

Bayside Domestic Animal Management Plan

Community engagement
summary report

Stage 2: May 2022



Bayside
CITY COUNCIL

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Overview

Bayside City Council is required to have a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) to outline its policies, programs and practices for domestic animals in the community. It must review the Plan every four years.

Bayside is home to 12,481 registered dogs and 3,659 registered cats (*June 2021*) with more than one in three households having a furry family member. As pet ownership is high in Bayside across a relatively small land area (36km²), the DAMP must strive to balance the needs of the whole community – including those who don't have pets – and protect our valued natural environment.

To develop Bayside's DAMP 2022-26, an extensive community engagement and research program was undertaken in two phases:

- the first phase in October – November 2021 gathered representative and detailed feedback from more than 2,150 community members. This feedback was used to draft a new DAMP 2022-26
- the draft DAMP's key actions were tested through community engagement in March – April 2022.

This document provides a summary of stakeholder and community feedback received on the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) during the second phase of community engagement.

Key findings – phase 2

Feedback on the draft DAMP was received from 584 community members, primarily via online survey or written statement.

Cat containment

- Most survey participants (66%) and written statements were opposed to a four-year transition to cat containment (day and night).
- A significant majority of cat owners (87%) did not support four-year transition to cat containment. Support for cat containment was higher among non-pet owners (52%), however many of those respondents currently experience nuisance from cats.
- There was some support for increasing restrictions to prevent cats roaming beyond their owner's property but not if it required enclosures.
- Strict containment was viewed by many to be cruel, cost prohibitive particularly for older and low-income residents, and that more education was needed not enforcement.

Beach restrictions

- More permanent off-leash areas and greater access to the foreshore is particularly desired by dog owners.

Most effective actions for encouraging responsible pet ownership

Participants generally viewed the following actions as extremely or very effective:

- Regular registration days that offer free first registration for new pets
- Offering standard (desexed) rate to all puppies for first year of registration
- Promote training of dogs through awareness of providers and incentives (such as subsidised training, registration discounts)
- Increasing promotion of pet ownership benefits (health and wellbeing, companionship)
- Review the locations of dog poo bag dispensers and refilling schedule and promote locations on a map
- Increase targeted patrols of reserves and foreshore (summer and sports seasons)
- Review barking dog complaint process and incorporate technology for evidence gathering

Next steps

Feedback from the second phase of community engagement will be used to inform amendments to the DAMP, particularly regarding approaches to cat containment and the prioritisation of actions.

Community feedback and a proposed Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-26 will be considered by Council for adoption in May 2022.

Council must adopt a new Domestic Animal Management Plan by June 2022.

Background

Every Victorian Council is required to have a DAMP and review it every four years under the Domestic Animal Management Act 1994 (the Act).

The DAMP provides the framework for the planning, development, and evaluation of animal management services and programs delivered by Council and needs to comply with the requirements of the Act.

The Plan includes services and programs to promote responsible pet ownership, registration, training of officers, and minimising health and safety risks from nuisance animals, and reviewing existing Local Laws and orders made under the Act. Any changes to existing controls/Local Laws/Council orders would be delivered through actions in the Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Bayside has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in Victoria; with pets residing in more than one in three households. Owning a pet has many benefits, including an improved sense of wellbeing, safety and social connectedness. However, not everyone shares the same views about pets.

The first phase of community engagement in October – November 2021 received more than 2,150 responses. This phase was focused on representative research and in-depth interviews to better understand current trends and emerging issues, measure community experience, expectations and satisfaction, and generate ideas for improving the Plan.

Feedback from this phase was used to set actions in a new draft DAMP, which was presented to Council in March 2022. The draft DAMP was then tested with key stakeholders and the broader community through a second phase of community engagement in March-April 2022.

Key issues explored through community engagement

During 2020-21 increased and serious concerns were raised with Council regarding community conflict and safety when some dog owners are using sports grounds for off-leash purposes while organised sports training is occurring, or holes dug by dogs causing injury to sports players. Community engagement sought to identify and understand community views on these long-standing issues to explore ways to increase the safety of both dogs and people sharing sportsgrounds.

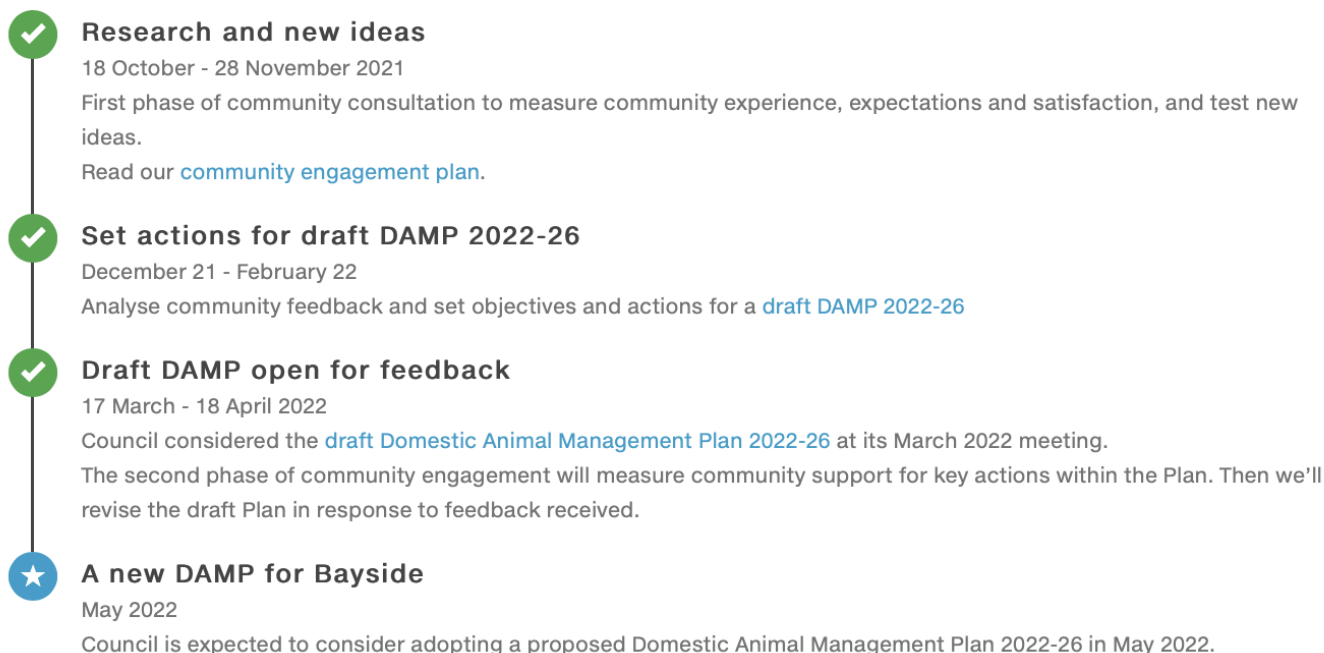
Concerns were also raised about cats roaming into private gardens and environmental sensitive areas and endangering native wildlife. Bayside currently has a night cat curfew, and community engagement sought to identify if these are concerns were widespread, requiring stronger controls relating to domestic cats.

While the DAMP covers leash restrictions and timings in existing shared open space areas, secure exclusive or new dog off-leash areas are strategic considerations of Open Space and outside of the scope and role of the DAMP.

1 Consultation process

1.1 Consultation purpose

The second phase of community engagement was designed to test community and stakeholder support for proposed actions in the draft DAMP.



1.2 Consultation methodology

The second phase of community consultation ran from 17 March 2022 to 18 April 2022 and received 584 contributions.

Table 1: Engagement activities and participation: 17 March – 18 April 2022

Details	Activity
Online survey 537 respondents	Online engagement through Have Your Say, including interactive maps, and opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback
Written statements 23 submissions	Statements from community members and groups provided via the Have Your Say platform. See appendix 7.2
Interactive map 10 submissions	Social map on Have Your Say to pinpoint location specific issues and suggestions. 114 submissions throughout both phases of engagement, including 10 received during phase 2.

Q&A forum 0 questions	A Q&A forum on Have Your Say received no questions from community members during this phase of consultation.
Email submissions 8 submissions	Eight email submissions were received by Council (one received after consultation closed)
Pop-up information session 250 interactions	Pet's Day Out, Cheltenham Park, 10 April 2022 Pet focused community event focused on providing information about the engagement and directing community members to Have Your Say platform to provide feedback.
Reference groups	Presentation to and facilitated discussion with the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee (DAIAC). Meeting with Bayside Dog Alliance.
Print survey 2 submissions	A print survey was available upon request and at pop-up engagement events. The survey was also available in accessible formats on request.
Correspondence 4 submissions	1 email 2 phone calls 1 written letter

1.3 Communication methods and reach

The engagement program was promoted through the following communication methods between 17 March – 18 April 2022.

Digital communications reached more than 36,000 community members, with printed information sent to all households via Let's Talk Bayside magazine. Pet owners were informed of the consultation period via the registration renewal process.

- Direct email to Have Your Say project subscribers (710)
- Pet newsletter to registration database (15,937)
- Direct email to key stakeholders and community groups
- News stories on Council's website (four)
- This Week in Bayside and special interest e-newsletters (9,000 recipients)
- Social media, including sponsored posts to increase reach (36,743 reached)
- Let's Talk Bayside magazine – April/May 22 issue (41,000 households)
- Postcards (Corporate Centre and Pets Day Out event)

2 Participant profile

The consultation received a total of 584 responses, including 537 surveys completed via Have Your Say, 23 written statements, 10 interactive map submissions, and other correspondence.

Most participants in the second phase of engagement were pet owners (421, 78%), with a large proportion of cat owners (284, 53%), and dog owners 230, 43%). Non-pet owners were underrepresented (91, 17%), as around two-thirds of Bayside households do not have a pet.

The geographical profile of the sample of respondents was relatively reflective of the Bayside community, with over-representation in Sandringham and under-representation in Brighton and Brighton East.

There was also a spread of age groups with most frequent (46%) aged 45 – 59 and 24% over 60. Gender identity was not considered relevant for this phase of consultation.

The demographic profile of survey participants (537) is as follows:

	Demographic	Bayside 2016 census	Participants (%)
Age	<18	23%	3, 1%
	20-34	15.6%	50, 9%
	35-44	12.8%	106, 20%
	45-59	23.5%	249, 46%
	60-74	15.9%	111, 21%
	>75	9.2%	17, 3%
	Undisclosed		1
Suburb	Beaumaris	13.5%	88, 16%
	Black Rock	6.5%	47, 9%
	Brighton	24.1%	52, 10%
	Brighton East	15.9%	51, 9%
	Cheltenham	3.7%	29, 5%
	Hampton	13.6%	81, 15%
	Hampton East	5.0%	31, 6%
	Highett	7.2%	36, 7%
	Sandringham	10.5%	95, 18%
	Outside Bayside	-	27, 5%

Limitations

The open-access survey in Phase 2 was not a representative (random sample) survey as in Phase 1 engagement. This means results should be read as a strong indication of the views of community members who are sufficiently engaged either with the issue of pets (particularly cats) or more broadly with Council.

These results represent the views of pet owners and should not be interpreted as an accurate measure of Bayside community views. Please refer to the [Phase 1 engagement and research report](#) for representative analysis.

3 Consultation findings

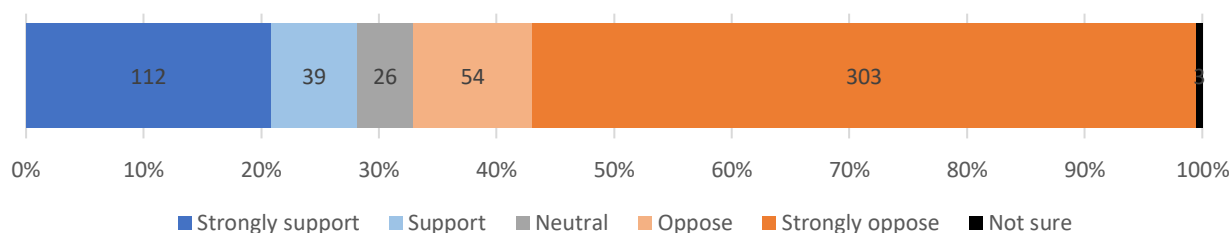
The following section summarises the key themes which arose in community feedback on the draft DAMP. In the interest of privacy, individual quotes from surveys have not been included within this public document. However, written statements are provided in full in the appendix. Where there was more than one mention of a topic or item, the number of mentions has been specified in brackets.

3.1 Cat containment

Most survey participants were opposed (66%) to a four-year transition to cat containment (day and night). This is in line with the Phase 1 representative survey where only 33% expressed direct support for cat containment, as part of question that suggested a range of ideas to protect native wildlife and the environment.

A significant majority of cat owners (87%) did not support four-year transition to cat containment.

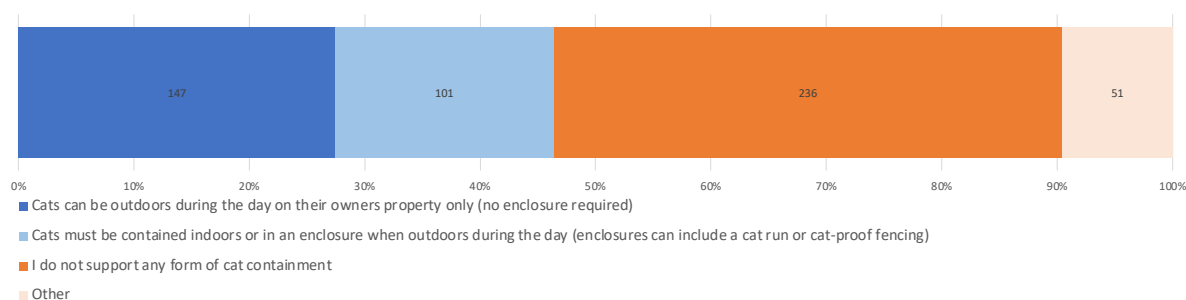
Figure 1: Support for a four-year transition to cat containment (n=537)



When asked about preferred approaches to cat containment to best protect the wellbeing of both cats and native wildlife, survey respondents were more divided:

- 44% - Do not support any form of cat containment (236)
- 27% - Cats can be outdoors during the day on their owner's property only (no enclosure required) (147)
- 19% - Cats must be contained indoors or in an enclosure when outdoors during the day (enclosures can include a cat run or cat-proof fencing) (101)
- 9% - Other (majority reference support for current restriction – night curfew only). (51) (*Numbers are rounded to nearest %)

Figure 2: Support for different approaches to cat containment (n=535)



Almost half of respondents could be seen to support some increase in restrictions for cats to prevent roaming (which would bring into line with current restrictions for dogs), but not if it required an outdoor enclosure or escape proof fencing.

Common themes in comments included strict containment (indoors or enclosures) being cruel to existing cats; the prohibitive cost of installing containment measures – especially for older and low-income residents; need for education not enforcement; greater environment impact of other animals eg foxes on native wildlife; and unwillingness to pay registration if cats cannot be outdoors without enclosures.

Among non-pet owners, most (48, 52%) supported a four-year transition to cat containment in this survey. This group also expressed greater support for a requirement for enclosures such as a cat run or escape proofing fencing when cats are outdoors (42, 47%). However, around half of non-pet owner survey respondents also said they currently experience nuisance from cats. One third of non-pet owners did not support any form of cat containment in this survey.

Written statements regarding cats (15) were all against cat containment, and included themes around containment being cruel and costly to owners. Other feedback included general comments highlighting the positive mental health benefits of cat ownership, and that Council should offer free cat sterilisation.

Results from phase 1 representative survey

A random representative survey was sent to 5,700 Bayside households in October – November 2021, with 1,251 residents responding.

Over a third (38%) of respondents in the representative survey said they've seen cats trespassing, outside at night and/or preying on wildlife.

Almost two thirds (65%) of cat owners indicated their cats were outdoors during the day weekly or more often, whereas one in six owners (17%) report their cats outdoors after dark weekly or more often.

Those who let their cats out at night mostly know that the regulation says they shouldn't (67% who let their cat out at night monthly or more often are aware, and 88% of those who let their cat out at night sometimes are aware).

However, there is minimal support for cat containment (33% overall, 17% cat owners) nor increasing the night-time curfew for cats (32% overall, 12% cat owners). Around a third (31%) say their cats are already kept indoors only.

3.2 Nuisance from cats

When asked 'Have you experienced nuisance from roaming cats?', 27% (146) of respondents in the Phase 2 survey reported experiencing nuisance, with daily (37, 25%) or weekly (37, 25%) the most frequent responses.

Around 1 in 8 cat owners (33, 12%) reported experiencing nuisance from other cats. Half of non-pet owner survey respondents reported experiencing nuisance from cats.

3.3 Proposed review of beach restrictions

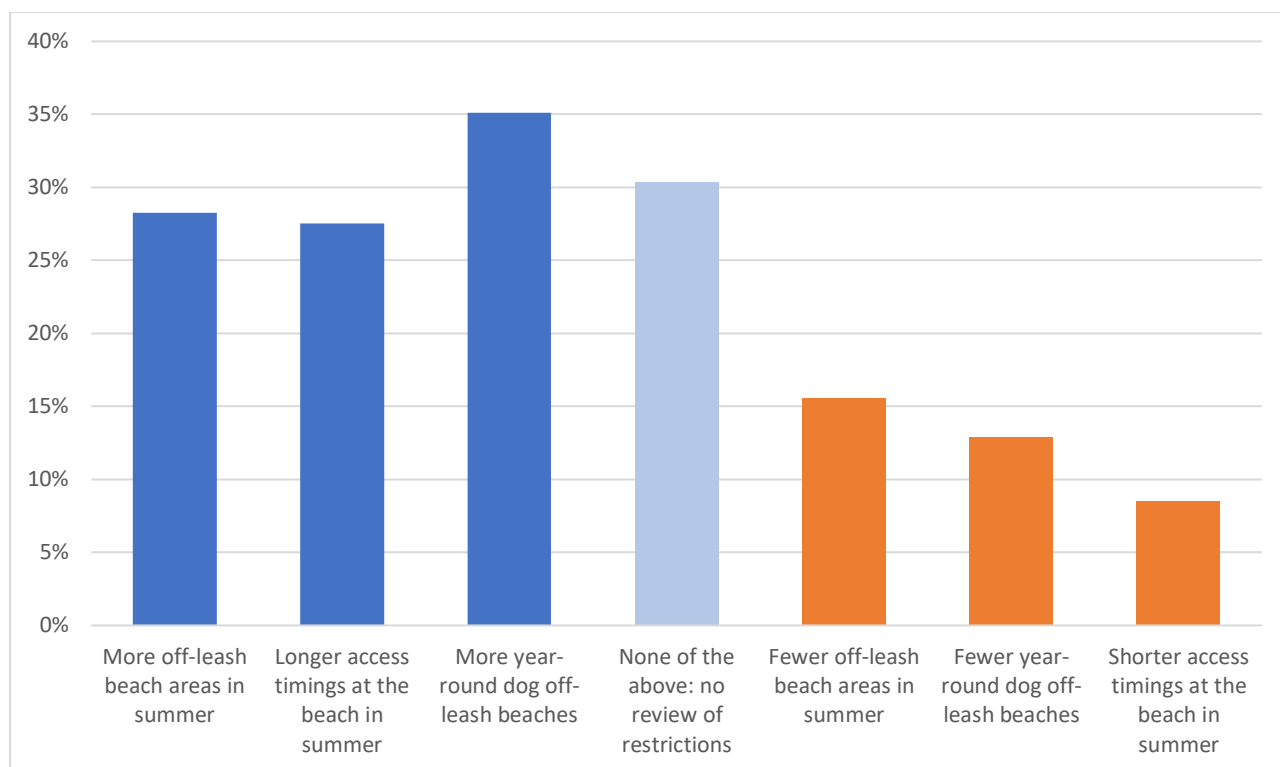
Around one third of Phase 2 survey respondents (185, 34%) wanted a proposed review of beach restrictions to focus on more year-round dog off-leash beaches (55% for dog owners), while 30% (160) did not want beach restrictions to be reviewed at all (21% for dog owners). There was also some support for more off-leash beach areas in summer (149, 28% overall: 49% dog owners) and longer access timings in summer (147, 27% overall: 49% dog owners).

There was limited support overall for shorter access timings at the beach in summer (45, 8% overall: 15, 16% non-pet owners) or fewer year-round off-leash beach areas (68, 13% overall: 27, 30% non-pet owners). While there were a limited number of non-pet owners who completed the survey, there was no strong support among this group for limiting beach access for dogs in any form.

The balance of responses regarding the proposed review indicates that more areas/access to the foreshore is desired, particularly by dog owners.

Results of the representative survey in Phase 1 (see page 13) are more indicative of general community sentiment regarding leash restrictions.

Figure 3: Focus of proposed review of beach restrictions (n=527)



When asked for other feedback on ways dog and cat restrictions can help to protect the natural environment, 271 survey respondents provided comments, which are summarised below.

- Cat containment is cruel to cats (95 mentions)
- Animals provide health benefits for people and neighbours (28 mentions)
- Support for cat containment or current restrictions sufficient (22 mentions)
- More enforcement of restrictions (32 mentions)
- Owners need more education (43 mentions) and support for dog owners to train their pets (12 mentions)
- Other comments (96) included more signage, cats deter other pests, cats should wear bells, focus on bigger issues, separate area for small and large dogs.

Three written statements also referenced dog restrictions, including the need for more secure off leash dog parks (2); and keeping Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary available for dog access (1). Other correspondence also reference need for more enforcement in specific local areas.

Results from phase 1 representative survey

A random representative survey was sent to 5,700 Bayside households in October – November 2021, with 1,258 residents responding to a question about the balance of leash restrictions for dogs for sharing public spaces.

Overall, just over one third (36%) of Phase 1 survey participants believe the current off-leash restrictions for dogs are *too strict* (23%) or *much too strict* (13%). Not surprisingly, a greater proportion of dog owners (51%) believe this to be the case compared to non-dog owners (11%). The most common response amongst non-dog owners is that off-leash restrictions are not strict enough.

Notably, there is some parity between dog owners and non-dog owners (39% and 36% respectively) on the balance of restrictions being *just right*.

3.4 Proposed actions for promoting responsible pet ownership

Many Phase 2 survey participants felt the following proposed actions in the DAMP would be **extremely or very effective**:

- Regular registration days that offer free first registration for new pets (47%)
- Offer standard (desexed) rate to all puppies for first year of registration (46%)
- Promote training of dogs through awareness of providers and incentives (such as subsidised training, registration discounts) (46%)
- Increasing promotion of pet ownership benefits (health and wellbeing, companionship) (38%)

Conversely, the following proposed actions were seen by many respondents as only being **slightly or not at all effective**:

- Signage to include QR codes linking to current restrictions and information (46%)
- Short training and knowledge assessment for on-line registration of new pets (41%)
- Regular pop-up information stands at Council and community events (instead of annual pet expo) (38%)
- Signage to include examples of responsible pet owner behaviour / etiquette (37%)

However, these actions were strongly suggested through representative research and in-depth interviews with stakeholders in Phase 1.

One written statement also referenced a need for greater promotion of free/discounted pet registration days.

3.5 Good pet etiquette when sharing public spaces

In-depth interviews with key stakeholder groups in Phase 1 research indicated there was a prevailing sentiment that pet owner etiquette is lacking in shared open space. It was suggested that signage should go beyond rules and restrictions and include examples of proper etiquette for the comfort of others – defining effective control and reasons why this is important.

When asked what they would consider good pet etiquette when sharing public spaces, 320 Phase 2 survey respondents provided feedback, as summarised below.

- Having effective control or animal on leash (173 mentions)
- Having courtesy for others (114 mentions)
- Cleaning up after dog (83 mentions)
- Obey current regulations (39 mentions)
- Owners need more education/training (24 mentions)
- Other comments (50) included muzzling large dogs, keep dogs on lead at all times, more patrols/signage and control barking.

3.6 Pet-focussed community working group

An action in the draft DAMP is to establish community working groups and strengthen partnerships to provide input/feedback on emerging domestic animal issues. There was some interest in joining a working group from survey respondents, with 11% (56) indicating they were interested in participating.

3.7 Proposed actions for reducing negative experiences with pets in the community

Many survey respondents felt the following proposed actions in the DAMP would be **extremely or very effective** for reducing negative experiences with pets in the community:

- Review the locations of dog poo bag dispensers and refilling schedule (56%)
- Promote locations of dog poo bag dispensers (such as on a map) (51%)
- Increase targeted patrols of reserves and foreshore (summer and sports seasons) (45%)
- Review barking dog complaint process and incorporate technology for evidence gathering (44%)

Conversely, the following proposed actions were seen by many respondents as only being **slightly or not at all effective**:

- Run responsible dog ownership course (37%)
- Strengthen enforcement around cat traps for nuisance cats (36%)
- Increase regular patrols to encourage and promote effective control (31%).

3.8 Other feedback about the draft DAMP

One third of Phase 2 survey respondents (182) also provided further feedback for Council to consider regarding the draft DAMP. These comments are summarised below.

- No cat containment (40 mentions)
- More patrols or fines (29 mentions)
- More off leash parks/gates (18 mentions)
- More bins and poo bags (14 mentions)
- More education (10 mentions)
- Other comments (76) included don't cater to minority, dog DNA samples, Council is too restrictive, most people do the right thing.

A written statement was also received regarding Clause 25(1) of the Local Law, which requires a permit to keep more than two dogs or more than two cats, and that Council should promote and encourage (not restrict) the keeping of pets.

4 Evaluation

4.1 Participant reach and representation

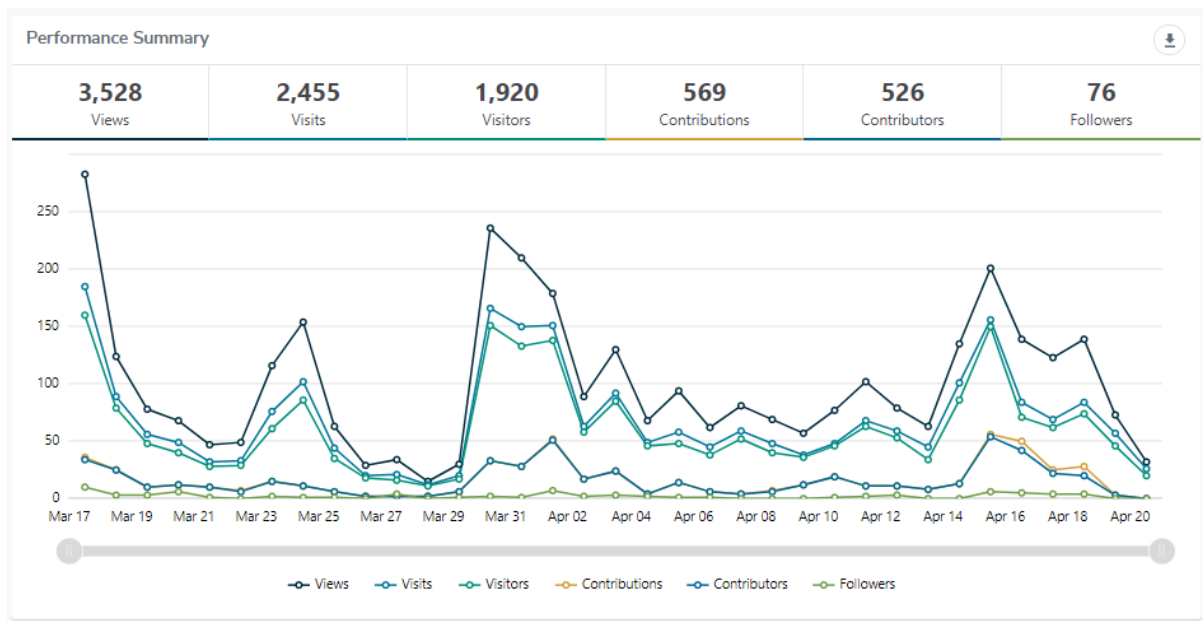
All key stakeholders were represented in the second phase of community engagement to inform the DAMP, with Phase 1 participant subscribers also invited via email to contribute.

Digital communications reached more than 36,000 community members, with printed information sent to all Bayside households via Let's Talk Bayside magazine (41,000). Registered pet owners (15,937) were informed of the consultation period via communications for the pet registration renewal process.

Phase 2 participation targets, based on previous similar projects, were all exceeded.

- Submissions: target 200; actual 584 – exceeded
- Contributions from non-pet owners: target 10%; actual 17% - exceeded
- Feedback (% of visits where at least 1 contribution is made): target 5%; actual 19.5% - exceeded
- Attention (% of visits that last > 1 minute): target 25%; actual 38.5% - exceeded
- Actions (% of visits where at least two actions were performed): target 15%; actual 30% - exceeded.

The draft Domestic Animal Management Plan document was downloaded 760 times.



4.2 Participant satisfaction

Survey participants were asked if they had the information they needed to provide their feedback, with 518 providing a response. The majority found the information very or mostly easy to find/understand (77%) - 17% found the information mostly or very hard to find/understand and 7% weren't sure.

5 Appendix

5.1 Phase 2 survey

Domestic Animal Management Plan survey



Section 1: Your experience with pets

These introductory questions help us understand the sections of our community that have provided feedback. Your responses are confidential and anonymous.

Does your household have a pet cat or dog?

☐ Yes > How many dogs? _____ How many cats? _____ ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

Your suburb

☐ Beaumaris ☐ Black Rock ☐ Brighton ☐ Brighton East ☐ Cheltenham ☐ Hampton
☐ Hampton East ☐ Highett ☐ Sandringham ☐ Outside Bayside _____

Section 2: Our environment

An objective in the draft Plan is to ensure dog and cat restrictions help to protect the environment. Two new actions are proposed to achieve this objective:

Cat containment

Containing a cat means preventing them from roaming beyond their property at any time, day or night. Cats that are safely contained are at less risk of injury from cars, dogs and other cats, and prevented from killing native wildlife. Bayside regulations already require the confinement of cats between sunrise and sunset (8pm and 8am or between 9pm and 6am during daylight savings) to protect native wildlife. Cats are currently allowed to roam during the day in Bayside, provided they do not cause a nuisance.

To what extent do you support or oppose a four-year transition to cat containment (day and night)?

☐ Strongly support ☐ Support ☐ Neutral ☐ Oppose ☐ Strongly oppose ☐ Not sure

Which of these containment approaches do you think would best protect the wellbeing of both cats and native wildlife?

- ☐ Cats can be outdoors during the day on their owner's property only (no enclosure required)
- ☐ Cats must be contained indoors or in an enclosure when outdoors during the day (enclosures can include a cat run or cat-proof fencing)
- ☐ I do not support any form of cat containment
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Have you experienced nuisance from roaming cats?

☐ Yes > How frequently? _____ ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Beach restrictions review

A proposed action in the draft DAMP is to 'review dog off-leash restrictions adjacent to Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary and all beaches' in 2025/26 to ensure beach access balances the needs of pets, people and the environment.

What would you like a proposed review of beach restrictions to focus on?

Please select all that apply

- ☐ More off-leash beach areas in summer
- ☐ Longer access timings at the beach in summer
- ☐ More year-round dog off-leash beaches
- ☐ None of the above – no review of restrictions
- ☐ Fewer year-round dog off-leash beaches
- ☐ Shorter access timings at the beach in summer
- ☐ Fewer off-leash beach areas in summer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Do you have any other feedback on ways dog and cat restrictions can help to protect the natural environment?

Section 3: Pet education

An objective in the draft Plan is to increase responsible pet ownership behaviour and compliance with the law through communication, incentives, and effective enforcement. These are some of new activities proposed to achieve this:

How effective do you think these proposed actions will be for increasing responsible pet ownership?	Extremely effective	Very Effective	Moderately Effective	Slightly Effective	Not at all effective	Not Sure
Short training and knowledge assessment for on-line registration of new pets						
Promote training of dogs through awareness of providers and incentives (such as subsidised training, registration discounts)						
Signage to include QR codes linking to current restrictions and information						
Signage to include examples of responsible pet owner behaviour / etiquette						
Offer standard (desexed) rate to all puppies for first year of registration						
Regular pop-up information stands at Council and community events (instead of annual pet expo)						
Regular registration days that offer free first registration for new pets						
Increasing promotion of pet ownership benefits (health and wellbeing, companionship)						

We've heard from the community that some dog owners seem oblivious to the comfort of others when their dog provides unwanted attention to people or other dogs, and there are issues at off-leash sportsgrounds during organised sport. A prevailing sentiment is that pet owner etiquette is lacking, and signage needs to include etiquette examples.

What do you consider to be good pet etiquette when sharing public spaces?

Council is proposing to form a community working group to work collaboratively over the four years of the Plan and provide ongoing feedback on emerging domestic animal issues.

Would you be interested in joining a pet-focused community working group?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure

Do you want to receive updates about this project?

If yes to the questions above, please provide a contact email: _____

Thank you for your feedback!

Privacy Statement: Council will use the personal information collected on this form solely for the Domestic Animal Management Plan project. All personal information collected will be stored and maintained in line with Council's Privacy Policy. For more [information](#) please visit Council's website at bayside.vic.gov.au/privacy or contact the Privacy Officer at privacy@bayside.vic.gov.au

5.2 Written statements