

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029

DRAFT

Acknowledgement of Country

Bass Coast Shire Council acknowledges the Bunurong as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and Lore.

Bass Coast Shire Council celebrates the opportunity to embrace and empower the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island Communities in their diversity.

Bass Coast Shire Council will create opportunities for future recognition and respectful partnerships that will honour the Traditional Owners and Custodians, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Mayor and Councillors Message

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Diversity and Inclusion

Bass Coast Shire Council celebrates the diversity of our communities. We acknowledge and respect the skills, insights and life experiences of all community members irrespective of gender, ethnicity, ability, religious belief, sexuality or age.

Child Safe Statement

Bass Coast Shire Council is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and has a Child Safe Statement ([Child-Safety-Statement-signed.pdf](#))

Gender Impact Assessment

In accordance with the Gender Equality Act 2020, a Gender Impact Assessment has been undertaken when developing the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029.

Introduction

Purpose

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) is a four-year Plan that provides a strategic approach to promoting and encouraging responsible pet ownership, the welfare of dogs and cats, the protection of the community and environment from nuisance dogs and cats.

This document explains how Council currently manages programs and sets out actions to improve and grow the ways in which Council delivers domestic animal management programs.

These objectives and guidelines aim to create a place where pets and the community can live together, without adversely impacting on the environment or community amenity.

Vision Statement

Through the consultation process to develop the DAMP, key stakeholders collaborated to articulate a shared Vision for domestic animal management across the Shire:

“To support a thriving, healthy community where responsible pet ownership and environmental stewardship go hand in hand—ensuring safe, shared spaces that protect biodiversity while enriching the lives of people and their animals.”

Statutory Requirement

Under Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Act), every Victorian local government must prepare a DAMP every four years, outlining how it will manage dogs and cats within its municipal boundaries.

Every Council must review its DAMP 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.
 - 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 the management of dogs and cats.

Strategic Alignment

Supporting pet owners to care for their pets and be responsible pet owners enhances the safety and wellbeing of the wider community. The DAMP is an endorsed major initiative in the Bass Coast Shire Council Plan and the Health, Safe and Resilient Bass Coast Plan.

A year 1 action of this DAMP is to develop a Dogs in Public Places Guidelines. This document will be used for decision making around all dog regulations that are Government Gazetted by Council this includes regulations on the beaches.

Process

This new DAMP builds on the current DAMP that has successfully guided the delivery of animal management services across Bass Coast.

It was developed in consultation with Council's Community Safety Team, and informed by community consultation, research and benchmarking. It seeks to balance community and stakeholder needs, whilst ensuring compliance with requirements of the Act.






Successful initiatives from 2021-2025

The 2021-25 DAMP realised several successful initiatives including:

- Successful roll out of 24/7 cat containment across Bass Coast to reduce euthanasia rates, support welfare of domestic cats and protect the environment. This included the establishment of a cat containment working group, design and roll out of a communication and education campaign, and development of supporting processes.
- Completed an upgrade of the Pound including acoustic treatments, updated enclosures, installation of generators and improvements to drainage and security.
- Established partnerships with local vets, so that concession card holders can access subsidised microchipping and desexing.
- Installed dog waste dispensers at all off lead beaches across Bass Coast.
- Uplift and simplification of signage to support compliance across the Shire.
- Established the Dog Off Leash working group to provide guidance and recommendations on improving dog off leash areas.
- Improvements to Wonthaggi fenced dog park.
- Continued to work with Land Managers, Phillip Island Nature Parks (PINP) and Parks Victoria (PV) to investigate opportunities to create consistent rules regarding off leash times on beaches.
- Significant increase in the number of registered pets in Bass Coast.
- Increased authorised officer presence on beaches from December to April, including joint beach patrols and education with Parks Victoria and Phillip Island Nature Parks.
- Reviewed and updated our systems and processes.
- Developed and delivered communication and education activities across all Council platforms, targeted towards promoting responsible pet ownership, including:
 - Sharing our Shores summer education campaign in partnership with Phillip Island Nature Park.
 - Attendance at local markets and events.
 - New animal registrations now receive a 'registration pack'. These are also available from Customer Service.


Summary Actions for 2026-2029

The table below provides a summary of actions proposed for 2026-2029. Further details are provided in the body of the DAMP.


Objective 1 	Ensure that Authorised Officers have the knowledge and skills required to effectively administer their role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Authorised Officers to further develop their skills as part of the annual performance development process. • Authorised Officers to be trained in and authorised under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986. • Authorised Officers participate in state- wide forums and working groups • Develop a framework to support officers in managing high complexity matters. 	
Objective 2 	Promote responsible pet ownership through effective communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and implement multi-channel communication plan utilising a variety of media such as social media, print, post and website information. • Audit and update website information. • Uplift messaging to promote health and wellbeing benefits of responsible dog ownership. • Partner with local community groups to develop and deliver campaigns that promote responsible dog ownership. 	
Objective 3 	Promote responsible pet ownership through educational activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate opportunities to introduce QR codes to Council signage, that point to information on responsible pet ownership. • Investigate and implement materials for Officer vehicles to promote animal registration - such as magnets, car signs or decals. • Utilise variable message sign to promote responsible pet ownership. 	
Objective 4 	Decrease feral animals, protect wildlife, raise awareness and educate domestic animal owners on the impacts and implications of pets near conservation areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support Phillip Island Nature Park in promoting conservation and wildlife preservation. • Continue to engage directly with key stakeholders and create opportunities for information to be shared across the Shire. 	
Objective 5 	Increase Council's capacity to improve welfare of dogs and cats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate ways to continually improve Council's Pound facilities. • Partner with other animal management services and facilities to support domestic animal management across Bass Coast. Continue to develop relationships and partnerships with vets and rescue groups. • Partner with local foster care networks to build their capacity and impact. • Establish an emergency management document detailing arrangements and partnerships to support animals during an emergency and ensure their welfare and safe housing. • Partner with Pets of the Homeless to help keep vulnerable people and their pets together by alleviating the burden of providing essential pet care during times of hardship. 	

Objective 6  **Animals are microchipped, desexed, registered and wearing tags**







- Conduct targeted education and promotional activities ahead of annual April 10 pet registration renewal.
- Investigate the feasibility of introducing discounted fees for first year of registration and dogs and cats under 12 months old that are not yet desexed.
- Undertake activities to better identify pet registration non-compliances. · Continue registration checks in the field. Continue Central Animal Records (CAR) microchip audits · Follow up reported lost animals for registration.
- Partner with shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders to promote Council registration and updating of microchip details.
- Improve promotion of the subsidised desexing and microchipping program available through Council partnership with local vets (for holders of a Health Care Card, Aged Pension etc).
- Introduce Council registration and microchipping days.

Objective 7  **Develop a strategic and consistent approach to leash free and dog prohibited areas**

- Develop a Dogs in Public Places Guidelines (leash free and dog prohibited areas) that provides a consistent approach to assess the suitability and design of designated leash free and dog prohibited areas on Shire-Managed land.
- Identify and deliver a fenced dog park on the mainland of Bass Coast Shire (Inverloch). Signage changes to reflect any changes made to regulations.
- Identify and deliver a suitable location for a dog park on Phillip Island. Signage changes to reflect any changes made to regulations.
- Undertake a signage review and audit of dog controls.
- Continue to partner with the Dog Off Leash Working Group, including bi-annual meetings to discuss community matters that relate to the management of dogs in Bass Coast Shire.

Objective 8  **Effective patrols, education and enforcement activities**

- Review seasonal roster and patrol schedule, and resource appropriately to increase patrol activity to include year- round beach patrols, education and enforcement activities during peak periods
- Continue the partnership with land managers to extend Council Officer presence to include their beaches through joint beach patrols.
- Investigate opportunities to increase Officer capacity to respond quickly to compliance issues identified as high priority (such as dogs of lead).
- Review and improve processes for enforcement regarding animal management including barking dog nuisance, dog attacks, dogs off leash and cat containment.
- Develop a 'Barking Dog Kit' with information and resources to support the community to resolve barking dog concerns.
- Review and improve information available regarding reducing nuisance and promoting dog friendly spaces. Including dog off leash and dog prohibited area maps, picking up after your dog, barking dog information, dog attack reporting and prevention information, online resources.
- Review and improve the way Council collects, measures and reports on domestic animal requests (including identification of 'hotspots'). Investigate feasibility of implementing Snap, Send, Solve as part of this initiative.
- Provide body corporates and Short Stay Rental Accommodation properties information on preventing dog and cat nuisance.

Objective 9		Continue to deliver best practice in management of dog attacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop and improve processes to improve the way Council manages, investigates and prosecutes dog attacks to maintain best practice • Review and improve information to support dog attack reporting and prevention. Promote early reporting of minor incidents to prevent escalation and major incidents. • Analyse dog attack data and target hot spots for additional proactive patrols to actively enforce against and minimise dog attacks in the community 		
Objective 10		Declared dogs in municipality will be identified and appropriately managed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct annual declared dog property inspections for compliance with the Domestic Animal Act (including but not limited to security of fencing, animal housing and signage). • Continue to identify and declare animals dangerous and menacing when required • Review Council procedures in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs. 		
Objective 11		Domestic animal businesses in municipality will be identified and registered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor for businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses by reviewing advertisements, social media, local notice boards, etc and ensure they are compliant with legislation 		
Objective 12		Registered businesses are compliant with current legislation and relevant code of practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual audit of domestic animal businesses in Bass Coast for compliance. 		
Objective 13		Seek funding opportunities to support domestic animal management programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate opportunities for external funding towards the development of domestic animal management programs. 		
Objective 14		Leverage new technology to continuously improve Council services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and incorporate new technologies to provide improvements in Council's Domestic Animal Management services and communications materials. 		

Our consultation

How we consulted

The community consultation approach included two rounds:

- Consultation to inform development of the DAMP; and
- Consultation to gather feedback on the draft DAMP.

Round 1 consultation

The purpose of the first round was to better understand views in relation to dog and cat issues in the community. These consultation activities were available from **9 May to 9 June 2025**.

Consultation tools were made available via Council's online platform – Engage Bass Coast.

- Online survey – provide feedback and suggestions on a series of dog and cat matters.
- Upload a written submission.
- Email DAMP@basscost.vic.gov.au

Other ways that people could have their say:

- Hard copy survey - available upon request.
- Write to Bass Coast Shire, PO Box 118 Wonthaggi 3995
- Talk with us at one of our pop-up sessions.

A workshop was also held with key stakeholders that have a passion for the management of domestic animals Bass Coast (e.g. land managers, conservation groups, vets, domestic animal business, Dog Off Leash Working Group etc.) to hear their thoughts to inform development of the draft DAMP.

The consultation was promoted via Council's communication channels, including Engage Bass Coast, social media, e-newsletters, media releases and posters with QR codes displayed at Council venues.

Key external stakeholders (e.g. domestic animal businesses, veterinary clinics, rescue groups, shelters, animal groups, environmental groups and land managers) were directly emailed an invitation link to participate in the community consultation activities.

We heard from 823, people with feedback used to help develop a draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029, ahead of a second round of community consultation.

Round 2 consultation – feedback on the draft DAMP

For completion after round 2 consultation period.

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About Bass Coast

Community

Bass Coast Shire is located on the traditional lands of the Bunurong people. A predominantly coastal municipality, Bass Coast boasts a stunning and diverse natural environment—from rugged coastlines and iconic beaches to rich farmland and bushland.

With a collection of over 30 vibrant townships and rural communities, each with its own unique identity and history, Bass Coast offers a mix of coastal and country living. Just 130 kilometres south-east of Melbourne, it is one of the fastest growing regional areas in Victoria. Bordered by Bass Strait to the south and neighbouring Cardinia and South Gippsland shires, Bass Coast is both accessible and deeply connected to its natural surrounds.

Home to over 43,000 permanent residents, the population increases significantly during holiday periods. Visitors are drawn by major events, coastal escapes, outdoor adventure, and cultural experiences, from surfing and cycling to local markets, the arts, wine and food, and nature-based tourism. Bass Coast offers a blend of rural, residential and holiday living, set against a backdrop of beaches, rolling hills, and wide-open skies.

The region is also home to the award-winning cultural venue Berninnet at the heart of Phillip Island in Cowes, and The Union Theatre in Wonthaggi, a venue deeply connected to the area's rich history of coal mining and social change. These facilities reflect a strong community commitment to creativity, storytelling and cultural connection.

Bass Coast continues to grow as a place where people come to live, work, invest and visit—attracted by its lifestyle, natural beauty, strong community spirit, and future-focused approach.

Dogs and cats in Bass Coast

The following table provides a snapshot of dogs and cats across Bass Coast. Further details are provided in the body of the DAMP.

Snapshot Data	2020-21	2024-25
Human population	37,445	43,557
Geographic area of municipality	864 km ²	
Community Safety Officers (FTE)	5	5
Registered dogs	7,385	7,915
Registered cats	2,004	1,820
Dog and cat related requests	2,678	2,366
Registered declared dogs (dangerous, menacing or restricted breed)	10	17
Dog attack or rush	144	128
Number of registered Domestic Animal Businesses	7	8
Keeping of animals / excess animals permits issued	8	10
Number of infringements	73	185
Number of successful prosecutions	83	10
Dogs impounded	160	147

Snapshot Data	2020-21	2024-25
Cats impounded	176	121
Cat cage request	92	108

The future

Bass Coast’s population is forecast to grow to 47,408 by 2036.¹ Increased resident population and visitors to Bass Coast has a flow on effect on the number of pets in our Shire. This impacts the number of animal registrations, dogs being walked in public open spaces, cats needing to be contained to properties, dogs potentially barking, and much more.

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.

As the Bass Coast environment is its economy, the protection and preservation of natural wildlife and habitat is important to the Bass Coast community. The DAMP outlines how Council will implement initiatives to increase community awareness and reduce impacts of dogs and cats on the environment.

Although mandatory cat desexing and 24-hour cat containment regulations are already in place, unowned and feral cats will continue to be both a nuisance for the community and an environmental problem without adequate management. Council will focus on continued promotion of responsible cat ownership.

Our services – what we do

The table below provides a summary of Council’s domestic animal management programs and services.

Program Area	Services
Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council website information, including links to other agencies • Social media posts – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram • Media releases and articles in local newspapers • Provide a range of educational materials and brochures to the community • ‘Where can I walk my dog?’ maps • Signage in parks, reserves and foreshore areas detailing dog controls
Overpopulation and High Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidised desexing and microchipping program through local vets. • Council’s Wonthaggi Pound facility houses animals for 8 days that are found wandering. After 8 days, animals are transferred to the RSPCA for rehoming or adoption
Registration and Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual registration renewal and follow up • Lifetime registration tags • Online registration forms and payment options • Registration information packs for newly registered dogs and cats.

¹ ABS population forecast.

Program Area	Services
Nuisance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuisance complaint - response within 48 hours • Online help information • Lodge nuisance requests online • Council-loaned cat cages to confine nuisance cats • Collection of found animals • Routine patrols of parks and foreshore areas • Extended patrols during peak / summer periods - with particular focus on foreshore areas • Partnership with Phillip Island Nature Park to extend our presence to include their beaches
Dog Attacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog attack complaint – immediate response • Dangerous dog complaint (where threat is not imminent) – response within 48 hours
Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual inspections of dangerous/restricted dogs for compliance • Prosecute non-compliant owners • Investigation of complaints
Domestic Animal Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect and process new Domestic Animal Business applications. • Annual inspections undertaken in accordance with the Act and issue annual registration certificates • Investigation of breaches / complaints
Animal Welfare / Cruelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with and report animal welfare / cruelty matters to the RSPCA for action
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers provide services 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday • An after hours service is provided 24/7 by rostered officers to respond to urgent requests. We do not pick up contained dogs after 8pm, we ask people to hold the animal and collect the following day • Lodge animal requests online • Payment facilities online • Online forms

Local laws, orders and other regulations

In addition to The Act, Council enforces the provisions of the Bass Coast Shire Local Law No 1 Neighbourhood Amenity 2022 and Council orders.

Registration and identification

Dogs and cats over 12 weeks of age must be registered with Council, microchipped and wear a registration tag when outside of an owner's premises

Keeping dogs and cats

The maximum number of dogs and cats allowed in residences less than 5000m² is two dogs and two cats.

However, if you live on a property 5000m² or greater, you may have up to three dogs and four cats. If you wish to keep more than the maximum number, you must apply for an Excess Animal Permit.

Exemptions are provided for dogs and cats under 12 weeks of age.

Animal accommodation

Owners are required to ensure that animal accommodation is well located, clean and minimises nuisance.

Adequate fencing

Owners must ensure that the land is adequately fenced to prevent animals from escaping.

Animal excrement

People are required to both carry a bag and remove their animals' excrement when left in a public place.

Dog containment order

Dog containment order for repeat offenders of 'dog at large'.

Desexing cats

Newly registered cats over the age of 3 months must be desexed. Cats exempt from desexing include:

- A cat that is owned by a person or body that conducts a domestic animal business under which cats are bred, and the cat is used for breeding purposes in connection with that business; and
- A cat that is owned by a person who is a current member of an applicable organisation, and the cat is registered with that organisation.

24-hour cat containment order

A Council Order is in place where cats must be always confined to the owner's premises.

Dogs on / off leash

In Bass Coast, Dogs must always be on leash in public places, unless otherwise signed in a designated 'off leash area'.

Dog prohibited areas

Council Orders are in place prohibiting dogs in certain reserves and foreshore areas.

Training of authorised officers

Council's animal management services are delivered through the Community Safety Team by building relationships within the community and key partners; and through providing advice, support and regulatory services. Council employs 5 full time Community Safety Officer who during 2024-25 responded to 2,366 animal management requests.

Community Safety Officers work in designated zones or areas and in addition to animal management undertake a range of service delivery including Local Laws.

Animal management services are provided from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday. An emergency 24/7 after-hours telephone service operates via the Council's main telephone number. One on-call rostered Community Safety Officer responds to urgent requests. We do not pick up contained dogs after 8pm, we ask people to hold the animal and collect the following day.

What we currently do

Community Safety Officers are to hold or be working towards Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation – or have appropriate other relevant qualifications and experience.

New staff are required to complete Council induction on policies and procedures. On the job training and ongoing coaching is provided.

Staff are encouraged to represent Bass Coast on industry bodies and committees where appropriate.

Internal procedures and processes are regularly reviewed and updated.

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

Team members currently receive on average 20 hours animal management training per year.

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 1:

Ensure that Authorised Officers have the knowledge and skills required to effectively administer their role.

I	Activity	When	Evaluation
I.1	Support Authorised Officers to further develop their skills as part of the annual performance development process. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Microchipping○ Animal handling○ Impacts of dogs and cats on wildlife○ Conflict resolution / dealing with difficult○ Personal defence○ OH&S, including staff wellbeing	Ongoing	Completion of training via Council's Professional Development Plan processes.

I	Activity	When	Evaluation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Investigations (e.g. animal noise, dog attacks) ○ 4WD and vehicle recovery 		
1.2	Authorised Officers to be trained in and authorised under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA Act)	Ongoing	POCTA training and authorisation complete.
1.3	Authorised Officers participate in state-wide forums and working groups	Ongoing	Representation in forums and working groups
1.4	Develop a framework to support officers in managing high complexity matters. Including but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training ○ Protocols ○ Service referral partnerships 	2027	Framework developed and implemented.

Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership

We promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats through a range of communication and education initiatives. We understand the increasing demand for Council services to be delivered online, and for engagement through social media and other digital means. However, we also acknowledge the power behind face-to-face interactions and that successful education and communication campaigns require a multi channelled approach.

Community consultation outcomes identified initiatives to promote responsible pet ownership as an important factor in contributing to dogs and cats being registered, microchipped and desexed with owners complying with regulations and signage. Communication and education campaigns with clear and simple messaging are delivered to support responsible pet ownership, as well as increasing awareness of 24-hour cat containment requirements and dog off-leash and dog prohibited areas. This will be further emphasised through the development of a Dogs in Public Places Guidelines.

What we currently do

- Council website information, including links to other agencies.
- Social media posts – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- Media releases and articles in local newspapers.
- Provide a range of educational materials and brochures to the community.
- ‘Where can I walk my dog?’ maps.
- Signage in parks, reserves and foreshores detailing dog controls.
- ‘Kids as Catalyst’ – education program with schools on issues relating to animal management.
- Increased face to face education, including ‘Pop-ups’ at events (e.g. Phillip Island National Park open days, local markets).

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 2: Promote responsible pet ownership through effective communication.

2	Activity	When	Evaluation
2.1	<p>Review and implement multi-channel communication plan utilising a variety of media such as social media, print, post and website information, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Promote community benefits of pet registration, microchipping, desexing, and cat confinement – including the use of testimonials.○ Prevention of dog attacks, including encouraging report of aggressive behaviours or dogs escaping.	2026 ongoing	Communication plan implemented annually and reviewed.

2	Activity	When	Evaluation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing awareness of Council's animal management services. ○ Dogs off leash and picking up after dogs. ○ Containing cats to owners' property. ○ Targeted visitor campaigns. 		
2.2	Audit and update website information.	2026 ongoing	Website reviewed and updated annually.
2.3	Uplift messaging to promote health and wellbeing benefits of responsible dog ownership.	2026 ongoing	Implemented, with messaging aligned to communication plan.
2.4	Partner with local community groups to develop and deliver campaigns that promote responsible dog ownership	2026 ongoing	Implemented, with messaging aligned to communication plan.

**Objective 3:
Promote responsible pet ownership through educational activities.**

3	Activity	When	Evaluation
3.1	Investigate opportunities to introduce QR codes to Council signage, that point to information on responsible pet ownership.	2028	Review completed.
3.2	Investigate and implement materials for Officer vehicles to promote animal registration - such as magnets, car signs or decals.	2028	Vehicle signage implemented.
3.3	Utilise variable message sign to promote responsible pet ownership.	2026 ongoing	Implemented.

**Objective 4:
Decrease feral animals, protect wildlife, raise awareness and educate domestic animal owners on the impacts and implications of pets near conservation areas.**

4	Activity	When	Evaluation
4.1	Continue to support Phillip Island Nature Park (PINP) in promoting conservation and wildlife preservation	Ongoing	Meet with PINP regularly and assist in promoting their key messages through Council communications channels
4.2	Continue to engage directly with key stakeholders and create opportunities for information to be shared across the Shire	Ongoing	Key stakeholders engaged

Overpopulation and high euthanasia

Impoundments occur when pets escape from their properties or are abandoned or surrendered by owners. Community Safety Officers work hard to reunite animals with their owners at first point, without taking them to the Pound. Council's priority is to achieve positive community and animal welfare outcomes wherever possible.

Community Safety Officers manage and run Council's Wonthaggi Pound facility. Council's Pound is a safe environment where animals found wandering can be housed for up to 8 days. The Pound is audited regularly, and cleaned daily, including on weekends.

Officers have 24/7 access and are 'on call' to attend to animals in our care.

The Pound is not open to the public for adoptions, instead Council has a Section 84Y agreement with the RSPCA. After 8 days of being held in our Pound facility, animals are transferred to RSPCA's care for rehoming or adoption. We also work with a number of rescue groups (Section 84Y holders) to rehome as many animals as possible.

Improvements to the Pound were completed in 2024 including acoustic treatments, updated enclosure facility, generator installation and general improvements to drainage and security.

Dog and cat impoundments have reduced since the last DAMP was developed and have not seen the spikes in surrendered animals attributable to unwanted COVID19 purchases and cost of living crisis that has been evident across a number of other Councils.

Impoundments	2020-21	2024-25
Dogs impounded	160	147
Dogs reclaimed by owner	138 (86%)	106 (72%)
Dogs rehoused	17 (11%)	25 (17%)
Dogs euthanised	4 (2%)	16 (11%)
Pending outcome	1 (<1%)	Nil
Cats impounded	176	121
Cats reclaimed by owner	28 (16%)	29 (24%)
Cats rehoused	81 (46%)	64 (53%)
Cats euthanised	33 (19%)	26 (21%)
Pending outcome	34 (19%)	Nil
Deceased (sick and passed away in Pound)	Nil	2 (2%)
Surrendered pets	31 dogs and cats	34 dogs and cats

Supporting the community to microchip and desex their animals is seen as a key to increasing the numbers of registered animals. Council promotes the return of lost pets as the primary reason to register and microchip animals. It is Council's aim to further reduce the euthanasia rates and overpopulation levels by working with the community to reduce the number of non-desexed animals in the municipality with a particular emphasis on cats.

Council continues to work with the community and partners Phillip Island Nature Park and Parks Victoria in relation to feral cats to try and reduce their populations. Council will increase education and awareness regarding semi owned cats (cats that are being fed by holiday homeowners and visitors) and the benefits of desexing and containment for cats in Bass Coast.

Community outcomes highlighted Council's service of collecting and reuniting found animals with their owners as important to the community, and the welfare of animals. In addition, recent implementation of the 24/7 cat containment order has been generally well-supported.

What we currently do

- Wonthaggi Pound facility where animals found wandering can be housed for 8 days.
- Section 84Y agreement with RSPCA for rehoming or adoption.
- When people approach us to adopt an animal in our Pound, we assist them to adopt via RSPCA once the animal is transferred there.
- Council-loaned cat cage system to confine nuisance 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 property without a permit.
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests.
- Enforcement actions include official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecutions.
- Newly registered cats are required to be desexed.
- 24-hour cat confinement order where cats are required to be always contained to owners' premises.

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 5: Increase Council's capacity to improve welfare of dogs and cats

5	Activity	When	Evaluation
5.1	Investigate ways to continually improve Council's Pound facilities.	Ongoing	Pound facilities continue to meet legislative requirements and are fit for purpose for community needs.
5.2	Partner with other animal management services and facilities to support domestic animal management across Bass Coast. Continue to develop relationships and partnerships with vets and rescue groups.	Ongoing	Formal and informal partnerships established and strengthened.

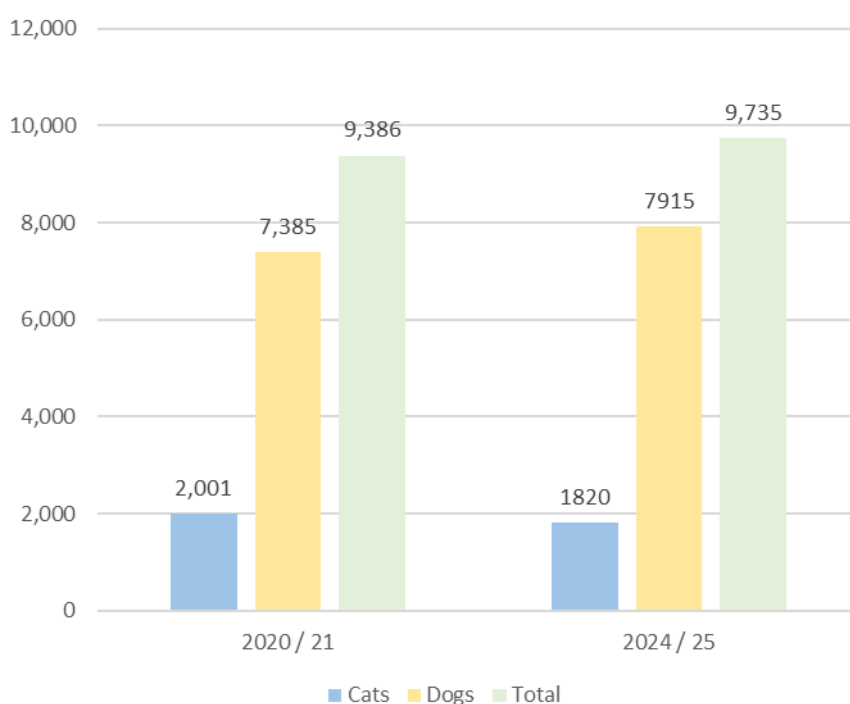
5.3	Partner with local foster care networks to build their capacity and impact.	Ongoing	Greater collaboration between foster carers and potential new volunteers and increase in foster care outcomes.
5.4	Establish an emergency management document detailing arrangements and partnerships to support animals during an emergency and ensure their welfare and safe housing.	2027	Plan developed and endorsed.
5.5	Partner with Pets of the Homeless to help keep vulnerable people and their pets together by alleviating the burden of providing essential pet care during times of hardship.	2028	Partnership implemented.

Registration and identification

All dogs and cats three months and over must be microchipped and registered with Council; and wear a registration tag when outside an owner's property. Newly registered cats are also required to be desexed. Registrations must be renewed annually by 10 April. As well as being a legal requirement, an animal found with current registration and microchip has a much higher chance of being reunited with its owner.

There has been a small increase in registrations, showing a possible trend towards increased pet ownership, partly due to COVID-19 'pet purchases'. The increase in registrations may also be attributed to increased resident population combined with comprehensive communication and education initiatives.

Dog and cat registrations



What we currently do

- Annual registration renewal and follow up.
- Lifetime registration tags.
- Online registration forms and payment options.
- Registration door knock activities.
- Registration checks during patrols.
- Registration information packs for newly registered cats and dogs.
- Subsidised desexing and microchipping program through Council partnership with local vets (for holders of a Health Care Card, Aged Pension etc).
- Animals in the Pound must be registered prior to release, and cats must be desexed.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 6:
Animals are microchipped, desexed, registered and wearing tags.

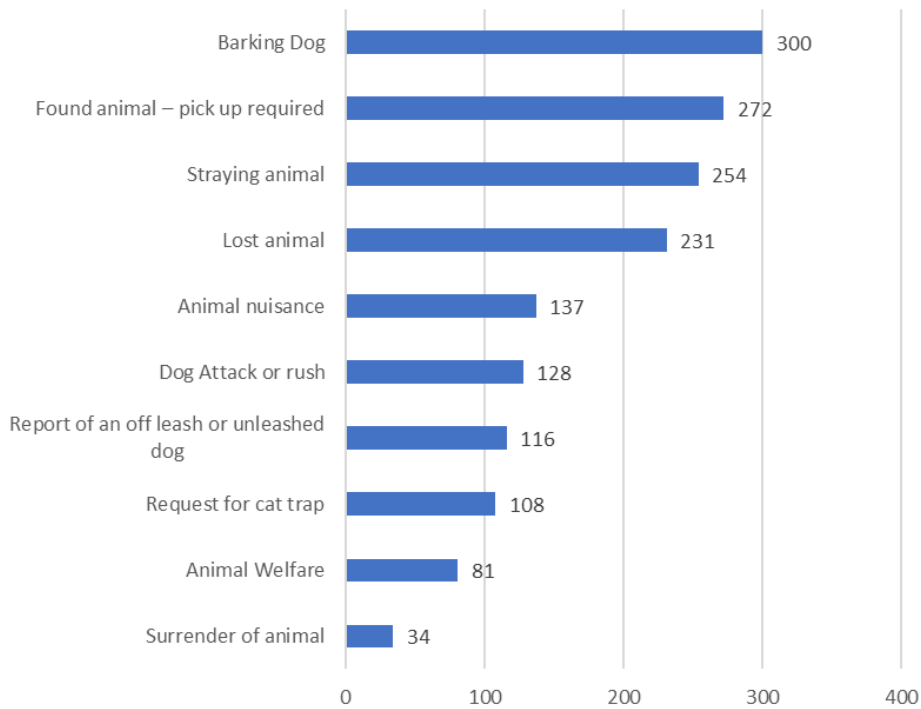
6	Activity	When	Evaluation
6.1	Conduct targeted education and promotional activities ahead of annual April 10 pet registration renewal.	2026 ongoing	Promotional activities undertaken annually.
6.2	Investigate the feasibility of introducing discounted fees for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First year of registration. ○ Dogs and cats under 12 months old that are not yet desexed. 	2028	Completion of review.
6.3	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 • Follow up reported lost animals for registration. 	Ongoing	Pet registration levels.
6.4	Partner with shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders to promote Council registration and updating of microchip details.	Annual	Shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders engaged and sharing messaging.
6.5	Improve promotion of the subsidised desexing and microchipping program available through Council partnership with local vets (for holders of a Health Care Card, Aged Pension etc).	2026	Promotional activities undertaken.
6.6	Introduce Council registration and microchipping days	2027	Registration and microchipping days held annually.

Nuisance

We will encourage people to manage their pets in a way that protects the health and welfare of the animal, maximises the companion benefits of their pet and minimises potential for nuisance or harm to others.

In 2024/25 Community Safety Officers responded to 2,366 domestic animal requests. The most frequent animal management requests are detailed below.

Frequent Animal Management Requests 2024/25



Barking dogs and found animal (pick up required) are the most prevalent request types and areas of greater concern in the community. Lost animals and straying animals are the other leading request.

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

Community Safety Officers monitor problem beaches in their areas over the winter months and provide reactive response to complaints. Over the summer period beaches are actively patrolled by rostered Officers. Patrols take place every day and slowly reduce as the peak period subsides.

We have developed a partnership with Phillip Island Nature Park to extend our presence on their beaches.

Cats are required to be always confined to owners' premises. Unowned and feral cats will continue to be both a nuisance for the community and a negative environmental impact without adequate management into the future. Council will focus on responsible cat ownership.

During Hooded Plover breeding season Council's Community Safety Officers work with Council's Coast and Bushland team to complete beach patrols to make sure pet owners, particularly dog owners, are keeping their dogs on a leash when not in designated off leash areas.

Although regular 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.

Consultation outcomes highlighted frequently noticed behaviours in the community, including:

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- Dogs off-leash with their owners in areas where they shouldn't be.
- People not watching their dogs in off-leash areas.
- People not picking up their dog's waste.
- Barking dogs.

Community suggestions to encourage responsible pet ownership, included:

- Increased proactive patrols and enforcement.
- Dog leash regulations that better balance the needs of different user groups and protect wildlife.
- Improved signage.
- Communication and education initiatives.

Dogs in Public Places Guidelines

A year 1 action of this DAMP is to develop a Dogs in Public Places Guidelines. This document will outline Council's position on the provision, distribution and management of dog facilities in public open spaces. It is to be used to guide decisions on the planning for all dog off-leash and dog-free areas. Development of the guidelines is part of a broader effort to ensure a positive experience for all users of public open spaces.

Key aspects of the Dogs in Public Places Guidelines

Consideration for all users	The guidelines will seek to balance the needs of dog owners with the needs of other residents and visitors, including those who may not be comfortable with dogs.
Demand analysis	The guidelines will consider the demand for off-leash areas in different parts of Bass Coast.
Site analysis	The guidelines include criteria for assessing the suitability of different locations for off-leash areas, considering factors such as size, access, safety, environmental and cultural sensitivities, and potential impacts on other users.
Restrictions	The guidelines will address existing restrictions, such as those related to playgrounds and beaches.
Fenced dog spaces	The guidelines will consider the development of fenced dog off-leash areas.
Dog-free spaces	The guidelines will explore options for designating more dog-free public open spaces.
Community engagement	We will engage with the community to hear their thoughts on the draft guidelines.

What we currently do

- Routine patrols of parks and foreshore areas.
- Extended patrols during peak / summer periods - with particular focus on foreshore areas.
- Partnership with Phillip Island Nature Park to extend our presence to include their beaches through joint beach patrols.

- Signage in parks, reserves and foreshore areas detailing dog controls.
- Dog waste bags at off leash beaches.
- Partnership with land managers and Dog Off Leash working group on dog controls.
- Cat cages are available for the public to use to contain nuisance cats.
- Collection of found animals.
- Barking dog process.
- Online help information.
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the number of animals that can be kept on a property without a permit.
- Enforce Council Orders and regulations such as the 24-hour cat confinement Order.
- A 48-hour response to nuisance complaints.
- Investigation of complaints.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

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Objective 7: Develop a strategic and consistent approach to leash free and dog prohibited areas across Bass Coast

7	Activity	When	Evaluation
7.1	Develop a Dogs in Public Places Guidelines (leash free and dog prohibited areas) that provides a consistent approach to assess the suitability and design of designated leash free and dog prohibited areas on Shire-Managed land.	2026	Guidelines endorsed by Council.
7.2	Identify and deliver a fenced dog park on the mainland of Bass Coast Shire (Inverloch). Signage changes to reflect any changes made to regulations.	2026	Identify and deliver a fenced dog park delivered.
7.3	Identify and deliver a suitable location for a dog park on Phillip Island. Signage changes to reflect any changes made to regulations.	2027	Fenced dog park identified and delivered.
7.4	Undertake a signage review and audit of dog controls.	Annually	Annual audit report.

7.5	Continue to partner with the Dog Off Leash Working Group, including bi-annual meetings to discuss community matters that relate to the management of dogs in Bass Coast Shire.	2026 ongoing	Ongoing partnership. Bi-annual meetings.
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**Objective 8:
Effective patrols, education and enforcement activities**

8	Activity	When	Evaluation
8.1	Review seasonal roster and patrol schedule, and resource appropriately to increase patrol activity to include year-round beach patrols, education and enforcement activities during peak periods	Ongoing	Increased patrols and officer presence, including year-round beach patrols.
8.2	Continue the partnership with land managers to extend Council Officer presence to include their beaches through joint beach patrols.	Ongoing	Increased patrols and officer presence.
8.3	Investigate opportunities to increase Officer capacity to respond quickly to compliance issues identified as high priority (such as dogs of lead).	2026	Workforce capacity review delivered and changes implemented.
8.4	Review and improve processes for enforcement regarding animal management including barking dog nuisance, dog attacks, dogs off leash and cat containment	Ongoing	Nuisance processes revised and improved.
8.5	Develop a 'Barking Dog Kit' with information and resources to support the community to resolve barking dog concerns.	2026	Barking Dog Kit developed
8.6	Review and improve information available regarding reducing nuisance and promoting dog friendly spaces, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dog off leash and dog prohibited area maps ○ Picking up after your dog. ○ Barking dog information. ○ Dog attack reporting and prevention information. ○ Online resources 	2026	Information revised and improved.

8.7	Review and improve the way Council collects, measures and reports on domestic animal requests (including identification of 'hotspots'). Investigate feasibility of implementing Snap, Send, Solve as part of this initiative.	2027	Review completed and any improvements implemented.
8.8	Provide body corporates and Short Stay Rental Accommodation properties information on preventing dog and cat nuisance.	Ongoing	Reduced complaint numbers regarding dog and cat nuisance in these properties.

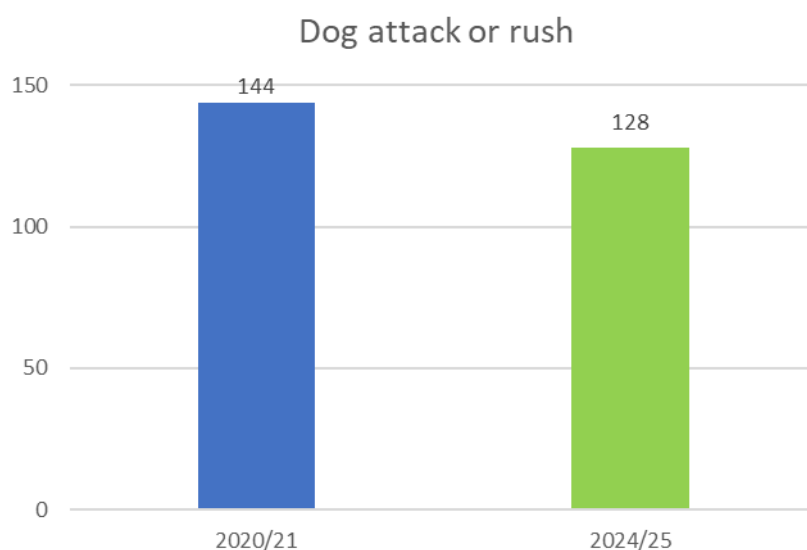
Dog attacks

Context & Current Situation

Serious dog attacks remain a concern and Council continuously looks for ways to minimise dog attacks on people and animals.

In 2024/25, Community Safety Officers investigated 128 reports of alleged dog attacks or dog rushes.

Dog attack and dog rush figures have decreased slightly since 2020-21, potentially partly due to the impact of COVID-19 lockdowns in Victoria and increased dog population as well as increased dog walking in the community during this time.



An increase in the number of patrols and enforcement actions undertaken for dogs was highlighted in community consultation outcomes. Other items raised to increase safety and wellbeing, included: dogs being kept on a lead and under the control of their owners at all times; reviewing times dogs are allowed on beaches with more consistent rules around off-leash times; and the provision of increased fenced off-leash areas at parks and beaches with improved signage.

What we currently do

- An immediate response to reports of dog attacks.
- Dangerous dog complaint (where the threat is not imminent), response within 48 hours.
- Signage in parks, reserves and foreshore areas detailing dog controls.
- Routine patrols of parks and foreshore areas.
- Extended patrols during peak / summer periods - with particular focus on foreshore areas.
- Partnership with Phillip Island Nature Park to extend our presence to include their beaches.
- Investigation of complaints.

- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.
- Declare dogs dangerous or menacing.

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Objective 9:
Continue to deliver best practice in management of dog attacks.

9	Activity	When	Evaluation
9.1	Continue to develop and improve processes to improve the way Council manages, investigates and prosecutes dog attacks to maintain best practice	2026 ongoing	Review completed. Process improvements implemented where required.
9.2	Review and improve information to support dog attack reporting and prevention. Promote early reporting of minor incidents to prevent escalation and major incidents.	2026 ongoing	Delivery of communications and education materials through multiple channels (also see action 2.1).
9.3	Analyse dog attack data and target hot spots for additional proactive patrols to actively enforce against and minimise dog attacks in the community	2026 ongoing	Additional targeted patrols implemented.

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

Council strives to minimise the risk to the community from menacing, dangerous or restricted breed dogs. In 2025, Bass Coast Shire has 17 declared dogs.

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.

What we currently do

- Supply and distribution of literature and pamphlets regarding keeping dangerous dogs.
- Annual inspections of dangerous/restricted dogs for compliance.
- Ensure all dogs declared by Council are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.
- Investigation of complaints.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

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Objective 10:
Declared dogs in municipality will be identified and appropriately managed.

10	Activity	When	Evaluation
10.1	Conduct annual declared dog property inspections for compliance with the Domestic Animal Act (including but not limited to security of fencing, animal housing and signage)	Annually	Inspections undertaken
10.2	Continue to identify and declare animals dangerous and menacing when required	Ongoing	Dogs who are repeatedly involved in non-compliance are declared
10.3	Review Council procedures in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.	Ongoing	Audits completed at a minimum annually

Domestic animal businesses

Council works in partnership with domestic animal businesses to make sure businesses are registered and complying with relevant regulations.

Bass Coast Shire has 8 registered domestic animal businesses.

Community Safety Officers inspect these facilities annually to ensure compliance prior to registration renewal.

Council has the ability to issue notices to comply, warnings, infringements, 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 Bass Coast.

What we currently do

- Supply and distribution of information regarding domestic animal businesses and relevant codes of practice.
- Inspect and process new Domestic Animal Business applications.
- Annual inspections undertaken in accordance with The Act; and issue annual registration certificates.
- Actively seek to identify unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses.
- Investigation of breaches / complaints.
- Council issues warnings, infringements, notices to comply or to prosecutes businesses that fail to comply with work plans and the relevant Code of Practice.

Our Plan 2026-29

Objective 11: Domestic animal businesses in municipality will be identified and registered

11	Activity	When	Evaluation
11.1	Monitor for businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses by reviewing advertisements, social media, local notice boards, etc and ensure they are compliant with legislation	Ongoing	Review undertaken annually

Objective 12:

Registered businesses are compliant with current legislation and relevant code of practice

12	Activity	When	Evaluation
12.1	Annual audit of domestic animal businesses in Bass Coast for compliance	Ongoing	Annual audits completed

Other matters

Actions in this section address The Act by providing for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the municipality.

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Objective 13: Seek funding opportunities to support domestic animal management programs

13	Activity	When	Evaluation
13.1	Investigate opportunities for external funding towards the development of domestic animal management programs	Ongoing	Grant opportunities identified and where appropriate, applications submitted

Objective 14: Leverage new technology to continuously improve Council services

14	Activity	When	Evaluation
14.1	Investigate and incorporate new technologies to provide improvements in Council's Domestic Animal Management services and communications materials.	Ongoing	Review undertaken and new technologies implemented.

Review and evaluation

Section 68A(3) of the Act requires that

Every Council must—

- (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan;
- (b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the Plan and any amendments to the plan; and
- (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the Plan in its annual report.

Performance monitoring and evaluation process

Council will monitor performance of the objectives that are detailed throughout the DAMP by reporting annually through the Council's established reporting systems, in accordance with the requirements of The Act and the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework.

A new DAMP will be completed on or before 30 October 2029.