



**Domestic Animal
Management
Plan 2014-2017**

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Domestic Animal Management Plan

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, every council must prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan as follows:

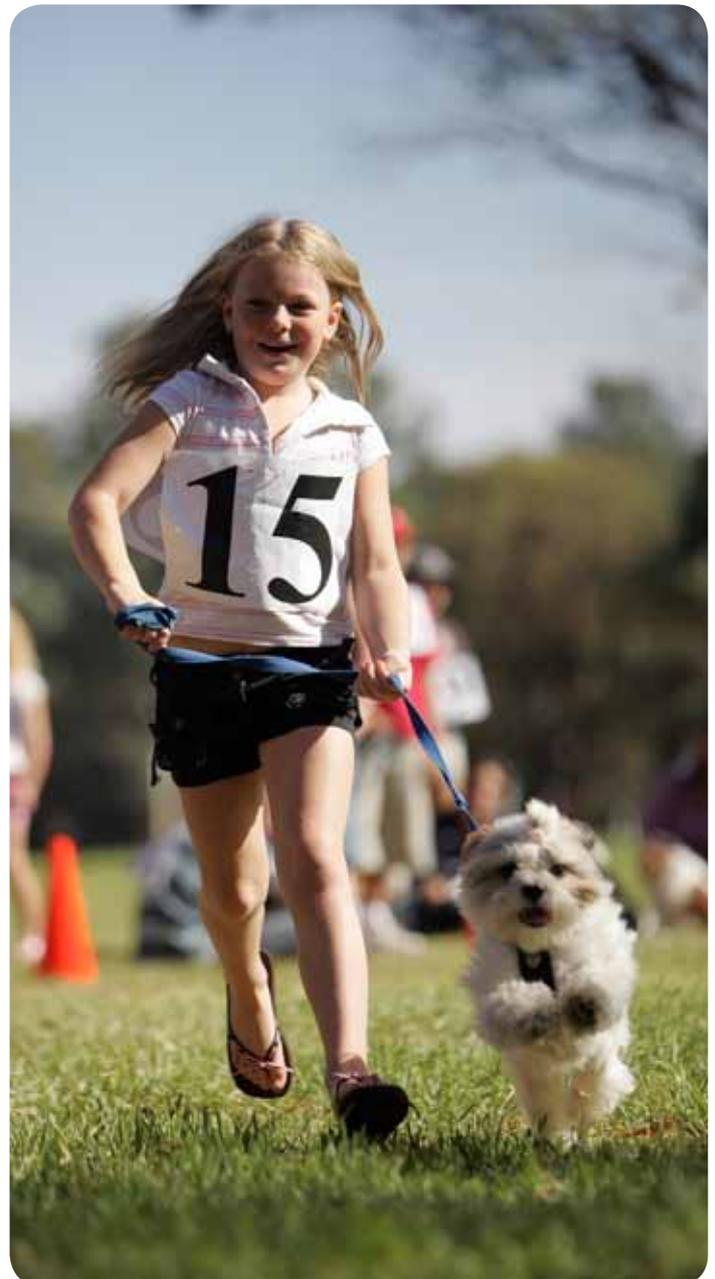
1. *“Every council must, in consultation with the secretary, prepare at four- year intervals a Domestic Animal Management Plan.*

2. *A Domestic Animal Management Plan prepared by a council must:*

- (a) Set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations;
- (b) Outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the council’s municipal district;
- (c) Outline programs, services and strategies which the council intends to pursue in its municipal district;
 - (i) To promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats;
 - (ii) To ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation;
 - (iii) To minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals;
 - (iv) To address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
 - (v) To encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats;
 - (vi) To minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - (vii) To effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations.
- (d) Provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the council’s municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable;
- (e) Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the council’s municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
- (f) Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.

3) *Every council must:*

- (a) Review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan;
- (b) Provide the secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
- (c) Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.”



1. Introduction

The aim of this Domestic Animal Management Plan (the plan) is to support **the council's mission** through effective management of domestic animals (**dogs and cats**) within the city of Wodonga.

The civic services team in delivering the plan aims to provide a community-focused service which strikes a balance between community expectations and compliance obligations under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act). The approach will use a mix of educational and regulatory processes to promote the notion of responsible pet ownership to gain compliance under the Act.

Development of the plan

This plan has been developed based on the outcomes and learnings from the previous plan, and a review of the existing data in areas such as complaints, dog attacks, registrations and impoundments. Initial community feedback and consultations with key stakeholders including veterinarians, animal businesses, volunteer groups, dog trainers and other service providers have also informed the plan. Issues identified by these consultations include:

- Adherence to legislation (the Act);
- Increased compliance to the Act;
- Identification of potential off-leash areas;
- Reduction of the number of stray and wandering animals;
- Introduction of 'on-leash' and other local laws relating to dogs and cats towards responsible pet ownership;
- Increased resourcing to help drive the council's animal management and education programs; and
- Increased community and domestic animal business awareness of animal welfare matters.

About the city of Wodonga

Spanning 433 square kilometres, the city is located in Victoria's north east, about 300km from Melbourne. The city, along with its near neighbour, Albury in NSW, is located in a strategic location on the main Melbourne-Sydney freeway and railway. There are more than 80km of bike and walking paths with picturesque parks and gardens dotted throughout the community providing the perfect opportunity for pet activities.

The city includes the suburbs and rural localities of Bandiana, Baranduda, Barnawartha North, Bonegilla, Castle Creek, Ebdon, Gateway Island, Huon Creek, Killara, Leneva, Staghorn Flat (part), West Wodonga and Wodonga.

Population and demographics

A snapshot of Wodonga:

- The estimated residential population at June, 2013 was 37,804 people;
- Wodonga is the largest and fastest growing centre in North East Victoria and one of the fastest growing regional Victorian cities;
- The average change of population between 2013 and 2031 will be 16,924, representing an annual percentage change of 2.08 per cent per annum (total 44.77 per cent);
- The average household size in 2012 was 2.52;
- The average household size in 2031 will be 2.54; and
- In 2031, people aged zero to four, 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 will be the most populous forecast age groups (Av. 4057).

It is expected that the number of pets in the city will grow in proportion to the population growth. By 2031 it is estimated there will be at least 8903 registered dogs in the city.

The council's mission states:

"We will strengthen our community in all that we do."

The council's vision for domestic animal management is:

"A community where pets are embraced as an integral part of a family, and where the safety of humans and the welfare of all animals underpins the delivery of council's animal management programs."

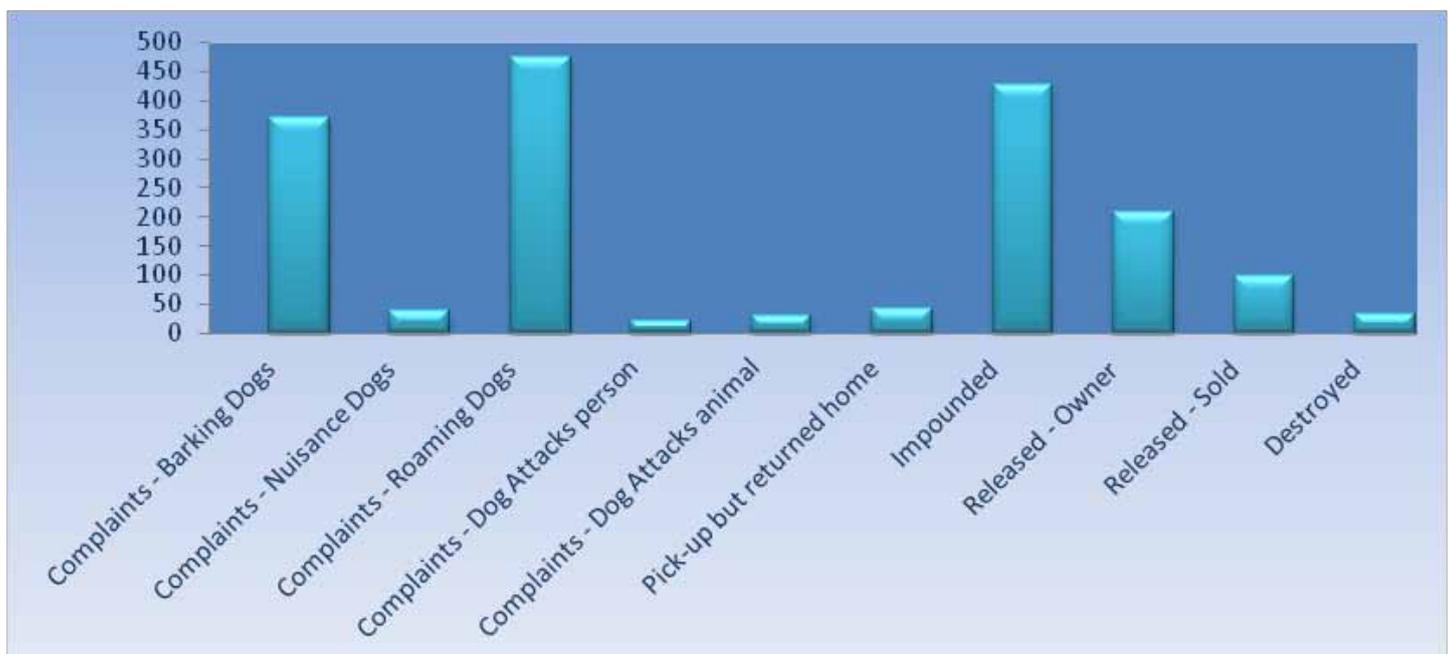
Domestic animal statistics and data

The following seven tables and graphs are based on the 2012-2013 financial year.

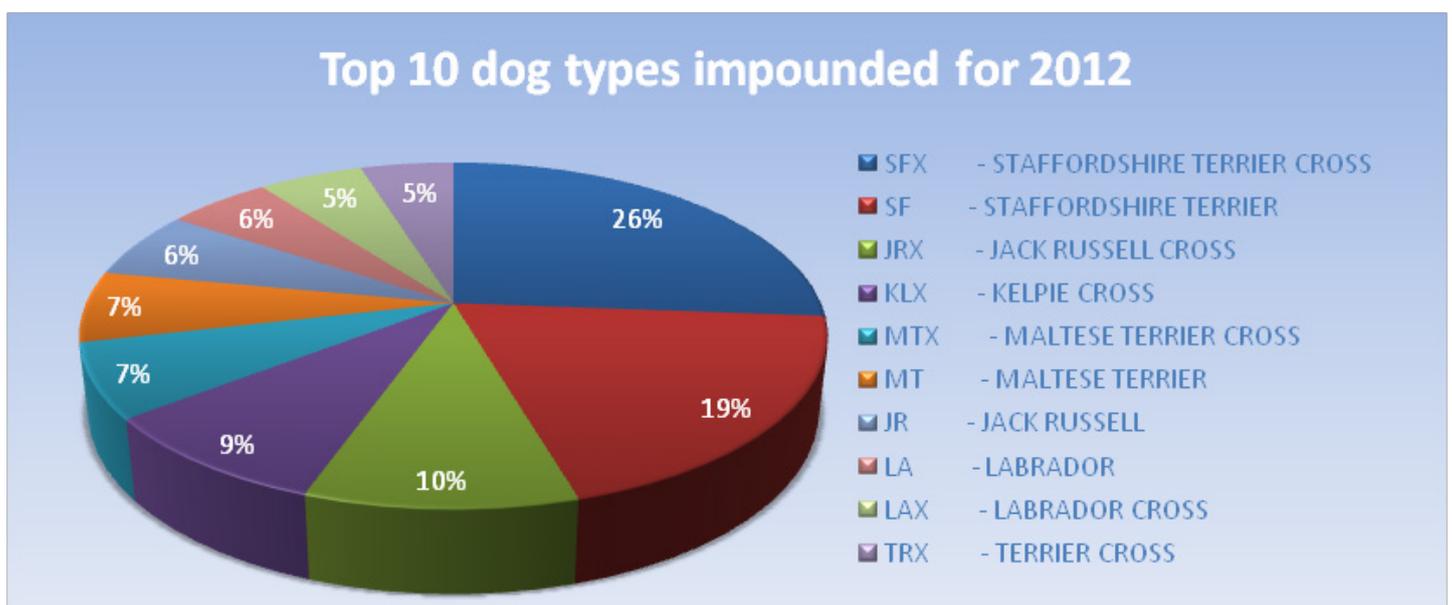
Number of registered dogs	6478
Number of dangerous dogs (guard dogs)	2
Number of restricted breed dogs	2
Number of menacing dogs	4
Average number of dogs impounded annually (over 10 years)	414
Average number of dogs reunited with owners (over 10 years)	202

The number of dogs entering the pound over the last four years has decreased but complaints have risen. Dog attacks have remained low and stable over the same period.

Dog data and statistics

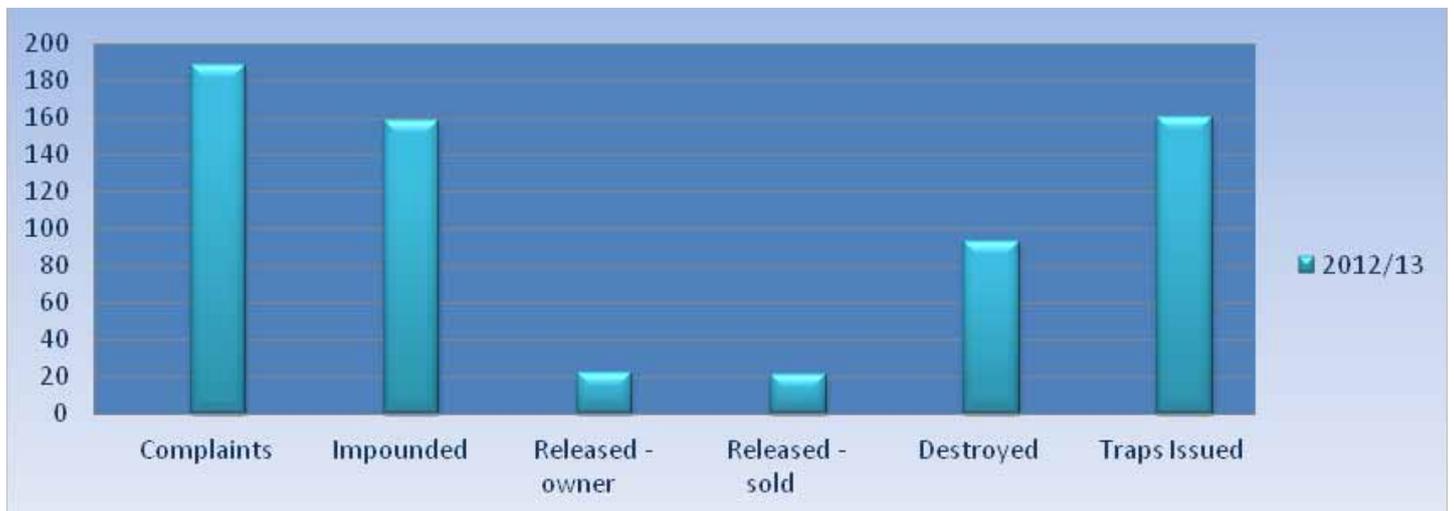


Top 10 dog types impounded for 2012



Number of registered cats	1750
Average number of cats impounded annually	158
Average number of cats reunited with owners	22
Number of traps issued	160

Cat data and statistics



Domestic animal businesses	
Registered domestic animal businesses	3
Number of boarding establishments	1
Number of pet shops	3
Number of pounds/shelters	1



2. Training of authorised officers

Section 68(A)(2)(b) of the Act outlines programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the council’s municipal district.

Context

The civic services team Wodonga Council is responsible for animal management operations under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, other applicable state laws and the council’s local laws.

Current council officers involved in animal control are trained to the required standards to be able to perform all requirements under the legislation. Officer competency is developed through a mix of practical training and through structured courses and industry training. Furthermore, all civic services officers are ‘authorised officers’ to enable them to carry out the functions required of the relevant legislation or local laws.

An annual skills audit will be undertaken to identify any gaps in the skills available within the civic services team. This skills audit will also drive the development of performance evaluation system for each team member.

Number of authorised officers	
Animal management team	3
Pound attendants/assistants	1
Additional available legislative officers fully trained in animal management	2

Officer competency is developed through a mix of practical training and through structured courses and industry training.

Future plans

Objective 2.1: Maintain competency of animal management officers.		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Continually identify relevant training needs for civic services officers through consultation with management and the team. Include in the annual training plan.	Ongoing	Training needs identified and included in the training plan. All planned training undertaken and officer competency increased.

Objective 2.2: Annually review all internal processes to ensure best practice investigation, compliance and enforcement processes.		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Review all investigation, compliance and enforcement processes to ensure that the processes are consistent with current practices, legislation and community expectations. Undertake training relevant to any changes across the sector.	By July annually	Annually - processes reviewed and officer guidelines developed, approved training undertaken and officers deemed competent. Officers using a range of enforcement techniques including compliance and education dependant on council and community expectations.

Current and planned training

Authorised officer training - basic	Current	Planned
Microchip implantation training:		
Officer one Officer two Officer three		Proposed Proposed Proposed
Industry training:		
Animal handling Breed identification Animal assessment Statement taking and brief preparation Evidence presentation and prosecution skills Computer skills Loading and unloading animals Emergency first aid for domestic animals Court etiquette training Court warrants, issue and filing Conflict resolution Aggressive dog handling	Completed x 2 permanent staff. One casual still to complete.	Certificate IV in Local Government (Regulatory Services) Refresher courses as required
Occupational Health and Safety (OH and S) training		
Animal control equipment use and care Animal handling induction Animal handling practical skills and practice Manual handling Emergency evacuation procedures Dealing with aggressive customers Conflict resolution Client interaction Council policies and procedures under OH and S legislation	Completed x 2 permanent staff. One casual to complete.	Refresher courses as required
Bureau of Animal Welfare - training and information seminars, for example dangerous, restricted breed, and menacing dogs		
All officers:	Officers to attend on a rotational basis	As offered
Induction program for new staff		
All officers:	As required	As required
Municipal Association of Victoria and local government professionals - training and information days		
All officers:	Officers to attend on a rotational basis	As offered

3. Registration and identification



Current situation:

The most effective way to improve animal management is to maximise the number of animals that are registered and identifiable.

The council's current identification and registration activities include:

- Annual registration renewal follow up including:
 - Reminder notices sent after May 10;
 - Phone audit; and
 - Door knock.
- All animals released from the pound must be micro chipped and registered;
- The council's website provides photographs of impounded wandering pets to help owners locate lost animals quicker;
- Encouraging pet identification at every opportunity;

- Random door knocking audit for unregistered animals;
- Mars Petcare Paws in the Park event which also incorporates registration and renewals, discounted microchipping, responsible pet ownership information sessions and competitions;
- Maintain and update the animal registration database;
- Offering reduced fee for registration of puppies (between three and six months). Reverts to full fee if evidence of desexing not provided at next registration cycle.

68(A)(c)(v) Outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats - also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

Current data:

The animal registration numbers in the city of Wodonga have varied in proportion to population growth over the last 10 years. Cat registration is currently trending down while dog registrations are stable.



Year	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Population	32,882	33,351	34,157	34,146	34,293	34,446	34,655	35,058	35,487	36,043

Current education/promotion activities

- Information on the council’s website relating to registration and identification of pets;
- Registration and identification brochures supplied to all local vets, community centres, libraries and dog training facilities;
- Supporting Department of Environment and Primary Industries’ “Who’s For Cats” campaign;
- Use media releases, paid advertising and the council’s newsletter (Citylife) to advise residents of registration and responsible pet ownership requirements;
- Registration and animal-related information in all new resident packs;
- Promote and provide registration and information at annual Paws in the Park event; and
- Officers available to present to school and community groups on responsible pet ownership.

Current compliance activities

- Investigation of unregistered animals;
- Patrols of municipality;
- Issue registration renewal notice annually;
- Follow up on non-renewal of registration:
 - Phone call; or
 - Visit to property.
- Random unregistered animal audits;
- Follow up on registration for animals notified as sold by domestic animal businesses;
- Regularly update/audit registration database to

ensure data is current and correct (for example notification of deceased animal, change of address, change of owner);

- Ensure all seized and impounded animals are identified, registered and microchipped prior to release to their owner; and
- Visiting premises with puppies and kittens for sale to ensure they are microchipped as required under the Act.

Summary

A key focus during the cycle of this plan is to increase the number of cats and dogs that are registered, microchipped and desexed.

Future plans

A greater emphasis will be placed on advertising the benefits of matching the domestic pet with the owners needs. Choosing the right pet for your lifestyle can be difficult so it is important that you take into account a variety of factors. To help you make a responsible decision on the best pet for you, talk to your local veterinary or animal business proprietor. For further information visit petnet.com.au/selectapet/choose-a-pet

Objective 3.1: The ongoing accuracy of the council’s registration database by cross referencing with microchip registry data is improved.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Undertake a sample review of newly microchipped dogs and cats in the municipality by contacting registration microchip registries. Check all animals listed on the council’s pet registration database, and follow up those that are not.	Annually	Demonstrate the council’s pet registration database can be accurately cross-referenced with microchip registries. Demonstrate increase in numbers of pets registered with the council following microchip registry cross referencing exercise.

Objective 3.2: Increase dog and cat registrations by 3 per cent (over population growth) each year.

Activity	When	Evaluation
<p>Conduct random audits throughout the municipality. Promote the audit process through social and local media. Provide incentives to register animals, for example - reduced fee on initial registration if dog attends an approved course.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Review annual registration numbers. Number of unregistered and unidentified animals picked up during door knocks.</p>

Objective 3.3: Recommence issue of registration tags for dogs and cats as per legislation.

Activity	When	Evaluation
<p>Issue plastic registration tags upon registration application or renewal as per requirements of the Act and to assist in identification of unregistered animals (Division 4 - Identification of registered animals. Registration numbers, certificates and identification markers - S.19(1)(c)). Promote benefits of registering animals through social and local media, and educate resident pet owners. Instigate enforcement/ compliance campaign relating to unregistered animals and not displaying tags.</p>	<p>Annually (April) Ongoing Two months after launch of annual renewal date</p>	<p>Tags issued at time of new or renewal registration. Number of unregistered and unidentified animals picked up during door knocks. Increased numbers of animals registered. Quicker identification of roaming / lost animals and return to owner. Increased compliance to legislation. Dogs readily identified as being registered.</p>



Objective 3.4: Improve community understanding of responsible pet ownership.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop a more targeted approach to educating and informing the community.	June 30, 2014	Communication plan developed and implementation commenced.
Improve the use of existing community networks to distribute and share information.	June 30, 2014	Networks identified, contacted and engaged (dog and cat survey).
Create opportunities for more engagement with the community on pet related issues through the use of social media.	June 30, 2014	Social media included as a key channel in communication plan. Social media approaches implemented.
Investigate the development and distribution of a pet-related community newsletter.	June 30, 2014	Considered in the development of the communication plan.
Broaden responsible pet ownership messages to include matching the new pet to the household.	June 30, 2014	Reduced number of complaints received.
Broaden responsible pet ownership messages to include approaches to reduce risk of dog attack and animal neglect.	June 30, 2014	Key messages included in the plan.



4. Nuisance

Section 68A(2)(c)(vi) of the Act outlines programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance – also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

Current situation

The council is guided by the Act, other state laws and local laws to ensure that all members of the community are complying with the current legislation.

Council officers aim to inform, educate and communicate to the community about their responsibilities on pet ownership in the first instance. When these avenues do not gain the desired result, the council may issue letters, formal warnings, notices, infringements, court summons or referrals to the Dispute Centre of Victoria.

Compliance team members can also draw upon building, town planning and health requirements to deal with more complex issues relating to the welfare or compliance of animal ownership.

Current data

Barking dog complaints have risen in recent years. Officer investigations indicate this is an outcome of:

- Incidence of pets being left alone during the day;
- Increased working from home and neighbours noticing their dogs barking;
- Increase in higher density housing and new estates; and
- Declining levels of tolerance.

Excessive barking is caused by but not limited to:

- Boredom;
- Separation anxiety;
- Fear;
- Territorial behaviour;
- Attention-seeking behaviour; and
- Communication to each other.

In most cases the owners are not at home to hear or stop the excessive barking or may not notice the problem. The council has policies and procedures to deal with barking complaints. In the first instance, the council requests if the barking dog is your neighbour's that you inform them about the barking. If there is an ongoing problem, log sheets should be kept and council officers will then discuss the issue with the owner of the dog. Further action can be taken if the matter is not resolved satisfactorily. Dogs wandering or inadequately confined to their

premises are also considered a nuisance and a hazard to motorists and the public in general. In these circumstances, the council can utilise local laws or powers under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 to resolve these issues.

Cats

In Victoria there are approximately 500,000 un-owned cats across the state, presenting the community with a serious over-population issue. One of the reasons is due to the breeding cycle of these animals.

Cats start breeding as young as five months of age. If left un-desexed, just one female cat and her offspring can produce up to 420,000 cats in seven years.

Cat owners are encouraged to be responsible pet owners and desex their cats. Aside from preventing accidental litters, there are many health and behavioural benefits to desexing.

Desexed cats:

- Live longer and healthier lives;
- Are more affectionate and are less inclined to wander, run away or get into fights; and
- Desexed females do not experience heat cycles and males do not spray to mark their territory.

The council uses local laws and the Act to control the implications of irresponsible cat ownership.

The council's Environment and Community Protection Local Law (local law No.3) provides additional requirements to assist with animal management.

These include:

- Section 13 - notice to comply;
- Section 14 - power of an authorised officer to act in urgent circumstances;
- Section 57 - restrictions on the number of animals kept on premises;
- Section 58 - conditions under which animals are kept;
- Section 59 - noise and smell;
- Section 60 - animal litter; and
- Section 61 - wandering animals.

A complete copy of the City of Wodonga Environment and Community Protection Local Law No. 3 of 2007 can be found at:

wodonga.vic.gov.au/about-us/local-laws/images/Local_Law_No_3.pdf

Orders under the Act

The council can make orders under the Act to deal with animal management issues. Orders such as the current cat curfew are an example of this.

The council is proposing to introduce local laws that require owners of pets to have effective control over their animals and, to prohibit dogs entering certain areas within the municipality such as in the immediate perimeter of a public area children's playground or set distances away from a barbecue within a park.

The council will only make an order under this part of the legislation after community and stakeholder consultation. Current orders are listed in Appendix A.

Revision of the council's local law and orders

The local laws, orders and all strategies related to the management of domestic animals are reviewed on an ongoing basis as part of the Civic Services Compliance Team Plan and in response to Victorian Government requirements.

Review of local laws, orders and strategies are undertaken on a regular basis to ensure consistency with council, community expectations and legislation.

Current education/promotion activities

The Bureau of Animal Welfare operates state-wide educational programs and activities. In Victoria, legislation aims to encourage responsible pet ownership, to protect the community from dangerous or nuisance animals, and to prevent animal neglect and cruelty. The Department of Environment and Primary Industries is responsible for overseeing the development of this legislation, along with associated regulations and codes of practice.

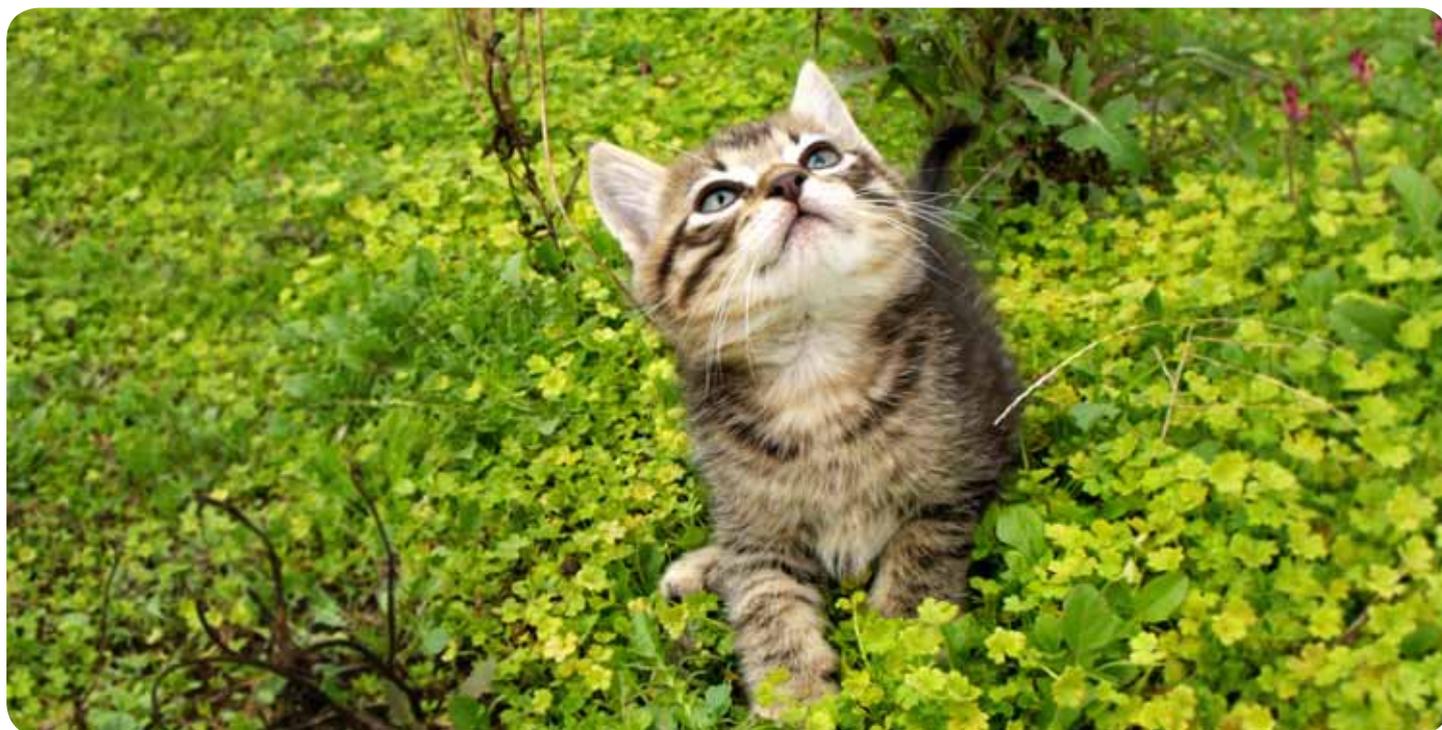
The council will build on these programs and operate its own education programs to reflect local priorities. An example of this is the annual Paws in Park program sponsored by Mars Petcare Australia.

Other council activities include:

- Information on the Wodonga Council website including registration, responsible pet ownership, animal welfare, lost animals, dangerous and restricted dogs, permits, pound and Wodonga Dog Rescue.

Current compliance activities

- Patrols of the municipality;
- Responding to animal nuisance and wandering animal complaints;
- Issue of notices to comply;
- Issue of infringements;
- Undertake legal action;
- Issue of barking log sheets to residents to record barking nuisances; and
- Provision of cat traps to assist residents with trespassing cats.



Future plans

Objective 4.1: Reduce dog nuisance complaints		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Research and review the need for additional off-leash areas, in conjunction with planning staff and property developers for consideration of special dog parks.	June, 2014	Level of needs identified through dog and cat survey 2013.
Review barking dog complaint/investigation policy/procedural guidelines.	April, 2014	Review undertaken, changes made and officers trained.
Include information regarding confinement, barking, wandering animals in registration information packs each year.	Ongoing	Information packs to be sent to new residents and new animal owners in the municipality each year.
Proposal to the council to create a new local law requiring dog owners to have effective control of their animal while in public places and to prohibit dogs entering certain areas in conjunction with the declaration of appropriate "off leash" areas.	June, 2014	Results of dog and cat survey evaluated to gauge community feedback, proposal to be considered in next local law review.

Objective 4.2: Reduce cat nuisance complaints		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Provide educational material about cat enclosures and nuisance issues to: (a) Cat owners on request; or (b) When issues are identified; and (c) In registration information packs each year.	Current and ongoing	Results of dog and cat survey evaluated to gauge community feedback. Number of information packs distributed.
Increase cat trapping by assisting residents with cat trespass/nuisance problems by providing advice and traps through the council's trap program.	Ongoing	Number of traps delivered. Number of cats impounded. Number of cats registered.
Consider extension of cat curfew order to cover a 24-hour period.	June, 2014	Report submitted to June, 2014 ordinary council meeting.

Objective 4.3: Increase community knowledge of cat disease issues

Activity	When	Evaluation
<p>Provide educational material about cat diseases which highlight the effect on animals and the impacts on the community.</p> <p>Seek feedback from animal industry and vets on key issues for education to community.</p> <p>Collate and monitor the number of disease related cat deaths.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Results of dog and cat survey to gauge community feedback (website information).</p> <p>Feedback from animal industry and veterinary businesses.</p> <p>Number of pamphlets/ information sheets distributed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local vets;• Council pound;• Libraries and learning centres;• Social media;• Local press; and• Civic centre customer service.



5. Dog attacks

Section 68A(2)(c)(iii) of the Act outlines programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals – also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

Current situation

Current data

Council officers carry out regular enforcement activities relating to wandering dogs. They:

- Respond to all wandering dog complaints;
- Attend after hours emergency dog complaints;
- Attend to all reports of dogs showing aggressive tendencies as a matter of urgency;
- Investigate all alleged dog attacks and ensure legal action is instigated where required;
- Declare animals as dangerous or menacing as required; and
- Ensure that the controls that are put in place under state legislation, local laws and council orders are effectively enforced.

The purpose of these measures is to ensure that the risk to the community is controlled, reduced or completely removed.

Current education/promotional activities

- Information on the council's website relating to responsible pet ownership and the owner's responsibilities relating to aggressive, menacing and attacking animals;
- Links on the council's website to the relevant state and non-government organisations which have a vested interest in animal welfare, responsible pet ownership and the provision of support services to pet owners and the animals themselves;
- Promote and provide registration and information at the annual Paws in the Park.

Current compliance activities

The council investigates all dog attacks and safety concerns by:

- Conducting patrols of the municipality;
- Declaring dogs as menacing, dangerous or restricted breeds as required;
- Providing after hours emergency response for dog attacks and dogs acting aggressively;
- Issuing infringements and summons to attend court where applicable;
- Seizing all dogs involved in dog attacks resulting in a serious injury; and
- Maintaining the ban on declared dangerous dogs.

Summary

The council will continue with its strict enforcement approach to all reported dog attacks and aggressive dog complaints in the municipality.



Future plans

Objective 5.1: Increase the reporting of dog attacks in the community		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Improve public awareness of what a dog attack and dog rush is, increase awareness of public reporting wandering animals.	Ongoing	Monitor the number of complaints received year on year.
Increase awareness of the possible penalties and possible legal actions that may result in the event of attack, drawing on recent dog attacks across Victoria as case examples.	Ongoing	Cat and dog survey results. Include additional questions when interviewing owners of dogs that have attacked to gauge if they had prior knowledge of the seriousness of the event.

Objective 5.2: Decrease the time delay between when attack occurs and reporting to the council		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Increase community awareness on reporting all dog attacks immediately after they take place, including better reporting from police. Update the council website to provide advice for reporting of dog attacks, updated media and pamphlets.	June, 2014 and then ongoing	Recording mechanisms to ask and show time of attack to time of reporting, which can then be evaluated to show decrease of time from attack until reporting.



6. Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

Section 68A(2)(c)(vii) of the Act outlines programs, services and strategies to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations - also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

Objective 6.1: Continue to obtain a high level of compliance		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Continue inspections of all declared, menacing and restricted breed dogs with zero tolerance for non-compliance as detailed in the Domestic Animals Regulations 2005.	Current and ongoing	All premises and owners comply with the requirements.

Current situation

Current data

Wodonga Council currently has the following dogs listed as dangerous, menacing or restricted breed:

- Dangerous dogs (guard dogs) - two
- Menacing dogs - two
- Restricted breeds - two

The level of compliance is high within the city of Wodonga and there is not a need to introduce any new activities in relation to this category of dogs. However, the council will continue to monitor any activity and carry out random inspections.

Council officers ensure that the owners of these dogs are adhering to the requirements by:

- Maintaining the Victorian Government database;
- Conducting inspections and random audits;
- Investigating complaints;
- Prosecution of non-compliant owners;
- Audits of industrial/residential areas for non-declared dogs; and
- Identify declared dogs which are impounded.
- Current education/promotional activities
- Information on the council website and links to the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) website; and
- Information via pamphlets.

Summary

Council officers conduct inspections of all existing restricted breed, dangerous and menacing dogs on an ongoing basis.

Future plans

- Information and microchipping at annual Paws in the Park event; and
- Continue to inform pet owners about responsible pet ownership including selecting the right pet for their circumstances and legal obligations.

Current compliance activities

- Attend to all complaints in relation to suspected dangerous, restricted breed and menacing dogs;
- Inspect all “declared” dog’s enclosures and premises annually and on random audits;
- Examination of the council’s registration database to identify and follow up on suspected (non-declared) restricted breed dogs;
- Declaration included on all registration forms as to status of animal under restricted breed legislation;
- Update and maintain DEPI database;
- Patrol industrial areas for non-registered guard dogs (dangerous dogs by definition); and
- Check signage and collars of all menacing and dangerous dogs.

7. Overpopulation and high euthanasia rates

Section 68A(2)(c)(iv) of the Act outlines programs, services and strategies to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats - also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c)(i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

Current situation

Current data

Rates of returning/re-housing of dogs

Over the last four years, council staff annually impounded on average 404 dogs. Of these, 234 are released back to their owners, 111 are sold and 59 euthanised.

The council together with the assistance of Wodonga Dog Rescue is achieving good rates of return of lost animals to owners and re-housing to new owners.

Rates of returning/re-housing of cats

Over the last four years, council staff annually impounded on average 156 cats. Of these, 22 are released back to their owners, very few are sold and 90 euthanased.

Based on a cat's breeding cycle, the proportion of feral or wild cats across the city is high. Data on cats sold was limited for the reporting period but remains very poor.

Our current education/promotional activities

- Promotion of organisations that encourage responsible pet ownership such as the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, RSPCA Victoria, Bureau of Animal Welfare and Wodonga Dog Rescue;
- Promotion of responsible pet ownership on the council's website;
- Reduced registration fee for all cats that are desexed and microchipped;
- First year registration free for cats under six months of age;
- Placement of all found cats on the council's website pound page; and
- Promote and provide registration and information at the annual Paws in the Park.

Current compliance activities

- Investigate complaints of animal hoarding;
- Investigate reports of unauthorised backyard breeders;
- Provision of cat traps to community delivered by authorised officers; and
- All released pets to be desexed.

Future plans

Objective 7.1: Explore options to encourage cat owners to register their cats such as incentives, programs and other methods.		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate and prepare a report to the council on reduction of cat registration fees (full and reduced fee) in the 2014-2015 budget.	March, 2014	New initiative prepared for consideration in 2014-2015 budget if activity has merit - determined by community and stakeholder engagement - cat and dog survey.

Semi-owned cats

The cat overpopulation problem is due to a number of factors, such as supply exceeding demand and the ability of cats to breed extremely quickly. Research has also found that a major contributing factor to this problem is people feeding un-owned cats but not taking full ownership or responsibility for them.

A survey by Monash University found that 22 per cent of people said they fed a cat that didn't belong to them. People feed un-owned cats because they genuinely care about them, and feel sorry for them. However many people don't realise that they are causing a bigger problem by feeding, but not owning

(for example desexing and identifying) these cats.

Feeding un-owned cats helps keep them alive and strong enough to reproduce. They keep breeding more kittens into a life of disease and neglect. This contributes to the cat overpopulation problem in Australia.

Source: Department of Environment and Primary Industries (2013) dpi.vic.gov.au/pets/?a=175629

Objective 7.2: Increased activities to reduce feral cat population		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Hot spot trapping in residential, commercial, industrial and environmentally-sensitive areas.	April, 2014	Number of cats trapped.

Objective 7.3: See community feedback on 24-hour cat curfew		
Activity	When	Evaluation
Engage community through media and community survey to generate discussion and to highlight issues of roaming cats and views on the implementation of a 24-hour cat curfew.	April, 2014	Survey results. Ongoing discussion with community. Number of cats impounded.



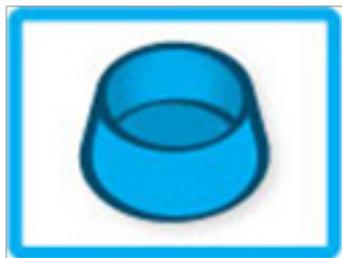
Your cat's welfare needs

Do you know the five key things cats need for a happy and healthy life?



Environment

The need for a suitable environment (place to live).



Diet

The need for a suitable diet.



Behaviour

The need to express normal behaviour.



Companionship

The need for to live with, or apart from, other animals.



Health

The need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

Source: depi.vic.gov.au/pets/cats/your-cats-welfare-needs (2013)

8. Domestic animal business

Section 68A(2)(c)(ii) of the Act outlines programs, services and strategies which the council intends to pursue in its municipal district to ensure that people comply with this Act, and any other regulations and any related legislation – also addresses 68A(2)(a), (c) (i), (c)(ii), (d), (f)

Current situation

Current data

The city of Wodonga currently has four registered domestic animal businesses as follows:

Boarding establishments -	one
Pet shops -	two
Pound/shelter -	one

Current education/promotional activities

- Visit facilities and provide information including mandatory code of practice to proprietors/ staff of existing and any new domestic animals businesses; and
- Ensure domestic animal businesses are advised of any review of the code of practice applicable for their business.

Current compliance activities

- Register all identified domestic animal businesses within the community;
- Conduct annual inspections/audits of each premises;
- Follow up any non-compliance;
- Liaise with other units within the council to provide advice when planning applications for domestic animal businesses are received to ensure appropriate conditions are placed on construction, operation and so on;
- Investigate and act on complaints received; and
- The Act has altered the definition of domestic animal business. Investigate reported businesses advertising in local newspapers to determine if the business falls into the new definition under the Act, and their compliance with the legislation.



Future plans

Objective 8.1: Identify and register all domestic animal businesses (DAB) in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify all businesses that should be registered DABs in the municipality using phone directories or similar, including online sites. Identify businesses selling pets, pet products and services in the municipality. Follow up to determine whether they are and should be registered with the council.	Annually	Compare number of registered DABs before and after activity.

Objective 8.2: Inspect and register all domestic animal businesses in the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Conduct an annual inspection of each registered DAB for compliance.	Annually	100 per cent of all DABs inspected prior to renewal and action taken for any non-compliance.

Objective 8.3: All domestic animal businesses meet their registration and mandatory codes of practice standards.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Develop a program to deal with audit outcomes.	2014	Program implemented. Number of non-compliances recorded and actioned.

Objective 8.4: Promote the requirements for domestic animal businesses to the community and domestic animal businesses to increase awareness.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Update the council's website to include a domestic animal business section with links to relevant codes of practice.	2014	Website updated.
Conduct a forum/seminar with current and prospective domestic animal business proprietors to provide information relating to their requirements under the Act.	Mid 2014	Forum/seminar conducted.

9. Other matters

68A(2)(e) Provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the council's municipal district that it thinks necessary.

Current situation

Current data

The city of Wodonga has experienced substantial growth since the last plan was published. The council also provides pound services to the shires of Indigo and Towong, which have added to the demand on the provision of animal management services. As Wodonga's population grows, so does the rate of animal ownership. To meet this growth, the council will need to plan to take into account the increasing numbers of pet ownership as it grows with the population. To achieve this, the council will need to consider additional facilities such as off-leash areas and dog friendly public places, increased pound capability and the ongoing education of the pet owner community.

The council will also need to investigate local law amendments to ensure sufficient powers are in place to ensure responsible pet ownership by all. The council will also need to match its compliance activities with the increased demand for services with an appropriate number of staff, and look at ways to not only increase its ability to respond more effectively to complaints, but to provide more of a visible presence within the community.

During 2012, state laws were changed which allowed dogs to enter outdoor dining areas that can be entered by the public without passing through an enclosed area. The council needs to ensure that local laws effectively protect the community, especially when there are legislative changes that have the potential to impact on community safety.

Current local laws relating to domestic animals across the city of Wodonga are listed in Appendix A.

Future plans

Objective 9.1: Ensure the pound services meet the needs of the municipality into the future.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Explore partnerships or other models to ensure animal pound capacity will be sufficient to meet the needs of an increasing population across the city of Wodonga, and Towong and Indigo shires.	June, 2014	Consultations carried out with stakeholders including Towong and Indigo shires and Wodonga Dog Rescue.
Carry out feasibility study of separating pound operations and rehoming operations within its current site. (DEPI funding may be available for voluntary organisations.)	December, 2014	Study carried out, costings investigated and external funding sources identified.

Objective 9.2: Investigate staff options to meet the increased demand of services.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Prepare cost benefit analysis of having an additional officer within the unit based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing demand due to rise in pet numbers; • Introduction of new local laws relating to effective control; • Reintroduction of registration tags leading to more non-compliance detections; and • Creating a senior ranger role to oversee the introduction and ongoing delivery of the outcomes produced in the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). 	July, 2014	Business case prepared and delivered.

Objective 9.3: Determine the benefits of introducing new off-leash dog areas across the municipality.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Consider the establishment of off-leash areas across the municipality within existing parklands/reserves, based on input from planning staff and dog and cat survey feedback.	June, 2014	Other areas established. Number of infringements issued. Number of 'Responsible Pet Ownership - Good Behaviour' Certificates issued (trial during this period of DAMP). Stakeholders/agency engagement carried out. Results of dog and cat survey feedback collated.
Active enforcement of effective control local law to reinforce responsible pet ownership principles.	Ongoing	
Investigate feasibility of creating an 'Active Dog' or 'Large Dog' off-leash area adjacent to Wodonga Creek near the newly constructed stock bridge.	June, 2014	

Objective 9.4: Investigate the benefit of an additional ranger vehicle and updated vehicle signage to increase public awareness.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Investigate and prepare a report to the council for a high profile/ high visibility concept ranger vehicle and updated ranger's uniform based on demand and feedback from community engagement survey.	June, 2014	New initiative prepared for consideration in 2014-2015 budget.

10. Annual review of the plan and annual reporting

Section 68A(3) of the Act states every council must:

- (a) Review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan;
- (b) Provide the secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
- (c) Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

Objective 10.1: Reporting requirements complied with.	
Review the plan.	June annually
Incorporate the annual evaluation in the annual report.	June annually



Appendix A - Current local laws

Order	Date
Introduction of 12 hour cat curfew.	January, 2001
Mandatory desexing of all new cats upon registration.	June, 2005
Removal of declared dangerous dogs.	January, 2006

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