

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021

Version: 1.0

Date updated: 17 October 2017

Responsible Department: Safer Communities

1. Purpose

Animal control enhances the safety and wellbeing of residents, visitors and animals through encouraging and enforcing responsible animal ownership.

The Domestic Animal Management (DAM) Plan 2017-2021 provides Casey City Council (Council) with a strategic approach towards:

- promotion of responsible pet ownership
- welfare of dogs and cats in the community
- protection of the community and the environment from nuisance dogs and cats

2. Definitions

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Dangerous Dogs | a dog which has been declared as Dangerous by a Council, is kept as a guard dog at a non-residential premises, or has been trained to attack or bite a person (refer Section 34, Domestic Animals Act). |
| Unregistered Breeder/s | an enterprise which carries out the breeding of dogs or cats to sell without registration with the appropriate authority (refer Part 4, Domestic Animals Act). |
| Menacing Dogs | a dog that has been declared by a Council as a menacing dog (refer Part 3, Domestic Animals Act). |
| “Puppy Farm” | is a domestic animal business established for the purpose of breeding large numbers of dogs or cats to sell. |
| Restricted Breed Dogs | is a dog that is one of the below breeds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Pitbull Terrier • Pitbull Terrier • Dogo Argentino • Japanese Tosa • Fila Brasileiro • Perro De Canario |
| Unregistered Breeder/s | an enterprise which carries out the breeding of dogs or cats to sell without registration with the appropriate authority (refer Part 4, Domestic Animals Act). |

Council policy documents change from time to time and it is recommended that you consult the electronic reference copy at www.casey.vic.gov.au/policiesstrategies to ensure that you have the current version. Alternatively you may contact Customer Service on 9705 5200.

3. Scope

The DAM Plan was developed in consultation with Council's Local Laws team (the principal unit responsible for its implementation) and informed by community and stakeholder (internal and external) consultation, research and benchmarking activities. It is a four-year plan that guides the delivery of animal management services across the City of Casey.

The DAM Plan is directly referenced in Council's budget activities, and aligns with the broader strategic directions for the municipality, in particular to be a community that is inclusive, safe and connected. It provides a sound basis and direction from which Council can plan and make future decisions over the next four years, and relates back to the wider Council policy context.

Principles of the Domestic Animal Management Plan

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* states that every Victorian Council must prepare a DAM Plan that addresses the following:

- Sets out a method for evaluating whether animal control services provided by Council are adequate to give effect to the requirements of the Act and regulations.
- Outlines programs for the training of authorised officers.
- Outlines programs, services and strategies to:
 - promote and encourage responsible ownership of dogs and cats
 - ensure that people comply with the Act, regulations and legislation
 - minimise risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals
 - address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
 - encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats
 - minimise potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
 - effectively identify all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and ensure that these dogs are kept in compliance with the Act and regulations.
- Provides for the review of existing orders and Local Laws made under the Act.
- Provides for the review of any other matters related to management of dogs and cats.
- Provides for periodic evaluation of the Plan.

This DAM Plan contains a range of actions to be undertaken by Council to address these requirements.

Development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021

The outcomes and achievements from the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2012-2016 were reviewed to determine the success of actions and note learnings for the future.

Domestic animal statistics were gathered and benchmarking against other 'like' Councils was undertaken. Statistics were analysed against the City of Casey demographic profile.

Council undertook extensive community and stakeholder consultation in late 2016 to inform the development of the Plan. This included surveys, workshops and a focus group.

The draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021 was then developed based on all of the information gathered, with the aim of balancing community and stakeholder needs whilst ensuring compliance with the requirements of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Council's Role

Council's role in animal management is twofold. It is charged with protection and preservation of the community, and the welfare of domestic animals.

Council strives to maintain community safety and amenity by seeking to balance the needs of both pet owners, and those residents without animals. Council undertakes education initiatives with the community on responsible pet ownership, whilst also performing an enforcement role.

It should be noted that whilst it is a requirement of the State Government that every Council develops and implements a Domestic Animal Management Plan to facilitate the implementation of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, no funds are provided to Council for the delivery of animal management services resulting in the full cost of services being funded by ratepayers.

4. Context

Casey Community Profile

The City of Casey is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia covering 409 km², and encompassing both built and rural areas. With approximately 311,000 residents and an average of 7,600 additional residents moving into the municipality each year, Casey has the most residents of any municipality in Victoria. By 2041, the number of residents is expected to increase to 514,000.

Casey's population growth is largely driven by young families; however, Casey is experiencing growth across all age groups.

There are 103,000 rateable households in the municipality, with 82 per cent of these being family households. Housing types range from rural acreage properties to high density housing developments. 19 per cent of households rent their home, whereas the Greater Melbourne average is 27 per cent.

Casey is culturally diverse, with more than 150 cultures represented in the municipality. Twenty seven per cent of residents were born in non-English speaking countries, twenty eight per cent of residents speak English as a second language¹ and the top five countries of birth of Casey residents (other than Australia) are:

- United Kingdom
- India
- Sri Lanka
- New Zealand
- Afghanistan.

Casey has extensive open space areas, including bushland, coastal villages, parks, gardens and reserves, which are utilised by the diverse community.

¹ Condensed from Profile ID -City of Casey Community Profile (2016)

Animal Management Staffing and Structure

The Local Laws team at Council forms part of the Safer Communities department.

Local Laws Officers operate in designated zones, with approximately 50 per cent of the workload allocated to Animal Management duties. The Local Laws team works to detailed Standard Operating Procedures to ensure consistency of approach across the team.

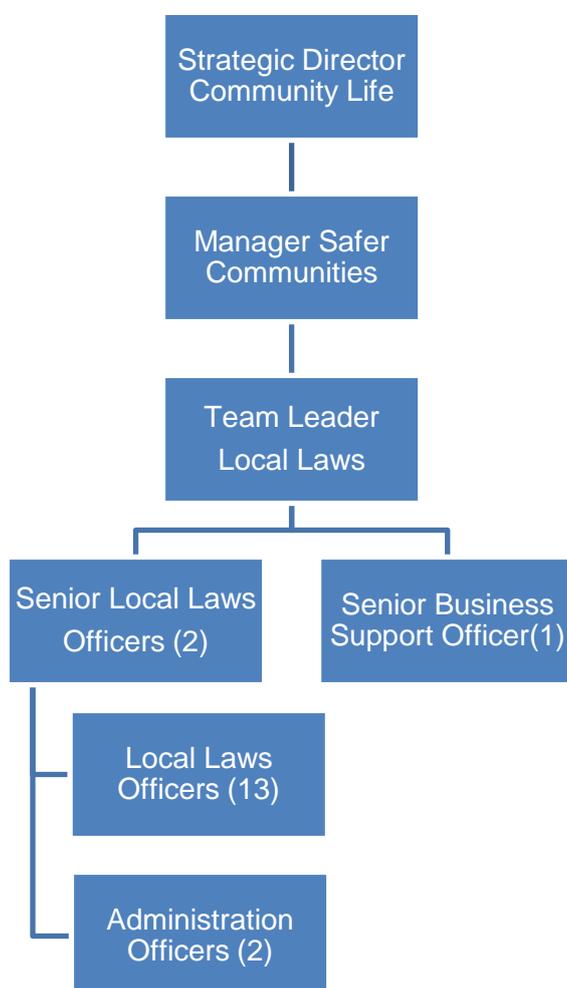
Local Laws officers hold a minimum Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation.

Due to their skills and experience, a number of staff are represented on industry boards and committees.

A training matrix is currently maintained which identifies training status for individual staff, and identifies areas for future training. Staff are provided with on the job training and ongoing coaching. An Employee Development Program (EDP) is established for each officer and is reviewed annually. Part of the EDP looks at training needs and requirements.

New Local Laws Officers are required to undertake a detailed departmental induction program with Senior Officers.

The amount of animal management related training provided to Officers on an annual basis is currently 12 hours. In 2008, this figure was 30 hours. However the introduction of the requirement for higher qualifications of staff in 2011 has reduced the need for Council to provide accredited training for new staff.



ANIMAL MANAGEMENT EFT EXPLAINED

Casey's Local Laws team undertakes a range of activities.

Approximately 50% of duties are dedicated to Animal Management matters.

EFT Dedicated to Animal Management:

- Senior Local Laws Officers = 1.0
- Local Laws Officers = 6.5
- Senior Business Support Officer = 0.5
- Administration Officers = 1.0

Key Casey Animal Management Initiatives

The Lost Dogs' Home

Council contracts its animal pound service to The Lost Dogs' Home. Under this contract, The Lost Dogs' Home provides Casey's animal pound facility, which is currently located at 920 Thompsons Road, Cranbourne West. The Lost Dogs' Home is open to the public every day (except Christmas Day and Good Friday).

Council supports responsible animal ownership programs for the community including 'microchipping' and 'discounted desexing of cats' events in partnership with The Lost Dogs' Home.

Council considers reunification of pets with their owners to be a high priority, and integral to the welfare of animals. In the majority of cases, enforcement against breaches of law can be effectively handled without a pet having to be housed in a pound facility. To this end, identifiable animals are reunited with their owners without taking them to the Pound, where appropriate and practicable.

Casey and The Lost Dogs' Home continue to demonstrate improving rates of pet reunification and rehousing.

Operation Termino – Managing Declared (Dangerous, Menacing or Restricted Breed) Dogs

Local Laws Officers conduct unannounced biannual inspections of properties where declared dogs are registered. Although there is no legislative requirement for inspections, Council considers the proactive management of declared dogs to be of utmost priority.

When inspecting for compliance, Officers also take the opportunity to provide education and advice to owners as required.

One of the recommendations Casey put forward to the State Government's Parliamentary Inquiry into Restricted Breed Dogs² in November 2015 was to increase requirements for owners of menacing dogs to have their properties properly signed to warn of the presence of a declared menacing dog.

Illegal Domestic Animal Businesses

Council proactively seeks out illegal domestic animal businesses operating in the municipality. This includes puppy farms and unregistered breeders.

Suspected illegal domestic animal businesses are investigated and enforcement action undertaken where offences are detected. This enforcement action can include:

- Business closure
- Seizure of animals
- Prosecution of business owner/s where appropriate
- Seeking banning orders against animal/business owner/s

Casey is one of only a few councils in Victoria whose staff involved in animal management are authorised under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*. Casey

²Parliamentary Inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted-breed dogs (2016)

was the first Council in Victoria to successfully prosecute the owner of a puppy farm after the introduction of 'Oscar's Law', and to successfully seek and be granted a banning order against a breeder.

Crisis Care for Animals

In line with the Council Plan, Council seeks opportunities wherever possible to support the Casey community.

Council provides crisis care for animals in emergency situations. This is assessed on an individual basis and may occur if there has been an emergency incident such as a death, accident, house fire, or case of family violence impacting the owner's ability to look after their animal.

Council may temporarily care for and house an animal for a limited period until the owner is able to resume care, or alternative arrangements can be made.

Family Violence Initiatives

The Local Laws team works closely with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and LGPro (Victoria's peak body for local government professionals) on family violence initiatives. All team members have undergone Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF) training to understand triggers for family violence in order to reduce the impact enforcement activities may have. The training equips them with a greater understanding of violence, its gendered nature, linkages to animal cruelty and neglect, and how best to respond to likely scenarios that they may face when out in the community. All officers undergo refresher training annually.

In 2014, the City of Casey Local Laws team received the LGPro Award for Excellence in Service Innovation for its Family Violence initiative. Council's initiative involved training and modifying work practices so Local Laws Officers are aware of potential family violence incidences when undertaking work in the community. The initiative assisted Local Laws Officers to identify, respond to and refer family violence victims in an effort to reduce the number of family violence incidences occurring in Casey.

Local Laws Officers encounter family violence in the field and are trained to recognise the correlation between animal cruelty, dangerous dogs and perpetrators of family violence. Local Laws Officers assist Police to remove pets from family violence situations and Council's animal pound service supports victims of family violence who are in fear of their animal's safety and in the process of leaving a violent relationship.

Dogs Friendly Parks Policy

Council has recently adopted the Dog Friendly Parks Policy (July 2017) and allocated funds towards the establishment of Dog Friendly Parks across the municipality. These parks will support the delivery of activities/events to activate the parks and promote responsible pet ownership.

Current Casey Programs and Services

| Program | Service to Community |
|---|--|
| Identification and Registration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual registration renewal notices and follow up process. • Educational information included on registration renewal forms. • Bi-annual cross reference of Central Animals Records database with Council's animal registration database, with discrepancies investigated. • Micro-chipping days conducted by The Lost Dogs' Home. |
| Dog Attack Complaints (dog wandering / attacks / rushes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate response if situation is deemed as dangerous. • Otherwise, response within 2-24 hours. |
| Wandering Cat Complaints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response within 7 days. • Cat cages are available for the public to utilise to confine nuisance, unowned or feral cats. |
| Animal Nuisance / Amenity Complaints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response within 7 days. • Inspect properties proactively and reactively in response to customer requests regarding excessive barking and other problems associated with domestic pets. |
| Animal Cruelty Complaints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response within 24 hours. • Reports of animal cruelty are referred to the RSPCA and Council officers support their investigations where required. |
| Park / Street Patrols | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrols of parks and reserves during business hours. • During daylight savings period (October to April) patrols are extended to 7pm. • Patrols/audits of non-residential estates. |
| Animal Pound Facilities (contracted to The Lost Dogs' Home) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Lost Dogs' Home is open to the public from 10.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday; and 9.00am to 1.00pm Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays (except Christmas Day and Good Friday). • Located at 920 Thompsons Road Cranbourne West. • Reunification program – identifiable animals are returned to owners. |
| Education and Promotion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing strategy to promote benefits of responsible pet ownership including media releases and articles, brochures, and social media. • Participation in travelling road shows and events. • Educational information included on registration renewal forms. • 'We Are Family' responsible pet ownership program via Maternal and Child Health Centres. |

| Program | Service to Community |
|---|--|
| Discounted Desexing of Cats / Free Microchipping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discounted desexing of cats 'events held at The Lost Dogs' Home. • Owner pays 50% of fee / City of Casey subsidises 50% of fee, plus free microchip. • Event conducted August 2016 fully booked. Second event held April 2017 again fully booked. Events to continue bi-annually. |
| Domestic Animal Business Inspections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect and process new Domestic Animal Business applications within 10 working days of receipt of application and payment. • Conduct annual audits and issue annual registration certificates. • Respond to and investigate complaints. • Undertake unscheduled 'spot' audits of Domestic Animal Businesses to ensure compliance. • Actively seek and identify illegal Domestic Animal Businesses and prosecute where appropriate. |
| Declared Dogs (Dangerous / Menacing or Restricted Breed) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-annual site inspections are undertaken, over and above annual requirements of Domestic Animals Act requirements. • Annual letter to owners outlining responsibilities and penalties for non-compliance. • Investigation of all declared dogs that remain unregistered after 10 April each year. |
| Dogs on / off leash | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and enforcement of Orders restricting dogs to on-leash in designated areas and designated reserves. |
| Cats not allowed in some areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S173 Planning Scheme exclusions in place that do not allow cats to be present in designated areas (e.g. Botanic Ridge). |
| Crisis care of animals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis care to ensure welfare of animals in cases that include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family violence – where a victim leaves a relationship and goes to a refuge, animals are unable to be housed in refuges. ○ Lone person households where the owner becomes sick or deceased. ○ Accident – e.g. fire / traffic etc. • Council temporarily covers costs associated with care and housing of the animal until the owner is able to resume care or alternative arrangements are made. |
| After Hours Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's after-hours animal management service responds to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Animals found and contained by residents ○ Dog attacks ○ Livestock wandering on roads. ○ Emergency events via Victoria Police involving animals. • Coordination of after-hours veterinary care for the above incidents, where required. |

City of Casey Domestic Animals Profile

| Key Statistics | June 2008 | June 2012 | June 2016 | June 2017 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Population | 236,466 | 259,549 | 297,034 | 299,301 |
| Number of households | 71,000 | 87,000 | 98,400 | 103,000 |
| Geographic area of municipality | 409km ² | 409km ² | 409km ² | 409km ² |
| EFT - Authorised Animal Management Officers (AMO) | 6.0 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 6.5 |
| EFT - Authorised AMOs per 1,000 households | 0.085 | 0.075 | 0.066 | 0.06 |
| Number of complaints or requests annually | | 5,690 | 5,507 | 4,617 |
| Number of complaints or requests per officer annually | | 875 | 847 | 710 |
| Hours of animal management training (annual per officer) | 30.0 | 25.2 | 12.0 | 13.5 |
| Number of registered dogs | 24,837 | 29,965 | 27,010 | 27,218 |
| Number of registered declared dogs (dangerous, menacing or restricted breed) | 17 | 21 | 22 | 15 |
| Registered dogs per 1,000 households | 349 | 344 | 275 | 264 |
| Number of registered cats | 7,995 | 8,400 | 7,443 | 7,421 |
| Registered cats per 1,000 households | 113 | 97 | 76 | 72 |
| Number of registered Domestic Animal Businesses | | 26 | 34 | 32 |
| Keeping of animals / excess animals permits issued | | | 89 | 122 |
| Number of successful prosecutions | 10 | 18 | 35 | 25 |
| Dogs impounded | 1,679 | 1,633 | 1,132 | 1,196 |
| Dogs returned to owner | 1,007 (60.0%) | 1,111 (68.0%) | 989 (87.4%) | 833 (69.6%) |
| Dogs rehoused | 247 (14.7%) | 259 (15.9%) | 86 (7.6%) | 72 (6.0%) |
| Dogs euthanased | 425 (25.3%) | 263 (16.1%) | 57 (5.0%) | 58 (4.8%) |
| Cats impounded | 738 | 970 | 824 | 1,171 |
| Cats returned to owner | 102 (13.8%) | 115 (11.9%) | 169 (20.5%) | 133 (11.3%) |
| Cats rehoused | 47 (6.4%) | 177 (18.2%) | 131 (15.9%) | 137 (11.6%) |
| Cats euthanased | 589 (79.8%) | 678 (69.9%) | 524 (63.6%) | 536 (45.7%) |
| Dogs and cats impounded per 1,000 households | 34 | 30 | 20 | 11.6 dogs 11.3 cats |
| Cat cages hired to community members | | 374 | 389 | 355 |

Note – data sourced from Council's animal management database.

Projections for the Future of Casey

It is estimated that the population in Casey will grow to 514,000 in 2041. This represents a population increase of 60 per cent across the municipality over 20 years.

Residential development forecasts assume that the number of dwellings in Casey will increase dramatically across the municipality, with the Clyde growth area forecast for the greatest increase.

With an increase in population and dwellings, correspondingly the numbers of dogs and cats within the municipality will increase, giving rise to a number of knock-on effects:

- The land area of properties will reduce to accommodate the increasing population. It is anticipated the incidence of domestic animal nuisance complaints and animal welfare issues may increase with animals being housed on smaller blocks, and effectively more animals occupying a given land area.
- Pressure on open space areas across the municipality will increase with the population size. This may include additional competition between the various user groups for access to open space areas – including owners walking their dogs.

Council is aware of the continuing low animal registration rates, and has developed corresponding strategies as part of this DAM Plan.

Workforce planning to effectively resource the Animal Management function in light of both current and future challenges is imperative.

The importance of providing effective digital and online services is paramount to ensuring key responsible animal management messages reach the community, and that Council makes it as easy as possible for residents to do business with Council, including registering their pets.

Current Challenges

Pet Registration Rates

The number of animal registrations in the City of Casey has not increased in line with the significant increase in the number of households.

Since 2008, the number of households has increased by 45.1 per cent while the number of pets registered has increased by only 5.5 per cent.

If the number of households is proportionate to the number of pets, it is estimated then that there may be a significant number of unregistered animals in the City of Casey.

This also represents a significant loss of income to Council which could be used to offset the cost of animal management services.

Staffing – Animal Management

The EFT staffing allocation for animal management duties is 6.5EFT. This translates to 0.06 per 1,000 households. This figure has declined steadily since 2008, representing a higher population and subsequent increased workload burden on existing Local Laws staffing resources.

The number of households in Casey has increased by 45.1 per cent since 2008. Staffing numbers have not grown accordingly, with an increase of only 0.5 EFT since 2008.

Animal management duties form a significant part of the Local Laws Officer workload. The total number of dog and cat complaints for 2016-17 were 4,617 - or 710 complaints per officer. This has reduced since 2012, however the corresponding increase of non-animal related workload based on population pressure should be considered. This impacts directly on the ability to provide effective animal management services, and undertake proactive activities to improve compliance rates within Casey.

Animal Impoundments

Casey continues to contract its animal pound service to The Lost Dogs' Home. This facility continues to partner with Council by participating in successful animal reunification and rehousing initiatives.

The rate of animal impoundments has reduced notably from 30 per 1,000 households in 2012, to 11 in 2017. The reduced number of impoundments could be reflective of increased workload across the broader Local Laws Officer portfolios. Alternatively it may be a reflection that many animals are returned to their owner by Local Laws officers prior to impoundment.

Dog euthanasia rates have reduced significantly from 16.1 per cent of impoundments in 2012, to 4.8 per cent of dog impoundments in 2017.

Cat euthanasia rates have continued to drop, down from 69.9 per cent of impoundments in 2012, to 45.7 per cent in 2017.

Responsible cat ownership remains an issue in Casey, with comparatively low rehousing rates when compared against the dog population.

Review of the RSPCA Victoria Inspectorate – Impact for Council

An independent review of the RSPCA Victoria Inspectorate was published in September 2016. It is anticipated that some of the recommendations from this review may have an impact on Victorian councils.

In particular, the review has recommended that animal cruelty matters relating to domestic animals be referred to local councils for investigation, enforcement and prosecution.

This is likely to provide additional pressure on Council's Local Laws resources.

The review has also recommended that RSPCA Inspectors are no longer authorised under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, which will in turn impact Council's Local Laws resources.

Review of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 – Impact for Council

The *Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farm and Pet Shops) Bill 2016* was introduced to State Parliament in October 2016. The Bill introduced a range of amendments to the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. These amendments delivered on the State Government's election commitment to reform the dog breeding and pet shop industries in Victoria and better regulate the online sale of dogs and cats.

However these proposed amendments were developed with very little consultation with Local Government, released prior to the handing down of the Report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into *Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farm and Pet Shops) Bill 2016* and due to the significant cost to Councils and the community became the subject of a united advocacy campaign by the Municipal Association of Victoria.

As a result of this campaign, and significant outcry by domestic animal breeders and recreational breeders, the Minister for Agriculture announced in December 2016 that the draft legislation would be reassessed and presented to Parliament in the first half of 2017. Any proposed changes will still impact on community expectations and resources of Council.

Consultation

This Plan was developed in consultation with:

- Casey's Local Laws team
- Internal Council stakeholders, including:
 - Safer Communities
 - Statutory Planning & Building Services
 - Customer Service
 - City Design & Construction
 - City Presentation
 - Waste & Landfill Management
 - Active Communities
 - City Planning
 - Legal Services

- Child, Youth & Family
- Connected Communities
- City Economy
- Information Technology
- Digital & Data
- External stakeholders including:
 - Animal-related businesses and services
- The broader Casey community, both pet owners and non-pet owners.

Community Survey – Responsible Pet Ownership 2016

A questionnaire was made available for completion via Council's online survey tool, Casey Conversations. A hard copy questionnaire was also available for completion at all City of Casey Customer Service Centres.

Customers who had recent contact with Council's Local Laws team and animal-related Businesses and Services were also emailed an invitation link to participate in the online survey.

The questionnaire was available from 15 June to 22 July 2016.

A total of 1,503 valid survey responses were received and processed (1,478 online and 25 hard copy responses).

Similar to previous surveys, the top issues relating to dogs and cats (as identified by the community) were:

- Dog related issues:
 - dog waste
 - dogs off lead / not under control
 - barking dogs
- Cat related issues:
 - cats roaming – killing wildlife
 - cats roaming – on other people's property
 - cat waste.

Awareness of the off-leash requirements was reported as very low amongst the community.

Outcomes of the survey responses were used to inform the development of subsequent community focus group for further exploration of ideas on responsible pet ownership.

Community Focus Group

Survey respondents who had registered their interest in focus group participation were invited to attend. Pre-reading information was sent to participants prior to the focus group sessions.

One focus group with 15 participants was conducted on 5 September 2016. An initial presentation outlining summary survey outcomes was provided to the participants.

For each of the top issues identified in the survey, participants were asked to workshop suggestions for improvement.

Additionally, respondents undertook a workshoping exercise to elicit suggestions to make it easier for residents to register their pets.

Engagement – Local Laws Team and Internal Casey Stakeholders

Local Laws officers and internal Council stakeholders were provided with results of the Responsible Pet Ownership Survey and Focus Group for their review and comment.

A series of workshops was then held to elicit suggestions to address the key animal management issues in the City of Casey.

Suggestions and outcomes from the various consultation methodologies were incorporated into the actions and initiatives of this Plan.

5. Strategic Themes and Action Plan

Based on the research and consultation undertaken to develop this Plan, and in keeping with the requirements of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, eight key themes have been developed to provide purpose, direction and commitment to domestic animal management activity across the municipality, being:

- Training of authorised officers
- Dog and cat registration and identification
- Nuisance animals
- Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs
- Dog Attacks
- Overpopulation and Euthanasia Rates
- Domestic Animal Businesses
- Other Matters

These themes are supported by strategic actions to guide the planning and delivery of services over the next four years.

Strategic Theme 1: Training of Authorised Officers

Aim - To ensure that all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work.

Actions under this Theme address Section 68(A)(2)(b) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* by outlining Casey's approach to the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of the Act.

Objective 1.1

Local Laws Officers to undertake training and skill development so that they may continue to be effective and cutting-edge in their roles.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|---------|---|
| 1.1.1 | Continue to review Animal Management Training as part of EDP process for Local Laws officers and Administration officers. | Ongoing | Review annually as part of EDP process. |
| 1.1.2 | Attendance at industry training and networking sessions. | Ongoing | Skills gained are utilised on the job by Local Laws officers. |
| 1.1.3 | Attendance at annual Australian Institute of Animal Management conference. | Ongoing | Officer attendance where program relevant to Casey. |
| 1.1.4 | Ensure all new Local Laws officers undertake Common Risk Assessment Training to develop their understanding of family violence and its links to animal welfare issues. | Ongoing | Include in induction program for new staff. |

Objective 1.2

Establish a portfolio area for an Officer to specifically focus on animal cruelty issues and complaints, with consideration to recent RSPCA internal review recommendations.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|---|
| 1.2.1 | Provide specialist Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act training and support for the portfolio officer. | Ongoing | Review annually as part of EDP process. |

Objective 1.3

Undertake detailed workforce planning to ensure animal management functions are effectively resourced both now and in the future.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|-------------------|--|
| 1.3.1 | Undertake City of Casey demographic analysis and workforce planning exercise. | 2018 and annually | Analysis and planning completed as part of annual service review and included in Council's Workforce Plan. |

Strategic Theme 2: Dog and Cat Registration and Identification

Aim - To ensure all lost animals are safely and quickly returned to and reunited with their owners.

Actions in this section address Sections 68A(2)(c)(v) and 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* by outlining services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.

Objective 2.1

Simplify Council's dog and cat registration and renewal processes

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|------|---|
| 2.1.1 | Improve the accuracy of Council's animal registration information through the use of digital services. | 2018 | Implementation complete. |
| 2.1.2 | Establish selected vets, animal shelters and Domestic Animal Businesses as registration agents for Council. | 2019 | Uptake of animal registration at point of sale. |
| 2.1.3 | Establish a digital process for animal registration at Council's pound facility for use following release of impounded unregistered animals. | 2018 | Implementation complete. |

Objective 2.2

Investigate the provision of registration incentives for residents, to encourage registration compliance.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|------|---|
| 2.2.1 | Investigate registration incentive options, including determination of feasibility and cost of implementation. | 2019 | Investigation complete and options considered by Council as part of fees and charges for 2019/20. |

Objective 2.3

Investigate the feasibility of introducing a temporary position with the primary focus on increasing registration compliance across the municipality.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|------|-------------------------|
| 2.3.1 | Investigate introduction of temporary 'Animal Registrations' role, including detailed cost-benefit analysis for consideration by Executive. | 2018 | Investigation complete. |

Objective 2.4

Identify hotspots for registration non-compliance.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|---------------------|
| 2.4.1 | Utilise Council's aerial mapping and geographical information system to analyse and identify hotspots for registration non-compliance and targeted enforcement. | Ongoing | Review quarterly. |
| 2.4.2 | Investigate new methodologies to encourage compliance in identified hot-spot areas. | Ongoing | Review quarterly. |
| 2.4.3 | Cross-reference animal registration database with the Central Animals Registry to identify unregistered dogs and cats living in Casey for targeted enforcement. | Ongoing | Review bi-annually. |

Strategic Theme 3: Nuisance animals

Aim - To minimise the potential for domestic animals to create a nuisance and reduce the impact of that nuisance on general amenity.

Actions in this Theme address Sections 68A(2)(c)(vi) and 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* by outlining programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance within the community.

Objective 3.1

Review the effectiveness of the cat cage program to identify service improvements.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|------|--|
| 3.1.1 | Investigate effectiveness of cat cage program and options for improved service provision, including cost analysis. | 2018 | Investigation complete and recommendations provided for consideration. |

Objective 3.2

Work with Council's Waste Management team to investigate the feasibility of implementing separate dog waste bins in Council parks and reserves.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|---|
| 3.2.1 | Investigate separate dog waste bin options to determine feasibility and cost of implementation. | 2018 | Investigation complete. |
| 3.2.2 | Dog waste bins installed in Council's Dog Friendly Parks as they are established. | Ongoing | Dog waste bins installed prior to opening of parks. |

Objective 3.3

Work with Council's Parks Services and Recreation Planning teams to develop more effective responsible pet ownership signage in Council reserves.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|------------------|--|
| 3.3.1 | Develop effective signage options to assist with communicating key messages around responsible pet ownership. | 2018 and ongoing | Improved signage installed in Dog Friendly Parks as priority. Improved signage installed in passive recreation reserves as appropriate. |

Objective 3.4

Encourage residents to utilise Government dispute resolution / mediation services to assist with animal nuisance complaint resolution (e.g. Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria).

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|------|---------------------|
| 3.4.1 | Review and update Council's Barking Dog procedures to include utilisation of dispute resolution / mediation services. | 2018 | Procedures updated. |

Objective 3.5

Reduce risk to flora and fauna from nuisance animals in environmentally sensitive areas.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|---------|---|
| 3.5.1 | Consider extension of S173 Planning Agreement restrictions in new subdivisions located within environmentally sensitive areas. | Ongoing | Restrictions imposed where appropriate. |

Strategic Theme 4: Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Aim - To ensure declared dogs (dangerous, menacing and restricted breed) are identified and managed to minimise the risk to safety of residents and the broader community.

Actions in this Theme address Sections 68A(2)(c)(vi) and 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* by outlining Council's approach to effectively identify all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs, and to ensure those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations.

Objective 4.1

Ensure all declared dogs are kept in accordance with the Act and regulations.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|-----------|--|
| 4.1.1 | Maintain regular contact with owners of declared dogs outlining their responsibilities, and penalties for non-compliance. | Ongoing | Annually. |
| 4.1.2 | All declared dogs that remain unregistered after 10 April each year are investigated for possible breaches of legislation. | Annually | Registration is current for all declared dogs. |
| 4.1.3 | Undertake bi-annual property inspections of all properties housing declared dogs to ensure compliance. | Bi-annual | All declared dogs are kept in compliance with legislation and regulations. |

Objective 4.2*Accurate identification of restricted breed dogs*

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|---------|---|
| 4.2.1 | When identifying restricted breed dogs, ensure appropriate standards are applied in accordance with the <i>Domestic Animals Act 1994</i> . | Ongoing | Annually reported KPI. |
| 4.2.2 | Ensure a minimum of 2 staff members are trained to recognise restricted breed dogs and apply the standards for declaration. | Ongoing | Skills gained are utilised on the job by Local Laws officers. |
| 4.2.3 | Ensure that all dogs declared by Council are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry. | Ongoing | Registry details are accurate at all times. |

Strategic Theme 5: Dog Attacks

Aim - To minimise the risk of dog attacks to the community.

Actions in under this Theme address Sections 68A(2)(c)(iii) and 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* by outlining strategies to minimise the risk of injury to people and other animals resulting from dog attacks.

Objective 5.1

Develop a Victim Charter

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|------|-------------------------|
| 5.1.1 | Develop a Victim Charter that ensures a victim-centric approach to the investigation of dog attacks. | 2020 | Charter implementation. |

Objective 5.2

Work with Council's Parks and Recreation teams to review existing and develop more effective responsible pet ownership signage in the community.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|------------------|-------------------------|
| 5.2.1 | Investigate alternative effective signage options to assist with communicating key messages around responsible pet ownership. | 2018 and ongoing | Investigation complete. |

Objective 5.3

Educate kindergarten and primary school aged children on appropriate interactions with dogs to reduce the risk of attack or injury.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|------------------|---|
| 5.3.1 | Introduce dog handling education into the curriculum offered at the Casey Safety Village. | 2019 | Program introduced. |
| 5.3.2 | Actively promote the Responsible Pet Ownership program conducted by Dept. Economic Development, Jobs, Training & Resources (DEDJTR) to kindergartens and primary schools within Casey. | 2018 and ongoing | Increase no. sessions conducted within Casey. |

Strategic Theme 6: Overpopulation and Euthanasia Rates*Aims*

- *To reduce the number of unwanted animals that are euthanased.*
- *To encourage people to manage pets in ways that protects the health and welfare of the animal and maximises the companion benefits of their pet.*

Actions in this Theme address Sections 68A(2)(c)(iv) and 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* by outlining programs, services and strategies to address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.

Objective 6.1

Promote reunification program.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|------------------------|
| 6.1.1 | Continue to undertake promotion and marketing of reunification activities, particularly over the peak animal wandering period of Christmas to New Year. | Ongoing | Activities undertaken. |

Objective 6.2

Illegal domestic animal businesses.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|-------------------------------|
| 6.2.1 | Actively seek to identify illegal domestic animal businesses (breeding establishments) and prosecute where appropriate. | Ongoing | Completion of investigations. |

Objective 6.3

Ensure Domestic Animal Businesses operate in accordance with legislation and regulations.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|-------------------------------|
| 6.3.1 | Continue to investigate, and where necessary prosecute non-compliant Domestic Animal Businesses (breeding establishments) in the City of Casey. | Ongoing | Completion of investigations. |

Strategic Theme 7: Domestic Animal Businesses

Aim - To ensure all domestic animal businesses maintain the highest standards of animal welfare.

Actions under this Theme address Sections 68A(2)(c)(ii) and 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(d),(f) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* by outlining how Council will ensure that Domestic Animal Businesses comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation. Actions under Theme 2 and 6 will also address this issue.

Objective 7.1

Ensure Domestic Animal Businesses operate in accordance with legislation and regulations.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|---------|-------------------------------|
| 7.1.1 | Actively investigate, and where necessary prosecute non-compliant Domestic Animal Businesses in the City of Casey. | Ongoing | Completion of investigations. |

Objective 7.2

Illegal domestic animal businesses.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|-------------------------------|
| 7.2.1 | Actively seek to identify illegal domestic animal businesses and prosecute where appropriate. | Ongoing | Completion of investigations. |

Strategic Theme 8: Other Matters

Actions in this section address Section 68A(2)(e) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* by providing for the review of any other matters that it thinks necessary for the effective management of dogs and cats in the municipality.

Objective 8.1

Review Council's Local Laws and Orders

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|------|---|
| 8.1.1 | Review Council's Local Laws and Orders in relation to animal management, to ensure currency. | 2018 | Local Law review complete. |
| 8.1.2 | Review Council's position regarding on/off leash areas in Council parks and reserves. | 2018 | Review completed following adoption of Dog Friendly Parks Policy. |

Objective 8.2

Reduce the cost of animal management services to Casey ratepayers.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|------|--|
| 8.2.1 | Investigate alternative options for operation of the after-hours animal management service. | 2018 | Investigation complete and recommendations considered. |
| 8.2.2 | Investigate the feasibility of establishing a regional animal pound facility with neighbouring municipalities. | 2019 | Investigation complete and options considered. |

Objective 8.3

Advocate to the State Government (DEDJTR) regarding legislative matters.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|---------|--|
| 8.3.1 | Advocate to the State Government (DEDJTR) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase penalties for barking nuisance via legislation to further encourage owners to address barking issues. • Increase penalties for cats at large via legislation to further discourage owners from allowing cats to wander. • Revise the DAA in relation to Notices to Comply (NTC) to make non-compliance with an NTC a penalty offence. | Ongoing | Implementation of updated legislation. |

Objective 8.4

Develop a strategy for communicating responsible pet ownership key messages.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|--|---------|--|
| 8.4.1 | Develop a communication strategy, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of registration – what do I get for my money? • Positive reinforcement • Responsible Pet Ownership Program (targeted approach with DEDJTR educators) • Preventative education • Targeted, culturally diverse approach • Consider using visuals / infographics / videos • Registration kits • Utilise digital and online methodologies including social media. | Ongoing | Strategy development and implementation. |

Objective 8.4

Develop a strategy for communicating responsible pet ownership key messages.

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|--|
| 8.4.2 | Deliver community events involving pets to encourage and support responsible pet ownership. | Ongoing | Events held in Casey. |
| 8.4.3 | Host pet-friendly events in Council's Dog Friendly Parks to raise awareness of animal welfare needs and promote the availability of these parks across Casey. | Ongoing | Increase in users frequently Dog Friendly Parks. |

Objective 8.5

Reduce the incidents of animal cruelty within Casey

| # | Activity | When | Evaluation |
|-------|---|---------|---|
| 8.5.1 | Local Laws officers to actively seek banning orders against alleged offenders charged with animal cruelty offences. | Ongoing | Banning orders introduced and enforced. |

Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Process

Council will monitor performance of the objectives that are detailed throughout this Plan by reporting annually through the Council's established reporting systems, in accordance with the requirements of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework.

Key Performance Indicators

| KPI | Target |
|--|--------|
| Increase in number of animal registrations from previous year | 5% |
| Reduction in euthanasia rates – dogs and cats | 5% |
| Staff receive an average of 15 hours training per year in animal management related training | 100% |
| Reduction in rate of nuisance complaints | 5% |
| Reduction in rate of dog attack | 3% |
| Compliance with Declared Dog registration requirements | 100% |
| Compliance with Domestic Animal Business requirements | 100% |
| Identified illegal domestic animal businesses (breeding establishments) prosecuted | 100% |

6. Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

7. Review

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; 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.*

The Plan will be reviewed as part of the evaluation process on an annual basis by the Manager Safer Communities.

The Plan will be reviewed and a new Domestic Animal Management Plan will be completed on or before 30 October 2021.