





Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029





CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO



Contents

	Executive summary	Page 3
1	Introduction and context	Page 4
2	Training of authorised officers	Page 10
3	Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership	Page 12
4	Programs to address over-population rates	Page 16
5	Registration and identification	Page 19
6	Nuisance	Page 21
7	Dog attacks	Page 24
8	Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs	Page 26
9	Domestic animal businesses	Page 29
10	Other matters	Page 31
11	Annual review and reporting	Page 34
	Appendix A - Activity summary	Page 35

Executive summary

Companion animals have been part of our lives since recorded history. Dogs and cats are embedded in day-to-day activity for many Greater Bendigo residents and are considered part of society. Therefore, it is vital that the City of Greater Bendigo (the City) undertakes sensible planning to ensure that pets, pet owners and non-pet owners can co-exist in a harmonious way.



In the past four years, the Local Laws and Animal Services team has handled over 5,000 domestic animal-related requests annually, highlighting the significant impact that dogs and cats have on many residents across Greater Bendigo.

This marks the fifth iteration of the City's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). Building on the progress and initiatives of earlier versions, the updated Plan sets out a strategic framework to steer future service delivery and actions through to 2029. For a summary of activities, refer to Appendix A on page 35.

The Plan has been prepared by the City's Animal Services team in response to Council's responsibilities under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act).

Key Initiatives from past plans and programs

- Changed delivery of animal services from a contract provider to in-house staff
- Provided a flexible 24/7 service delivery model
- Introduced noise recorders and software to assess noise nuisance
- Introduced a designated compliance team
- Introduced polices to enable more dogs to be taken home instead of to the animal shelter
- Development of four dog parks
- Introduced laws to require dogs to be leashed at popular recreation areas, shopping areas and around children's play areas
- Introduced laws to prevent dogs from exercising on the playing surface of the Queen Elizabeth Oval
- Introduced laws to require dog walkers to carry a bag to pick up their dog waste
- Introduced laws to regulate the keeping of animals according to regulatory planning land use principles
- Introduced a sunset-to-sunrise cat curfew to minimise wandering cats
- Developed a plan to deal with animals in emergencies
- Developed and implemented procedure to provide guidance to staff who may be working with victims of family violence
- Developed and introduced various work processes to assist in dealing with dog attack and nuisance complaints
- Introduced subsidised desexing and discounted microchipping for cats and dogs
- Introduced a rewards program for owners displaying responsible pet ownership
- Promoted the need to register not only dogs, but cats as well
- Raised awareness in the community in relation to being a responsible pet owner
- Improved community safety in public areas
- Introduced GPS vehicle monitoring and duress alert process to assist with field officer safety and allocation of jobs to officers according to their location
- Plans such as microchipping and desexing programs have resulted in a reduction in animal numbers incoming into the shelter by 16% from its peak two years ago, and increases in reclaim rates particularly for cats



1

Introduction and context

1.1 Purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan

Under the *Domestic Animals Act* 1994, councils are required to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every four years. The new DAMP aims to build upon the successes of previous plans and provide a strategic framework for the City to guide policy, services, initiatives, and actions related to animal management from 2026 to 2029.

The plan sets out a method for evaluating whether the animal management services provided by the City are adequate to give effect to requirements of the Act and *Domestic Animal Regulations 2015*.

The Plan applies to any land within the City where domestic animals are kept or proposed to be kept.

The Plan is informed by evidence, and action orientated. It sets priorities that are achievable and measurable within allocated resources.

The Plan must also outline programs for the training of authorised officers along with programs, services and strategies to:

- Ensure that people comply with the Act, the regulations and any related legislation
- Minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals
- Address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
- Encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats
- Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
- Effectively identify all Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations

- Provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and Local Laws that relate to the City'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
- Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the City's municipal district that it thinks necessary
- Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the Plan

The City is also required to review and, where appropriate, amend the Plan and publish an evaluation of the implementation of the Plan in the City's annual report.

The following guiding principles will continue to underpin the delivery of domestic animal management services at the City:

- Working towards achieving best practice in domestic animal management
- Achieving lasting improvements and rewarding responsible pet ownership
- Proactive animal management and education
- Balance the needs of pet owners with the needs of other members of the community and the environment
- Protecting the environment from any negative impacts from domestic animals
- Recognising the physical, mental and social benefits of pet ownership
- Reducing the number of unwanted animals
- The City is to play a key leadership role in animal management
- Adopting a whole of community approach to animal management

1.2 Process applied in developing the Plan

Community consultation has allowed residents to share their perspectives on how domestic animals are managed within the City. As part of this process, an online survey was conducted, inviting participants to provide feedback, share experiences, and offer opinions to help shape the direction of the new DAMP.

The survey was open for four weeks receiving a total of 454 contributions and 7 written submissions from the community.

In addition, over 70 stakeholders (mostly organisations and businesses, including domestic animal related businesses, land care groups, support for wildlife, and sporting associations) were contacted in relation to the DAMP and invited to make a submission or provide feedback via the survey.

43%

have been impacted in the past five years by unrestrained dogs

Flyers placed in public spaces to provide people with fast and direct access to information about the DAMP and the opportunity to contribute their feedback.

It was important to consider the views and opinions of people who do not own pets as well as those who do. Fortunately, the survey did identify a reasonable portion (16 per cent) of people contributed who did not own a cat or a dog.

The information received through the community consultation will guide the City in ensuring its service meets the expectations of the community, including the needs of pet owners and domestic animals, as well as those that who don't own pets but may be impacted by them.

Key findings from the community survey revealed that:

- 68% feel public spaces are safe from dogs
- 98% are aware of the 24 hour cat containment requirement
- 43% have been impacted in the past 5 years by unrestrained dogs
- 35% have used a fenced off leash dog park
- Between 62-70% support for several of BARC's programs including community cat desexing, registration and reclaims discounts

A working group was established with representatives across the City to ensure that all connections with our community were considered. This included staff from Community and Environmental Health, Parks and Open Spaces, Communications, Active and Healthy Communities, and Safe Environments units.

The City is committed to achieving better outcomes for everyone in the municipality, including both pet owners and non-pet owners.

1.3 Demographic and profile of the City

The City is situated in central Victoria and its geographical position provides links between the Melbourne metropolitan area and the north of the state. Greater Bendigo is approximately 150km from Melbourne. Bendigo is the major regional centre for north central Victoria.

Greater Bendigo covers almost 3,000 square kilometres and includes the urban centre of Bendigo and smaller towns such as Heathcote, Axedale, Huntly, Marong, Elmore, Goornong and Redesdale. Greater Bendigo has a population of approximately 120,000 residents.

The Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung are recognised as the Traditional Owners of the land. There are two appointed registered Aboriginal parties for the area – Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

Greater Bendigo is described as a city within a forest, as it is surrounded by natural bushland and Box Ironbark forests. The area has a strong historical link to the mining of gold, since gold was discovered in the 1850s.

1.4 Context and current situation

Animal Services in Greater Bendigo are part of the City's Healthy Communities and Environments directorate, working to ensure the wellbeing of both pets and people. The team stays up to date with the latest industry trends and animal management practices, always looking for better ways to deliver high-quality services.

Animal attendants working within the City's shelter facility, Bendigo Animal Relief Centre (BARC), provide industry acknowledged 'fear free' housing and management of animals. The City's animal management staff have been recognised as being subject matter experts, and have been invited to participate and contribute to multiple external programs with a focus on animal welfare and animal ethics.

The table below shows what programs and services are included in the City's delivery.

These services are provided by the following roles:

Local Laws Officers

Local Laws Officers are responsible for functions including:

- Active patrols and pickups to reunite dogs with their owners and to discourage wandering at large
- Managing unwanted animals
- Patrolling popular walk areas for dog faeces management
- Impounding of livestock found or reported wandering
- Trespassing cats
- Animal registration and identification process
- Providing advice to pet owners and the community
- Providing an after-hours service

Program/service	Service level for the 2023/2024 period
Identification and registration	Currently 21,661 cats and dogs registered.
Managing domestic animal complaints	Received 4,383 customer service requests.
Pound and shelter services	BARC is open to the public for adoptions seven days a week (excluding public holidays). In the last year it has provided care for animals and provided rehoming opportunities for of these animals.
Microchipping and/or desexing programs	Discounts for microchipping are offered year-round when combined with a new pet registration. Discount cat desexing offered has sterilised close to 1,200 since BARC began in 2019.
Animal management officer accessibility	Two full-time positions that provide responsive service to customer requests, as well as an after-hours emergency service available outside of business hours, seven days a week.



Senior Local Laws Officers

The City has Senior Local Laws Officers who are responsible for the following functions:

- Investigating dog attacks
- Investigating problem barking and other nuisance issues
- Investigating animal welfare concerns
- Promoting responsible pet ownership
- Dealing with Restricted Breed Dogs and Dangerous dogs
- Auditing properties where Dangerous, Menacing or Restricted Breed Dogs are kept
- Registration and management of domestic animal businesses
- Management of various neighbourhood issues and complaints relating to animals
- Ensuring compliance to various legislation and codes of practice relevant to pets and livestock

Animal Attendants

BARC operates seven days a week and has a team of Animal Attendants, including Senior Animal Attendants, to ensure appropriate care is provided to animals every day of the week. Animal Attendants are responsible for:

- Cleaning animal housing areas
- Providing feed, medication and other daily requirements for animals in care
- Providing exercise and environmental enrichment
- Liaising with the public in relation to surrendering animals into care
- Assisting with reuniting stray animals with their owners
- Assessment of animals' suitability for adoptions including behavioural assessments
- Managing adoptions of animals
- Providing education to animal owners on how to best manage their pets



Veterinary Nurse and staff with associated skill sets

Staff at BARC are required to provide medical care and attention to animals, including microchipping. A designated Veterinary Nurse is employed full-time and is supported by other staff with Veterinary Nurse and Animal Technician experience. This ensures that the BARC has a team of people capable of providing a service, including:

- Initial assessment of animal health and veterinary requirements
- Microchip implanting
- Dispensing medication under the direction of a vet
- Assessing and monitoring animals requiring intensive veterinary care

Animal Services Management team

The Animal Services Management team consists of a Team Leader Local Laws, BARC Operations Manager, and an overarching Coordinator. The Animal Services Management team is responsible for:

- Planning service delivery
- Managing income and expenditure
- Developing work plans, policy and work instructions
- Managing risk and workplace health and safety
- Mentoring, coaching, training and supervising staff
- Maintaining policies and procedures
- Developing a new Domestic Animal Management Plan on four-year cycles
- Reporting of statistical data
- Maintaining a database of all customer interactions and requests for service
- Promotion of health, leisure and social capital associated with pet ownership
- Managing dog access to public places (parks, reserves and streets)
- Maintaining a process for dealing with animals in the event of an emergency
- Managing the impacts of cats
- Assessing and reviewing open space planning for dogs and associated laws and orders
- Developing and maintaining a Health Management Plan for pound and shelter services
- Implementation of community focused programs to support responsible pet ownership
- Increasing reclaiming rates and rehoming rates of stray and surrendered animals

Customer service

The City's Customer Service Charter is the guiding document for responding to requests for animal services. In the previous 12 months, the average response time for first contact with the customer following a request for service was approximately 1.08 days. The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework has a target of two days.

What customers can expect from our Customer Service team:

- We will listen carefully to them
- We will be friendly and professional, and treat them with courtesy, respect and understanding
- We will keep them informed
- We will provide accurate and consistent information delivered in a way that is easy to understand and in a timely manner
- We will respect and protect their personal information and adhere to privacy requirements
- We will provide a 24-hour emergency service
- We will provide a website which contains current, quality, and easily accessible information

What we expect from our customers:

- Being courteous and respectful to our staff
- Respecting the rights of other customers
- Providing us with complete and accurate information
- Working with us to resolve problems
- Providing feedback on our services



1.5 Domestic animal statistics

Key statistics at a glance for the financial year period 2023/2024.

Dogs	Amount
Number of registered dogs	16,047
Number of impounded dogs (by rangers and the public)	773
Number of impounded dogs returned to the owner	647
Number of dogs rehomed	312
Number of dogs euthanised	120
Number of active declared dogs (Dangerous, Menacing or Restricted Breed Dogs)	11

Cats	Amount
Number of registered cats	5,614
Number of impounded cats (by rangers and the public)	905
Number of impounded cats returned to the owner	173
Number of cats rehomed	523
Number of domestic cats euthanised	171
Number of wild cats euthanised	439

Domestic animal businesses	Amount
Breeding and rearing establishments	2
Dog training establishments	3
Pet shops	8
Shelters and pounds	2
Boarding establishments	7

Customer Support requests and complaints	Amount
Dogs at large	371
Dog rush (person or animal)	60
Dog attack	211
Dog barking	631
Request for collection dogs	775
Dog registration follow up	542
Management of Keeping of Animals Local Law enquiries	235
Cat management	905
Other enquiries including injured animals, restricted breeds, business registration, loan of citronella collars, dog waste and livestock wandering	653
Prosecutions	2
Total requests for service	**4,385**

2



Training of authorised officers

2.1 Context and current situation

The objective of training and development is to ensure all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work in a safe and professional manner. The City is committed to ensuring all staff involved in animal management are equipped for the demands of their role and are competent in their job.

All Animal Management Officers receive extensive, on the job training. In addition, they receive additional formal training in:

- Customer service, including conflict resolution
- Dog and cat handling
- Bite prevention
- Stock handling
- Captive bolt use
- Traffic control and driver safety
- Self-preservation and harm reduction
- Family violence
- First aid

Additional training may be considered for Senior Local Laws officers, and may include:

- Prosecutions
- Statement taking and evidence gathering
- Restricted Breed Dog identification

2.2 Our planned training for authorised officers

Staff will continue to receive training in customer service, health and safety, workplace behaviours and the delivery of community education information and will be encouraged to attend industry related information sessions and seminars for networking opportunities and to keep up with latest trends and innovations.



An annual skills audit will be undertaken to identify any gaps in the skills available within Animal Services. A professional development plan is prepared each year arising out of this audit.

The annual performance development plan includes a review of the staff member's skills and training undertaken in the previous year.

All new staff are taken through an induction program and receive regular updates offering opportunity to undertake training using the City's Learning Opportunities Program.

2.3 Our plan

Considering the above, the activities and objectives for the next four years are listed in the following table.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training.		
Maintain a skills matrix for employed staff to identify required and proposed training.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Biannual review of the matrix to ensure its accuracy and to determine whether proposed training goals have been met for each officer.
Objective 2: Ensure all new authorised officers have completed their minimum training requirements.		
Identify minimum training requirements for authorised officers and record when officers have completed each course. Maintain records of when officers complete required training.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Annually review spreadsheet and ensure each officer has completed their minimum training requirements. Review every six months in line with the professional development plan.
Objective 3: Provide opportunities for additional training each year.		
Identify additional training opportunities, e.g. prosecutions training, advanced conflict management and mediation.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Annually review training undertaken by officers.
Objective 4: Provide and maintain performance training/planning process for individual officers.		
Complete annual development plan and review process for each staff member.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Completion of annual professional development plan process to identify training needs to deal with skill gaps and emerging issues or legislative changes.

3



Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership

3.1 Context and current situation

The City continues to deliver the pound and shelter services known as Bendigo Animal Relief Centre (BARC). This provided the opportunity to further develop a proactive approach to responsible pet ownership, tailored to the needs and desires of the community.

BARC has been operational since July 1, 2019 and can provide a platform to promote responsible pet ownership, and together with the City they are able to deliver:

- Free microchipping services
- Discount cat desexing opportunities to eligible residents of Greater Bendigo
- Education and assistance around choosing the right type of pet
- Online resources to assist with educating owners on their legal obligations
- Assistance with updating microchip details or people who don't understand the requirements of the different microchip databases
- Linking people with online courses such as Petcademy to educate pet owners to understand their pets needs

In 2020, BARC was independently audited and found to meet and exceed all industry standards and comply with all legislative requirements.

43% have been impacted in the past 5 years by unrestrained dogs

3.2 Our orders, local laws, policies and procedures

Current orders

During 2024, a S25 and S26 Order under the Act came into effect. This Order requires all cats to be securely confined to their owner's property 24 hours a day and that dogs can only be off leash in designated off leash public areas within the municipality. As a result of the new Orders, a number of previous S26 Orders designated certain areas to be on leash were revoked as they were no longer relevant.

Current local laws

Community Local Law prohibits dogs from Crusoe Reservoir. Local Law No 2 relates to the keeping of animals, it will be reviewed concurrently with the drafting of this Domestic Animal Management Plan prior to its automatic sunset in 2026. Local Law 2:

- Regulates the numbers of dogs and/or cats that can be kept at a property
- Ensures animals do not cause a nuisance to anyone by noise, dust, odour, or other condition, cause damage to flora or fauna or pollute any drain, watercourse or water catchment
- Keep land occupied by animals clear and clean of any waste, food scraps and excrement
- Ensures fencing is sufficient to contain animals
- Ensures the immediate collection and removal of any excrement left by animals in a public place
- Requires owners carry a bag or similar device to pick up excrement left by animals in a public place

Current policies and procedures

Current policies and procedures include education and enforcement strategies associated with City's programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership.





3.3 Our plan

Over the next four years, the City intends to meet objectives by completing the associated actions in the following table.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Increase pet registrations		
Continue with discounts for desexed pets.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increase in the number of newly registered pets and renewed registrations.
Provide education on the purpose of pet registration through increased community presence, and support owners to complete registration details (e.g. assist with sighting desexing tattoos, obtaining microchip numbers).		
Pound service discounts for registered pets.		
Online payment options for registrations.		
Review registration fees to encourage new registrations.		
Investigate pet registration amnesty.		
Promote benefits of registered pets (e.g. return to owner from the field).		
Further discounts for continued registrations or price locked in.		
Objective 2: Increase pet microchipping		
Continue to provide free microchipping services.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increase in the number of stray or surrendered animals received which carry a microchip.
Consider microchipping events to reach a wider range of pet owners.		
Conduct microchipping events in public spaces (e.g. dog parks, community houses).		

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 3: Increase dog waste removal		
Empower the community to encourage owners to clean up after their dogs including but not limited to additional signage in key areas, targeted ad-hoc patrols, or decals on footpaths.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Decrease in the amount of customer service requests received in relation to dog waste in public spaces. Decrease in the amount of infringements issued.
Provide environmentally friendly dog waste bags through BARC for owners of registered pets.		
Adhoc patrols by Local Laws Officers at popular dog walking areas and known locations identified by the community.		
Objective 4: Increase the number of desexed pets not intended for breeding		
Provide discount registration for desexed pets.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Decrease in the number of unwanted litters, and increase the percentage of registered pets that are desexed.
Provide discount cat desexing to eligible residents.		
Run 'Last Litter Program' for dogs, providing discount desexing for those eligible.		
Objective 5: Assist residents with choosing the right pet		
Provide advice and guidance to help people analyse what pet might be right for them.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Decrease in the number of surrendered animals due to the animal not suiting the owner's needs.
Continue to provide education for pets being adopted from the shelter.		
Objective 6: Promote responsible pet ownership to the younger generation		
Visiting local schools to educate the next generation of pet owners of the importance of responsible pet ownership.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increase in school education visits from current level.
Objective 7: Increase cat containment		
Promote and share existing resources from 'Rethink Roaming' campaign.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Decrease in the number of complaints relating to nuisance caused by wandering cats. Decrease in the number of infringements issued.
Provide flyers, information and advice on how to contain cats.		
Partner with local businesses to provide cat containment workshop sessions		

4



Programs to address over-population rates

4.1 Context and current situation

The City currently implements a range of measures aimed at reducing the overpopulation rates of cats and dogs.

Registration is seen as a solution to reduce high euthanasia rates, as registered dogs and cats are most likely to be reunited with their owners if picked up by City staff.

The City's promotion of registration requirements has a strong emphasis on the return of lost pets as a key reason to register.

BARC has a highly successful program with 835 animals adopted during 2023/2024. These animals are required to be desexed and microchipped before being made available to their new homes. Registration is free when animals are adopted from BARC.

BARC also provides training support for pet owners to reduce undesirable behaviours in their pets to reduce euthanasia rates.

In 2022, changes to the *Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds* (the Code) requires BARC to provide data on animal outcomes. This data is publicly available.

4.2 Our orders, local laws, policies and procedures

Current orders

The City has introduced a 24-hour cat containment requirement, under S25 of the Act, that applies across the municipality, making it an offence for a cat to be outside the owner's property. This requirement in part is aimed at reducing the incidence of breeding to decrease the number of unwanted cat litters in the community and reduce the occurrences of nuisance.

Current local laws

Local Law No 2 regulates the number of animals that can be kept at a property and provides the framework for compliance actions.

Current policies and procedures

Compliance policy provides a framework for enforcement action such as issuing of caution and infringement notices for dogs and cats found at large, or follow up of registration and identification requirements.

Current policies and procedures include:

- All cats and dogs over the age of three months must be registered and those being registered for the first time must also be microchipped (registration is free for animals under 12 months)
- All dogs and cats are desexed prior to being adopted and rehomed through BARC
- All dogs and cats reclaimed from BARC are microchipped and registered
- All dogs and cats taken to BARC are held for eight days for the owner to reclaim
- Unclaimed animals become property of the City and are managed according to the Code
- All dogs and cats to be rehoused must pass the appropriate temperament tests and veterinarian checks
- Loaning of humane trigger plate traps under strict guidelines for residents to trap feral and trespassing domestic cats
- Investigate all reports of inappropriate breeders

98%

are aware of the 24 hour cat containment requirement



4.3 Our plan

Considering the above, the activities and objectives for the next four years are listed in the following table.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Work with the community to further reduce euthanasia rates for impounded cats and dogs		
Provide training support for pet owners to reduce undesirable behaviours in pets.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increase shelter reclaim rates of cats and dogs found wandering.
Provide discounted registration costs for desexed pets.		
Educate community on the effect that feeding un-owned cats has on over-population.		
Promote lost and found pets online and on social media platforms to reunite them with their owner.		
Objective 2: Provide transparency to our public in relation to over-population and high euthanasia rates		
Provide access to statistics on the euthanasia rates at the shelter.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Provide animal outcome data as required into fate data reporting as required by AWV.
Objective 3: Provide discount cat desexing to eligible residents, and encourage ownership of community cats		
Continue to work with the National Desexing Network to provide low cost cat desexing to eligible residents.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increase in the number of cats entering the program from the previous comparable period.
Continue to seek grant funding application opportunities to run a low-cost desexing program to support disadvantaged pet owners within our municipality.		
Objective 4: Create more options for animals who are not suitable for adoptions through a shelter		
Increase community foster carers to provide care for vulnerable animals such as neonatal kittens which are vulnerable to disease and ill-health in shelters.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increased opportunities for animals to enter foster care and options for rehoming.
Continue to expand our network of rescue organisations, providing the option to transfer animals to other organisations which may be better equipped to manage behavioural or medical requirements.		
Provide foster to adopt options for pets.		



5

Registration and identification



5.1 Context and current situation

All dogs and cats over the age of three months must be microchipped and registered within the municipality they reside.

Registration fees help fund animal management services provided by the City. The City are required to pay a portion of every dog and cat registration to the Victorian Government to fund community education programs and the administration and maintenance of website, registers and databases.

An animal found with a registration or microchip marker has a much higher chance of being reunited with its owner and not being taken to the animal shelter.

It has been identified that the number of registered animals has not increased alongside the estimated increase in pet ownership. Increasing awareness of registration requirements and the benefits of registration has been identified as a priority for the Animal Services team.

5.2 Our orders, local laws, policies and procedures

Current orders

Dogs and cats are required to be microchipped at the time of renewal of registration (s.10C). All dogs and cats over the age of three months must be registered.

Current local laws

The City's Local Law No 2, as mentioned in previous sections, regulates the number of dogs and cats that can be kept at a property.

Current policies and procedures

Fees for the registration of cats and dogs are undertaken as part of the City's annual budget process, and is subject to the financial policies of the City including Hardship Policy.

Relevant procedures include the Dog Seizure Procedure and After-Hours Response Procedure. The Compliance Policy provides a rationale and framework for an equitable, transparent and consistent approach to compliance activities undertaken by the City.

Our current compliance activities

Compliance activities include:

- Conduct random door knocking each year to check for unregistered cats and dogs
- Ensuring all dogs and cats are registered and microchipped prior to their release from BARC
- All registered animals found wandering, where possible, are returned to their owners in the first instance
- All officers carry microchip scanners and public areas are patrolled regularly to undertake random checks for unregistered animals. Officers also have mobile access to registration data in the field to be more efficient in returning animals to their owners
- Registration checks are commonly undertaken on reports where it is suspected that unregistered animals may reside
- Follow up of failure to register or renew animal registration through the issue of caution notices and infringement notices in accordance with the City's Compliance Policy
- Unpaid infringement notices are lodged with Fines Victoria for follow up

5.3 Our plan

Considering the above, the activities and objectives for the next four years are listed in the following table.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Increase awareness of importance and benefits of pet registration		
Use social media platforms to communicate the benefits of registration, such as increased chances of being reunited with owner.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increased animal registrations.
Provide clarity on how funding from pet registration is utilised by the City.	2027.	
Provide information via registration mail out on what registration animal services are provided due to registrations.		
Objective 2: Continue to remind people of the requirement to register their pets		
Issue reminder notices to all pets who have been previously registered and not renewed.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increased animal registrations.
Send SMS reminders and emails for all unpaid registrations, along with messaging of its importance.	During each renewal period.	
Objective 3: Increase convenience of registration payments		
Provide and maintain an online platform for pet owners to pay their registration renewal, update details, and submit new animal registrations.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increased animal registrations.
Help owners to complete their registration by assisting to gather the required information (e.g. scan for microchip numbers, sight desexing tattoos, breed identification).		
Objective 4: Consider additional incentives for registered pets		
Consider further discounts for pets which have been consistently registered on time.	2027.	Increased animal registrations.
Consider to provide 'no fee' reclaims of registered animals found lost or wandering (within a certain time frame).	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	



6

Nuisance

6.1 Context and current situation

The regulations for managing dog and cat nuisance, relating to noise, trespassing and wandering at large, are contained within the Act.

Three common types of nuisance complaints that Animal Services deal with are noise from barking dogs, dog faeces in public spaces, and trespass of cats.

The City responds to over 3,000 requests each year regarding nuisance behaviours caused by domestic animals including barking dogs, wandering dogs and cat trepass. Residents can lodge requests online, by telephone, email or in person. Requests are reviewed to identify past issues and emerging trends helping ensure that the actions outlined in this document reflect current community concerns. The objective is to encourage positive compliance behaviours from residents.

Excessive barking

Barking dog complaints can be a source of great irritation within the community and are extremely time consuming and difficult for officers to resolve. Responses to our recent survey indicate that 51 per cent of residents are impacted by barking dogs.

Investigating these complaints takes time, as officers need to gather enough evidence to confirm that a nuisance exists. This can be tricky since barking is often intermittent and subjective—what's disruptive to one person might not be to another.

City officers based on the evidence collected can issue notices to the dog owner to abate the nuisance, issue infringement notices or have the matter heard in the Magistrates Court to seek an order from the Court to abate the nuisance.

Excessive barking can have several causes including:

- Housing environment, including inadequate yard space and lack of stimulation
- Inadequate exercise and interactions with people and or other dogs
- Inadequate shelter from weather conditions
- Hunger or thirst
- A medical condition such as illness or injury
- Provocation or disturbance - movement outside the dog's property (e.g. passers-by, other dogs barking, possums, cats)
- Changes to the family structure, routine or territory
- Learned behavior - dogs often bark more if they learn that their owner makes a fuss over them when they bark
- Contact seeking - dogs are social animals, barking and howling are ways that dogs can communicate with each other over distance
- Territorialism (visitors to the property) and communication

Not all barking dog complaints can be prevented. The objective is to resolve complaints as quickly and smoothly as possible. Sometimes the dog's behaviour requires professional advice from a veterinarian or referral to a qualified behaviourist is recommended. The City has established a list of behaviourists that owners of dogs with a barking problem can be referred.

The process for dealing with barking dogs tries to balance the interests and rights of both the dog owner and the resident affected by the noise. Often cases are resolved reasonably quickly after the initial complaint, but some require an investigation to be undertaken, which may take some time to determine if a problem exists.

Dog faeces

The pollution of footpaths, parks and reserves by dog faeces is a concern raised by residents in recent surveys, with 51 per cent of people feeling that dog waste on public streets was a significant issue. This is down from 72 per cent four years ago.

It is generally accepted that dog faeces left in public spaces is smelly, unsightly and unpleasant to step in. However, it can also host disease and parasites which can infect other dogs that come into contact with it, or worse, be transmitted to people.

Toxocara Canis is the roundworm that can be found in the faeces of infected dogs and can be passed onto humans.

Dog faeces is not a fertiliser and breaks down slowly. Leaving it lying around encourages other dogs to mark their spot. Dog faeces litter can lead to bacteria and algae in our water ways which can harm birds, fish, frogs and insects.

The City presently has a Local Law which requires dog owners to pick up their dog's faeces from public places. There is also a requirement that dog owners take a bag or other suitable device with them for picking up their dog faeces when walking their dog. It is not proposed to modify these requirements. 100 per cent of survey respondents indicated that they are aware of these requirements.

Cat trespass

The City have introduced a 24 hour cat containment requirement in 2024 that cats must be securely confined to their owner's property. Our survey responses show that a majority of residents are aware of cat containment (98 per cent), however nearly the same number of residents observe cats breaking this containment requirement (78 per cent).

Cats can create a nuisance to residents by leaving faeces in gardens and children's play areas, spraying plants and buildings with their urine, fighting with other cats which often involve loud and disturbing vocalisation, and upsetting resident cats which reside on the property by trespassing.

It is important to note that not all these cats would be owned. Some may be called a community cat and residents believe the cat is not owned but do provide food or care. BARC currently have funding to run a community cat desexing program to assist residents to become the owner of a community cat by removing a barrier to ownership by an affordable option for desexing.

Cat trespass can be significantly reduced by increased containment requirements, and a reduction in the number of un-owned cats living among the community.

Cats have a major impact on Victoria's biodiversity, with wild cats being one of the most significant threats to the survival of the state's threatened wildlife. Around 46 per cent of Australia's endangered wildlife can be found in towns and cities (*Ives et al. 2015*), so it is a topic that requires consideration for both urban and rural cats.

The main environmental impact of wandering cats is through direct predation, but cats also spread diseases that affect humans, livestock and our wildlife. These diseases can cause abortions in livestock, which reduces farmers' productivity, and create scar tissue in livestock meat, which reduces farmers' incomes.

6.2 Our orders, local laws, policies and procedures

Current orders

During 2024, a S25 Order under the Act came into effect. This Order requires all cats to be securely confined to their owner's property 24 hours a day, making it an offence for a cat to be outside the owner's property. This is to reduce incidence of breeding to decrease the number of unwanted cat litters in the community and reduce the occurrences of nuisance.

The City also implemented a S26 Order in 2024 that requires dogs to be on leash at all times unless in a designated off leash area. The Order also contains several venues where dogs are prohibited.

Current local laws

As per Chapter 3.2, the City's Local Law No 2 regulates the numbers of dogs and/or cats that can be kept at a property and requires dog owners remove and dispose of faeces deposited by their dogs in public places.

Current policies and procedures

Current policies and procedures for management of customer concerns relating to a nuisance caused by pets in the community includes:

- Nuisance animals policy
- Investigation manual for nuisance
- Compliance policy
- After hours response procedure
- Trespassing livestock procedure
- Issuing of infringement and caution notices procedure
- Internal review procedure
- Guidelines for dealing with animal matters

Our current compliance activities

The City has a comprehensive manual and procedures for dealing with nuisance issues and has several trained staff dedicated to managing the nuisance issues that arise from animals. Our staff respond to over 5,000 requests per year, including more than 500 barking dog requests.

6.3 Our plan

Considering the above, the activities and objectives for the next four years are listed in the following table.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Manage dog nuisance complaints		
Access to pet training advice to reduce undesirable behaviours such as barking.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Reduction in the number of complaints in relation to a nuisance caused by dogs, including barking and faeces in public spaces.
Continue to investigage barking dog complaints, in line with investigation policies and manuals.		
Review education material about managing dog nuisance issues on the website.		
Objective 2: Manage cat nuisance complaints		
Provide education material about cat enclosures.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Reduction in the number of complaints in relation to a nuisance caused by cats including trespass.
Review education material about managing cat nuisance issues on the website.	2027.	
Participate in the National Desexing Network programs to provide all eligible residents with discount cat desexing.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	
Provide free microchipping to pet owners within the municipality.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	
Provide affordable options for residents feeding/caring for community cats to become responsible cat owners.	2027.	
Provide cat traps for hire at no cost (refundable deposit required).	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	



7

Dog attacks

7.1 Context and current situation

There are several reasons why dogs will roam, including opportunity and boredom. Roaming dogs can be a problem as they can cause traffic hazards, act aggressively towards people and other animals, deposit faeces, be destructive, spread disease, can develop instinctive behaviours and act independently (disobedience).

Dogs that are used to roaming and having freedom can develop behavioural problems and are likely to protest when confined, which in turn can lead to residential amenity issues. Roaming dogs are also more likely to be involved in a rush or an attack on a person or another animal.

The City treats all dog attacks as a matter of priority and is a vital component of the Animal Services team.

As identified in the statistics on page 9, the City had 211 reported dog attacks in 2023/24. The City investigates each reported matter in accordance with the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Matters may include dog attacks on people, other dogs, other animals, or livestock. During 2023/24, the City successfully prosecuted 2 incidents. Other matters reported may have been finalised through infringement notices, notices to comply, official warnings or in some cases the City may be unable to take any further action.

Our survey shows that 27 per cent of respondents have experienced a dog rush or attack, however some are not reported to the City for investigation. Development of a program to educate residents on how to identify a dog attack, and the process for reporting it, are considered in the plan.

7.2 Our orders, local laws, policies and procedures

Current orders

Greater Bendigo is now considered a default on leash municipality following the introduction of an order under S26 that requires dogs to be on leash at all times unless in a designated off leash area. Dogs are prohibited from certain areas of the City as per the Order.

Current local laws

There are currently no Local Laws relevant to dog attacks. Instead, the provisions of the Domestic Animals Act are used when responding to reports of a dog attack.

Current policies and procedures

Current policies and procedures for customer concerns relating to dog attacks in the community includes the:

- Dog attack procedure
- Destruction procedure
- Dangerous dog declaration procedure
- Menacing dog declaration procedure
- Procedure for prosecuting dog attacks
- Dog seizure procedure
- After hours response procedure
- Issuing of infringements procedure
- Nuisance animals policy
- Compliance policy

Our current compliance activities

Officers respond to reports of dog attacks as a high priority to reduce dog attacks.

All declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Register (VDDR) including type of declaration.

7.3 Our plan

Considering the above, the activities and objectives for the next four years are listed in the following table.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Increase awareness of safety around dogs and reduce number of attacks		
Maintain a designated dog attack information webpage which explains the implications for the dog and owner if the dog attacks, and information for those affected by a dog attack.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Reduction in number of dog attacks.
Publicise key dog attack prevention messages (e.g. confinement of dogs to property, leash laws etc.) through social media articles and the City website.		
Undertake letterbox drops in areas where an unknown dog has attacked.		
Ensure annual audits of properties where Dangerous, Menacing or Restricted Breed Dogs are housed and properties where a Magistrate has imposed an order to contain.		
Make the community aware of outcomes of dog attack prosecutions where possible.		
Provide information on how to safely interact with dogs.	2027.	
Objective 2: Reduce harassment and wandering by dogs		
Promote the importance of desexing at an early age.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Reduced rate of impounded dogs as a result of wandering, and decreased reports of harassment caused by wandering dogs.
Identify and patrol properties where containment is not sufficient and other high-risk areas.		
Benchmark data of dog attacks against previous years to identify trends or useful information.		
Educate the community about dog confinement and penalties for owners not keeping their dog confined.	2027.	

8



Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

8.1 Context and current situation

The City is required to effectively identify all Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs (RBDs) in the district and to ensure that these dogs are kept in compliance with the Act and regulations.

A dog is considered Dangerous, regardless of its breed or actions, if it is left to guard non-residential premises, or it has been trained to attack or bite a person or clothing attached to or worn by a person.

Any dog, regardless of its breed or size, can be declared Dangerous if the dog has attacked and bitten a person or other animal and caused serious injury, or has menaced people more than once.

A dog can be declared Menacing if the dog causes a non-serious bite injury to a person or animal, or the dog rushes or chases a person in an aggressive manner.

Restricted Breed Dogs are five specific breeds of dogs that are considered a higher risk to community safety than other breeds of dogs.

In 2003, the Victorian Government introduced Restricted Breed Dog Legislation to regulate the ownership and keeping of dogs whose importation is prohibited under the *Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956*.

The following dog breeds are restricted:

- American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier)
- Fila Brasileiro
- Japanese Tosa
- Dogo Argentino
- Perro de Presa Canario (or Presa Canario)

Only the American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier) and Dogo Argentino are known to be in Victoria.

The Victorian Government has developed a standard for identifying RBDs and all dogs fitting the Standard including part breeds, except where exemptions are given by the Standard, are considered an RBD. RBDs not registered prior to September 30, 2011 are not allowed to be kept in Victoria.

At June 2025, the City had a total of 6 Dangerous dogs, 5 Menacing dogs and no RBDs.



Dogo Argentino

8.2 Our policies and procedures

Current policies and procedures

Current policies and procedures relating to the management of Dangerous, Menacing and RBDs in the community includes:

- Dangerous and Restricted Breed Dogs inspection procedure
- Dog seizure procedure
- Destruction Procedure
- Dangerous dog declaration procedure
- Menacing dog declaration procedure
- Procedure for prosecuting dog procedure
- Issuing of infringements procedure
- Compliance policy details the enforcement framework for decision making with issuing notices to comply, infringement notices, or filing charges for prosecution
- Internal procedure requiring two officers to be present when visiting a property where a Dangerous dog is kept
- Officers are duly authorised and delegated via the City's Instrument of Delegation the provisions to destroy a Dangerous dog or an RBD under certain circumstances, declare a dog to be Dangerous or Menacing or to register/refuse the registration of an RBD

Current compliance activites

Staff are trained in identifying RBDs and respond to community reports with inspections conducted of industrial areas for dogs guarding premises.

The City has implemented a formal registration and annual audit program for properties where declared Dangerous or Restricted Breed Dogs reside. Unannounced audits are also undertaken during this time or in response to reports from the community. Any serious breaches of audit requirements are dealt with by enforcement actions.

Prescribed requirements for keeping Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

There are a clear set of requirements which must be met to appropriately house and contain a Dangerous dog or RBD, and to prevent incidents caused by Menacing dogs.

The prescribed requirements for keeping RBDs include:

- Desexing
- Microchip identification
- Warning signs on property
- Muzzled and on leash outside the property
- Must wear a prescribed collar at all times
- Registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Register (VDDR)
- Housed in an enclosure or secured yard
- Annual inspection by a City officer
- Requirement to notify the City of change of address or ownership, or if the dog dies or goes missing
- Higher rate of registration with no pension concession
- Harsh penalties (Crimes Act) for attacking a person, including ten years jail if the dog kills a person, or five years jail if the dog endangers someone's life

The prescribed requirements for keeping a Dangerous dog are similar to RBD requirements, however there is a colour difference of the warning signs, and they also must be in an enclosure on a residential property (not secured yard) or within prescribed perimeter fencing when guarding non-residential property.

The City may require a declared Menacing dog to be muzzled when outside the owner's premises to prevent the dog from being able to bite. The City may also require the dog to be under effective control of a person by means of a chain, cord or leash whenever it is outside the owner's premises.

A Menacing Dog Declaration can be upgraded to a Dangerous Dog Declaration if the owner of the Menacing dog has been issued with two infringement notices for failing to comply with requirements, such as leashing or muzzling their dog while in public places.


Japanese Tosa

8.3 Our plan

Considering the above, the activities and objectives for the next four years are listed in the following table.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Reduce the risk of dog attacks by ensuring that all declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs investigations are managed quickly and efficiently		
Respond to complaints regarding Menacing, Dangerous and RBDs as a matter of priority.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	All complaints are actioned in accordance with the customer service charter, resulting in successful compliance action.
Review policies and delegations in relation to declaring a dog Dangerous or Menacing.		
Benchmark data of dog attack against previous years to identify trends or useful information.		
Objective 2: Reduce the risk of dog attacks by ensuring that all declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs are kept in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act requirements		
Ensure that all properties where declared dogs and RBDs are kept have random, unannounced inspections annually.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	100 per cent of required properties audited annually.
Ensure all declared dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.		

9

Domestic animal businesses

9.1 Context and current situation

The City has several registered Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs). These businesses operate under approved Codes of Practice and are subject to regular audit. Under the provisions of the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*, a Domestic Animal Business is:

- An animal shelter
- A Council pound (operated by a Council or a contractor on behalf of a Council)
- A pet shop
- A dog training establishment (where the business is run for profit)
- A dog and/or cat breeding establishment where there are three or more fertile females and the proprietor is not a member of an applicable organisation. If the proprietor is a member or an applicable organisation, they are allowed up to nine fertile females
- An establishment that is rearing dogs or cats (where the business is run for profit)
- A dog or cat boarding establishment (where the business is run for profit to provide overnight, day-care or homecare boarding)

9.2 Our plan



Current policies and procedures

Current policies and procedures relating to a Domestic Animal Business include the Instrument of Delegation which provides delegation to staff to implement the DAB provisions of the Act regarding:

- Refuse to register or renew the registration of the premises
- Refuse to transfer the registration to a new premises
- Suspend the registration of the premises, or impose terms, conditions, limitations or restrictions on the registration of a premises
- Revoke the registration of a premises

Compliance policy provides the framework to guide compliance and enforcement action including (but not limited to) issuing notices to comply, infringement notices, refuse to register or revoking the registration or filing charges for prosecution regarding DABs.

In addition, a Domestic Animal Business must be audited annually, and must comply with relevant legislation mentioned previously relating to the number of animals which can be kept at a property, and animal registration requirements.

9.3 Our plan

Considering the above, the activities and objectives for the next four years are listed in the following table.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality and ensure that they are in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act		
Inspect and audit all registered Domestic Animal Businesses annually.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	100 per cent of registered DABs inspected annually, with reduced rate of non-compliance.
Investigate any reports and complaints of unregistered DABs within 48 hours.		Number of reports actioned within 48 hours.
Provide relevant Code of Practice to proprietors of existing and proposed DABs.		Relevant information distributed.
Monitor newspapers and online advertisements to identify unregistered businesses and compare information to the Pet Exchange Register.		Number of new businesses identified and registered.



10

Other matters

10.1 Context and current situation

Population of unowned cats

The population of unowned cats has been highlighted over the past four years by the cat numbers coming into the shelter. An over-population of cats in the community results in several issues.

Desexing is an effective management strategy to reduce stray cat population. BARC provides several low-cost desexing options for eligible people in the community. It provides an option for residents to become owners of community cats and reduce the opportunity for unwanted litters by removing a barrier to ownership for the resident.

BARC have had desexing programs available for the past five years which has resulted in a decrease by 28% of cat incoming to BARC compared to 2022/23 which saw the highest number of cats incoming to the shelter. Similar reductions have been noted in the number of requests lodged relating to nuisance and the number of cat collections. This Community Cat Program in conjunction with other measures such as 24 hour cat containment have driven these reductions.

The City has also partnered with the National Desexing Network (NDN) to provide discounted cat desexing to eligible residents.

Over the period these desexing programs have ran, more than 1100 cats have been desexed. Conservatively, these programs may have prevented a huge amount of kittens being produced within our municipality.

70 per cent of survey respondents would like support in the form of discounted desexing, and so the partnership with the NDN will continue in addition to the City applying for any applicable funding opportunities.

Emergency housing provisions for pets

There are many situations that might call for emergency housing for an animal when an owner is not able to care for them. In many of these situations, it is best practise to not encourage 'surrendering' an animal for rehoming, as the bond between the owner and the pet is vital in supporting the owner though the experience they are managing. Situations may include escape from family violence, homelessness, or the requirement for medical treatment or rehabilitation. BARC will continue to provide support to pet owners experiencing these situations however is not able to provide emergency housing or boarding.

The contributions pets make to healthy lifestyles

Pets can improve their owner's health, and the benefits of owning a pet have been proven to include a reduction in stress, anxiety, and depression. They can ease loneliness, encourage exercise and playfulness, and even improve your cardiovascular health. Caring for an animal can help children grow up to be more secure and active. Pets also provide valuable companionship for older adults.

The importance of pets has been widely identified by the City's Healthy Communities and Environments directorate and future consideration is being made to support a desire for pet ownership by assisting people to choose the right animal for them and understand the benefits of owning a pet.

10.2 Our policies and procedures

Current policies and procedures

The shelter service provided by BARC currently works with several other organisations to provide emergency accommodation to animals whose owners might be experiencing family violence, homelessness, or other significant disruption which threatens the relationships they have with their pet.

There is currently an existing Emergency Animal Welfare Plan that sits as part of the Integrated Municipal Emergency Management Plan that contains the City's actions and responses for animal management and welfare in an emergency.

Current compliance activites

All processes fit within the Victorian *Code of Practice for the Management of Dogs and Cats in Shelters and Pounds*, as well as the Health Management Plan for the BARC.

Discount cat desexing is delivered in accordance with the Domestic Animal Act by ensuring that all desexed cats are microchipped and registered.

10.3 Our plan

Considering the above, the activities and objectives for the next four years are listed in the following table.



Activity	When	Evaluation
Objective 1: Support the community to manage community cats responsibly		
Provide support to residents who are feeding/caring for a community cat by providing affordable desexing, microchipping and registration.	Will continue for 2026-2029 plan dependant on funding.	The Bendigo Community Cat Program will continue to provide a desexing, microchipping and registration service for eligible residents.
Continue to partner with the National Desexing Network to provide discount cat desexing.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	
Objective 2: Establish a community-centric emergency management plan for animals		
Provide ongoing community support to pet owners experiencing difficulty.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Successful service provision.
Provide timely community notices about current situations that may impact their pet's health and wellbeing (e.g. heatwaves, fireworks).	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	
Consider support options for people and pets required to evacuate (e.g. flood, fire).	As required.	
Objective 3: Encourage pet ownership as a means of health and wellbeing of the City's residents		
Provide assistance to people seeking companionship with an animal by providing guidance and assistance on choosing the right animal.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increase pet ownership.
Increase community awareness of the benefits of owning a pet.	Ongoing will continue for 2026-2029 plan.	Increase pet ownership.
Contribute to the review of the Public Space Plan to establish service standards for designated off leash areas and criteria for identifying future sites.	2026-2027.	Policy adopted.



11

Annual review and reporting

Under section 68A(3) of the Domestic Animals Act, the City must:

- Review its DAMP annually and, if appropriate, amend the Plan
- Provide the Secretary with a copy of the Plan, including any amendments to the Plan
- Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the Plan in its annual report

The actions of the Domestic Animal Management Plan will be reported and monitored via the City's business planning software which assists in monitoring strategic plan actions.

The DAMP will continue to be monitored annually against several key performance indicators. A number of these indicators form part of the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) and infringement activity is reported to the Attorney-General. The performance indicators are:

- Number of dog and cat registrations
- Number of dogs and cats entering BARC
- Number of dog and cats reclaimed from BARC
- Number of dogs and cats rehoused from BARC
- Number of dogs and cats euthanised
- Number of dog management requests
- Number of cat management requests
- Total requests for animal services
- Number of prosecutions undertaken
- Number of successful prosecutions
- Number of infringement notices
- Response times for service delivery

Activity	When	Evaluation
1. Evaluation of implementation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan		
Conduct annual review of the DAMP.	Annually as part of the Plan.	Ensure actions are delivered as per the Plan, and the content remains current with the needs of the community and the Act.
Update the DAMP as required.	As required.	Provide the DAMP to the Secretary if amendments are undertaken.
Report on the implementation of the DAMP in the City's annual report.	Annually.	Report completed.

Appendix A - Activity summary

	Objective	Activity
2. Training of authorised officers		
1	Maintain a training register for individual officers detailing completed and proposed training.	Maintain a skills matrix for employed staff to identify required and proposed training.
2	Ensure all new Authorised Officers have completed their minimum training requirements within 12 months of appointment.	Identify minimum training requirements for Authorised Officers and record when officers have completed each course. Maintain records of when officers complete training courses.
3	Provide opportunities for additional training each year.	Identify additional training opportunities e.g. prosecutions training, advanced conflict management and mediation.
4	Provide and maintain performance training/planning process for individual officers.	Complete annual development plan and review process for each staff member.



Objective	Activity
3. Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership	
1 Increase pet registrations.	• Continue with discounts for desexed pets • Provide education on the purpose of pet registration through increased community presence, and support owners to complete registration details, e.g. assist with sighting desexing tattoos, obtaining microchip numbers • Pound service discounts for registered pets • Online payment options for registrations • Investigate pet registration amnesty • Promote benefits of registered pets, e.g. return to owner from the field • Further discounts for continued registrations, e.g. price lock in • Review registration fees to encourage new registrations
2 Increase pet microchipping.	• Continue to provide free microchipping services • Consider microchipping events to reach a wider range of pet owners • Conduct microchipping events in public spaces, e.g. dog parks, community houses
3 Increase dog waste removal.	• Empower the community to encourage owners to clean up after their dogs including but not limited to additional signage in key areas, targeted ad-hoc patrols, or decals on footpaths • Provide environmentally friendly dog waste bags through for pet owners • Adhoc patrols by Local Laws Officers at popular dog walking/ exercise areas and known locations identified by the community
4 Increase the number of desexed pets not intended for breeding.	• Provide discount registration for desexed pets • Provide discount cat desexing to eligible residents • Run 'Last Litter Program' for dogs, providing discount desexing for those eligible
5 Assist residents with choosing the right pet.	• Provide advice and guidance to help people analyse what pet might be right for them • Continue to provide education for pets being adopted from the shelter
6 Promote responsible pet ownership to the younger generation.	• Visiting local schools to educate the next generation of pet owners of the importance of responsible pet ownership
7 Increase cat containment.	• Promote and share existing resources from Rethink Roaming campaign • Provide flyers, information and advice on how to contain cats • Partner with local businesses to provide cat containment workshop sessions

Objective	Activity
4. Programs to address over-population rates	
1 Work with the community to further reduce euthanasia rates for impounded cats and dogs.	• Provide discounted registration costs for desexed pets • Educate community on the effect that feeding un-owned cats has on over-population • Promote lost/found pets online and on social media platforms to reunite them with their owner • Provide training support for pet owners to reduce undesirable behaviours in pets
2 To provide transparency to our public in relation to overpopulation and high euthanasia rates.	• Provide access to statistics on the euthanasia rates at the shelter
3 Provide discount cat desexing to eligible residents and encourage ownership of community cats.	• Continue to work with the National Desexing Network to provide low cost cat desexing to eligible residents • Continue to seek grant funding opportunities to run a low-cost desexing program to support disadvantaged pet owners within our municipality
4 Create more options for animals who are not suitable for adoptions though a shelter.	• Increase community foster carers to provide care for vulnerable animals such as neonatal kittens which are vulnerable to disease and ill-health in shelters • Continue to expand our network of rescue organisations, providing the option to transfer animals to other organisations which may be better equipped to manage behavioural or medical requirements • Provide foster to adopt options for pets
5. Registration and identification	
1 Increase awareness of importance and benefits of pet registration.	• Use social media platforms to communicate the benefits of registration, such as increased chances of being reunited with owner • Provide clarity on how funding from pet registration is utilised by the City • Provide information via registration mail out on what services are provided due to registrations
2 Continue to remind people of the requirement to register their pets.	• Issue reminder notices to all pets who have been previously registered and not renewed • Send SMS reminders and emails for all unpaid registrations, along with messaging of its importance
3 Increase convenience of registration payments.	• Provide and maintain an online platform for pet owners to pay their registration renewal, update details, and submit new animal registrations • Help owners to complete their registration by assisting to gather the required information, e.g. scan for microchip numbers, sight desexing tattoos, breed identification
4 Consider additional incentives for registered pets.	• Consider further discounts for pets which have been consistently registered on time • Continue to provide 'no fee' reclaims of registered of animals found lost or wandering (within a certain time frame)

Objective	Activity
6. Nuisance	
1 Manage dog nuisance complaints.	• Maintain technology such as noise recorders for assessing nuisance • Continue to investigate barking dog complaints, in line with investigation policies and manuals • Review education material about managing dog nuisance issues on the website
2 Manage cat nuisance complaints.	• Provide education material about cat enclosures • Review education material about managing cat nuisance issues on the website • Participate in the National Desexing Network programs to provide all eligible residents with discount cat desexing • Provide free microchipping to pet owners within the municipality • Provide affordable options for residents feeding/caring for community cats to become responsible cat owners • Provide cat traps for hire at no cost (refundable deposit required)
7. Dog attacks	
1 Increase awareness of safety around dogs and reduce number of attacks.	• Maintain a designated dog attack information web page which explains the implications for dog and owner if the dog attacks, and information for those affected by a dog attack • Provide information on how to safely interact with dogs • Continue to educate community on requirements and laws related to containment, leash controls, and designated off leash areas • Make the community aware of outcomes of dog attack prosecutions where possible • Undertake letterbox drops in areas where an unknown dog has attacked • Ensure annual audits of properties where Dangerous, Menacing or Restricted Breed Dogs are housed and properties where a Magistrate has imposed an order to contain
2 Reduce harassment and wandering by dogs.	• Promote the importance of desexing at an early age • Identify and patrol properties where containment is not sufficient and other high-risk areas • Benchmark data of dog attacks against previous years to identify trends or useful information • Educate the community about dog confinement and leash requirements
8. Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs	
1 Reduce the risk of dog attacks by ensuring that all declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs investigations are managed quickly and efficiently.	• Respond to complaints regarding Menacing, Dangerous and RBDs as a matter of priority • Review policies and delegations in relation to declaring a dog Dangerous or Menacing • Benchmark data of dog attack against previous years to identify trends or useful information

	Objective	Activity
2	Reduce the risk of dog attacks by ensuring that all declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs are kept in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act requirements.	• Ensure that all properties where declared dogs and RBDs are kept have random, unannounced inspections annually • Ensure all declared dogs are accurately registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry
9. Domestic animal businesses		
1	Identify and register all Domestic Animal Businesses in the municipality and ensure that they are in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act.	• Inspect and audit all registered Domestic Animal Businesses annually • Investigate any reports and complaints of unregistered DABs • Provide relevant Code of Practice to proprietors of existing and proposed DABs • Monitor newspapers and online advertisements to identify unregistered businesses and compare information to the Pet Exchange Register
10. Other matters		
1	Support the community to manage community cats responsibly.	• Provide support to residents who are feeding/caring for a community cat by providing affordable desexing, microchipping and registration • Continue to partner with the National Desexing Network to provide discount cat desexing • Provide education and resources on the effect feeding a stray cat can have to increased disease transmission and over-population
2	Establish a community-centric emergency management plan for animals.	• Provide ongoing community support to pet owners experiencing difficulty • Providing timely community notices about current situations that may impact their pet's health and wellbeing (e.g. heatwaves, fireworks) • Consider support options for people and pets required to evacuate (e.g. flood, fire)
3	Encourage pet ownership as a means of health and wellbeing of the City's residents.	• Provide assistance to people seeking companionship with an animal by providing guidance and assistance on choosing the right animal • Increase community awareness and of the benefits of owning a pet • Contribute to the review of the Public Space Plan to establish service standards for designated off leash areas and criteria for identifying future sites
11. Annual review and reporting		
1	Evaluation of implementation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan.	• Conduct annual review of DAMP • Update DAMP as required • Report on the implementation of the DAMP in the City annual report









City of Greater Bendigo

W **www.bendigo.vic.gov.au**

E **requests@bendigo.vic.gov.au**

P **1300 002 642**
If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us via the National Relay Service. Phone 133 677 then ask for 1300 002 642

A **Bendigo: 189-229 Lyttleton Terrace, Bendigo**
Heathcote: 125 High Street, Heathcote

M **PO Box 733 Bendigo VIC 3552**

CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO