Maribyrnong
CITY COUNCIL

# DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026-2029

# Acknowledgement of Country

Council is proud to represent a municipality filled with important and significant Aboriginal history. It acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land, the Kulin Nation, and acknowledges the rich culture and considerable contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have made and continue to make to this City.

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# Introduction

## Purpose

We recognise the value of pet ownership, its overall benefit for our health and wellbeing, the importance of welfare for pets and the protection of the community and the local environment from nuisance dogs and cats.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) aims to help us balance the needs of pet owners with the needs of the rest of our community.

The DAMP also outlines Council's approach to the delivery of animal management services, programs and strategies across the City of Maribyrnong over the next four years.

## Statutory Requirement

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (Act), every Victorian Council must prepare a DAMP every four years. The DAMP must:

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

Every Council must review its Plan annually and publish an evaluation of its implementation in its Annual Report.

## Strategic Alignment

The DAMP supports the Council Plan 2021-2025 vision of an inclusive, flourishing, progressive city that cares for both its residents and its environment.

## Process

The DAMP was developed in consultation with Council's Animal Management Team, and informed by community and stakeholder consultation, research and benchmarking activities.

It seeks to balance community and stakeholder needs, whilst ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Act.

# Summary of Key Actions

The following provides a summary of the DAMP's key actions and initiatives.

| **Objective 1**<br>Ensure that Authorised Officers have the skills and knowledge required to effectively administer their role. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 1.1 | Support Authorised Officers to further develop their skills as part of the annual performance development process. Including:<br>• Conflict resolution/dealing with difficult situations.<br>• Cultural awareness.<br>• Animal behaviour/handling<br>• OH&S, including staff wellbeing.<br>• Investigations (e.g. animal noise, dog attacks).<br>• Microchipping training. | Ongoing | Training incorporated into individual employee plans in Council's learning management system. |
| cur1.2 | Support Authorised Officers to undertake Certificate IV in Local Government Investigations and Animal Regulations. | Ongoing | One Authorised Officer to undertake this training annually |
| 1.3 | Continue to review and update Animal Management processes and new staff induction material. | Annually | Processes reviewed and updated. |

| Objective 2<br>Promote responsible pet ownership through increased education and information provision. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 2.1 | Review and implement communications and education plan, including:<br>• Animal registration and identification.<br>• Importance of keeping dogs on lead.<br>• Promotion of dog off lead areas.<br>• Picking up after your dog.<br>• Benefits of cat curfews and desexing.<br>• Impacts of dogs and cats on wildlife.<br>• Barking dog information.<br>• Minimising dog attacks.<br>• Dog training. | 2026 ongoing | Communication plan reviewed and implemented annually. |
| 2.2 | Review and update animal information on Council's website and fact sheets. | 2026 ongoing | Information reviewed and updated annually. |
| 2.3 | 'Welcome Pack' sent to residents who have recently adopted a dog or cat from an adoption agency, breeder or other Council. | 2026 and ongoing | Implemented. |
| 2.4 | 'New Registration Pack' sent to owners of newly registered dogs or cats. | 2026 and ongoing | Implemented. |
| 2.5 | Develop a targeted campaign to increase education and awareness amongst pet owners on the potential impacts their pets can have upon wildlife. Work with partners such Parks Victoria where required. | 2026 and ongoing | Implemented – as part of annual Communications Plan. |
| 2.6 | Support low-cost cat and dog education programs to encourage responsible pet ownership. | 2026 | Implemented. |

| Objective 3<br>Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership to support a dusk-to-dawn (7pm-7am) cat conferment order with consideration of a phased approach to a full 24/7 curfew and mandatory desexing of cats. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 3.1 | Develop and implement a targeted communication and education plan to encourage responsible cat ownership including explaining the benefit of cat confinement and desexing. Focus on welfare benefits for cats. | 2026 | Suite of communication and education resources designed and implemented. |

| Objective 4<br>Introduce a dusk-to-dawn (7pm-7am) with consideration of a phased approach to a full 24/7 curfew, cat confinement order across Maribyrnong to support the welfare of domestic cats and protect the natural environment. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **4** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 4.1 | **Phase 1: Education**<br>Develop processes including an education campaign and information about maintaining the welfare of contained cats; to support implementation of a dusk-to-dawn (7pm-7am) Cat Confinement Order. | Jan-July 2026 | Community education program developed and delivered. |
| 4.2 | **Phase 2: Implement a dusk-to-dawn (7pm-7am).**<br>Officers will continue providing support and information to help cat owners transition cats indoors, including guidance and links to local resources. Our priority is education and assistance, with enforcement considered only when other options have been exhausted. | July 2026-June 2027 | Cat Confinement Order implemented. |
| 4.3 | **Phase 3: Evaluation**<br>Assess the impact of the night curfew, the effectiveness of the education campaign, and the effect on cat owners and community members. Include | July – Dec 2027 | Program reviewed in line with specific goals. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | efforts to understand potential impacts on native wildlife, noting that accurate measurement may be difficult**.** Gather community feedback to identify barriers and opportunities for improvement. Share findings transparently. | | |
| 4.4 | **Phase 4: Transition to 24/7 Curfew (January 2028 onwards)**<br>Based on evaluation outcomes, consider moving to a full 24/7 curfew. Communicate the decision clearly and provide a transition plan for residents. | Jan 2028 | Consider success of the curfew program and based on assessment consider moving to a full 24/7 curfew. |

| **Objective 5**<br>Improve pet desexing rates | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 5.1 | Implement an Order for mandatory desexing of all registered cats, with exceptions for registered breeders. | 2026-2027 | Cat Desexing Order implemented. |
| 5.2 | Investigate and deliver discounted and easy to access desexing services. | 2026-2027 | Discounted desexing services delivered. |

| **Objective 6**<br>Increase Council's capacity to improve welfare of domestic animals. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **6** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 6.1 | Partner with other animal management services and facilities to support domestic animal management across the City of Maribyrnong.<br>Continue to develop relationships and partnerships with vets and rescue groups. | Ongoing | Partnerships in place. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6.2 | Facilitate pet adoption days with the Lost Dogs' Home or other community groups to promote rehoming of pets and reduce the number of animals in the facility. | 2026, ongoing annually | Annual adoption day held. |
| 6.3 | Investigate opportunities to reward people who adopt pets from partner shelters. | 2027 | Action completed. |
| 6.4 | Partner with Pets of the Homeless to help keep vulnerable people and their pets together by alleviating the burden of providing essential pet care during times of hardship. | 2026 | Partnership implemented. |

| **Objective 7**<br>Undertake activities to improve rates of registration and identification for cats and dogs in Maribyrnong. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **7** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 7.1 | Continue SMS reminders for dog and cat registration renewals. | Ongoing | Annual reminder process |
| 7.2 | Investigate feasibility of introducing pro-rata or discount fees for:<br>• First year of registration.<br>• Multiple pets.<br>• Pets under 12 months that are not yet desexed. | 2026 | Completion of review. |
| 7.3 | Develop an infographic depicting how registration fee income is allocated and make this available to the community through:<br>• Council website.<br>• Registration notices.<br>• Other Council publications as appropriate. | 2026 and ongoing | Information provided and updated regularly |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7.4 | Undertake activities to better identify pet registration non-compliances:<br>• Continue registration checks in the field.<br>• Continue Central Animal Records (CAR) microchip audits. | Ongoing | Pet registration levels |
| 7.5 | Partner with shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders to promote Council registration and updating of microchip details. | Annual | Shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders contacted. |
| 7.6 | Continue to promote opportunities for subsidised or free microchipping programs. | 2026 and ongoing | Promotional activities undertaken. |

| **Objective 8**<br>Effective patrols, education and enforcement activities. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **8** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 8.1 | Continued proactive patrols of dog off-leash parks and reserves. | Ongoing | Number of patrols. |
| 8.2 | Review and improve processes for enforcement regarding animal management including barking dog nuisance, dog attacks, dogs off leash and cat containment. | Annually | Nuisance processes revised and improved. |
| 8.3 | Review and seek to improve the way Council collects, measures and reports on domestic animal requests (including identification of 'hotspots'). | 2027 | Review completed.<br>Implementation of changes. |
| 8.4 | Review and update signage at designated off-leash parks and reserves, and walking trails along the river.<br>Consider introducing a QR code with link to Council website on dog leash rules. | 2027 | Review completed.<br>Signage updated. |

| Objective 9<br>Promote initiatives to address dog aggression. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **9** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 9.1 | Continue to develop and improve processes in the way Council manages, investigates and prosecutes dog attacks to maintain best practice. | Annually | Processes reviewed annually. |
| 9.2 | Analyse dog attack data and target hot spots for additional proactive patrols to actively enforce against and minimise dog attacks in the community. | 2026 and ongoing | Additional targeted patrols implemented. |
| 9.3 | Promote a strong reporting culture in the community regarding dog attacks. | 2026 and ongoing | Implementation of action. |
| 9.4 | Advocate to primary schools to participate in free Animal Welfare Victoria dog behaviour education program. | 2026 and ongoing | All Maribyrnong primary schools contacted and encouraged to participate. |

| Objective 10<br>Declared Dogs (dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs) in the City of Maribyrnong will be identified and appropriately managed. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **10** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 10.1 | Conduct annual declared dog property inspections, ensuring compliance with the Act (including but not limited to security of fencing, animal housing and signage). | Annually | Inspections undertaken. |
| 10.2 | Continue to identify and declare dogs dangerous and menacing where required. | Ongoing | Dogs who are involved in non-compliance are declared. |

| Objective 11<br>Domestic Animal Businesses in Maribyrnong will be identified, registered and compliant with current legislation and relevant code of practice. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **11** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 11.1 | Annual inspections of Domestic Animal Businesses annually in Maribyrnong City Council for compliance. | Annually | Inspections completed. |
| 11.2 | Monitor for businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses by reviewing advertisements, social media, local notice boards, etc. | Annually | Review undertaken. |

| **Objective 12**<br>Seek funding opportunities to support domestic animal management programs. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **12** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 12.1 | Investigate opportunities for external funding towards the development of domestic animal management programs. | Ongoing | Grant opportunities identified and, where appropriate, applications submitted. |

# City of Maribyrnong Profile

## People

The City of Maribyrnong is located in Melbourne's inner west and is made up of nine suburbs – Braybrook, Footscray, Kingsville, Maidstone, Maribyrnong, Seddon, Tottenham, West Footscray and Yarraville – with a total land area of 31 square kilometres. The suburbs vary in demographics and social and economic status.

Maribyrnong is a thriving hub of arts, culture, retail, education and innovation. People are attracted by the period homes, 'foodie' culture, the natural environment of the Maribyrnong River and open spaces, access to public transport, job opportunities and the close proximity to Melbourne's city centre and airports.

Maribyrnong has 153 open spaces, covering 313.5 hectares of land or 10 percent of the total land area of the municipality which is much lower than the surrounding municipalities. Open spaces are highly valued and highly utilised by pet owners and non-pet owners alike. 53% of the estimated 94,251 residents (ABS ERP 2024) live in medium to high density housing.

Maribyrnong is culturally and linguistically diverse with 38% of residents born overseas. The main countries of birth, apart from Australia include Vietnam, India, China, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The ethnic composition is comparable to Greater Melbourne, where 36% of people identified as having been born overseas.

The median age of residents is 35 years, with a smaller percentage of 'seniors', 'empty nesters and retirees'; and a larger percentage of 'young workforce' and 'parents and homebuilders' than Greater Melbourne.

## Dogs and cats

The table below provides a summary of Domestic Animal data.

| Animal Management Data Summary | 2016/17 | 2020/21 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Human population | 86,942 (ABS 2016) | 86,385 (ABS 2021) | 94,251 (ABS estimated 2024) | 94,251 (ABS estimated 2024) |
| FTE Authorised Officers | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Number of requests | 1,239 | 1,233 | 1,127 | 1,447 |
| Registered dogs | 6,279 | 7,038 | 6,396 | 6,249 |
| Registered declared dogs | 2 dangerous<br>1 menacing | 3 dangerous<br>2 menacing | 5 dangerous<br>9 menacing | 4 dangerous<br>13 menacing |
| Dog attacks (including rush) | 84 | 75 | 92 | 97 |
| Registered cats | 2,945 | 3,061 | 3,600 | 3,551 |
| Registered domestic animal businesses | 7 | 9 | 10 | 11 |

| Animal Management Data Summary | 2016/17 | 2020/21 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Keeping of animals / excess animal permits | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Infringements issued | 483 | 268 | 674 | 369 |
| Successful prosecutions | 6 | 0 | 4 | 7 |
| Dogs impounded | 317 | 150 | 205 | 238 |
| Cats impounded | 527 | 324 | 429 | 382 |

## The Future

Maribyrnong's population is forecast to grow by more than 60,000 residents by 2051. Increased resident population has a flow on effect on the number of pets in Maribyrnong. This impacts the number of animal registrations, dogs being walked in public open spaces, cats needing to be contained to properties, dogs potentially barking, and much more.

Our parks need to be welcoming to all members of the community, including pet owners, and cater for various and increased use as they become residents' 'backyards'.

This includes responding to an increased number of domestic animals residing in the municipality and living in apartments, as well as providing a balanced approach to ensuring that our limited open spaces are well managed and shared between dog owners and non-dog owners.

Protection of our environment and wildlife from dogs and cats at large will continue to be a priority. We will implement initiatives to increase community awareness and reduce impacts of dogs and cats on the environment.

# Local Laws, Orders and other Domestic Animal Controls

In addition to The Act, Council enforces the provisions of the Local Law and Council Orders which relate to animal management as outlined below.

## Keeping dogs and cats

Dogs and cats over three months old must be microchipped and registered with Council.

The maximum number of dogs that can be kept is as follows:

| Animal | Houses | Units, townhouses, apartments, flats and other multi-residential dwellings |
|---|---|---|
| Dogs | 3 | 2 |
| Cats | 2 | 2 |

Exemptions are provided for cats and dogs under 12 weeks of age.

An assistance dog or cat may be kept, provided it is registered with Council.

## Animal housing and noise

Owners are required to ensure that animal housing is appropriate for the number and type of animals, minimises noise and other nuisances, and does not adversely impact the amenity of the area.

## Animal waste

Pet owners are required to pick up after their pets (and carry waste bags).

## Dogs on/off leash

Dogs must always be on leash in public places, except in specifically designated off leash areas.

When dogs are off-leash it is the responsibility of the owner/handler to:

- Observe park signage always in all parks, gardens, reserves and other public open spaces.
- Clean up after dogs.
- Carry a chain, cord or leash and be able to bring their dog under effective control if the dog behaves in a manner which causes any person or animal to feel threatened or worried.
- Remain in effective voice or hand control of their dog so that the dog can be brought under effective control should it become necessary.
- Ensure that dogs do not cause worry or threaten any person or animal.

When dogs are on-lead it is the responsibility of the owner/handler to:

- Clean up after their dog.

- Ensure that the dog is under effective control of the owner/handler by means of a chain, cord, or leash no longer than three metres which is held by the owner/handler and attached to the dog.

## Dogs on sporting grounds

Under no circumstances are dogs permitted to enter onto sports grounds when booked sports training or matches are taking place.

## Dogs in playgrounds

Under no circumstances are dogs permitted to enter playground areas without being on a lead. Dogs that are off-lead are not permitted to be within 30 metres of any playground area.

# Current programs and activities

Our current domestic animal management programs and activities.

| Program | Service Provided |
|---|---|
| Education and promotion of responsible pet ownership | • Communications plan, including a range of activities across the year.<br>  ○ Online information<br>  ○ Fact sheets<br>  ○ Social media campaigns and media releases<br>  ○ Missing or found cats and dogs<br>  ○ Barking dog information<br>  ○ Reporting a nuisance cat or dog<br>  ○ Dog off-leash parks and reserves<br>  ○ Dog attacks and rushes<br>  ○ Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs<br>• Attend local festivals with the Animal Management Team and provide information and education to residents on responsible pet ownership.<br>• Signage and waste bags in dog off-leash parks. |
| Identification and Registration | • Annual pet registration renewal notices and reminder process.<br>• Educational information contained in renewal notices.<br>• Online portal for new registration applications and payment of renewals.<br>• Educational media campaigns and online promotions.<br>• Audit of information held with Central Animal Records against Council's animal registration database with anomalies followed up.<br>• Door knocks or mailouts conducted intermittently where complaints are received regarding wandering/unregistered animals. |
| Dog attack complaints (against people or animals) | • Immediate response to emergencies or dangerous situations.<br>• Dangerous dog complaints, response within one hour. |
| Wandering dog complaints | • As soon as practicable and within one to two hours (during business hours). |
| Wandering cat complaint | • Response within one day. |

| Program | Service Provided |
|---|---|
| Animal nuisance complaints<br>(including barking dogs) | • Targeted response time is within one day.<br>• Customers encouraged to utilise Council's educational materials (Barking Dog Booklet) in order to resolve barking issues directly with dog owner, supported by an Officer where required. |
| Off-leash parks/areas | • Council has an on-leash order in place across the municipality, except in our 12 designated off leash parks and reserves.<br>• Proactive patrols of off leash parks and reserves. |
| Pound Facilities<br>Lost Dogs Home<br>2 Gracie Street<br>North Melbourne | • Lost Dogs Home is open to the public from 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday and 9am to 12.30pm weekends (closed Christmas Day and Good Friday).<br>• Online 'lost dog' and 'lost cat' search facility.<br>• Community and animal welfare-based outcomes wherever possible – reuniting animals with owners as first priority. |
| After Hours Emergency Service | • After hours reports/calls are actioned by The Lost Dogs Home. |
| Animal welfare / cruelty matters | • Animal welfare matters are reported immediately to RSPCA when an Officer becomes aware of a complaint.<br>• We liaise with and report animal welfare / cruelty matters to the RSPCA for action. |
| Domestic Animal Business (DAB) Inspections | • Annual inspections to be undertaken in accordance with Domestic Animal Act 1994.<br>• Issue annual registration certificates.<br>• Respond to and investigate complaints. |
| Declared Dogs (dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs) | • Annual inspections are undertaken in accordance with the Act legislation. |
| Prosecutions | • Council Officers prosecute breaches of the Act. |

# Training of Authorised Officers

Council's Animal Management Team are part of the Emergency Management and Regulatory Services Department. Council employs 4.0 FTE Authorised Officers, who during 2024-25 responded to 1,447 domestic animal management requests.

Animal Management services are provided 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

After hours reports/calls are actioned by The Lost Dogs Home.

## Current activities

Given the diverse roles and activities undertaken, it is critical that all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work.

Authorised Officers are encouraged to hold a Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation or equally appropriate and applicable qualifications and experience.

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

We maintain a training needs analysis detailing all the qualifications and training courses completed by each officer. We undertake annual performance reviews to identify further training and development opportunities with targeted training provided.

## Actions for 2026-29

| **Objective 1**<br>Ensure that Authorised Officers have the skills and knowledge required to effectively administer their role. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 1.1 | Support Authorised Officers to further develop their skills as part of the annual performance development process. Including:<br>• Conflict resolution/dealing with difficult situations.<br>• Cultural awareness.<br>• Animal behaviour/handling.<br>• OH&S, including staff wellbeing.<br>• Investigations (e.g. animal noise, dog attacks).<br>• Microchipping training. | Ongoing | Training incorporated into individual employee plans in Council's learning management system. |
| 1.2 | Support Authorised Officers to undertake Certificate IV in Local Government Investigations and Animal Regulations. | Ongoing | Support one Authorised Officer to undertake this training annually (if not already qualified). |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.3 | Continue to review and update Animal Management processes and new staff induction material. | Annually | Processes reviewed and updated. |

# Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership

Education and promotion initiatives are essential to encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats. Responsible pet ownership includes animals being trained and exercised, microchipped, desexed and registered with owners who comply with regulations and signage.

We promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats through a range of education and enforcement initiatives. We understand the increasing demand for Council services to be delivered online, and for engagement through social media and other digital means.

The promotion of dog friendly and dog prohibited spaces is important in increasing community awareness of where and when you are able to walk your dog.

The implementation of a dusk-to-dawn (7pm-7am) with consideration of a phased approach to a full 24/7 curfew, Cat Confinement Order and mandatory cat desexing across Maribyrnong will require targeted community education initiatives to ensure awareness of cat confinement requirements.

## Current Activities

- Communications plan, including a range of activities across the year.
  - Online information
  - Fact sheets
  - Social media campaigns and media releases
  - Missing or found cats and dogs
  - Barking dog information
  - Reporting a nuisance cat or dog
  - Dog off-leash parks and reserves
  - Dog attacks and rushes
  - Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs
- Attend local festivals with the Animal Management Team and provide information and education to residents on responsible pet ownership.
- Signage and waste bags in dog off-leash parks.
- Proactive patrols of off-leash parks and reserves.

## Actions for 2026-29

| Objective 2<br>Promote responsible pet ownership through increased education and information provision. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 2.1 | Review and implement communications and education plan, including:<br>• Animal registration and identification.<br>• Importance of keeping dogs on lead.<br>• Promotion of dog off lead areas.<br>• Picking up after your dog.<br>• Benefits of cat confinement and desexing.<br>• Impacts of dogs and cats on wildlife.<br>• Barking dog information.<br>• Minimising dog attacks.<br>• Dog training. | 2026 ongoing | Communication plan reviewed and implemented annually. |
| 2.2 | Review and update animal information on Council's website and fact sheets. | 2026 ongoing | Information reviewed and updated annually. |
| 2.3 | 'Welcome Pack' sent to residents who have recently adopted a dog or cat from an adoption agency, breeder or other Council. | 2026 and ongoing | Implemented. |
| 2.4 | 'New Registration Pack' sent to owners of newly registered dogs or cats. | 2026 and ongoing | Implemented. |
| 2.5 | Develop a targeted campaign to increase education and awareness amongst pet owners on the potential impacts their pets can have upon wildlife. Work with partners such Parks Victoria where required. | 2026 and ongoing | Implemented – as part of annual Communications Plan |
| 2.6 | Support low-cost cat and dog education programs to encourage responsible pet ownership. | 2026 | Implemented. |

| **Objective 3**<br>Promote responsible pet ownership by implementing a dusk-to-dawn (7pm–7am) cat confinement order, with a phased approach toward a full 24/7 curfew and mandatory desexing of cats. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 3.1 | Develop and implement a targeted communication and education plan to encourage responsible cat ownership including explaining the benefit of cat confinement and desexing. Focus on welfare benefits for cats. | 2026 | Suite of communication and education resources designed and implemented. |
| 3.2 | Collaborate with community organisations around cat containment program and options for low-cost cat enclosures and other management approaches. | 2026 | Establish a working group with the objective of supporting the community to adjust to cat confinement and increasing access to cat enclosures. |

| **Objective 4**<br>Introduce a dusk-to-dawn (7pm-7am) with consideration of a phased approach to a full 24/7 curfew, cat confinement order across Maribyrnong to support the welfare of domestic cats and protect the natural environment. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **4** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 4.1 | **Phase 1: Education**<br>Develop processes including an education campaign and information about maintaining the welfare of contained cats; to support implementation of a dusk-to-dawn (7pm-7am) Cat Confinement Order. | Jan-July 2026 | Community education program developed and delivered. |
| 4.2 | **Phase 2: Implement a dusk-to-dawn (7pm-7am).**<br>Officers will continue providing support and information to help cat owners transition cats indoors, including guidance and links to local resources. Our priority is education and assistance, with enforcement | July 2026-June 2027 | Cat Confinement Order implemented. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | considered only when other options have been exhausted. | | |
| 4.3 | **Phase 3: Evaluation**<br>Assess the impact of the night curfew, the effectiveness of the education campaign, and the effect on cat owners and community members. Include efforts to understand potential impacts on native wildlife, noting that accurate measurement may be difficult**.** Gather community feedback to identify barriers and opportunities for improvement. Share findings transparently. | July – Dec 2027 | Program reviewed in line with specific goals. |
| 4.4 | **Phase 4: Transition to 24/7 Curfew (January 2028 onwards).**<br>Based on evaluation outcomes, consider moving to a full 24/7 curfew. Communicate the decision clearly and provide a transition plan for residents. | Jan 2028 | Consider success of the curfew program and based on assessment consider moving to a full 24/7 curfew. |

# Reducing overpopulation and euthanasia

Impoundments occur when pets escape from their properties or are abandoned or surrendered by owners. Council's priority is to achieve positive community and animal welfare outcomes and return registered pets to owners from the field wherever possible, without taking them to the Lost Dogs' Home.

Council has a contract with the Lost Dogs' Home to collect uncontained dogs and cats and assist them in being returned to their owner or where this is not possible - to be rehomed.

The Lost Dogs' Home's goal is to reunite healthy and treatable animals with their owners or adopt them into new homes. They rehome and reunite the majority of dogs and cats that come into their care. Animals are only euthanised as a last resort. "If the health condition is chronic and pain cannot be alleviated or quality of life is acutely impeded, it is considered humane to relieve an animals' suffering with compassionate euthanasia."

| | 2016-17 | 2020-21 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dogs impounded** | **317** | 150 | **205** | **238** |
| Dogs reclaimed by owner | 216 (68%) | 107 (71%) | 108 (53%) | 126 (53%) |
| Dogs rehoused | 40 (13%) | 17 (11%) | 51 (25%) | 82 (34%) |
| Dogs euthanised | 36 (11%) | 13 (9%) | 31 (15%) | 30 (13%) |
| Pending outcome in next financial year | 25 (8%) | 13 (9%) | 15 (7%) | 0 |
| **Cats impounded** | 527 | 324 | **429** | **382** |
| Cats reclaimed by owner | 46 (9%) | 36 (11%) | 18 (4%) | 24 (6%) |
| Cats rehoused | 111 (21%) | 138 (43%) | 214 (50%) | 161 (42%) |
| Cats euthanised | 323 (61%) | 130 (40%) | 192 (45%) | 197 (52%) |
| Pending outcome in next financial year | 47 (9%) | 20 (6%) | 5 (1%) | 0 |

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

Council does not register pets that are not microchipped and ensures animals are registered prior to releasing them once impounded. When Council becomes aware of an unregistered cat or dog, follow up is conducted and assistance provided to ensure the pet gets registered.

Community engagement outcomes from a 2024 survey of 995 people identified that:

- 76% of respondents support the introduction of a cat curfew.

- 66% of those who support the introduction of a cat curfew reported that they support a 24/7 cat curfew.
- The primary reason for supporting a cat curfew was impact on local wildlife.

## Current activities

- Council contracts its animal collection and pound services to The Lost Dogs' Home which is open to the public every day (except Christmas Day and Good Friday).
- Online 'lost dog' and 'lost cat' search facility through the Lost Dogs Home.
- Promotion of pets available for adoption through the Lost Dogs Home.
- Liaise with and report animal welfare/cruelty matters to the RSPCA for action.
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the number of animals that can be kept on a property without a permit.
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the responsible breeding of dogs and cats.
  - Conduct investigations in response to customer requests.
  - Enforcement actions include notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecutions.
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests.
- Enforcement activities including official warnings, infringements, notices to comply and court prosecution.

## Actions for 2026-29

| **Objective 5**<br>Improve pet desexing rates. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **5** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 5.1 | Implement an Order for mandatory desexing of all registered cats, with exceptions for registered breeders. | 2026-2027 | Cat Desexing Order implemented. |
| 5.2 | Investigate and deliver discounted and easy to access desexing services. | 2026-2027 | Discounted desexing services delivered. |

| **Objective 6**<br>Increase Council's capacity to improve welfare of domestic animals. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **6** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 6.1 | Partner with other animal management services and facilities to support domestic animal management across the | Ongoing | Partnerships in place. |

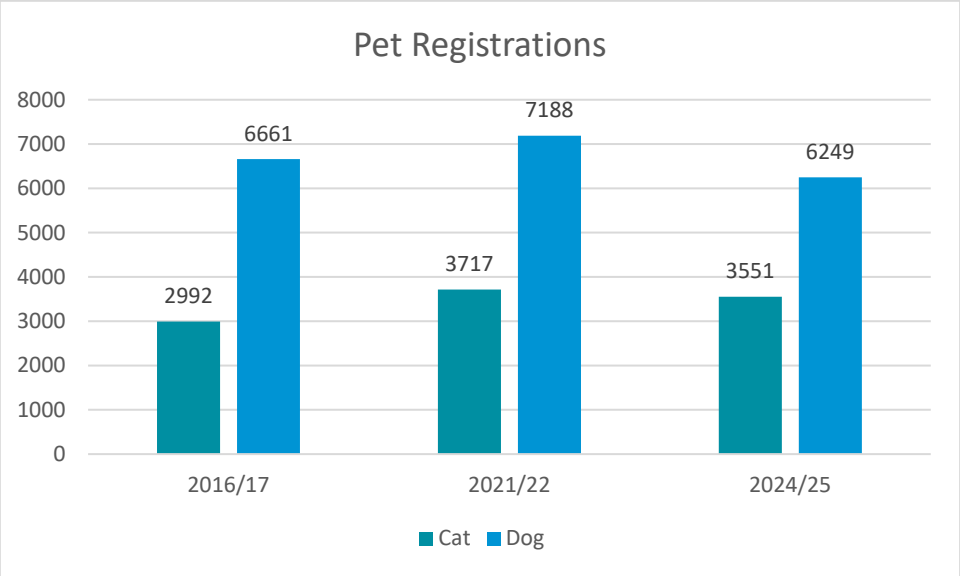
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|---|---|---|---|
| | City of Maribyrnong.<br>Continue to develop relationships and partnerships with vets and rescue groups. | | |
| 6.2 | Facilitate pet adoption days with the Lost Dogs' Home to promote rehoming of pets and reduce the number of animals in the facility. | 2026, ongoing annually | Annual adoption day held. |
| 6.3 | Investigate opportunities to reward people who adopt pets from partner shelters. | 2027 | Action completed. |
| 6.4 | Partner with Pets of the Homeless to help keep vulnerable people and their pets together by alleviating the burden of providing essential pet care during times of hardship. | 2026 | Partnership implemented. |

# Registration and identification

The registration and identification of dogs and cats is important in demonstrating responsible pet ownership and in caring for the welfare of animals. As well as being a legal requirement, an animal found with current registration and microchip has a much higher chance of being reunited with its owner.

All dogs and cats three months and over must be microchipped and registered with Council. Cats are also required to be desexed. Registrations must be renewed annually by 10 April.

There have been fluctuating animal registration numbers, reflecting a need to increase awareness of the importance of pet registration. There are plans in the next DAMP to highlight the benefits of pet registration in order to increase registration numbers with one of the key benefits of enabling lost pets to be returned to their owner.




## Current activities

- Annual registration renewal notices and follow up process, including SMS reminders. Educational material is also sent with renewal notices.
- Online portal for new registration applications and payment of renewals.
- Free registration for guide dogs, seeing eye dogs and assistance dogs.
- Lifetime registration tags.
- Educational media campaigns and online promotions.
- Cross-referencing of Central Animal Records (CAR) microchip database with Council's animal registration database.
- Registration door knock activities.
- Animals in the Lost Dogs' Home must be registered and microchipped prior to release.
- Proactive patrols in the community, where registration is checked and followed up for all interactions officers have with members of the public.

- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.

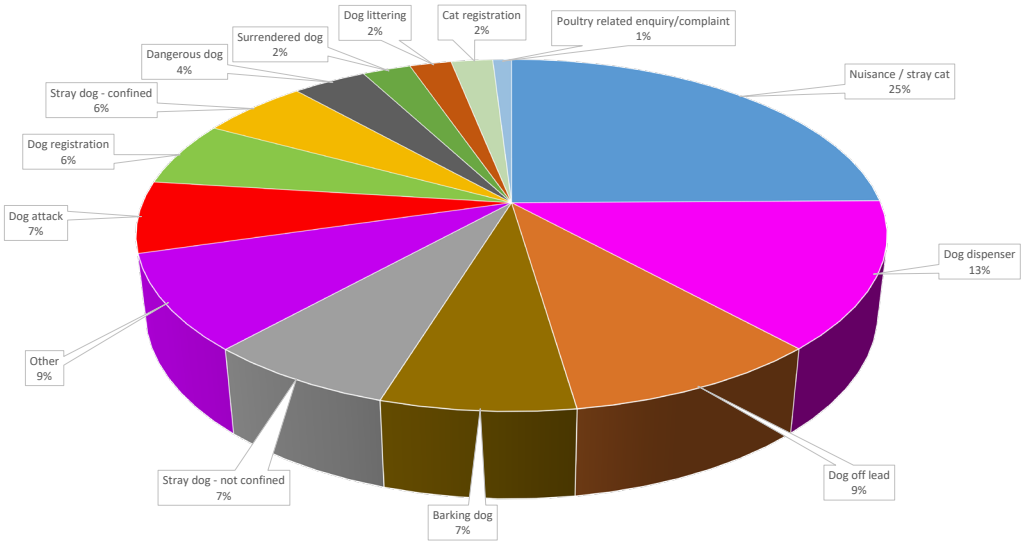
## Actions for 2026-29

| **Objective 7**<br>Undertake activities to improve rates of registration and identification for cats and dogs in Maribyrnong. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **7** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 7.1 | Continue SMS reminders for dog and cat registration renewals. | Ongoing | Annual reminder process. |
| 7.2 | Investigate feasibility of introducing pro-rata or discount fees for:<br>• First year of registration.<br>• Multiple pets.<br>• Pets under 12 months that are not yet desexed. | 2026 | Completion of review. |
| 7.3 | Develop an infographic depicting how registration fee income is allocated and make this available to the community through:<br>• Council website<br>• Registration notices<br>• Other Council publications as appropriate | 2026 and ongoing | Information provided and updated regularly |
| 7.4 | Undertake activities to better identify pet registration non-compliances:<br>• Continue registration checks in the field.<br>• Continue Central Animal Records (CAR) microchip audits. | Ongoing | Pet registration levels |
| 7.5 | Partner with shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders to promote Council registration and updating of microchip details. | Annual | Shelters, vets, body corporates and breeders contacted. |
| 7.6 | Continue to promote opportunities for subsidised or free microchipping programs. | 2026 and ongoing | Promotional activities undertaken. |

# Nuisance

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

In 2024-25, Authorised Officers responded to 1,447 domestic animal requests. The most frequent animal management requests are detailed below.




Dogs off lead and stray dogs make up 22% of requests.  Although regular and proactive patrols are undertaken, community education and voluntary compliance are critical as only a small portion of public open space areas can be patrolled at a time.

Nuisance or stray cats remain a concern making up 25% of activity, although cats are currently not required to be confined to their owners' premises.  Unowned and feral cats will continue to be both a nuisance for the community and a negative environmental impact without adequate management into the future. Council is looking to focus on responsible cat ownership in this future DAMP.

There is an opportunity to increase community awareness around responsible pet ownership of both dogs and cats.

## Current Activities

- Proactive patrols of dog off-leash parks and reserves.
- Signage in dog off-leash parks detailing dog controls.
- Information provided to reduce nuisance and promote the 12 designated dog off-leash areas, including:
    - Barking dog booklet.
    - Dog off leash area.
    - Picking up after your dog.
    - Reporting a nuisance dog or cat.

- Signage and waste bags in the 12 designated dog off-leash areas.
- Enforce Local Law provisions governing the number of animals that can be kept on a property without a permit.
- Enforce Council orders and regulations such as those governing dogs on sports grounds or near playgrounds.
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests regarding nuisance associated with dogs and cats.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.

## Actions for 2026-29

| **Objective 8**<br>Effective patrols, education and enforcement activities. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **8** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 8.1 | Continued proactive patrols of dog off-leash parks and reserves. | Ongoing | Number of patrols. |
| 8.2 | Review and improve processes for enforcement regarding animal management including barking dog nuisance, dog attacks, dogs off leash and cat containment. | Annually | Nuisance processes revised and improved. |
| 8.3 | Review and seek to improve the way Council collects, measures and reports on domestic animal requests (including identification of 'hotspots'). | 2027 | Review completed.<br>Implementation of changes. |
| 8.4 | Review and update signage at designated off-leash parks and reserves, and walking trails along the river.<br>Consider introducing a QR code with link to Council website on dog leash rules. | 2027 | Review completed.<br>Signage updated. |

# Dog attacks

Dog attacks remain a concern and Council continuously looks for ways to minimise dog attacks on people and animals. We do this by means of a range of proactive communication initiatives and investigation and enforcement action against offending dog owners.

A dog attack is a bite or injury to a person, whereas a rush is where a dog has approached a person within three metres displaying aggressive behaviour (e.g. snarling, growling, barking, raising hackles).

In 2024-2025 Authorised Officers responded to 97 reports of alleged dog attacks or rushes and Council successfully prosecuted seven serious dog attacks.

Education, access to dog training and enforcement of local laws / greater physical presence in the community are important in minimising dog aggression and attacks in the community.

## Current activities

- An immediate response to reports of dog attacks.
- Where the threat is not imminent, a response within one hour to reports of dangerous dogs.
- Conduct investigations in response to customer requests regarding dog attack, rush or aggression.
- Signage in dog off-leash parks and reserves detailing dog controls.
- Proactive patrols of dog off-leash parks and reserves.
- Information provided to reduce instances of dog aggression and promote designated dog off leash parks.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.

## Actions for 2026-29

| **Objective 9**<br>Promote initiatives to address dog aggression. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **9** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 9.1 | Continue to develop and improve processes in the way Council manages, investigates and prosecutes dog attacks to maintain best practice. | Annually | Processes reviewed annually. |
| 9.2 | Analyse dog attack data and target hot spots for additional proactive patrols to actively enforce against and minimise dog attacks in the community. | 2026 and ongoing | Additional targeted patrols implemented. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9.3 | Promote a strong reporting culture in the community regarding dog attacks. | 2026 and ongoing | Implementation of action. |
| 9.4 | Advocate to primary schools to participate in free Animal Welfare Victoria dog behaviour education program. | 2026 and ongoing | All Maribyrnong primary schools contacted and encouraged to participate. |

# Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

Council seeks to minimise the risk to the community by administering and enforcing the provisions of the Act to identify and control dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

In 2025, Maribyrnong City Council has 17 declared dogs:

- 4 declared as dangerous dogs;
- 13 declared as menacing dogs; and
- 0 restricted breed dogs.

Our pet registration forms require owners to declare if their dog is a restricted breed, has been declared menacing or is a dangerous dog.

## Current activities

- Record all declared dogs on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry and conduct annual audits of properties and leasing and housing requirements.
- Conduct investigations in response to reports of declared dogs.
- Conduct Central Animal Records microchip audits to identify potential restricted breed dogs.
- Information on website and available at Council offices.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.

## Actions for 2026-29

| Objective 10<br>Declared Dogs (dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs) in the City of Maribyrnongwill be identified and appropriately managed. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **10** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 10.1 | Conduct annual declared dog property inspections, ensuring compliance with the Act (including but not limited to security of fencing, animal housing and signage). | Annually | Inspections undertaken. |
| 10.2 | Continue to identify and declare dogs dangerous and menacing where required. | Ongoing | Dogs who are involved in non-compliance are declared. |

# Domestic Animal Businesses

Council works in partnership with Domestic Animal Businesses to make sure businesses are registered and complying with relevant regulations.

Maribyrnong has 11 registered Domestic Animal Businesses:

- 1 breeding and rearing establishment;
- 6 boarding establishments;
- 2 dog training establishments; and
- 2 pet shops.

Authorised Officers inspect these facilities annually to ensure compliance with the relevant Code of Practice under the Act, prior to registration renewal.

Council has the ability to issue notices to comply, warnings, infringements, or to prosecute businesses that fail to comply with work plans and the relevant Code of Practice.

We actively seek to identify, investigate and prosecute any illegal Domestic Animal Businesses operating in Maribyrnong City Council.

## Current activities

- Information on website and available at Council offices.
- Provide all Domestic Animal Businesses with relevant Code of Practice.
- Conduct annual property inspections of registered Domestic Animal Businesses for compliance with legislation.
- Conduct investigations in response to complaints to ensure compliance.
- Enforcement activities including notices to comply, official warnings, infringements and court prosecution.
- Actively seek and identify illegal domestic animal businesses and prosecute where appropriate.

## Actions for 2026-29

| Objective 11<br>Domestic Animal Businesses in Maribyrnong will be identified, registered and compliant with current legislation and relevant code of practice. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **11** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 11.1 | Audit Domestic Animal Businesses annually in Maribyrnong City Council for compliance. | Annually | Audits completed. |
| 11.2 | Monitor for businesses that should be registered Domestic Animal Businesses by reviewing advertisements, social media, local notice boards, etc. | Annually | Review undertaken. |

# Other Matters

Actions in this section addresses The Act by providing for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the City of Maribyrnong.

## Actions for 2026-29

| **Objective 12**<br>Seek funding opportunities to support domestic animal management programs. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **12** | **Activity** | **When** | **How we will measure** |
| 12.1 | Investigate opportunities for external funding towards the development of domestic animal management programs. | Ongoing | Grant opportunities identified and, where appropriate, applications submitted. |

# Review and Evaluation

Section 68A(3) of The Act requires that every Council must:

a) review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the Plan;
b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the Plan and any amendments to the plan; and
c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the Plan in its annual report.

## Performance monitoring and evaluation process

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

A new DAMP will be completed on or before 30 November 2029.