

# 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 (36km<sup>2</sup>), 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.

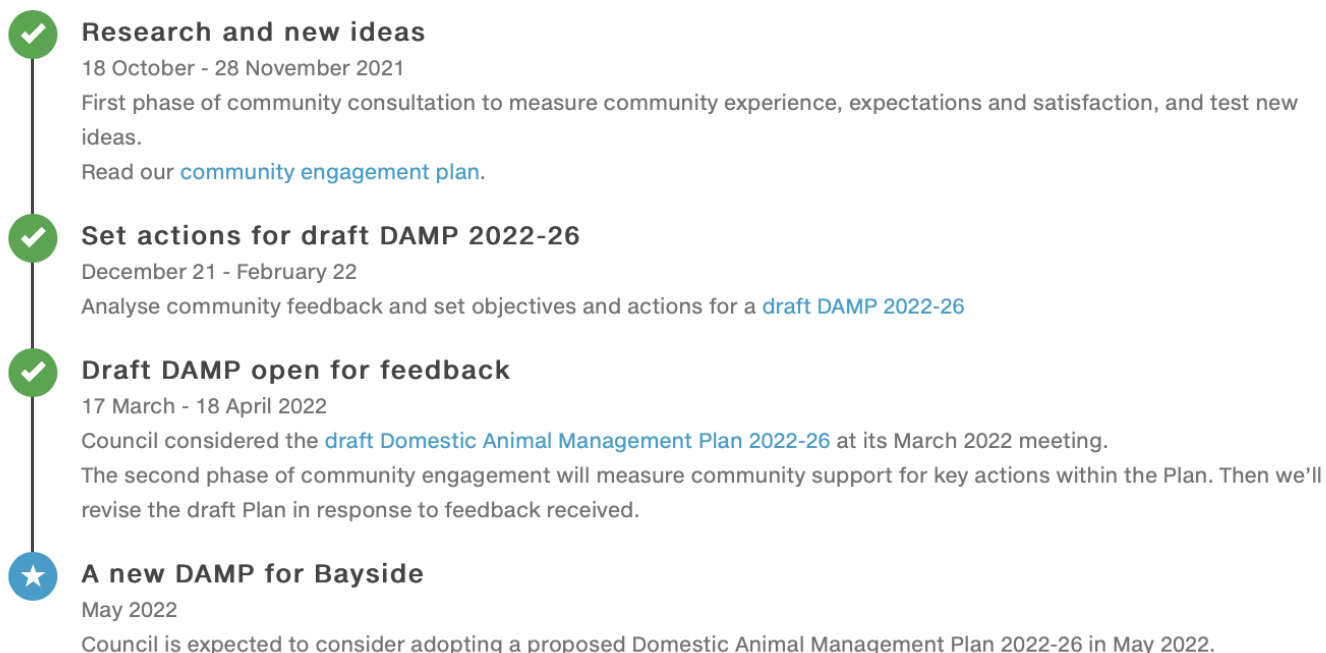
Concerns were also raised about cats roaming into private gardens and environmental sensitive areas and endangering native wildlife. Bayside currently has a night cat curfew, and community engagement sought to identify if these are concerns were widespread, requiring stronger controls relating to domestic 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  |
|--|---|
| <b>Online survey</b><br><b>537 respondents</b>     | Online engagement through Have Your Say, including interactive maps, and opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback  |
| <b>Written statements</b><br><b>23 submissions</b> | Statements from community members and groups provided via the Have Your Say platform. See appendix 7.2  |
| <b>Interactive map</b><br><b>10 submissions</b>    | 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. |

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

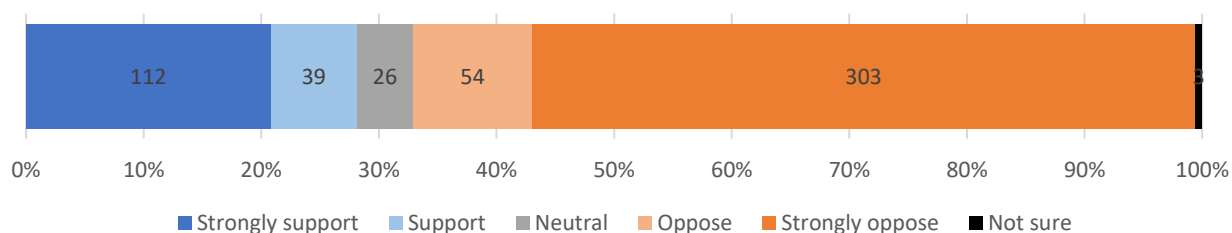
The following section summarises the key themes which arose in community feedback on the draft DAMP. In the interest of privacy, individual quotes from surveys have not been included within this public document. However, written statements are provided in full in the appendix. Where there was more than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

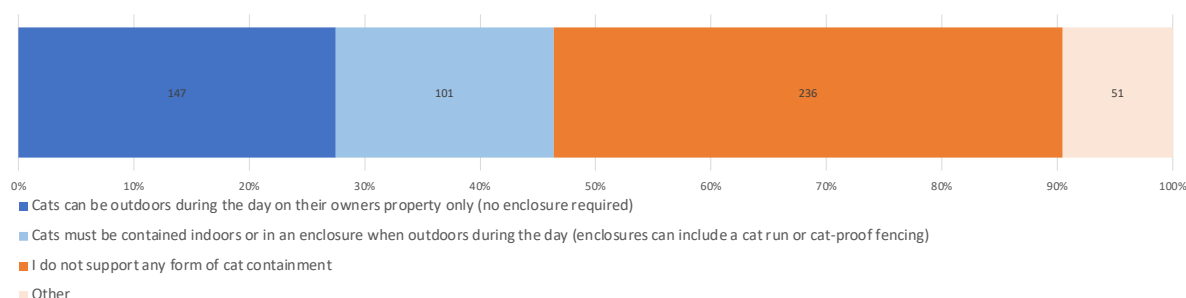
**Figure 1: Support for a four-year transition to cat containment (n=537)**



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**

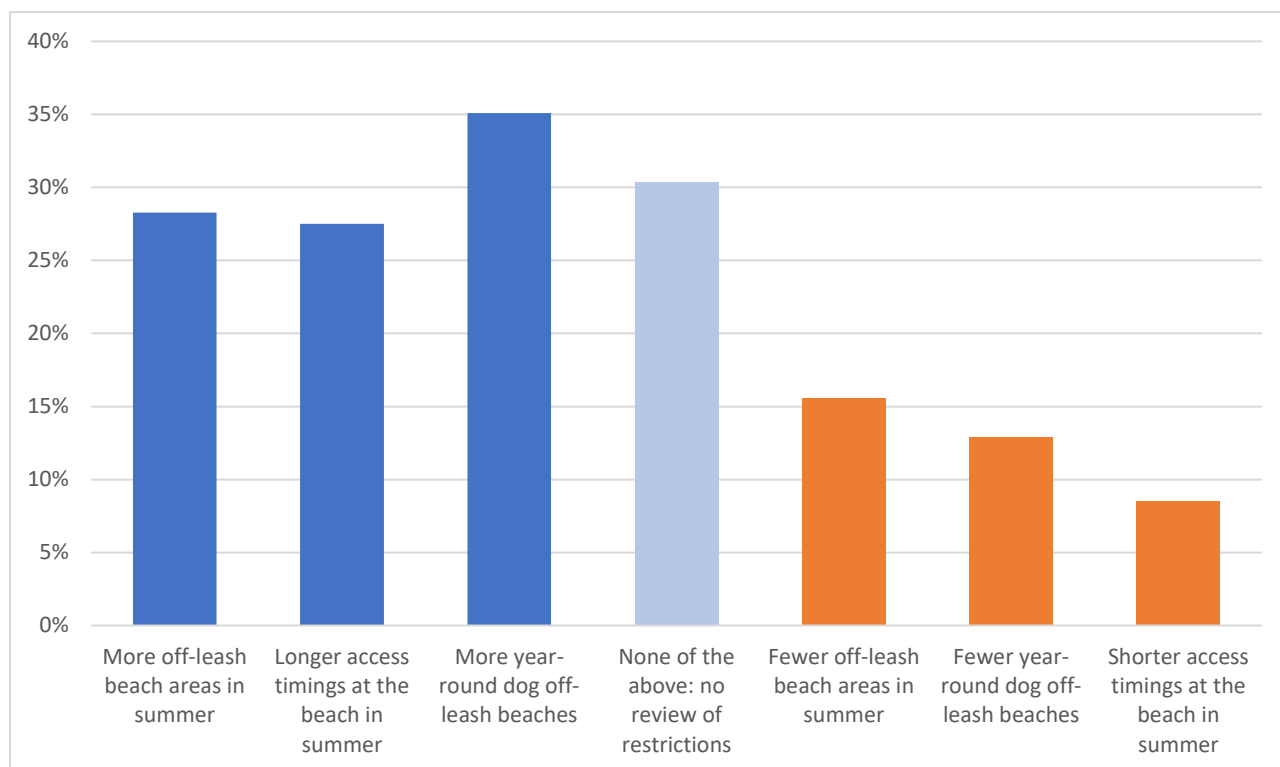
Around one third of Phase 2 survey respondents (185, 34%) wanted a proposed review of beach restrictions to focus on more year-round dog off-leash beaches (55% for dog owners), while 30% (160) did not want beach restrictions to be reviewed at all (21% for dog owners). There was also some support for 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.

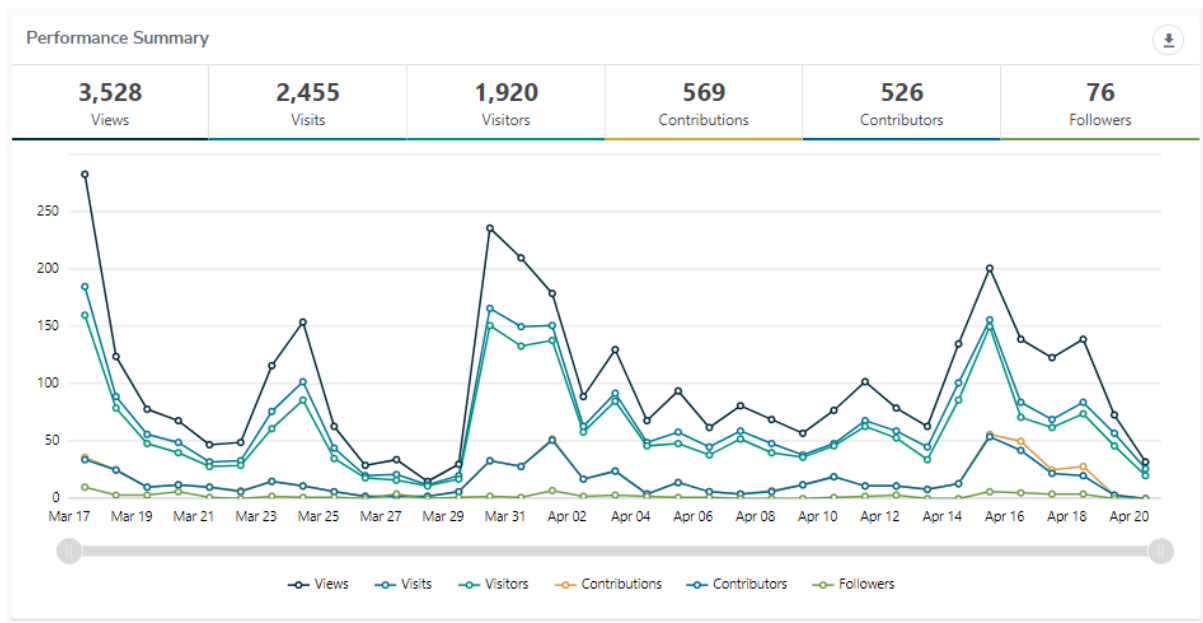
Digital communications reached more than 36,000 community members, with printed information sent to all Bayside households via Let's Talk Bayside magazine (41,000). Registered pet owners (15,937) were informed of the consultation period via communications for the pet registration renewal process.

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?

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### 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?

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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](http://bayside.vic.gov.au/privacy) or contact the Privacy Officer at [privacy@bayside.vic.gov.au](mailto:privacy@bayside.vic.gov.au)

## 5.2 Written statements

The Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan is a conservative attempt to maintain a status quo approach to animal management in the City of Bayside. Serious additions need to be made to address glaring omissions with respect to secure off lead dog facilities.

In April 2021 I had a lengthy phone conversation with [REDACTED] regarding a more realistic strategic plan that understood and respected the recreational needs of Dogs and registered dog owners in the City of Bayside. **Please see [REDACTED] email follow up to our discussion below.** The promise to include me in early community input to the formulation of the Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan was not followed up even though I emailed both John and Jacqueline multiple times in the following months reminding them of the promise.

Because my input has been effectively side-lined up to now, I am making this submission online to hopefully have it addressed. As well I am emailing a copy of this submission to all City of Bayside Councillors.

There are insufficient secure enclosed off lead dog parks in Bayside for the 12,500 plus registered dogs. The only real one is the small Wishart Park off Bluff Road via lane access. Despite Council attempts to promote the Sandown St off leash beach park as secure it is not. Dogs can wade out of it or step over the fence in some places.

From my experience as a dog owner across 38 years in Bayside three areas present themselves as obvious places for secure off lead parks. All are used daily by many dog owners, and I have witnessed a strong sentiment to see them made secure.

1. Merindah Park in Sandringham
2. The huge open space on the coast between Chatsworth Ave and Millar St in Brighton.
3. Royal Ave Park in Sandringham.

There must be others that relevant council staff with an open minded and sympathetic attitude could identify.

In a military style co-ordinated action in 2017 Council managed staff took gates off sports grounds across Bayside as a response to perceived dog excrement issues noisily raised by a small minority of people. Dog owners using the sports grounds and even sporting groups were not consulted or advised. What were basically many safe and secure dog exercise/recreation areas were suddenly denied to many dog owners. The ongoing social and recreational effects especially to older residents is still felt today. At the very least as an interim measure council should immediately put gates back on some ovals across the city.

The City of Bayside does not acknowledge in writing that Dog ownership is the most participated recreational activity in this city. This requires the inclusion of Dog Ownership as a recreational activity managed through the recreation section of council administration AS well as through amenities and revenue collection. This would ensure dog recreation resources and facilities are identified, budgeted for and managed as recreation infrastructure.

**Date:** Tuesday, 13 April 2021 at 7:05 pm

[REDACTED]

**Subject:** Dog Off Leash Matters

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

Our conversation was beneficial in helping to understand the views of a long-term resident regarding dogs and open space.

As discussed, the issues around use and access of open space is complex which a broad range of community views.

It would be good to have you involved in early community consultation when we commence the next review of our Domestic Animal Management Plan in the next year.

I understand you are interested to be involved with this consultation and I will ask that [REDACTED] adds you to our list of interested community members.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Manager Amenity Protection | Amenity Protection



**Bayside City Council**  
76 Royal Avenue, Sandringham VIC 3191

[REDACTED]

[bayside.vic.gov.au](http://bayside.vic.gov.au)



## **Australian Pet Welfare Foundation submission**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Bayside City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022–2026 (Draft).

The Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF) has serious concerns regarding the proposal to expand the current cat night curfew to 24/7 cat containment on the owner's property. Some local governments consider implementing 24/7 cat containment because it is believed this will reduce the number of wandering cats, cat nuisance complaints and potential native wildlife predation.

However, the scientific evidence clearly shows that 24/7 cat containment is not an effective strategy for reducing the number of wandering cats or any cat-related issues and, will actually increase cat issues in Bayside City. For this reason, the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation is strongly opposed to mandatory 24/7 cat containment. Both the RSPCA and Hobsons Bay Council in Melbourne, Victoria report that councils with cat containment regulations have not been able to demonstrate any measurable reduction in cat complaints, or cats wandering at large following the introduction of cat containment regulations (RSPCA 2018, Hobsons Council 2014).

We have outlined the details of the research supporting our position, and have made alternative evidence-based recommendations below, which *will* effectively reduce the number of wandering cats, costs to council and cat-related issues such as cat nuisance complaints.

### **Stakeholder background**

The Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF) is the peak research body and advocate for pet welfare in Australia. As a not-for-profit organisation, APWF specialises in evidence-based solutions for reducing euthanasia in animal welfare shelters and local government facilities. APWF is led by Dr. Jacquie Rand, Emeritus Professor of Companion Animal Health at The University of Queensland (UQ) and a registered specialist veterinarian in small animal internal medicine. She has worked extensively in shelter research over the last 15 years, including collaborative studies with the RSPCA, Animal Welfare League and local governments.

Professor Rand has a distinguished track record in the delivery of industry relevant research outcomes. She is the author of over 115 journal articles, 118 abstracts, and 42 book chapters, and is the editor of three books. While at UQ she taught Urban Animal Management and since 2013 has co-authored 21 peer-reviewed articles on the management of urban domestic animals, including seven related to semi-owned and unowned cats. She is also the author of government reports and discussion papers on the management of urban dogs and cats, and consults with local governments on urban cat management.

### **Negative outcomes associated with 24/7 cat containment**

It is critically important for Bayside City to be informed that if the proposed 24/7 cat containment proceeds, based on the evidence, it will have the following negative outcomes:

1. Increase cat nuisance complaints to Bayside Council Animal Management because an expectation will be created in the community that cats should not be seen.
2. Increase cat trapping and cat impoundments.
3. Increase costs to Bayside Council without providing any measurable benefit in reducing wandering cats, complaints, cat impoundments or cat-related costs.



4. Increase the number of healthy cats and kittens euthanased. This killing is unnecessary, preventable and pointless because it will not reduce the number of wandering cats in Bayside.
5. Cause devastating mental health impacts to council, animal shelter and veterinary staff and community cat carers associated with killing healthy cats and kittens including depression, substance abuse, traumatic stress and suicide.
6. Will ensure the continuation of the failed 'trap, adopt or kill' approach to domestic cats, which has failed to reduce the number of wandering cats over many decades across Australia.
7. Create major barriers to responsible cat ownership/adoption uptake due to reduced willingness and/or financial ability to adopt cats because of these new regulations.
8. Constrain Community Cat Programs (programs which do effectively reduce the number of wandering cats and reduce costs to council). These programs are very successful in transforming cat semi-owners to full owners, and would be negatively impacted by the proposed laws.
9. Will not reduce the number of wandering cats in Bayside.
10. Will not reduce cat nuisance behaviours, disease risks (toxoplasmosis) or potential native wildlife predation.
11. Increase cruelty towards cats and increase animal pain and suffering.
12. Increase the number of wandering cats in Bayside.
13. Increase relinquishment of pet cats.

Alternatively, scientific evidence including from Australia, repeatedly demonstrates that high intensity desexing of cats, targeted to areas of high cat complaints or high cat impoundments will significantly reduce the number of wandering cats and nuisance complaints and therefore also reduce any potential wildlife predation.

Banyule City and Brimbank City in Melbourne are already implementing contemporary urban cat management strategies including Community Cat Programs which have a focus on transforming semi-owners feeding stray cats into full owners where the cats are desexed and microchipped/registered to these people.

#### **Statistics to support the negative outcomes associated with 24/7 containment by-laws**

Most wandering cats are either not owned and therefore do not have an owner to contain them, or they are owned but not identified. Most wandering cats are semi-owned strays (cats that are fed by people who do not perceive they are the owner) and most are not desexed, microchipped or registered to a person. Semi-owned cats are the major source of cats and kittens entering shelters and pounds (Zito 2015 and 2016). The number of semi-owned cats varies between suburbs, with the highest numbers occurring in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas.

- Australian research shows that 3-9% of Australian adults feed a stray cat daily (Rand 2019). Semi-owners feed an average of 1.5 cats (Zito 2015).

- Bayside City had a resident population of 105,580 in 2021 which means that approximately 4,000 adults are feeding around 6,000 semi-owned cats in Bayside City each day.

In addition, some impounded cats are owned, but are not identified or desexed. Most wandering cats are in low socioeconomic areas.

Based on data from shelters and municipal pounds across Australia, the overwhelming majority of trapped and impounded cats are not owned or traceable to an owner (the cats are unidentified).

- Only 8% of stray cats entering RSPCA Qld had a microchip, and of those with a microchip, 37% had inaccurate or no contact details associated with the chip (Lancaster 2015).
- On average, only 4% of cats in NSW and 7% in Victoria and Queensland are reclaimed by an owner (Chua 2021 unpublished).

As a large majority of impounded cats are not identified as owned and come from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, then the implementation of 24/7 cat containment is likely to have a negligible effect on reducing the number of wandering cats, but *will* increase costs to councils for cat management. This is supported by data from councils that have implemented 24/7 cat containment. Some examples include Yarra Ranges, Casey and Cardinia Councils.

24/7 cat containment is also likely to have a negligible effect on reducing cat nuisance complaints or potential wildlife predation. **In fact, 24/7 cat containment has been shown to increase cat nuisance complaints to councils.**

With most cats being unidentified and not claimed by owners after impounding, there would also be minimal income achieved from fines issued for breaches of 24/7 containment. Additionally, the cost and resources for trapping and holding cats are typically high, and *even higher* after 24/7 cat containment is introduced which has been shown to increase cat nuisance complaints, trapping and impoundment in the Australian context (Yarra Ranges Council, Casey Council).

It is far more cost effective for councils to prevent kittens being born via proactive, targeted desexing than it is to trap and impound cats as part of a reactive approach costing an average of \$500-\$750 *per cat* impounded (Kerr 2018).

#### **Cost is a major barrier to containment .**

Cost is a major barrier to cat containment, not lack of knowledge or education. For owned cats, income and affordability are critical factors when trying to understand why mandates for containment of cats get limited traction in those Australian suburbs where many properties are rental properties, and where cat containment systems can cost in the order of \$1,000-\$2,000. For many low-income families or renters, these costs are simply not feasible.

Research has also found that many cat owners do not support 24/7 cat containment and a significant proportion of Australian cat owners believe that total indoor confinement of their animals is a welfare issue (McLeod 2015). This is reflected in the Bayside DAMP Community Research Survey in which only a minority of approximately 33% of respondents supported introducing 24/7 cat containment. These are additional factors which explain why 24/7 cat containment fails to reduce wandering cats.

- Importantly, 24/7 containment criminalises cat ownership for low-income families and people in rental properties, especially if they have “door-dasher” cats which are difficult to contain solely inside.
- Despite owners’ best intentions, cats can be difficult to contain. For example, approximately 40% of lost cats were described by owners as “in-door only” cats (Lord 2010), and most escaped through an open door or garage. Of cat owners (Huang 2018), 15% lose their pet at least once in a 5-year period.
- Even well-constructed (and costly) containment enclosures do not necessarily prevent a cat escaping from the enclosure or the house when a door is opened.
- Lost cats are 13 times more likely to return to owners by means other than a visit to a shelter or pound. Therefore, impounding cats wandering cats decreases their chances of being reunited with their owner.

### **24/7 cat containment is a major barrier to responsible cat ownership/adoption**

The APWF is strongly opposed to 24/7 cat containment which should not be enacted because it will deter people from owning/adopting cats, particularly cat semi-owners, which is the opposite of what is needed to reduce wandering cats.

In particular, 24/7 cat containment creates a major barrier for cat semi-owners to take ownership of the stray cats they are feeding, especially if they are low-income (most wandering stray cats reside in low-income suburbs) and would severely limit Community Cat Programs in Bayside. The success of Community Cat Programs relies heavily on semi-owners taking full ownership of the cats they are feeding, and any barriers to this process will reduce the success of these desexing programs.

Cat feeders and carers (semi-owners) are emotionally attached to their cats, and primarily feed stray cats for compassionate reasons. They are often bonded to their cats as strongly as owners are to their pets and they will go to great lengths to feed their cats rather than let them dehydrate or starve. This is why it is essentially impossible to stop people feeding stray cats. In addition, 90% of semi-owners say the cat helps them through tough times, highlighting the mental health benefits to these carers (Rand 2021).

Moreover, 24/7 cat containment is likely to increase owned pet cat surrender or abandonment due to the imposition of an added responsibility to cat ownership and also result in some cats being relinquished because they display behaviour issues as a result of 24/7 containment. For these reasons, 24/7 cat containment should be rejected and evidence-based strategies including Community Cat Programs implemented instead. Please see below for information on Community Cat Programs.

### **24/7 cat containment has failed in Australia**

Evidence shows that where 24/7 cat containment has been introduced in Australia, it has failed to reduce wandering cats, cat nuisance complaints, cat impoundments and euthanasia, and therefore also failed to reduce any potential wildlife predation. After reviewing the evidence, a number of councils such as Hobsons Bay Council in Melbourne Victoria, have recognised that 24/7 cat containment is not an effective strategy for managing wandering cats.

## 1.) The Yarra Ranges Council in Melbourne, Victoria.

- The Yarra Ranges Council introduced 24/7 cat containment in **2014** (also referred to as a 24-hour cat curfew).
- The stated reason by the Yarra Ranges Council was that 24/7 cat containment 'will be used to assist us in dealing with complaints about wandering cats.'
- A few years after 24/7 cat containment was introduced the Yarra Ranges Council Domestic Animal Management Plan 2018-2021 acknowledged that:

In 2016/17 council received the largest number of formal complaints in relation to cats causing a nuisance (576), an increase of 143% (339) between 2012/13 and 2016/17. **The significant increase in cat complaints, including as a proportion of all complaints, is likely to be a result of the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew in 2014.**

- The number of cats impounded and euthanased has also increased since introducing 24/7 cat containment in 2014, increasing costs to Council for cat management.
- The number of cats impounded reflects the size of the surrounding wandering cat population, suggesting that 24/7 cat containment has not reduced the numbers of wandering cats or the issues they can cause.

### Yarra Ranges Council data

| Measure                 | 2012/13  | 2016/17 | Difference | % Change |
|-------------------------|----------|---------|------------|----------|
| Resident population     | 149, 026 | 152,246 | +3,220     | ^ 2.16%  |
| Cat Nuisance complaints | 237      | 576     | +339       | ^ 143 %  |
| Cats impounded          | 440      | 738     | +298       | ^ 67.7 % |
| Cats euthanased         | 232      | 273     | +41        | ^17.67 % |

## 2.) Casey Council in Melbourne, Victoria

- After 24/7 cat containment was introduced in Casey in 1999, Casey council stated in 2001 that 'Attendance to cat nuisance and related complaints continue to account for around 13% of Council's animal management services'. This demonstrates that 24/7 cat containment did not reduce cat nuisance complaints (Casey Council 2001).
- The number of cats impounded has increased by 296% from 264 in 1998 to 1,047 cats in 2019/2020 since the introduction of 24/7 cat containment.

### Casey Council data

| Measure        | 1998 | 2019/ 2020 | Difference | % Change |
|----------------|------|------------|------------|----------|
| Cats impounded | 264  | 1047       | 783        | ^296%    |

## Enforcement difficulty

Enforcement of 24/7 cat containment is problematic and costly for local governments (Hobsons Bay Council 2014), essentially making it impossible to effectively enforce, for various reasons including:

- Animal Management Officers (AMOs) often work standard hours 8:00am – 4:45pm, seven days per week.
- For OHS reasons, AMOs can only handle and transport cats if they are appropriately confined in a cage. AMOs could not be expected to chase cats that are at large in breach of containment.
- 24/7 cat containment can only be enforced through cat trapping programs and cat-trap loan schemes, which are time consuming and costly for local governments.
  - Cat traps are loaned to residents to assist with dealing with cats that are straying on to their property.
    - If 24/7 cat containment was introduced, it is likely that cat-trap services would need to be expanded with the purchase of additional traps to reduce waiting times, and allocation of additional staff to teach residents to use the trap, with particular emphasis on how to avoid animal welfare issues.
  - Some cats need to be trapped by AMOs, because not all wandering cats are able to be trapped by residents or on private property. Trapping by AMOs is very time-consuming because multiple trips to the site are often required -a trip to set up the trap and then trips to check the trap each morning (for welfare reasons) and reset the trap each evening until the cat is caught. Times required to trap cats can range from an average of 8.9 days to 29 days *per cat* to trap 90% of the target cats (Nutter 2005, Lazenby 2015).
- Such an expansion of the trapping service for wandering cats would be costly to councils, and based on data from councils that have implemented 24/7 containment by-laws, would not provide any measurable benefit in reducing complaints, cat impoundments or cat-related costs.
- Introduction of 24/7 cat containment will lead to community expectations about enforcement and management that are unlikely to be delivered, leading to frustration with and criticism of AMO's and Bayside Council and Councillors.
- The experience of councils that have introduced 24/7 cat containment shows that few infringement notices have been issued following the introduction of 24/7 cat containment. This reinforces that identifying owners of wandering cats and taking enforcement action is not a useful or effective strategy.
- The majority of cats that are trapped and impounded by AMOs are not owned or released to owners. In all of those cases, there is no possibility of taking any enforcement action. These cats would then need to be rehomed or euthanased, increasing costs for cat management and increasing the number of cats euthanased, which negatively affects the mental health of staff involved.

### **Trap, adopt or kill is not effective at reducing the number of wandering cats**

The current approach for managing domestic cats across Australia and in Bayside City is known as 'trap, adopt or kill', which results in low level *ad hoc* culling of cats. Only 5%-10% of the stray population of cats are impounded each year (Tan 2017) resulting in no measurable decrease in the free-roaming wandering cat population. The trap-adopt-kill approach has failed over many decades to reduce the number of free-roaming cats across Australian cities and towns, and it will continue to fail (Boone 2019, NSW Animal Seizures – Pound Data Reports, Yarra Ranges Council, Casey Council).

Trap-adopt-kill leads to a constant cycle of breeding, impoundment and then killing, over and over again causing well-documented negative mental health impacts on council, animal shelter and veterinary staff, and community cat carers, associated with the killing of healthy cats and kittens (Baran 2009, Reeve 2005, Rohlf 2005, Rollin 2011, Tiesman 2015).

The proposed 24/7 cat containment order will increase the number of healthy cats and kittens being killed, exacerbating negative mental health impacts on staff but without actually reducing the overall population of wandering cats or cat-related issues in Bayside City. These increased negative mental health impacts will occur in the context of an already exhausted and in short-supply veterinary sector.

This counter-intuitive dynamic, whereby the overall cat population is sustained despite an increase in the number of healthy cats and kittens being trapped and killed can be explained by:

1. The high reproductive rate of cats which overrides low-level *ad hoc* culling rates.
2. The compassionate behaviour of community members who recognise that stopping the feeding of dependent stray cats is inhumane and they continue to feed stray cats, reflecting the inability to ban compassion with legislation.
3. When the jurisdictional approach to stray cats is 'trap, adopt or kill', people who feed stray cats (semi-owners) can hide their activities rather than seek assistance to desex, for fear of their cats being killed, leading to many unwanted kittens. Alternatively, when the jurisdictional approach is to assist semi-owners to desex their cats for free, and return their cats alive, semi-owners will desex their cats, preventing any unwanted kittens and allowing for the successful reduction and management of cats in the area.
4. Low-level *ad hoc* culling of cats has been shown in the Australian context to actually increase the number of cats due to influxes of new cats after dominant resident cats are removed, and increased survival of juveniles (Lazenby 2015, Miller 2014). Importantly, research shows that high-level culling, where 30% to 60% of cats need to be removed every 6 months to result in a measurable decrease in cat numbers, is unacceptable to the majority of the community and is cost prohibitive for councils (Boone 2019, Miller 2014).

These factors will lead to the failure of the proposed 24/7 cat containment to reduce wandering cats in Bayside City.

## Cat definitions

The APWF notes that the Draft Bayside DAMP states under Activities 'Patrols to collect stray and feral cats'.

It is critically important for protecting native wildlife that Bayside Council recognises the difference between feral cats and domestic cats. This distinction is important because it impacts:

1. the methods available for successful management of cats to reduce their numbers and their potential for wildlife predation
2. the actual threat to native wildlife

The RSPCA's manual for Best Practice in Domestic Cat Management (RSPCA 2018) defines domestic cats as those with some dependence (direct or indirect) on humans, and subcategorised into **owned**, **semi-owned** and **unowned cats**.

**Owned cats** are identified with and cared for by a specific person and are directly dependent on humans. They are usually sociable, although sociability varies.

**Semi-owned cats** are fed or are provided with some other care by people who do not consider they own them. These cats are of varying sociability, with many socialised to humans, and they may be associated with one or more households.

**Unowned cats** are indirectly dependent on humans, may have casual and temporary interactions with humans, and are of varying sociability, including some who are unsocialised to humans. Unowned cats often live in groups or colonies in urban environments, where common aggregation places include industrial sites, universities, rubbish tips, food outlets, and fishing harbours.

**Feral cats** can be distinguished from domestic cats because they are unowned, unsocialised, have no relationship with or dependence on humans, survive by hunting or scavenging, and live and reproduce in the wild. For practical policy and management purposes, there is a high probability that a cat in Australia found more than 2-3 km from the nearest human habitation is a feral cat (Roetman 2017).

**Feral cats** are very different from domestic cats which live around where people live. Based on these definitions which are recognised by government and the RSPCA, wandering cats trapped in Bayside are domestic cats. Those deemed "feral" based on behaviour, are in fact domestic cats. They may be poorly socialised semi-owned or unowned stray cats, or highly stressed owned pet cats with no identification (no microchip).

*An ongoing issue is that feral cat impacts are often wrongly attributed to domestic cats, even though they are two very distinct populations with different behaviour and ecology.*

## There is no evidence domestic cats in urban areas impact native wildlife populations

The impact of feral cats on native wildlife in natural environments is well-documented. Surprisingly however, very scarce research exists on domestic cat wildlife impacts. The impacts (if any) of domestic cats on native wildlife populations is largely unknown. Contrary to popular belief, there is actually no definitive scientific evidence demonstrating population viability or conservation impacts at a population level on Australian native animals by domestic cats living around people. Despite this



lack of evidence, domestic cats in Australia still receive significant blame for negative impacts on native wildlife populations.

Multiple Australian studies were unable to detect a measurable impact in urban areas of domestic cats on native mammals (MacLagan 2018, Lilith 2010), or birds (Grayson 2007), but found that vegetation quality, housing density, distance from bushland and size of bushland were significant factors. Other studies demonstrate the positive impact cat predation has by reducing the numbers of rats that predate bird nests (Matthews 1999).

Very importantly, domestic cats that are obtaining food intentionally or unintentionally from humans predate significantly fewer animals than feral cats which have to hunt to supply all their nutritional needs (Murphy 2019, Woinarski 2017).

A recent Australian study (Franklin 2021) which analysed pet cat and dog predation, challenges longstanding assumptions and beliefs about the impacts of pet cats on native wildlife. The key findings included that not all pet cats were observed to catch prey which concurs with previous research. Critically, of the pets observed to catch prey, the median numbers of native animals caught per dog or cat over 6 months were actually low. Only a very small minority of cats were prolific hunters countering common claims that all cats are efficient and prolific hunters that kill many animals. This finding also potentially invalidates often-used calculations estimating the number of native animals preyed on by pet cats.

Of great significance, most prey animals in the study were common native or introduced species suggesting that cats may not be having a significant negative effect on these populations. As other researchers have concluded, hunting by domestic cats appears to be of relatively minor conservation concern compared with habitat loss and urban development. Therefore, efforts directed at habitat preservation are likely to be the most effective strategy to protect wildlife, as opposed to pet control regulations.

Analysis of the stomach contents of trapped urban stray cats in the City of Brisbane revealed that the only prey species consumed were introduced black rats (BBC Invasive Times Newsletter). Similarly, cats impounded by the Southern Downs Shire (Qld) found predominantly cat food, house mice and carrion (eastern grey kangaroos) and no species of conservation concern in stomach and colon samples (Leis 2021).

These findings contrast with the well-documented adverse effects of feral cats in undisturbed environments.

False blame for native wildlife impacts directed at domestic cats living in urban cities is very dangerous and harmful because it is used as a justification for the use of lethal control methods for domestic cats. This perpetuates the unnecessary killing of healthy cats and kittens, and the concomitant severe mental health damage to council pound, animal shelter and veterinary staff tasked with killing these healthy cats and kittens. This false blame can also be used as a justification for cruelty towards cats increasing acts of cruelty towards cats and increasing animal pain and suffering.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategies other than ineffective containment are urgently needed to humanely reduce wandering cats. The following recommendations are **evidence-based strategies** which *will* effectively reduce the number of wandering cats in Bayside City. These strategies will also reduce cat nuisance complaints, costs to council, cat impoundments and euthanasia, and potential wildlife predation.

1. Implement Community Cat Programs
2. Promote strategic feeding to keep cats inside at night time
3. Provide humane cat deterrent devices for hire to residents
4. Exclusion fencing in areas of high conservation value
5. Native wildlife habitat preservation
6. Native wildlife road safety measure

### **Recommendation 1: Implement Community Cat Programs**

Community Cat Programs are science-based and provide an effective and humane way to reduce the number of wandering cats including unowned and semi-owned stray cats. Community Cat Programs are based on high intensity, free desexing programs targeted to areas with high cat impoundment or high cat complaints. Locations of high cat impoundment and cat complaints to council are typically low socioeconomic areas.

Desexing, microchipping and registration are provided for free in target areas because cost is the main barrier to desexing, not lack of knowledge or education about desexing (Rand 2021, APWF 2021). Community Cat Programs align with the Draft Bayside DAMP Objective to 'reduce the number of cats and dogs euthanised by encouraging pet desexing' and the pre-existing subsidised desexing programs. However, it is critical to actually provide totally FREE desexing, microchipping and registration in high priority target areas and subsidised desexing in lower priority areas, in order to effectively reduce the number of wandering cats.

- Community Cat Programs are aimed predominantly at desexing owned entire cats, and stray cats being cared for by semi-owners (people who feed and care for the stray cat but do not perceive themselves as the owner). Very importantly, most semi-owners will take full ownership of the cats and their details are registered on the cat's microchip and registration databases, successfully transforming most semi-owned stray cats to fully owned desexed cats, microchipped and registered to an owner.
- Community Cat Programs facilitate the adoption of adult cats and kittens into new homes which increases the proportion of responsibly owned cats
- Community Cat programs assist people caring for multiple cats on private property, around businesses or other locations to have all cats desexed, microchipped and registered to an owner for free, and the cats continue to be fed and responsibly cared for. In this way, multiple semi-owned stray cats are converted to fully owned desexed cats, microchipped and registered to an owner as part of the Program.
- Cats enrolled in Community Cat Programs cannot produce any unwanted kittens and will not contribute to overpopulation.

Scientific evidence, including from Australia, repeatedly demonstrates that Community Cat Programs effectively reduce the number of wandering cats overtime when they are targeted to areas of high complaints or cat impoundments, and performed with high intensity (Cotterell 2021, APWF 2021, City of Banyule 2020, Spehar & Wolf 2019, Gunther 2021, Boone 2019, Kreisler 2019, Swarbrick 2018, Levy 2014, Tan 2017, Levy 2003). A number of Australian local councils have implemented Community Cat Programs for example, Banyule and Brimbank Councils in Melbourne, Victoria.

Recent Australian data demonstrate that Community Cat Programs are cost effective and result in a 30-50% decrease in council pound cat impoundment, more than an 80% reduction in cat euthanasia and a 30-50% decrease in cat nuisance complaints over 1 to 3 years, with these parameters reflecting the decrease in the surrounding wandering cat population (Cotterell 2021, City of Banyule 2020, APWF 2021). Please see attached poster based on the City of Banyule data that was presented at the World Small Animal Veterinary Conference 2021.

Data from the **City of Banyule in Melbourne, Victoria** demonstrate the efficacy and cost savings to local government when implementing CCPs (City of Banyule 2020). The Banyule program started in 2012-13 and offers free desexing, microchipping, and registration for all non-desexed cats in the targeted suburbs. Those who accept the offer to enrol the cat they are caring for, complete paperwork for the microchip database and register the cat in their name with the local government. Of those who enrol a cat, approximately 20% are semi-owners and 80% are owners.

This strategy has reduced council impoundments from 1,004 cats in 2010-11 (8 cats/1,000 residents) to 152 in 2019-2020 (1 cat/1,000 residents), and euthanasia from 578 to 24 cats/year (from 5 to 0.2 cats/1,000 residents). Between 2017 and 2020, the council used a targeted approach for the desexing strategy, and over that 3-year period, impoundments decreased by 67% and euthanasia by 76%. The program has also significantly reduced cat-related complaints where cat-related calls decreased from 11 calls to 4 calls/1000 residents in just three years after implementing a targeted Community Cat Program.

Target areas were selected using existing information held by the Banyule council, which was used to identify cat hotspots in the Banyule area using the addresses from which most of the cat-related calls originated.

The total cost to council from 2012-13 to 2019-20 was \$60,000 for desexing, and calculated savings from reduced cat impoundments alone was \$397,500 (Federal Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia 2021).

Please also see the attached Info sheet: How to Implement a Community Cat Program 11-Steps.

#### **Community Cat Programs:**

- Reduce the number of wandering cats
- Reduce cat nuisance complaints
- Reduce cat impoundment and euthanasia of healthy cats and kittens
- Reduce costs to councils
- Reduce wildlife predation
- Reduce cat nuisance behaviours such as fighting, mating, urine spraying and roaming.

Critically, because Community Cat Programs are based on desexing rather than euthanasing cats, they protect council pound, animal shelter, veterinary staff, and community cat carers from the well-documented severe mental health impacts caused by the killing of healthy cats and kittens.

Cost is the main barrier to desexing

Desexing, microchipping and registration are provided for FREE in target areas because cost is the main barrier to desexing, not lack of knowledge or education about the benefits of desexing (Rand 2021, APWF 2021). Research conducted by APWF shows that for 90% of residents with undesexed cats, cost is the major reason for not desexing. In low socioeconomic areas, 25% or more residents are in households (average of 2.4 people) that live on less than \$650 per week. The cost of desexing and microchipping a female cat often exceeds \$300, and 89% of people enrolling a cat in a Community Cat Program say they could not afford more than \$200. In fact, annual family income was the strongest predictor of whether cats in the household were desexed (Chu 2009).

For this reason, Community Cat programs provide free desexing in high priority target areas and subsidised desexing in lower priority areas.

Bayside City door-knocking program

The APWF notes in the Draft DAMP that Bayside undertakes door-knocking in relation to identification and registration. It is critically important that the door-knocking is associated with a philosophy of helping people and their pets, not from a compliance/punitive perspective. The process should be designed to make it possible for people to be responsible.

A punitive enforcement/compliance approach to registration is not supported by the APWF. We are very concerned that this type of approach may create a negative relationship between the Council and cat owners/carers in the Bayside community. This could then seriously compromise positive engagement with cat semi-owners in target areas. Positive engagement with cat semi-owners is critical to the success of Community Cat Programs in reducing wandering cat numbers. Punitive compliance action may cause semi-owners to hide their activities for fear of financial penalties or euthanasia of their cats, rather than facilitate desexing, thereby preventing improvements to the situation.

Harnessing the rehoming power of cat semi-owners

With 4,000 adult residents feeding around 6,000 semi-owned cats in Bayside City each day, Community Cat Programs represent a significant avenue to rehome stray cats and will lead to a significant reduction in the number of wandering and unwanted cats and kittens, and successful management of cats in Bayside. Such an increase in the number of cats that are owned, desexed, microchipped and registered is significant, given that the number of semi-owned cats is estimated to be 20-60% of the owned cat population, depending on the location (Animal Medicines Australia 2021, Rand 2019, Toukhsati 2007, Zito 2015).

The Draft Bayside DAMP states that in 2020/2021 43 cats were impounded and 14 cats were euthanased (32.55% euthanasia rate). The DAMP goes on to state that 13 of the euthanased cats were considered either 'semi-wild or aggressive/unsuitable temperament for rehoming'.

Firstly, all cats in Bayside will be domestic cats. Secondly, if trapped cats are not allowed at least 3 or more days to settle in an appropriately calm environment after being trapped, even friendly

socialised pet cats can be wrongly mistaken for unsocialised cats or feral cats if they display fearful behaviour such as hissing (Slater 2013). Behaviours such as hissing, growling, and striking reflect the cat's fear as a result of being trapped and confined in a frightening environment such as a council animal management facility or trap cage. Behaviour does not differentiate if a cat is domestic and highly stressed, or feral (no reliance on humans for food and at least 2-3kms from any humans). In fact, trapped pet cats can respond with more "feral" behaviours than truly feral cats.

A better approach than euthanasing healthy cats with temperaments unsuitable for rehoming, which will traumatise staff and community cat carers, is to use the existing door-knocking program to identify semi-owners and semi-owned cats as part of a Community Cat Program. Bayside City should door-knock in areas of high cat complaints or cat impoundments. Once semi-owners are located, they should be offered free desexing, microchipping and registration for the cats they are feeding. It is absolutely critical that semi-owned cats are returned alive to their carers, most of whom will take full ownership of the cat. This will build trust and enable more semi-owned cats to be located and desexed to ensure they do not produce unwanted kittens.

The APWF also noted comments on the Community Feedback Map stating that "since the level crossing removal was done there seems to be a lot of stray cats around the rail line". Instead of trapping these cats and euthanasing any cats displaying temperaments unsuitable for rehoming which will lead to more cats migrating into the area and a vicious cycle of trapping and killing, the APWF strongly recommends that Bayside Animal Management Officers instead door-knock around the railway line to find the semi-owners feeding these cats. Once located, semi-owners should be offered free desexing, microchipping and registration for all of their cats and the cats returned to their location to continue to be fed and cared for. Kittens and friendly adults can be rehomed to reduce cat numbers, and carers/semi-owners encouraged to take ownership of the cats where possible. Cat carers should be assisted to implement best practice in caring methods to minimise complaints, such as feeding only enough food that can be consumed in 30 minutes (APWF 2022). In this way, staff and semi-owners will not suffer the negative mental health effects of killing these cats unnecessarily.

24/7 cat containment must not be enacted because it would prevent this effective approach to stray cats and instead perpetuate the ineffective and damaging trap-adopt-kill model. Furthermore, if semi-owners are prevented from taking full ownership of their cats this will also lead to litters of unwanted kittens being born which would otherwise have been prevented.

**Recommendation 2:** Promote strategic feeding to keep cats in over night

Night-time is when cats are most active and travel the longest distances (Roetman 2017). It is also the time when most threatened species preyed by cats in urban and peri-urban areas (nocturnal mammals) are active. Night-time is the most dangerous time for cats as they roam further and are more likely to fight with other cats, be attacked by dogs, and injured or killed by cars. Strategic feeding keeps cats indoors from dusk to dawn. It is highly effective and is free for residents to implement.

**Strategic feeding:** Cat owners should feed one-third of their cat's daily food in the morning, one third at dusk, and the last third when they go to bed. Remove uneaten food after 20 to 30 minutes after the morning and dusk feeds. Owners need to close windows, screens and doors before the dusk meal is fed, to prevent their cat from leaving the house after it has eaten. The evening feed provides additional security that the cat is indoors for the night.

The APWF recommends that Bayside City promotes strategic feeding to Bayside residents instead of expanding to 24/7 cat containment.

**Recommendation 3: Provide humane cat deterrent devices for hire to residents**

To help residents deter wandering cats from their property, councils should provide humane cat deterrents including motion-activated water sprinklers and non-toxic sprays.

**Recommendation 4: Exclusion fencing in areas of high conservation value**

Councils should identify areas where threatened, vulnerable and endangered native species are located, and where possible, implement exclusion fencing around these areas of high conservation value. Where councils do not provide exclusion fencing in areas of high conservation value, councils should instead provide free cat containment systems to residents in those areas.

**Recommendation 5: Native wildlife habitat preservation**

Councils should focus on native wildlife habitat preservation and the prevention of any further land clearing for human use such as urban development or agriculture, given that habitat loss is the number one threat to native wildlife in Australia (Evans 2011, Australia State of the Environment Reports 2011 and 2016).

- Importantly, the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation dashboard (2021) shows that in 2019-20 in NSW, 402 threatened species were rescued as a result loss of suitable environment, 290 were rescued as a result of collisions with motor vehicles, 127 as a result of dog attacks and 31 because of cat attacks.

**Recommendation 6: Native wildlife road safety measures**

Councils should implement native wildlife road safety measures to mitigate wildlife road strike, particularly in areas of risk for wildlife species of conservation concern.

The APWF would be happy to discuss these issues in greater detail with Bayside City Council. We also provide a 2-hour Discovery Session to local governments. The purpose of the session is to discuss contemporary urban cat management and key factors to consider in building a considered, strategic and evidence-based approach. The specific objectives are to:

- ✓ Explore current pain points in the area (including understanding current council data and how this compares with other councils)
- ✓ Introduce principles for effective urban cat management (based on the latest international evidence and research)
- ✓ Start a strategic discussion about options available to the City moving forward.

Yours sincerely,

Jacquie Rand | Executive Director and Chief Scientist  
Australian Pet Welfare Foundation

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20 March 2022

**Re: Community Consultation – Domestic Animal Management Plan**

Dear Bayside Council,

My husband and I purchased our 'forever' home on [REDACTED] Beaumaris at a competitive auction in June 2021. We fought hard at auction, ending up with a whopping mortgage to live in our desired location, within walking distance of Rickett's Point off-leash beach. We don't (can't) have children. Our two dogs are our family. Following the sudden death of a previous dog to heatstroke (in winter), it was important for us to be close to an off-leash area with water access so that we can ensure our dogs can cool down on a walk to avoid reliving the loss of dog to heatstroke. This was the number one reason we purchased our home in Beaumaris, and we love it.

Lockdowns were tough on us and our dogs. We previously frequented an off-leash park (outside of Bayside, in our former neighbourhood) however one of our dogs was attacked, unprovoked, which rendered off-leash parks unsafe for us, and our dog is now nervous of other dogs. Avoiding off-leash dog parks is also the advice of many vets and behaviourists given some dogs become excited and aggressive in enclosed 'pack' environments. See below a sample of recent posts from the Bayside Dog Owner Facebook page, from parties not associated to us, demonstrating the same. The only place we have quiet off-leash enjoyment with our dogs is on the beach. Dogs simply do not attack other dogs when in the water. Hence why we moved to Beaumaris.

The previously proposed removal of off-leash access adjacent to the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Fourth Street to the Beaumaris Sea Scouts) is removing off-leash beach access for all of Beaumaris. Beaumaris is known for its dog community, not to mention, being an inclusive suburb with beach access for all. One of the key benefits of Rickett's Point is the lack of steps or walls to cross which allows all abilities (humans and dogs) to reach the beach with ease. I am not sure that this can be replaced anywhere in Bayside (referring to 'no net loss' – which should mean no net loss of beach off-leash access in the same suburb, rather than no net loss of off-leash access anywhere in Bayside). Even if it was, Beaumaris residents deserve to be able to access the local Beaumaris beach with their dogs; and Rickett's Point was an off-leash beach before it was a sanctuary.

Whilst I understand the importance of protecting the marine sanctuary, please consider retaining part of Rickett's Point off-leash access, **at the very least for Beaumaris locals**. This can be the area north of the rock islands, away from the primary section of the sanctuary, where the birds rest. I would recommend increased signage and educational prompts for 'new' and perhaps 'unaware' patrons to understand the importance of not using the area to the south off-leash, and to educate owners about keeping their dogs away from the rock islands where the birds rest, and other sensitive areas – which I suspect, many people are unaware of. And I agree that we should be able to approach dog owners when their dogs are not acting within the designations, without fear of aggression. Again, this comes down to awareness and education.

Finally, I would like to highlight some points for consideration:

- It is rare for a dog to interfere with the sanctuary. I would recommend you patrol the beach to monitor this. In my experience, as a daily user, dogs are simply paddling in the water or walking alongside their owners. They are not chasing wildlife or causing nuisance. For the few dogs that do go into the water close to the rock islands, this requires education – perhaps these owners are simply unaware. And perhaps they are not Bayside residents – hence they may be missing the message.



- The vast amount of dog owners pick up not only their own dog's poo, but rubbish left by humans visiting the beach. I myself regularly pick up beer bottles and plastic bags, almost daily when taking my dogs to the beach in the mornings.
- A dip in the water can sometimes be the only way a dog can exercise without pain or fear. Examples include elderly dogs, nervous / anxious dogs, dogs with limb issues and dogs with arthritics. Examples of humans that rely on off-leash access to the beach with their dogs include elderly humans, nervous / anxious humans and humans with mental/physical health issues.
- Taking a daily stroll on the beach with one's dog is a huge mental health benefit for residents of Bayside. We learned this all too well through our two years of restrictions. Our off-leash beach saved many people's mental health during this time, and in extreme examples, I have no doubt that it saved relationships and potentially even has saved lives.
- There is no alternative off-leash access to the foreshore in Beaumaris. Whilst there may be alternatives in other parts of Bayside, is this fair on Beaumaris residents to take this away when the alternatives are not within walking distance, may not have disabled access and are already too busy? Mentone is not an alternative in Bayside. And Mentone beach is difficult to access and already crowded. The vast amount of Beaumaris residents walk to Rickett's Point with their dogs. Perhaps, like us, some of the frequent Rickett's Point visitors purchased in Beaumaris to be able to walk to the beach with their dogs. Is it fair to take this away? Our Council rates reflect the location we chose to live in, close to the beach. Will these reduce if our access to the beach is restricted?
- Off-leash parks are unsuitable for nervous dogs. Off Leash parks are not always the solution. There is no means for dogs to cool down in these parks. And they are difficult when busy – which would be the case if Rickett's Point off-leash access was removed.
- Bayside rate payers pay the highest dog registration fees in all of Melbourne. Please listen to our needs here.

Please continue to work with residents to find a way that the sanctuary can be protected, whilst we and our furry kids can still go for a dip off-leash – it is what Beaue is all about – **beach access for all**.

Finally, I would like to recognise and thank you for the refined and amended message that appeared in the 'Have your Say' email of 17<sup>th</sup> March and the Final Draft DAMP. It appears as though Council is listening, and I am grateful and appreciative of how quickly this message has changed to support all Bayside resident's interests. Congratulations on being a dynamic Council.

Thank you sincerely.

**Linda German**

*Attachments: Examples of recent Bayside Dog Owners Facebook Page re: Off-Leash Parks*



Recent posts to Bayside Dog Owners facebook page (within the past 2 weeks) on why off-leash parks may not be the best solution to 'no net loss' of off-leash access from the Beaumaris foreshore.



Like Comment

**Bayside Dog Owners Group - Melbourne, Australia** · 21 m · E

My 5month old Golden Retriever - Scout - was savagely attacked at Oak st off leash park earlier this week.

It was unprovoked, Scout wasn't anywhere near or playing with the other dog, he was just by my side sniffing the grass. The other dog launched itself on my pup and was biting hard and growling, Scout was yelping, and didn't stop. It was very scary, I was trying to get Scout away and pull the other dog off but the other dog kept attacking him - so I had to lie in the mud on-top of Scout to stop the attacks.

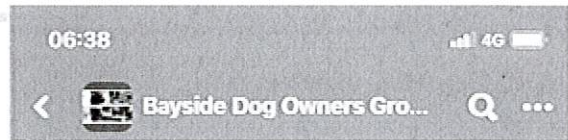
Scout has a punctured ear, is scratched and has scabs. I took him straight to the vet in concourse, they were so lovely, saw us right away, patched him up, gave him an injection and even bathed him, as we were both covered in mud. But \$120 thanks very much.

The other owner just stood there while I was screaming and pulling her dog off, and offered no help. Scout was pinned to the ground, bleeding, crying and yelping, it was awful.

Please keep your dog on a lead if you can't control it.

👍👍👍 8 10 comments

Like Comment Send



You and 26 others 15 comments

Like Comment Send

Write a comment...

**Brenda Buchholz Scout** · 3 d · E

Got back 20mins ago from Cheltenham Park and saw a dog attack. Was already getting into my car but saw from there that they managed to separate the dogs ok after the poor attacked dog yelped and yelped and was obviously hurt.

I've seen the owner with this attacking dog (off leash) a few times at this park and have noticed it being aggressive towards other dogs.

I felt like going up to him with a red card saying "put a muzzle on" or at least "keep your dog on leash", or "here is the name of a few dog trainers".

I don't know - what do you in this case?  
So scary to witness.

👍👍👍 32 55 comments

Like Comment





# RESPONSE TO CAT CONTAINMENT IN BAYSIDE

3 April 2022

Dear BCC,

I'm writing to express my strong objection to the planned changes to the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) concerning introduction of permanent cat containment (day and night). Our family owns a ragdoll who is registered, desexed, microchipped, has a bell on his collar, and abides by curfew rules. We feel we are being punished with these new plans despite following these rules, all because we own a cat.

My objections are based on the following:

## **Poor evidence to support your decision**

- A strong majority of respondents did NOT support the introduction of cat containment (66%).
- There is NO information supplied pertaining to the RSPCA's support for cat containment provided in this plan. I suspect that the greatest risk to cats is during nighttime, for which cat curfew exists already – and should probably be enforced.
- Based on responses to the survey, awareness and compliance seem to be the greater issue – not cats altogether.
- Additionally, I am deeply concerned with the nature in which this decision was socialized. It was very well hidden in a 40 page document which was only communicated recently through social media – weeks after the plan came out. I feel that council no longer considers consultation as a requirement to make decisions, and I fear that they will proceed despite strong objection to what will negatively impact on the lives of its residents and their beloved animals.

## **Cruelty to Bayside cats & a highly impractical solution**

If it was possible to keep our cat indoors, we would. From the moment we got our cat, despite him having been raised indoors, he would meow incessantly until let outside. Additionally we have children who are constantly opening the doors and forgetting to close them, so it is near impossible to keep our cat inside or contained.

Our cat loves to spend a lot of time basking under trees in our backyard, and in the hedges of our front yard. We vigorously follow the cat curfew requirements, however placing him under 24/7 containment would be an inhumane act to a cat who loves to explore his own area.

### **Creating expensive eyesores to accommodate requirement of cat containment**

Given our cat loves to spend much of his time in the front yard, and we live in a heritage listed property, I seriously question the likelihood and practicality of introducing a cat run around our gardens in the front, which leaves him with only the backyard. Cat runs and cat containment areas are not practical for all houses and will become prohibitively expensive if all cat owners are suddenly expected to acquire these for their homes. I personally do not want to see cat runs and cages in my backyard and it will seriously devalue our property as I have yet to see an attractive option.

### **Recommended approach**

- Your survey indicated MOST residents were not aware of current cat curfews. As a resident who acquired a cat last year, I can attest that I've seen MANY cats roaming our backyard after curfew. In addition to this, an alarming number of residents are not aware that they need to desex and register their cats. It seems far more logical to me to directly address these gaps through effective communication to change resident behavior that will reduce the risk to pets and to the environment.
- Focus on removal of feral cats - of which there are many. I organized a cat cage which captured a feral cat - NOT a domestic whilst our cat was a kitten. This was a very large and highly aggressive animal that had been pacing up and down outside our glass doors at night in front of our kitten (who was inside). Removing these real pests would greatly benefit the environment and are the responsibility of council.
- Birdsafe cat collars allow birds to more easily see cats from a distance and escape safely in time. An independent, two-season field study by Dr. Susan Willson at St. Lawrence University published in the Global Ecology and Conservation Journal (GECJ) in 2015 concluded that the **Birdsafe collars reduced bird fatalities by a whopping 87%!** Additionally, this collar does not inhibit their ability to hunt rodents, which cats are very effective in also removing.

Don't punish the cat owners of Bayside (especially those who already have their cat registered, desexed, and following curfew rules) with these sudden draconian measures to protect wildlife. Some pragmatic and iterative changes as mentioned above are far more effective in encouraging adoption than sudden confinement. It will be impossible for us to force our cat indoors permanently and I do not wish to defile my house with hideous cat cages, which are likely to become prohibitively expensive (especially if everyone is trying to procure these at the same time) and will cause offence to neighbours as well. Not everyone in Bayside wishes to own a dog - let's make pet ownership equitable.

Sincerely, [REDACTED]

REJECTION OF PLAN FOR CHANGES TO CURRENT BAYSIDE CAT CURFEW

I am writing to complain about the draft plan to completely contain cats indoors (day/night) as per the Bayside Council Draft Animal Strategy for 2022-25.

Whilst I respect the current nighttime curfew on the basis it protects native wildlife I totally disagree with the daytime curfew. Cats deserve fresh air, sunlight and exercise as much as any pet. They are also nocturnal hunters so it is very rare for any species to be threatened during the day. This is why the 65% of cat owners let their cats out during the day and only 17% at night (once a week or more).

I note that in 2020/2021 only 43 cats were impounded of the 3659 registered in Bayside. This is a tiny 1.18% showing that most cat owners are responsible.

I totally reject any changes to the current cat curfew.

I will also add that the Bayside Council have been very sneaky with this proposal which is hidden away in back pages of your document. It has been in NONE of the Bayside magazines/circulars including the recent one focusing on dogs.

Upset resident.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Brighton East,

Vic 3187



I am requesting Council to reconsider the proposed introduction of Day and Night cat containment in Bayside as outlined in the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP).

While I am fully supportive of the current night curfew for cats, I strongly feel the proposed changes while well-intentioned, are unjustly restrictive for an urban area such as Bayside, and will have limited impact at the expense of increased compliance costs for Council and reduced mental wellbeing for impacted residents and their pets based on the following.

Firstly: Only 33% of respondents in Council's Community Research Survey were supportive of day and night cat containment. Contrast this against the key recommendation of the 2021 DAMP Bayside Community Research Summary Report: to prohibit dog off-leash access to any bushland, heathland and/or conservation areas, including Ricketts Point, an approach supported by more than 50% of respondents. The response from Council to this key recommendation; noting that there was no key recommendation to introduce day and night cat containment, is only to undertake a review of off-leash restrictions in year 4 of the DAMP.

Secondly: While cat containment comes in many formats, there is significant cost attached to almost all approaches bar locking a cat inside a home. Cat runs are expensive, and I fear will not be financially sustainable for some cat owners. I am also concerned that cats could be abandoned as a result of this policy.

Thirdly: Pet ownership has shown to have many positive impacts on individuals and by extension the community. Introducing Day and Night cat containment will most likely limit the ability and attraction of cat ownership, and lead to poorer health outcomes for affected Bayside residents, with 65% of cat owners surveyed indicating that their cats were outdoors weekly or more often.

And lastly: The efficacy of cat containment is questionable.

RSPCA found in 2018 that: "Overall, councils with cat containment regulations have not been able to demonstrate any measureable reduction in cat complaints or cats wandering at large following the introduction of the regulations" (RSPCA. 2018. Identifying Best Practice Domestic Cat Management in Australia). This report also noted that "More data are needed on the impact of cat containment on prevention of wildlife prevention, health and welfare of confined pet cats".

Recent research found that concerns about the impact of pet dogs and cats on native wildlife populations in Australia have shaped pet control legislation, despite there being scant research on their impact in urban areas (Franklin, M., Rand, J., Marston, L., Morton, J. 2021. Do Pet Cats Deserve the Disproportionate Blame for Wildlife Predation Compared to Pet Dogs?. Frontiers in Veterinary Science. 25 Oct 2021.). This research found that among pets observed to have caught prey, a larger proportion of dogs caught native prey than cats, whereas the most common prey caught by cats were introduced species such as rats, mice and rabbits. This paper also noted that other research has found that in urban areas, cat and

dog population density had no correlation to native bird abundance, however, there were strong correlations to housing density and distance from bushland, suggesting that habitat destruction and degradation were critical factors rather than cats or dogs. This report also found that "...rather than attempts to confine all cats through education and legislation (and associated costs to local governments for compliance), efforts might be best directed at targeted strategies in locations where there are threatened species, such as engaging with the community to identify and assist owners with containment solutions for cats which are prolific hunters, and implementing habitat restoration, exclusion fencing, or utilize guardian animals for more targeted protection of wildlife."

In contrast, I am surprised to see that Council's Biodiversity Action Plan 2018-2027 have no targeted programs on fox control, despite foxes killing 300 million native animals in Australia every year, and RSPCA having named Melbourne as the fox capital of the world.

In conclusion, I urge Council to abandon the introduction of a policy that is not backed-up by scientific evidence; that is likely to have negative impacts on residents' mental wellbeing; and that comes at a real cost to Council and by association rate payers in the form of compliance related costs.

Noise pollution is severely affecting quality of life in Bayside. There are multiple causes which daily interrupt sleep and lead to chronic stress and exhaustion:

- placement of heating, watering, pool pump systems near bedrooms of neighbours and running them daily at times earlier than the legal limits (Our neighbours run them from 5am daily. This is on a new build house, where regulations could easily have avoided these issues. Instead, we area sadly consigned to years of interrupted sleep and chronic problems.)
- allowing dogs to bark for extended sessions outdoors in the early morning. (Our neighbours allow their dog to bark outdoors on weekends from 7am to 8.30am, and at many other times of day. We have had two dogs over a period of 14 years: we have trained them not to bark outside, and if they do, we bring them in the house and stop them.)
- building work where builders arrive on site prior to 7am daily and then play loud outdoor music all day until they leave. (Building work has interrupted our sleep patterns for 2.5 years due to neighbours building on both sides.)

There needs to be

- much stricter enforcement of noise regulations generally,
- much stricter laws around placement of heating systems, pool pumps and watering systems, with distance exclusions from neighbours bedrooms that are enforced through building checks, especially on new builds
- much more frequent clear education and reminders about what the times and at what decibel level that people can run heating systems, pool pumps and watering systems, and allow their dog to bark outside
- the hours for dog barking, and the decibel accepted level for perception in neighbours' homes, should be specifically included within the DAMP document.
- regulations that builders must not play music out loud during working hours in residential areas. If they wish to listen to music they must use headphones.





I would like to make a statement And Have My Say, re **the Domestic Animal Management Plan** proposed changed to cat management.

I have always been a responsible cat owner... abiding by council rules and regulations and keeping my cat indoors during the night before it gets dark. However, I am voicing my **strong opposition to the proposed day confinement for cats**. During daylight hours my Siamese cat loves to be outdoors lie in the grass, inside my walled garden, with me, and when I am out. He has a cat flap and can enter the house for day naps and cannot get out again. When he is in our garden, he sometimes climbs the high fence and visits one of our elderly neighbours ...which she adores and is a health bonus to her.

If I were to lock him indoors all day, he would destroy the house furnishings and be anxious and upset, plus my neighbour would not get to see him on the occasion he goes to visit her. I do not know I could cope with his pacing and screaming....to get out with me to be in the garden. He is my close companion and is a health benefit to me also but locked indoors would cause much upset to both of us. Cats need to experience outdoor fresh air but cannot be walked on a leash like a dog.

I have read the Draft Management Plan and noted that **only 33%** of cat owners thought it was a good idea to keep cats indoors *all day*. Who cares if a large majority of cat owners say their cats are outside in daylight hours...That is normal and is not contrary to the current law, therefore it is not an argument about locking cats up at night?

Over the past 3 years number of cats impounded has DECREASED from 81 to 43...This is a big improvement. Only 14 cats needed to be euthanised...also a decrease down for 30. There is *a trend of a decreasing problem*.

So why is council proposing these changes to cat ownership management? For the 66% majority of owners? No! For the increasing problem with cats being out at night? No! No evidence...in fact the data shows the opposite.

Does the Council want to reduce cat ownership? Not letting people have their cats in their garden may be a deterrent to getting a cat at all. The number of cats owned in Bayside is already 1000 less than years ago. (4411 in 2013, down to 3659 in 2022). So, Council resources dealing with cats, must be less than ever before.

Already stated in the Council Paper...was the problem that a large majority of cat owners were unaware of the current rules for keeping cats (rego, microchipping, inside at night etc). Surely the answer is to better inform and enforce the current rules (as mentioned in the DAMP), rather than adding another rule!

Another concern in keeping cats permanently indoors in the daytimes...is that large amounts of kitty litter will be going into the council rubbish bins. My cat does not need kitty litter, as he does his business in my garden. If 66% of cat owners were to suddenly use kitty -litter...it will be another waste management problem. By insisting cats stay indoors in daylight hours, subsequently needing to use kitty-litter (a lot!), council will be adding to this problem, instead of reducing waste.

For all the reasons described, this proposed night cat curfew and keeping cats locked indoors all their lives, makes no sense, and could be seen as a stunt by council...to be seen to "do something"... regardless of lack of the coherent argument and good reasoning. Not to mention *democratic* majority opinion.

Please let cat owners have their cats outside in their gardens, so they are free to be cats, and we can enjoy them, instead of living in a society that lives indoors day and night. I bought a house with a garden...not a flat, so I could have my cat in the garden during the day.

Please re-consider Bayside, and do not make these changes and *add* this additional rule to cat ownership. Education and enforcement of the current rules should be the line of action.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
Bayside Resident Brighton  
[REDACTED]



# #587 OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH A COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM BASED ON HIGH-INTENSITY STERILIZATION OF OWNED AND SEMI-OWNED CATS

## IN TARGET AREAS J. Cotterell<sup>1,2,3</sup>, J. Rand<sup>2,3</sup>, Z. Ahmadi<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>City of Banyule, Animal Management, Banyule, VIC, Australia; <sup>2</sup>Australian Pet Welfare Foundation, Kenmore, QLD; <sup>3</sup>School of Veterinary Science, University of Queensland, Gatton, QLD.

### INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Outcomes for cats in municipal animal facilities and shelters are considerably worse than for dogs in most countries where straying and nuisance cats are impounded by authorities (1).
- ❑ Return to owner rates are usually much lower than for dogs, because few impounded cats are identified (1).
- ❑ Many stray cats in urban areas are semi-owned – they are provided regular food by people who do not perceive the cat is their property (2)
- ❑ Because of overcrowding in municipal facilities and shelters, timid or fearful cats and young kittens are often euthanized on admission (3)
- ❑ Euthanasia of animals, particularly healthy and treatable animals, has adverse effects on the psychological health of staff (4, 5)
- ❑ The City of Banyule implemented a high-intensity targeted free sterilization program for cats.
- ❑ The trigger point for this change was the impact on animal management staff forced to deliver a stray kitten to the contracted shelter. It was killed on admission because it was under 8 weeks of age.

### METHODS

- Free sterilization, microchipping and registration (licensing) of owned and semi-owned cats, targeted to 3 suburbs (pop 15,000), began in 2017-2018, in parallel with an existing city-wide, low-intensity, non-targeted program.
- The target suburbs had the highest calls related to found and nuisance cats per 1000 residents (11 vs 2 calls for other suburbs, Fig 1).
- The target suburbs were also the most SOE disadvantaged in the city, and had the highest proportion of government housing.
- Door-knocking and flyers were used to recruit entire cats.
- In the targeted suburbs, from 2017-18 to 2020-21, the number of cats sterilized per 1000 residents each year was 6.6, 2.3, 2.8 and 4.2 cats, respectively (Fig 2).

### OBJECTIVES

To assess the outcome of a contemporary community cat program based on a high-intensity free-sterilization program targeted to suburbs with high cat intake, euthanasia and cat-related complaints.

### RESULTS

- ❑ In the 3 years after the targeted approach was instituted, cat impoundments from the whole city decreased from 4 cats/1000 residents to 1.2 cats per 1000 residents, and euthanasia from 0.8 to 0.2 cats per 1000 residents (Fig 2). Impoundments and euthanasia remained at this low level in the fourth year of the program (1.0 cats and 0.2 cats respectively).
- ❑ Sterilizing 7 cats/1000 residents in year 1 in the target suburbs, and decreasing to 2-4 cats/1000 residents in later years, resulted in measurable change after 12 mths, which plateaued in the 4<sup>th</sup> year (Fig 2).
- ❑ Cat impoundments decreased 70% over the first 3 years, resulting in reduced associated costs for the city.
- ❑ All semi-owners, including those caring for multiple cats, took ownership of the cats

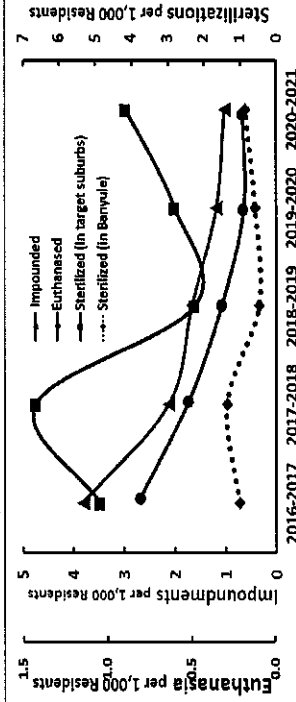


Fig.2 Impoundments, euthanasia and sterilizations per 1,000 residents for city (population: 130,000) and sterilizations/1,000 residents in target suburbs (population:15,000)

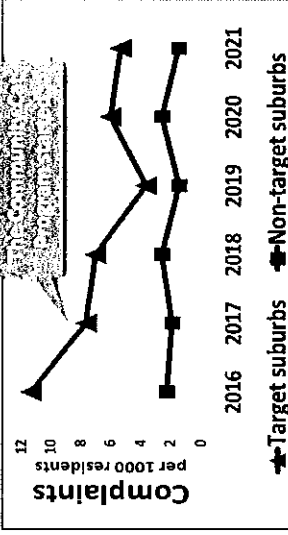


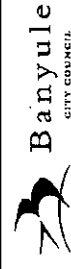
Fig.1 Calls related to found & nuisance cats/1,000 residents

### CONCLUSION

- ✓ High intensity, free-sterilization programs are effective in reducing municipal impoundments of cats when targeted to areas of highest cat-related complaints, and cat owners and semi-owners recruited.
- ✓ Semi-owners will take official ownership of the cat they are caring for, including multiple cats, when offered free sterilization, microchipping and registration/licensing for cats.
- ✓ Free sterilization programs can save local governments money, and reduce exposure of staff to mental health damage from euthanizing cats and kittens

### REFERENCES

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2. Zito S, Vankar D, Bennett P, Patterson M, Phillips C. (2015). "Cat ownership perception and caretaking explored in an internet survey of people associated with cats". *PLoS ONE*, 10, e0133293.
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4. Scofield R.L., McLaughlin D., Kneiss H.L. A systematic review of the effects of euthanasia and occupational stress in personnel working with animals in animal shelters, veterinary clinics, and kennels. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 2017, 4:177.
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Dear Bayside Councillors,

SUBMISSION 10

Usage of the park has grown due to the COVID pandemic.

I understand it is important that dogs are given a space to walk off-leash and most dogs and their owners are lovely. However, while owners try to have effective control of their dogs – no everyone does, and the reality is, they cannot usually outrun them!

To facilitate social cohesion can you please place a fence around the second playground to prevent Dogs running in and do poo and take food out of children's hands.

Can you make it a larger area so people can also picnic inside this fenced area and also large enough to include the BBQ area where many people host children's parties.

Signs without fences have proven to be ineffective. **I have been living on Head Street for 20. Years and I have seen my fair share of disputes between different types of park users.** A large, fenced area for families, picnickers, and people having barbeques would avoid the tension between different types of park users.

Many thanks for your time in reading this.

Happy to discuss further on the number below after 3.30pm (I'm a teacher!)

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

Brighton VIC

[REDACTED]



Pt 6: Nuisance – Cat Containment

I do not support this amendment to the draft plan.

Your plan states that 33% of people supported cat containment which means that 67% of people did not support it and I am one of that 67%.

As a responsible cat owner, I am happy to accept the cat curfew laws. I also support the desexing of cats as I feel it is the feral cats in the local environment that do the most damage to native wildlife.

However, I feel complete cat containment is impractical, expensive, unrealistic, and inhumane to the animal.

From a financial point of view, cat containment would mean that I could no longer leave my windows and doors open for fresh air. This would mean, as summers get warmer, that I would have to pay for the installation and running costs for several air conditioning units which I do not have and cannot afford. The other alternative is to purchase and install fly screens and window shades which I also cannot afford. If I wished my cat to get fresh air, I would have to purchase a cat run, again, an expense which I can't budget for. I would also have to pay a weekly cost of approximately \$10 - \$15 to supply the household with cat litter.

I also feel you need to consider the negative impact on mental health this will cause for current cat owners. We will have to police our cats constantly, always on guard every time a door or garage is opened, causing an increase in anxiety and stress. As a household which already has people with anxiety and other mental health conditions, I am all too aware of the increase in stress and anxiety this will cause my family. This is deeply ironic as our cat has always been a calming influence in our house.

The other fact to consider is the impact of cat containment on the health and wellbeing of the cat, an animal that loves to search out its favourite sunny spot and smell the fresh air. Being enclosed 24 hours a day will mean a reduction in the quality of life for these animals.

I feel that the current cat curfew, combined with education on responsible pet ownership, should be enough.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]





## SUBMISSION 12

I have read your proposed Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022 - 2026 and responded to your short survey. As an owner of a cat who resides in Bayside I wish to make the following points:

- 1) You need to fix the feral fox and the revolting rat problem that is endemic in Bayside.
- 2) Council's issue is not registered cats. My cat is desexed. My cat is registered. I follow the rules. The percentage of cat trap cages delivered to actual cat ownership in Bayside is so minute - 2.7% - it is ridiculous you have spent this amount of time drafting a plan that impacts cat owners. Your problem with local wildlife is feral, stray cats not domestic, responsibly owned cats.
- 3) I cannot believe so much focus and attention has been given to this issue. Please refocus your attention, and my rates, on things that really make Bayside one of the more liveable parts of Melbourne. Fix the pot holed roads and uneven footpaths, maintain the foreshore, parks and playgrounds.
- 4) Your plan in my opinion is akin to a police state. Council is effectively telling ratepayers who own a cat in Bayside how they need to live and care for a domestic pet on their own private property, not council property. That is not acceptable in my opinion, a line is being crossed.

Your sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the submitter.



# Response to the Bayside Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026

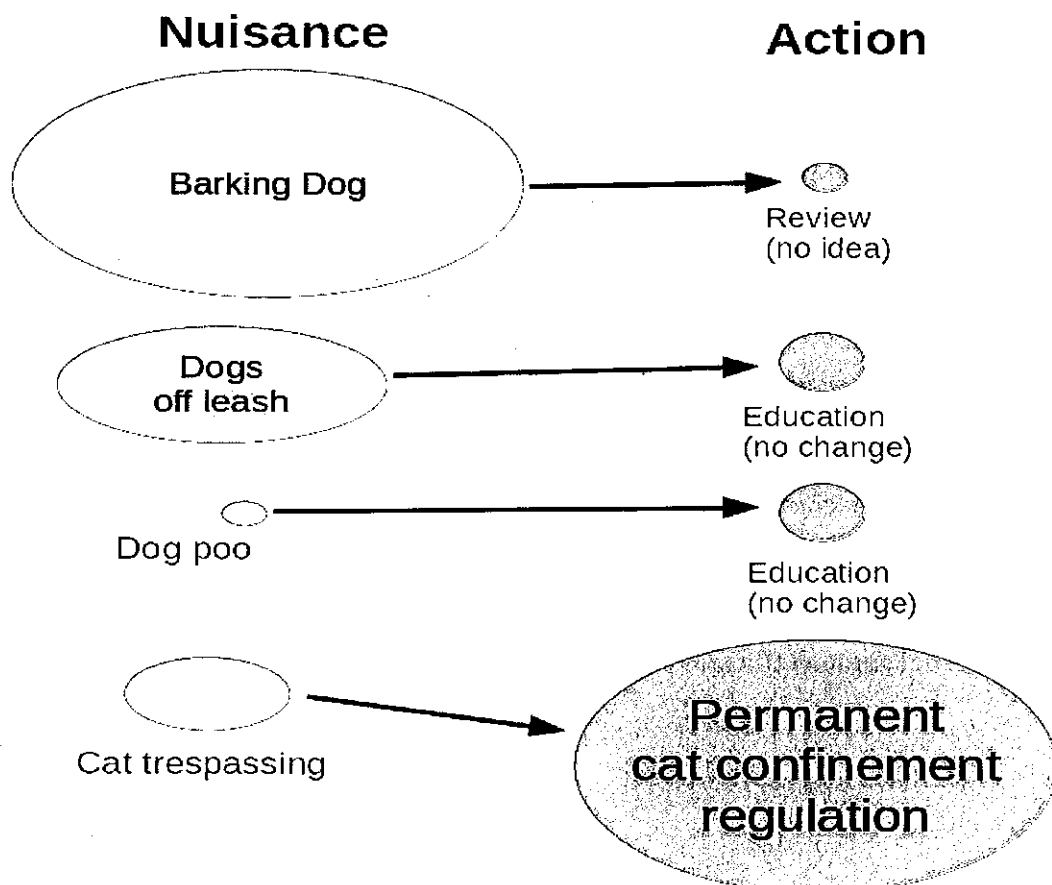
## Action Summary

1. The plan should be redrafted to follow the recommendations made by the RSPCA in "Identifying Best Practice Domestic Cat Management in Australia". The Council's decision making processes are exposed if this document is not addressed in the plan.
2. The proposed transition to permanent cat containment must be removed from the 2022-2026 plan.
3. The plan should announce an education program to inform the residents of the benefits of cat containment. Its effectiveness can be measured through monitoring the level of community acceptance. (This is the RSPCA's recommendation 13)

## Detailed Response

Overall I am impressed by the quality and content of this plan, showing that animal management is working quite well, especially with the emphasis on education. However, there are issues with this plan which are unacceptable.

As per the graphic representation below, why is the greatest nuisance put into the too-hard basket, while the most restrictive legislation ever imposed on a single species being rushed through to address a significantly less serious issue? This disproportionate use of Council resources and imposition on the community is completely out of step with community expectations and is poor governance.



## 6.1 Nuisance – Cat trespassing and curfew compliance

This section introduces the most significant change to pet ownership proposed by this plan, the move to permanent cat containment. The fact that it does not appear in the document until page 28 out of this 40 page document is poor communication and suggests a lack of transparency. Such a significant change should have been called out much earlier if Council was acting in good faith.

Note this section is repeated verbatim in section 10.1 and is proposed as an activity to meet the objective to ensure dog and cat restrictions help protect the environment.

This proposal is presented after a number of claims:

*“Based on these factors, Council will transition to a permanent cat containment (day and night) across the four years of the DAMP as an action in section 10. This will ensure the community are supported to transition their existing cats to cat containment and that for the long-term, cats and native wildlife are safer and protected.”*

Examining the **factors** used to support this proposal:

*“Cat trap requests increased to their highest levels (101 requests) in 2020/2021 of the four years of the 2017-2021 DAMP.”*

While numbers are not presented, the annual figures from 2017-2021 are approximately 90, 75, 75, 100 (graph on page 26). These numbers are not showing any trend or significant change that suggests the acquisition of more traps or hiring more staff is needed. Likewise, this is not an argument to support the introduction of any additional measures. Additionally, these figures make no distinction between the type of cat – is it feral or a domestic cat? The euthanasia numbers suggest these were feral cats, but we just don’t know. Further doubts about this data include that 43 cats were impounded in 2020/2021, so how does this tally with the 101 trap requests in addition with all other Council animal management activities?

Summary: **Does not support the move to containment.**

*In the Community Research Survey those who indicated they had got a pet for the first time during COVID-19 showed notably lower incidences of being aware of:*

- *Night-time cat curfew (56%)*
- *Cats needing to be desexed to be registered (57%)*
- *Cats having to be registered (71%)*

This is clearly an issue which should be addressed by education, as proposed in section 6.3, and part of a general trend from the increase in new pet owners, both dog and cat.

Summary: **Does not support the move to containment**

*Additionally, 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.*

This observation lacks detail. It does not indicate if the cats were outdoors but on their property or supervised. There is no relationship between these responses and nuisance activity. Further investigation is needed to draw any useful conclusions.

**Summary: Does not support the move to containment**

*Approximately 33% of respondents supported introducing cat containment to ensure sensitive environmental areas and native wildlife are protected. Council's Biodiversity Action Plan 2018-2027 includes an action to review existing cat curfews and improve effectiveness as appropriate.*

Clearly the majority of respondents (approximate two out of three) do not support introducing containment. I will expand upon this item later, as the reference to protection of the environment and wildlife warrants particular attention.

**Summary: Objects to the proposed move to containment**

*Furthermore, the RSPCA highlights the health benefits for cats and other animals in being contained at home.*

This claim is taken out of context and is superficial. I will address the RSPCA's actual position separately as it is complex. It is disappointing this egregious comment is being used by the Council and shows a lack of professionalism which is uncharacteristic of the quality of the rest of this document.

## **RSPCA's position on cat containment**

Guided by: <https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Identifying-Best-Practice-Domestic-Cat-Management-in-Australia-RSPCA-Research-Report-May-2018.pdf>

Firstly, the RSPCA document makes 21 recommendations where containment is recommendation 13. Recommendation 1 defines the distinction between feral and domestic cats. It makes sense for the DAMP to reflect this distinction and to address its handling of owned, semi-owned and unowned domestic cats, and feral cats. Recommendation 4 considers cat management planning by councils so would be another good reason to be referring to this resource.

Moving on to containment, recommendation 13, the relevant text is:

### ***"Recommendation 13***

*Education programs are needed to increase the acceptance and uptake of 24-hour cat containment, with subsequent regulation in areas of high conservation value."*

Let's make this completely clear: The RSPCA is recommending the implementation of education programs. This makes sense and would fit in well with the plan which already has a significant

education component. The RSPCA has already created many resources to support this activity (for example <https://safeandhappycats.com.au/>).

Secondly, once the education programs have been implemented and have increased the acceptance of containment (for example, when the level of community support moves from 33% to an arbitrary majority, say 67%), then regulation could be introduced in areas of high conservation value. It seems reasonable to defer this until at least the 2026-2030 DAMP.

Note the RSPCA calls out that “*enforcement of cat containment regulations can prove difficult*” (read: costly), and “*more data are needed on the impact of cat containment on prevention of wildlife predation, health and welfare of confined pet cats and risks associated with cat trapping*” (read: We don’t really know if this is going to work like we hope it will). This suggests a conservation approach will save the Council significant grief by waiting until there is more data and community understanding to underpin any new regulations.

Additionally, what is an **area of high conservation value** and are there any in Bayside?

## **Protecting sensitive environmental areas and native wildlife**

This plan is for Bayside so it is essential to consider only the environmental areas and native wildlife in Bayside. The Bayside Biodiversity Action Plan 2018-2027 item 6 indicates there are no known rare or threatened species (this task is to assess populations to determine if there are any). This action is to be completed over the same time frame as the DAMP 2022-2026.

The Biodiversity Plan item 30 indicates there is a fox, [feral] cat, rabbit and rodent problem being managed.

The Biodiversity Plan item 38 action is to: “*Review existing cat curfews and improve effectiveness as appropriate.*” It notes two specific actions: *Promote and enforce the current cat curfew, and prohibit cats from all conservation reserves*, via a letter drop campaign. It specifically calls out protection for the rakali/water rat. Note this species is not considered endangered.

To truly answer the question of whether Bayside has areas of high conservation value which are vulnerable to domestic cats requires the data gathering activities of the Biodiversity Plan to be completed. This assessment would align with the DAMP 2026-2030 period. Further, this data must distinguish between the impact of domestic cats rather than foxes, feral cats, rabbits and rodents.

## **Conclusion**

I have examined all the factors the plan has listed and shown the arguments are weak and unsupported. The action is disproportionate for the level of nuisance and risk to the environment and wildlife.

If any action were to be taken then follow the guidelines from relevant expert organisations (for example, the RSPCA) and simply introduce an education program in this plan.

Please be sensitive to the community’s feelings for their feline pets. 33% is not a majority. This proposal is being rushed and is out of step with community expectations.

Gather more data, perhaps introduce geo-tracking for repeat curfew offenders.

Note the plan introduced into a few suburbs in the ACT which comes into effect in mid-2022 is grandfathered so that it does not apply to cats born prior to the scheme. There is a distinct lack of natural justice in the Bayside proposal such that it is being imposed on homes with cats whose life expectancy is a decade or more.

## **6.1 Nuisance – Barking Dogs**

This is the plan to handle the highest rated nuisance:

*We will review our approach for barking dog nuisances to seek effective resolution while minimising the potential for neighbour conflict. This is challenging as the investigation ultimately requires evidence that someone is experiencing a nuisance.*

Compare this (lack of) action with that of trespassing cats and explain how this is addressing the issue in any proportionate way? Have you considered requiring dogs be confined to indoors while their owners are out? It would be for their own safety so they are not being exposed to the elements or accidental escape from the property. While you roll back in horror at this suggestion can you spell double-standard?





Dear Bayside Council,

## SUBMISSION 14

I strongly object to the proposed daytime curfew that you are considering for domestic cats.

If cats are not allowed outdoors, this will significantly increase my cat litter expenses, and also increase landfill.

Further, I assume that the council will be foregoing a large revenue stream from current cat registrations.

Lastly, you must agree that keeping a cat indoors would be cruel, and unjustified.

Please reconsider this poorly thought through idea.

Regards,



Sandringham Resident.



I am opposed to the proposal to keep cats indoors both day and night, which I consider undesirable, unnecessary and totally impractical.

While it might be possible with a new cat, my cat is used to roaming outdoors during the day. He never strays far from the house, spends most of the time snoozing on the front porch and to my knowledge has never killed any wildlife. At night I bring him indoors. He has a cat door which allows him to enter the house but not to leave it. When he wants to go outside, I open a door for him.

It would be very difficult to keep my cat indoors all the time. While he is used to being indoors at night, he is an indefatigable escape artist by day. Open any door a tiny crack and he is outside.

I don't want to go to the time and expense of constructing a run for him.



Based on these factors, Council will transition to a permanent cat containment (day and night) across the four years of the DAMP as an action in section 10. This will ensure the community are supported to transition their existing cats to cat containment and that for the long-term, cats and native wildlife are safer and protected.

Upon reading the changes to the DAMP plan I am most concerned that the council recommendation above is unnecessary and targeting a minority group of pet owners. As a cat owner who has a very mild natured and well cared for old cat the current night curfew works extremely well and is fair. It allows our cat to enjoy the fresh air and garden space with us during the day and sleep safely inside in the evening, posing no threat to the natural environment. Our cat is meek, and I find it a bit much to assume all cats kill. Our cat has never ever killed as it has no need to as it is cared for by responsible pet owners. What is more upsetting is when the cat is outside with us the noisy minor birds harass it and we need to protect it from them! Yet the council refuses to attend to their effect on our pets!

So rather than just assuming all cat owners are not responsible be mindful that there are some residents who really do care and always do the right thing by the environment and their neighbours. The current laws work well, no need to change them.

Kind regards

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the submitter.



Dear Councillors,

I have read this plan and agree that it is in a difficult position to evaluate the DAMP considering everyone's views and protection of our environment.

I support additional education for all residents – pet owners for improved knowledge and understanding of rules and responsibilities; and non-pet owners for increased tolerance and understanding of everyone with pets living in Bayside. Education is the best way for culture change, such as not allowing your dog to bark outside at night, or not picking up your dog's poo – which is an ongoing problem.

I will now itemise some of the issues I have with the work up to the 24 hour cat confinement proposal, and the proposal itself.

I appreciate that Council has attempted to gather information from various sources for evaluation of the DAMP. It would be appropriate to disclose who the 31 stakeholder groups/individuals are. My local vet was not aware of this proposal, and I would argue that professional vets in the municipality should be considered important stakeholders, who could then disseminate information about this proposal to many *other* stakeholders – people who have cats.

**Issues with the survey:**

The questions in the survey were not good enough or objective enough to gather information as a basis for this proposal.

The sample size of the survey is not appropriate to propose such a drastic change. This survey is based on personal opinion, and although important, is being used as the basis to implement this proposed change to improve native animal numbers; where pet cats are not solely responsible for the alleged decline in these numbers.

Everyone who I have spoken to in relation to the upcoming review of the DAMP were not aware of the 24 hour cat confinement proposal.

This proposal has not been very well thought out and has obvious bias toward those who are 'for it' based on the survey questions asked.

The questions asked were about how many cats; if they are outdoor; have I seen nuisance cats. The proposal is about confining them to protect wildlife. There is no correlation between the two. The proposal cannot have been made based on these questions.

The survey questions I answered in November did not:

- distinguish between pet cats, feral cats and foxes; these animals were grouped together as the main cause for loss of native wildlife in Bayside. Well-fed pet cats are being made scapegoats for alleged native animal decline with minimal mention of other causes of animal loss. Data has not been provided to this effect.
- address other causes such as loss of native habitat and felling of trees to housing development, nor a study to identify the relationship between the two; native animals killed on roads or by people don't appear to be a consideration in these questions. Increased housing and population has meant increased cars on roads and hence animal deaths.



Habitat loss due to housing development and busier roads have been the biggest changes in Bayside since I have lived here.

- identify which areas of Bayside these native animal deaths are occurring. I have lived in Bayside for 28 years, have many trees on my property and have only noticed an *increase* in birdlife, especially wattle birds, rainbow lorikeets and yellow crested cockatoos. I have noticed possum deaths mainly due to cars and electrocution on overhead power lines.
- itemise that when a cat is 'outside', where exactly is it? I answered 'yes' to this question, but there wasn't the opportunity to say that when my cats are outside, they are on the deck or in the garden; it was also not asked how long they are outside for, or how far they are venturing.
- ask any questions about whether my cat has killed a native animal or an unwanted rodent, or how many per day/week/month/year.
- ask any questions about whether my cat wears a bell – making it harder for them to kill anything.
- ask any questions about the safety of cats who venture outside – and yet the proposal claims it is also for the safety of our cats.

#### **Questions:**

- What scientific studies have taken place to first determine native animal numbers in Bayside? Are any of these animals endangered?
- What have been the effects of these numbers since the night-time curfew for pet cats has been in place? Why is the night-time curfew not sufficient?
- Where is the evidence of a study which may suggest that 24 hour confinement of pet cats will reduce native animal deaths more effectively than the current night time curfew?
- Has Bayside Council initiated any proposals to reduce the number of foxes in the area?
- Has there been a study to determine the effect of population growth, housing, night-time lighting, number of cars and pollution on native wildlife?

#### **Issues with 24 hour cat confinement proposal:**

- The proposed for 24 hour cat confinement is a significant imposition on pet cat owners, and one that should be based on scientific study of the impact of pet cats to the native animal populations within each urban area.
- The cost this will impose on all cat owners who will require appropriate house/garden wiring, netting, flyscreens to allow air flow in houses with cats indoors, enclosures, cat litter.
- I fear that people may let their cats out at night instead of during the day.
- Possible dumping/abandoning of animals due to costs and/or the inability to keep cats inside or on property.
- Will impact those living in apartment residences who rely on allowing their cat companions to be outdoors during the day; they also have no means to provide outdoor confinement.
- This is simply cruel for cats who are not used to living indoors all the time, and increases anxiety/boredom when trapped inside, possibly increasing health issues like diabetes. This also creates anxiety for the owners.
- Will have environmental impact with increased production, use and disposal of cat litter.

#### **Thoughts for the future if proposal goes ahead:**

- How much financial assistance will cat residences be given to modify their homes to include appropriately sized outdoor enclosed areas? This will particularly impact renters. Cages are not appropriate for cats; they are not items for display, they are companions.

- Proposal needs to include what may happen if a cat may accidentally get out of their property. Will people have the right to trap them and deal with them in the way they see fit? This is open slather for cat haters.
- If proposal goes ahead, it could be a consideration that it applies to newly registered kittens/cats from a set date, and not for those who have lived all their lives as outdoor cats. They could be identified by different coloured collars for example.
- How much is additional patrolling, overseeing and management of this proposal going to cost the ratepayer? Perhaps this should have been disclosed in the survey.
- Is cat registration still going to be charged for cats who do not venture beyond their property? And if so, why would it?

#### **Possible Solutions:**

- A feral fox eradication program would be far more effective at protecting native animal species.
- Habitat rehabilitation in the urban environment, where possible, that provide nesting and breeding hollows for native animals and reliable food sources would further enhance the chance for native animal populations to recover and thrive in the urban environment.

#### **In conclusion:**

There are always people who will not follow the rules – they don't pick up their dog's litter, they park in no parking areas, they throw rubbish in the streets, they smash glass on the footpaths, they let their cats out at night. The proposal to confine cats 24 hours a day will only impact those of us who do follow the rules and will have even more rules impacting our lives and those of our beloved pets, reducing the joy which we share with them; and those who don't follow rules anyway, will go about their lives in the way in which they always have.

  
Hampton East



[REDACTED]  
Black Rock VIC 3193

17 March 2022

Dear Bayside Council

I would like to lodge a formal complaint about the proposal to confine domestic cats both day and night.

We are home owners in Black Rock and responsible owners of both a dog and a cat.

I support the requirement for cats to be indoors at night but it is absolutely outrageous, unreasonable, cruel and inhumane to confine cats during the day.

Your research doesn't even support this - with only 33 % supporting cat containment.

Cats hunt at night so you are already protecting native wildlife with the current measures you have in place.

Even if you introduced extreme new measures like this - you certainly couldn't apply this to existing pets who have lived their whole life being able to enjoy being outside and then expect them to be locked inside 24/7. This completely ignores the wellbeing of the cats.

I really am appalled that you would be seriously considering such a measure.

I can be contacted on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]



## BAYSIDE CITY COUNCIL CAT CONTAINMENT DRAFT POLICY

We live in a democratic society where is it reasonable to think that majority rules

Our Councillors are elected to serve the interests of the residents within Bayside and we mistakenly thought that they would take into account the views of those residents when making any major decisions. As published in black and white on page 28 of the Draft Domestic Animal Plan 2022-26 , the Council has stated that approximately 33% of respondents to their Animal survey last year support the introduction of cat containment. That would mean that our Councillors are more than happy to go against 67% of their residents' wishes. Why is this agenda being pushed here?

As a responsible pet owner, I am all for the cat curfew (which the majority of the respondents agree) either in its existing state or even slightly adjusted to bring the times in earlier. I would argue that education is always the first step and Bayside City Council have not actively run any sort of community based campaign to educate or highlight this the cat curfew to the cat owners of Bayside. I am flabbergasted that Council feels that it has the right to proceed, against the majority, to introduce a cat containment policy.

It is downright cruel to expect our domesticated animals to understand that they will no longer be able to go outside unless their owners have the funds to put in a cat run. With 3.659 registered cats in Bayside as of July 2021, how do you envisage the owners coping with their pets' constant meows of distress at the door, wanting to go outside just as they have all of their lives. Even if the cost of putting in a decent sized cat run was reasonably priced, not all owners are going to be able to afford to build cat runs. Let's also imagine the amount of complaints from neighbours who would have to look at the isore of Bayside being littered with such structures. And god forbid that the cat runs outside when you are trying to enter or exit your own property. What revenue collecting fees will the Council and/or the Pound add onto residents in order to get our beloved animals back?

I understand that this is being pushed forward under the guise of protecting native wildlife but the only animals that my cats have brought home are rats and mice, of which Bayside is quite overrun at the moment. Council is not doing anything about this "plague" which will only get worse if cats are taken out of the equation.

I would be happy to discuss any of the above with any member of Bayside Council.



# Implementation of a Community Cat Program

## BENEFITS:



**30-50%**

reduction in cat  
intake/impoundments  
in first year\*

**50-80%**

reduction in numbers  
of cats and kittens euthanased  
in first year\*

Reduced council expenditure on  
cat management programs for council  
& support welfare groups.



**Reduced calls regarding found  
cats & nuisance complaints**

**Less burnout of animal  
management & shelter staff**



Reduced wildlife  
predation

**Improved environment for residents - less noise disturbance and  
nuisance behaviours from cats & less disease risk for humans,  
pets and wildlife**

**Donors & supporters  
happier with fewer cats being  
euthanased in shelters  
& pounds\***

\*Based on observed results from high-intensity desexing programs recently conducted in Australia.



# How to Implement a Community Cat Program

## 11 STEPS:



### PHASE 1: Evaluate Data

#### ✓ Step 1

Calculate cat intake or impoundments per 1,000 residents<sup>^</sup> or cat-related calls per 1000 residents for each suburb in your service area.

#### ✓ Step 2

Rank and prioritise suburbs in descending order based on the highest cat intake or impoundments per 1,000 residents or calls per 1,000 residents.

### PHASE 2: Plan budget for 1-3 years & select target suburbs

#### ✓ Step 3

Allocate budget for free desexing, microchipping & registration for the next 1-3 years.

#### ✓ Step 4

Negotiate with service providers on the cost per cat for desexing & microchipping and how many desexing surgeries they are willing to perform. (If the local vets have insufficient capacity or are unwilling to provide a discount, check if your local animal shelter is willing to be involved).

#### ✓ Step 5

Identify top-ranked suburbs to target in the first year where your budget will allow you to achieve 30 cats desexed per 1,000 residents (based on observed results from high-intensity desexing programs recently conducted in Australia).

In selecting a target suburb, also consider factors necessary for a successful project, including distance from veterinary clinics, access for staff and volunteers, community involvement, etc.

### PHASE 3: Implement program

#### ✓ Step 6

Identify owners, semi-owners, and multiple-cat carers in the target suburb whose cats are not desexed. Particularly focus on locations where impoundments or cat-related calls are coming from using flyer drops, doorknocking, social media and community announcements. Offer free desexing, microchipping and registration.

#### ✓ Step 7

Encourage semi-owners (cat carers/guardians) to take ownership of their cats, including having their name on the microchip.

#### ✓ Step 8

For community members caring for multiple cats, rehome kittens to reduce numbers if possible. Encourage the carer or property owner where the cats are located to have their name on the microchip. (Check how to manage multi-cat situations legally within state government legislation and local by-laws).

#### ✓ Step 9

Offer assistance to catch timid and poorly socialised cats for desexing, assist with scheduling desexing appointments, supply carry-containers and provide transport if needed.

### PHASE 4: Offer services in non-target suburbs

#### ✓ Step 10

In non-target suburbs, provide referrals to services for subsidised desexing & microchipping.

### PHASE 5: Maintain & expand program

#### ✓ Step 11

Maintain high-intensity desexing for 1 to 3 years until a 50% to 75% reduction in cat intake or cat-related calls occurs, and then maintain desexing at about 5 to 10 cats per 1,000 residents in your yearly budget for the targeted suburbs. Expand the Community Cat Program to the next suburbs down the priority list.

<sup>^</sup>To calculate cat intake per 1,000 residents, divide cat intake over 12 months for the suburb by the human population of the suburb, and multiply the result by 1,000.

In summary the BDA and members are looking for changes to;

- Boost registration numbers for dogs in Bayside;
- Enhanced and a greater frequency and clarity of communication with dog owners;
- Greater visibility of BCC patrol activity; hours per week, locations visited, fines issued, warnings issued and noting compliant behaviours observed.
  - The overwhelming feedback was that rangers are rarely, if ever seen in local parks or beaches. Publishing a summary of details of patrols completed would remove doubt regarding the the perceived lack of presence, highlight good behaviours observed without giving away upcoming patrol activity.

In response to the draft DAMP the BDA proposes the following amendments in support of the DAMP purpose;

- To encourage the registration and identification of dogs in the BCC council areas;
- To provide assurance that residents are aware of their obligations and as a result register their dog/s;
- To recognise the contribution of dogs to an active lifestyle;

The BDA and members support the amendment carried at the March 15, 2022 meeting for a report detailing further open space dedicated for the provision of a secure off-leash dog park.

- It is noted that the lack of secure off leash space for dogs in Bayside will be covered under the upcoming Open Space Strategy and is not addressed under the DAMP.

**Proposed amendments:**

**SECTION 3 - Programs to promote and encourage responsible ownership and compliance with legislation.**

**A. Amend Activity and relocate activity to section 5;**

“Review the current desexing rebate program to help increase early puppy and kitten registrations”

**Amend to**

“Review current registration fees to help increase dog and cat registrations”

**B. Amend the time frames of the following activities;**

Develop a program to encourage training of dogs through awareness, education and incentives.

(Schedule in Year 1)

- Review dog restriction signage to include QR codes, open space etiquette, impacts of uncollected poo and why effective control is important.

(Schedule in Year 1 – the technology is already available and in use for pop up events.

**C. Add Activity;**

- Publish a BCC patrol activity; hours per week, locations visited, fines issued, warnings issued and noting compliant behaviours observed.
  - Could be published monthly in ‘Let’s talk Bayside’ for example.

**SECTION 5 - Registration and identification; Section 5.3 – Our Plan**

**Add Activity;**

To implement a discounted registration fee of \$0 for puppies/dogs under the age of 12 months and for first time BCC registered dogs, irrespective of entire/neutered status.

**SECTION 6 - Nuisance; Section 6.3 – Our Plan**

**Add Activity;**

Provide a ‘Thank you for registering your dog’ pack annually at each renewal;

- Include in the pack; 'Walking your dog in Bayside' brochure, minimum standards for dog etiquette, poop packs, educational material with information pertaining to training, picking up faeces, and 'what to do when....' -
- eg. Council phone numbers for assistance, training locations which provide discounted rates for BCC registered dogs;

### **Supporting Information:**

Bayside has the highest registration fees of any Council in the Melbourne Metro area with the least amount of amenities for dog owners.

- Apart from Bayside, every council area in Melbourne and surrounds has more than one space dedicated solely to dogs for off leash play.
  - Bayside has no purpose-built spaces for dogs – all areas are considered multiple use areas;
  - Bayside City Council \$81.10 per dog this year, whilst the adjacent council Kingston pay \$59 in comparison.
  - **Mornington Shire Council has a \$0 registration if dogs are registered within 3 months of acquisition, irrespective of neutered status.**
- The City of Kingston also as 3+ dedicated dog parks, most notably;
  - Kingston Heath Dog Park
  - Roy Dore Reserve (new purpose built Dog Park)
  - G.R. Bricker Reserve Dog Off Leash Area
  - Southern Road Reserve Dog Off Leash Area (adjacent to oval)

Summary of Dog Registration fees (for neutered dogs) across Councils.

|                                      |                       |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ○ <b>Note</b>                        |                       |
| ○ <b><u>Bayside City Council</u></b> | <b><u>\$81.10</u></b> |
| ○ City of Kingston                   | \$59                  |
| ○ City of Port Phillip               | \$73                  |
| ○ City of Yarra                      | \$71                  |
| ○ City of Moonee Valley              | \$67.50               |
| ○ City of Stonnington                | \$67                  |
| ○ City of Glen Eira                  | \$64.90               |
| ○ City of Whitehorse                 | \$64                  |
| ○ City of Booroondara                | \$63                  |
| ○ City of Melbourne                  | \$62                  |
| ○ City of Frankston                  | \$61                  |
| ○ City of Hobsons Bay                | \$60                  |
| ○ Greater Dandenong                  | \$58.65               |
| ○ City of Casey                      | \$58.50               |
| ○ City of Manningham                 | \$57.90               |
| ○ City of Moreland                   | \$56.50               |
| ○ City of Maribynong                 | \$56                  |
| ○ City of Darebin                    | \$56                  |
| ○ City of Maroondah                  | \$56                  |
| ○ City of Brimbank                   | \$54                  |
| ○ City of Knox                       | \$52                  |
| ○ Mornington Peninsula               | \$52                  |
| ○ Wyndham Council                    | \$50                  |
| ○ City of Monash                     | \$49                  |
| ○ City of Banyule                    | \$43.65               |
| ○ Bass Council                       | \$41                  |
| ○ Yarra Ranges                       | \$40                  |



"Animal Welfare by the experts – those who keep, care for and breed animals."

[www.animalcareaustralia.org.au](http://www.animalcareaustralia.org.au)

17<sup>th</sup> April 2022

To whom it may concern,

**RE: Bayside City Council -Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-26**

Animal Care Australia (ACA) is a national incorporated association established to lobby for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

ACA is currently recognised by **Agriculture Victoria** as a key stakeholder in the review of Animal Welfare Victoria's Animal Welfare Action Plan and its associated regulations. ACA is directly consulting and advising during that review, including revising Codes of Practice for the keeping of all pets.

ACA encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, companion animals, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation.

It is apparent by the level of restrictions that Council has NOT sought out expert consultation from species experts. It is beyond comprehension that a Council would instigate and implement restrictions on numbers of pets/animals able to be kept by its residents, especially without consultation with expert organisations, such as dog breed clubs, bird clubs or small mammal clubs.

ACA strongly encourages all councils to promote and encourage the keeping of animals as pets as they provide extraordinary mental health benefits for all of us. Any restrictions only serve as a detriment to pets and those wishing to keep them.

**ACA does not agree with imposing blanket limits on numbers of animals that can be kept especially when based solely on ideological theories. Animal restrictions for many species actually creates animal welfare concerns.**

Animal welfare is NOT about numbers – it is about the conditions, behavior, cleanliness, housing and husbandry that each animal is kept under by the owners – your residents.

Policies that restrict keeping of animals on the basis of preventing noise, odour or other issues for neighbours are strongly discouraged. Restrictions including permit requirements inflict an unnecessary compliance burden on residents and staff which only discourages animal keeping needlessly. Laws are already in place to deal with neighbourhood nuisance issues including matters due to poor animal keeping practices.

In addition, ACA seeks further explanation on the details of the training and expertise of Council's Officers responsible for ensuring compliance with Council's Neighbourhood Amenity Laws. The Policy covers a variety of species which require very specific skill sets – one's ACA seriously doubts are employed within Council.

In relation to the use of a survey for the purpose of consultation, ACA recognizes the ease this provides for Council, however ACA has opted to respond in writing to ensure our views are not lost within the statistical reporting process of a survey and in doing so providing inaccurate feedback. Surveys tend to be leading in their questioning and misleading in their statistical outcomes.

ACA's primary objective is 'education over regulation' and accordingly, ACA commends Council on the education measures outlined in your Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026. (Section 3 pgs 16-17)

**Section 3.2 – Order 5**

ACA questions the validity of and purpose of restricting the number of dogs under an owners control in a reserve, public place or designated area to four dogs. This surely restricts proprietors of dog walking businesses?

**ACA also has concerns with the following sections of Councils Neighbourhood Amenity Laws:**

***Section 25 (1) Table of Keeping Animal – restricted numbers***

Council's lack of knowledge about different species is highlighted by the ambiguity of terms within the table such as, '*and the like*' as well as '*noisy birds*'. Nearly all birds make a noise – this ambiguity provides an open slather for complaints against a bird owner as well as contravening standards of care and animal welfare.

Does the exclusion of pet rats indicate Council believes these animals are exotic?

***Section 67 (11) allow any animal (other than a dog) of which he or she is in charge to be present in the municipal reserve; (without a permit)***

ACA strongly objects to this clause. People with animals other than dogs should (within reason) be allowed to exercise their animals in municipal reserves. If dogs are allowed, all pets should be allowed under the same conditions (on leash, clean up excrement, etc). Many people are now being encouraged to walk their cats (on lead) especially given imposed restrictions on the freedom of cats in local Shires.

***Section 86 (4) as soon as possible after impounding, the Authorised Officer or Delegated Officer must, if practicable, serve a notice in writing on the owner or person responsible for the animal or thing which has been impounded setting out the fees and charges payable and the time by which the thing must be collected***

Requiring only a written notice is irresponsible of Council. Notice should be made via telephone call/email (digital correspondence) in the first instance. Reliance on Australia Post to deliver a notice within the announced timeframe is impractical – and in the year 2022 – outdated. This section should be changed. The risk for the life of an animal being euthanised before the owner is notified outweighs any additional workload on the authorised officer to make ALL attempts to contact an owner.

**For species specific concerns please refer to Annexure 1 for our comments**

**Imposing number restrictions IS an animal welfare issue!**

ACA strongly recommends the removal of restrictions on birds and small mammals instead implementing an open policy with an appropriate caveat that indicates numbers may be restricted or require permitting if a resident is found to continue to have animals in such numbers, or situations that create a public health concern, smell, or excessive/continual noise complaints in the same way many other Councils have.

ACA finds it indefensible that Council would utilise a permit system that is implemented on an unrealistic selection of numbers, that have not been satisfactorily consulted on with the experts/major stakeholders, and has no correlation with improving animal welfare. ACA sees this as Council profiteering off the rights of residents to keep pets.

ACA has references to support our submission, and will be happy to supply them on request. Should Council wish to persist with your current policy restrictions ACA offers our expertise to recommend more suitable categories and less restrictive numbers.

It should be noted that ACA will be making this submission public and is prepared to follow the outcome of this draft Animal Management Plan.

With the ongoing changes allowing pets in strata it is astounding to see a Council moving in a backwards direction and placing further restrictions on the keeping pf pets.

**ACA strongly encourages all councils to promote and encourage the keeping of animals as pets as they provide extraordinary mental health benefits for all of us. Any restrictions only serve as a detriment to pets and those wishing to keep them.**

## **Annexure 1**

### **Dogs and Cats:**

ACA is astounded at Council restricting the number of dogs and cats allowed to just 2 without council approval. There is no logical animal welfare basis for this decision.

This policy blatantly reeks of animal rights ideology and has not no substantive animal welfare grounds.

Perhaps Council would be respectable enough to respond to us on this?

### **Birds:**

The proposal relating to the keeping of birds is the most outrageous of all. Clearly no one has been consulted on bird numbers and most importantly bird welfare.

Restrictions based on numbers of birds are archaic and reflective of animal rights ideologies. Birds come in a range of sizes and temperaments, many are flock species, there is a broad range of alternative and legitimate management and housing systems and numerous other factors. For birds, where hundreds of different species are being regulated, numbers are simple for legislators but inappropriate for ensuring sound animal welfare standards.

ACA strongly recommends Council excludes the restriction of birds when the resident is keeping their birds in compliance with the Agriculture Victoria's *Code of Practice—Housing of Caged Birds*.

<https://ablis.business.gov.au/service/vic/code-of-practice-for-the-housing-of-caged-birds/24198>

ACA encourages council to refer residents to the *Code of Practice- Housing of Caged Birds*. If numbers are to be restricted, then doing so according to this code has legitimacy. Council may like to consider Logan City Council's approach, which is based on a similar code - <https://www.logan.qld.gov.au/aviary-birds>.

Council's restrictions are not supported as your residents would be hobbyists and current nuisance laws with regard to noise, odour, vermin, etc. are sufficient to ensure neighbour amenity is maintained should any problems occur.

### **Small mammals:**

Imposed limits on the permitted number of rats, mice, rabbits, ferrets and guinea pigs which may be kept by an individual on their property are unrealistic. Many of these animals are colony animals, and it is important for their health and well-being to be kept in larger numbers than your policy imposes. In addition the policy goes against scientific research (*Short Communication: Rats Demand For Group Size - Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 7 (4) 267-272 – 2004*) into ideal colony numbers for rats, which have demonstrated that the numbers in your policy are not compatible with the fulfillment of basic social needs and high welfare standards. As companion animals allowing more appropriate colony sizes poses no threat to community, health or animal welfare.

Rats, mice, rabbits, ferrets and guinea pigs are primarily indoor pets and invariably kept in small enclosures. These animals do not exhibit extreme noise, are not intrusive and are free of the diseases and pathogens that often plague their wild counterparts. In fact they pose no health problem to their owners and are renowned for keeping themselves well groomed. For the Club registered breeding community the proposed limitations are also unrealistic, especially given the average litter size for some of these species is larger than the proposed limit suggesting that these proposals have not taken into account the biology and needs of some species. Additionally, due to their short life-spans it is vital that several adult pairs be kept at any given time to ensure that the quality of the gene pool is maintained – without allowing owners to keep 'breeders' the health of the species will invariably suffer. Owners of these smaller pets work to improve the quality of the animal in health and temperament and the Clubs mentioned above have policies for registered breeders who are bound by their published Code of Ethics and Code of Practice along with provisions provided with the current Animal Welfare Act.

**Should Bayside City Council wish to persist with numbers based on various land areas rather than as specified above ACA requests Council convene a meeting with us to enable our species representatives to directly address Council and provide a more concise position.**

Please do not hesitate to make contact if we can assist further.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Donnelly', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael Donnelly  
President  
0400 323 843