

## **APPENDIX A**

**Darebin Council**

**Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013 -2017**

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**Draft Report**

**Version 0.9**

**Prepared by: Health and Urban Protection Unit**



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2013-17 Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan) aims to guide Council and the community towards the goal of responsible animal ownership and management.

Darebin's Domestic Animal Management Plan has been developed in accordance with State Government requirements as outlined in Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. This plan continues to build on the foundation of work undertaken by Council with the inaugural 2008-2012 Animal Management Strategy. The distinct difference from the previous strategy is the focus on key areas of reporting as listed in the Domestic Animals Act 1994. The relevant objectives of the new Plan are to:

- ensure Local Laws Investigations Officers are appropriately trained
- encourage responsible dog and cat ownership
- reduce nuisance caused by dogs and cats
- promote effective management of dogs and cats
- identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs in the Municipality and ensure they are kept in accordance with the Act and the Regulations
- minimise the risk of attacks by dogs
- address over population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Council's activities in relation to animal management are legislated through the Domestic Animals Act (the Act) 1994. The purpose of the Act is to promote animal welfare, the responsible ownership of animals and to protect the environment.

Council also has in place local strategies and laws to regulate the management of animals and this is achieved through the development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan). The statutory requirements of the Plan under Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act are to:

- (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.*

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Plan is to provide a strategic framework for the next four years that delivers policy direction and an action plan for domestic animal management practices throughout the Municipality. The Bureau of Animal Welfare has requested the Plan be developed using their preferred template that will enable improved auditing of all Council Plans.

The preparation of the Plan follows an amendment to the Domestic Animals Act 1994 which now requires all Councils to have a four year plan in place for the management of dogs and cats within their area.

## **Consultation process**

The plan was developed in house by the Health and Urban Protection Unit in consultation with Darebin Councillors, Executive Management Team and Manager Economic Development and Civic Compliance.

An Internal Reference Group was set up which comprised of staff from Environment and Natural Resources, Leisure and Public Realm, Parks and Vegetation, Community Planning, Partnerships and Performance, Communications and Advocacy, Health and Urban Protection, Business Development and Civic Compliance.

An External Reference Group was also set up to guide the development of the Plan.

The Plan was developed with input from the community and identified stakeholders through the following methods:

- Community forums were held in Northcote, Preston and Reservoir. These were open to the general public and also by invitation. Stakeholders invited were local Veterinarians, Domestic Animal Businesses, industry associations and animal welfare groups.
- Online surveys and one on one interviews were also conducted. Thirty six surveys were completed at Darebin's micro-chipping event in April and sixty four

surveys were completed online. The online survey was promoted through Council's website, social media, local paper and through pop up messages on online payment screens during renewal of animal registrations in April 2013. A total of 100 surveys were completed.

- Face to face meetings were held and several written submissions were received.



### **3. RELEVANT PLANS AND STRATEGIES**

#### **City of Darebin Council Plan 2013-2017**

There are a number of shared goals in the Council Plan which support the strategic direction of Councils animal management services.

##### Healthy and Connected Community

- Provide the opportunity for isolated residents to connect socially and physically to the wider community via access to social networks, active transport and safe and accessible public places and networks.

##### Sustainable and Resilient Neighbourhoods

- Protect and enhance biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage assets, wildlife corridors, local forests, waterways and the built and natural heritage areas.
- Develop policies to encourage the ethical treatment of all animals and to support responsible pet ownership.

##### Excellent Service

- Create a business culture that focuses on customer service and the provision of timely and meaningful responses to community needs and requests; and analyse all customer feedback, using it as an opportunity to improve the quality of our services.

##### Open and Accountable Democracy

- Communicate effectively and in accessible formats and media with all members of our diverse community.
- Identify issues of concern to our community and advocate for strategic solutions.
- Work with organisations, other levels of government and the private sector for the benefit of our community.

Other related plans which are important in the development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan are:

- Darebin's Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-13
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Darebin Open Space Strategy 2012

#### **3.1 Darebin – Demographic and City Profile**

The City of Darebin has an area of approximately 53 square kilometres comprising the suburbs of: Northcote, Fairfield, Alphington, Thornbury, Preston, Kingsbury, Reservoir, Macleod (part) and Bundoora. It features Latrobe University at Bundoora, Northern Metropolitan Institute of Technology (NMIT) at Preston, major shopping centre Northland and various shopping activity centres at Preston, Fairfield, Reservoir, Northcote and Thornbury.

There are over 900 hectares of open space in Darebin. Bordered by the Darebin and Merri Creeks, the City of Darebin contains a diverse range of open spaces ranging from small, local parks to major regional parklands such as All Nations Park in Northcote, Edwardes Lake in Reservoir and Bundoora Park in Bundoora. Added to this are environmentally sensitive areas such as the Central Creek Grasslands, the wildlife reserve at Latrobe University and the Leamington Street Wetlands.

The City of Darebin is a metropolitan Council representing more than 143,057 people in the inner Northern suburbs of Melbourne. The Municipality has over 63,000 properties, including over 57,000 homes.

Darebin is one of the most diverse communities in Australia with residents from a range of cultures, languages, ages, socio-economic status and disability.

2011 ABS Census data shows 34% of the Darebin population were born overseas and 39% speak a language other than English at home.

While the socioeconomic profile of Darebin is changing, with more residents earning higher incomes, it is important to remember that a significant proportion of the population still experiences a level of relatively high socio-economic disadvantage.

## **Animal Ownership**

Pets are increasingly kept for companionship both in families and sole person households. There is a wide range of benefits to owning a pet. The key benefits relate to health and wellbeing, responsibility and companionship. Pets can:

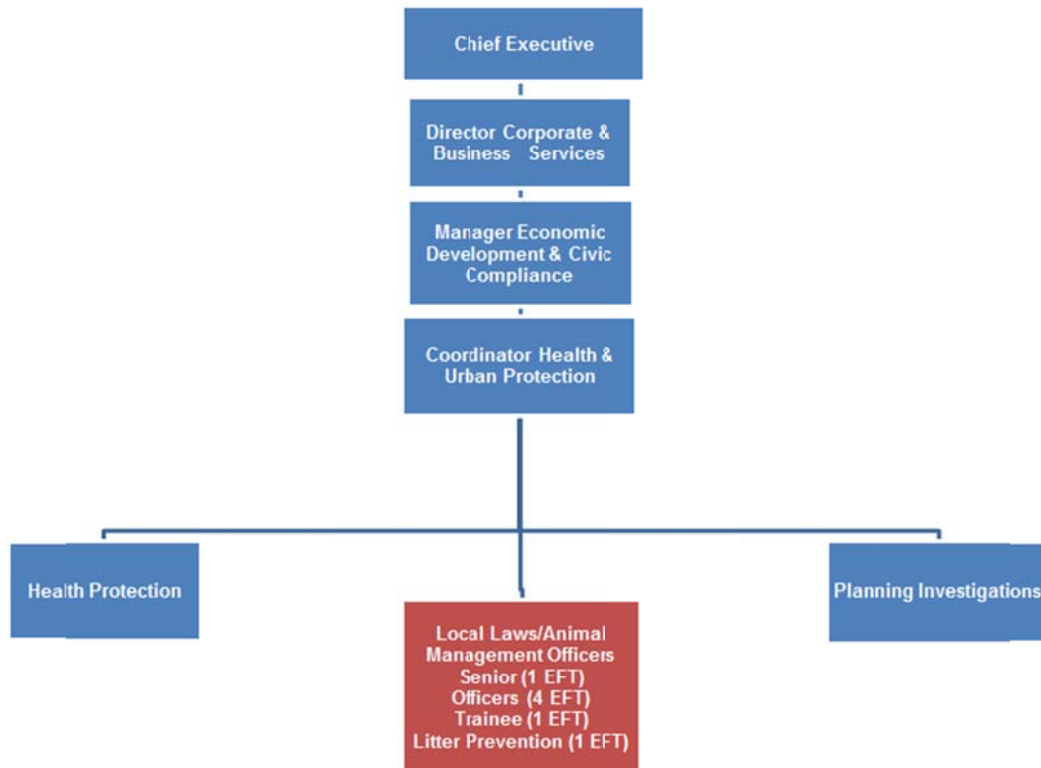
- motivate people to exercise regularly
- create opportunities to meet people and make new friends
- teach responsibility, as pets require ongoing care
- provide companionship and prevent loneliness.

For these reasons it is important to ensure lost animals are reunited with their owner and responsible pet ownership is encouraged in Darebin. Also important is providing regular education and information to residents on the positive benefits of pet registration.



### 3.2 Animal Management Services at Darebin

Animal management services at Darebin are conducted by the Local Laws Unit within the Health and Urban Protection Unit. The organisational relationship is depicted in the organisational chart below:



Darebin’s animal management services are managed in-house with the provision of animal pound and after-hours collection services being managed by an external service provider. Council has a day stay holding animal impound facility which is used to contain animals before being transported to the pound and after-hours collection services provider where they are then housed.

In July 2012, the Health & Urban Protection Unit underwent a restructure. This restructure provided for the amalgamation of the previous roles of local laws and animal management. Combining the Local Laws and Animal Management Officer role into one was required to provide the ability to cope with spikes in workloads that fluctuate throughout the year. This provided management the ability to spread the workload when required.



## **The Current Animal Management Strategy and Local Laws**

Council has in place a number of animal management requirements that residents must comply with if they own (or are in charge of) animals. A Council Order for the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2013-17 will support the enforcement requirements of the on and off lead areas in parks. The controls stipulated in the strategy are in accordance with the prescribed requirements under the Act.

The current strategy regulates the number of cats and dogs that can be kept on a property. This will continue to be enforced through the General Local Laws 2005 and the development of the new Local Laws 2015 once it is completed.

## **Overview of the Services undertaken by Local Laws Unit**

Educational and promotional activities:

- responsible pet ownership
- animal management information
- information on Council's website
- Pet Registration Free Pension Scheme
- signage related to appropriate collection and removal of dog faeces and bag
- parks patrols
- cat and dog trespass
- noise from barking dogs
- leash and leash requirements in parks
- specific responsible pet ownership links on Council's website
- de-sexing and micro-chipping
- trapping and collection of stray and feral cats
- Domestic Animal Businesses (DAB) with relevant Code of Practice
- Bureau of Animal Welfare fact sheets

Compliance activities:

- engagement with pet owners and pets
- enforcement using Infringement Notices
- annual doorknock of non-renewed pet properties
- follow up of notifications from pet welfare agencies of claimed or rehoused pets which are sold within the Municipality
- issuing infringements where non-compliance occurs in parks and other public places
- provision of cat traps to complainants in cases where education and advice has failed to prevent cat trespass
- undertake enforcement proceedings if required
- where unidentified dogs or cats are found wandering collect and send to Council's pound service provider
- complaint investigation

- ensure any magistrates' orders to confine dangerous and menacing are met
- annual inspections of all properties with declared dogs and follow up non-compliance issues
- registration and inspection of all registered DABs
- registration and renewal of registration for dogs and cats
- registration renewal follow up, telephone audit and door knocking of houses
- seizure and impounding of unregistered and/or unidentified dogs and cats
- afterhours service for stray contained dogs.

## 4. KEY STATISTICS AND SUMMARY

### 4.1 Registration and Identification

*The Domestic Animals Act 1994, 68A(2)(c)(v) provides that Council must: outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats - also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f).*

Registration and the requirement to be micro-chipped is a legislative requirement but more importantly, it supports the quick return of pets to their owners. Registration also provides Council with an understanding of the level of pet ownership and allows for the development of relevant services and programs.

Data and key summaries of the performance of the animal management services during the period of the Animal Management Strategy 2008-12 is provided below.

#### **Darebin's estimated pet population**

It is difficult to capture data on the actual ownership population of animals. Pet registration is one indicator of pet ownership and this can be used to estimate likely ownership. In Victoria, it is estimated that only 64% of dogs and 41% of cats are registered with Councils.<sup>1</sup> These figures could then be applied to 2013 registered numbers to calculate the potential increase of registration numbers in Darebin.

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<sup>1</sup> McMurray, R. (2004) Benchmarking Victoria, an all- Council view and comparison. Urban Animal Management Conference Proceedings 2004 (pp69 – 74) Australian Veterinary Association Ltd, NSW

Table 1 Darebin's estimated pet population

	2013 Registration Numbers	Estimated ownership population	Potential increase in number of registrations
Dogs	10894	17021	6127
Cats	5098	7965	2867

Below is also a comparison of registration numbers of neighbouring municipalities which further indicates there may be opportunities to increase dog registrations in Darebin.

Table 2 Figures as of January 2013

	Darebin	Banyule	Moreland	Nillumbik	Whitehorse	Monash	Yarra	State average <sup>2</sup>
Households	58,482	44,937	58,574	19,806	57,207	59,382	33,500	26,640
Dogs	10,894	15,021	11,076	10,623	16,039	13,067	5,091	7,384
Cats	5,098	5,809	5,033	3,325	6,210	5,477	2,598	3,324
Dogs per household	1 in 5	1 in 3	1 in 5	1 in 2	1 in 3	1 in 5	1 in 7	1 in 4
Cats per household	1 in 11	1 in 8	1 in 12	1 in 6	1 in 9	1 in 11	1 in 13	1 in 8

The above table also highlights there are a higher number of dog registrations in Banyule, Nillumbik and Whitehorse and a higher number of cat registrations in Banyule, Nillumbik and Whitehorse. The table also indicates that Darebin needs to do more work to increase registrations for both dogs and cats.

Current education and compliance activities have resulted in a slight to moderate increase in the number of registered pets over the past four years when the Animal Management Strategy 2008-2012 was in place.

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<sup>2</sup> State average statistics provided from the Australian Companion Animal Council Incorporated Document, Contribution of the Pet Care Industry to the Australian Economy – 5th Edition, 2003.

For the 2011-12 financial year, there were 9774 dogs and 4667 cats registered with Council. During the period of the original Animal Management Strategy 2008 – 2012 there was an overall 2.5% decrease in dog registrations and a decrease in cat registrations of 2.2%.

Table 3 Registration numbers for dogs and cats over last four years

ACTUAL ANNUAL REGISTRATIONS	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
CATS	4769	4772	4849	4667
DOGS	9237	9511	11631	9774
TOTALS	14006	14283	16480	14441

Graph 1: Number of registrations for every year, the past four years.



As can be seen from the above graph from 2009 to 2011 there was an increase of 2,394 registrations for dogs. In 2012 the number of registrations dropped by 1,857. Interestingly, the number of cats over the four year period has remained relatively constant.

## 4.2 Nuisance Complaints

*The Domestic Animals Act 1994, 68A(2)(c)(vi) provides that Council must: outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance - also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)*

There are a range of complaints relating to nuisance provisions under the Act. These include:

- excessive noise from barking dogs or yowling cats
- dog aggression and attacks in public places
- fouling of public places by dog faeces
- wildlife predation
- the spread of zoonotic disease
- property damage such as dogs upturning rubbish bins or cats digging up gardens
- the odour caused by cats spraying
- traffic hazards caused by wandering pets
- fights between wandering dogs and cats
- animals trespassing on private property
- the breeding of unwanted animals.

The issue of barking dogs is a matter that requires an ongoing assessment of whether the level of noise is unsatisfactory and the complaint justified and whether or not Council's activities and interventions are suitable to reduce the noise levels so that it is acceptable. In the same way, the issue of cat trespass is affected greatly by the levels of compliance and responsible pet ownership.

Table 4 Community compliance

<b>Infringement Notices by Offence Category</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Dog/cat not wearing ID marker	21	1	1
Dog at large daytime	347	145	290
Dog at large nighttime	97	65	87
Fail to register dog/cat	236	119	162
Fail to renew registration dog/cat	38	17	24
Dog attack - non-serious injury	3	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>570</b>

The above table shows that non-compliance in dogs at large during the day and failing to register a dog/cat consume a considerable amount of resources and officers' time.

Table 5 Figures from McArthurs Municipal Laws Benchmarking Study for Banyule City Council.

Animal Management Services	Darebin Council	Council B	Council C	Council D	Council E	Council F
Pick ups	Dogs-703 Cats-893 Total= 1596	Dogs-618 Cats-600 Total= 1218	Dogs-542 Cats-225 Total= 767	Dogs-665 Cats-438 Total= 1103	Dogs-1100 Cats-100 Total= 1200	Dogs-419 Cats-426 Total= 845
Impounded rates	Dogs-703 Cats-893	Dogs-550 Cats-500	Dogs-143 Cats-160	Dogs-360 Cats-324	Dogs-1200 Cats-900	Dogs-419 Cats-426
Return to owner	Dogs-499 (71%) Cats-43 (5%)	Dogs-235 (38%) Cats-53 (9%)	Dogs-514 (95%) Cats-77 (34%)	Dogs-481 (72%) Cats-23 (5%)	Dogs-594 (54%) Cats-3 (3%)	Dogs-219 (71%) Cats-28 (6%)

The above table is from a recent study by Banyule City Council which benchmarks a number of Council Municipal Laws Services. Darebin's pick-ups, impounded rates and return to owner rates are higher or differ significantly when compared to neighbouring municipalities.

Table 6 Complaints received by Local Laws Unit

Nature of Complaint	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Barking Dogs	250	242	231
Dog Attacks	226	197	286
Dog Roaming	281	275	384
Dog Injured	25	24	35
Dog Collection Pick-up	893	672	824
Excess Animal Permits	135	157	102
Cat Collection (trespass and stray)	438	598	428
Cat Injured	24	43	33
Bird Complaints Noise	54	94	81
Other animal contained	43	39	46
<b>Total complaints</b>	<b>2369</b>	<b>2341</b>	<b>2450</b>

Table 6 above data shows typical complaints received by Council. Some categories of complaints generate more than one contact with Council as part of an ongoing investigation prior to any final action. The most common nuisance complaints received by Council are dog pick up, cat collection, dog roaming and dog attacks.

The category of barking dogs, for example has data representing only 10% of the total contacts relating to each matter. The numbers of complaints regarding barking dogs continues and at just less than 4.5 per week average this is a heavy burden on resources. To undertake proper investigations and a resolution to the issues is time consuming and resource intensive.

As mentioned previously, Council currently places a limit on the number of animals that can reside with any one household. This is to ensure the health and wellbeing of the animals, to minimise any adverse impact on neighbourhood amenity and inappropriate practices such as the hoarding of animals. Council does however consider applications from households that want to keep more than the prescribed number of animals and issues multiple animal permits to suitable residents with appropriate capacity.

Overall community education on responsible pet ownership is a key factor to reducing nuisance complaints and animal collection requests. The Bureau of Animal Welfare operates educational programs and activities on a state-wide basis and Council needs to localise the key messages and work in partnership with state government authorities in delivering these programs.

Strategies to educate and encourage dog and cat owners to confine their dog and cats will assist to minimise nuisance complaints. Key messages could be made available in languages other than English.

Strategies to improve registration and identification rates will also assist to reduce nuisance complaint levels.

Strategies aimed to reduce nuisance complaints have a flow on effect across other areas of animal management including minimisation of harm to wildlife.

### 4.3 Dog Attacks

*The Domestic Animals Act 1994, 68A(2)(c)(iii) provides that Council must: outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals - also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)*

#### Dog Attack Data

Table 6 above shows an overall increase in the number of dog attacks in the last year of the Animal Management Strategy 2008-2012. This is consistent with data relating to nuisance where there may have been a heightened public awareness of dog issues, with attacks and dangerous/restricted breed dogs taking a prominent role within all arms of the information media.

#### **4.4 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs**

*The Domestic Animals Act 1994, 68A(2)(c)(vii) provides that Council must: 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 - also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)*

Council enforces the provisions of the Act through identification and control of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

Council promotes the need for appropriate dog training and management of dogs by those who walk them in public places. This ensures other residents, with or without dogs can enjoy the open spaces. Dog owners who take responsibility for the training and behaviour of their dogs will minimise the likelihood of their dogs being involved in incidents that may negatively impact on their pet's future.

The Act also identifies breeds of dogs that are considered a higher risk to community safety than other breeds of dogs. These dogs are called 'restricted breed dogs' and in September 2011 new state government legislation was introduced in relation to the keeping of these dogs.

Darebin was one of the first Councils to test the legislation at the Supreme Court due to an attack which resulted in the death of another dog.

The Supreme Court made it clear that in order for a dog to fall within the Standard for Restricted Breed Dogs in Victoria there must be a substantial or high level of correspondence between the characteristic of the dog and the criteria specified in the Standard. This case highlights the significant difficulties Councils are encountering implementing the restricted breed dog legislative provisions.

This case set the criteria which will assist Darebin City Council, along with all other Councils in making future assessments in enforcing the Act.

Declared Dangerous and Menacing Dogs and Restricted Breed dogs are currently low incidences within Darebin. In Darebin, there are currently nine declared dogs, one restricted breed, four dangerous and four menacing dogs. A key focus however is to maintain a level of public awareness through the Education/Enforcement programs and providing suitable training for Local Laws Investigations Officers in assessment and identification of breed types.

It is important that these properties are inspected regularly to ensure that requirements of keeping a declared dog are being met. These dogs have potential to cause great harm therefore it is important from a community safety perspective that these animals are kept under conditions prescribed within the Act and regulations.



## 4.5 Overpopulation and High Euthanasia

*The Domestic Animals Act 1994, 68A(2)(c)(iv) provides that Council must: outline programs, services and strategies to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats - also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f)*

### Unwanted Litters

De-sexing is a major factor contributing to a reduction in the unwanted animal population. There is also general agreement that de-sexing will have the following benefits:

- Reduces the burden and cost to the community of having to care for unwanted puppies and kittens in pounds and shelters.
- Pets are less prone to wander, fight and are less likely to get lost or injured.
- Pets are less likely to suffer from anti-social behaviours. They become more affectionate and become better companions.
- Eliminates 'heat' cycles in female cats and their efforts to get outside in search for a mate.

A review of the de-sexing rate of pets for the period 2008 – 2012 shows that animals which are not de-sexed are increasing in comparison to those that are micro-chipped. The reason for this is that in the past, legislation provided the same monetary incentive if pet owners either de-sexed or micro-chipped their pet. Micro chipping was favoured by cat and dog owners as this was cheaper and less invasive than de-sexing. This trend is likely to change with recent changes to the Domestic Animal Act, which no longer makes micro-chipping attract a reduced fee.

From April 2013 with micro-chipping no longer attracting a discounted registration fee, de-sexing of pets should become more attractive to pet owners.

Low figures for de-sexing of pets could also be due to the cultural backgrounds of the pet owners. Subsequently some owners may choose not to register their pet with Council as they face higher registration fees and high costs of de-sexing.

### Lost and/or Unwanted Animals

When animals are collected by Council, they are first scanned for ownership details using microchip scanners. If they are micro-chipped the animals are returned to their owner. If the animals are not micro-chipped or wearing Council identifiable registration tags they are taken to Council's impound facility before being transported to Council's pound service provider where they are then housed.

Part of Council's service also includes the collection of surrendered pets which are no longer wanted either due to age or owners ability to care for the animal.

Impounded dogs and cats are housed at Council's pound service provider and kept for the statutory period of 8 days (14 days for abandoned animals). During the statutory holding period, the pound is required to make every effort to reunite the animal with its owner.

If animals are not claimed within that period they may be rehoused or euthanised. Euthanasia is not the desired outcome for any animal but there is provision for this activity as prescribed in the Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds, due to disease, injury, behaviour, age or unsuitability for sale. It should be noted that there is also an obligation by the organisation to ensure they have taken all necessary care to ensure the animal they are rehousing is not a threat to the community.

In Darebin, statistics collected by the current service provider indicate the percentage of impounded dogs that are euthanised is 16% which is significantly lower than the Victorian average at 34% in 2012.

Dog euthanasia rates are particularly low due to high rates of dogs being reclaimed and rehoused. This has been achieved through more dogs being identified through micro-chipping and/or wearing Council identification tags in recent years. In addition to this, Lost Dogs Home (LDH) shelter has a policy of not releasing any animal without registration. This involves LDH charging for animal registrations on behalf of Council.

In comparison to dogs, the percentage of impounded cats that are euthanised in Darebin is higher than the Victorian average at 73%. The issue of cat overpopulation relates to unowned or partially owned cats which are not de-sexed. People feed semi owned cats and this helps to keep them alive and strong enough to reproduce. The ability of cats to quickly breed contributes to the over-population problem.

## Our Plan

In the first year of the Plan, Council will start collecting relevant data in relation to the number of dogs collected and impounded within the Municipality. The type of information collected for dogs will relate to the following:

- registered and identified
- non registered and unidentified
- surrendered and reasons for
- seized (due to dog attack, restricted breed)
- registered at shelter
- returned to owner
- rehoused
- animals that are subject to euthanasia due to the following:
  - diseased
  - injured
  - behaviour
  - age
  - unsuitable for rehousing

In relation to cats the type of information collected will be as follows:

- registered and identified
- non registered and unidentified
- surrendered and reasons for
- seized (nuisance or stray)
- registered at shelter
- returned to owner

- rehoused
- animals that are subject to euthanasia due to the following:
  - diseased
  - wild, uncontrollable or feral
  - injured
  - behaviour
  - age
  - unsuitable for rehousing

**Third Chance**

Council will also investigate the opportunity to provide a third chance for unclaimed Darebin animals to be rehoused. Council will attempt to give all dogs and cats a third chance by providing rescue groups or foster care organisations the opportunity to have the dogs and cats rehoused after the statutory holding time. Any dog or cat that is unsuitable for rehousing will not be included in the third chance.

**Current Data**

Table 7 Impounded dogs and cats

	2010		2011		2012		State average <sup>3</sup>
Number of dogs impounded	727		697		703		485
Number returned to owner	451	62%	466	67%	499	71%	53%
Number rehoused	85	12%	82	12%	73	10%	13%
Number euthanised	169	23%	130	19%	119	16%	34%
Number of cats impounded	1096		1055		893		269
Number returned to owner	41	3%	36	3%	43	5%	11.5%
Number rehoused	26	2%	79	7%	72	8%	15.5%
Number euthanised	1007	91%	924	88%	762	85%	73%

<sup>3</sup> State average statistics provided from the Australian Companion Animal Council Incorporated Document, Contribution of the Pet Care Industry to the Australian Economy – 5th Edition, 2003.

## 4.6 Domestic Animal Businesses

*The Domestic Animals Act 1994, 68A(2)(c)(ii) provides that Council must: 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- also addresses 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(d),(f)*

Darebin has eight Domestic Animal Businesses (DAB) registered. Council monitors DAB's to ensure all new businesses are registered and that Council works with proprietors to ensure all standards relating to the Act and Code of Practice are met.

The eight DABs in Darebin consist of the following:

- six pet shops
- one dog training establishment
- one boarding establishment

Council audits all businesses at least once a year and there have not been any significant issues with compliance. Scheduled compliance/education activities will continue as well as the adoption of a range of methods to identify new or any previously unknown DAB activities within the municipality.

## 4.7 Training of Authorised Officers

The Domestic Animals Act 1994, 68(A)(2)(b) provides that Council must: *"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"*.

Council is committed to providing an ongoing development program to ensure staff are appropriately trained and able to enforce the requirements of the Act. It is critical that all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work and the necessary authorisations and delegations. All staff have access to the Animal Management Officers internet resource site with their own log in and password access to this site. This allows them access to training opportunities as they become available.

To ensure staff are equipped to respond to the demands of their roles staff training requirements will be reviewed annually. Current and planned training programs provided to staff are listed below.

- Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation
- Certificate IV in Statutory Compliance and Regulation
- Specialised Training for Handling of Dogs and Cats
- Basic Legal Procedures Course
- Court Procedure – Giving evidence and presentation skills
- Council Policies and Business Systems
- Use of Technology
- Code of Conduct
- Fraud and Corruption
- Emotional Intelligence

- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Privacy

There is also a growing community expectation that Council should be playing a greater role in fostering partnerships and supporting community education initiatives concerning pets. There is also an opportunity to offer education in partnership with other organisations.

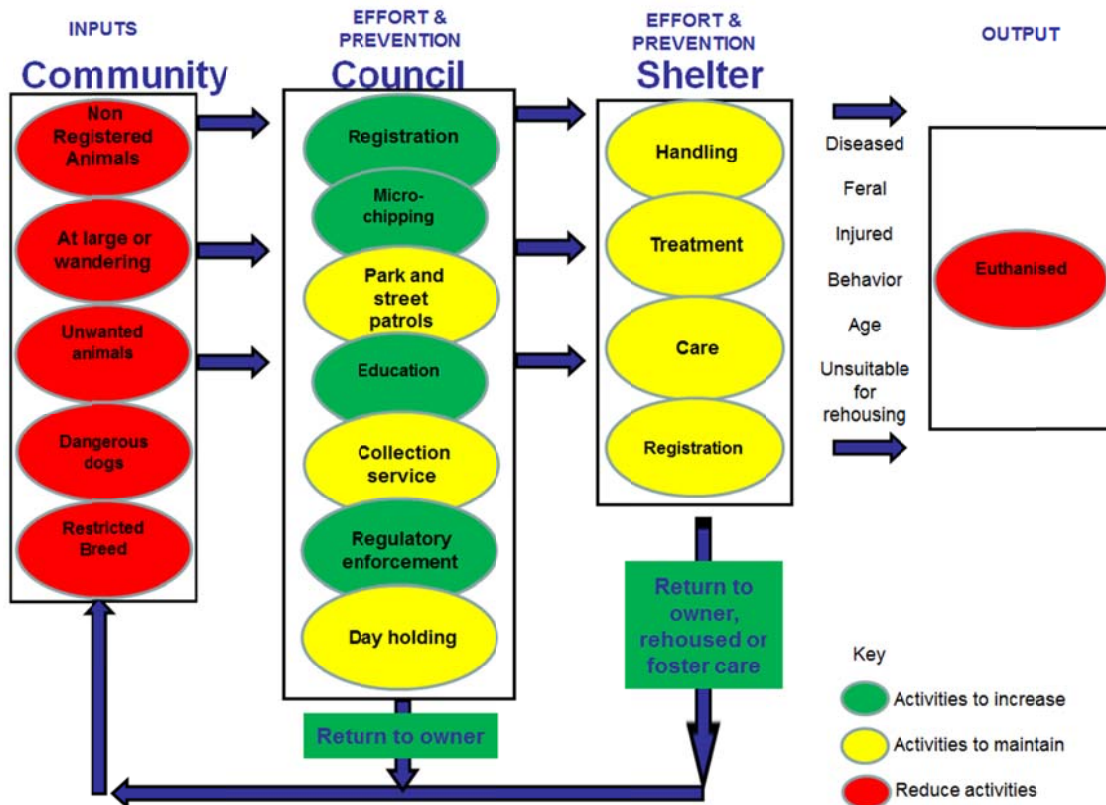
### **Our Plan**

Objective: To ensure staff have the necessary technical and interpersonal skills to carry out their role.

## 5. DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN 2013-17

A key focus of the Plan is to promote responsible pet ownership. The focus will also be to increase activities that will result in increase in registrations and subsequently increase the reclaim rates of impounded dogs with the cooperation of the service providers and involvement of Councils Health & Urban Protection Unit. This in turn will decrease the rates of euthanasia. Below is an illustration of the areas that are a key focus for the Plan.

Figure 1 Illustration of key areas of focus for the Plan



Listed below are the key headings for the actions to address the issues highlighted in this report:

- Training
- Registration and Identification
- Nuisance
- Dog attacks
- Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs
- Over-population and Euthanasia rates
- Domestic Animal Businesses

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Registration and Identification				
Objectives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase the number of registration of dogs and cats each year.</li> <li>Raise awareness and understanding of registration and micro-chipping (MC).</li> </ul>				
Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
1.1 Identification	1.1.1 Council to review pet identification tags and provide the most appropriate through registration process.	Review any new available tags and change if necessary.	Local Laws Unit	Year1
	1.1.2 Council to investigate the viability of introducing Darebin collars and or leads as a value add to registration.	Review suitability and make recommendation through new initiative budget bid. Introduce collars and/or leads if new initiative budget bid approved.	Local Laws Unit	Year 2 Year 3
	1.1.3 Council to review MC program in collaboration with Vets and neighbouring municipalities to create more opportunities for MC.	Increase in the number of Darebin animals that are MC. Have a minimum of 4 events per year.	Local Laws Unit, Vets	Annually
	1.1.4 Advocate to Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to introduce MC vouchers.	Write to Municipal Association of Victoria to investigate potential to introduce MC vouchers.	Local Laws Unit, Municipal Association of Victoria	Year 2

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Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
1.2 Pet profiling at time of purchase	<p>1.2.1 Advocate to State Government on pet ownership license.</p> <p>Council to work with Domestic Animal Businesses (DAB) – Introduce a questionnaire promoting responsible pet ownership and provide advice to customers on the suitability of the type of pet they are buying.</p> <p>Promote opportunities to complete pet ownership licence through media and website.</p>	<p>Write to state government to encourage them to consider introducing Pet Ownership licenses.</p> <p>Questionnaire produced and number of areas where the questionnaire is able to be accessed.</p> <p>A minimum of two promotions to DAB to promote use of pet ownership licenses.</p>	Local Laws Unit, pet shops, Vets, shelters, DAB	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p> <p>Year 3</p>
	<p>1.2.2 Advocate to State Government to make registration, MC and de-sexing mandatory at the time of purchase.</p> <p>Council to investigate the viability of DAB and Vets to act as authorised registration agents.</p>	<p>Write to minister to change legislation to make MC and de-sexing at the time of purchase to be put into the legislation.</p> <p>Enlist Vets and DAB to act as authorised registration agents if appropriate</p>	Local Laws Unit	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p>
	<p>1.2.3 Council to submit budget bid for reduced registration rate for pets obtained from a shelter.</p>	<p>New initiative budget bid</p> <p>Introduce reduced fee if approved</p>	Local Laws Unit	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3</p>
	<p>1.2.4 Council to introduce checklist appropriate for pet owners covering owner's goal and reason for buying pet and environment for housing - apartment vs. house, kids vs. no kids; include responsible pet ownership supporting materials.</p>	<p>Checklist developed</p> <p>Number of areas in which the checklist is accessed for use.</p>	Local Laws Unit	Year 2



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Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
	<p>1.2.5 Council to work in partnership with Real Estate agents and provide information for landlords and tenants on benefits of pets and encourage responsible pet ownership.</p>	<p>Through local Real Estate Agents and relevant real estate peak bodies, develop a combined responsible pet ownership strategy/booklet/DVD.</p>	<p>Education Officer (Budget Bid 2014), Real Estate Agents, relevant peak bodies</p>	<p>Year 3</p>
	<p>1.2.6 Council to develop a new pet owner information pack (to contain information about on-lead and off-lead areas, de-sexing to reduce overpopulation and promote responsible pet ownership). Provide information in different languages and distribute through Council customer service centres, Vets, DAB and Council's pound service provider.</p>	<p>Develop a new pet owner information pack. Send new information pack to all new registered pet owners. Have the new information pack available from Darebin's Customer Service Centres</p>	<p>Local Laws Unit, Customer Service, Communication and Marketing</p>	<p>Year 1</p>
	<p>1.2.7 Introduce alternative communication methods – mail, Community News, Rate Notices, infringement notices, Council displays and social media. Council to continue to provide information on registration, identification and renewal information in new resident kits, Council Newsletters and Council telephone on hold messages.</p>	<p>Number of community messages going out on animal management in various media communications.</p>	<p>Local Laws Unit, Communication and Marketing</p>	<p>Annually</p>

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Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
1.3 Registration	<p>1.3.1 Council to explore more opportunities to raise awareness and understanding of registration and MC databases.</p> <p>Council to provide benefits of registration over and above the benefits that micro-chipping can provide.</p>	<p>Display of relevant brochures and information in customer service centres, website and social media</p> <p>Information provided on Council's website</p> <p>Increase in MC and registration numbers.</p>	Local Laws Unit Communication and Marketing	<p>Year 1</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>1.3.2 Council to explore further incentives to increase registrations. (e.g. first time registration free.</p>	Council to review through new initiative budget process.	Local Laws Unit (Budget Bid 2014)	Year 2
	<p>1.3.3 Council to promote value from registration fees by offering subsidised local services or products from local businesses and explore potential for selling advertising space.</p>	<p>Investigate interest from local businesses to provide subsidised local services and potential for advertising space.</p> <p>Develop a list of businesses willing to offer their services.</p>	Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 3
	<p>1.3.4 Council to use media and website to promote the benefits and value of registration.</p>	Achieve 75% satisfaction rate from registration rate from registered animal owners.	Local Laws Unit, Communication and Marketing	Year1

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Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
	1.3.5 Council to introduce doorknocking of properties of selected areas in the Municipality where there are low numbers of animal registrations.	2,000 properties to be doorknocked Continue process for other years if found to be effective. Council to review through new initiative budget bid process.	Local Laws Unit (Budget bid 2013,2014)	Annually
	1.3.6 Council to consider introducing Council run dog training in parks.	Apply for new initiative budget bid for Council to introduce free dog training in parks for dogs. Introduce free dog training in parks.	Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2015 & 2016), registered trainers, Leisure Services	Year 3 Year4
	1.3.7 Council to increase opportunity for education in parks.	Increase in the number of patrols in parks Number of hours spent on park patrols	Local Laws Unit	Annually
1.4 Pet Expo	1.4.1 Council to host a pet expo and promote registration, MC, trainers, shelters, rescue groups and foster carers.  Council to tap into community run events – make these pet friendly and incorporate free MC.  Council to tap into early training opportunities currently in place with Vets, puppy and kitten pre-schools.	Achieve 85% community satisfaction and awareness in registration, MC rescue groups, shelters and foster carers at each event.  Number of new registrations received at these events.  Number of pets micro-chipped at events.  Apply for new initiative budget bid for Education Officer introducing more community engagement events.  Introduce dog breakfast events in parks.	Local Laws Unit (Budget Bid 2014), Vets, DAB, shelters, foster carers, rescue groups     Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014), Leisure Services)	Year 1  Year 2  Year 2 Year 3

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Animal Nuisance				
Objectives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To raise awareness and educate owners on responsible pet ownership.</li> <li>To reduce the number of animal nuisance complaints that arise in the Municipality.</li> </ul>				
Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
2.1 Animal management services	2.1.1 Council to work with various stakeholders to introduce a companion animal care program for the elderly.  Council to develop promotional material around need for socialisation, enrichment and exercising of pets to prevent boredom.	Apply for new initiative budget bid for Education Officer.  Investigate viability of providing activities to those that are elderly and unable to provide exercise for their pets.  Develop promotional material and include in information pack for new registrations	Local Laws Unit ( Education Officer Budget Bid 2014), Aged Care, Youth Services, Leisure Services)	Year 2
2.2 Maximum animals	2.2.1 Review the current allowable number of animals in line with Darebin's Planning Scheme as part of the General Local Law 2005 review.	Revise and adopt General Local Law 2005	Local Laws Unit,	Years 1 and 2
2.3 Education	2.3.2 Council to attend State Government education sessions in schools and consider providing an extension of this program for target groups.	Attendance at minimum of one education session provided by state government annually.  Write to every Primary school in Darebin offering the service.  Introduce a local education session for a new target audience each year.	Local Laws Unit  Local Laws Unit ( Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 1  Years 2 and onwards
	2.3.3 Council to promote responsible pet ownership through various media and promoting messages in various languages.	Council to apply for new initiative budget bid for responsible pet ownership animated video.	Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 3

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Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
2.4 Dog Droppings in streets, parks and reserves	2.4.1 Council to explore opportunities to review signage for on/off lead parks, identify issues with off lead parks, location and use of bag stations and bins.  Council to consider introducing a fenced dog park in Darebin.	Council to review existing signage in parks and make recommendation for changes.	Local Laws, Leisure Services, Bushland Crew	Year 1
		New initiative budget bid in 2014 if appropriate.		Year 2
		Replace signs as identified.		Year 3
2.5 Cats	2.5.1 Council to review information provided and improve communication on cat nuisance issues and promote responsible pet ownership program.	Promote responsible pet ownership program relating to cats.  Information to be available on website and messages delivered through various communication mediums.	Local Laws Unit  Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 1  Year 2
2.6 Cat Trapping	2.6.1 Cat trapping – de-sex and returning into community – (SA –trap de-sex return).	Write to minister to change the laws in relation to community cats and allowing trap, de-sex and return of cats.	Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 2
2.7 Training	2.7.1 Council to develop relationships with reputable and accredited training service providers and registered DAB.	Promotion of service providers on website and social media.	Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 2
	2.7.2 Council to explore providing discount for dog registration if advanced accredited training levels are obtained.	Apply for new initiative budget bid to introduce discount of pet registration for dogs with approved accredited training levels dependant on budget approval 2015 and 2016.  Number of owners undertaking dog training.	Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014), registered trainers	Year 3  Year4
	2.7.3 Council could introduce trick based behavioural training programs to reinforce obedience in dogs and promote referral to further training opportunities.	Apply for new initiative budget bid for Education Officer.  Introduce trick based behavioural training at community events to reinforce obedience.  Number of owners undertaking dog training.	Local Laws Unit (Local Laws Unit) (Budget Bid 2014)  Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014), registered trainers	Year 1  Year 2

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Dog Attacks and Declared Dogs				
Objective: to reduce the incidence of dog attacks through education				
Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
3.1 Dog Attacks	<p>3.1.1 Council to introduce a dog seminar– using hospital data on dog bite injuries to profile target audience and identify trends.</p> <p>Council, Vets and local hospital emergency departments to work in partnership to increase reporting of dog incidents and injuries.</p>	<p>Apply for new initiative budget bid for Education Officer in 2014.</p> <p>Develop a program for a dog seminar.</p> <p>Number of attendees at information session.</p>	<p>Council (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014), Vets, local hospitals</p>	<p>Year 2</p> <p>Year 3 and 4</p>
	<p>3.1.2 Development of an information kit for owners of declared dogs making them aware of their obligations under the Act regarding identification and keeping those dogs by providing them with relevant section of the Act, brochures and fact sheets.</p>	<p>Develop an information kit for dog owners of declared dogs.</p> <p>Provide information pack to all new dog owners of declared dogs.</p> <p>Decrease the number of dog injuries to humans and other animals over four years.</p>	<p>Council (Local Laws Unit)</p>	<p>Year 1</p>

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Overpopulation and euthanasia				
Objective:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce euthanasia rates up to 10% for dogs and up to 75% for cats within 4 years.</li> <li>• To decrease the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted dogs and cats.</li> </ul>				
Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
4.1 Reduce euthanasia rates	4.1.1 Pound service provider to advise Council when owners have not collected their pet within the statutory holding period. Council Officer to visit the property (if resident still lives in Darebin) to encourage the collection of their pet. Where this is not possible Council to put the pet in third chance process.	Council to attend Animal Welfare of Queensland, Getting to zero – conference in September (depending on approval from People and Development Process).	Local Laws Unit	Year 1
	4.1.2 To increase the percentage of unclaimed dogs returned to owner or rehoused to 90%	90% of unclaimed dogs are saved		Year 4
	4.1.3 To increase the percentage of unclaimed cats returned to owner or rehoused to 25%	25% of unclaimed cats are saved		Year 4
4.2 De-sexing	4.2.1 Council to explore options for low cost juvenile de-sexing and to consider options through budget process.	Investigate feasibility for a suitable low cost de-sexing program for Darebin residents.	Local Laws Unit, Vets	Year 1
		Apply for new initiative budget bid in 2015. Provide low cost de-sexing program for Darebin residents. Increase number of de-sexed pets in Darebin.		Year 2 Year 3
	4.2.2 Council to advocate and support Domestic Animal Businesses that assist shelter dogs and cats to rehouse pets.	Write to DAB and advocate support for rehousing abandoned or surrendered animals.	Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 3

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Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
4.3 Abandoned pets due to renters	4.3.1 Council and Real Estate agents to work in partnership and promote pet friendly housing opportunities.	Through local Real Estate Agents and relevant real estate peak bodies, develop a best practice rental agreements supporting responsible pet ownership. Number of owners that use the developed rental agreements.	Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 3 Year 3 & 4
4.4 Dogs wandering /surrendered animals	4.4.1 Council to investigate opportunities for pets to be transported home from the pound service provider and applicable costs.	Identify feasibility and costs associated with transporting pets home from Council's pound service provider. Number of residents having their pets returned through this service.	Local Laws Unit, shelter	Year 1
	4.4.2 Animal surrendered to Council (apart from those involved in dog attacks or deemed unsuitable) the owner will be requested to hold the animal for 48 hours while rescue groups or foster care organisations attempt to rehouse the animal.	Develop relationships with dog and cat foster care and rescue groups and establish written 84Y agreements to help assist in re-housing of surrendered Darebin animals. Write to local Vets and rescue groups inviting interested parties to form 84Y agreements under the Act. Annual review agreements. Record animals offered to rescue groups and advertise. Provide guidance and assistance to foster carers where necessary. If inconsistencies are identified with implementation write to State Government with recommendations of improvements.	Local Laws Unit, shelter, rescue groups,	Year 1
4.5 Lost and found register and effective marketing of lost animals	4.5.1 Council to create lost and found animals registered using social media and Council's website. Increase media profile, website and advertising.	Create online lost and found interactive facebook page. Customer Service Centres to access online database for residents and provide noticeboards displaying lost pets.	Local Laws, Customer Service Centres, Communication and Marketing Local Laws Unit (Education Officer Budget Bid 2014)	Year 1 Year 2



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Issue / Concern	Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
4.6 Third chance for animals to be rehoused.	<p>4.6.1 Investigate the feasibility for Council to provide third chance for Darebin animals.</p> <p>Council to be offered third chance for rehousing Darebin dogs and cats after the statutory holding time.</p> <p>Council to provide 24-48 hours for an approved rescue group to rehouse animals.</p> <p>Council to consider financial incentive to decrease the number of animals euthanised.</p> <p>Council to set target to significantly reduce kill rate.</p>	<p>Provide a third chance for unclaimed animals to be rehoused through rescue groups and foster care.</p> <p>Council to provide monthly statistics to public to show number of animals impounded, reclaimed, adopted, and transferred to rescue groups and euthanised.</p> <p>Introduce requirements to include reasons for euthanasia.</p> <p>Details of contracts to be on public record.</p>	Local Laws Unit, shelter, Vets, rescue groups	Year 1
4.7 External Reference Group	An External Reference Group will be established and meet 3 times a year throughout the life of the Plan.	To provide advice to Council in relation to domestic animal management practices.	Local Laws Unit, shelter, Vets, rescue groups, residents	Year 1 - 4

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Training			
Objective: To ensure staff have the necessary experience with appropriate technical and interpersonal skills to carry out their role.			
Activity	Outcome	Resources	Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1.1 Identify minimum training requirements for all Local Laws staff by consultation with management and staff including Certificate IV in Government and Animal Control.</li> </ul>	<p>Training to be identified and incorporated into the officers Annual Development and Performance Plan.</p> <p>Completion of training at end of June each year.</p>	Local Laws Unit, People and Development	Annually
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1.2 Offer at least one opportunity for additional training each year in the areas of prosecutions training, conflict management, communication / education technique.</li> </ul>	<p>Staff attendance of at least one training opportunity per year.</p> <p>Provide ongoing training and refresher training as required.</p>	Local Laws Unit, People and Development	Annually
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1.3 In consultation with management and staff, identify opportunities for Local Laws Officers to be actively involved in providing input into current and future animal management practices.</li> </ul>	Attendance of all relevant seminars provided by Bureau of Animal Welfare.	Local Laws Unit, People and Development	Annually

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**Monitoring and Review**

- Council will review the Domestic Animal Management Plan in years 1 to 3 to ensure actions and priorities are still relevant and can be completed within available resources.
- In year 4 Council will undertake a major review of the Plan.

Planned activity	Was it completed?	Reasons for non-completion or cancellation	Recommended changes to this activity	Comments arising from unsuccessful activity	Objectives met?	Level of Success?	Date for Review