

2026-2029

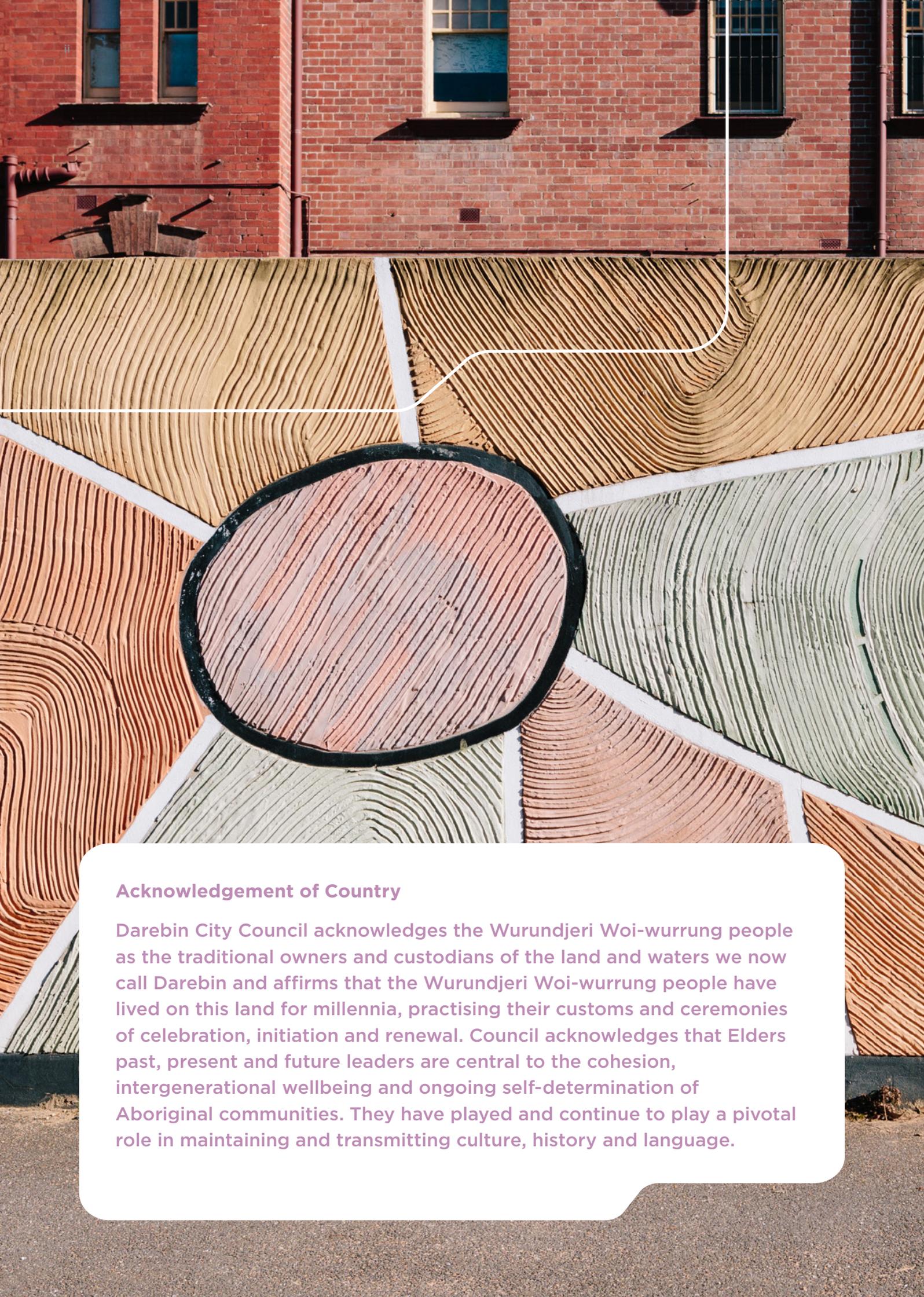


DAREBIN COUNCIL

Domestic Animal Management Plan



the place
to live



Acknowledgement of Country

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and affirms that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practising their customs and ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. Council acknowledges that Elders past, present and future leaders are central to the cohesion, intergenerational wellbeing and ongoing self-determination of Aboriginal communities. They have played and continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining and transmitting culture, history and language.

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Executive summary

Overview

Victorian Councils must complete a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every four years, as outlined in the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. Darebin Council undertook a comprehensive community engagement program in mid-2025 to identify community need and priorities regarding dog and cat management. Approximately 2144 people who live, work, or visit the City of Darebin provided feedback.

Key findings

Community feedback highlighted a need for Council to address dog and owner behaviour in public spaces, as well as addressing cat nuisance behaviours - with 70% of participants supporting the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew. Mandatory desexing for cats and dogs (excluding registered breeders) was also largely supported (86%).

Community feedback also highlighted a need for improved education and communication, infrastructure and maintenance, enforcement of regulations and Council officer presence in parks and open spaces, off-leash areas, and environmentally sensitive areas.



70%
of participants supporting
the introduction of a
24-hour cat curfew

Context and current situation

In mid 2025, there were 9912 dogs and 4950 cats registered with Darebin Council, with 18 dogs registered as menacing or dangerous.

Of particular note for the last DAMP period (between 2021/22 and 2024/25):

- the number of dogs impounded decreased by 4%, with fewer dogs reclaimed from Council's pound (dropping from 69% to 60%)
- for cats, impoundments increased by 10%, but fewer were reclaimed or rehomed, potentially linked to an increase in targeted (unowned) cat trapping programs.
- during this time, transfers to rescue organisations grew substantially, rising from 4% to 23%, attributed to a collaborative approach to rehabilitation and rehoming.
- Darebin City Council recorded a 10% increase in euthanasia rates for both dogs and cats compared to the previous reporting period. This increase is primarily attributed to a rise in behavioural issues among dogs and cats, targeted cat-trapping activities undertaken in response to the growing population of unowned and feral cats within the municipality, and a decline in adoption and reclaim rates, which has reduced opportunities for animals to be rehomed or returned to their owners.

Our Actions

Key actions for the DAMP 2026-2029 address 9 key themes, with key activities including (but not limited to):

Training of Authorised Officers

Exploring opportunities for ongoing training, development and health and safety practices in partnership with the Merri-bek City Council and City of Whittlesea.

Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation

Reviewing and improve dog park/off-leash area maps, implementing desexing programs when grants/funding available, exploring opportunities for the dissemination of pet ownership information.

Programs to address overpopulation rates and any high euthanasia rates

Implementing a mandatory desexing requirement for cats, exploring the feasibility for dogs and review of Council's cat trapping program.

Registration and identification

Review Council's registration portal and fee structure and distribute registration forms and easy access QR codes to Domestic Animal Businesses and community sites.

Nuisance

Explore feasibility of introducing of cat and dog exclusion zones and explore feasibility of introducing a 24-hour cat curfew.

Dog attacks

Undertake a park signage audit and perform targeted patrols in hot spot locations.

Dangerous menacing and restricted breed dogs

Establish a dog control panel and Introduce Animal Management Plans (AMAs) for dogs and cats who are found to regularly offend.

Domestic Animal Businesses

Conduct audits of all Domestic Animal Businesses and Act promptly to address matters of non-compliance.

wat djerring Animal Facility

Work with the wat djerring Animal Facility to assist its delivery of its objectives to achieve the best outcomes possible for the animals in our care, reunite every animal possible with their owners or find them loving new homes, and reduce the current euthanasia rates and hold an open day/community event at the wat djerring Animal Facility.

1

Introduction and Context



1.1

Purpose of Domestic Animal Management Plan

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) requires Councils in Victoria to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP), every four years.

The DAMP must outline Council services, programs and policies established to address the administration of the Act, and management of cat and dog issues in their community. Councils must review their DAMPs annually and publish an evaluation of the implementation of the past year's actions in their Annual Report.

DAMPs must outline strategies to:

- ensure that people comply with the Act, regulations, and any related legislation.
- minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.
- address overpopulation and high euthanasia rates for cats and dogs.
- encourage the registration and identification of cats and dogs.
- minimise the potential for cats and dogs to create a nuisance.
- effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs within the municipality and ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulation.
- provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district, to determine the need for modification or introduction of further orders or local laws.
- determine any other matters relating to the management of cats and dogs within the municipality that require Council exploration
- provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy, or review outlined within the plan.

The benefits of pet ownership for people's health and wellbeing are well established. Whilst DAMPs are concerned primarily with the management of cats and dogs within the community, it is important to note that pet ownership has a range of positive outcomes for the ongoing physical and mental health of community members, including:

- preventing loneliness
- motivating people to exercise regularly
- creating opportunities to meet people and make new friends
- teaching responsibility and giving people a sense of purpose
- aiding people with additional needs eg. assistance or pet therapy animals (the rights of assistant animal users are covered under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*).



Pets are often viewed as extended members of the family and can provide great companionship, affection, and joy.

1.2

Process applied in developing the plan

Darebin Council's DAMP was developed through a sector-leading approach in partnership with two neighbouring Councils, Merri-bek and Whittlesea.

An inter-organisational working group was developed to encourage partnerships and lead best practice. The development of the DAMP was driven by the working group and through four specific stages.

Stage 1:

Background Research and Analysis

A review of the local government area; relevant state and local policies; review of Council's current DAMP; emerging issues in domestic animal management; and current animal management statistics.

Stage 2:

Community Consultation

A comprehensive community engagement program was delivered to encourage the community to have their say on domestic animal management issues. Approximately 2144 people who live, work, or visit the City of Darebin provided feedback. Feedback was gathered through five methods: a detailed online survey which was available through a dedicated project webpage; a poll, community pop-ups; direct emails and telephone and in-person interviews with key stakeholders.

The feedback received from community members and key stakeholders has been used to inform the priorities and actions outlined in the DAMP 2026-2029. A full engagement report which outlines the community feedback is also available.

The following provides a snapshot of the online community engagement findings:

How pets come into your life

- adopted from a shelter **(55.6%)**
- bought from a breeder **(37.6%)**
- took in a stray **(6.8%)**

Community attitudes to pets

- **92.5%** strongly agreed that pets provide comfort and support to many people in the community
- **91.8%** strongly agreed that my/our pets are an important part of the family
- **89.8%** strongly agreed that my/our pet gives me/us great comfort and support
- **51%** strongly agreed that I/we exercise more because I/we have a dog
- **44.8%** strongly agreed that I/we talk to more people in the neighbourhood because I/we have a dog

ONLINE SURVEY	8 COMMUNITY POP-UPS	KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	DIRECT EMAILS	QUICK POLL
879 completed	114 participants	11 key stakeholders	4 emails	1136 responses

Cat curfew

The introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew was supported by 70.1% of participants.

When asked if they had noticed changes in their neighbourhood since the night-time cat curfew was introduced in 2021:

- **54.4%** said 'no'
- **21.1%** said 'yes'
- **24.5%** said 'I did not know about the curfew'

Mandatory desexing support

When asked about the introduction of a mandatory desexing requirement for cats and dogs (where owner is not a registered breeder):

- **65.6%** strongly supported this proposal
- **21.6%** somewhat supported this proposal and have concerns
- **7.1%** somewhat opposed the proposal and have concerns
- **4.3%** strongly opposed the proposal

The top three behaviours participants noticed about dogs when out and about in the local area were:

- dogs sitting next to their owners at outdoor cafes
- dog poo left on the ground
- dogs off-leash when they shouldn't be

The top three behaviours participants noticed about cats when out and about in the local area were:

- cats in the streets at night
- cats kept inside houses during the day/night
- cats preying on wildlife

The top three services indicated by participants that Council should provide for the community were:

- low-cost cat desexing programs
- dog poo bags at parks where people walk their dogs
- more off-leash areas

The top three perceived barriers to registering a cat or dog:

- they might not know they have to register their pet
- not sure/don't know
- too young to be registered

The top three topics that need more promotion within the general community were:

- responsibilities of dog owners when walking/exercising their dog
- information regarding cat confinement/cat curfew
- what 'effective control' of a dog means

Participants favoured smaller neighbourhood-based pet events throughout the year (58.1%), compared to no pet events at all (25.9%) or large annual pet events (16.3%).

Stage 3:

Collaborative Council planning

Council officers have analysed community feedback to determine the priorities and actions for the DAMP 2026-2029, including participating in a joint planning session with Merri-bek and Whittlesea Councils to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Stage 4:

Public exhibition

To finalise the DAMP and ensure that community feedback is captured on the draft Plan, a formal public exhibition period was held November – December 2025.

1.3

Demographic Profile of Council

The City of Darebin is located in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, about 5km from the Central Business District (CBD). It covers approximately 54 square kilometres and includes the following suburbs:

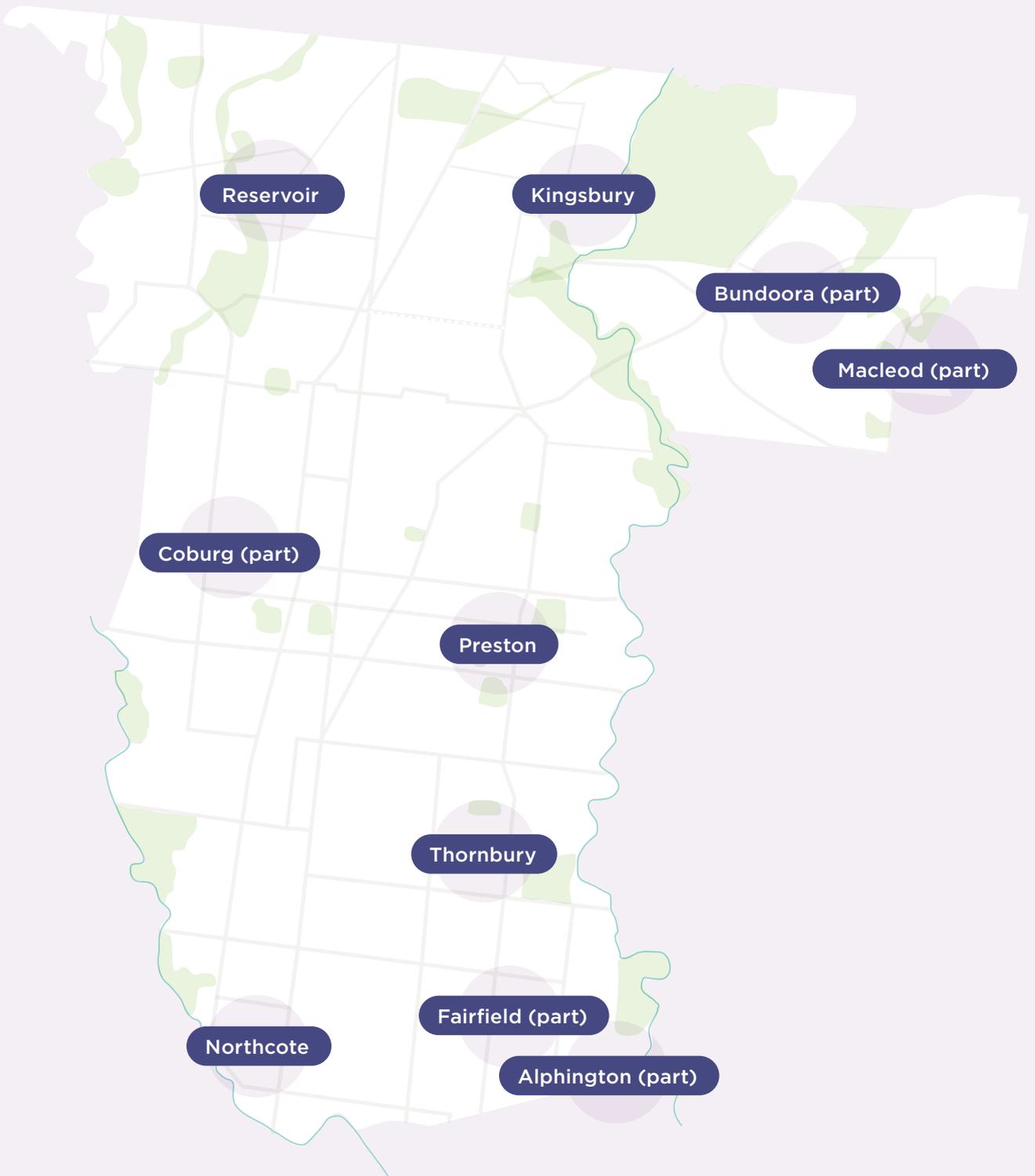


Figure 1: Map of the City of Darebin Municipality



The community has a lower proportion of children (aged under 18) and a lower proportion of persons aged 60 or older than Greater Melbourne. The **largest age group** being **35-49 years** of age.

32% 

of residents speaking a language other than English at home

Darebin is a multicultural municipality. The most common languages, other than English, are Greek, Italian, Mandarin, Arabic and Vietnamese.

1,444 

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in **2021**

making up **1%** of the population.

1.4

Context and current situation

The City Safety Unit is responsible for all animal management functions and services at Darebin Council.

Darebin's animal management services are managed in-house with the provision of an animal pound, the wat djerring Animal Facility, managed by Whittlesea Council.

The purpose of Darebin Council's animal management service is to:

- implement Council's responsibilities under the Act and the (add Darebin) Community Amenity Local Law 2025
- promote the welfare of cats, dogs, and other animals
- inform and educate the community about responsible pet ownership and the needs of companion animals
- respond to issues raised by the community about nuisance animals e.g. barking dogs
- provide programs and services to support pet owners, such as subsidised programs, education campaigns, and park patrols
- provide animal welfare services in partnership with Whittlesea Council via the wat djerring Animal Facility.

Council provides a wide range of educational, promotional and compliance activities. These include:

- providing print and online information on Council animal services
- engaging with people and their pets
- providing subsidised pet desexing programs and other veterinary services (subject to external grant funding)
- developing collaborative partnerships with animal rescue organisations
- investigating animal complaints
- patrolling parks



1.5

Domestic Animal Statistics

A high-level summary of the current population and service numbers for domestic animals in Darebin is outlined in Table 2.

PROGRAM/SERVICE	SERVICE LEVEL
Identification & Registration	9912 dogs 4950 cats
Registration renewals	Annual activity
Domestic animal complaints	Actioned within 1-5 business days
Dangerous Dogs complaints	Immediate response for in progress incidents
Park patrols	Regular as required
wat djerring Animal Facility	Monday 10am - 4pm Tuesday 12 - 6.30pm Wednesday 10am - 4pm Thursday 12 - 6.30pm Friday 10am - 4pm Saturday 11am - 3pm Sunday - Closed
Animals reclaimed	190
Animals rehomed	197
Animals euthanised	249
Declared dogs	18
Registered domestic animal businesses	Eleven in total. Five pet shops, four boarding establishments, 1 animal training establishment and one breeding establishment.
Microchipping and/or desexing programs	When funding/grants are available
School/community group information sessions	As opportunity arises
After hours emergency service	5pm - 8am

Table 2: Current population and service numbers for domestic animals

2

Training of authorised officers

In order to deliver animal management services that meet the requirements of the Act to the level that the community expects, it is crucial to ensure that all authorised officers are appropriately trained through participation in a robust training program.



2.1

Context and Current Situation

Darebin's Local Laws and Animal Management team members are all authorised officers.

It is a requirement that all authorised officers have, at minimum, Cert IV in Animal Regulation & Management and Certificate IV in Government Investigations (or worked within the industry more than 4 years) and undertake all Council required training, outlined in Table 3.

Training for all authorised officers is delivered in accordance with the business unit's work plan, as well as in response to identified training needs and required refreshers. Unit plans are reviewed and updated regularly, with responsibility for ensuring completion of nominated training shared between each officer and their supervisor.

PLANNED TRAINING (2026-2029)	EXPECTED TIMEFRAME
OH&S <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dealing with aggressive customers Working alone 	2 yearly
Industry Training	2 yearly
Animal handling & assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prosecutions Statement taking Evidence gathering 	As required
Restricted Breed Dog Identification	As required
Council e-learning opportunities	As required
Customer service and conflict management	As required
Cert IV in Animal Regulation & Management and Certificate IV in Government Investigations (Dual certification)	As required
Cert IV in Companion Animal Services	As required
Training on handling pets in an emergency	As required
Australian Institute of Animal Management	As opportunity arises
Animal Welfare Victoria seminars	As opportunity arises

Table 3: Planned training of Authorised Officers for 2026-2029

2.2

Our Plan

Table 4: Training of Authorised Officers outlines the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 2.

Objective 1: Ensure animal management officers have the skills necessary to support the community and effectively perform their regulatory role

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Explore opportunities for ongoing training, development and health and safety practices in partnership with the Merri-bek City Council and City of Whittlesea	Ongoing	Number of events/ training programs undertaken
Review standard induction process	2026	Completion of review
Provide refresher training for Authorised Officers	Annually	Annual completion of training
Review OHS procedures and use of personal protective equipment	2026	Completion of review
Explore training opportunities for animal emergency response	2026	Implementation of training

Table 4: Training of Authorised Officers

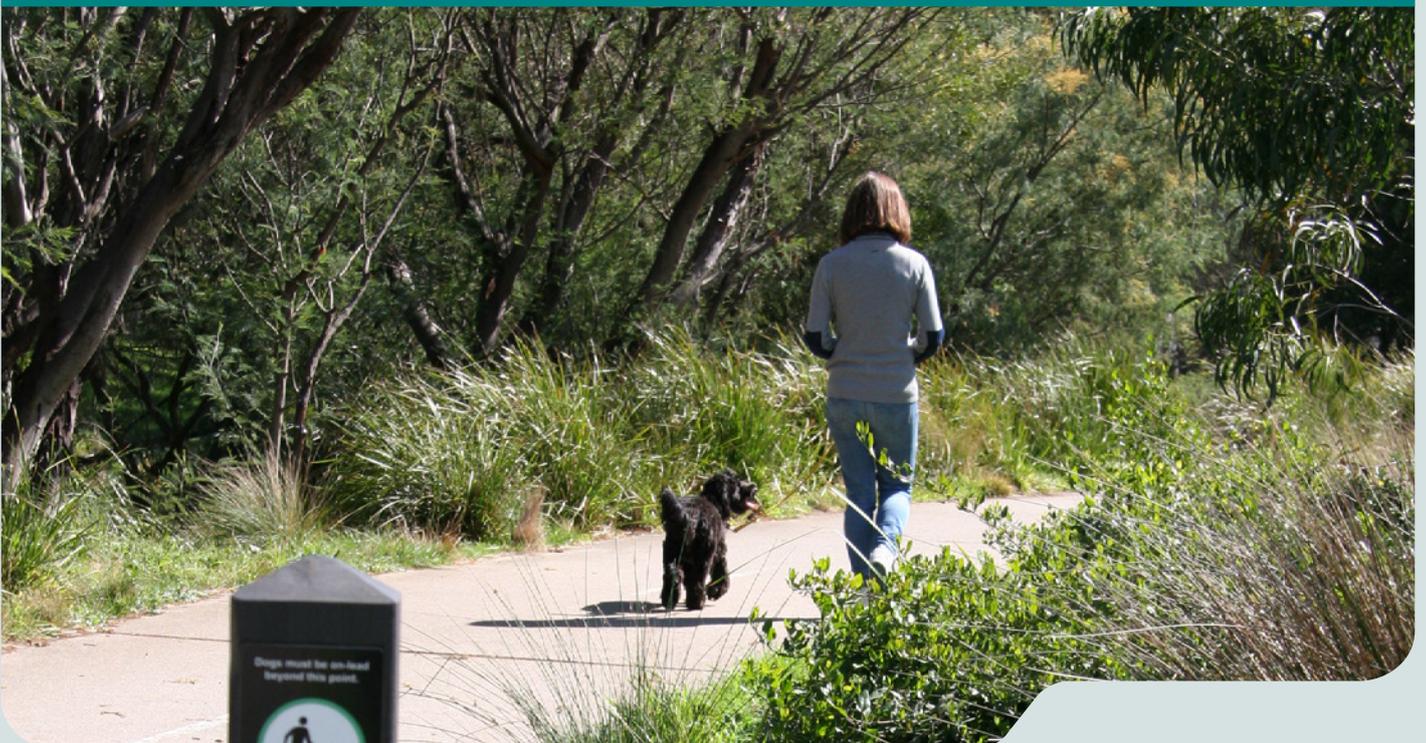


3

Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation

Responsible pet ownership was a key theme that emerged from the community consultation. There was a strong desire for community education topics such as responsibilities of dog owners when walking or exercising their dog, information about what 'effective control' of a dog means and information regarding cat

confinement and the curfew. Many key stakeholders were keen to partner with Council to help deliver education programs on these topics as well as others, including domestic animals and wildlife, cat, and dog behaviour, how to help injured animals, microchipping and desexing.



3.1

Context and Current Situation

Council works to educate the community about responsible pet ownership and has several initiatives that aim to reduce the number of dog attacks, increase the proportion of dogs and cats registered and microchipped and reduce euthanasia rates at the wat djerring Animal Facility. Council's initiatives include:

- a lost and found Facebook page that helps to reunite owners with their pets - Darebin Lost Animals.
- partnering with rescue organisations to assist with animal rehabilitation and rehoming.
- educating the community about responsible pet ownership, including the benefits of desexing, registration and microchipping.
- temporary accommodation of residents' pets to support family violence victims or survivors in an emergency or crisis at the wat djerring Animal Facility

Desexing partnerships

In partnership with Animal Welfare Victoria, Darebin Council received a grant in 2024 to offer free desexing for community cats. The pilot program was implemented to target cats who were not traditionally owned, but were being cared for by a household (or several households) by way of receiving shelter, food, or water. The program aim was to promote and encourage responsible cat ownership whilst also reducing the population of stray cats within the City of Darebin. Delivered via the wat djerring Animal Facility, cats included in the program were desexed for free, and also vaccinated, microchipped, treated for parasites (flea and worm) and registered with Council.

Animal rescue partnerships

Council and Council's animal pound provider, the wat djerring Animal Facility have developed partnerships with a number of community animal rescue organisations to support vulnerable animals. After identifying a need for specialist care for young kittens, a neonate program has been implemented in partnership with cat rescues for orphaned kittens that require 24-hour care.

Pets in the park

There are 33 off-lead areas within the City of Darebin. In Reservoir and Bundoora, there are two purpose-built, fully fenced play spaces for dogs to exercise and interact off-lead.

Cat curfew

A cat curfew can also be described as a cat containment - where a cat must be contained within their owner's property boundary. Council introduced a night-time cat curfew on 1 January 2021, requiring cats to be kept within their owners' property boundary between 7pm and 7am. The curfew aims to protect cats from harm, reduce their impact on native wildlife and the environment and help manage nuisance complaints about cats wandering onto private properties.

During the DAMP engagement, feedback reflected strong support for a stricter approach, with 70.1% of survey participants supporting the idea of a 24-hour curfew. When asked to provide further comments, the most common concern came from those worried about the impact such a rule would have on cats' wellbeing (12 participants). Others supported a 24-hour curfew but suggested it should come with support measures, like subsidies for cat enclosures, more education, or exemptions for certain circumstances (10 participants). A smaller group (8 participants) raised concerns about the enforcement of a 24-hour cat curfew and the subsequent impacts.

Darebin Council offers services surrounding the following educational and promotional activities:

- promoting information on responsible pet ownership via brochures, website, and social media
- developing collaborative partnerships with animal organisations
- providing signage related to control of dogs and removal of dog faeces in parks

3.2

Our Current Orders, Local Laws, and Policies

Domestic Animals Act 1994

- Section 23 – it is an offence for a cat to remain on private property without permission, and landowners or occupiers may trap cats (both owned and unowned) found trespassing on their property.
- Section 25 – Darebin Council requires cats to be confined to their owners' premises and not be at large outside of those premises between 7pm and 7am effective from 1 January 2021.
- Section 26 – all dogs must be on a leash in public places throughout the municipality unless in a designated off-leash area.

Darebin Community Amenity Local Law 2025 (Part 3)

- Animal Waste
- Keeping of Animals
- Responsible Breeding of Dogs and Cats

Compliance Activities

- Enforcement using infringement notices and, where required, court prosecution
- Property inspections for permits and reports of non-compliance
- Follow up of notifications from pet welfare agencies of claimed or rehoused pets which are sold within the municipality
- Provision of cat traps to complainants in cases where education and advice have failed to prevent cat trespass and nuisance
- Collection of cats and dogs found wandering at large or contained by community members.
- Investigation of animal complaints
- Patrols of parks, including off-leash areas, fenced dog parks and nearby streets and engagement with community members regarding their responsibilities.
- Issuance of infringement notices
- Maintenance of the animal holding facility at Council's Operations Centre

3.3

Our Plan

Table 5: Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation outlines the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 3.

Objective 1: Promote responsible cat and dog ownership

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Develop a communication plan in partnership with Merri-bek City Council and City of Whittlesea and stakeholders on responsible pet ownership topics	Annually	Communications plan developed
Distribute pet ownership information brochure with registration renewals	Annually	Development and distribution of brochure
Provide pet ownership information to vet clinics and pet shops	Annually	Completion of activity
Host community pop up events	Annually	Number of events held
Review emergency welfare boarding program	2026	Completion of review
Introduce Darebin-specific information regarding responsible pet ownership in the wat djerring Animal Facility adoption packs	2026	Darebin adoption packs created and distributed
Review pet information provided in new resident welcome packs	2027	Completion of review
Implement desexing programs when grants/funding available	Annually	Number of programs implemented
Visit kindergartens, schools, and scout groups to talk about responsible pet ownership	Annually	Number of education visits
Review and improve dog park/off-leash area maps	2027	Completion of review

Table 5: Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation

4

Programs to address overpopulation and high euthanasia rates

The presence of dogs and cats in the community can lead to issues such as impacting wildlife populations, as well as people and their pets. The welfare of dogs and cats is also compromised if they find themselves displaced, abandoned, or surrendered to a shelter. In particular, the overpopulation of cats within the community leads to challenges with the fluctuation of euthanasia rates due to the incoming volume of cats and unmatched rehoming rates.

During the community engagement period, key stakeholders highlighted the need for low-cost desexing of animals, increased rehoming efforts and reducing illegal and irresponsible backyard breeding to help combat overpopulation and high euthanasia rates. Community education was seen as important to help the community understand the importance of desexing and the impact of un-desexed cats roaming in the community.



4.1

Context and Current Situation

Recent population and euthanasia rates and trends are demonstrated in Table 6.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dogs				
Impounded	223	260	247	227
Reclaimed from shelter	153	198	160	137
Transferred to rescue	10	17	41	22
Rehomed	40	25	27	38
Euthanised	12	20	23	34
Cats				
Impounded	532	498	553	584
Reclaimed from shelter	60	65	66	53
Transferred to rescue	19	176	197	132
Rehomed	244	142	176	189
Euthanised	145	121	143	215

Table 6: Numbers of cats and dogs impounded and subsequent outcomes

Of particular note between 2021/22 and 2024/25:

- the number of dogs impounded decreased by 4%, with fewer dogs reclaimed from Council's pound (dropping from 69% to 60%)
- transfers to rescue organisations for dogs doubled, while rehoming rates remained steady
- for cats, impoundments increased by 10%, but fewer were reclaimed or rehomed, with the proportion reclaimed falling from 11% to 9% and rehomed from 46% to 32%. This being potentially linked to an increase in targeted (unowned) cat trapping programs.
- during this time, transfers to rescue organisations grew substantially, rising from 4% to 23%, attributed to a collaborative approach to rehabilitation and rehoming.
- a 10% increase in euthanasia for both dogs and cats has occurred due to an increase in behavioural issues seen in dogs and again in cats, targeted cat trapping in response to an increase in unowned cat populations.

These trends highlight the need for ongoing strategies to reduce euthanasia and improve reclaim and rehoming outcomes. Animals that are not reclaimed are offered for rehoming if they meet temperament and health requirements. Animals may be euthanised for humane reasons, if they have an untreatable medical condition or if deemed feral.

Darebin Council's current educational and promotional activities include:

- engaging with vet clinics and the Wat djerring Animal Facility to provide low-cost or free desexing for cats
- distributing relevant information to residents in areas where issues are identified
- charging a full registration fee for un-desexed cats and dogs. This is intended to provide a further incentive for owners to desex their pets.
- targeted cat trapping for unowned cats
- partnerships with animal rescue organisations

4.2

Our Current Orders, Local Laws and Policies

Darebin Community Amenity Local Law 2025 (Part 3)

- Animal Waste
- Keeping of Animals
- Responsible Breeding of Dogs and Cats

Domestic Animals Act 1994

- Section 25 - Darebin Council requires cats to be confined to their owners' premises and not be at large outside of those premises between 7pm and 7am effective from 1 January 2021.

Compliance Activities

- Investigation of reports of animal hoarding
- Enforcement of registration, microchipping, and tag-wearing requirements
- Issuing infringement notices for cats and dogs found at large, unregistered, and trespassing on private property



4.3

Our Plan

Table 7: Programs to address overpopulation and euthanasia rates outlines the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 4.

Objective 1: To decrease the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted cats

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Partner with Merri-bek City Council and City of Whittlesea to seek partnership/funding to conduct a desexing program	As grant funding is available	Number of successful grant applications
Explore introducing mandatory desexing as a requirement of multiple pet permits	2027	Completion of research with recommendations Council endorsement
Implement mandatory desexing for cats	2027	Council endorsement
Explore mandatory desexing for dogs	2027	Community consultation Completion of research
Identify colonies of cats and implement targeted cat trapping programs	As required	Number of targeted cat trapping activities

Table 7: Programs to address overpopulation and euthanasia rates

5

Registration and identification

Registration and the requirement to be microchipped is a legislative requirement. This provides Council with an understanding of the level of pet ownership and allows for the development of relevant services and programs. It also assists in the safe and prompt return of lost cats and dogs to their owners.

During community engagement, feedback highlighted several reasons why people may not register their cats or dogs. Many respondents believed some owners simply don't

know registration is a state requirement or are unsure of the process. Cost was the most common barrier mentioned in written responses, with some residents saying fees are too high, especially given current cost of living pressures. Others said they don't see the value in registration, particularly for indoor pets, or found the system confusing to use. The findings suggest a need for clearer communication, improved processes, and support for low-income pet owners.



5.1

Context and Current Situation

Demonstrated in Table 8, there were 9,912 registered dogs and 4,950 registered cats in the City of Darebin in mid-2025.

It is difficult to capture data on the actual population of owned cats and dogs, as we know that not all are registered. Compared to previous years, there was a decrease in the number of dogs (9.7%) and cats (6%) registered in the City of Darebin 2024/2025.

Darebin Council provides an online registration portal, and offers fees based on factors like desexing status, age, recognised training, or membership with approved organisations. Reduced rates are available for eligible pets, and pensioners may receive further discounts or one free registration each year.



Offenses/prosecutions for unregistered animals (Failure to apply to register)

	DOGS	CATS
Registration Numbers	9912	4950
New	1618	1050
Renewal	8294	3900

Table 8: Registration and microchipping numbers of cats and dogs

Darebin Council provides the following educational and community awareness activities in relation to registration and microchipping:

- providing half price registrations for new applicants from 10 October each year until 9 April.
- following up registrations for cats and dogs purchased from pet shops and shelters
- utilising microchip scanners on patrols
- providing promotional material and reminders via: postal mail; text messaging; officers on patrol; corporate communications such as the Darebin Community News, social media, 'Messages on Hold,' Council's website; and Customer Service Centres
- Local Laws and Animal Management Officers licensed to implant microchips.
- offering free Council registration during cat desexing programs

5.2

Our Current Orders, Local Laws, Policies and Procedures

Domestic Animals Act 1994

- Section 10C – requirement of dogs/cats to be microchipped at time of renewal of registration

Darebin Community Amenity Local Law 2025 (Part 3)

- Responsible Breeding of Dogs and Cats

Policies and Procedures

- Application for registration and renewal of registration of cats and dogs.
- Procedure for impounding unregistered and/or unidentified cats and dogs.
- Process for issuing notices to comply, infringement notices and filing charges for prosecution.
- Process for yearly follow-ups on unpaid renewals.

Compliance Activities

- Park patrols, including random checks of registration and tag details
- Use of microchip scanners on patrols
- Issuing a registration renewal notice in advance of the due date each year
- Reminder communication for unpaid registrations
- Final notices and subsequent infringements

5.3

Our Plan

Table 9: Registration and identification outline the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 5.

Objective 1: Ensure all eligible cats and dogs are registered

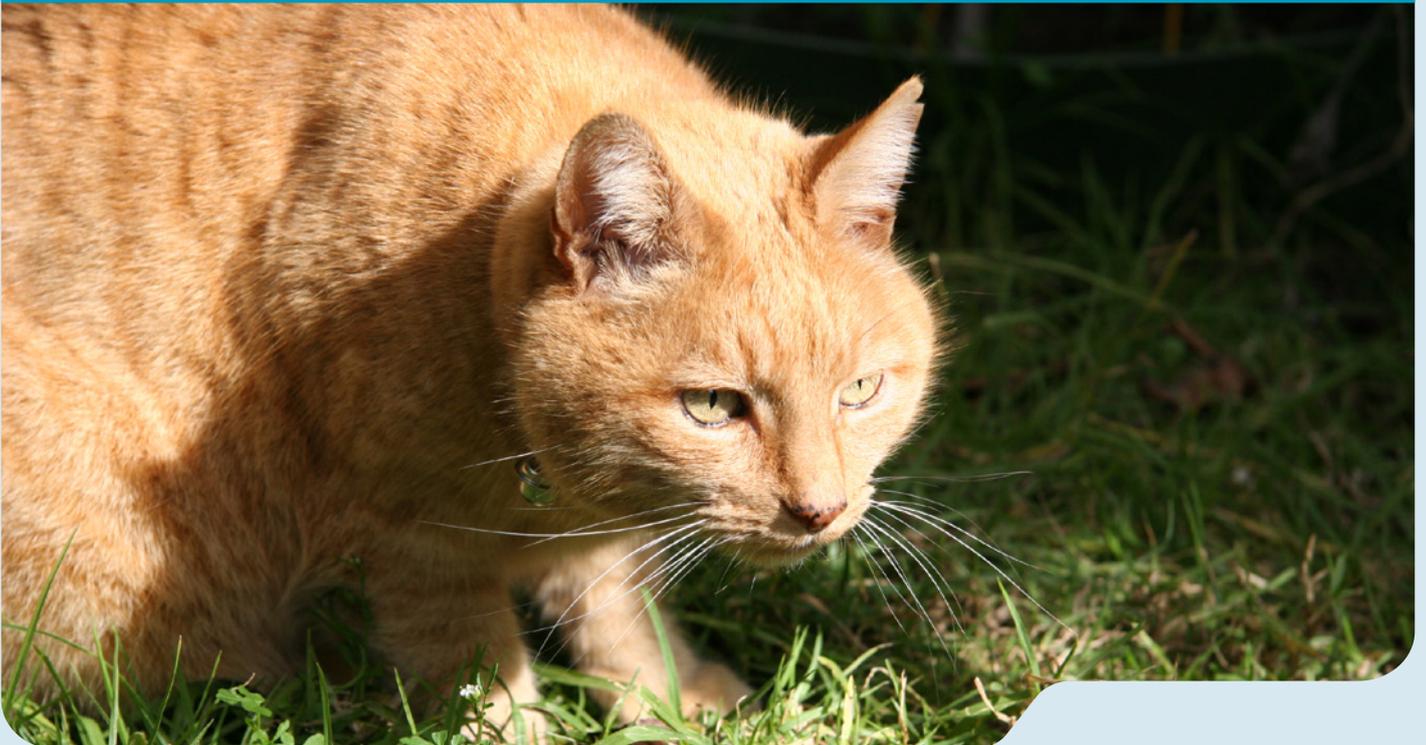
ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Cross-check with microchip databases	Annually	Annual completion of activity
Review Council's registration portal	2027	Completion of review
Develop communications on what registration pays for and its benefits	Annually	Occurrence of annual communications
Review registration fee structure	2028	Completion of review
Produce series of hold messaging regarding registrations	Annually	Roll out of messaging
Distribute registration forms and easy access QR codes to Domestic Animal Businesses and community sites	Annually	Annual completion of activity

Table 9: Registration and identification

6

Nuisance

During the engagement period, community feedback demonstrated key nuisance themes, particularly relating to barking dogs, waste, impacts on wildlife, issues with dogs in open spaces and cats out at night. Council has a role in protecting the community from unnecessary nuisance from cats and dogs through their services and community education.



6.1

Context and Current Situation

The data in Table 10 illustrates the number of contacts received by Council from customers in relation to animal related issues between 2021/22 and 2024/25.

Nature of Complaint	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Barking dogs	82	89	83	90
Cat collection and afterhours (AH)	291 (+52 AH)	274 (+26 AH)	316 (+46 AH)	283 (+41 AH)
Dog collection and afterhours (AH)	148 (+110 AH)	175 (+115 AH)	164 (+129 AH)	164 (+133 AH)
Roaming dog report and afterhours (AH)	101 (+29 AH)	159 (+45 AH)	156 (+50 AH)	157 (+70 AH)
Cat nuisance requests	241	227	150	135
Aggressive dog (scare/rush/chase)	73	73	129	119
Dog off lead in park	47	50	70	82
Animal registration enquiry	215	217	113	210

Table 10: Cat and dog complaints to Council from 2021/22 to 2024/25

While complaints about cat nuisance requests have steadily declined over this period, reports of barking dogs and aggressive dog behaviour have generally increased. Cat and dog collection requests, including afterhours callouts, have remained high, with fluctuations year to year.

Reports of roaming dogs and associated after hours responses have also trended upward since 2021/22. The continued rise in aggressive dog incidents since 2022/23 may reflect greater use of public open spaces by dog owners, increasing the likelihood of interactions between unfamiliar dogs.

Conversely, the decline in cat nuisance reports could suggest improved cat containment practices or changes in community attitudes toward roaming cats. This could be in correlation to the introduced cat curfew in 2021. However, during the community engagement, just over half of the

respondents (54.4%) said they hadn't noticed any changes in their neighbourhood since the curfew began. Notably, nearly a quarter (24.5%) said they weren't aware the curfew existed at all. This suggests a need for ongoing education to increase community awareness and understanding of the curfew and its purpose.

Darebin Council's current educational and promotional activities regarding nuisance include:

- providing information and advice on methods for resolving nuisance in the community
- encouraging complainants to speak to the owner of the animal causing the nuisance directly
- providing a barking dog diary and noise nuisance complaint form
- providing cat traps where cat nuisance issues cannot be solved by other methods

6.2

Our Current Orders, Local Laws and Policies

Domestic Animals Act 1994

- Section 32 – Dogs or cats creating nuisance

Darebin Community Amenity Local Law 2025 (Part 3)

- Animal Waste
- Keeping of Animals
- Responsible Breeding of Dogs and Cats

Compliance Activities

The Local Laws and Animal Management team currently respond to complaints by undertaking investigation, community education, infringement and, when necessary, prosecution.

The team patrol on and off-leash areas in parks and nearby streets regularly, including weekends and evenings during daylight savings. They provide education and enforcement of local laws where necessary to reduce the incidence of animal nuisance and dog attacks.



6.3

Our Plan

Tables 11: Nuisance outline the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 6.

Objective 1: Reduce the impacts of cat and dog nuisance behaviours within the community

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Implement targeted education programs in hot spot areas of reported nuisance	Annually	Annual completion of activity Number of activities completed
Explore feasibility of introducing of cat and dog exclusion zones	2028	Completion of review Reduction of nuisance complaints of animals at large in sensitive environmental areas (if implemented)

Objective 2: Review cat curfew

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Consider the introduction of a 24-hour cat containment order, where a cat must be contained within property boundaries at all times, to be informed by the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. a review of the effectiveness of the cat curfew (7pm-7am) ii. community consultation to inform (i) the review of current arrangements and (ii) the introduction of a 24 hour cat containment iii. incorporation of a 2-year lead time with educational programming before the 24 hour containment commences iv. consideration of operational and enforcement costs v. agreed measures of success including a reduction of complaints about cats at large. 	2026	Completion of cat curfew review, including research, community consultation and recommendations
Review/modify Council's reactive cat trapping program	2026	Completion of review Reduction of nuisance cat complaints

Table 11: Nuisance

7

Dog attacks

Dog attacks against people and other animals unfortunately do occur in the City of Darebin. During engagement, community feedback indicated that public dog parks are a particular area of concern and that owner behaviours and understanding of responsibilities needs to be addressed.



7.1

Context and Current Situation

As seen in Table 12, Council received an increasing number of dog attack complaints from 2021/22 to 2024/25.

In 2021/22, there were 61 attacks on animals and 51 attacks on people. By 2024/25, these numbers rose to 91 attacks on animals and 70 attacks on people. This shows a steady upward trend in dog attacks, particularly those involving animals. The rise in incidents may be linked to increased dog ownership

and outdoor activities over recent years. Council continues to focus on community education, promoting responsible dog ownership and effective control of dogs in public spaces to help reduce these incidents. More activities are planned to raise awareness and provide training to dog owners.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dog attacks on animal	61	59	74	91
Dog attacks on person	51	65	65	70

Table 12: Dog attacks in City of Darebin

Current activities undertaken by Council to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals include:

- providing community education about dangerous/restricted breed dogs and containment of dogs (fact sheets, online)
- conducting proactive park and street patrols
- contacting dog owners to provide information or follow-up
- inspecting properties where dangerous and restricted breed dogs reside
- responding promptly to complaints about dog attacks
- visiting schools to educate children about responsible pet ownership
- investigating dog attack reports and taking an appropriate course of action

Our Current Orders, Local Laws and Policies

Darebin Community Amenity Local Law 2025 Part 3

- Animal Waste
- Keeping of Animals
- Responsible Breeding of Dogs and Cats

Compliance Activities:

Council is responsible for the investigation of dog attack and incident reports. If the investigation uncovers evidence of an attack and offending dogs are identified, possible courses of action that Council may take include:

- infringements (where non-serious injuries sustained)
- menacing/Dangerous Dog Declaration
- prosecution in Magistrates' Court
- seeking destruction/compensation orders by Magistrate
- referring parties to mediation for resolution of medical and/or veterinary costs

In some circumstances owners and of fending dogs cannot always be identified and located depending on where an incident has occurred and whether contact information for follow-up has been provided.



7.3

Our Plan

Table 13: Dog attacks outline the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 7.

Objective 1: Reduce the impacts of cat and dog nuisance behaviours within the community

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Perform targeted patrols in hot spot locations	Ongoing	Completion of regular park patrols
Provide communications regarding park etiquette and dog owner responsibilities	Biannually	Number of social media posts (at least two per year)
Undertake a park signage audit	2027	Completion of audit with recommendations

Table 13: Dog attacks



8

Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

The community's understanding of what constitutes a dangerous or restricted dog may not broadly align with the classifications as per the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, however it was clear during community engagement that there was some community concern about dogs being off-leash where they shouldn't be and poor management by owners.



8.1

Context and Current Situation

In 2025 there were 18 declared dogs, as shown in Table 14. This is a decrease since 2021 where there was a total of 23 declared dogs.



Table 14: Declared dogs in the City of Darebin July 2025

Darebin Council's current educational activities include:

- providing fact sheets and Animal Welfare Victoria brochures on dangerous/restricted breed dogs, reading dog body language and how to prevent dog attacks;
- providing education at local events; and
- providing information via the Council website, social media, and other media.

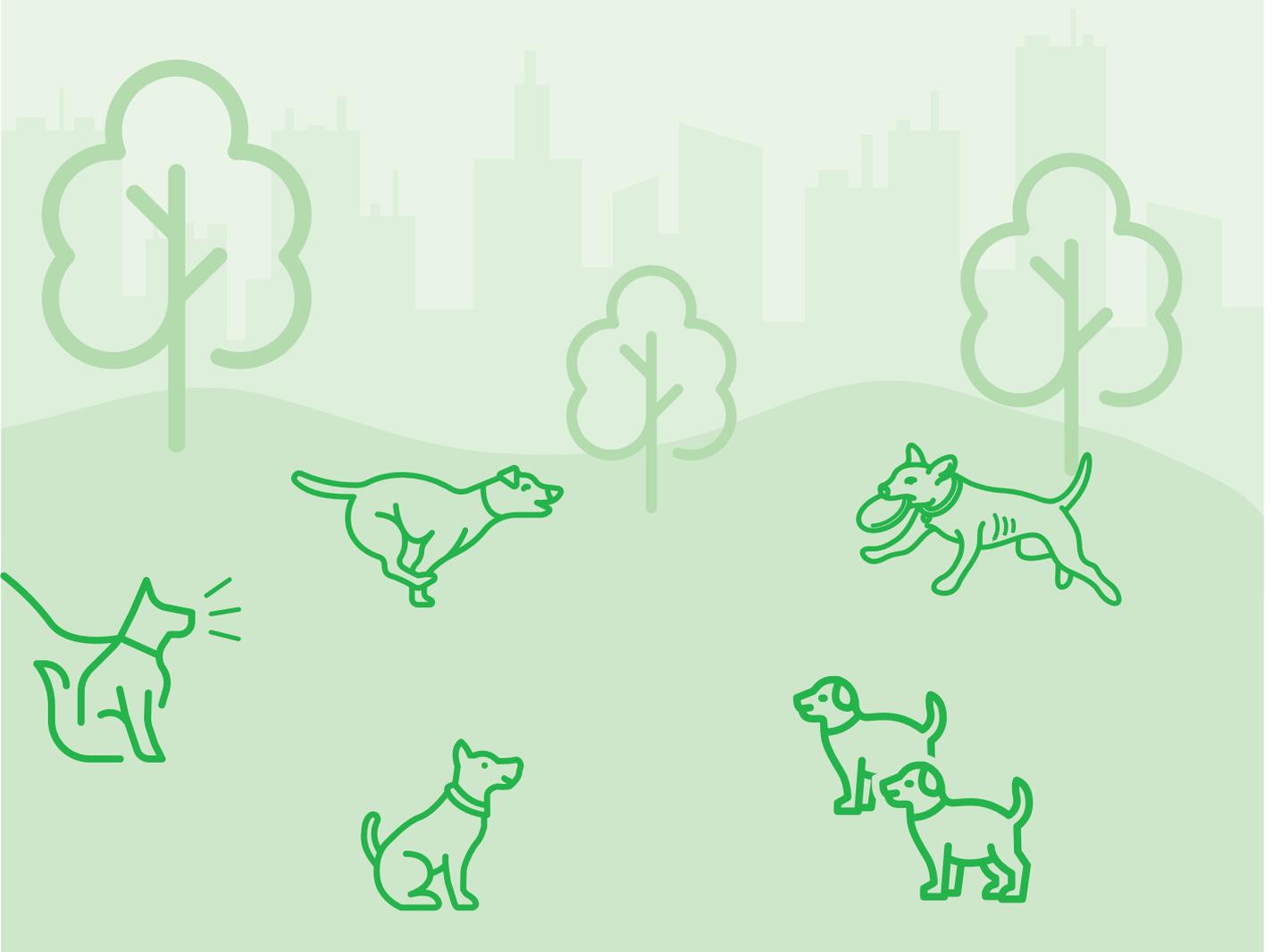
8.2

Our Current Policies and Procedures

City of Darebin's registration application and renewal forms require all owners to declare if their dog is a restricted breed, has been declared menacing or is a dangerous dog, as required by the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Compliance Activities

- Annual and unscheduled inspections of properties housing declared dangerous, restricted-breed and menacing dogs
- Patrols by Officers of all areas and parks to monitor dog behaviour
- Maintenance of data on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry
- Investigation of reports of restricted breed dogs.



8.3

Our Plan

Table 15: Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs outline the activities, timeframe, and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 8.

Objective 1: Identify, register and ensure all declared dogs are compliant with legislation

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Introduce Animal Management Plans (AMAs) for dogs and cats who are found to regularly offend	2027	Introduction of AMAs
Conduct property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance	Annually	Annual completion of inspections
Investigate and undertake enforcement action for serious dog attacks	Ongoing	Number of infringements issued and prosecutions
Establish a dog control panel	2028	Introduction of panel

Table 15: Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

9

Domestic animal businesses

All Domestic Animal Businesses must register with their local council. Under current legislation (*Domestic Animals Act 1994*), local councils have the authority to:

- Refuse registration of a business if they fail to comply with the legislation and relevant code of practice.
- Set special conditions on the registration of any domestic Animal Business.



9.1

Context and Current Situation

Table 16 provides additional information about the Domestic Animal Businesses.

Domestic Animal Business Statistics	2023/24
Pet shops	5
Boarding establishments	4
Animal training establishment	1
Breeding establishment	1
Total	11

Table 16: Types of Domestic Animal Businesses in Darebin

Compliance activities in relation to Domestic Animal Businesses include:

- Providing all Domestic Animal Businesses with the relevant Code of Practice;
- Providing Animal Welfare Victoria fact sheets on Domestic Animal Businesses to registered businesses.
- Registering all Domestic Animal Businesses;
- Conducting annual audits of each Domestic Animal Business
- Follow up any non-compliance as required;
- Reidentification of new/non-registered Domestic Animal Businesses.

9.2

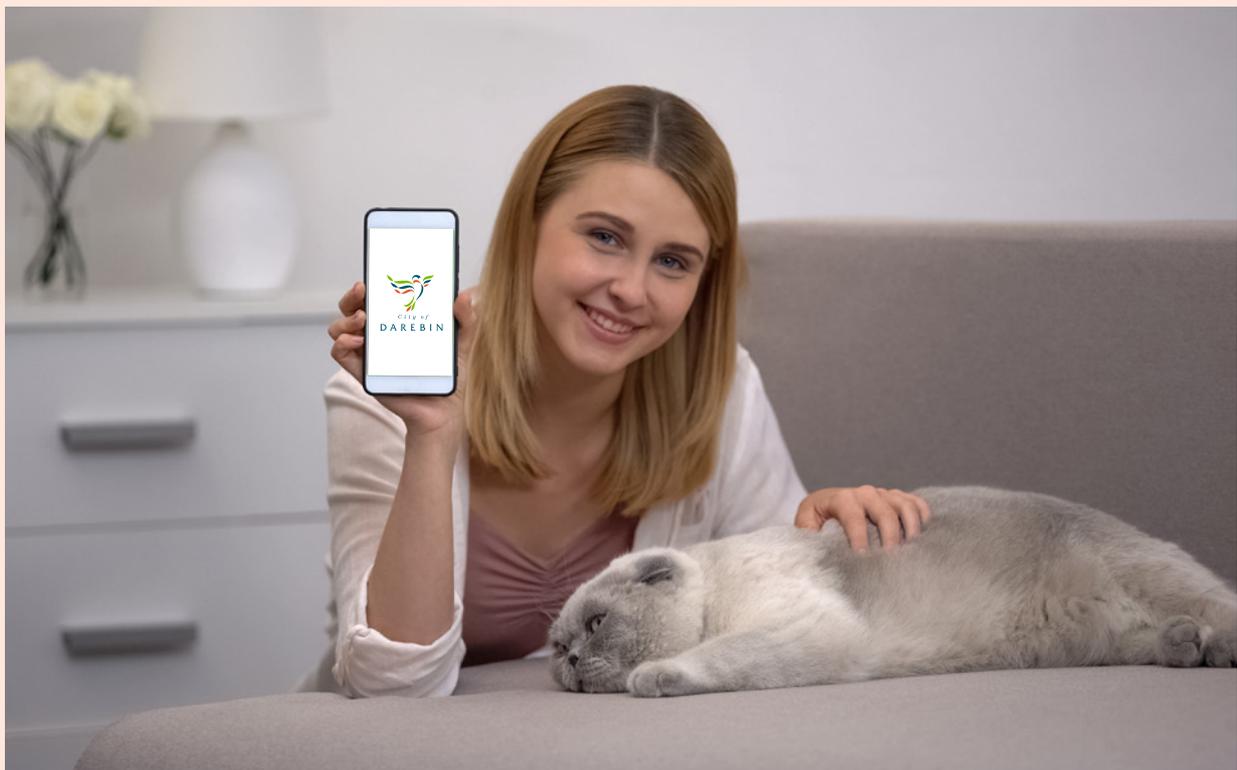
Our Current Orders, Local Laws, Policies and Procedures

Domestic Animals Act 1994

- Section 13 - requirement for all domestic animal businesses to notify Council within seven days of selling an animal.

Compliance Activities:

- Annual Domestic Animal Business renewal program
- Annual inspections by Council Authorised Officer
- Council notification for animal sales



9.3

Our Plan

Tables 17: Domestic Animal Businesses outlines the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 9.

Objective 1: Identify, register and audit all Domestic Animal Businesses with the municipality

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Conduct audits of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses	Annually	Number of inspections completed vs number of Domestic Animal Businesses
Act promptly to address matters of non-compliance	As required	Number of non-compliance received and investigated
Investigate complaints from the community	As required	Number of complaints received and investigated

Table 17: Domestic Animal Businesses

10

wat djerring Animal Facility



10.1

Context and Current Situation

Table 16 provides additional information about the Domestic Animal Businesses.

In October 2022, Whittlesea, Merri-bek, and Darebin Councils took joint responsibility for managing the wat djerring Animal Facility (formerly the Epping Animal Welfare Facility) in-house. This collaborative approach aimed to improve outcomes by reducing euthanasia rates and increasing the reunification of animals with their owners or placement into new homes.

Managed by animal care and welfare experts, the Facility focuses on high standards of care without expecting cost savings. The new model provides greater flexibility for Council to respond to community needs, build stronger partnerships within the animal welfare sector, and lead on shared domestic animal management priorities.

Under this approach, animals are adopted either from the Facility or through animal rescue organisations. The facility was renamed the wat djerring Animal Facility in July 2023.

The wat djerring Animal Facility has partnered with many animal rescue and welfare organisations who offer adoption opportunities to the community.

The objectives of the Facility are to:

- achieve the best outcomes possible for the animals in care
- reunite every animal possible with their owners or find them loving new homes
- reduce euthanasia rates

The Facility provides the following services:

- shelter for stray, abandoned and surrendered animals with refuge and a new life
- reunification of lost pets with their owners
- facilitation of adoptions by finding new homes for unowned cats and dogs
- protect animals from cruelty
- promotion of pet wellbeing
- education regarding responsible pet ownership
- veterinary care to animals at the Facility
- Low-cost community desexing programs

Community sentiment identified during engagement from the community from those that had used the wat djerring Animal Facility's services was positive, with over 80% of respondents being very satisfied or satisfied with the helpfulness, professionalism of staff and the timeliness of service.

10.2

Our Current Policies and Procedures

The wat djerring Animal Facility supports partner Councils in meeting their responsibilities under:

- The *Domestic Animals Act 1994*
- Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds.



10.3

Our Plan

Table 18: wat djerring Animal Facility outlines the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 10.

Objective 1: Review the operation of the wat djerring Animal Facility to ensure it is achieving best practice

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Work with the wat djerring Animal Facility to assist its delivery of its objectives to achieve the best outcomes possible for the animals in our care, reunite every animal possible with their owners or find them loving new homes, and reduce the current euthanasia rates	Ongoing	Number of animals rehomed or transferred to rescue
Hold an open day/community event at the wat djerring Animal Facility	Annually	Event held
Review animal welfare services contract ahead of renewal period (2027)	2026	Completion of review

Table 18: wat djerring Animal Facility

11

Annual review of plan and annual reporting

In line with the Domestic Animals Act, Council must review its DAMP annually and amend the plan as needed. The following activities outline how the Council will meet these requirements.



11.1

Our Plan

Table 19: Annual review of plan and annual reporting outlines the activities, timeframe and method of evaluation to meet each planned activity under Section 11.

Objective 1: Comply with Section 68A(3)

ACTIVITY	WHEN	EVALUATION
Review the Domestic Animal Management Plan Annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan	Annually	Completion of review
Publish an evaluation of the implementation of the Plan in Council's annual report	Annually	Published evaluation
Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan	2026	Copy provided to the Secretary
Council will undertake a review of the Plan at the conclusion of plan	2029	Completion of review

Table 19: Annual review of plan and annual reporting



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