Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-25

A Responsible Pet Ownership Plan for Bass Coast Shire

DRAFT



Acknowledgement

Bass Coast Shire Council pay respect to the Bunurong, we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where we work and live, we acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities in their diversity. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and the emerging, for they hold the memories, the Traditions, the culture and Lore. A better understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage and can lead to reconciliation. This is essential to the maturity of Australia as a nation and fundamental to the development of an Australian identity.



Mayor's Message



Cr Brett Tessari

Our pets are an important part of our families and our community. They provide companionship, mateship and bring much joy. This Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) sets out the ways in which Council can support pet owners and the community, and provides objectives for improving the welfare of pets in our Shire.

Responsible pet ownership is the key focus point of the DAMP. The way we responsibly manage our pets is unique in our Shire. In Bass Coast, we must balance the expectations of our community along with the protection of our natural environment and wildlife, and the best interests of our pets.

Importantly, the DAMP sets out the different roles we all must play in achieving this balance. It identifies opportunities for Council to lead programs, to improve education and communications, to work closely with key stakeholder, and to take appropriate regulatory and enforcement action. However, pet owners can make the biggest difference, by ensuring that we not only love and care for our pets, but that we also participate in making our community better and safer for all pets, people and the environment.

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Summary

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, Council must develop and implement a new Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every four years. The DAMP is aimed at promoting and encouraging responsible pet ownership. It explains how Council currently manages this, and establishes objectives 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, in harmony, without adversely impacting the environment or amenity.

In order to develop a DAMP that addresses the key priorities of the Bass Coast Community, Council conducted a vigorous community consultation program from March to September 2021. This included collecting and collating feedback through 556 survey responses, written submissions, stakeholder workshops, community pop-ups and much more.

The key themes were consistent with previous domestic animal management consultation. The key areas of community focus highlighted in the DAMP are:

- Increased and improved communication, education and training for the community to promote responsible pet ownership;
- Improved education opportunities and increased patrols and enforcement;
- Signage improvements relating to dog areas and regulations;
- Improvements and a more consistent approach to dog off leash areas;
- Introduction of 24/7 cat containment; and
- Council taking a more active and leadership approach, including seeking external funding opportunities and establishing and facilitating working groups.



" To me it is important to care passionately about our dog/pet as well as the environment. "

Domestic Animal Management Plans

Under Section 68A of the Domestic Animal Management Act, every Council must prepare a domestic animal management plan, as follows:

1. Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (of the Department of Primary Industries), prepare at four year intervals a Domestic Animal Management Plan.
2. A Domestic Animal Management Plan prepared by a Council must:
    a. set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
    b. outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
    c. outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district:
        i. to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
        ii. to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
        iii. to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
        iv. to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
        v. to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
        vi. to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
        vii. to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and
    d. provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
    e. provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
    f. provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the Plan.
3. Every Council must:
    a. review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the Plan; and
    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.

Our Consultation

The DAMP was driven by Council's Community Safety Team and informed by community and stakeholder consultation and independent research.

How we Engaged

A two-phased community and stakeholder consultation approach was adopted to inform the development of the Plan. Broad consultation with the community and key stakeholders was undertaken from March to June, 2021. This included:

- An **online survey** via Council's website 20 May to 27 June 2021 (promoted via media releases; social media posts; published on Council's website; Councillor Bulletin).
- **Written submissions** received by email and post.
- **In-person drop in sessions** as part of the Council Plan development at Corinella, Cape Paterson, San Remo, Wonthaggi, Kernot, Rhyll, Cowes, Grantville and Inverloch.
- **Pop-Up sessions** held at Wonthaggi Plaza and Cowes Shopping Centre.





- Direct **contact with external stakeholders** including through email, phone calls and meetings.
- An **external stakeholder workshop** with representatives from Phillip Island Nature Parks, Birdlife Australia, Friends of Surf Beach, Bass Coast Residents and Ratepayer Association, Phillip Island BC Dog Association, Tenby Point Community and Inverloch K9.
- **Internal Council Officer stakeholder workshops**
- **Councillor Briefings**

Feedback gathered through this consultation, including 556 survey responses, was collated and analysed. This feedback has informed the development of the Draft DAMP 2021-25.

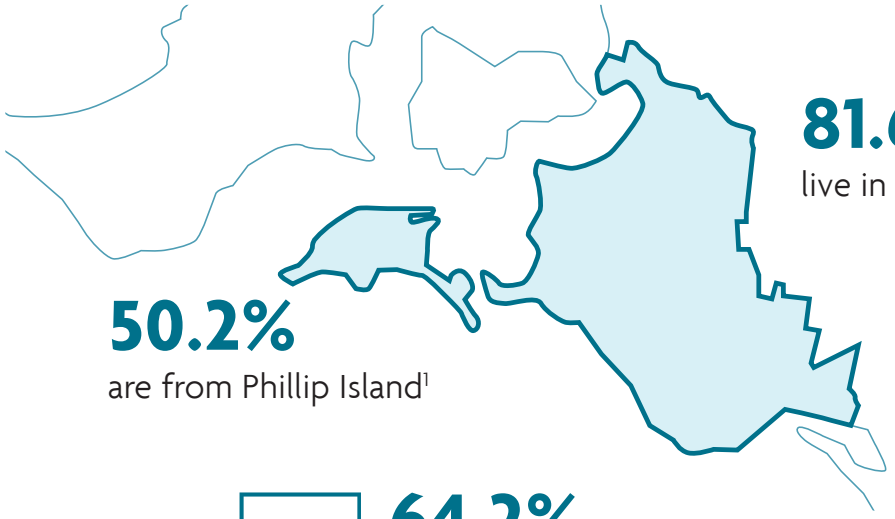


What the Community Told Us

Community engagement included 556 survey responses. Of these surveys:

76.5%
own a dog

16.5%
own a cat



81.6%
live in Bass Coast

50.2%
are from Phillip Island[1]

64.2%
want to be kept informed about the DAMP

Key suggestions and viewpoints highlighted by the community include the following themes and priorities:

What can we do to make Bass Coast safer for pets, their owners and the community?

- More off leash areas - parks and beaches
- Provide dog waste bins and bags
- Greater Ranger presence at beaches and parks to encourage responsible pet ownership
- Enforce regulations
- Provide fenced off leash areas
- Review times dogs are allowed on beaches
- Communications to promote responsible pet ownership
- Cat confinement to owner's premises
- Improved signage

What does responsible pet ownership look like in Bass Coast?

- Dogs on leash / under control of owner
- Provide bins to address dog waste
- Cat confinement and curfews respected
- Looking after animal welfare
- Compliance with regulations and signage
- Register, microchip and desex animals
- Training and socialising pets
- Respect for others - minimise barking

[1] Residents from Phillip Island comprise 32.4% of the Bass Coast Shire population (ABS Estimated Resident Population 2020)

Combined findings from community and stakeholder engagement highlighted the following key themes and priorities:

- **Communication, Education and Training:** Promote responsible pet ownership through strong and simple messages.
- **Responsible Pet Ownership:** Animals microchipped, de-sexed, registered and wearing tags, exercised and trained.
- **Council Leadership:** Work with other Councils and in partnership with key stakeholders; be forward thinking, leverage state government funding, and lead in domestic cat management.
- **Regulations, Local Laws and Enforcement:** Increase patrols and enforcement actions.
- **Signage:** Improve and simplify.
- **Dogs Off Leash Areas:** Improve and increase enclosed areas, provide dog waste bags and bins, create consistent rules around off leash times on beaches.
- **Cats:** A phased implementation of 24/7 cat containment including a thorough community education campaign, to improve cat welfare.
- **Wildlife and Animal Welfare:** Decrease feral animals, protect wildlife, raise awareness and educate domestic animal owners on the impacts and implications of pets near conservation areas.

Responsible pet ownership is:

"Looking after their needs, good food, sheltered sleeping arrangements, good socialisation, plenty of room to run and exercise. And lots of love."



Bass Coast Shire at a Glance

One of the fastest growing municipalities in regional Victoria, Bass Coast is a combination of unspoiled coastline and picturesque hinterland, with the main town centres of Wonthaggi, Cowes and Inverloch. Bass Coast's natural environment is one of its most valuable assets. It is the reason 3.4 million people visit each year with the local population swelling to over 70,000 during peak holiday periods.

Bass Coast's population of 37,445 is spread across 865km^2. It is an ageing population, and includes a mixture of coastal, peri-urban and farming communities.

COVID-19

Council continues to proactively address the impacts on its local communities and businesses created as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The pandemic has created a focus on 'staying at home', moving our work and education into our living spaces. This has, and will continue to impact on our pets. It will adjust the parameters around what responsible pet ownership is, and the challenges in achieving and maintaining responsible pet ownership in our community.

Future Impacts

Bass Coast's population is forecast to grow to 46,429 by 2036, representing a 24% increase. 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.

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.

To manage and navigate through this growth, Council will continue to work with community and industry partners to create a more cohesive approach to domestic animal management across Bass Coast.



Bass Coast Population and Domestic Animal Snapshot

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
Population	37,445
Geographic area of municipality	864 km^2
Registered dogs	7,385
Registered cats	2,004
Dog and cat related requests	2,678
Registered declared dogs (dangerous, menacing or restricted breed)	10
Dog attack or rush	144
Number of registered Domestic Animal Businesses	7
Keeping of animals / excess animals permits issued	8
Number of infringements	73
Number of successful prosecutions	8
Dogs impounded	150
Dogs euthanised	4
Cats impounded	155
Cats euthanised	33
Cat cage request	92



" Enforce pet owner compliance with Council rules to make Bass Coast safer for all community members, pets, birds and wildlife. "

Current Programs and Activities

The following table provides a summary of domestic animal management programs and services currently provided by Council.

Program Area	Services
Promoting Responsible Pet Ownership	• 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	• Discounted desexing through mobile desexing van • Council's Wonthaggi Pound facility houses animals found wandering for up to eight days. After eight days, animals are transferred to the RSPCA for rehoming or adoption
Registration and Identification	• Annual registration renewal and follow up • Lifetime registration tags • Online registration forms and payment options • Council microchipping days
Nuisance	• Nuisance complaint (such as barking dogs), 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 Parks to extend our presence to include their beaches
Dog Attacks	• Dog attack complaint – immediate response • Dangerous dog complaint (where threat is not imminent) – response within 48 hours
Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs	• Annual inspections of dangerous/restricted dogs for compliance • Prosecute non-compliant owners • Investigation of complaints
Domestic Animal Businesses	• 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	• Reports are referred to the RSPCA
Customer Service	• 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 8.00pm, we ask people to hold the animal and then we collect the following day • Lodge animal requests online • Payment facilities online • Online forms

Our Local Laws, Orders and other Domestic Animal Controls

In addition to The Act, Council enforces the provisions of the Bass Coast Shire Local Law No 1 Neighbourhood Amenity 2012 and Council Orders. The current Local Law sunsets in 2022, before which time a revised Local Law is to be developed and implemented.

Keeping Dogs and Cats

The maximum number of dogs and cats allowed in residences less than 0.5 hectares (1.24 acres) is two dogs and two cats.

However, if you live on a property between 0.5 and 2 hectares (4.9 acres), 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.

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

Pet owners 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 three 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.

Night-Time Cat Curfew

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

Dogs On / Off Leash

In Bass Coast, Dogs must be on leash in all public places at all times, 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. The Team regularly work with key partners and stakeholders, and aim to build relationships with these partners and the community by providing advice, support and regulatory services.

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

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.

What we currently do

Community Safety Officers hold, or are working toward attaining, a Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation or equally relevant qualifications, or have appropriate and applicable qualifications and experience.

New staff are required to complete specific training including a Council induction on policies and procedures and introduction to Councils Animal Management procedures and programs. Regular team training and refresher courses and ongoing on the job training and coaching is provided.

Staff are encouraged to represent the Shire on industry bodies and committees where appropriate.

Internal procedures and processes are regularly reviewed and updated.

The Team maintain a training register, detailing all the qualifications and training courses completed by each team member. Performance reviews and professional development plans are also undertaken annually.

Team members currently receive on average 21 hours animal management training per year.

Our Plan 2021-25

Objective 1:

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

1	Activity	When	How we will Measure
1.1	Train Community Safety Officers in *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (POCTA Act)	2021/22	POCTA training delivered
1.2	Community Safety Officers participate in state-wide forums and working groups	Ongoing	Participation in activities
1.3	Identify additional training and development opportunities	Ongoing	Community Safety Team follow Council's Professional Development Plan processes
1.4	Train Community Safety Officers in how to understand and effectively communicate the impacts of off-leash dogs and uncontained cats on native wildlife	2022	Training delivered

Promote and Encourage Responsible Pet Ownership

Healthy and happy pets can bring life and vibrancy to a family, and community. They provide companionship and improve well-being through supporting physical exercise and mental wellness. These benefits rely on responsible pet ownership. While not all animals are able to be socialised, supervised and responsible socialisation of animals is considered an important part of pet ownership. Supervised and responsible socialisation supports dog behaviour so that they are able to cope with unfamiliar situations (e.g. involving other animals or people) by teaching them to not react fearfully to new experiences and being more comfortable when encountering anything new.

Council promotes and encourages 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 responsible pet ownership as an important factor including animals being trained and exercised, microchipped, desexed and registered with owners complying with regulations and signage. Communication and education campaigns with clear and simple messaging were suggested to support responsible pet ownership as well as increasing awareness of the impacts and implications of pets near conservation areas. In addition, cat confinement to owner's premises with curfews being respected and the phased implementation of 24/7 cat containment order across the Shire were proposed as being important.

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.



Objective 2:

Promote responsible pet ownership through strong and simple messages, delivered through multiple channels.

2	Activity	When	How we will Measure
2.1	Develop Communication and Education Campaigns targeted towards promoting responsible pet ownership	Commence 2021	The development of communications and education materials and delivery through multiple channels
2.2	Investigate opportunities for educational events such as animal first aid, pet psychology, pet nutrition, and pop-up stations at community events	Ongoing	Hold information pop-ups at community events Work together with community associations and organisations to support the delivery of educational events
2.3	Increase Community Safety Officers presence across the Shire to create opportunities for face-to-face education	2021/22	Increased patrols of Officers, including a seasonal roster

Objective 3:

Raise awareness on the impacts and implications of pets near conservation areas to help protect wildlife and decrease feral animals.

3	Activity	When	How we will Measure
3.1	Support Phillip Island Nature Parks (PINP) in promoting conservation and wildlife preservation	Ongoing	Meet with PINP regularly and assist in promoting their key messages through Councils various communications channels
3.2	Continue to engage with and share conservation messages	Ongoing	Conservation messages shared with the community

Objective 4:

Promote and encourage responsible cat ownership.

4	Activity	When	How we will Measure
4.1	Design a Communication and Education Plan to explain what cat containment is and the benefits	2021/22	Suite of communications and education resources designed to explain the welfare benefits of cat containment and how it can be achieved
4.2	Develop and roll out Communication and Education Campaign to explain the benefits of cat containment	2022/23 2023/24	All registered cat owners directly contacted, and broader community informed, about 24/7 Cat Containment including the welfare benefits and any regulatory changes coming into effect
4.3	Collaborate with community organisations, associations, businesses and clubs to provide support and increase options of cat enclosures available locally	2022/23 2023/24	Council to establish and facilitate a Cat Containment working group with the objective of supporting the community to adopt 24/7 cat containment and increasing access to cat enclosures locally
4.4	Investigate ways Council can support the community to build or buy cat enclosures	2022/23 2023/24 2024/25	Council to investigate grant opportunities and apply, or support organisations to apply, where appropriate





Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

Council's priority is to achieve positive community and animal welfare outcomes wherever possible. Community Safety Officers work hard to reunite animals with their owners at first point of contact, without taking them to the Pound.

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 eight 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 an agreement with the RSPCA. After eight days of being held in our Pound facility, animals are transferred to RSPCA's care for adoption. We also work with a number of rescue groups (Section 84Y holders) to rehome as many animals as possible.

The Pound is an ageing facility, which over busy summer periods often reaches it's capacity. It will be important to understand how the needs of a growing community and local population will impact on the Pound facility, and what changes may need to be considered.

Dog and cat impoundments have decreased significantly since the last DAMP was developed. We suspect this is reflective of more people working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, and less animals found wandering at large.

Pound Statistics	**2016**	**2020**
Total dogs and cats impounded	**589**	**311**
Reunited with owner (total)	280	166
Cats	32	28
Dogs	248	138
Rescue groups (total)	**122**	**96**
Cats	71	81
Dogs	51	15
RSPCA (total)	**48**	**96**
Cats	42	81
Dogs	6	15
Euthanised (total)	**111**	**30**
Cats	103	28
Dogs	8	2

It is Council's aim to reduce the euthanasia rates and overpopulation levels by working with the community to increase the number of desexed, microchipped and registered animals in the municipality, with a particular emphasis on cats.

Council does not register pets that are not microchipped and desexed, and also ensure animals are registered prior to releasing them once impounded. Council also support the community to microchip and desex their animals through subsidy programs including mobile de-sexing vans and programs with local vets.

Council continues to work with the community and partners PINP and Parks Victoria in relation to feral cats to try and reduce their populations.

What we currently do

- Discounted desexing through mobile desexing van.
- Wonthaggi Pound facility where animals found wandering can be housed for up to eight 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 has been 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 a 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.
- Night-time curfew where cats are required to be contained to owners' premises sunset to sunrise.

" Please implement a curfew for cats. My cat is indoor only but I see lots of local cats around including after dark. "



Cat Containment

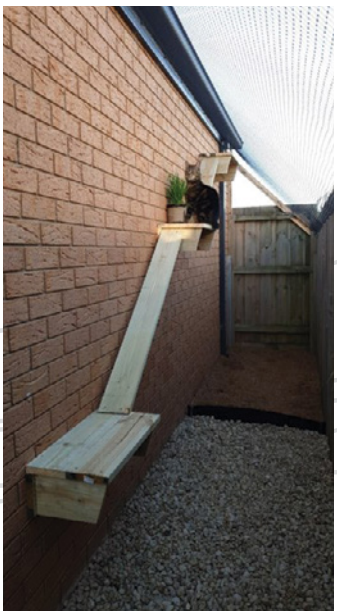
Community consultation outcomes highlighted the welfare of animals as an important part of responsible pet ownership as well as making the Shire safer for pets, their owners and the community. In addition, cat containment to owner's premises with curfews being respected and the phased implementation of 24/7 cat containment order across the Shire were proposed as being important.

Many studies have demonstrated that cats safely contained to their property live longer and have healthier life outcomes than cats that are able to wander at large. Cats contained to properties avoid road trauma, exposure to disease, pathogens or parasites, and attacks from other animals.

'Cat Containment' means keeping a cat contained to a property and/or under its owner's control, in the same way that dogs are. A cat's ability to climb means that enclosures such as cat runs or netting are often required to ensure a cat is securely contained. Contained cats can be walked and exercised outside of their property if kept on a leash.

In order to achieve cat containment, Council will need to lead a strong educational campaign and support cat owners to make the necessary adjustments. This will involve working closely with the community, sharing and providing information, and facilitating and exploring opportunities to support easier access to cat enclosures.







" Education to keep cats on your property and the reasons why. "

Objective 5:

Facilitate a phased implementation of 24/7 cat containment across Bass Coast Shire to reduce euthanasia rates and support welfare of domestic cats.

5	Activity	When	How we will Measure
5.1	Order for 24/7 cat containment goes to Council for adoption	2021/22	Order for 24/7 cat containment adopted and then Gazetted
5.2	Community Safety Team develop a regulation and enforcement plan to regulate 24/7 cat containment	2022/23	Processes developed and in place, including purchasing materials such as cat traps, developing improved cat trap processes and promoting cat trap process
5.3	Implement 24/7 Cat Containment beginning July 1, 2023, with a minimum 12-month education campaign beforehand	2023 onwards	24/7 cat containment implemented and enforced beginning July 1, 2023
5.4	Develop a cat containment working group for the period leading up to and six months post implementation, to provide guidance and recommendations	2022/23	Cat containment working group established and meet quarterly up until 30 December 2023
5.5	Review of processes and implement improvements including the management of cat cages	Ongoing from 1 July 2023	Community Safety Team collate data relating to cat containment processes including number of warning notices and infringements issues, number of cat cages requested and issued. Data and processes reviewed annually by Community Safety Team

Objective 6:

Increase Council's capacity to improve welfare of domestic animals.

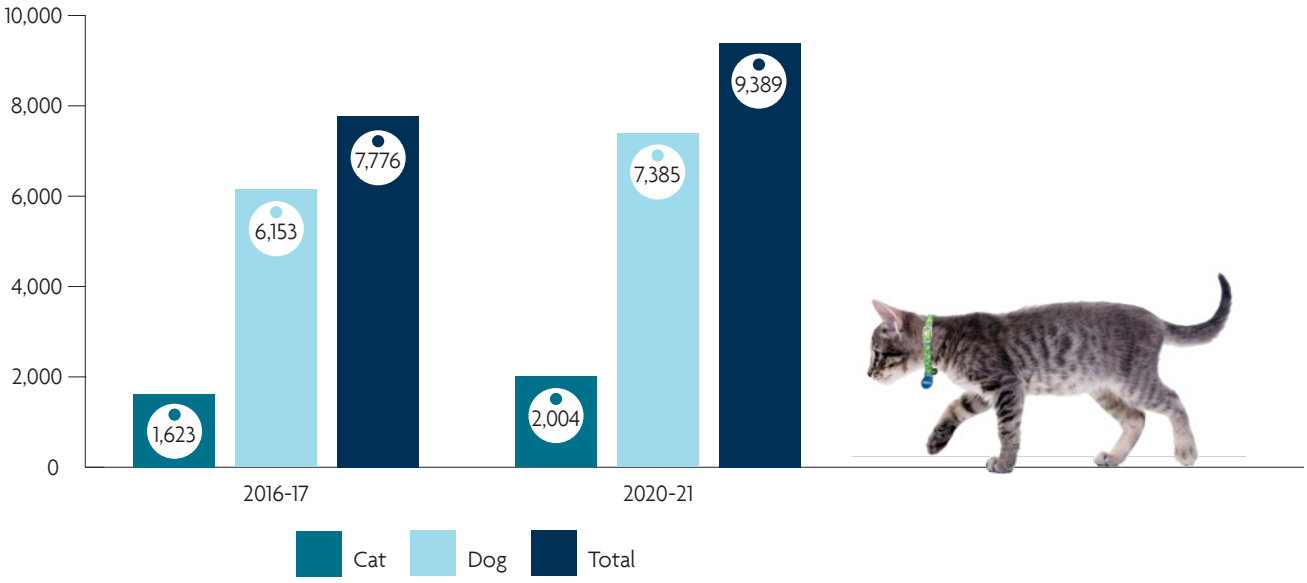
6	Activity	When	How we will Measure
6.1	Continually improve Council's Pound facilities	Ongoing	Pound facilities reviewed, maintained and designed to meet future demands

Registration and Identification

All dogs and cats three months and over must be microchipped and registered with Council. 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 notable increase in registrations, showing a possible trend towards increased pet ownership, partly due to COVID-19 'pet purchases' in 2020-2021. The increase in registrations can also be attributed to increased resident population and the success of previous DAMP activities which focussed on increasing pet registrations in the community.

Dog and Cat Registrations



The registration and identification of dogs and cats was highlighted in community consultation outcomes as important in demonstrating responsible pet ownership and in caring for the welfare of animals.

What we currently do

- Annual registration renewal and follow up.
- Lifetime registration tags.
- Online registration forms and payment options.
- Council microchipping days.
- Registration door knock activities.
- Registration checks during patrols.
- Animals in the Pound must be registered prior to release.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

Objective 7:

Animals are microchipped, desexed, registered and wearing tags.

7	Activity	When	How we will Measure
7.1	Investigate improving registration tags	2023/24	Feasibility study for improving registration tags
7.2	Develop registration packs	2023/24	New animal registrations receive a 'registration pack'
7.3	Work with local vet clinics to develop subsidised desexing and microchipping programs	Ongoing	Concession card holders can access subsidised microchipping and desexing through their local vets
7.4	Continue to investigate and deliver discounted and easy to access desexing services such as desexing van	Ongoing	Discounted desexing services delivered

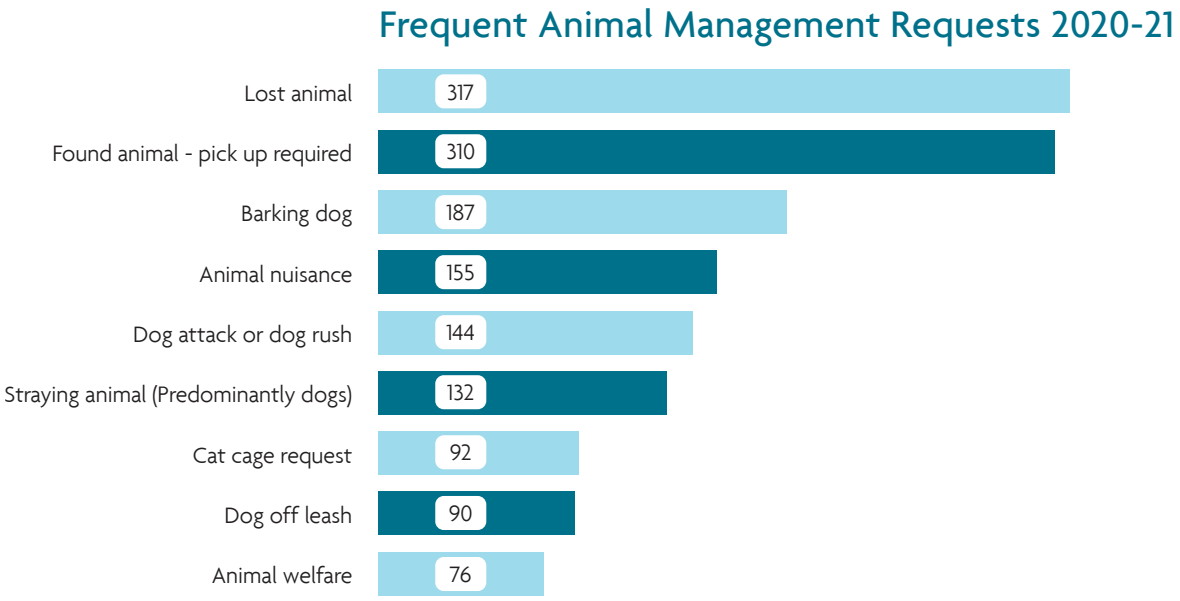


" It is important that community members understand that pet ownership comes with responsibilities and obligations."

Nuisance

We hope to 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 2020-21, Community Safety Officers responded to 2,678 domestic animal requests. The most frequent animal management requests are detailed below.



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 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.

Council has developed a partnership with Phillip Island Nature Parks to extend its presence on their managed beaches.

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.

Cats are currently required to be confined to owners' premises from sunset to sunrise.

Community consultation outcomes highlighted a number of themes and suggestions to make Bass Coast safer and to encourage responsible pet ownership, including: providing a greater presence to enforce regulations at beaches and parks, and for animal owners to display respect for others (e.g. in minimising barking and noise).

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 Parks to extend Council's presence to include beaches they manage.
- Signage in parks, reserves and foreshore areas detailing dog controls.
- Cat cages 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.
- A 48-hour response to nuisance complaints.
- Investigation of complaints.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

Our Plan 2021-25

Objective 8:

Reduce dog waste in public spaces.

8	Activity	When	How we will Measure
8.1	Develop and present to Council a business case exploring dog waste bags	Before July 2022	Council presented with a feasibility study including costs, benefits and impacts associated with introducing dog waste bins and bags

Objective 9:

Provide a consistent approach to management of dogs in public spaces across the Shire.

9	Activity	When	How we will Measure
9.1	Review the current management of dogs off leash and dogs on leash on Shire-managed beaches and commit to engage with the community and key stakeholders as part of this review	Commence 2022	Review complete and recommendations presented to Council
9.2	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	Commence 2021	PINP, PV and Council agree on best rules regarding off leash times, Order/s revised as needed
9.3	Work with land managers to investigate opportunities to audit, simplify and streamline signage and make changes where appropriate	Commence 2022	Audit undertaken and action plan developed in conjunction with Council, PINP, PV and Committees of Management
9.4	Review existing inland dog off leash areas and develop a plan to provide suitable inland dog off leash areas across the Shire and commit to engage with the community and key stakeholders as part of this review	Commence 2022	Review completed, plan developed and recommendations presented to Council
9.5	Investigate improvements for existing inland dog off leash areas, including through the use of grant funding (e.g. fencing, furniture, landscaping and play infrastructure)	Commence 2022	Design facilities and apply for grant funding to improve existing off leash areas
9.6	Develop a dog off leash working group to provide guidance and recommendations on improving dog off leash areas	Commence 2021	Dog off leash working group established and meet minimum biannually



Objective 10:

Increase patrols, education and enforcement actions.

10	Activity	When	How we will Measure
10.1	Develop a seasonal roster and resource appropriately to increase patrols, education and enforcement activities during peak periods	2021/22	Roster implemented to increase Officer presence on beaches from December to April
10.2	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
10.3	Review and seek to improve the way Council collects, measures and reports on domestic animal requests	2022	Review completed. Changes implemented



" I would like to see the dogs on beach hours altered to reflect beach usage. "

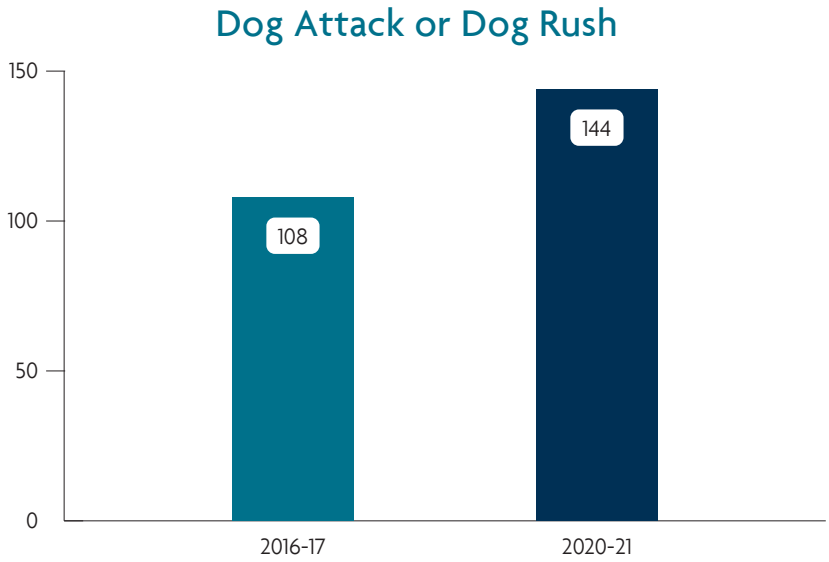
Dog Attacks

Context and Current Situation

Council continuously looks for ways to minimise dog attacks on people and animals.

In 2020/21, Community Safety Officers investigated 144 reports of alleged dog attacks or dog rushes and Council successfully prosecuted five serious dog attacks and five dog rushes, equating to a 100% prosecution success rate.

Dog attack and dog rush figures have increased since 2016-17. This is 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. It is also potentially due to the increased focus of previous DAMP actions to educate the community on the importance of reporting these incidences.



An increase in the number of patrols and enforcement actions undertaken for dogs was highlighted in community and stakeholder engagement conducted during 2021. 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 11:
Continue to deliver best practice in management of dog attacks.

11	Activity	When	How we will Measure
11.1	Continue to develop and improve processes to improve the way Council manages, investigates and prosecutes dog attacks to maintain best practice	Ongoing	Audits completed annually

" Better education in the public regarding dog attacks and rushes and how to report them. "

Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Council strives to minimise the risk to the community from menacing, dangerous or restricted breed dogs. In 2021, Bass Coast Shire has 17 declared dogs:

- Six declared as dangerous dogs;
- Ten declared as menacing dogs; and
- One restricted breed dog.

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.

Our Plan 2021-25

Objective 12:

Declared dogs in municipality will be identified and appropriately managed.

12	Activity	When	How we will Measure
12.1	Conduct declared dog property inspections, ensuring compliance with the *Domestic Animal Act 1994* (including but not limited to security of fencing, animal housing and signage)	Annually	Inspections undertaken
12.2	Continue to identify and declare animals dangerous and menacing when required	Ongoing	Dogs who are repeatedly involved in non-compliance are declared

Objective 13:

Review Council procedures in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

13	Activity	When	How we will Measure
13.1	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 eight registered Domestic Animal Businesses:

- One animal shelter;
- Two boarding establishments;
- One day care / boarding establishment;
- One home boarding establishment;
- One dog training establishment; and
- Two breeding establishments.

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

In 2020-21, three businesses were identified as having breaches upon first inspection. Notices to comply were issued. Second inspections revealed that breaches were rectified, and businesses were compliant.

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.
- 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.



Objective 14:

Domestic animal businesses in municipality will be identified and registered.

14	Activity	When	How we will Measure
14.1	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 15:

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

15	Activity	When	How we will Measure
15.1	Audit 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.

Our Plan 2021-25

Objective 16:
Seek funding opportunities to support domestic animal management programs.

16	Activity	When	How we will Measure
16.1	Investigate opportunities for external funding towards the development of domestic animal management programs	Ongoing	Grant opportunities identified and, where appropriate, applications submitted

Objective 17:
Leverage new technology to continuously improve council services.

17	Activity	When	How we will Measure
17.1	Investigate and incorporate new technologies to provide efficiencies and improvements in Council's Domestic Animal Management services	Ongoing	Technology used to create improvements



" Seek external funding for dog parks and have more understanding about the value pets (dogs) offer to people's well-being and mental health. "

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 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 2025.



Bass Coast Shire Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-25 Community Consultation and Engagement Summary.

Who and How we Consulted

The DAMP was developed in conjunction with Council's Community Safety Team and informed by community and stakeholder consultation and independent research.

A two-phased community and stakeholder consultation approach was adopted to inform the development of the Plan and to gather feedback on the draft Plan.

Phase 1 – Consultation to Inform Development of the DAMP 2021-2025

Broad consultation with the community and key stakeholders was undertaken from March to June 2021. This included:

- An online survey via Council's website 20 May to 27 June 2021 (promoted via media releases; social media posts; published on Council's website; Councillor Bulletin).
- Written submissions received by email and post.
- In-person drop in sessions as part of the Council Plan development at Corinella, Cape Paterson, San Remo, Wonthaggi, Kernot, Rhyll, Cowes, Grantville and Inverloch.
- Pop-Up sessions held at Wonthaggi Plaza and Cowes Shopping Centre.
- Direct contact with external stakeholders including through email, phone calls and meetings.
- An external stakeholder workshop with representatives from Phillip Island Nature Parks, Birdlife Australia, Friends of Surf Beach, Bass Coast Residents and Ratepayer Association, Phillip Island BC Dog Association, Tenby Point Community and Inverloch K9.
- Internal Council Officer stakeholder workshops
- Councillor Briefings

What the Community Told Us – Key Themes

Community engagement through Council's online survey realised a total of 556 valid survey responses.

A profile of community respondents identified that:

- 76.5% own a dog (survey outcomes were heavily weighted towards dog owners);
- 16.5% own a cat;
- 81.6% live in Bass Coast;
- 50.2% are from Phillip Island[1]; and
- 64.2% want to be kept informed about the DAMP.

Key suggestions and viewpoints highlighted by the community include the following themes and priorities:

[1] Residents from Phillip Island comprise 32.4% of the Bass Coast Shire population (ABS Estimated Resident Population 2020)

What can we do to make Bass Coast safer for pets, their owners and the community?	*What does responsible pet ownership look like in Bass Coast?*
• More off leash areas - parks and beaches • Provide dog waste bins and bags • Greater Ranger presence at beaches and parks to encourage responsible pet ownership • Enforce regulations • Provide fenced off leash areas • Review times dogs are allowed on beaches • Communications to promote responsible pet ownership • Cat confinement to owner's premises • Improved signage	• Dogs on lead / under control of owner • Provide bins to address dog waste • Cat confinement, curfews respected • Looking after animal welfare • Compliance with regulations and signage • Register, microchip and desex animals • Training and socialising pets • Respect for others - minimise barking

Combined findings from community and stakeholder engagement highlighted the following key themes and priorities:

- **Communication, Education and Training**: Promote responsible pet ownership, strong and simple messages;
- **Responsible Pet Ownership**: Animals trained and socialised, microchipped, desexed, registered, wearing tags;
- **Council leadership**: Work with other Councils and in partnership with key stakeholders, be forward thinking, leverage state government funding, lead in domestic cat management;
- **Regulations, Local Laws and Enforcement**: Increase patrols and enforcement actions;
- **Signage**: Improve and simplify;
- **Dogs Off Leash Areas**: Improve and increase enclosed areas, dog waste bags and bins, consistent rules around off-leash times on beaches;
- **Cats**: A phased implementation of 24/7 cat containment including a thorough community education campaign. Increase desexed cats; and
- **Wildlife and Animal Welfare**: Decrease feral animals, protect wildlife, raise awareness and educate domestic animal owners on the impacts and implications of pets near conservation areas.

How We Listened

Feedback gathered through the Phase 1 consultation was collated and analysed. This feedback has informed the development of the Draft DAMP 2021-25.

The key themes and areas of community focus highlighted in the Draft DAMP include:

- Increased and improved communication, education and training for the community to promote responsible pet ownership
    - *Objective 2: Promote responsible pet ownership through strong and simple messages.*
- Increased patrols to improve and increase opportunities for education, regulations and enforcement;
    - *Action 2.3: Increase Community Safety Officers presence across the Shire to create opportunities for face-to-face education.*

- *Objective 10: Increase patrols, education and enforcement actions.*

- Signage improvements relating to dog areas and regulations;
    - *Action 9.3: Work with land managers to investigate opportunities to audit, simplify and streamline signage and make changes where appropriate.*
- Improvements and a more consistent approach to dog off leash areas;
    - *Objective 9: Provide a consistent approach to management of dogs in public spaces across the Shire.*
- Introduction of 24/7 cat containment; and
    - *Objective 4: Promote and encourage responsible cat ownership*
    - *Objective 5: Facilitate a phased implementation of 24/7 cat containment across Bass Coast Shire to reduce euthanasia rates and support welfare of domestic cats.*
- Council taking a more active and leadership approach, including seeking external funding opportunities and establishing and facilitating working groups.
    - *Objective 16: Seek funding opportunities to support domestic animal management programs.*
    - *Action 9.6: Develop a Dog off leash working group to provide guidance and recommendation on improving dog off leash areas.*
    - *Action 5.4: Develop a cat containment working group for the period leading up to and six months post implementation, to provide guidance and recommendations.*
- Protecting wildlife and preserving natural flora and fauna.
    - *Objective 3: Raise awareness on the impacts and implication of pets near conservation areas to help protect wildlife and decrease feral animals.*

Phase 2 – Feedback on the Draft DAMP 2021-2025

Council sought feedback from the community and key stakeholders on the draft DAMP 2021-2025 between 13 August and 12 September 2021.

- The draft DAMP was available to view online at Council's website, and the community were invited to provide feedback via written submission (promoted via media releases; social media posts; published on Council's website; Councillor Bulletin).
- Written submissions were received via email, post or in person at Council service centres.
- Key external stakeholders (eg. vets, shelters, animal groups, domestic animal businesses, environmental groups, etc) were directly contacted to provide feedback on the draft DAMP 2021-2025.
- 357 Phase 1 consultation respondents who had indicated that they would like to be kept informed were directly invited via email to provide feedback on the draft DAMP 2021-2025.

61 written submissions were received and collated. These have been individually assessed to determine whether changes to the draft DAMP 2021-2025 are required. *Please refer to Detailed Engagement Summary Phase*