

WHITEHORSE CITY COUNCIL

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2017 – 2020



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Whitehorse City Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) has been developed in accordance with the State Government's requirements that all Councils have an adopted DAMP in place by November 2017.

The DAMP has been developed through consultation with the community, key stakeholders, the Domestic Animal Management Plan Advisory Committee (DAMPAC) and key Council staff members.

DAMPAC is the cornerstone of Whitehorse City Council's domestic animal management strategy and together with the DAMP provides a framework for Council to manage its statutory responsibilities associated with domestic animal management recognising that animal management is an ever moving environment requiring ongoing assessment and development to address emerging issues.

The 2017-2020 DAMP objectives are to provide a safe, harmonious environment by promoting responsible pet ownership to residents and the community throughout Whitehorse, focusing on key issues such as effective control of dogs in public places such as parks and streets, registration levels, education programs and enforcement.

Other key compulsory information in the 2017-2020 DAMP includes staffing levels, training standards, key workload performance indicators, current programs and other services available.

In detail, the 2017-2020 DAMP outlines planned programs and initiatives including training and development, community education, responsible pet ownership strategies, identification and registration of animals that assist with a key objective of reuniting lost and found animals with their owners.

Compliance is required with legislative provisions including the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and Council's *Community Local Law 2014*. Both documents are available on Council's website.

The Community Laws team, on behalf of Whitehorse City Council, is responsible for administering the legislative framework. The evaluation and monitoring of the team's performance is detailed in the 2017-2020 DAMP including key performance indicators and the year by year life cycle objectives for this plan.

The first stage of the community consultation in relation to the development of this plan was conducted in 2017 and focused on identifying broad overarching community issues associated with domestic animal management. This was carried out by an electronic survey, multiple pop up displays at prominent locations and the provision of hard copies of the survey at a number of shopping centres and other key locations. The survey identified five key community issues as follows:

- Enforcement of the legislation
- Further Education
- Animal Registration
- Cat Curfew
- Off/On Lead areas

These 5 issues along with other related matters will form part of the Action Plan (Appendix 1) in the 2017-2020 DAMP.

Through the life of the Plan there will be further community engagement and consultation on those issues identified in the Action Plan and any identified emerging issues.

A key component of Council's domestic animal strategy, the membership of the DAMPAC will also be reviewed with increased representation from community and key stakeholders.

The DAMP 2017/20 will be reviewed annually and implemented over a 4 year period.

2. INTRODUCTION

Whitehorse City Council's DAMP has been developed as a fluid document that is designed to identify and manage emerging domestic animal issues and includes a Domestic Animal Management Plan Advisory Committee (DAMPAC) that has Industry and Community representatives, Councillors and key staff as a platform in facilitating this. The DAMPAC will examine emerging domestic animal issues and consider appropriate management strategies.

The committee will monitor previous Council commitments to animal management and ensure the plan not only reflects current community issues but will enhance responsible pet ownership and services the Whitehorse City Council delivers in this area now and in the future.

Whitehorse City Council's DAMP will balance the competing needs of animal owners, the broader community and the animals that share people's lives. Council also recognises the positive health and wellbeing outcomes that arise from pet ownership.

The programs and activities set out in the action plan have been developed with the aim to encourage more people to enjoy the pleasure derived from animal companionship, within a framework of responsible ownership that is adaptable to community needs and expectations.

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The purpose of the DAMP is to balance differing community expectations, keep abreast of different trends and improve animal management in the City of Whitehorse. The Plan supports the development and implementation of a range of strategies that will:

- Encourage responsible pet ownership of cats and dogs through education and enforcement approaches;
- Ensure that officers are adequately trained to fulfil Councils legislative, educational and enforcement functions;
- Review Council's animal management services, programs, procedures and policies which include Local Law provisions and existing Orders made under the Act;
- Enhance community safety by reducing the number of dogs not under effective control throughout the municipality;
- Reduce the number of dog attacks;
- Promote the benefits to the community that may be gained by owning companion animals;
- Raise the profile and importance of effective animal management;
- Address the overpopulation of unwanted cats and dogs while minimising euthanasia rates;
- Address domestic animal welfare issues that are specific to the City of Whitehorse community;
- Register and ensure that domestic animal businesses as defined under the Act and declared animals are managed according to the relevant Codes of Practice;
- Continue to return lost and found animals to their owners with the impact of reducing pound costs and euthanasia rates;
- Promote the benefits of desexing dogs and cats;
- Continue to raise awareness of responsible pet ownership in off lead areas;
- To have plans and contingencies in place in the event of an emergency.

2.2 PROCESS APPLIED DEVELOPING THIS PLAN

This plan is developed in consultation with Council Officers, key industry and welfare groups, the community and Councillors. During the initial drafting stage, DAMPAC utilised the many thoughts and contributions from the industry experts, ideas and recent survey results, previous plans and community expectations.

Should funding be required for identified projects, a business case will be developed and promoted to Council for consideration during the development of the annual financial budget.

2.3 THE CITY OF WHITEHORSE – DEMOGRAPHICS AND COUNCIL PROFILE

Key demographics for the City of Whitehorse are:

- In 2016, the City of Whitehorse had an estimated residential population of 170,093
- The City of Whitehorse has a lower proportion of pre-school and higher proportion of people at post retirement age than Greater Melbourne
- Around 17% of our residents are aged 65 years and over as compared to 14%, which is the Melbourne metropolitan average
- It is predicted that the number of people aged 65 and over will increase by 5,152 persons between 2016 and 2026 and represent almost 18% of the population
- Households with children make up 35% of the population in Whitehorse
- Box Hill and Burwood have larger concentrations of residents aged 20-29 (28.4% and 27.8% respectively compared with 15.3% for the municipality)
- We are also a culturally diverse community. In the 2016 census it was found that 37% of residents were born overseas and a third came from a non-English speaking background
- The top five countries of birth are: China, India, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Vietnam. Whitehorse experienced 69% growth in the number of people born in China from 2011 levels (an increase of 7,576 people born there)
- Reflecting this, Mandarin and Cantonese are the most commonly spoken languages other than English at home. This is followed by Greek, Italian and Vietnamese
- In terms of housing, 31% of households have a mortgage, 27% of households rent
- Whitehorse City Council has a high percentage of staff who live locally with approximately 44% of the workforce, (494 staff members) living in the municipality

3. THE LEGISLATION

Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (Act), requires every Victorian Council prepare a DAMP. Section 68A of the Act states:

“Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary of Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR)), prepare at 4 year intervals a domestic animal management plan.*
- (2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—*
 - (a) set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and*
 - (b) outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and*

- (c) *outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—*
 - (i) *to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and*
 - (ii) *to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and*
 - (iii) *to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and*
 - (iv) *to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and*
 - (v) *to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and*
 - (vi) *to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and*
 - (vii) *to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and*
- (d) *provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and*
- (e) *provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and*
- (f) *provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.*
- (3) *Every Council must—*
 - (a) *review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and*
 - (b) *provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and*
 - (c) *publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.”*

Council, in consultation with the community and DAMPAC, has developed the 2017-2020 DAMP ensuring the legislative framework forms the basis of Council’s domestic animal management strategy incorporating community expectations.

4. OUR PLAN

The 2017-2020 DAMP has established a series of key objectives that ensures Council's capability and capacity to deliver the Action Plan detailed in appendix 1.

The objectives are designed to ensure Council address the pillars of the legislation by:

- Ensuring staff are appropriately trained and skilled;
- Promoting responsible pet ownership;
- Evaluating and monitoring activities undertaken;
- Sharing knowledge and creating an environment of continuous improvement; and
- Community education strategies to promote responsible pet ownership

The Community Laws Team carry out the following business as usual activities in administering both the Act and Council's *Community Local Law 2014*.

The Action Plan detailed in Appendix 1 compliments and enhances this operational strategy addressing the legislative review requirements and considerations. The following provides an overview of the business as usual service provision delivered by Whitehorse City Council's animal management team.

Area of Responsibility	Strategy	Measureable Performance Indicators (including statutory and performance reporting)
<p>Provide Animal Management education and enforcement for the community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering relevant Acts, Regulations, Local Laws, Policies and Codes of Practice • Managing customer service requests (CSR) • Provide educative information to groups and individuals • Manage key contracts including the Domestic Animal Pound Contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and Implement the animal education strategy • Provide access to Acts, Regulations, Local Laws and Codes of Practice; • Prepare information to inform the community about domestic animal management issues (e.g. web information, press articles, brochures) • Administer within operating procedures to programs to educate and assist community with these issues • Preparation of legal briefs if required; • Receive and investigate complaints; • Undertake inspections, issue notices where required, follow up inspections, issue infringements, arrange compulsory clearance work where required, authorise payments to contractors and charge against property owner; • Undertake regular park patrols • Complete statutory and departmental reporting • Pound service is operational and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with Council standards; • Monthly reporting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CSRs; ○ Completion rates; ○ Infringements issued; ○ Number of cat cages distributed; ○ Number of cats and dogs impounded; ○ Number of lost and found cats and dogs reunited with owners. • Reports completed; • Council's performance in the "Know Your Council" reporting ; • Prosecutions completed and relevant persons advised of outcomes; • Successful roll out of any new processes and/or initiatives • Number of animals impounded decreases; • CSR and document management complies with organisation standards.

4.1 CONTEXT

There are nine officers in the Community Laws team that are involved in animal management activities as part of their duties. In addition to its day to day service delivery, the team also provides an out of hour's response service to complaints regarding animals 52 weeks of the year.

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

Community expectations are increasing significantly in the animal management area with the table below demonstrating the work load increases during the life of the 2013/2017 DAMP. Each service request has the potential for numerous additional inspections and ongoing negotiations.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
CSR	8,171	7,856	9,052	14,515

Since the introduction of a mobile office environment in 2016/17 for field staff, there has been a greater emphasis on proactive reporting. This has resulted in the accurate capture and reporting of actual workloads particularly in the area of community engagement and presence in our open spaces.

4.2 TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Section 68(A)(2)(b) of the Act states: *"Outline programs for the training of authorized officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district"*

As part of the annual Performance Appraisal Development Program (PADP) training programs are developed with each individual staff member to ensure they receive opportunities to develop their skills and techniques to perform their duties.

Whitehorse City Council has a strong commitment to safety and development of staff. To achieve this, training is offered in a variety of mediums including in house and external service provides training options to meet both organisational and individual needs.

The following tables detail both routine and targeted training options for staff, the frequency and how it will be evaluated. The training is designed to raise awareness on and knowledge of organisation wide good governance practices as well as operational matters. The training establishes base like knowledge, reporting process and understanding of the broader impacts of the topic.

- **Operational**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identified training requirements (induction, manual handling etc.)	As required	Attendance and successful completion of training in accordance with Corporate Standards
Animal Handling	Every two years (minimum)	Training completed
Situational Awareness	Annually	Annual training completed
Occupational Health and Safety	Ongoing	Health and Safety issues identified and actioned

- **Governance**

Activity	When	Evaluation
Staff Induction	On Commencement	Induction completed within 2 months of engagement
Mandatory Governance Training	As per Council's requirements	Training completed in accordance with Corporate standards
In house training opportunities	As they arise	Training opportunities provided
Equal Opportunity	As per Council's requirements	Training completed and awareness
Statement and Interview taking	As identified	Competence achieved
Performance Reviews (PADP)	Annually	All staff to achieve "Meets Requirements" as a minimum
Prosecutors Course	As identified	Competence achieved

4.3 REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

Section 68A (2)(c)(v) of the Act states: *"Outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats"*

This section also addresses sections 68A (2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f) of the Act.

Identifying and registering domestic animals is seen as the backbone of a successful animal management program and enable lost and found animals to be reunited with their owners. To prove the effectiveness of identification, in 2017 a cat was found and reported to Council. Upon scanning the animal, a microchip was found and through this, we matched the cat to a lost pet report two years earlier. This enabled staff to match the cat to its previous registration data resulting in Council reuniting the cat with its owner after a two year separation.

Annual registration fees partially funds Council's animal management program and the legislated annual payment to DEDJTR of \$4 per registered cat and dog and \$10 for each registered Domestic Animal Business.

The payment funds the department's training and education programs and materials for Local Government.

In 2017 Whitehorse City Council has 15,322 registered dogs, 6,917 cat and 11 Domestic Animal Businesses registered. The table below provides an overview of registration levels over the past four years. As can be seen, registration levels are increasing.

Year	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Registered Dogs	12,442	12,674	14,308	15,322
Registered Cats	5,718	5,797	6,565	6,917

Whitehorse City Council will continue to undertake programs that are designed to increase the number of registered animals using a variety of methods including:

- Targeted door knocking programs;
- Promotion of the benefits and the need to register domestic animals in the media;
- Promotion at public events including Spring Festival, shopping centre displays and park patrols;
- Free first time registration for puppies;
- Reduced first time registration for pets under 12 months;
- Reduction of cat registration fees; and
- The distribution of pet giveaways.

5 CURRENT SITUATION

5.1 ORDERS, LOCAL LAWS, COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In accordance with the Act and the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council has established a series of local requirements that supports and promotes responsible pet ownership. These local standards include Orders name under the Act and Local Law provisions made in accordance with *Local Government Act 1989*.

Detailed below are provisions established in Whitehorse in addition to the statutory requirements of the Act.

The Act:

- Council Order No 3 Section 10A (1) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*
Whitehorse City Council will not after the 9 April 2011 register any dog or cat for the first time, unless the dog or cat is desexed or is exempt under Section 10B (1) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.
- Council Order No 4 Section 25(2) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*
The owner of any cat(s) within the Whitehorse City Council municipal district must keep the cat(s) confined to a property at night (8:00pm to 6:00pm)
- Council Order No 5 Section 26(2) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*
The owner of a cat must keep their cat from any designated Council bushland reserve
- Council Order No 6 Section 26 (2) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*
Dogs being exercised in public places must be under effective control and on a lead (or similar) unless in a designated dog off lead area.

Local Laws:

The *Community Local Law 2014* has provisions relating to domestic animals in the areas of:

- The Keeping of Animals (Part 5); and
- Specified Wetland Guide (an incorporated document of the *Community Local Law 2014*)

The *Community Local Law 2014* is available on Council's website.

To assist Community Laws Officers to provide consistent service delivery, operation manuals have been developed that provide an overview of the expectations, expected standards and guidelines in the management of service requests.

The operational manuals are supported by a Department Business Plan where the groups values and principles have been identified and agreed too.

At Whitehorse our service delivery is about managing the grey and providing opportunities for our community to be responsible pet owners.

5.2 EDUCATION/PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

Promotion of Responsible Pet Ownership Programs through:	Timeframe	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Festival 	October each year	Furthering the education of pet owners' responsibilities and benefits of pet ownership via key messaging that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits of desexing their pets; Effective cat confinement and its impact; Requirements and benefits of pet registration; Effective control of dogs in public.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park visits throughout the municipality (Giveaway lead/poo pouches) 	Weekly	As above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Visits 	Each Term	As above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media articles 	As identified in the Compliance Business Plan	As above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brochure display at municipal offices and branches 	Ongoing	As above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website 	Ongoing	As above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text messaging/notification to owners of registered pets 	Ongoing	To decrease incident of dog escape during fireworks and providing important information

5.3 COMPLIANCE ACTIVITIES

Activity	Outcome
Complaint investigation	Thorough and rapid investigation
Seizure of identified dogs (Dog attacks or where appropriate)	Removal of threat/risk to community during investigation
Enforcement Proceedings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue Infringement; Court; Declaration; and Euthanised. 	Treatment of threat/risk to community in shortest time possible
Education (Ask/Tell/Enforce)	As considered appropriate to action required
Targeted Patrols – Proactive/Reactive	Random presence promoting compliance
After hours response	Thorough and rapid investigation and response
Media articles/brochures	Increase awareness and responsibility

5.4 ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

There are a number of programs carried out by Council which create opportunities to undertake and promote a positive message to the community about responsible pet ownership.

This includes the provision of pound services, annual registration, exercising dogs, keeping dogs under effective control, socialisation of dogs, ownership of cats and the general welfare of domestic animals. All these contribute to the overall reduction of nuisance behavior by pets in our community.

Council produces numerous media articles, promotions, brochures, Visual Messaging Signs (VMS) and A/Board signage to provide specific information for pet owners at targeted times.

Following are some of the programs undertaken.

5.4.1 POUND SERVICE

Recent data sourced from Council's CSR system and from the RSPCA on domestic animals impounds identifies that the majority of these animals are registered and returned to their owners.

This can be attributed to the following:

- Legislative change in 2007 to make microchipping compulsory is paying dividends as the general animal population is mainly microchipped at sale – hence ownership is more easily determined and again animals can be sent home rather than impounded. Registration can be addressed at reclaim if needed;
- Introduction in 2010 of a Cat Curfew and the associated community awareness/education programs carried out. Residents are generally aware of their responsibilities and raise matters with Council's attention;
- Better access for Officers to animal registration information outside of normal working hours that enables ownership details to be obtained and the animal reunited with its owner eliminating the need to take the animal to the pound;
- Improved coordination between various microchip data enabling more animals to be reunited with their owners rather than the animal being impounded; and
- A greater emphasis internally to explore all avenues that can reunite the animal with the owner provided ownership details are correct with either Council and/or the microchip company.

The following table demonstrates the improved reunification levels for both cats and dogs and the upward trend of cats and dogs being returned home rather than being placed in the pound.

Whitehorse Pound	Type	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	% comparison from 2015/16 to 2016/17
Dogs In	Council Stray	249	265	212	151	-40%
	Public Stray	228	232	217	231	6%
	Surrender	135	92	113	52	-117%
	Total	612	589	542	434	-25%
Cats In	Council Stray	150	127	81	66	-23%
	Public Stray	202	204	186	231	19%
	Surrender	170	121	94	87	-8%
	Total	552	452	361	384	6%
Total	Incoming	1134	1041	903	818	-10%

5.4.2 NUISANCE ANIMALS

Section 68A (2)(c)(vi) of the Act states: *“Outline programs, services and strategies to minimize the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance”*

This section also addresses sections 68A (2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f) of the Act.

There are three key issues that relate to nuisance matters dealt with on a regular basis that are details as follows:

- **Dog Faeces**

Faeces is an unavoidable consequence of dog ownership and the failure of owners to pick up after their dog(s) has proven quite difficult to enforce. Council is continually reviewing its approach to dog faeces implementing strategies to educate and where necessary enforce with the ultimate aim of reducing the volume of dog litter left in streets, parkland reserves and sporting venues. Dog litter can not only be an eyesore but hazardous to health with Council’s Community Laws Officers continually reminding dog owners that it is their responsibility to collect and dispose of their dog(s) litter.

The Community Laws Officers use a variety of techniques, such as targeted or random patrols of parklands and sporting grounds, letterbox drops, posters, temporary signage and media articles in educating the community and change the behavior of dog owners who either live in or visit the City of Whitehorse.

Council provides educational material in the form of brochures, giveaways and has information on the issue available on its website

- **Noise**

Noise nuisance issues generally relate to barking dog/s and do cause a lot of concern. The issues raised with these sorts of matters can be very complex as we try and balance the interests and rights of both the dog owner and the complainant.

The process carried out to resolve barking dog matters is on receipt of a complaint, documentation is provided to both parties that identifies that there is a potential issue and identifying the need resolve the matter. The information includes techniques and strategies to manage a barking dog issue and information on the next phase of the process if the nuisance continues. For more serious noise issues there is an escalated process.

In general the easiest way to resolve a lot of these issues is by talking to the dog owner as in the majority of cases they are unaware that their dog is creating a nuisance by barking.

Excessive dog barking can be resolved by seeking advice from a local vet or dog trainer who can provide assistance or by visual stimulation and exercise such as walking.

Council does provide educational material in the form of brochures, on site advice with further information available its Council's website.

The below table indicates the number of nuisance barking dog complaints for the life of this plan.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Barking dog complaints	287	323	405	349

- **Cat Nuisance**

Cat trespassing can be a problem however this is not currently a major issue in Whitehorse. Residents of the City of Whitehorse can obtain cat traps in a controlled manner that enables discussions owners of cats that are causing problems. The effectiveness of this strategy is supported by the reduction in cage hire as detailed in the table below.

The Act provides for Community Laws Officers to issue direction notices to cat owners to assist with compliance. Council does provide educational material in the form of brochures and information on its website.

In 2013/14, 106 cat cages were borrowed by residents and 49 complaints were made about cats wandering and causing a nuisance. In 2016/17 only 23 cages were borrowed with 184 complaints investigated. The investigations resulted in a commitment from cats owners to manage their pets effectively reducing the need for cat traps.

The impact of this process has resulted in:

- An increase in matters resolved at officer level in the field;
- Residents are educated and informed regarding their options (cat owners and complainants);
- Consideration given to finding solutions what are workable for both parties;
- Reduction in the misuse of cages;
- Associated significant drop in the numbers of cats needing to be trapped and/or impounded; and
- Less cats at risk of not being reclaimed or being euthanised.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Cat cage hire requests	106	98	61	23

The total number of contacts to Council regarding complaints about cats has risen. However this can be contributed to the above mentioned process that seeks further information to assist in issue resolution.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Cat Complaints	49	43	36	184

5.4.3 DOG ATTACKS

Section 68A(2)(c)(iii) of the Act states: *“Outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals”*

This section also addresses sections 68A (2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f) of the Act.

Whitehorse City Council is committed to reducing the number, impact and injuries associated with dog attacks in our community. Council Community Laws Officers aim to address incidents of dog attack and other aggressive dog behavior as quickly and efficiently as possible. The intent is to utilize the “tools” provided within the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* to address and remove ongoing risks to the community.

We do this by means of a range of proactive messaging and education and form but fair investigation and when required enforcement action against offending dog owners.

Council ensures it is a high priority for all Community Laws Officers to have the required skills, knowledge and equipment to effectively carry out these tasks associated with the investigation of dog incidents, as well as the safe handling and transportation of aggressive dogs.

It is a priority for officers to quickly investigate reported incidents of aggression and where required and approved, have the matter presented before the courts within the shortest time frame possible without compromising the investigation.

This provides confidence and assurance to the victim as well as treating the alleged offender with respect and procedural fairness.

The below table indicates the number of reported dog attacks to Council over the life of the previous plan. The figures are raw data which have not been categorised. It includes serious dog attacks, minor dog attacks, dogs rushing and in some cases dogs wandering. Often reported dog attacks are often unsubstantiated.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Dog Attacks (includes serious, minor, rush or other incidents)	105	97	105	80

Reported attacks do not always result in prosecution or infringement notices being issued as the actual incident was not considered to be a breach of Section 29 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

All Councils are required to provide quarterly reports to Local Government Victoria of all prosecuted dog attacks for that quarter with the outcomes. For the 2016/17 financial year, Whitehorse Council successfully prosecuted 9 dog attack matters.

5.4.4 DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

Section 68A(2)(c)(vii) of the Act states: *“Outline programs, services and strategies to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations”*

This section also addresses sections 68A (2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f) of the Act.

Management of known Restricted Breed Dogs, Declared Dangerous and Menacing Dogs within Whitehorse is deemed to be a high priority and officers ensure compliance officers with the legislative requirements via annual inspections.

Where non-compliance is identified, enforcement action is initiated as specified in the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Dangerous and Menacing dog declarations are generally used in conjunction with a prosecution to ensure measures are put in place that assists with the management of a potential future risk to our community.

The Victorian Dangerous Dog Register is updated on findings of a prosecution and a subsequent declaration is completed.

The following table details the number of declarations made by Council over the past four years.

Type of Declaration	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Restricted Breed Dog	0	1	1	1
Declared Dangerous Dog	0	4	4	6
Declared Menacing Dog	2	2	3	6

5.4.5 OVER POPULATION AND HIGH EUTHANASIA

Section 68A (2)(c)(iv) of the Act states: *“Outline programs, services and strategies to address over over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats”*

This section also addresses sections 68A (2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f) of the Act.

The following data has been provided by the RSPCA, the Council pound provider during the life of the previous plan, and details Council and community impounded and surrendered animals, animals returned home and euthanasia rates.

The data indicates that there is a large reduction in animals collected, a large increase in animals returned to their owners and significantly lower euthanasia rates over the period in the City of Whitehorse.

For the year 2016/17 the percentage of dogs reclaimed from the RSPCA was 81%. This is also consistent with cats with an adoption rate of 63% and a reclaim rate of 14%.

This achievement is in addition to a reduction of 28% of animals being impounded over the life of the previous plan (detail under Pound Services).

		2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	% comparison from 2015/16 to 2016/17
Dogs Out	Sold/Adopted	111	98	97	55	-76%
	Reclaimed	435	442	383	357	-7%
	Euthanised	51	45	26	30	13%
	Total	597	585	506	442	-14%
Cats Out	Sold/Adopted	279	254	226	214	-6%
	Reclaimed	73	44	51	48	-6%
	Euthanised	177	118	71	78	9%
	Total	529	416	348	340	-2%
Total	Outgoing	1,126	1,001	854	782	-8.5%

5.4.6 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

Section 68A(2)(c)(ii) of the Act states: *“Outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation”*

This section also addresses sections 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f) of the Act.

All Domestic Animal Businesses are audited annually after registration fees are paid in accordance with the relevant Code of Practice. If a business is compliance a certificate issued confirming registration.

If the business is non-compliant then staff work with the business owner to undertake strategies to rectify the identified issues.

Detailed below is a breakdown of current registered Domestic Animal Businesses in Whitehorse.

Type of Domestic Animal Business Registration	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Pet Shop	4	5	6	6
Boarding Kennel	1	3	3	3
Training Establishment	2	2	2	1
Pound/Shelter	1	1	1	1

5.4.7 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

An Animal Welfare Emergency Management Plan has been developed which is an endorsed plan of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.

The aim of the plan is to be prepared for any disaster of emergency and in doing so, define the roles and responsibilities of Authorised Community Laws Officers and support staff during an emergency.

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Support and assist the principal Municipal Emergency Management Plan;
- Identify triggers for activating this plan;
- Coordinate Community Laws Functions and animal rescue and/or shelter during an emergency;
- Increase community knowledge and confidence that animal welfare will be considered and managed during an emergency;
- Identify and prioritise the requirements of groups at risk during emergencies;
- Facilitate the hygienic management and disposal of animal waste and carcasses during an emergency;
- Secure the assistance of community members with animal handling skills;
- Provide immediate animal welfare assistance at Emergency Relief Centres; and
- Ensure business continuity of the Community Laws team.

Staff involved with responsibilities in this area have been trained and take part in regular exercising of the Animal Welfare Emergency Management Plan.

5.4.8 PROACTIVE

Council undertakes a number of proactive activities that reduce the need for enforcement, provide education on responsible pet ownership, establishes community partnerships and provides for a safe environment able to be shared by as many people and their pets as possible. These programs include:

- Pop up displays at public open spaces where dogs are exercised. Staff at these displays provide information on where you can exercise your dog, what the law says, offer pet safety tips, provide drinking bowls and assist with any concerns over pet ownership;
- If a cat or dog is collected by a Community Laws Officer and is wearing its registration tags is able to be identified, it is returned to its owner (if possible) rather than being impounded;
- First time juvenile registration discounts;
- Subsidised cat release and registration fees;
- Animal advise service on sustainability of pets and your lifestyle;
- Barking dog management plans;
- RSPCA and Animal Aid partnerships in community events;
- Education for CALD communities;
- Presentations at community meetings; and
- Text message notification of community events or information including impending fireworks.

5.4.9 DAMPAC

DAMPAC has agreed to meet three times a year to discuss the DAMP Action Plan, consider Council service provision in animal management, makes recommendations to Council on related issues and identifies strategies moving forward.

DAMPAC's Terms of Reference are detailed in Appendix 2.

APPENDIX 1

ACTION PLAN

Year 1

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review 2013/17 Domestic Animal Management Plan Actions	Annually	Prepare report to Council and provide to the Secretary of DEDJTR
Develop DAMP 2017/20	November 2017	DAMP 2017/20 adopted by Council
Report performance for inclusion in the Council's Annual Report	Annually	Published in Council Annual report
Communication strategy to identify improved opportunities of communicating with pet owners	Dec 2017	Communication strategy in place for notification of key information and warnings
DAMPAC	Twice annually (minimum)	Terms of reference achieved

Year 2

Activity	When	Evaluation
Review composition of Domestic Animal Management Plan Advisory Committee membership and terms of reference	March 2018	Committee selected and endorsed for the term of the Domestic Animal Management Plan. Agreed Terms of Reference.
Review the DAMP annually and if appropriate, amend the plan	Annually	Amend plan where needed
Review Council Order No 6 Section 26(2) Domestic Animals Act 1994	October 2018	Revised draft of Council Order No 6 to be presented to Council for consideration
Develop and implement a promotion and education program including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible pet ownership and management; Benefits of registration; Microchip promotion; Cultural diversity; Parks are for all campaign; Clean up after your dog; Value of cats; Good news stories 	June 2018	<p>Awareness programs of responsible pet ownership conducted for CALD communities</p> <p>Support and link into Domestic Animals Unit's (DEDJTR) programs</p>

Spring Festival	Annual	Responsible Pet Ownership display
Identify emerging trends	Ongoing	Strategies discussed and programs developed to address issues identified
Provide DEDJTR Secretary with a copy of the DAMP and any amendments to the plan	November 2018	Copy of plan and any amendments supplied
Publish an evaluation of the implementation of the plan	November 2018	Evaluation published in Council Annual Report
Registration Incentives	June 2018	Simplified registration process in place Multiple delivery options available Reduced registration defaults Reduced enforcement action
DAMPAC meetings held	2 X annually (minimum)	Terms of Reference achieved
Reuniting Lost Animals Program	November 2018	Assessment of Section 84Y agreements with key stakeholders

Year 3

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide DEDJTR with a copy of the DAMP and any amendments to the plan	November 2019	Copy of plan and any amendments supplied
Publish an evaluation of the implementation of the plan in Councils annual report	November 2019	Evaluation published in Council report
Review the DAMP and if appropriate, amend the plan	Annually	Amend plan where needed
Manage and promote responsible pet ownership program with the predicted population growth with a cultural influence in Box Hill	November 2016	Options developed to assist new residents
Ongoing promotion of being responsible pet owner	Ongoing	Material available on website or in brochure form in English and translated to most commonly used languages in the municipality
Discuss and review any emerging trends and implement findings	Ongoing	Included in plan and report to DEDJTR Secretary
Animal Registration Improvement program	June 2019	Increase of registration by 5% of domestic animals
Review Council Orders 3, 4 & 5 made under the Act	October 2019	All Orders reviewed and considered.
DAMPAC meetings held	2 X annually (minimum)	Terms of Reference achieved

Year 4

Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide the DEDJTR Secretary with a copy of the DAMP and any amendments to the plan	November 2020	Copy of plan and any amendments supplied
Publish an evaluation of the implementation of the plan	November 2020	Evaluation published in Council Annual Report
Review the DAMP annually and if appropriate, amend the plan	Annually	Amend plan where needed
Develop and implement a promotion and education program including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible pet ownership and management; Benefits of registration; Microchip promotion; Cultural diversity; “Parks are for all” campaign; Clean up after your dog; Value of cats; Good news stories	June 2020	Council Annual Report
Review training needs of Community Laws Officers	March 2020	Benchmark against like municipalities and DEDJTR
DAMPAC meetings held	2 X annually (minimum)	Terms of Reference achieved



APPENDIX 2

WHITEHORSE CITY COUNCIL

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference

Purpose of the Committee:

The Domestic Animal Management Plan Advisory Committee (DAMPAC) may provide guidance on:

- forums for improved domestic animal partnerships;
- a common understanding and shared purpose with regard to domestic animal management processes;
- integrated domestic animal planning in the urban environment through responsible pet ownership and a focus on education;
- domestic animal management initiatives; and
- domestic animal better practice;
- mechanisms for Whitehorse City Council to receive advice and work with our community

The role of the committee:

The DAMPAC is to provide advice to Council on:

- opportunities to promote responsible pet ownership;
- evaluation of activities undertaken;
- sharing knowledge and creating an environment of continuous improvement in the domestic animal urban environment; and
- community education strategies to promote responsible pet ownership.

Membership and Attendance at Meeting:

DAMPAC membership to include representation from the following agencies:

- Two Councillors (one the chair);
- An Executive Officer;
- Four representatives from peak body groups (such as RSPCA, Cat Protection Society, Bicycle Victoria and Australian Veterinary Association);
- Council staff including Community Laws and Arts and Recreation Development;
- Additional members as required (e.g. existing advisory committees or management groups); and
- Members must attend one meeting annually

Schedule of Meetings and Administration:

It is proposed that the DAMPAC will meet twice in the first year and then annually as determined by the chair.

Administrative support requirements will be provided by Council staff with correspondence distributed electronically.

DAMPAC members may be required to undertake activities outside scheduled meeting timelines.

DAMPAC members will provide advice on mechanisms for Council to effectively engage and work with the community on domestic animal issues.