

## DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Report Author: Executive Officer Safer Communities

Responsible Officer: Director Communities

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

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*The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.*

### CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

### SUMMARY

Yarra Ranges Council is required to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) at four-year intervals under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. The plan is required to be developed in consultation with the Department of Jobs, Planning and Resources (DJPR).

The Draft DAMP 2022- 2026 has been developed in accordance with best practice standards and informed by current available data, research, and a continued consultation process. The initial online survey attracted over 460 responses from community and business, which highlighted key themes that have been included in the Draft DAMP.

Further community consultation is recommended to be conducted during September and October 2022 to draw out community perspective and identify any further opportunities and challenges that could be recognised and addressed through the DAMP.

To ensure Council is meeting its legislative responsibilities, a final Council endorsed DAMP is required to be submitted to DJPR by 2 December 2022.

### RECOMMENDATION

***That Council endorse the Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022 – 2026 for public consultation.***

## RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

3/3/2018 – Council Meeting - Domestic Animal Management Plan 2018 – 2021.

## DISCUSSION

### *Purpose and Background*

Council is required to prepare a DAMP at four-year intervals under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. The DAMP is a guiding document that provides Council with a framework for identifying and addressing matters associated with the management and wellbeing of cats and dogs over a four-year period.

Council has a large pet registration database with over 25,185 dogs and 8,483 cats on its registration system, a total of 33,668 animals. This is a decrease of 4,438 (-12%) between 2018 and 2021.

Pet owners and the broader Yarra Ranges community were provided an opportunity to contribute to the development of the Draft DAMP as part of a previous community consultation during April - May 2022, which resulted in 460 responses.

As well as current survey data, further research informed the eight key principals that guided the development of the Draft DAMP, moving the plan beyond the traditional scope of animal management planning and services, to explore opportunities and innovative approaches that recognise and embrace the real value of pets. This is reflected in the changes from the previous iteration that recognise the role of pets in helping us achieve both personal and community health and wellbeing outcomes.

Key inclusions in the Draft DAMP 2022- 2026 are:

- Partnership initiatives with Councils pound contractor Animal Aid, and dog obedience clubs, to minimise the incidence of barking dog complaints;
- Targeted programs and research-based initiatives to address specific animal welfare issues, such as cat wandering, semi owned and feral cats;
- Focus on supporting and incentivising registration of Domestic Animal Business's (DABs); and
- Input into complimentary Council strategies, such as dog off leash areas.

While the Draft DAMP 2022- 2026 has broadened its approach, it still retains a legislative responsibility to address issues relating to:

- Evaluating the effectiveness of the service;
- The annual review and amendment of the DAMP where necessary;
- The review of policies, Local Laws and Orders;

- The training of Authorised Officers;
- The encouragement of responsible pet ownership;
- Minimising the risk of dog attacks;
- Minimising the incidence of nuisances caused by cats and dogs such as cats trespassing and dogs wandering;
- Ensuring cats and dogs are registered and identified;
- Animal welfare including the euthanasia rates of pets, in particular cats; and
- The management of animals in times of natural disasters.

The Yarra Ranges Draft DAMP 2022 – 2026 is a comprehensive, informed plan that aims to seek positive pet and community outcomes over the next four years.

### ***Options considered***

The development of the DAMP is a legislative requirement under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. An alternate option that did not meet the legislative requirements of the Act was not considered.

### ***Recommended option and justification***

The Draft Yarra Ranges DAMP 2022 – 2026 (attached as appendix one) outlines the Yarra Ranges Animal Management program over the next four years. This plan meets the legislative requirements as outlined in the Act and is recommended for public consultation.

## **FINANCIAL ANALYSIS**

Programs including the expansion of the cat trapping service (estimated at \$8,000) along with other actions outlined within the Draft DAMP and corresponding action plan, will be supported through existing operational budget and exploration of external funding opportunities through the State Government.

## **APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES**

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

- Connected and Healthy Communities;
- Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places;
- Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism; and
- High Performing Organisation.

Further to this, the Draft DAMP 2022 – 2026 also contributes to Council’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Connected and healthy communities;
- Resilient and liveable communities; and
- Equitable and inclusive communities.

## **RELEVANT LAW**

- *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. Section 68A.
- Neighbourhood Local Amenity Law 2020.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Economic Implications***

The DAMP provides opportunities to support local business and promote pet tourism within the municipality by leveraging the reputation of Yarra Ranges as an area which is safe for domestic animals, visitors, wildlife and our community.

The Community Safety team will actively engage with Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) and Council’s Economic Development team to explore further opportunities that may arise as a result of the DAMP implementation.

### ***Social Implications***

Research which has informed the Draft DAMP has highlighted key strategic connections with Health and Wellbeing, including

- A strong sense of community connection;
- Safety through minimising dog attacks; and
- Responsible pet ownership.

The Community Safety team will continue to collaborate with internal departments on the development other supporting plans, such as the Dogs, People and Parks Plan.

### ***Environmental Implications***

While limited responses from the community consultation specifically referenced environmental or wildlife impacts of cats and dogs, Council acknowledges that there are broader environmental implications which the DAMP aims to address. These include but are not limited to:

- Increasing Councils cat trapping service to protect native wildlife;
- Education regarding appropriate disposal of dog litter; and

- Promotion of responsible pet ownership to protect and ensure the sustainability of our natural environment and wildlife.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Consultation with internal council departments and industry research has informed the development of the Draft DAMP, along with an initial 460 community survey responses and submissions from the community.

Further community consultation is recommended to be undertaken during the months of September and October 2022. This will provide an opportunity for broader community feedback on the content of the Draft DAMP and whether key issues and opportunities have been addressed and/or captured in the Draft DAMP.

## **COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

In addition to previous community consultation, input and collaboration has been sought from other Councils, external consultants, and industry bodies.

Opportunities for innovation were identified during the development of the Draft DAMP and have been captured within the Draft DAMP Action Plan (Appendix One).

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

It is a legislative requirement of Council to ensure it prepares and implements a DAMP as directed by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

The development of the Draft DAMP and ensuring the appropriate consultation process is undertaken to inform a final endorsed, version is minimising the risk of legislative non-compliance.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## **ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT**

1. Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022 – 2026