

# Annual review of Councils Animal Management Strategy (Domestic Animals Plan)

## Introduction and how to make a submission

Darebin Council's annual review of the Animal Management Strategy has resulted in identifying the following issues for further review and consultation:

- A revision of the on lead/off lead areas in All Nations Park, Darebin Parklands and MacDonnell park
- Increased buffer zones for animal enclosures
- Non introduction of mandatory cat de-sexing

We have received many submissions regarding these issues over the last year.

The following proposals have been developed to resolve the identified issues. We seek your feedback and comments on these proposals and will also consider submissions received over the past 12 months in the final recommendation to Council regarding these issues.

All submissions received by 18 July 2008 will be considered by Council.

**All submissions should be provided in writing to:  
Animal Management Strategy , City of Darebin, PO Box 91, Preston 3072;  
or by email to Council at [mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au](mailto:mailbox@darebin.vic.gov.au) or by contacting  
Council on 8470 8529.**

Please note that any submissions which have been received by Council over the past 12 months will be considered as part of this review.

## Proposed changes to Darebin's Animal Management Strategy

### 1. Increased buffer zone required for Animal Enclosures.

The current Animal Management Strategy sets some requirements relating to the number of animals which can be kept in Darebin. It also has some information around appropriate enclosures for birds and poultry throughout the municipality. The aim of amending this requirement is to ensure that any noise and odor issues which may arise are minimized, while also protecting the rights of residents to maintain an appropriate number of these animals if they choose.

The current Animal Management Strategy sets out the following requirements for animal enclosures within the municipality, they must be

- of a design approved by Council
- adequately drained
- not less than eight metres from the frontage of the land
- not less than two metres from another street alignment not being the frontage
- not less than three metres from any dwelling on the land of another property.



City of

DAREBIN

The proposal will amend these requirements to include:

- maintain the number of animals which are able to be kept
- determine guidelines for what is considered reasonable for an animal shelter including:
  - height of a shelter not exceeding 2 metres
  - a distance of at least 1.5 metres from the boundary of an adjoining premises
  - a distance of at least 10 metres from any dwelling whether on the same or adjoining premises
  - the shelter must be consistent with any guidelines or code of practice which exists in Victoria relating the breed or type on animal being kept
  - Any Planning Act requirements will override any requirements of Councils Animal Management Strategy

## **2. Non introduction of Mandatory Cat De-sexing**

Stray and feral cat populations have been an issue for Council for a number of years. Over the past twelve months, Councils Animal Control Officers have impounded 1065 cats with only 103 of these cats being released. Only 6% of the cats which were impounded by Council were registered animals, these registered animals were returned to their owner.

Over the past twelve months Council Officers have received a number of letters from organisation including The Cat Crisis Coalition, The Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Lost Dogs Home as well as some correspondence from interested residents.

This correspondence advocates that mandatory cat desexing will greatly reduce the number of stray, feral and unwanted cats which exist within the municipality, in turn reducing the numbers of cats euthanased.

Cardinia, Mornington Peninsula, Greater Shepparton, LaTrobe and Wangaratta Councils have so far introduced Mandatory Cat de-sexing.

Council currently has around 5000 registered cats throughout the municipality and 94% of the cats registered with Council are already de-sexed. It is estimated that this registered population of cats only relates to less than a quarter of the cats which exist in the municipality. This means that the vast majority of cats which are not de-sexed are also not registered with Council and as such Council Officers have little knowledge of their whereabouts

Other correspondence has also been received by Council from the Australian Veterinarian Association advocating that “thinking the problem of stray cats and dogs will go away by legislating compulsory de-sexing of the family pet is naïve and will have long term negative consequences for the quality of family pets”<sup>1</sup>

Even if Council were to enact compulsory cat de-sexing the Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act provides a number of exemptions for cat owners including Vet advice, membership to certain organizations or breeding stock.

---

<sup>1</sup> Australian Veterinary Association, Media Release, Thursday 8 September 2005

As previously stated less than 6% of registered cats are currently not de-sexed. It is estimated that of this at least half would be exempt from any Council requirements. This requirement would therefore place this burden on 3% of otherwise responsible current cat owners (only 150 cats), and affect none of the feral or unregistered cat population.

This weight of numbers indicates that introducing compulsory cat desexing will have negligible effect on the high number of unregistered animals. An unintended consequence is that it may also provide incentive for cat owners who do not agree with compulsory cat de-sexing to simply not register their animal.

Council currently supports responsible pet ownership which advocates:

- Containing your cat to your own property
- Advocating and facilitating (through a voucher system) de-sexing of cats
- Trapping of stray and feral populations of cats
- Educating owners to not feed stray cats, and either taking responsibility for them as a pet or contacting Council to help with the issue

This is consistent with the State Governments “Who’s for Cats” campaign administered by the Department of Primary Industries, which aims to create a reasonable and effective strategy for managing the feral & stray cat population.

It is proposed that Council continue to advocate responsible pet ownership, including the strategies outlined in the “Who’s for Cats” campaign (see attached). It is not proposed to extend this into requiring all cats registered with Council be de-sexed for the reasons outlined.

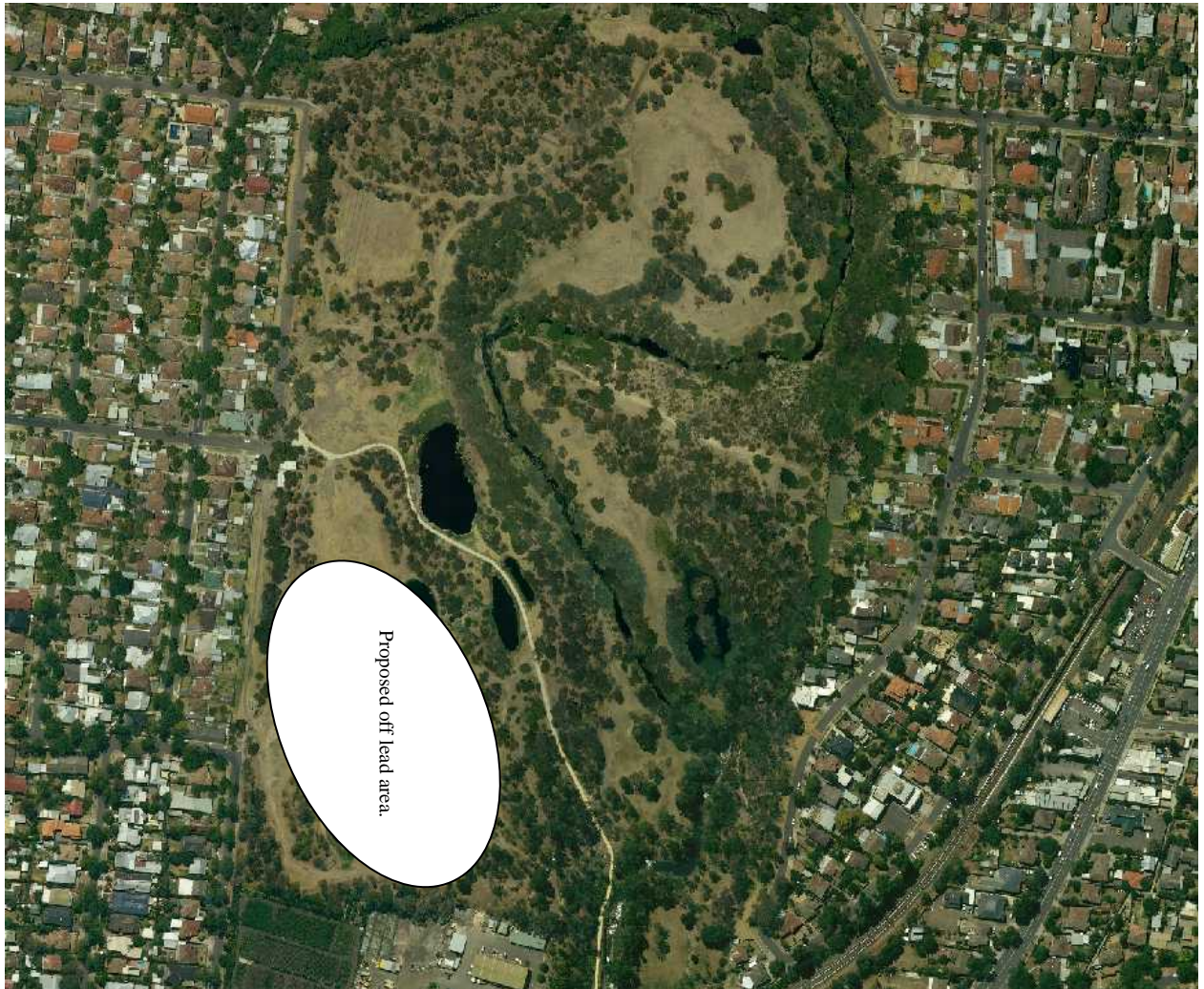
### 3. All Nations Park Proposed On/Off Dog Exercise Areas



The current signed off lead area is shown on the above plan in bold lines on the northern boundary which runs along Brickworks Lane. Currently this off lead area is restricted to the hours of 6-9 am and 6-9 pm daily. At other times the park is an on lead park for all areas.

The proposal is that this area be retained as an off lead area 24 hours per day. This is in consideration of the few incidents which have been reported to Council regarding it's off lead status and also it's very high patronage. Officer inspections have shown that for the most part dog owners are trying to do the right thing with their main issue being that the time restrictions prove difficult to meet for working people. Dog walkers often comprise the largest user group in this park.

#### 4. Darebin Parklands Proposed On/Off Dog Exercise Areas



Darebin Parklands currently has a number of official and non-official off lead areas throughout the parklands area. The park itself is managed on the ground by the Darebin Parklands Association this is due to the fact that the area straddles two Council areas (Banyule & Darebin) with the Banyule side of the park currently being an on lead area.

Council has recently drafted a Masterplan for this park which sets out the future objectives for this park, this masterplan identifies the need to effectively manage off lead dogs within the park to avoid conflict with other users. Recent on ground experience has also shown that there has been a significant increase in the number of off lead dogs in the park, related issues (such as dog rushes) and also more non compliance with the current off lead areas.

In order to better balance these uses, a new off lead area is proposed for the parklands which takes in the south west corner of the park. This area provides a large off lead area and is placed in an area where potential conflicts with other uses of the park are minimized. This is explored in more details in the Darebin Parklands Masterplan Document, available for download on Councils web site, [www.darebin.vic.gov.au](http://www.darebin.vic.gov.au).

## 5. MacDonnell Park Proposed On/Off Dog Exercise Areas



MacDonnell Park has up until two years ago been provided as an off lead area. This provision was removed at the last review of the Animal Management Strategy due to some requests from the sporting club regarding faeces being left on the football ground prior to organized sporting events. While it is proposed that dogs continue to be banned off lead from the sporting ovals it is proposed that the significant amount of space which exists around the sporting ovals at MacDonnell Park be provided as off lead areas. As in all other areas of Darebin a requirement will remain on all animal owners that they pick up after their animals.

### Comments and suggestions

Your comments and suggestions regarding these issues and proposals are welcome. All submissions received by July 18 will be considered by Council in the Animal Management Strategy Review. The introduction of this document provides addresses and contact points to submit your submission.