2020/21.

Dogs not under control and dog poo continue to be the most prevalent request types and the areas of greatest concern in the community.

Barking dog requests have reduced since implementation of the Barking Dog Management Kit which provides a step-by-step guide for owners and neighbours on the process to manage and lodge barking dog complaints.

Type of requests	2016 / 17	2020 / 21
Dog under control	223	255
Animal collection	178	154
Dog poo	143	133
Dog attack	93	96
Dog rush	20	12
Requests for barking dog management kit	138	115
Barking dog complaint	141	54
Stray cat	80	88

Table 11. Frequent management animal requests.

Council Orders are in place designating foreshore and park areas where owners are able to exercise their dogs off leash. There are also Orders in place prohibiting dogs in certain areas. Some of these areas are season and time dependent.

Although regular and proactive patrols are undertaken, community education and voluntary compliance are critical as only a small portion of public open space areas can be patrolled at a time.

Recent community consultation outcomes were heavily weighted towards dog and cat owners with 88% of respondents indicating that they were pet owners. Although overall dog controls were considered as fairly well balanced, the most prominent suggestion was for more fenced and enclosed off leash areas. Interestingly, 35% of dog owners reported that they lived in apartments with their dogs.

There was a desire for greater compliance with regulations and enforcement. In addition to increased Council enforcement activities, it was suggested that an owner onus approach could be explored.

Dog waste that is not cleaned up by the owner was identified as an issue. Suggestions to reduce the problem included the provision of dog waste bags/bins, public education and awareness, and better enforcement by Council.

The suggestions to provide dog waste bags in parks and shopping strips has been considered during development, including the experiences of neighbouring Councils, and is not proposed to be progressed. This is because our research indicates that it does not effectively reduce dog waste in public places, with most waste found in local streets and on nature strips. There are also concerns about the very high costs (hundreds of thousands of dollars); generation of litter; theft and vandalism; and the conflict with the principle of responsible pet ownership. Further, it has been tried before in Port Phillip without success and discontinued. The main reason the provision was discontinued was due to the high costs, particularly after extensive vandalism, theft and overuse of bags, and littering.

Recent community consultation outcomes show that 70% of respondents support a night-time cat curfew. However, cat nuisance was not reported as a primary issue or concern by the community. There are also a relatively low number of cat-related requests reported to Council.

Current Activities

- Proactive patrols of parks and foreshore areas. Reactive patrols in focused areas as required.
- Extended patrols during peak / summer periods - with particular focus on foreshore areas. Partnership with City Amenity Team to provide additional patrols.
- Signage in parks and foreshore areas detailing dog controls.
- Cat traps available for the public to utilise to contain nuisance, unowned or feral cats.
- Information provided to reduce nuisance and promote dog friendly spaces:
- Dog off leash and dog prohibited area maps
- Pets of Port Phillip flyer
- Barking Dog Management Kit
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the number of animals that can be kept on a property without a permit.
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests regarding nuisance associated with dogs and cats.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.



New Activities

- Conduct increased Authorised Officer patrols to increase enforcement in parks and open spaces.
- Ensure the needs of dogs and their owners are incorporated into the draft City of Port Phillip Public Space Strategy (PSS).
- Introduce a Council Order requiring dogs within 20 metres of an organised sporting event or training, to be on lead and not enter the ground/playing surface/training space while the sporting event or team training is taking place.
- Introduce permit requirements for people/businesses wishing to walk more than 6 dogs at a time.
- Advocate to Parks Victoria to encourage a holistic approach to animal management across Port Phillip.

Dog Attacks

Council must outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.

Context

In 2020/21, Animal Management Officers investigated 108 reports of alleged dog attacks or dog rushes. Our prosecution success rate is 100%. In 2020/21 we successfully prosecuted 10 serious dog attacks and 2 non-serious dog attacks.

Although dog attack and dog rush figures have remained relatively static, serious dog attacks remain a concern and Council continuously looks for ways to minimise dog attacks on people and animals.

Attacks	2014 / 15	2015 / 16	2016 / 17	2017 / 18	2018 / 19	2019 / 20	2020 / 21
Dog attack	71	100	86	93	84	93	96
Dog rush	16	5	14	27	14	20	12

Table 12. Dog attack and dog rush in City Port Phillip from 2014 to 2021.

Recent community consultation outcomes indicate that up to 24% of respondents who had witnessed a dog-related incident had not reported it to Council. Those who did not report the incident cited a range of reasons including inability to identify the dog and/or owner; lack of awareness of the reporting process; a perception that Council would be unable or unwilling to act on the information; and owner intimidation or concern about the repercussions of reporting.

We recognise the opportunity to increase community awareness and level of comfort with the incident reporting process, including assured anonymity.

Current Activities

- An immediate 24/7 response to reports of dog attacks.
- A response within 24 hours to reports of dangerous dogs, where the threat is not imminent.
- Signage in parks and foreshore areas detailing dog controls.
- Information provided to reduce instances of dog aggression and promote dog friendly spaces:
- Dog off leash and dog prohibited area maps
- Pets in Port Phillip flyer
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests regarding dog attack, rush or aggression.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.



New Activities

- Partner with Australia Post on dog attacks and other concerns.
- Develop a dog attack reporting kit to assist the community in understanding and reporting incidents.

Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Council must outline programs, services and strategies to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in the municipality and ensure those dogs are kept in accordance with the Act and regulations.

Context

Council administers and enforces provisions of the Act to identify and control dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs to ensure the safety of the community.

In 2021, the City of Port Phillip has 3 declared dogs (declared as menacing).

Our pet registration forms require owners to declare if their dog is a restricted breed, has been declared menacing or is a dangerous dog.

Officers respond promptly to investigate reports involving declared dogs.

Current Activities

- Record all declared dogs on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry and conduct annual audits of their properties.
- Conduct investigations in response to reports of declared dogs.
- Conduct Central Animal Registry microchip audits to identify potential restricted breed dogs.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

New Activities

- Document clear processes, based on best practice and legal advice, for declaring a dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dog; and any potential destruction of a dog.



Domestic Animal Businesses

Council must outline programs, services and strategies which Council intends to pursue in its municipality to ensure that domestic animal businesses (DABs) comply with the Act, regulations and any related legislation.

Context

Council is responsible for registering premises as domestic animal businesses. Port Phillip has six registered domestic animal businesses:

- 1 day care / boarding facility
- 1 pet shop (sells pet accessories only)
- 4 dog training establishments

Council can issue warnings, infringements, notices to comply or to prosecute businesses that fail to comply with work plans and the relevant Code of Practice.

We actively seek to identify, investigate and prosecute any illegal Domestic Animal Businesses operating in Port Phillip.

Current Activities

- Fact sheets on website and available at Council offices.
- Provide all Domestic Animal Businesses with relevant Code of Practice.
- Conduct annual property inspections of registered Domestic Animal Businesses for compliance with legislation.
- Conduct investigations in response to complaints to ensure compliance.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

New Activities

- Monitor for businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses by reviewing advertisements, social media etc and ensure they are compliant with legislation.

Training of Authorised Officers

Council must outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of Act.

Context

The dedicated Animal Management Team forms part of the Safety and Amenity Department.

We employ 3 full time Animal Management Officers to deliver our animal management services and programs, supported by an Administration Officer.

In 2020-2021 Animal Management Officers responded to 2,643 requests.

Animal Management services are provided 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday. An emergency afterhours service is provided 24/7 by rostered officers. Council's Summer Amenity program provides seasonal support and a presence in our parks and foreshore areas of an evening.

Animal management staffing requests	2016-17	2020-21
Population	100,863	118,903
Geographic area of municipality	21 km ₂	
Registered cats and dogs (total)	10,034	11,560
Number of complaints or requests annually	3,532	2,643
FTE Authorised AMO's	2.8	3
Number of complaints or requests per AMO annually	1,261	755
Number of registered cats and dogs per AMO	1:3,584	1:3,303
Hours of animal management related training per AMO annually	33	41

Table 13. Key data from Council's Animal Management Unit about animal management staffing requests from 2016 to 2021.

Current Activities

We maintain a training register, detailing all the qualifications and training courses completed by each Animal Management Officer. We undertake annual performance reviews to identify further training and development opportunities with targeted training provided.

The amount of training undertaken during 2020 was significantly reduced due to COVID-19. We envisage the average amount of animal management training provided annually in 2021 and beyond to be 45 hours. Port Phillip is committed to ensuring the capacity to provide an effective animal management service to the community.

New Activities

- Support Animal Management Officers to further develop their suite of skills as part of the annual performance development planning process.
- Animal Management Officer attendance at conferences, industry training and networking.
- Continue to review and update Animal Management Processes.