WARRNAMBOOL
CITY COUNCIL

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2026-2029

Draft for Consultation

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1. Introduction

Animal management is one of Council's primary responsibilities. The Warrnambool City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan) for 2026 - 2029 provides a clear overview of the Council's role and actions for the current and future management of domestic animals within the Warrnambool City Council (WCC),and ensures statutory compliance.

The Plan highlights the most important aspects of responsible pet ownership which, together with education, will be a particular focus for domestic animal management within the municipality. There is a strong emphasis on community safety and the need to reduce the number of dog attacks, animals at large and public complaints.

The Plan also discusses the importance of pet owners having their pets desexed, which will help reduce unwanted litters of puppies and kittens placing pressure on our shelter services that contributes to increased operating costs.

Basic pet ownership responsibilities, including picking up your dog's waste and ensuring your cat is contained between sunset and sunrise, help protect the environment and ensures pets are kept safe and healthy. Registration, microchipping, controlling barking dogs and maintaining 'effective control' over your dog when out walking are all key responsibilities of pet ownership.

Council aims to offer our community a fair and balanced environment – where everyone can enjoy our community and the many open public spaces, regardless of whether or not they are a pet owner.

Residents have access to a range of dedicated off and on-lead areas, including beach locations, a large enclosed off leash park and most sporting precincts, which are listed on Councils website. For the remainder of the municipality, owners are required to keep their dogs on a lead at all times.

The WCC Domestic Animal Management Plan for 2026 – 2029 provides Council with the framework to work with the community to ensure animal management services are sufficient for the municipality's population of pets.

For the purpose of this plan, a "domestic animal" is defined as an animal covered by the Domestic Animals Act 1994, which are predominantly dogs and cats.

2. Legislative requirements

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

68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

(1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (of the Department of Agriculture), prepare at 4 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;
  - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
  - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs / cats;
  - (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;
- (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.

3. Purpose of the plan

This Plan sets the future guidelines of domestic animal management for the Warrnambool City Council.

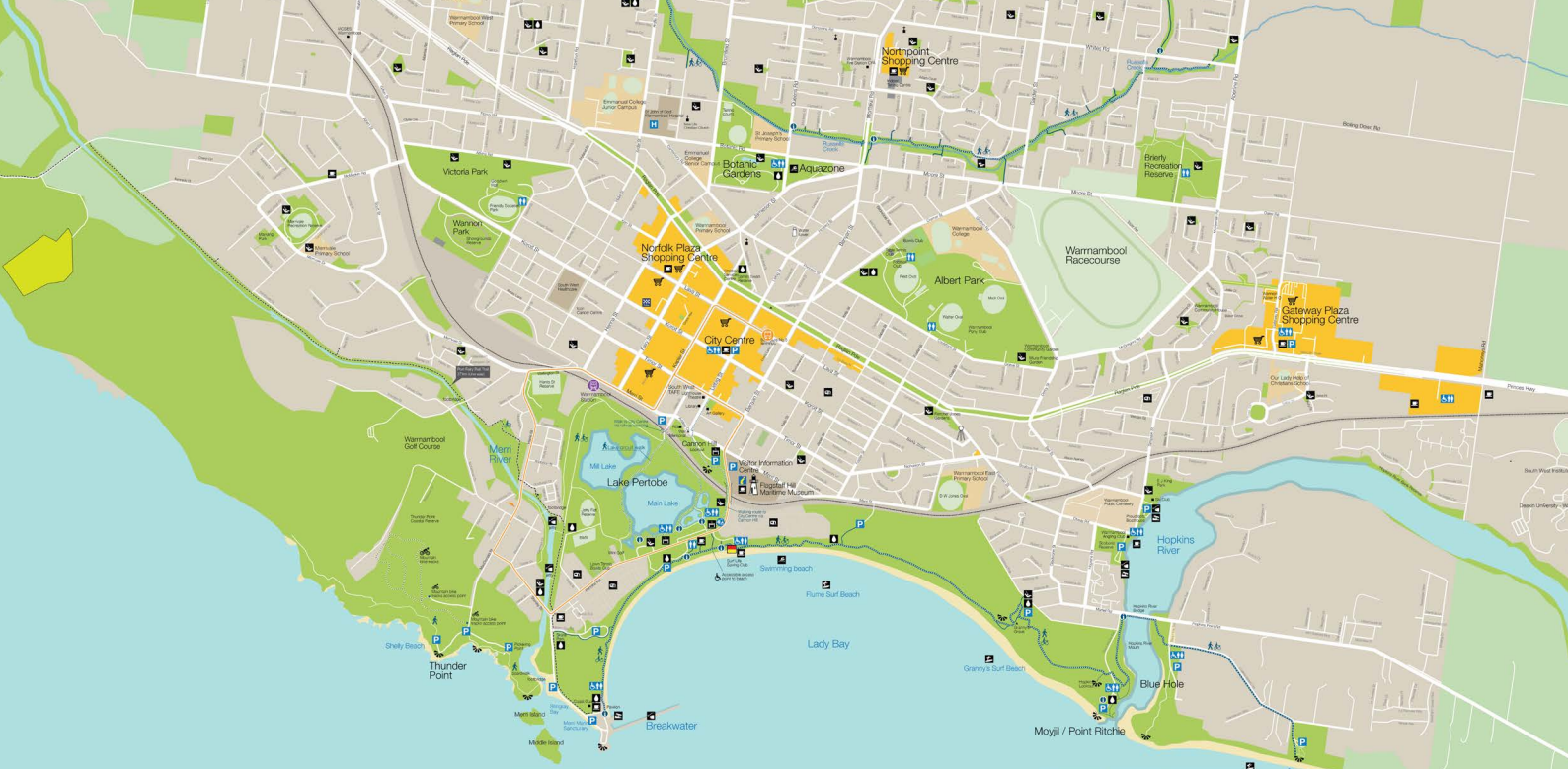
The Plan identifies strategies and actions to implement the vision, aims and objectives for animal management. It contains recommendations to be implemented in a structured program. These actions enable Council to maintain a balance between all interested parties and to meet all legislative requirements.

Council's Local Laws Officers developed the Plan, with data and information from the following internal and external parties:
- Warrnambool Animal Shelter
- Warrnambool veterinary clinics;
- Dog obedience / training clubs;
- The public

The community is invited to comment on the draft Plan for two weeks prior to being submitted to Council for adoption. Any submissions will be referred to Council and where necessary incorporated into the Plan.

The current Plan (2021 – 2025) is available at the Council Offices and on the Council website.

The Plan is reviewed annually and any improvements suggested by the community during the year may be considered and added to the Plan or considered for further investigation and discussion as part of the annual review process.



4. Warrnambool - municipal demographic

The City of Warrnambool is in Southwest Victoria; approximately 260km west of Melbourne and covers approximately 120sqkm.

The City is surrounded by the Shire of Moyne and the Southern Ocean.

It has a population of approximately 36,000 residents which also includes the townships of Allansford, Bushfield, Dennington and Woodford.

The City economy is based on tourism, education, farming and food processing.

5. Council organisational structure

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Assistant

Director City Futures	Director City Wellbeing	Director City Infrastructure	Director Corporate Strategies	Manager Governance
Manager City Activation	Manager Recreation and Culture	Manager Environment	Manager Financial Services	
Manager City Growth	Manager Children's and Family Services	Manager Infrastructure Services	Manager Engagement and Communications	
Manager Economic Development	Manager Community Strengthening	Manager Assets and Projects	Manager Organisation Development	
Manager City Safety			Executive Manager IT Strategy	

6. Current Services provided to assist with Animal Management statistics.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Officer weekend patrols	37	63	97	67 Covid Lockdown	N/A	80	104	104
24 hour emergency contact	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Cage Request for stray cats	71	63	51	26	24	49	45	67
Provide trial barking aid equipment	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Investigate nuisance complaints	233	210	227	220	291	262	364	339
Dog at large complaints	135	128	135	168	156	214	146	254
Investigate reported dog attacks	29	16	22	41	39	56	45	43
Return dogs home	26	37	68	70	51	24	21	33
Community Information Sessions	3	5	3	2	N/A	N/A	0	1
Door knock / Letter registration follow up	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Current Animal data:

Warrnambool City Key Statistics	2017 - 18	2018 - 19	2019 - 20	2020 - 21	2021 - 22	2022 - 23	2023 - 24	2024 - 25
Council:								
Population	31,060	31,466	31,791	32,180	32,901	33,410	33,905	36,170
Area	120sqkm	120sqkm	120sqkm	120sqk	120sqkm	120sqk	120sqk	120sqk
Current, not for profit or future properties (approx. tenements)	18,000	18,000	18,500	18,800	19,108	19,467	19,791	20,212
Domestic Animal Businesses	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	6
Declared Menacing (currently in City)	24	17	9	21	N/A	N/A	14	9
Declared Dangerous (currently in City)	3	2	0	1	1	1	2	2
Declared Restricted Breed (currently in City)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dogs:								
Registered	4204	4297	4318	4,478	N/A	N/A	4,211	4,276
Impounded Council Public=	228 122	137 137	103 143	115 116	96 95	158 115	148 92	216 123
Returned to owner	207	143	100	104	72	114	105	66
Rehoused	118	102	102	87	75	111	83	92
Euthanized	18	16	17	13	21	25	32	31

Warrnambool City Key Statistics	2017 - 18	2018 - 19	2019 - 20	2020 - 21	2021 - 22	2022 - 23	2023 - 24	2024 - 25
Cats:								
Registered	1603	1681	1739	1,833	N/A	N/A	1,542	1,596
Impounded Admit. Data =	70 423	66 445	82 525	40 341	94 369	47 399	98 329	111 384
Returned to owner	33	28	29	24	30	13	14	7
Rehoused	348	268	430	352	355	366	325	271
Euthanised	83	109	102	58	68	65	66	45

7. Training of Authorised Officers

The purpose of this section is to ensure all Animal Management Officers are skilled and appropriately trained to deliver the Council services and programs under Section 68 A(2)(b) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

Warrnambool City Local Laws Team consists of:

- a Coordinator;
- one full-time Supervisor;
- two permanent full-time officers;
- four permanent part-time officers
- two City Amenity Operations Officer

The Local Laws officers manage animal complaints relating to nuisance, attacks, registration and dogs at large.

Officers assist the promotion of responsible pet ownership by conducting foot patrols along the city walking paths, also talking to schools and service support groups.

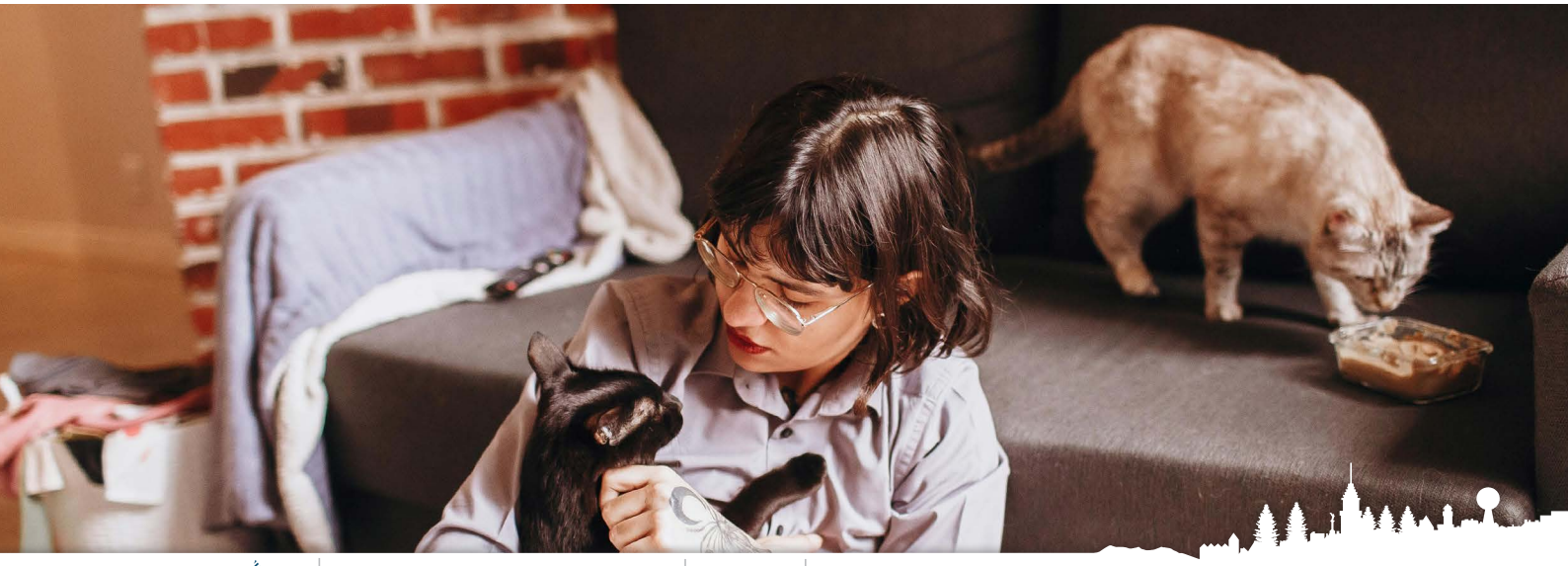
Animal control is one component of the Authorised Officer duties, which include traffic management, local laws, fire and litter control.

Current and Planned Qualifications and Training

All Local Laws Officers are appointed under Section 224 of the Local Government Act 2020 to administer the Environmental Protection Act 2017, Tobacco Act 1987 & Local Laws.

As employees of Warrnambool City Council, Officers are certified as General Inspectors under section 18 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and are authorised to exercise powers of a general inspector under Part 2A and Part3A of that Act.

Furthermore, Officers are at times asked to attend training to advance their understanding of animal behavior and law enforcement. One such course is the Certificate IV Animal Control & Regulation.



Actions:

Ensure that all Animal Management Officers receive training to a level that they can complete all requirements of the Act, Regulations and Local Laws in accordance with relevant Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) guidelines and community needs.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Coordinator to identify minimum training requirements and updates for the position.	During annual Council appraisal program	Training needs to be finalised and incorporated into the Organisational Development plan by October each year.
Identify additional training needs by consultation with Organisational Development Dept.	Ongoing	Course dependent.

Ensure completion of the Certificate 4 in Statutory Compliance & Animal Control by all full-time Animal Management Officers.

Activity	When	Evaluation
This qualification is preferred in the position description for staff as it covers all aspects of the position.	12 month qualification. Dependent on the service provider.	Receiving accreditation from the service provider. Recorded with the Organisational Development Dept.

Ensure all Animal Management Officers have completed their minimum in-house training requirements within 6 months of appointment.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Basic animal handling. Computer training. Internal procedures.	Within 6 months of appointment (or when suitable training is available)	Coordinator to monitor and maintain records.

8. Responsible Pet Ownership & Compliance with Legislation

Council is committed to providing a visible presence with officers wearing distinct uniforms and driving dedicated vehicles with Local Laws and Animal Control identification.

This creates public awareness of the Local Laws team and patrols that extend after hours, including weekends. Local Laws Officers, where practical, will also conduct patrols on foot to engage with the public, particularly during busy holiday periods (i.e. foreshore precinct during summer).

There is also information on domestic animal ownership available on Council's website, www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au and information pamphlets at the Civic Centre reception.

Council will continue to promote the benefits and legal requirements of microchipping, desexing of pets, the off-lead areas within the city, cat curfews and dog litter collection.

Officers carry poo bags and pamphlets on patrol and proactively distribute to assist local residents and tourists within the area.

Council will also:

- Door-knock an area if there are specific ongoing concerns;
- Conduct promotions and education through social and traditional media;
- Promote the availability of cages for hire to contain feral or nuisance cats.

During the summer of 2025, Local Laws Officers have increased the number of patrols conducted on beaches along Lady Bay in order to create a culture of respect for all beach users.

Governance

Council Local Laws provide a comprehensive description of regulations governing pet ownership, the responsibilities of the Council and the responsibilities of pet owners.

Council policies, procedures and legislation describe the processes Council will follow to ensure compliance with Local Laws to ensure that domestic animal owners can enjoy their pets and that non-owners are not adversely impacted by domestic animals within the municipality.

- Use of lifetime tags for dogs and cats.
- Renewal notices are generated and mailed to all previously registered animals.
- Registration forms are available from customer service and the website.
- Registrations are paid at the Warrnambool City Council Civic Centre, or online at www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au.
- Council charges additional fees for dangerous / restricted breed dogs
- Dangerous / restricted dogs must be microchipped, desexed and housed according to legislation prior to registration.
- Pensioner discounts are available on request.
- Local Laws' vehicles are complete with computer access, plus scanners to link directly to Council records and Central Animal (microchip) Records for assistance in returning pets to owners.
- Enforcement of unregistered animals.

Compliance

Council will use a number of strategies to ensure compliance with Domestic Animals legislation, including:

- Patrolling for dogs at large.
- Patrolling for owners with dogs off lead.
- Monitoring dogs in prohibited areas and playgrounds etc.
- Monitoring Declared Dogs for compliance.
- Issue infringements for impounded dogs.
- Issuing renewal notices annually.
- Door knocking / phone call for non-renewed registrations.
- Door knocking "problem areas" for compliance.
- Opportunistic registration checks whilst completing other investigations.
- Leaving business cards requesting contact.
- Enforcement of dog littering.
- Advice on barking dogs (including a sheet of tips on causes and what to do).
- Hire bark control and citronella collars.
- Cat curfew under Local Laws.
- After hours patrols, door knocks, phone calls and SMS message reminders.
- Confirm animal information of all pets at a property of complaint.
- Promote the owner's responsibility relating to animal litter.
- Hire cat cages for feral / nuisance cats.
- Council Local Law restricting the number of animals at a property.
- Use of warning notices in some situations.
- Monitoring housing compliance of Declared Dangerous Dogs.
- Enforcement of animal registration.

Council website provides information on designated areas, including on and off lead locations. This information is also available in a pamphlet format from the Council office, information centre and relevant locations.

Policies and Procedures

Local Laws relating to registration and identification include:

- Local Law 2 (33) the owner of any cat must confine the cat to the owner's property, between the hours of sunset and sunrise;
- Local Law 2 (31) relates to the control of dogs or cats in certain areas; (Prohibited areas, off leash areas and playgrounds etc);
- Local Law 2 (30)(1) relates to the number of animals that may be kept at a property without a permit; and,
- Local Law 2 (35) (1)(2) relates to animal litter.

Actions:

Update brochures:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review and update brochures.	As required	Use and feedback.

Council website:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Update Council website and links to relevant sites with Council communication team.	Annual review or updated as necessary.	Use and feedback.

After-hours Patrols:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Record officer patrol sheet and feedback to vary patrol times.	Ongoing	Public interaction.

9. Animal population and euthanasia

Section 68 A(2)(c)(iv) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 relates to overpopulation & euthanasia compliance.

Council encourages pet owners to take responsibility for environmental issues associated with roaming pets and encourages desexing of domestic pets.

The chart below highlights:

- Low euthanasia & high reclaim percentages for dogs.
- Higher euthanasia & lower reclaim percentages for cats.
- Consistent percentage of dogs rehoused & high percentage for cats.

DOGS	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Impounded Council & Public	374	350	274	246	231	191	273	240	339
Total euthanized	32	18	16	17	13	21	25	32	31
%	9	5	6	7	6	11	9	13	9
Reclaimed by Owner	228	207	143	100	104	72	114	105	66
%	61	59	52	41	45	38	42	43	20
Rehoused	114	118	102	102	87	75	111	83	92
%	30	34	37	41	38	39	41	35	27
Total dogs registered	4211	4204	4297	4318	4478	N/A	N/A	4211	4276
Total desexed	---	---	---	3435	3871	N/A	N/A	3620	3744
%	---	---	---	80	86	--	--	86	87

Note - RSPCA data does not tally due to rescue, foster & feral animals & movement between shelters etc.

CATS	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Impounded Council & Public	441	493	511	607	381	463	446	427	384
Total euthanized	82	83	109	102	58	68	65	66	45
%	19	17	21	17	15	15	15	15	12
Reclaimed by Owner	29	33	28	29	24	30	13	14	17
%	7	7	5	5	6	15	15	15	4
Rehoused	276	348	268	430	352	355	366	325	271
%	63	71	52	71	92	77	82	76	71
Total cats registered	1591	1603	1681	1739	1833	N/A	N/A	1542	1596
Total desexed	---	---	---	1568	1818	N/A	N/A	1532	1549
%	---	---	---	90	99	--	--	99	97
Requests for cat cages	60	71	63	51	26	37	27	83	45

Note - RSPCA data does not tally due to rescue, foster & feral animals & movement between shelters etc.

Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Warrnambool City does not require pets to be de sexed prior to registration.
- Council Local Law 2 (30) (1) allows 2 dogs & 2 cats without a permit.
- Registration discount incentive for animlas that are desexed, over 10 years old, working dogs, membership of applicable organisation and dogs with accredited training).
- Officers conduct patrols after hours, and on weekends which includes animal control, speaking with and explaining to pet owners about Local Laws, off lead areas, benefits of desexing and possible infringements for dogs at large.
- Hire of cat cages for stray / nuisance cats in residential areas.
- Local Law 2 (33) the owner of any cat must confine the cat to the owner's property, either within the dwelling or within another escape proof building between the hours of sunset and sunrise.
- Council does not support immediate euthanasia after the mandatory holding period. All animals are assessed by a professional trainer to determine whether the animal is qualified to be rehomed.

Education and Promotion - animal population control

- Promote the Animal Welfare Victoria programs including education and promotion of de sexing programs.
- Support the purchase of pets from the animal shelter as they are de- sexed and microchipped.
- Whilst on patrol, engage with the public in regard to animal control, laws, infringements etc.
- If an animal is returned to the owner, explain the reason and possible costs for an animal at large.
- Provide pamphlets & Council webpage information to the public.
- Speak to public service groups and local veterinary clinics.

Compliance

- Animals may be euthanised after the required holding period of the Domestic Animals Act if they do not pass the temperament test etc.
- Cat cages are hired or loaned to the public for feral / nuisance cats.
- Officer patrols, including weekends, for dogs at large.
- Local Law 2 (33) the owner of any cat must confine the cat to the owner's property, either within the dwelling or within another escape proof building between the hours of sunset and sunrise.
- 24hr emergency service provided.

Actions:

Monitor cat cage requests.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Record the number of requests to Council to hire a cat cage. Collate the number of cats collected, how many were de sexed, reclaimed, re-housed or euthanized.	Ongoing.	Collate the figures annually. Number of • Cage requests • Cats caught • Desexed • Reclaimed • Rehoused • Euthanised

Promote public awareness of issues with roaming cats.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Providing information on Council website explaining the importance of keeping cats inside at night.	Ongoing	• Measure number and type of education materials distributed • Number of media stories published • Measure uptake on any promotions to encourage people to take responsible ownership of cats

10. Registration and identification

This section outlines the strategies to encourage pet registration, required for compliance under Section 68A (2)(c)(v) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

The Warrnambool City Local Laws team deals with a broad range of issues associated with the management of domestic animals in our community.

The table below summarises registration totals and impounded animals.

Dogs	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	204-25
Total registrations	4064	4211	4211	4297	4318	4478	N/A	N/A	4211	4,276
Council impounded	264	236	228	137	103	115	96	158	148	216
Public admitted	130	138	122	137	143	116	95	115	92	123
Reclaimed	245	228	207	143	100	104	72	114	105	66
Adopted	117	114	118	102	102	87	75	111	83	92
Euthanized	32	32	18	16	17	13	21	25	32	31

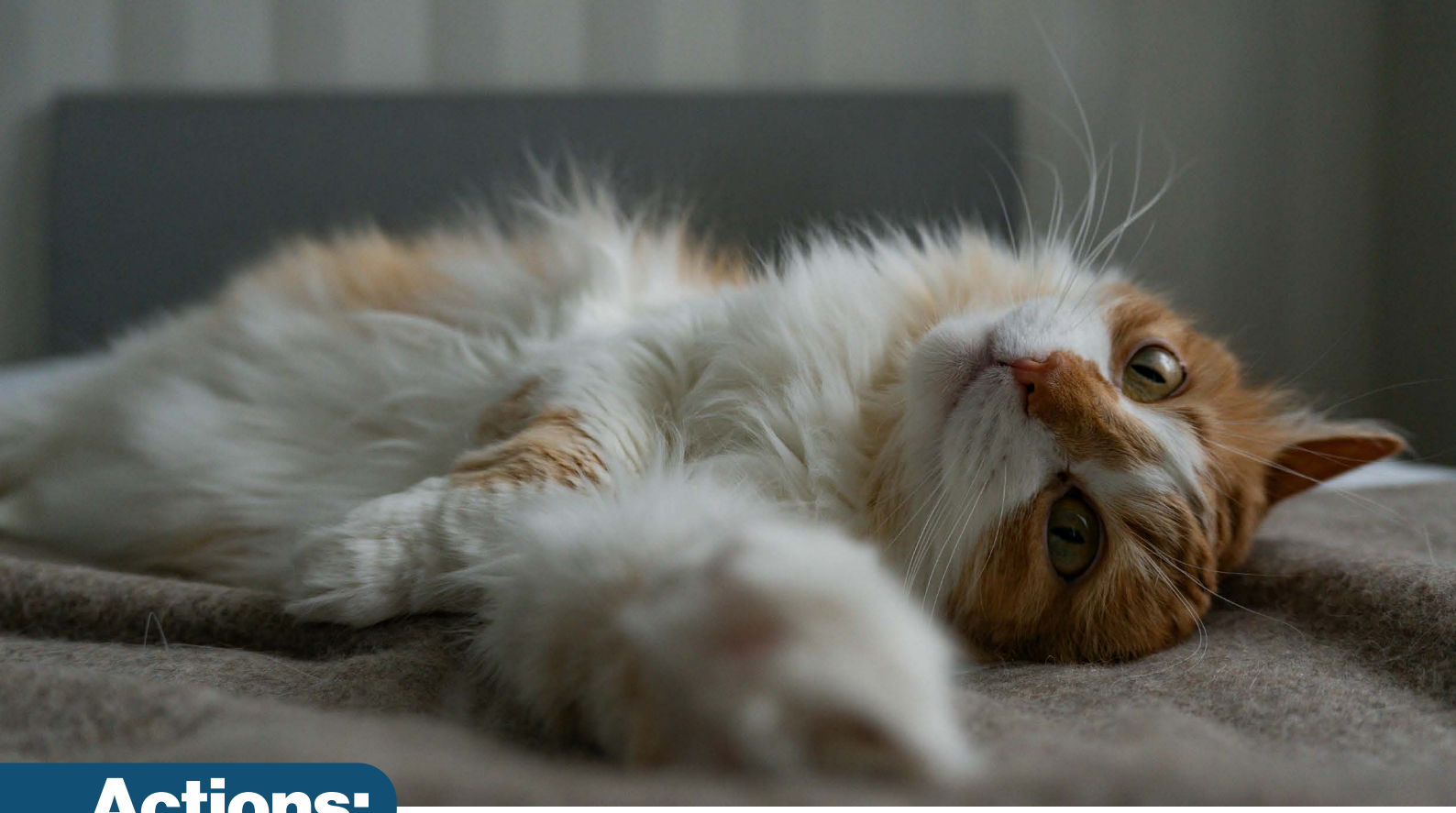
Cats	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total registrations	1490	1591	1603	1681	1739	1833	N/A	N/A	1542	1596
Council impounded	36	49	70	66	82	40	94	47	98	111
Public admitted	269	392	423	445	525	341	369	399	329	273
Reclaimed	22	29	33	28	29	24	30	13	14	7
Adopted	234	276	348	268	430	352	355	366	325	271
Euthanised	49	82	83	109	102	58	68	65	66	45

Council provides several initiatives to assist with registration & identification, these include:

- Provision of advice to the community in relation to animal matters;
- Dealing with customer questions and complaints;
- Providing the collection of lost, stray and/or unwanted dogs and cats;
- Investigations into alleged dog attacks;
- Inspections / registration of relevant animal businesses;
- Inspection of dangerous/restricted breed dog premises for compliance;
- Educating and promoting responsible pet ownership to residents;
- Ensuring Council completes its legislative duty of care;
- After-hours emergency service;
- Working cooperatively with the RSPCA, and other councils;
- Educational activities;
- Weekend bike & foot patrols talking to the public about any concerns;
- Provides registration discounts for concession card holders, and desexed animals;
- Random door knocks to discuss animal issues including registration, benefits, such as the ability to return a pet home instead of impounding.

When an animal is collected by an officer the first priority is to return it to the owner.
The vehicles have computer access to the Council registration system, and Central Animals microchip data base.

When returning the animal, the officer will discuss registration and provide advice if the dog is escaping on a regular basis.



Actions:

Conduct a media campaign highlighting the requirement and benefits of pet registration:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct an annual media campaign before the April 10th registration renewal date (include press releases, adverts renewal notices, providing pamphlets through Customer Service, to highlight benefits of registration.	February/March	Compare registration figures from previous years

After April 10th conduct a follow up for non-renewed registrations:

Activity	When	Evaluation
• Officers' conduct door knocks in different locations across the city. • Follow up phone calls and SMS messages to owners of unpaid renewals.	May	To be compared with the total registered pet numbers from the previous year

Improve records by cross-referencing data:

Activity	When	Evaluation
• Registration paid at office. • Pound purchase data. • Data collected during a complaint investigation, or random door knock. • Requesting mobile & e-mail.	Prior to a new registration or release.	Ongoing

Continue to promote benefits of registration:

Activity	When	Evaluation
• In conjunction with Vets promoting microchipping days. • Walking tracks, off lead areas. • After hours patrols. • Improvements to facilities, including off lead areas and fenced dog parks. • Public information sessions.	Ongoing	Public feedback and registration numbers.

11. Nuisance

To minimise the potential for a dog or cat to create a nuisance as outlined in Section 68A (2)(c)(vi) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

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

In 2019, Council opened another off-leash enclosure, taking the total to two. These enclosures are both highly utilised and encourage responsible ownership. This was designed and constructed by a committee of Council staff and members of the public.

Council has a cat curfew that requires all cats to be confined to the residence, or a cat enclosure, between sunset and sunrise. This assists in preventing nuisances such as spraying and fighting, as well as protecting native wildlife.

Council logs all complaint and request data electronically.

Council has witnessed a spike in complaints and incidents related to dogs at large.

Complaint	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Nuisance	182	189	137	233	210	227	220	291	262	364	330
Dog at large	152	172	163	210	97	135	168	156	214	146	251
Dog attacks	24	32	22	29	16	22	41	39	56	45	43
Cat cage requests	48	64	64	71	63	51	26	37	27	83	41
Stock on roads	34	56	74	52	64	54	25	13	10	10	25

Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Local Law 2 (33) states that the owner of any cat must confine the cat to the owner's property between the hours of sunset and sunrise.
- Local Law 2 (31) relates to the control of dogs or cats in certain areas. (Prohibited areas, off-leash areas, playgrounds etc).
- Local Law 2 (30) (1) relates to the number of animals that may be kept at a property without a permit.
- Local Law 2 (35) (1)(2) relates to animal litter.

Council provides a 24-hour emergency service for attacks, dogs at large, stock on roads and injured animals.

A customer request record is initiated once Council receives a complaint.

Local Laws officers will attempt to reunite animals with owners through available owner details, use of scanners and 24-hour computer data access.

Council hires cat traps to the public to assist with feral and stray cats.
Council also hires out citronella collars an bark houses for the public to try prior to purchasing their own.

A door knock on neighbors and an assessment of the property will be completed before a permit to house extra animals is issued.

Education and Promotion about nuisance animals

To assist the public:

- Pamphlets are issued during registration door knocks.
- After-hours patrols in residential areas are carried out and bike patrols along bike paths.
- Signage and mapping is being improved along walking tracks.
- Pet ownership pamphlets will be updated to reflect any changes in off-lead and prohibited areas and pamphlets will be made available from City Assist (customer service area at the Civic Centre) and information on the Council website.
- Cat cages will be hired out for feral and nuisance cats.
- Where required media releases will be issued and advertisements placed with local media.
- Desexing of pets will be encouraged to reduce pets at large.
- Local Laws Officers will carry pamphlets to educate residents and visitors about collecting their pets' waste.

Compliance

Council use several strategies to reduce nuisance complaints:

- Barking procedure, which includes issuing information on causes and tips.
- Cat curfew will be enforced.
- After-hours patrols, door knocks, phone calls and SMS reminders may be issued.
- Accuracy of information on file will be confirmed at the property about which a complaint has been made.
- Prohibited areas will be patrolled for dogs.
- Warning notices may be issued in some situations.
- Housing compliance for Declared Dangerous Dogs will be monitored.
- Dog littering laws will be enforced.

Actions:

Continue to provide and improve weekend and after-hours patrols:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Officers patrolling in vehicles and on foot. Activities include: public relations, dogs off-leash or in prohibited areas, animal litter control and to improve signage on walking tracks.	Ongoing	Positive public feedback. Monthly collation of figures from patrol sheets.

Off lead park improvements:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Build Off-lead Dog Park at Queens Road Reserve	2027 (funding dependent)	Public satisfaction and feedback.

Improve and promote prohibited / off-leash area information:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Update Council information for prohibited and off lead areas to include any new areas and and required information. Focus education on dogs at large.	2029 (in line with Local Law review)	Feedback during the holiday season. The number of requests for information and complaints

New technology:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Further investigate new products to assist the reduction in nuisance complaints.	Ongoing	Public satisfaction and feedback.

Reduce stock on road:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure we issue warnings and infringements when suitable to increase compliance.	Ongoing	Monitor number of stock on road call outs.

12. Dog attacks

This section highlights Council's service and strategy to minimise the risk of a dog attack on a person or pet, compliant with Section 68 A(2)(c)(iii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

Council is proactively trying to minimise the risk of injury or fear in the community due to the presence or actions of a dog.

Because dogs at large have the potential to attack, or rush without provocation, officers patrol regularly, including at weekends and provide a 24hour emergency service.

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Dog attacks	32	22	29	16	22	41	39	56	45	43

Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

- Local Law 2 (31) relates to the control of dogs or cats in certain areas. (Prohibited areas, off leash areas, playgrounds and sporting grounds etc.)
- Local Law 2 (30) (1) regulates the number of dogs and cats that may be housed at a property without a permit.
- All complaints / requests are recorded on the Council Customer Request system.
- Officers will collect any dog at large and may return it to the owner if there is a microchip and registration. Otherwise, the animal will be impounded.
- All dog attacks, declarations and seizures are investigated and acted on in accordance with the Domestic Animal Act.
- Council has developed a procedure manual for incident investigations.
- Dogs must be on leash, unless in a designated off lead area.

Education and Promotion about dog attacks

The importance of avoiding dog attacks are assisted by initiatives including:

- After-hours patrols are conducted across the city in vehicles, on foot and bicycle.
- Officers provide information to the public when required.
- Animal welfare information is sent out with registration renewals.
- Relevant information is made available on Council's website and newsletter and, where required, via media release.

Compliance

All incident reports are investigated immediately, that includes:

- All dog attack reports will trigger an immediate response from Local Laws officers, with Council providing a 24-hour emergency service.
- Weekend patrols will be conducted along with regular patrols in higher incident areas.
- Random inspections of declared dangerous dog enclosures and signage are conducted.
- Dogs declared dangerous, menacing or restricted are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Register.

Actions:

Improve officer patrol procedure:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Officers to discuss and collate patrol running sheets after weekend shifts.	Weekly	Public feedback and improved information collated from running sheets.
Improve interaction with public (frequent patrols)	Ongoing	Public confidence in the service provided by Council.

Recording devices:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Purchase Body Worn Cameras to assist with incident investigation interviews.	2026	Accurate evidence and information retention.

13. Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 Section 68 A (2)(c)(vii) relates to effectively identifying all Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs in the City and to ensure housing etc. compliance.

The Council objective is to minimise the risk of injury or fear in the community due to the presence or actions of a declared dog.

Compliance and control measures around dangerous dogs and dog attacks include:

- All dog attack reports receive immediate response from officers.
- Council provide a 24hour / 7days a week emergency service.
- Conduct weekend patrols.
- Conduct patrols in high incident areas.
- Promote ramifications for having a dog off-leash or at large.
- Conduct patrols in prohibited areas for dogs.
- All dogs declared (dangerous / menacing / restricted) are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Register.
- Local Laws Officers carry a current register of all declared dogs whilst on patrol, in case an animal with the distinguishing collar is observed.
- Council Officers randomly inspect the premises o Declared Dogs to ensure compliance of housing requirements.

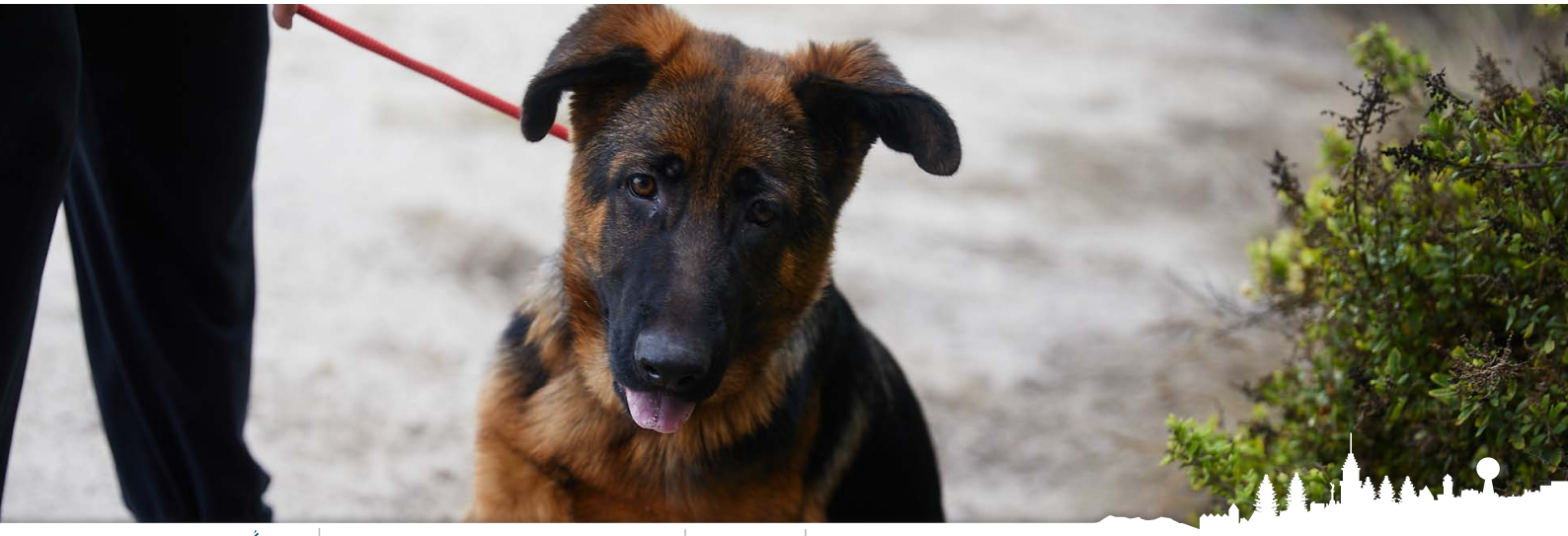
Warrnambool currently has 1 Declared Dangerous dog, 8 Declared Menacing dogs and no Restricted Breed dogs listed on the Victorian Declared Dog Register, housed in the Municipality.

Declared menacing by breed	No. in Warrnambool	Declared dangerous by breed	No. in Warrnambool
Bull Terrier	1	American Staffy	1
German Shepherds	2		
Great Dane	1		
Mastiff	1		
Jack Russell	1		
Cattle Dog	1		
Staffordshire Terrier	1		

Local laws, council policies & procedures

Council declarations are governed by the requirements of the Domestic Animals Act:

- Council does not refuse the registration of a declared dog that meets all legislative and Council requirements of the declaration.
- Higher registration fees are charged for Declared Dangerous & Restricted Breed dogs but not Menacing dogs.
- Following an investigation, Council will issue a letter of proposed declaration explaining the incident, reasons and requirements. This may be followed by a letter including reasons for the declaration.
- Declared dogs are listed on the Victorian Declared Dog Register.
- All declared dogs, at a minimum are required to be on lead at all times & muzzled.



Education and Promotion about dangerous, menacing and restricted breeds

Council officers assist the public by:

- Providing pamphlets to the community about the legislative requirements of Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs.
- Media releases following an incident when possible.
- Educational media releases when possible.
- Officer patrols in the industrial area for guard dogs.
- Regular contact with owners of dogs on the register to monitor the dog, provide advice and assistance.
- Information sessions at schools and local service groups as requested.

Compliance

- Ensure all dogs declared by Council are registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Register.
- Conduct unannounced inspections of declared dogs to maintain the requirements of the declaration.
- Communicate and assist with region RSPCA inspectors.
- Ensure the details on the register are updated.
- Immediate response to complaints relating to declared dogs.

Actions:

Effectively inspect and audit all declared dog premises to ensure they are implementing all legislative requirements:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Unannounced visits to the listed address of a declared dog to ensure requirements of the declaration are implemented.	Twice yearly	Meeting the requirements of the declaration. Keep a record of results and required actions.

Regularly review procedure manual and educational material:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Discuss procedure manual following any major incident to ensure it is current. Maintain a supply of Animal Welfare Victoria and Council pamphlets to assist with education.	Ongoing	Investigations completed with relevant information recorded. Public feedback.

14. Domestic animal businesses

Ensure all Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) are managed appropriately and comply with Section 68 A(2)(c)(ii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

The Warrnambool City Council objective is to work in partnership with domestic animal businesses to achieve State Government Legislative requirements. Warrnambool currently has 5 registered domestic animal businesses.

- 2 boarding facility (cats).
- 1 pound (Warrnambool Animal Shelter).
- 2 pet shops.

These businesses are registered and inspected once a year.

Council staff are trained in dealing with conflict and difficult customers.

Actions:

Identify and register all domestic animal businesses in the municipality:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify any businesses that should be registered.	Ongoing	Compare number of registered DABs from the previous year

Annually inspect and audit all registered domestic animal businesses:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Visit all registered businesses and check for compliance and animal condition.	September	Those requirements of the Act are met.

15. Other matters

This section provides for the review of other matters related to the management of animals in the City, and compliant with Section 68 A (2)(e) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

Animals play a significant role in our lives. Victorians' own dogs, cats, birds and horses. In addition, there are cattle and sheep, pigs and poultry, and many more.

While it is difficult to quantify wildlife populations, human interest in the welfare of native animals can be reflected in the wildlife shelters, foster carers currently authorised to rehabilitate wildlife in Victoria, and the native animals which are treated in Victorian shelters each year.

Many types of emergencies in Victoria inevitably affect animals. Furthermore, recent disasters in Australia and overseas highlighted that bonds between people and animals strongly influence decision making in times of crisis. The lack of adequate planning for the management of animals and their welfare in emergencies often results in poor, last minute decisions with dangerous or fatal consequences for animals and their owners or carers.

Before, during and after an emergency, people in charge of animals retain the ultimate 'duty of care' to provide for the needs of animals in their charge. In the event of an emergency, Government acknowledges the supporting role it can play in helping owners or carers meet their requirements.

Victoria's emergency management arrangements define the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions as the primary agency for livestock and companion animal welfare support services during an emergency response. As the closest level of government to the affected community, local government also has a key role in supporting emergency animal welfare activities. Numerous non-government organisations assist in the management of animal welfare, with the RSPCA, Australian Veterinary Association and Animal Welfare Victoria having specific capacities to assist.

Actions:

Develop a local animal emergency welfare plan:

Activity	When	Evaluation
In conjunction with relevant local parties & government departments, create a local sub plan to the Municipal Emergency Plan, with a contact list for emergency situations for Local Law Officers.	2027	Adopted plan

16. Annual Review of the Plan and Reporting

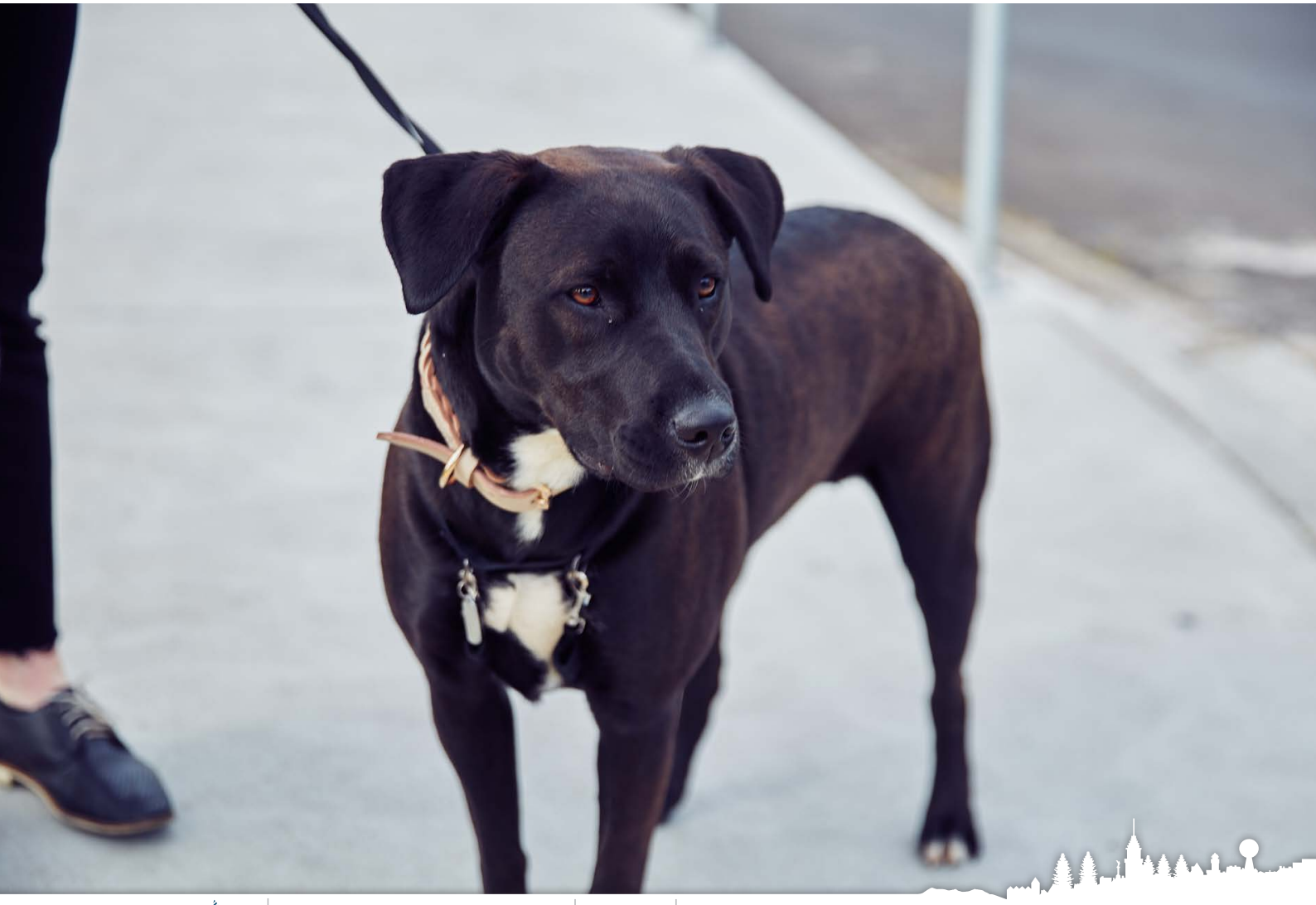
Section 68A (3) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 states: Every Council must—

(a) Review its domestic animal management plan annually, and if appropriate, amend the plan.
(b) Provide the Department of Agriculture Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan.
(c) Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

Actions:

Conduct an annual review of the Domestic Animal Management Plan:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct an annual, internal department review of the current plan.	November	Comparison with previous plan.

Reporting of results:

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide results for Council's annual report. Notify the Secretary (of the Department of Agriculture) of review. Conduct a major review every four years	Annually. Annually. Four-yearly	Evaluate results against the requirements of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.