

Community Consultation Report

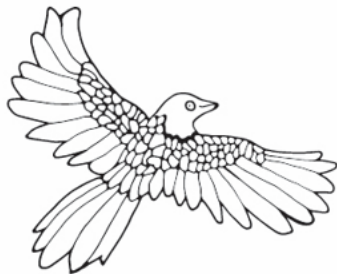
Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan

October 2025



Contents

1	Summary.....	3
1.1	Background.....	3
1.2	Engagement strategies	3
1.3	Key findings	3
2	Methodology.....	6
2.1	Key engagement questions.....	6
2.2	Communication	6
2.3	Participation	6
2.4	Survey respondent demographics	7
3	Findings	10
3.1	Survey.....	10
3.2	Additional written submissions	17
3.3	Social media comments.....	18
4	Conclusion	18
5	Appendices.....	20
5.1	Your Say page	20
5.2	Survey.....	21
5.3	Additional written submissions	23



Moonee Valley City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which Moonee Valley is located – the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation; and we pay respects to their Spirits, Ancestors, Elders and their community members past and present.

Council also extends this respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples who call Moonee Valley home.

Artwork by Wurundjeri artist, the late Judy Nicholson

1 Summary

1.1 Background

Council is reviewing its Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) and invited the community to be part of the journey.

From 1-28 September 2025, Council invited the community to have their say on the draft DAMP 2026-2029. Feedback received during this consultation will inform Council's refreshed Plan, which will guide decision making in relation to dog and cats within Moonee Valley.

The draft DAMP 2026-2029 outlines how Council manages dogs and cats in Moonee Valley. It promotes animal welfare and responsible pet ownership and aims to create a community where people and pets live together harmoniously and respectfully.

The draft DAMP 2026-2029 highlights four key areas of focus that will shape Council's work over the next four years.

1. Animal Registrations
2. Community Safety
3. Community Tensions
4. Environment and Animal Welfare

1.2 Engagement strategies

Community members could contribute to the consultation via:

1. A dedicated Your Say webpage (Appendix 5.1), linking participants to the online survey (Appendix 5.2) and Draft DAMP 2026-2029.
2. Recording verbal feedback via the Your Say webpage.
3. Telephoning, emailing or writing to Council, or requesting a hard copy survey.

1.3 Key findings

Key findings from the consultation are summarised below.

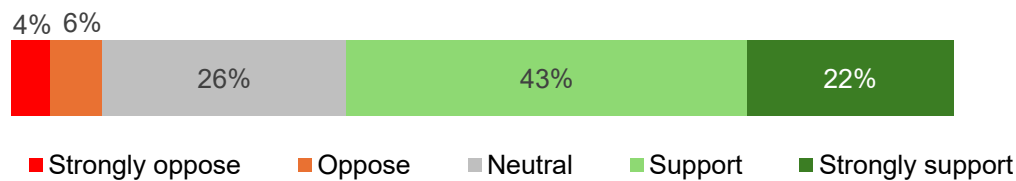
Participants

- A total of 91 people participated in the consultation.
- Most survey respondents live in Moonee Valley, predominantly in Moonee Ponds, Ascot Vale or Essendon.
- 76% of survey respondents identified as a woman and 17% identified as a man.

- Respondents spanned six age groups, from 18-84 years old, with highest representation in the 35-49 age group.
- Several respondents identified as a person with a disability, a disability ally or carer.
- 82% (n=60) of survey respondents own a pet – predominantly dogs (n=44), followed by cats (n=26) or other pets (n=2).

Level of support for the draft DAMP

- The majority of respondents either strongly supported (22%, n=16) or supported (43%, n=31) the draft DAMP, with 10% expressing opposition (n=7).



Key feedback about the draft DAMP

- **Pet registration** - Strong consensus that increasing pet registrations requires a multi-faceted approach. Primary focus on addressing cost, improving awareness, and balancing incentives with enforcement.
- **Dog attacks** – Strong consensus on a need for increased enforcement of existing leash laws. Considerable focus on owner responsibility and dog training, and management of on-lead and off-lead areas. Some breed specific concerns. Calls for public education about safely interacting with dogs, and an enhanced incidents reporting system.
- **Community tensions** –Overall sense that this is a complex issue. Requires a multi-faceted approach combining education, council intervention, improved infrastructure, and fostering greater community understanding.
- **Cat desexing** - Overall, feedback strongly indicates that making desexing affordable and accessible, coupled with robust education and enforcement, are the primary pathways to achieving this goal and reducing feral cat populations.
- **More inclusive approach to animal management:**
 - Strong desire for more proactive and accessible communication from Moonee Valley Council regarding animal management and more accessible registration processes.
 - Recurring focus on the need for *stronger enforcement and accountability* for irresponsible pet owners.
 - Key concern about financial accessibility of *desexing and disparity across* registration fees.

- The need to manage competing interests of those seeking *more inclusive pet-friendly spaces and policies* and those seeking greater consideration for non-pet owners.
 - A call for broader education on *responsible pet ownership* and acknowledging the positive role animals play in mental health.
 - A minority call to expand the scope of animal management to include *other popular pets like rabbits*.
 - Some preference to priorities expert over public opinion in policy decisions.
- **Other feedback** - Strong desire for more effective and visible animal management, with a mix of critical feedback and constructive suggestions including:
 - The need for stronger enforcement and compliance, stricter cat management controls, better managed off-lead areas, including more off-leash parks and designated off-leash times versus increased signage and enforcement. Dog nuisance concerns including 'dog poo' and barking were also highlighted.
 - Suggestions regarding owner education and support and amnesty for unregistered pets. Calls for greater scope of the DAMP, including assistance animals, a ban on selling certain animals in pet shops, and greater transparency regarding stray animal data.

2 Methodology

2.1 Key engagement questions

The survey asked respondents:

- Overall level of support for the draft DAMP
- Priorities for the next four years in relation to animal management
- Suggestions to make Council's approach to animal management more inclusive
- Any gaps in the draft DAMP

Survey respondents were also asked questions about their demographic characteristics, as outlined in Section 2.4 below.

2.2 Communication

Participants were informed about the engagement project via the Your Say page, social media posts, community newsletters and direct emails to relevant stakeholder groups.

2.3 Participation

The table below provides information about consultation participation.

Table 1. Consultation participation

Consultation	Engagement Type	Participation
Your Say website	Page views	374
	Page visits	332
	Unique visitors	267
	Project followers	3
Online survey	Survey responses:	86
Email submissions	Emails sent to Council	2
Audio recording	Recording using the SpeakPipe tool on Your Say	1

Facebook	Social media comments	2
Total respondents: 91		

2.4 Survey respondent demographics

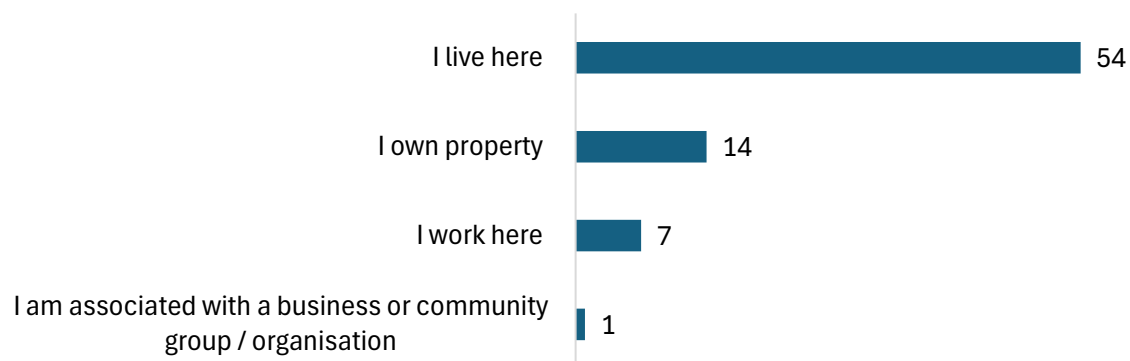
Connection to Moonee Valley

Survey respondents were asked to identify their connection to Moonee Valley, with the ability to select multiple of the following options:

- I live here
- I work here
- I own property
- I own a business
- I am associated with a business or community group/organisation.

Of those who responded to this question 54 indicated they live in Moonee Valley. Several respondents indicated other local connections, as illustrated in the graph below.

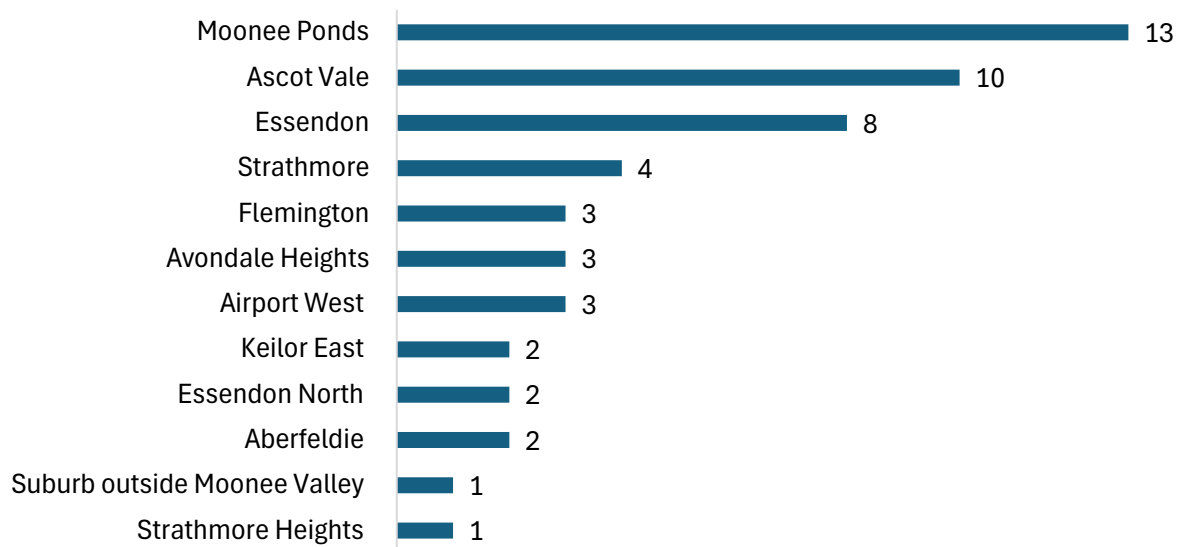
Figure 1. Connection to Moonee Valley



Suburb of residence

Respondents were asked to identify the suburb they live in. Of those who responded to this question (n=52), 51 were from suburbs within Moonee Valley and 1 was from a suburb outside of Moonee Valley. Of the local residents, most were from Moonee Ponds (n=13), Ascot Vale (n=10) and Essendon (n=8), with smaller numbers from other suburbs in Moonee Valley, as illustrated in the graph below.

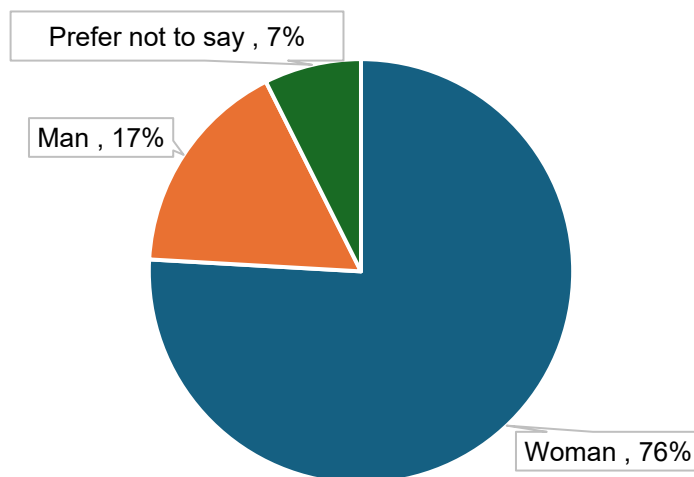
Figure 2. Suburb of residence



Gender identity

Respondents were asked their gender identity. 54 respondents answered this question. A greater percentage of respondents identified as a woman (76%) compared with those who identified as a man (17%)

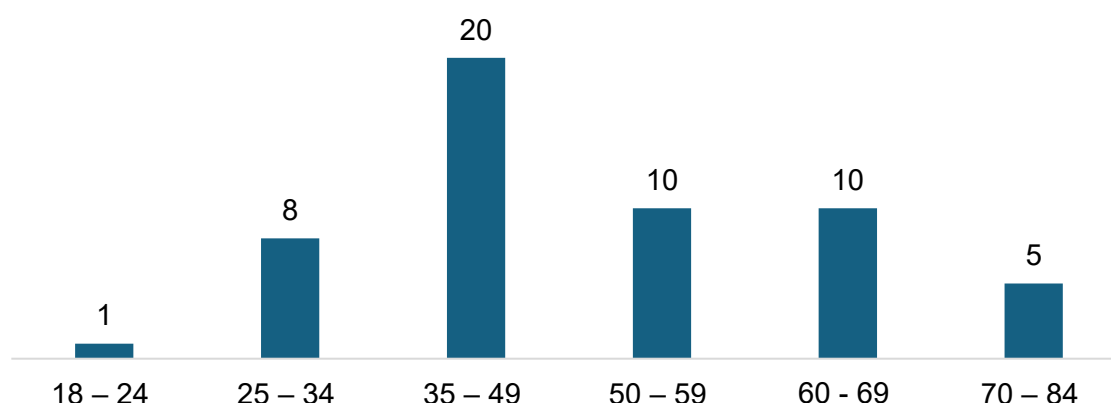
Figure 3. Gender identity



Age

Respondents were asked to identify which age group they belong to. 54 respondents answered this question, with representation across 6 age brackets. Most respondents were between 35-49 years old (n=20).

Figure 4. Age



Language

Respondents were asked if they usually speak a language other than English at home. 54 respondents answered this question, with the majority (n=51, 94%) indicating they only speak English at home.

Respondents (n=3) who identified that they usually speak a language other than English at home were asked to specify the main language they speak at home, with one response noting that they speak Italian at home.

Additional identifiers

Respondents were asked whether they identify with a range of different options including Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, LGBTQIA+, a person with a disability, a carer, a disability ally, or a person needing assistance with self-care activities/movement and communication. Respondents could select multiple options.

- A person with a disability (n=6)
- A disability ally (someone who supports and amplifies the cause of people with disability) (n=6)
- A carer (n=5)
- LGBTQIA+ (n=5)

3 Findings

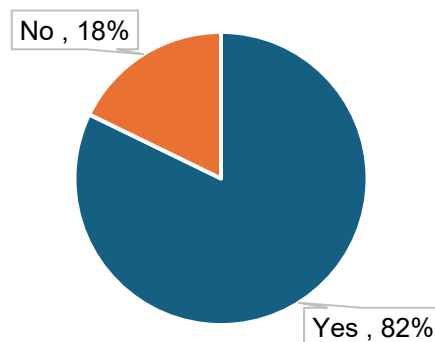
This section presents the consultation findings from the survey and other forms of feedback as specified below.

3.1 Survey

3.1.1 Pet ownership in Moonee Valley

Community members were asked if they own a pet in Moonee Valley. 73 people responded to this question with the majority (82%, n=60) noting that they do own a pet in Moonee Valley.

Figure 5. Pet ownership in Moonee Valley



Community members who indicated that they do own a pet in Moonee Valley were asked to indicate the type of pet that they own, with the option to select multiple options. The most common pets were:

1. Dog (n=44)
2. Cat (n=26)
3. Other (n=2)

Of those who selected 'other', the following were listed:

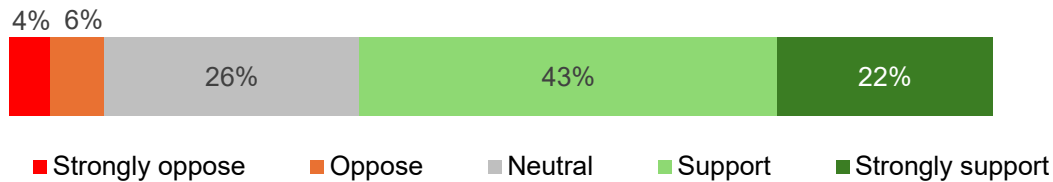
- Bearded dragon. Have previously owned a dog
- Two domestic rabbits

3.1.2 Level of support for key areas of focus of the draft DAMP

When asked to what extent they oppose or support the four key areas of focus identified in the draft DAMP. 73 participants responded to this question. As illustrated in the graph below, the majority of respondents either strongly supported

(22%, n=16) or supported (43%, n=31) the draft DAMP, with 10% expressing opposition (n=7).

Figure 6. Level of support for draft DAMP



3.1.3 Pet registration

Community members were asked:

We know around two thirds of pets in Moonee Valley are unregistered. We'd love to increase this number. What are your thoughts about how we increase pet registrations in Moonee Valley?

55 community members responded to this question. Responses indicate a strong consensus that increasing pet registrations in Moonee Valley requires a multi-faceted approach, primarily addressing cost, improving awareness, and balancing incentives with enforcement.

A significant number of respondents, well over a quarter, identified the **cost of registration as a major barrier**. Suggestions repeatedly included "*make it free/less expensive*," "*lower the cost*," "*cheaper fees for people on low incomes*," and offering "*discounts or waivers on registration fees*." The higher fee for un-desexed animals was also noted as a deterrent.

Education and awareness emerged as another critical theme. Many believe residents are "*unaware of pet registration requirements*" and suggest "*increase community awareness*" through leaflets with rates notices, public campaigns, and promoting the benefits for pet safety and welfare. There's a call to use "*softer language*" and explain why registration is important, rather than just stating it's a legal obligation.

Respondents frequently advocated for a 'carrot and stick' approach. **Incentives** proposed include "*discounts with local Vets or Pet food suppliers*," "*offering small gifts like a lead or treats*," "*amnesty*" periods with discounted or free registration, and "*pop up rego days*" at parks with vouchers.

Enforcement was also strongly supported by many, with calls for "*door knock houses*," rangers to "*patrol parks ALL OVER Moonee Valley*," "*spot checks*," and "*increase fines for unregistered pets*." Some suggested involving local businesses like vets and groomers in checking registration status.

Concerns were also raised about **the transparency and process of registration**. A few respondents questioned "*Where does the funds raised by registrations go to?*" and requested clearer communication on how fees benefit pet owners and the community, such as improving dog parks. One respondent highlighted confusion with pro-rata registration periods.

Finally, a few respondents expressed scepticism, viewing registration as "*just a revenue generating*" exercise, underscoring the need for the council to clearly articulate the value proposition of pet registration.

3.1.4 Dog attacks

Community members were asked:

Dog attacks in Moonee Valley are uncommon, however, we'd like to avoid it occurring at all. What are your thoughts about how we can decrease the risk of dog attacks in Moonee Valley?

The survey responses highlight a strong consensus on the need for **increased enforcement of existing leash laws** and a more visible ranger presence to mitigate the risk of dog attacks. Many respondents expressed frustration that dogs are frequently off-lead in designated on-lead areas, particularly in parks like Queens Park, Lincoln Park and Woodlands Park, leading to unsafe encounters for those with on-lead dogs. There is a clear call for rangers to be "*out of the office and patrolling*" and to "*issue fines to people for dogs off lead,*" as current enforcement is perceived as insufficient. Several individuals reported a lack of follow-up on complaints, with one noting, "*I submitted a case three years ago and never received an outcome.*"

Owner responsibility and dog training emerged as another critical theme. Many believe that proper training is fundamental, with suggestions for the Council to offer local training programs. Some proposed incentives, such as reduced registration fees for owners who provide proof of qualified training, or even mandatory training for all dog owners.

The **management of on-lead and off-lead areas** also requires attention. While acknowledging the importance of off-lead spaces, respondents pointed out issues with inadequate and poorly placed signage for on-lead areas. There were calls for more dedicated off-lead areas to prevent overcrowding, which can lead to increased aggression. Conversely, some noted a need to educate the public that dogs should not be on-lead within designated off-lead parks.

Breed-specific concerns were raised by a few respondents, with suggestions for certain breeds to always be on leads or even banned, though another respondent countered that "*not all dog breeds are dangerous.*"

Finally, respondents also suggested **public education** on how to safely approach unfamiliar dogs, and improvements to the **reporting system** to make it easier for the

public to report incidents and for Council to track vicious dogs, potentially involving vets in the reporting process.

3.1.5 Community tensions

Community members were asked:

We know there are some tensions in community between people and animals. For example, barking dogs. What are your ideas for decreasing this tension?

The survey responses reveal a strong consensus on the need for proactive strategies to mitigate tensions between residents and animals, particularly concerning barking dogs. A dominant theme is the call for enhanced **education and resources for pet owners**. Many respondents suggested the council provide practical tips and information on responsible pet ownership, including guidance on mental stimulation and physical exercise for dogs. These resources could be delivered via email upon pet registration, council websites, social media, or through free workshops. As one respondent articulated, *"Most dogs will bark less if they're engaged. They need mental stimulation as much as physical exercise."*

Another significant theme centres on the **council's role and enforcement**. Several respondents advocated for increased council visibility, more timely responses to complaints, and effective mediation. One comment highlighted this by stating, *"Council need to educate residents and follow up on complaints. The rangers need to be visible on streets and at parks."* While some suggested stricter measures, such as animal removal if issues persist after a grace period for training, a few also cautioned against unsubstantiated complaints, noting that *"False reports are common."*

The lack of adequate **infrastructure and space** emerged as a key concern. Suggestions included creating *"dedicated play areas and parks for dogs"* and providing more off-lead areas. Some respondents directly linked barking issues to insufficient space, particularly in high-density living environments, with one noting, *"Council decision to build high density housing is also not helpful to pet ownership. Houses have very small or no backyards for dogs to explore and exercise."*

Regarding **neighbourly interactions**, sentiments were mixed. While some advocated for *"Open communication between the parties involved,"* others acknowledged the challenges, observing that *"some dog owners are overly sensitive to criticism"* or that complaints sometimes originate from individuals who simply *"don't like dogs."* A few respondents also proposed improved **reporting systems**, such as an *"Online system to report problem dogs,"* alongside calls for thorough council investigation of reports.

Finally, several respondents pointed to the **underlying causes of barking**, such as boredom and under-stimulation, suggesting that affordable training could help. Frustration was expressed by some towards owners who do not address their dog's

barking, and concerns were also raised about uncontrolled "dangerous breeds." Overall, the responses indicate a complex issue requiring a multi-faceted approach that combines education, council intervention, improved infrastructure, and fostering greater community understanding.

3.1.6 Cat desexing

Community members were asked:

We'd like to increase the number of desexed cats, so that we do not have feral cats in Moonee Valley. What are your thoughts about how we can achieve this?

Responses highlight a strong consensus that financial incentives and increased accessibility to desexing services are crucial for reducing feral cat populations in Moonee Valley. The most frequently suggested solution is **free or heavily subsidised desexing**, with many advocating for council subsidies, mobile desexing clinics, or partnerships with vets to lower costs. Several respondents suggested linking desexing to registration, either through **reduced registration fees** for desexed cats or higher fees for fertile ones, with one noting current higher registration costs for fertile cats are "appropriate". Ideas like pet store vouchers and "amnesty on non-registration" were also put forward to encourage participation.

Education and awareness campaigns are another key theme, with many suggesting public information events about the importance of desexing and the environmental impact of stray cats. This includes educating owners on responsible pet ownership, such as keeping cats indoors.

A significant number of responses focused on **regulation and enforcement**. Suggestions include mandatory desexing for all cats, particularly those found roaming, with some proposing that cats found in public should not be returned unless desexed. **Cat curfews**, especially at night, were mentioned to protect wildlife and prevent breeding. Increased fines for non-desexed or roaming cats were also suggested.

Regarding existing feral populations, respondents proposed **Trap-Neuter-Return** programs, increased funding for community rescue organisations, and providing more cat traps. However, a few respondents expressed more extreme views, suggesting that cats "shouldn't be allowed in Australia at all."

Conversely, a minority of respondents questioned the premise, stating they "don't think there is a problem with feral cats" in Moonee Valley or that cats are "harmless" compared to dogs. Some simply had no opinion or identified as dog owners. Overall, the feedback strongly indicates that making desexing affordable and accessible, coupled with robust education and enforcement, are the primary pathways to achieving the goal.

3.1.7 More inclusive approach to animal management

Community members were asked:

How can our approach to animal management in Moonee Valley be more inclusive?

Responses highlight a strong desire for more proactive and accessible communication from Moonee Valley Council regarding animal management. Many respondents suggested *regular, easily digestible online information, council bulletin tips, and newsletters*. A significant number felt current communication was insufficient, with one noting they "stumbled across the draft plan accidentally" and advocating for direct emails or letters to registered pet owners. There was also a call for *multicultural messaging and popup registration booths* to improve accessibility.

A recurring theme was the need for *stronger enforcement and accountability* for irresponsible pet owners. Several respondents expressed frustration with a perceived "very soft" approach, stating that those "doing the wrong thing" are not held to account, which is unfair to compliant owners. Suggestions included *more ranger visibility, fining off-leash dog owners*, and a "higher focus on the issues of unmanaged animals". Some also recommended that authorised officers receive *community engagement/development education* to foster a more proactive, less purely regulatory approach.

Financial accessibility emerged as a key concern, particularly for low-income households. Many suggested *discounted or free desexing programs* and questioned the disparity in registration fees, with one asking, "Why so much cheaper for cats than dogs?" Some even proposed *lower or free registration* to encourage compliance.

Respondents also advocated for *more inclusive pet-friendly spaces and policies*. This included allowing businesses to decide on dog entry, making areas like Moonee Ponds more animal-friendly, and providing *public toilets suitable for dog walkers*. However, a balanced view was also expressed, with some calling for "more consideration for non-pet owners and those wanting a peaceful neighbourhood," highlighting the need to manage competing interests.

Finally, there was a call for broader education on *responsible pet ownership* and acknowledging the positive role animals play in mental health. A few respondents highlighted the need to expand the scope of animal management to include *other popular pets like rabbits*, suggesting microchipping for them. Conversely, some felt that "experts" should be given more weight than general public opinion in policy decisions.

3.1.8 Further feedback

Community members were asked:

Do you think there is anything missing from the draft DAMP, or anything else you would like to share?

The survey responses reveal a strong desire for more effective and visible animal management within the community, with a mix of feedback and constructive suggestions.

A prominent theme is the **need for stronger enforcement and compliance**. Many respondents expressed frustration with a perceived lack of council action, stating that rules are not enforced and that there is a "distinct lack of action on anything." Calls were made for a "more visible presence of enforcement activities," clarity on the roles and powers of compliance officers, and accountability for pet owners. One respondent questioned, "How can I identify who is a Compliance officer? I have never seen one so do they really exist?"

Cat management emerged as a significant concern, with numerous calls for stricter controls. Many advocated for "stronger laws requiring cats to be kept indoors, or supervised on a lead while outside," and suggested "cat curfews/fines," with some proposing a future policy of "no outdoor cats" due to their impact on wildlife.

Regarding **dog management**, there was a clear demand for more and better-managed off-leash areas. Several respondents requested "more Off-leash parks" and suggested designated times for off-leash use in on-lead parks, citing positive examples from other areas. Conversely, there were strong pleas for increased signage and enforcement in designated on-lead parks, with one noting the "staggering" number of off-leash dogs in areas like Montgomery Park. Issues with **dog nuisance** were also highlighted, particularly "dog poo on footpaths" and the need for "pragmatic action to address barking dogs," as current proposals were seen as "weak and lacking substance."

Suggestions for **owner education and support** included engaging families and non-pet owners on responsible pet interaction, fostering neighbourhood connections, and providing resources to help owners manage issues like barking. A few respondents also raised concerns about the **cost of pet registration**, suggesting an "amnesty month" for unregistered pets.

Some respondents felt the draft DAMP did not go far enough, suggesting the inclusion of **assistance animals**, a ban on selling certain animals in pet shops, and greater transparency regarding stray animal data.

3.2 Additional written submissions

Two respondents provided detailed feedback about the draft DAMP via email to Council, as summarised below. The detailed submissions are provided at Appendix 5.3.

Supported aspects of the draft DAMP

- The 'Register to Reunite' program.
- Discounted registration/permit fees.
- Targeted promotion and education about pet registration/ responsible animal management.
- Improved data collection regarding dog attacks.
- Review of animal complaints process.

Concerns about the draft DAMP

- Limited research, data, information and evidence base underpinning the draft DAMP.
- Lack of data transparency, reporting accountability, and prioritisation of and commitment to animal management and welfare.
- Chronic under-registration of cats and continued high population of urban strays.
- Barriers to cat registration, including cost, administrative and compliance burden, transport, capped number of cats per household, no perceived benefit.
- The use of the term 'feral' cats; considered inaccurate and misleading compared with more contemporary definitions.
- Concerns about the evidence base, efficacy and humanity of trapping cats (many of which may not all be 'feral').
- Limited proposed education about responsible containment of pets at home and promotion of pet adoption and re-homing.
- Unsupportive of:
 - requirement for permits to keep pet birds, reptiles and small mammals.
 - restrictions of cats and dogs without a permit to one per household.
 - the banning of ferrets, pet fish and other aquatic species, pet insects and arachnids.

Broad suggestions

- Online forums with pet owners; to seek solutions.
- Learnings and clearer outcomes from the 2022-2025 DAMP.
- More detailed, publicly accessible data, including euthanasia data, separate, categorised data regarding cats and dogs.
- Transparency regarding Council animal management expenditure.
- Prioritise expenditure on subsidies/incentives over education and additional research which is already available.
- Prioritise (targeted) education over regulation.
- More progressive, innovative, strategies which are evidence based and cost-effective.
- Stronger, realistic, shorter-term indicators and more extensive reporting.

Recommendations

- Separate strategies for cats and dogs (e.g. 'Register to Reunite' considered effective for dogs but not cats).
- Free microchip days and subsidised and incentivised desexing and registration via various partnerships and initiatives (e.g. with not-for profit organisations/volunteer groups).
- Provide the opportunity for residents to keep their pets without the need for permits – 'to be kept as appropriate to species'.
- Advocate to state government to remove the need for source numbers for non-breeder cats.
- Install clear, positively worded signs in playgrounds and near shared paths explaining off-lead regulations.
- Regular monitoring and on the spot fines for dogs off lead.
- Clearer, more transparent, consistent complaints process that is fair to both complainants and pet owners.
- Education for dog owners to curb dog barking and consideration of ethical debarking if all other options exhausted.

3.3 Social media comments

Three people provided comments in response to Council's social media posts about the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan. These comments raised concerns about:

- Community frustration about the number of off-leash dogs outside designated areas and the lack of safe spaces for on-leash dogs.
- Desire for a more dog-friendly approach across Council, including advocacy for allowing dogs in cafes and public spaces similar to UK and Europe.

4 Conclusion

Overall, the consultation demonstrated broad community support for the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP), with two-thirds of respondents indicating support or strong support. Women made up the majority of respondents, and participants ranged in age from 18 to 84 years old. A significant portion of participants were pet owners, primarily of dogs and cats, and several identified as people with disability, carers or allies, providing valuable perspectives on accessibility and inclusion in animal management.

Feedback highlighted that residents want a more balanced and inclusive approach to animal management, one that combines education, affordability, and effective enforcement. Key priorities included increasing pet registration through incentives and awareness, stronger enforcement of leash laws, and affordable, accessible desexing to manage cat populations. Community tensions around off-lead dogs and

shared public spaces were acknowledged as complex, requiring both infrastructure improvements and greater community understanding. Participants also emphasised the importance of clear and proactive communication from Council, stronger accountability for irresponsible pet owners, and recognition of the positive role pets play in wellbeing. While most feedback was constructive and solution-oriented, some respondents sought more robust regulation, expanded off-leash areas, and a broader scope for the DAMP to include issues like assistance animals and pet shop sales.

5 Appendices

5.1 Your Say page



HomeProjectsLog In / Join

Domestic Animal Management Plan

Council is reviewing its Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). We would love you to have your say on the draft plan.

[+ Follow](#)



Home / Domestic Animal Management Plan

Introduction

Council is reviewing its Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) and we want you to be part of the journey. The DAMP outlines how we manage dogs and cats in Moonee Valley. It promotes animal welfare and responsible pet ownership and aims to create a community where people and pets live together harmoniously and respectfully. The DAMP highlights four key areas of focus that will shape Council's work over the next four years.

1. Animal Registrations
2. Community Safety
3. Community Tensions
4. Environment and Animal Welfare

Have your say!

You can have your say on Council's **draft DAMP 2026-2029** by completing our online survey or recording verbal feedback via this webpage. You can also contact us via the details below or request a hard copy survey.

In particular, Council is keen to seek your feedback about:

- Your overall level of support for the draft DAMP
- Priorities for the next four years in relation to animal management
- Any gaps in the draft DAMP

Your input will inform our refreshed plan, which will guide decision making in relation to dog and cats within Moonee Valley.

The survey is open until **28th September 2025**. Stay tuned for further updates on this page.

Draft DAMP



Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029
PDF (1,003.51 KB)

Additional information

? Benefits of a DAMP

? Why the DAMP is being reviewed

? Previous community engagement

? What community can influence

? Non-negotiable elements of the DAMP

Record your verbal feedback about the DAMP

Is your microphone ready?

[Start recording](#)

Record Listen Send

Powered by [SpeakPipe](#)

Timeline

★ Consultation open for feedback
1 Sep 2025

☆ Consultation closes
28 Sep 2025

☆ Review of community feedback
Oct 2025

☆ Council consideration of revised DAMP
Nov 2025

[See less](#)

Contact Us

If you have questions or want to learn more about this project, contact us below:

NameCommunity Engagement Team

Phone9243 8888

Emailyoursay@mvcc.vic.gov.au

In writingDomestic Animal Management Plan
Community Engagement Team
PO Box 126
Moonee Ponds Vic 3039

Complete our survey

We'd love to receive your feedback about our draft DAMP

[Open survey here](#)

Fun facts about pets in Moonee Valley

We love our furry friends! Did you know that we have just over 3,500 cat registrations and nearly 10,000 dog registrations in Moonee Valley? That is the equivalent of a quarter of all households having a registered pet.



Registration leaderboard

Essendon leads the way with around 1,500 registered dogs.

Moonee Ponds sits at the top with nearly 650 registered cats.



Our favourite dog breed

We love our pups! Here are the top registered dog breeds in Moonee Valley.

1. Cavoodles
2. Jack Russels
3. Labradors



Most popular cat breed

The Domestic Short Hair, our much-loved all-rounder, proving every kitty is special no matter their lineage.

5.2 Survey

1) Do you own a pet in Moonee Valley?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2) Please indicate which type of pet(s) you own.

☐ Dog

☐ Cat

☐ Other - Write In: _____

3) We have identified four key areas of focus to shape our work in animal management over the next four years. To what extent do you oppose or support our key areas of focus? 6) We know there are some tensions in community between people and animals. For example, barking dogs. What are your ideas for decreasing this tension? (Free text)

- Animal registrations
- Community safety
- Community tensions
- Environment and animal welfare

☐ Strongly oppose ☐ Oppose ☐ Neutral ☐ Support ☐ Strongly support

4) We know around two thirds of pets in Moonee Valley are unregistered. We'd love to increase this number. What are your thoughts about how we increase pet registrations in Moonee Valley? (Free text)

5) Dog attacks in Moonee Valley are uncommon, however, we'd like to avoid it occurring at all. What are your thoughts about how we can decrease the risk of dog attacks in Moonee Valley? (Free text)

7) We'd like to increase the number of desexed cats, so that we do not have feral cats in Moonee Valley. What are your thoughts about how we can achieve this? (Free text)

8) How can our approach to animal management in Moonee Valley be more inclusive? (Free text)

9) Do you think there is anything missing from the **draft DAMP**, or anything else you would like to share? (Free text)

We are committed to collecting demographic data so that we can understand the reach of our consultations. Please note these questions are all optional.

- **What is your connection to Moonee Valley?**

☐ I live here ☐ I work here ☐ I study here

☐ I visit here ☐ I own property ☐ I own a business

☐ I am associated with a business or community group / organisation. Please name::

☐ I am a Moonee Valley City Council staff member

- **Suburb you live in:** _____

- **To which of the following age groups do you belong?**

☐ Under 18 ☐ 18 – 24 ☐ 25 – 34 ☐ 35 – 49 ☐ 50 – 59

☐ 60 – 69 ☐ 70 – 84 ☐ 85+

- **Do you identify as:**

☐ Woman ☐ Man ☐ Non-binary ☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Prefer to self-describe: _____

- **Do you usually speak a language other than English at home?**

☐ No. I speak English only at home.

☐ Yes. I usually speak another language at home.

- **The main language I speak at home is:** _____

- **Please indicate if you identify as any of the following (select all that apply):**

☐ Aboriginal ☐ Torres Strait Islander ☐ LGBTQIA+ ☐ A carer

☐ A person with a disability ☐ Need help with self-care activities

☐ Need help with body movement ☐ Need help with communication

☐ A disability ally

(someone who supports and amplifies the cause of people with disability)

5.3 Additional written submissions

Submission 1 – Community member

Submission to the Domestic Animal Management Plan - Draft 2026 to 2029

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this Domestic Animal Management Plan. I am a resident of Moonee Ponds, a retired veterinarian and involved in animal welfare for many years. From 2020 to 2024, I was the founder and manager of a not-for-profit cat desexing clinic in Sunshine and had the pleasure of working with Councils' Animal Management Team providing affordable cat desexing to the residents of Moonee Valley.

In July 2021 I participated in discussions for the development of the 2021-2025 DAMP resulting in some progressive and positive changes which unfortunately are lacking in this draft. I find this very disappointing and indicates poor resourcing leading to incomplete data, dismissive and insufficient information and lack of research into progressive and effective strategies.

My comments will be mainly around **cat welfare and management** based on my knowledge and practical experience in this field.

Background Data, Statistics and Insights

Animal Registrations (cats)

As noted on page 3 there has been no notable shift in cat registrations for almost ten years, consistently around 3,500 registrations per year. In 2017 there were 3532 cats registered and today 3584. Using the Research provided on page 6, only 18% of owned cats are registered with Council. This statistic, which is similar across many Victorian councils, is an ongoing challenge and despite being addressed in every DAMP the problem continues. Surely that indicates strategic change and more resourcing is needed.

Along with the 15,000 unregistered owned cats there are an estimated 3,000 to 11,000 semi-owned or unowned cats and these urban strays account for the majority of impounded cats (and therefore Councils' costs) however this data is not forthcoming. It was noted in the 21-25 DAMP that the next 4 years would address cat population. Outcomes that are continually not being met need to be acknowledged with transparency and advocacy at local and state government level. If not, nothing will change and planning for domestic animals becomes a fruitless exercise.

Why do residents not register their cats?

- Mandatory microchip. Essential - however will typically cost between \$45 and \$80 and requires the owner to obtain a source number online for another \$24. This is often a surprise to owners, an extra cost and inconvenience, and a proven

deterrent to chipping (and desexing) and therefore registration and responsible owner compliance.

- Limit to numbers of cats per household. Many people have more than one cat. They won't register any of their cats for fear of Council engagement which may lead to paying fees for multiple cats or having to surrender cats.
- Residents see no benefit in registration. I commend the 'Register to Reunite' program and it has great results mainly for dogs. The reuniting rates for cats with chips/ ID tags is low due to out-of-date chip data and cats not wearing collars. It is not clear to residents exactly how their registration fee is of benefit to them or the wider community or environment. Most cat loving people do not want to contribute to inhumane trapping or euthanasia of unwanted cats. I think it is vitally important for Councils' management staff to give serious consideration to the actual benefits of registration for cat owners.

Solutions

Focus area 1 – animal registrations.

This focus area (page 8) acknowledges the importance, complexity and consequences of the high number of unregistered pets but the listed actions 1.1 to 1.6 are weak and uninspired.

1.1 Register to reunite - great, a fantastic initiative hopefully to continue. More related to dogs.

1.2 Increase value proposition - using already available research and a commonsense approach it shouldn't take too long for consideration. Dogs need to be separated from cats.

1.3 Barriers - a commonsense approach. Barriers outlined above. One or two online forums with pet owners would give you all the answers you need. Not implementing the findings until the last year of this DAMP is a lack of commitment.

1.4 Partnerships - It is difficult to engage profit vets in animal welfare initiatives without adequate financial reward for example desexing and microchip days. As your animal management provider, LDH should be providing many more subsidised services in this space – free microchip days, subsidised desexing with numbers that will make an impact. There are also animal rescue organisations that would partner in innovative solutions if approached by Council.

1.5 Targeted pet registration promotion. Unlikely to be effective for cats unless other issues are addressed.

1.6 Marketing and education will not change people's behaviour if they see no benefit and laws are too constrictive and costs too high eg limit to cat numbers, source numbers, chip and desexing costs. Money spent on 1.6 would be better spent on providing free chipping/ subsidised desexing/registration.

Further Solutions

- Advocate to state government to remove the need for source numbers for non-breeder cats.
- Change local laws to allow more cats to be owned. Question the problems caused to neighbours/community of **compliant** residents owning perhaps 2 cats in a flat or 4 cats in a home providing they are compliant with curfew/desexing/registration. It really would not affect anybody else when people who love cats have more than one cat. Semi owned cats would become owned. This could be trialled for the duration of this DAMP.
- Fund free cat microchip/ days for residents or vouchers by working with LDH/ rescue groups/local vets. Include cost of source numbers. Time these for kitten season.
- Trial free cat registration for life for 2026-2029 then review the numbers
- Provide incentives to register your cat – annual contact to help owners update chip records, waive multiple cat fees, voucher with local vets, cat netting, enrichment toys, goodie bags.

The cost to council to implement these changes would be recouped over time by fewer complaints, more cats registered hence better data and therefore management, happier residents, fewer semi owned/stray cats, lower impoundments, reduced surrenders and euthanasia's hence significant savings with your provider.

Complaints and Investigations

What are the total complaint figures? In 2020 there were 1567 total complaints. In this draft there are 241 specific dog complaints. Where are the cat complaint figures? This lack of data and transparency is a concern. It is very hard for constituents to offer meaningful feedback if complete data is not presented.

Local Government Performance Reporting Framework

The introduction of the LGPRF was a step forward but needs significant expansion to enable true transparency and accountability leading to better outcomes. The current indicators do very little to support meaningful change due to unseparated and uncategorised cat and dog data, no euthanasia data and in the 24/25 guide, allowing the omission of all 'unregistrable' animals from the indicators. This is a backward step for recognising and managing challenging animal welfare situations especially for cats and allows councils to be non-transparent.

I disagree that 100% of deemed unregistrable cats/kittens are unable to be rehomed with improved resourcing and networks with willing rescue groups. More importantly, this population of unwanted kittens/cats should underpin effective strategic decision making and it is likely that these cats are costing Council significantly. To not have to report on numbers, trends and the effectiveness of current strategies is unacceptable. I think our community should know that in 2023/24 359 cats/kittens

were impounded and 125 were euthenased i.e. 35%. What did this poor outcome cost Council and rate payers? Of the remaining 234 cats – how many were rehomed or reunited? What was the data for dogs?

A progressive and open council could do so much better than the required LGPRF and could provide expanded data for accountability and assessment of expenditure. The following data as example, published monthly and in annual reports/reviews.

Intake data to include:

- Numbers of cats and dogs (separately) admitted to third party provider and why (collected, surrendered, trapped)
- Breakdown of kittens and puppies (<4 months) & adult cats and dogs

Outcome data must detail dogs & cats separately

- reclaimed by owner
- rehomed by the pound contractor
- died (and what of)
- killed (and why)
- transferred to rescue group & the outcome

Why do we need this data?

- because dogs and cats, kittens and puppies all require different management strategies which need to be evaluated separately.
- to improve transparency.
- because accountability of a third-party contractor is expected by Council and community.
- cost-outcome analysis and trends.
- to identify problem areas.
- to stop convenience killing.
- to ensure residents are fully informed.

Community satisfaction

It is a shame animal management does not rate higher in importance, if it did, more funding could be allocated. If the community knew the cost of provider contracts and had access to data that is of interest such as euthanasia rates and meaningful dog and cat statistics, they may well demand better animal outcomes for their dollars invested.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan

What did we achieve from the 2022-2025 plan?

Key learnings are valuable. Register to Reunite is an effective program certainly for dogs. Data presented in this draft does not suggest progress has been made or goals achieved over the last 4 years although it is hard to assess as the statistics are incomplete.

Research and content provided by expert Animal Welfare Organisations (AMO's) such as Australian Pet Welfare Foundation and Getting 2 Zero could lead MVCC to cost effective actions to really start making a difference.

As noted in the 2021 DAMP a dedicated AMO had been appointed which was a progressive and impactful step. Is this still the case?

Focus Area 1: already discussed

Focus area 3: Community Tensions

I can relate to tensions arising with dogs in parks and I think this is one area that on site regulation and spot fines would make a huge impact. I attend various parks with my grandkids who are not use to dogs and every playground visit is the same – dogs off lead in and around the playground rushing up to the kids who become frightened. The same response from owners - “oh she is friendly, she won't hurt a fly, she loves kids etc” which is completely not the point. Same with shared paths with dogs not under effective control and off lead. I have never lodged a complaint as it would be pointless.

How many people know dogs are not allowed within 15 m of a playground? Or that they must be on a lead on a path?

I don't think the activities listed on page 10 will make any difference on the ground. Marketing and improving complaint processes will not change people's behaviour and funds could be spent elsewhere. Stronger actions are needed that in the long term will be cost effective.

- Staff rotating around popular dog parks/playgrounds and issuing fines on the spot
- This will involve weekend and afterhours work, summer evenings. The costs could be recouped over time with lots of fines issued, fewer complaints and would tick the education box.
- If the same areas were visited fortnightly initially then perhaps quarterly, this visibility and a potential fine would be a deterrent.
- For education accessible where it is needed - large easy to read signs placed at every playground and nearby shared paths stating the rules in a friendly way. It would make it much easier for park users to politely point the sign out to a nuisance dog's owner creating less conflict, less chance of a complaint and much happier constituents. Signs could be actioned in the first half of 26 and patrolling in the second half and ongoing.

Focus Area 4: Environment and Animal Welfare

Feral cats are the single biggest threat to Australia's native mammals. The threat of feral cats to Australian mammals is almost double that of foxes, which is the next highest threat, and substantially greater than habitat loss.² The Australian

Government has a “Threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats 2024” to address this issue.

This “commentary” is extremely disappointing to see in the opening paragraph of what should be a transparent, informed, well researched and progressive plan to address cat population challenges. Compared to the work done in 2021 for the current DAMP, this is a significant backward step and clearly shows a deterioration in Council resourcing, interest and priority to animal welfare. The above Commentary has nothing to do with MVCC area and is in fact quoted out of context.

The term “feral” has no place in MVCC documentation and clearly misleads people by attributing the actions of feral cats to domestic cats. Feral cats are defined for purposes of management as cats which receive no food or shelter from humans and are remote from human habitation. Based on this definition, none of the cats that MVCC manage are feral, they are semi owned or unowned with various degrees of sociability.

I am so disappointed to see my Council regress to one of the biggest obstacles to improving cat outcomes and euthanasia rates - the language around unsocialised cats. The term “feral” was removed from the current (21-25) Damp and replaced with accepted evidence-based definitions of **domestic** cats -urban strays, colony cats and community cats, now more correctly referred to as semi owned and unowned domestic cats.

Using the term ‘feral’ gives the impression of cats out ravaging our native wildlife and spreading disease, which is a long way from the truth in urban environments and this language gives credence to outdated, ineffective and inhumane trap and kill.

Cats harming wildlife populations in MVCC needs to be placed in perspective and based on research of local wildlife species and numbers, the actual impact cats are having on these numbers and then the effect of different strategies. Unless research is available no strategy can be evaluated. Not a single published peer-reviewed research paper in Australia has shown that cats have any overall impact on wildlife populations in **urban and semi urban areas**. Cats are often the scapegoats for ‘wildlife’ kill in urban areas when it is obvious human activity does the most damage. For as long as we; continue to destroy wildlife habitat for new housing, commercial developments and infrastructure; have windows in our buildings; kill wildlife with our vehicles; use raptor-killing rat poison; and use plastics and produce litter that harms wildlife; then cats' impact on wildlife in urban and peri urban areas is not the issue that needs to be addressed.

Desired Community Outcomes

The outcomes stated here are unrealistic and unsupported by any evidence based and practical actions. Aspiring to eliminate “feral” cats within the city is absurd when firstly they are not “feral” cats, but unwanted semi owned and unowned cats with

completely different management requirements and secondly, councils across Victoria have been trying to do this for decades with the same ineffective methods, including those you mention here. It does not and will not work. See trapping comments below.

Previous data analysis clearly shows that MVCC has a significant problem with cat overpopulation which needs to again be prioritised and actioned with evidence-based strategies.

Actions and Accountability

4.1 Undertake feral cat trapping in environmentally sensitive parts of the municipality to address the impacts of feral cats on native fauna. Establish and implement a program in 2026.

- which areas are these?
- what studies have been done on native fauna populations in these areas over time?
- what are the cat numbers in these areas (registered, owned unregistered, semi and unowned) and how many contribute to impounded cats annually?
- how are future impact studies to be conducted and funded and over what time frame?
- are these environmentally sensitive areas significant hot spots for cats ie high impoundments rates and therefore high cost to council?

Research shows using a trap-adopt-or-kill approach, is not effective at current trapping levels. It is ineffective in producing a long-term reduction in cat overpopulation, which could be easily shown looking at historical data. Based on cost analyses, it is not feasible or sustainable for local councils to implement trapping at the levels required to achieve a sustained decrease in semi-owned/unowned cat numbers at a city or suburb level.

For trapping to be effective to control urban stray cats, 30 to 50% of the population must be trapped and killed every 6 months for at least 10 years. For a city of 100,000 residents, this is 4,000 cats culled in the first year, at a huge and prohibitive cost to Council and logistically impossible.

A trap and kill approach is also no longer accepted as humane by most people who are becoming more engaged with welfare issues. This type of management results in large numbers of healthy cats and kittens being killed in municipal facilities, along with those deemed unadoptable which has a devastating effect on the mental health of staff.

4.2 Undertake research to investigate barriers to cat desexing. Complete research by 2027.

This information is already well known and resources for councils are readily available with highly regarded AMO's - APWF, G20, National Desexing Network, including cost benefit analysis. The number one reason people don't desex their cats is they can't afford or access this essential service. This is what needs to and can be addressed immediately.

4.3 Implement targeted programs to uplift the desexing rates of domestic cats. Following research, establish and implement a program in 2028.

Targeted low-cost or free desexing programs are proven to be the most efficient strategy for reducing cat overpopulation and euthanasia rates. Targeted means for areas where there is need - high numbers of semi owned, unowned or surrendered cats. Cat-related issues are highly socioeconomically dependent. In low income disadvantaged areas, there are large numbers of free and stray kittens and cats available. Desexing plus microchipping and registration is simply unaffordable and inaccessible, and not the highest priority in peoples' lives. Studies have shown that when free or subsidised desexing is made available by local council, along with culturally appropriate information on the importance of desexing cats, and assistance with transport if needed, desexing rates of 90% can be achieved. In these programs semi-owners became owners.

Partnerships for desexing programs In Moonee Valley

I understand the difficulty of engaging local for-profit veterinary clinics in welfare programs such as subsidised desexing. These programs are enthusiastically taken on board only by not-for-profit community clinics which are scarce and under resourced.

During 3 years of operation Westside Community Desexing (WCD), a not-for-profit vet clinic in Sunshine, desexed 6,428 cats many through subsidised programs with local councils including Moonee Valley. I was co- founder and manager of this clinic and had first-hand experience of the vast positive impacts that these programs achieve in a short time. Unfortunately, there must be ongoing funding for the services to be affordable to those in need, who otherwise will not desex /chip their cats. WCD could not access ongoing and secure funding to support business costs and were forced to close last year, with an outpouring of community anger at lack of local council and state government support.

So, despite WCD now closed and profit vets not interested, there are opportunities to offer free/subsidised cat desexing programs for your residents along with admin support/grants.

As a start LDH should be providing more services with strong advocating for this from Council. A couple of desexing days a year won't do it, numbers of cats desexed must be relative to the population data, and a continuous service.

A more exciting opportunity is to work with 'The Vet Project'. This fantastic team offer similar services to WCD but from a mobile van to keep costs low. They park on an agreed council space, organise all the bookings and can desex 20 cats a day with both owners and council funding the service. I am not involved with this business; this is not a promotion but a proven and immediate solution.

I ask MVCC to explore this option to successfully implement Action 4.3

4.4 Explore partnerships with volunteer groups, to promote and increase pet adoption and re-homing. Undertake by 2028 and review annually.

This has been an action in every DAMP with nothing achieved. There are several reputable Rescue and Foster groups that work in my area caring for unwanted kittens and cats that are Councils responsibility, with no funding. These groups would gladly work with a progressive council who would support them with funding and transparent data, a cost-effective strategy compared to contractor fees, better outcomes for everyone.

4.5 Undertake pet adoption and re-homing promotion. Undertake a minimum of two per year.

Your provider will be doing this extensively, shared to residents. Funds more effective elsewhere.

My opinion of the entire Focus Area 4 is it is poorly written with no back up from evidenced based fact, is unachievable with the actions outlined, and misleading of the actual challenges and their consequences at hand.

Submission 2 – Animal Care Australia

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.

Animal Care Australia is currently recognised by Animal Welfare Victoria as a key stakeholder in the review of Victoria's Animal Welfare Act and its associated regulations. Animal Care Australia is directly consulting and advising during that review, including the future revision of Codes of Practice for the keeping of all pets.

Animal Care Australia 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.

Animal Care Australia is engaged with state governments to develop more appropriate model Local Laws and model Subordinate Local Laws governing the keeping of animals in each state. Nationally, Animal Care Australia is finding Local Councils placing restrictions and permit requirements on their residents which do nothing to improve animal welfare and tend to lead to greater non-compliance.

With this in mind, **Animal Care Australia commend Council on the following:**

- “Register to Reunite” program.
- Discounted initial Registration Fees for pensioners and Service dogs.
- Undertake targeted pet registration promotion at events and via targeted neighbourhood patrols and pop-ups – especially where the purpose is to educate pet owners rather than to catch out residents with unregistered pets.
- Improve data about dogs, dog owners, dog attack victims, and dog attack circumstances to help with future dog attack prevention initiatives and monitor trends. This applies to all data collection and should be regularly accessible by the public in order to promote transparency of the issues local residents are experiencing.
- Undertake targeted responsible animal management promotion at events, park patrols, and pop-ups.

Specific Comments:

Focus Area 1: Animal Registrations

1.2 Consider how to increase the value proposition for customers to register their animals.

Council could consider utilising the “Register to Reunite” program to include one fee free impoundment for first time offenders? Animal Care Australia

recommends looking at Macedon Ranges Council's "Free Ride Home" program for how this has been a successful initiative.

1.3 Undertake research to investigate barriers to registration.

The most obvious barrier is the need to register non-cat/dog animals and annual fees.

Animal Care Australia does not support the need or reasoning for extra animal permits; however, we commend Council for having 'fee free additional animal permits' for dogs and cats. That said, please refer to our response below regarding the animal numbers and restrictions as they are uneducated and ill-informed, and contradictory to good animal welfare outcomes and the requirement for permits to keep pet birds, reptiles and small mammals is categorically not supported.

Where an individual need is identified for a permit or number restriction that could be an exception requiring an annual renewal and fee.

1.4 Explore partnerships with animal service providers, volunteer groups, and community hubs to promote and increase pet registrations.

Animal Care Australia supports this initiative and recommends consulting with local and national pet keeping and breeding associations. Council should provide digital education material that can be shared on social media, association newsletters, etc.

Focus Area 2: Community Safety

2.1 Undertake education about best practice containment of pets at the family home.

There is only one targeted campaign slated for the life of this DAMP, which is disappointing. Campaigns should be at least an annual in addition to being part of regular informational sessions.

Focus Area 3: Community Tensions

3.1 Review the animal complaint process to ensure it is easy to understand and take part in and that the customer is informed throughout the process.

This is vital. On far too many occasions Animal Care Australia receives complaints from our members frustrated by the 'lack of due process; and what is becoming more apparent – the need for Council to 'shut-up' a complaining neighbour to the detriment of a resident who is in fact the victim of the complaining neighbour. While Council is responsible to respond to complaints, Council is equally responsible to ensure full and proper investigation and process is undertaken. Local Laws etc are far too often used as the 'scapegoat' excuse rather than justice for situation.

Animal Care Australia strongly believes there needs to be clearer, transparent procedures in place that are fair to both complainants and pet owners. A structured process flow (e.g. complaint received → initial mediation → barking diary issued → owner approached and provided with diary → timeframe to rectify issue before escalation) would provide transparency from Council's side and ensure consistency for all parties. (Barking dog issue used as part of the example)

3.2 Improve barking dog case data about dogs, dog owners, complainants, and case circumstances to help with future barking dog prevention initiatives.

There are a number of reasons for dogs barking, and as long as it is not sustained over extended periods, it should not be considered an issue.

Generally, sustained periods of dog barking are due to boredom and/or lack of exercise or anxiety of being left alone after having owners constantly at home. These issues should initially be dealt with via education and strong encouragement of owners to provide their dogs with activities etc when owners are not at home, and with exercise when they are at home.

While, debarking is illegal in Victoria, it can only be performed by a registered veterinarian in extreme circumstances and only when following the Code of Practice for Debarking of Dogs, which requires a thorough assessment and a statutory declaration from the owner stating all reasonable efforts have been made to control barking. Council should add this as a consideration and support the owner where all other options have been exhausted, as this is a preferable option than to order a family dog to be sold, removed or seized from its home.

Focus Area 4: Environment and Animal Welfare

Target – decreasing numbers of unowned cats, increasing desexing rates of owned cats.

Unfortunately, Council has over-simplified this issue. Cats cannot simply be designated as “pets” or “ferals” – they also comprise “unowned/colony” cats. To designate only the two options of “pet” or “feral” ostensibly dooms all trapped un-microchipped cats to euthanasia.

Animal Care Australia strongly recommends Council re-evaluate this section considering the identified classifications of cats and their management within the Victorian Cat Management Strategy 2025. ¹

4.1 Undertake feral cat trapping in environmentally sensitive parts of the municipality to address the impacts of feral cats on native fauna.

As noted above – despite Council having a night-time curfew for cats – not all cats wandering at large are going to be “feral” and as such requires a multi-faceted program that addresses all actual levels of cat populations within the community.

Animal Care Australia does not support the statement that:

“Feral cats are the single biggest threat to native fauna”

While it is true cats (feral or otherwise) are responsible for killing native wildlife, there are many other factors that need to be considered.

The inclusion of that statement in its current context serves no other purpose than to inspire and promote a hatred of cats and cat owners. This should either be re-phrased or removed.

¹ **Victorian Cat Management Strategy**

4.2 Undertake research to investigate barriers to cat desexing.

Animal Care Australia questions the need to carry out more research especially when the identifiers are outlined in the Victorian Cat Management Strategy. A better use of ratepayer money in this case would be to subsidise desexing costs for low-income pet owners. Copious research on this issue has already ascertained that the biggest barrier to desexing is cost.

4.4 Explore partnerships with volunteer groups, to promote and increase pet adoption and re-homing.

Private rescue groups are already doing much of the work in this sphere. Engaging with an ensuring rescue are being run responsibly would be a great ongoing process for Council to meet this need. Encouraging those 'proven responsible' rescues to share the informational/educational aspects relating to the benefits of owning a pet etc, would further develop that relationship. Council held/supported pet days which included local rescue groups would be a great start.

4.5 Undertake pet adoption and re-homing promotion.

Animal Care Australia questions why this action is only listed for twice a year (minimum). Utilising local papers, online community groups, and social media advertising should be occurring all year.

Could also be included in community information sessions (as per actions 1.6, 2.4, and 3.4)

Keeping of animals and extra animal permits:

It is necessary to call your attention to animal restrictions within the DAMP and on Council's website, as this is where Council is disappointing in its approach to pet ownership and Animal Care Australia DOES NOT support the number restrictions listed in the table below.

It is our hope that while Council is reviewing the Domestic Animal Management Plan you will consider approving amendments the restrictions above taking into consideration our feedback and provide the opportunity for residents to keep their pets without the need for permits.

How many animals can I have?

If you keep more animals than listed, you will need to submit an [Additional Animals Permit Application online](#).

Permits expire on 10 April annually.

2025/26 fee for non-cat and dog permits is \$43.

There is no fee for housing additional cats and dogs, but a permit is required.

Type of animal	Small property (under 150m2)	Large property (150m2 and over)
Poultry (excluding roosters)	0	6
Caged birds	5	15
Roosters	0	0
Dogs	1	2
Cats	1	2
Rabbits	1	5
Rodents	2	6
Reptiles	5	5
Racing pigeons	0	40
Farm animals	0	Only permitted by permit where there is 2,000m2 of open land per animal
Any other animals	0	0

The restrictions on birds, rabbits, rodents, reptiles and 'any other animal' are in contradiction of the animal welfare needs of all of these species.

This table is completely out of touch with pet keeping in Australia and the community expectations of being able to keep pets freely while still maintain the animal welfare standards.

‘Any other animals’

The banning of ferrets, pet fish and other aquatic species, pet insects and arachnids is ABSOLUTE overreach, ignorant and unnecessary.

It is legal to keep these animals as pets in Victoria, and these restrictions appear to be based on species-bias and not animal welfare. It should be noted that Animal Welfare Victoria supports the keeping of these other pets ² (including the other small mammals). Council should note that AWV recommends the small mammals are all social animals. There is no justification to restricting or banning the keeping of these species.

Small mammals are extremely popular, particularly in circumstances of higher residential density areas, make no noise, and despite common misconception produce little to no odour. Small mammals are colony animals, and a limit of such small numbers is simply poor animal welfare.

Small Mammals:

Rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs, rats, and mice are considered as house pets and have been for some time now.

Now that housing cost forces people into smaller unit dwellings, indoor pets such as rabbits, ferrets, rats, mice, and guinea pigs are becoming the norm.

Owners of these smaller pet's work to improve the quality of the animal in health and temperament and animal related clubs and societies 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 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

There are many Societies for rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, and mice.

Ferrets

Ferrets have become much loved companion pets and while they do require some care, maintenance and ensuring that they are kept very entertained and occupied when awake, they in fact do not require a lot of space which makes them perfect as ‘indoor’ pets.

Ferrets are far more secure indoors and escapes into the environment are far less likely to occur with an indoor kept pet than an animal out in a cage. Ferrets are also social animals and should be kept at a minimum as pairs or in groups, therefore Council's restriction is uneducated, ill-advised, and most definitely **NOT SUPPORTED**.

Rats, Mice and Guinea Pigs

The limit of just two (2) animals in a Unit/flat or land of less than 150m² is **NOT SUPPORTED** by Animal Care Australia.

These animals are colony animals, and it is important for their health and well-being to be kept in larger numbers than what Council's policy imposes As companion animals allowing more appropriate colony sizes poses no threat to community, health, or animal welfare. ³.

² **Animal Welfare Victoria – other pets**

³ **Short Communication: Rats Demand for Group Size - Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 7 (4) 267-272 – 2004)**

Rats, mice, 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 for 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 considered the biology and needs of these species.

Additionally, due to their short lifespans 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.

Rabbits

Many people that keep rabbits in any residential situation keep them as pets and the majority of pet rabbits are kept as indoor pets for their health and safety. Vaccines do not provide protection against all of the government released rabbit haemorrhagic viruses that are designed to eradicate feral rabbits.

Responsible pet owners will also have their rabbits desexed should THEY NOT wish to breed.

Council imposing restrictions is an extreme overreach of power and highlights how out of touch with animal keeping this draft policy is.

We **STRONGLY recommend the removal of the permit requirement/restriction** and insert: ‘To be kept as appropriate to species.’

The blatant species-bias against small mammals shows a clear lack of knowledge regarding their keeping.

Cats:

Restrictions (without a permit) to just one cat is not supported, with a recommended change to 2 cats where a permit is required for a third or more cat. Cats are social animals, and the idea that cats are solitary animals is incorrect and not in the interests of higher welfare for cats. Cats should have a friend, especially if they are to be contained to the owner’s home or property.

Dogs:

Restrictions (without a permit) to just one dog is not supported, with a recommended change to 2 dogs where a permit is required for a third or more. Having only one dog on a block/unit of less than 150m², especially if not considering the breed (i.e.: size) and is clearly an uneducated view.

There are no animal welfare justifications to this restriction – especially when considering small breed dogs.

Reptiles:

Reptiles are extremely popular, particularly in circumstances of higher residential density areas, they make no noise, and despite common misconception produce little to no odour. Reptiles come in a range of sizes and husbandry needs. There are a broad range of alternative and legitimate management and housing systems and numerous other factors that should be considered when keeping reptiles/amphibians.

For reptiles, where hundreds of different species are being regulated under State Regulation via the Wildlife Act 1975⁴ and associated Regulations, which governs the keeping of reptiles by setting licensing requirements and regulating which species can be kept. The vast majority of reptiles are housed in small enclosures, with many enclosures capable of existing in a child's bedroom or other small space (substantially less than the stated 150m²). Number restrictions are simply not applicable and are inappropriate for ensuring sound animal welfare standards. The table should simply stipulate the reptiles must be kept in accordance with the Victorian Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals — Private Keeping of Reptiles.⁵

Birds:

The proposal relating to the keeping of birds is ill-founded. 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.

Animal Care Australia 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.⁶ If numbers are to be restricted, then doing so according to this code has legitimacy and should be based on the housing needs of the particular species in question, for example keeping of requirements for canaries is vastly different to those of galahs. It must be breed and husbandry need specific.

Councils' 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.

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

Policies that restrict the 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.

Animal Care Australia would like to request a meeting to discuss further collaboration to ensure a policy that aligns with the needs of your pet keeping residents.

Animal Care Australia's primary objective is 'education over regulation' and always commend Councils wherever they seek to further the education of their residents. We recommend viewing our online document: [Council Animal Management Plans](#)

⁴ [Wildlife Act 1975](#)

⁵ [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals — Private Keeping of Reptiles](#)

⁶ [Code of Practice—Housing of Caged Birds](#)

Comparison of Moonee Valley City Council DAMP 2021–25 vs Draft DAMP 2026–29

This provides a structured side-by-side comparison of the Moonee Valley City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2021–25 and the Draft DAMP 2026–29. It highlights continuities, key changes, and new directions.

Category	DAMP 2021–25	Draft DAMP 2026–29
Overall Structure	Broad, descriptive with many actions spread thin. Limited measurable outcomes.	Streamlined with 4 clear focus areas, explicit links to Council Plan 2025–29, measurable success indicators.
Animal Registrations	Encouraged registration, but without strong measurable targets. 'Register to Reunite' introduced late.	Registrations made primary priority. Target: 25% growth (~16,000 by 2029). Expanded education, partnerships, research.
Community Safety (Dog Attacks & Rushes)	Focus on enforcement and education. Limited data collection.	Education plus improved complaint processes, data capture on demographics and circumstances, trend analysis.
Community Tensions (Barking Dogs, Off-Leash Dogs)	Recognised issue, but actions less structured. Limited transparency in complaint handling.	Formal review of complaint process but still requires a flow for this e.g. complaint received, medication, barking diary, owner approached provided with barking diary, given time to rectify. expanded data collection, regular community engagement campaigns.
Environment & Animal Welfare	General focus on desexing and rehoming. Feral cat management noted but not prioritised.	Feral cat control elevated (aligned with 2024 federal strategy). Research barriers to cat desexing. Clear reclaim/rehoming targets.
Implementation & Governance	Annual review but not strongly tied to measurable metrics or LGPRF.	Strong alignment with LGPRF indicators. Annual community reporting. Resource alignment and compliance in appendices.

About Animal Care Australia

As a nationally recognised animal welfare organisation, Animal Care Australia 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, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation, and in particular native birds, reptiles, and mammals.

Animal Care Australia was founded in early 2018 to establish an organisation run solely by volunteers to lobby for real animal welfare. With extreme animal rights and animal liberationist ideologies influencing government legislation, regulation, and policy at our expense and to the detriment of our animals and pets, it has become necessary to provide government with a balancing voice.

By uniting the broad spectrum of animal groups, collectively we offer an experienced, sensible approach to animal welfare.

By educating our members and the public about the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect for their needs and promoting the humane treatment of animals to improve animal welfare outcomes, Animal Care Australia is in the unique position of lobbying and advocating for all animals within our care.

Animal Care Australia provides priority to the following:

- advocating for stronger welfare outcomes
- advocating to increase education of the public in animal welfare and best care techniques
- educate the public on handling their animals with kindness & respect and the importance of their needs
- educate the public in the differences between animal welfare and animal rights

Moonee Valley Language Line

العربية	Arabic	9932 1471	Ελληνικά	Greek	9932 1474	Español	Spanish	9932 1477
廣東話	Cantonese	9932 1472	Italiano	Italian	9932 1475	Türkçe	Turkish	9932 1478
Hrvatski	Croatian	9932 1473	Somali	Somali	9932 1476	Tiếng Việt	Vietnamese	9932 1479

All other languages 9932 1480

National Relay Service 13 36 77 or relayservice.com.au