



# **DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2007**

**(Adopted by Council 29 April 2008)**

Domestic Animal Management Plan  
under Section 68A of the *Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994*.

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# Introduction

The purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan) is to provide the City of Bayside with a strategic framework that delivers policy direction and action plans for animal management over the next 3 years.

The preparation of the Plan follows a recent amendment to the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 (DAA) which now requires all Victorian councils to have a three year plan in place for the management of dogs and cats within their area.

The Plan integrates the developing expertise in domestic animal management within Victoria through the Department of Primary Industries with Council's investigations of its own local needs to produce a program of action to be undertaken over the next three years (2007-2010). Relevant issues include those prescribed under relevant legislation and local laws as well as the generally understood notion of responsible pet ownership.

## 1.1 What will the Plan address?

Section 68A of the DAA sets out the statutory requirements of the Plan which state that the Plan must:

- *Set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and*
- *Outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and*
- *Outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district-*
  - *to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and*
  - *to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and*
  - *to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and*
  - *to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and*
  - *to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and*
  - *to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and*
  - *to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and*

- *Provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and*
- *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*
- *Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.*

The plan relates primarily to Council's management of dogs and cats under the DAA.

This Plan does not include a review of the provisions relating to dogs and their access to public places – in particular the provision of off leash areas. This was the subject of extensive review and community consultation in 2006. These provisions will be reviewed in 2010.

## **1.2 Process Applied in Developing the Plan**

The Plan has been developed using the guiding principles of the DAA and local knowledge, expertise and input received from the community.

Community input was received by the following methods:

- A Domestic Animal Management Plan Community Working Group was formed. Expressions of interest to join the working group were advertised in the local newspaper and on Council's website. Ten community members with diverse expertise and experience in animal management and community views and two Bayside Councillors were appointed to the working group. The working group also included and was managed by two Council employees and has met regularly with valuable input into the planning process. Appendix 2 contains a list of the members of the working group.
- Written submissions were called for from the community.
- An on-line community survey was conducted.
- Four community forums were held during February, March and April 2007.

In May 2007, Virginia Jackson, a consultant specialising in animal management was appointed to assist Council in the development of the Plan.

## 1.3 Structure of the Plan

Section 2 describes the context for developing the Plan. It provides an overview of animal management at Bayside including a brief overview of Bayside City, a description of the new animal management environment, a summary of the DAA, Council's existing local laws and orders, key Council animal management statistics and Council animal management staffing and programs. It also outlines the role of other stakeholders. Section 2.2 outlines the strategic context, including relevant parts of Council Plan 2007-1011 and other relevant strategies and plans. Section 2.3 includes an outline of the expectations of the Plan.

Section 3 provides a summary of feedback received from the community.

The investigations in Sections 2 and 3 resulted in the **Statement of Purpose** provided in Section 4. It includes a vision, and the principles underpinning the Plan.

The **Key Objectives** contained in Section 5 outline how Council will achieve and implement its vision and mission statement in accordance with the principles underpinning the Plan. A discussion is provided with each objective that explains the issues and Council's intentions. Each objective concludes with a series of strategies that Council will pursue to achieve that objective.

Section 6 describes how the Plan will be reviewed and amended each year as appropriate, including monitoring its success against a selection of key performance indicators that will be designed to test whether the Plan's objectives are being achieved.

The **Action Plans** are contained in Section 7. This section provides the detailed actions Council will implement to achieve the Plan's Statement of Purpose and Key Objectives.

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Appendix 1</b> | Organisation diagram showing where the animal management function sits within the overall Council structure, |
| <b>Appendix 2</b> | Members of the Domestic Animal Management Plan Community Working Group.                                      |
| <b>Appendix 3</b> | Council's current animal management programs and services.   |
| <b>Appendix 4</b> | Community feedback received.   |
| <b>Appendix 5</b> | Issues identified by the Domestic Animal Management Plan Community Working Group.                            |
| <b>Appendix 6</b> | Dog barking complaint procedure flow chart.  |

## **2 Context for Developing the Plan**

### **2.1 Animal Management at the Bayside City Council**

#### **Bayside City Council: A Snapshot**

Bayside City Council is located in Melbourne's southern bayside suburbs between nine and twenty kilometres from the Melbourne GPO. It covers an area of 37sq km. The City is bounded by the Cities of Port Phillip and Glen Eira to the north and the City of Kingston to the east. It includes the suburbs of Beaumaris, Black Rock, Brighton, Brighton East, Cheltenham (part), Hampton, Hampton East, Highett (part) and Sandringham.

The City's boundaries are Head Street, St Kilda Street and Glenhuntly Road to the north, Nepean Highway, North Road, Thomas Street, The Frankston railway line and Charman Road to the east and the Port Phillip Bay foreshore to the south and west. The City has 17km of foreshore areas and beaches.

The City's population of 89,000 inhabits some of Port Phillip's most beautiful shorelines and its well established residential areas are some of the most desirable in Melbourne. In 2007, there were 35,540 households in Bayside. This is projected to increase to 38,220 households by 2017.

#### **The Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994**

Council is responsible for implementing the Act, which has been in operation now for well over a decade. It replaced the former Dog Act. Its introduction heralded a new era in animal control with cats included for the first time in animal control, tougher penalties for dangerous dogs, clearer nuisance provisions and a greater emphasis on prevention.

The purpose of the DAA *is to promote animal welfare, the responsible ownership of dogs and cats and the protection of the environment by providing for:*

- *A scheme to protect the community and the environment from feral and nuisance dogs and cats;*
- *A registration and identification scheme for dogs and cats which recognises and promotes responsible ownership;*
- *The identification and control of dangerous dogs;*
- *A registration scheme for domestic animal businesses which promotes the maintenance of standards of those businesses;*
- *Matters related to the boarding of dogs and cats;*
- *Payments to the Treasurer from fees received by Councils under this Act; and*

- *Other related matters.*

A recent amendment to the Act saw the introduction of a requirement for councils to develop and implement three year animal management plans for dealing with all matters relating to dog and cat management issues. Section 1.1 of this Plan outlines what the Plan is required to include.

### **Council Local Laws and Orders**

Council's existing local laws and orders relating to animal management are summarised below. A mechanism will be established to ensure that they are reviewed over the life of the Plan.

**Local Law No 2: Environment** sets restrictions on the number of animals that can be kept without a permit. This includes dogs, cats, birds, fish, guinea pigs, horses donkeys etc. It also provides guidelines for their shelter. It requires animal owners to 1) remove all animal excrement from Council land and 2) carry a litter device suitable to clean up any excrement left by their animal. Section 49 requires that animal owners do not allow their animal or bird to create a nuisance by reason of noise.

**Local Law No 4: Municipal Places** states that if Council has made an Order under Section 26 of the DAA, it must cause the area to be signposted.

**Order No 3** has been made under Section 26 of the DAA. It requires dogs to be under effective control by means of a chain, cord or leash in a reserve or public place except where it is a Designated Area or a Prohibited Area. The Schedule to the Order lists the reserves and public places that are Designated or Prohibited Areas. The introduction of this Order followed extensive review and community consultation in 2006. The Order will be reviewed in 2010.

### **Other animal management responsibilities**

Some public authorities are now looking at ways to foster the health, companionship and social benefits of owning pets. There is a wealth of scientific evidence that demonstrates the benefits of owning pets. There is also much research available on the leisure potential of owning a dog particularly the social dynamics associated with dog owners meeting other dog owners in designated off-leash parks. There are potential implications for local government arising from this work. For example there are programs available that match frail elderly pet owners with volunteers who walk, bath or take pets to the vet.

### **Animal Management Statistics**

Council's key animal management statistics are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Bayside City Council Animal Management Statistics  
1<sup>st</sup> July 2006 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007**

<b>Dogs</b>	
Number of registered dogs	12,001
Estimated total owned dog population <sup>1</sup>	20,471
Number of registered declared dogs in Bayside	3
Number of impounded dogs	228
Number of impounded dogs returned to owner	201
Number of dogs rehoused	6
Number of dogs euthanased	21
<b>Cats</b>	
Number of registered cats	5,108
Estimated total owned cat population <sup>2</sup>	13,583
Number of impounded cats	41
Number of impounded cats returned to owner	12
Number of cats rehoused	8
Number of cats euthanased	21
<b>Customer Service Requests/Complaints</b>	
Animal infringement	12
Animal litter	12
Animal registration	742
Removal of dead animals	127
Cat cage to be delivered	44
Dog attack	97
Dog – barking	293
Dog – on foreshore	10
Dog – off leash	70
Dog – pick up (being held or confined)	188
Dog – wandering	94
Feral/domestic cat to be collected	34

<sup>1</sup> Based on national data collected by the Petcare Information and Advisory Service that suggests that 40% of Australian households own one or more dogs at 1.44 dogs/household. The City of Bayside has approximately 35,540 households.

<sup>2</sup> Based on national data collected by the Petcare Information and Advisory Service that suggests that 26% of Australian households own one or more cats at 1.47 cats/household. The City of Bayside has approximately 35,540 households.

General animal compliant	146
Information request	35
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUESTS / COMPLAINTS</b>	<b>1904</b>
<b>Prosecutions</b>	
Number of prosecutions completed	140
Number of successful prosecutions	135

### **Staffing and organisational structure**

Council's Local Laws Team falls in Council's Infrastructure Services Department (refer Appendix 1, Figure 1)

Council has four (effective full time) authorised animal management officers however they also perform other tasks such as replacement School Crossing Supervisors when necessary to fulfil departmental operational responsibilities.

Six more local laws staff are also authorised animal management officers but perform a variety of local laws responsibilities.

Each member of the local laws team receives at least 20 hours training per annum.

Council's on call animal management officers deal with out of hours dog attacks. The Lost Dogs Home in North Melbourne is contracted to deal with dogs that are stray and/or wandering at large out of Council hours.

### **Current Programs and Services**

Council's current animal management programs and services are listed in Appendix 2.

### **Role of Other Stakeholders**

The **Department of Primary Industries** undertakes a range of responsibilities associated with the administration and enforcement of provisions of the Act. It also undertakes or facilitates research and educational programs relating to dog and cat management.

The **Lost Dogs Home** operates Council's out of hours service for dealing with stray and wandering dogs.

Dogs and cats found that are found wandering at large and which are not claimed by their owner are taken to the **South Eastern Pound Services** in Cranbourne, which is operated by the Lost Dogs Home.

**Veterinarians** are an important point of contact especially in a pet's early years. They have an important role to play in maintaining the health of pets and educating

pet owners. Many veterinarians also offer puppy pre school classes and will take in stray animals.

**Registered shelters and adoption centres** provide a valuable service that assists with the care and re-homing of unwanted animals.

**Domestic Animal Businesses** including breeders, veterinary behaviourists, private dog trainers, dog walkers, kennels and catteries and pet shops are important stakeholders in providing services to dog owners that may assist them to be responsible pet owners.

**Dog and cats clubs** have an important role to play in training dogs and cats, socialising pups and kittens and educating pet owners.

The **local media** can assist Council with media coverage to promote responsible pet ownership.

**Neighbouring councils** have many common interests and issues with the City of Bayside. Council could look at ways of extending the responsible pet ownership more efficiently and effectively through increased dialogue and collaboration.

An **Animal Management Liaison Group** will be established by Council to monitor the ongoing implementation and review of the success of the Plan.

**Dog Trainers and Veterinary behaviourists** that run Dog Safe programs that are school based programs that provide training for primary school children in bite avoidance and humane animal care/interaction.

**Pet owners** themselves have a role to play in choosing an appropriate pet to suit their lifestyle, in training and socialising their dog, and by adhering to Council requirements.

**Non-owners of pets** also have a role to play in determining animal management in Bayside. This will be through participating in the Animal Management Liaison Group, and through surveys conducted on animal management issues and providing other more general feedback to Council on issues of concern to them or where they believe Council can improve its animal management service levels.

## **2.2 Strategic Context**

### **Council Plan 2007-2011**

The Council Plan is Bayside's key corporate document detailing the goals, objectives and commitments Council makes for the coming four years to manage and deliver services and facilities for the Bayside community. The DAMP needs to be consistent with the Council Plan.

The Council Plan outlines Council's vision for the future of Bayside that is:

*To present and enhance Bayside as a place of connected and healthy communities and environment, safety and security, built and natural heritage and open spaces, urban amenity, culture, the arts and economic viability.*

Under Goal 2: Environment, the Council Plan has as short term commitments to be completed over the next 12 months:

- *Supply eco-friendly and highly identifiable dog litter bags in Council's parks and reserves, in response to community consultation findings (rec 2.2.49)*

Under Goal 3: Connected, Healthy Communities, the Council Plan has as short term commitments to be completed over the next 12 months:

- *Finalise and implement Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (rec 4.2.8).*

Under Goal 5: Community Leadership and Governance, the Council Plan has as short term commitments to be completed over the next 12 months:

- *Implement actions to recruit and maintain a skilled and competent workforce, particularly in the areas of health, aged, disability, engineering and town planning areas of the organisation (rec 5.2.26).*
- *Continue to refine staff training and development programs to ensure Bayside's workforce is appropriately skilled and qualified to meet Council's performance objectives (rec 5.2.27)*

### **Open Space Strategy 1996**

The effective management of dogs in open space areas and along the foreshore was a major issue in this strategy, which it is noted is more than 10 years old.

### **Bicycle Strategy 2003**

Only one route on the proposed Bicycle Network runs through dedicated off-leash areas although many run along the edge of off-leash parks creating a potential safety hazard between cyclists and dogs. The Animal Management Plan should ensure all additions to Bayside's Cycle network avoid any of Council's off-leash areas and both the Plan and any review of the Bicycle Strategy should consider ways to avoid such conflicts.

### **Bayside Leisure Plan 2002**

Recommendation 9 of this Plan states:

*Investigate the management of "off-leash" areas and fenced training areas for available for dogs.*

This is yet to be completed and is noted in the Action Plans in Section 7.

#### **Municipal Public Health Plan 2004-2008**

Whilst there is no mention of animal management in this plan, any review or update could include recommendations concerning improvements in health from pet ownership.

#### **Safety Action Plan 2005-2007**

Whilst there is no mention of animal management in this plan, any review or update could include recommendations concerning safety from dog attack and improvements in actual and perceived safety from attack if people walk their dog compared instead of walking alone.

## **2.3 Expectations of the Plan**

The development of the Plan was driven by the need to satisfy the expectations of four key areas:

#### **Community**

The community's ever increasing expectations of local government has seen the need for a more comprehensive long term strategy in the management of domestic animals; one that delivers a more compassionate and proactive approach.

#### **Council**

Local government needs to have strategies and processes in place to assist in identifying its community's needs and planning for future developments and required resources and to assist in providing a strategic framework on which to base the management of domestic animals.

#### **Council's Local Laws Unit**

Council's Local Laws Unit is responsible for delivering key objectives and targets for animal management whilst identifying and providing adequate resources to ensure sustainable programs and outcomes. This Plan needs to clearly define the policies it is expected to implement and the strategic objectives that underlie these policies.

#### **Legislative (State Government)**

The Plan provides Council with the appropriate tool for meeting its obligations and responsibilities under the DAA by providing the strategic framework that underpins the detailed actions plans.

### **3 Feedback Received from the Community**

An extensive community engagement and consultation process was undertaken in the preparation of the Draft Animal Management Plan. In addition to the community working group, four community consultation forums were conducted and advertisements were published seeking written submissions. The following list contains the main issues (not ranked in any order) emanating from the forums and written submissions received:

- Dogs - barking, attacks, faeces, owners disregarding off-leash rules
- Cats - mandatory desexing, night curfew
- Sale of pets – impulse buying due to shopfront displays, backyard breeders
- Enforcement - ensuring compliance with regulations, minimising animal nuisance, dangerous and restricted breed dogs
- Registration and reunification – improve rate of registration and process of re-unifying lost pets with owners
- Proactive initiatives – incentives and free schemes to encourage responsible pet ownership
- Education - less enforcement more education, schools education, dissemination of information, benefits of pet ownership
- Council services – staff training and resources, review of services, animal pound in Bayside

## **4 Statement of Purpose**

The following vision, principles and key objectives of the Plan were developed from the investigations outlined in previous sections.

### **4.1 Vision Statement**

Council's vision for animal management in the future is as follows:

Bayside will be widely seen as a success story in animal management. It will have a progressive Domestic Animal Management Plan that is fair to pet owners and non-owners alike, encourages responsible pet ownership and deals with pets and their owners in a humane, sympathetic and caring way.

As a result, pet owners in Bayside will be responsible. They will understand the legal requirements and the community's high expectations in regard to responsible pet ownership. The community in general will also understand the value and benefits of pet ownership and the central role that pets play in many people's lives.

This will allow Council staff to focus their efforts on serving rather than policing the community, and on a continuing educative role designed to maintain and improve on the high standards of responsible pet ownership already achieved.

### **4.2 Principles Underpinning the Plan**

The following principles underpin all recommendations and actions in the Plan:

- A commitment to promoting community harmony and achieving lasting changes in human behaviour with a focus on education and prevention of undesirable behaviours;
- A commitment to ensure the welfare of companion animals in the community is well catered for and taking a compassionate approach to both pet and pet-owner welfare;
- Encouragement of the community to comply with domestic animal legislation based on incentives for compliance rather than penalties for non-compliance;
- A commitment to achieving the highest levels of responsible pet ownership;
- A commitment to accessing the most up to date information and strategies on animal management;

- A commitment to seeking and acting on community feedback on animal management issues;
- A commitment to recognising that pets are an integral part of many people's lives and that there are health and social benefits from owning pets.
- A commitment to balancing the needs of pet owners with the needs of other members of the community and the environment;
- Adopting a whole of community approach to animal management. The Council will develop and strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders to deliver improved outcomes;
- A commitment to continual improvement in the delivery of animal management services; and
- A commitment to cost effective use of animal management resources.

## 5 Key Objectives and Related Strategies

In the following section Council has broken down its objectives for achieving its vision for animal management in Bayside into the following key areas:

The **Key Objectives** of the Plan are:

1. Promoting community harmony.
2. Ensuring community safety.
3. Servicing the needs of the community.
4. Promoting animal welfare.
5. Protecting the environment.
6. Recognising and managing cat specific issues.
7. Harnessing the benefits of pet ownership.

A comprehensive discussion of each of these objectives, issues related to them and strategies that Council intends to pursue to deal with the issues, is given below.

The strategies discussed are the basis for the detailed action plans contained in Section 7.

### 5.1 Promoting community harmony

#### **Objective**

To create an environment where pet owners and non-owners co-exist harmoniously with each other.

#### **Discussion**

Whilst pet ownership is a wonderful experience for many people, it is sometimes a source of discord in the community. Issues include:

- Lack of compliance with leash and access laws in Council's reserves, foreshore areas and other public places, including effective control in off leash areas.
- Unremoved dog faeces in public places (refer Section 5.5).
- Dogs and cats wandering at large (refer Section 5.3).
- Pets that cause a nuisance to others, in particular by excessive barking.
- Cat issues (refer Section 5.6).

Whilst these issues are dealt with under the DAA and/or Councils local laws and orders, dealing with them can be time consuming, costly and sometimes very difficult to resolve, particularly given varying levels of tolerance within the community.

### **Responsible Pet Ownership**

Council wants to promote community harmony in relation to animal management issues and it is felt that promoting responsible pet ownership is critical to this objective. A responsible pet owner will comply with animal management laws and respect other members of the community, whether or not they are pet owners – this is fundamental to the building of mutual respect and tolerance amongst all members of the community. The responsibilities of a pet owner include:

- Registering their dog or cat
- Identifying their dog or cat
- **Desexing their dog or cat**
- Confining their dog to their premises
- Ensuring their pets do not cause a nuisance to others in particular by excessive barking
- Ensuring that their dog is leashed except in off leash areas
- Maintaining effective control of dogs in off leash areas
- Keeping their dogs out of areas where dogs are prohibited from entering
- Removing dog faeces from public places
- Ensuring that dogs do not rush, worry or attack humans or other animals
- Ensuring pets receive an appropriate standard of care to maintain their welfare

Council believes it can be more strategic in achieving higher standards of responsible pet ownership. For example, to minimise problem behaviours in animals, people should be encouraged to carefully consider breed selection, socialise their dogs around humans and other animals and undergo obedience or etiquette training.

Dogs and cats have a natural repertoire of behaviours, not all of which can or should be eliminated. For example all dogs bark – it is excessive barking that causes problems. And, in off leash areas, people need to understand that they will encounter unleashed dogs. Certainly, dogs must be under effective control at all times, however the behaviour of dogs in off leash parks is that they will romp and play which other people have to accept. At the same time however, all off leash areas are multi use and dog owners need to respect the rights and wishes of other park users.

A code of conduct for all users of all on and off leash parks will be developed with a view to building mutual respect and tolerance. Dog owners will be encouraged to properly assess whether their dog is suitable to be off leash. Council will also investigate other ways to build tolerance and respect with respect to all animal management issues.

## Mutual Respect and Tolerance

Whilst responsible pet ownership is a cornerstone of achieving harmonious relations between pet owners and the rest of the community, it is necessary that non-owners also act responsibly and show respect and tolerance for the rights of dog owners and their pets.

## Education vs Enforcement

An important issue is the relative merits of education versus enforcement. The community working group believes that it is necessary to have animal control laws and that enforcement may be necessary in situations of a serious or recalcitrant nature. It is felt likely, however, that education in responsible pet ownership will deliver more meaningful, lasting changes in human behaviour.

The Bureau of Animal Welfare operates education programs and activities on a statewide basis. Council will build on these programs and develop its own education programs to reflect local priorities.

The main education options available to local government are listed below. This list is not necessarily complete but can be used as a basis to design local programs. The options are divided into antecedence and consequence strategies. The strategies are further classified into written/documentary programs and face to face contact.

## Education Options

<b>Antecedence Strategies (that occur <i>before</i> the behaviour)</b>	
Written or documentary	Face to face contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web site information.</li> <li>• Brochures</li> <li>• Mail outs.</li> <li>• Press coverage.</li> <li>• Signs.</li> <li>• DVDs on responsible pet ownership.</li> <li>• Advertisements</li> <li>• Code of Conduct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking to pet owners about responsible pet ownership.</li> <li>• Obedience training</li> <li>• Etiquette training</li> <li>• Talking to children about responsible pet ownership &amp; appropriate behaviour around dogs</li> <li>• Dog Day Out Festivals</li> <li>• Cat shows</li> <li>• Microchipping days</li> <li>• Demonstration (eg how to pick up dog faeces without it touching your hand)</li> <li>• Door knocks</li> </ul>
<b>Consequence Strategies (that occur <i>after</i> the behaviour)</b>	
Written or documentary	Face to face contact

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awards - eg dog owner of the year or month accompanied by letters of congratulation and press coverage</li> <li>• Written warnings</li> <li>• Fines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rewards for responsible behaviour</li> <li>• Talking to pet owners about responsible pet ownership.</li> <li>• Verbal warnings.</li> </ul>
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It is believed that face to face contact is generally superior to written or documentary approaches. However face to face contact is time consuming and requires a skilled educator. Written or documentary approaches have the ability to reach more people and the message has the potential to last longer (e.g. a sign erected in a park is there as a reminder every time someone visits the park).

There is evidence to suggest that written messages work best when used in conjunction with face to face contact (eg officers/veterinarians handing out brochures to pet owners and talking about them).

Lessons from successful community education programs in other areas of public interest indicate that, to be successful, community education programs need to:

- Be targeted - people need to feel that the message applies to them. (People won't hear the message about the need to train their dog if they have an old dog)
- Convey clear and specific messages. (The message should not just be "pick up your dog's faeces" – it should be "take a bag with you, pick up as soon as your dog defecates and dispose of it in an appropriate garbage bin"), and
- Convey positive messages (e.g provide a list of places where you can take your dog off the leash as opposed to a list of places where you can't take your dog off the leash).

Partnerships with key stakeholders (vets, clubs, and welfare organizations) are important to maximise the success of education programs and Council will seek to further develop and strengthen these partnerships.

Council's community education priorities for the life of this Plan will be:

- Benefits of pet registration
- Effective operation of leash free areas;
- Compliance with dog leash and access requirements in other public places;
- Removal of dog faeces from public places; and
- Encouraging dogs and cats to be de-sexed.

### **Encouraging Registration**

Registration of and adequate identification of animals is extremely important if Council is to deliver an effective animal management service to the Bayside community. As described in section 5.3, Council will be encouraging registration

and identification of animals through offering a significant new service for those who have their animals registered.

### **Excessive barking**

The following discussion deals with excessive barking because this is a major and often drawn out cause of complaint in the Bayside community.

Around 300 barking dog complaints are received by Council each year.

Barking dog complaints have increased over the last 20 years with the rising incidence of pets being left alone during the day, increases in housing density and generally declining levels of tolerance.

Excessive barking has several causes:

- Separation anxiety;
- Boredom;
- External stimuli (eg passers by, other dogs barking, possums, cats);
- Territorialism (visitors to the property); and
- Communication.

Often the owner is not at home to hear or stop excessive barking.

Prevention of barking dog problems should be the starting point for managing excessive barking because once excessive barking is entrenched it is often hard to resolve.

Some breeds are genetically pre-disposed towards excessive barking. However excessive barking is often an acquired behaviour that can occur in any breed or sex of dog. Nevertheless Council could encourage prospective pet owners to avoid breeds that have a genetic predisposition to bark.

Habitual barking often develops at an early age. New dog owners should be encouraged to manage their puppies barking tendencies.. Utilising dog training schools or behavioural trainers for education and assisting owners to control their dog and prevent emerging problem behaviours will be instrumental in achieving awareness and prevention.

Regular exercise, including exercise in off leash areas, assists to socialise dogs around other people and their animals and results in a reduction of barking. Council will continue to provide accessible opportunities for off-leash exercise.

Providing dogs with an enriching home environment helps to minimise problem barking (toys, view of the outside world, shade, shelter and comfort). Council could provide dog owners and prospective dog owners with tips on environmental enrichment.

Design guidelines exist for pet friendly housing that addresses ways housing design can minimise problem barking. Council could make these guidelines available through the building and planning departments.

Council always suggests that complainants speak to their neighbours before contacting the Council. Council should encourage people to do this as early as possible - before the excessive barking becomes an entrenched habit and before complainants are literally at their wits end when they make the complaint to the Council. As these people are not able to be targeted, Council should provide this message through the general local media and on Council's website.

Not all barking dog complaints can be prevented. The objective is to resolve complaints as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Given the difficulties which generally arise in ascertaining the level of noise caused by the barking of dogs, and whether that constitutes an offence under the Act, Council takes the view that, at least in the first instance, education and prevention are more effective ways of dealing with these matters than enforcement.

Once a further complaint has been made, Council needs to decide if an ongoing problem exists. This is not easy. First, there is the need for reliable data. Council issues complainants with diaries to complete in order to ascertain the most appropriate course of action in addressing the complaint. This practice is used by councils throughout Australia and should be retained.

In recent years, bark counters have been developed. These are attached to a dog's collar (say for a week) and provide a printout of the time and duration of barking. Council could purchase one or more of these collars and use them in resolving barking dog complaints. This could provide additional data but should not replace the diary system.

Second, there is the question of determining what level of barking is excessive. This is subjective. Council does not believe it should define excessive barking (eg a set number of barks per minute or hour). Whilst this data is helpful, nuisance can be felt in other ways, e.g., it may be particularly loud, it may occur right beside a complainant's bedroom, or it may occur every time someone visits the complainant's house. Council will continue to treat each complaint on a case by case basis.

Once established, barking dog problems need to be resolved. Again, this is not easy. There are no right solutions, e.g., getting a second dog will help the problem in some cases but aggravate the problem in others.

Council assists dog owners with suggestions to help with problem barking, and assists dog owners with low cost hire of special anti-bark collars. Council will continue to update staff skills in relation the understanding and diagnosis of excessive barking and solutions available.

Sometimes the behaviour is so ingrained that professional advice is required. In these cases, advice from a veterinarian or referral to a qualified veterinary

behaviourist should be obtained. Council will establish a panel of behaviourists to whom owners of dogs with a barking problem can be referred.

Council has procedures for dealing with barking dog complaints documented in a flow chart for officers to follow and forms for use to complete the investigations. It is considered that the procedures operate effectively and are attached to be formally adopted by Council as part of this Plan. (refer Appendix 6)

### **Other Dog Related Complaints**

Apart from dog barking complaints Council receives various other complaints about dogs. Complaints about dogs wandering, dog litter and dog attacks are the more common of these. Just as the complaints are diverse, so are the remedies and while Council has adopted a 'zero tolerance' enforcement approach to the problem of dog litter, Council's Animal Management officers use a variety of methods in resolving other complaints with a heavy emphasis on education and conciliation.

### **Strategies**

Educate the community, including pet owners, prospective pet owners, non-owners, and children regarding responsible pet ownership, animal behaviour and the benefits of pet ownership.

Encourage and empower the community to resolve nuisance complaints without the need for enforcement and prosecution.

Develop procedures to facilitate conciliation and resolution of animal management complaints.

Identify the needs of the wider community and ensure they are reflected in Council's strategies and actions and in the implementation of the Plan

Develop a code of conduct for responsible pet owners

Encourage registration and identification of animals through incentives (see Section 5.3)

## **5.2 Ensuring community safety**

### **Objective**

To minimise the safety risks to humans and animals from domestic animals.

### **Discussion**

Safety risks include:

- Attacks by dogs on humans and other animals.
- Hazards from dogs and cats running on to roads.

- Hazards from dogs running on to bicycle paths.
- Attacks by cats on wildlife.
- Diseases that can be transmitted to humans from unretrieved dog faeces.
- Tripping and other injuries caused by extendable leads.

Attacks by cats on wildlife and the impacts of unretrieved dog faeces are considered in Section 5.5.

A responsible pet owner willingly complies with animal management laws and respects other members of the community, whether or not they are pet owners. These responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that their dog is leashed except in off leash areas
- Maintaining effective control of dogs in off leash areas.
- Ensuring that dogs do not rush, worry or attack humans or other animals.

Many people feel, and in fact could be, safer from attack by other humans if they are walking with or have a dog with them at home.

Whilst the number of dog attacks is not high in the City of Bayside, managing them is a critical animal management role. It is generally thought that dog attacks occur predominantly in and around the family home including the pavement in front of the home.

Council will encourage all dog owners to have their dog desexed as this will reduce the likelihood of aggressive tendencies.

Dog owners should be encouraged to take their dog to a recognised puppy pre-school. This introduces basic training, helps the owner to understand his or her responsibilities and, importantly, helps with early socialisation of the dog that will help to minimise aggressive tendencies later on.

Dog owners should be encouraged to attend etiquette and/or obedience training with their dog. This will provide continuing socialisation and help owners to manage and/or reduce potentially aggressive tendencies in their dog. Council will strengthen partnerships and links with approved training organizations to promote the training of dogs in Bayside.

Regular exercise, including exercise in off leash areas, is important for reducing the incidence of aggression and other undesirable behaviours in dogs. Regular outings also help to socialise dogs around other people and dogs.

Council provides a number of off-leash areas within convenient walking distance for most people where dogs can exercise and socialize quite freely while staying under effective control. In recognition of this the working group believes Council should consider limiting the length of lead that may be used when walking a dog. The use of extendable leads causes many safety hazards, including to cyclists in the vicinity of bicycle paths and in other instances where the length of the lead may be the cause of tripping or other injury to another person. Their use should be discouraged.

### **Dog playground/Tail Trail**

Learning of acceptable behaviour towards other dogs and people is assisted by being exposed to the community / social environment and through play with other dogs. This is best achieved in the public open space domain. There will continue to be demand for a variety of open space areas in which dogs can be exercised off-leash.

In the Dog Off-Leash Review conducted in 2006 Council noted the need to consider opportunities for 'open' exercise areas and creative 'play' environments with agility courses, otherwise known as 'Dog playgrounds' that encourage participation by the owner and dog.

### **Wandering Dogs**

Dogs that are wandering at large could worry, rush at or attack humans or other animals. They can also be a traffic hazard if they run out on to the road. All dogs are required to be confined to their property. This is a requirement under the Act. Council will continue to place importance on the need for dogs to be confined.

### **Fear Of Dogs In The Community**

Council acknowledges that there is a section of the community that is afraid of dogs and seeks to address that fear as a part of this plan.

It is acknowledged that dogs have physical capabilities and a genetic make-up that contribute to the possibility of aggressive behaviour that may be displayed toward people and/or other animals in varying contexts.

However, whilst incidents involving dogs do occur, statistics confirm that these are quite infrequent in the full scheme of canine/human interactions. Many people's individual experience and connection with dogs is limited and media coverage of a few highly charged incidents tends to contribute to public hysteria.

As a proactive body upholding community harmony and values, appropriate follow up by Council officers of each and every fearful encounter is required.

Any truly aggressive behaviour from a dog is a very serious warning that must be heeded and attended to as quickly as possible.

Council believes that the best way to deal with people's fears is through the provision of education programs. These would aim to prevent and reduce the likelihood of incidents by giving the community as a whole the tools to actively interact with dogs without prejudice, conflict or over-reaction.

People should be reminded that every dog has the capacity to bite and should understand how to behave around dogs. Children should be supervised around dogs at all times. Dog owners should be made aware of the potential implications for their dog if it bites.

Council believes that all school children in the Bayside City should receive instruction in bite avoidance and animal welfare /humane animal care in the home. This is particularly important for children who don't have any experience with dogs. Council will consider augmenting the state government program to ensure all school children in Bayside receive some training in bite avoidance.

Breed specific restrictions are the cause of much debate. Whilst some people say particular breeds should be banned, others say we should blame the deed not the breed. Nevertheless Council can encourage people to select a breed of dog that they believe they can manage and is appropriate to their circumstances. It should also be noted that several breeds of dog are already banned under the Act.

Council has procedures for dealing with dog attacks and other incidents that will be formalised as approved procedures and reviewed during the life of the Plan.

Council is always exploring avenues to reduce community disharmony and allay active fears within the community so that resources and time can be used to bring about positive responses and ensure community safety. It is a priority to maintain a balance within the community as a whole. Productive input will always be welcomed.

### **Strategies**

Provide information on appropriate breed selection.

Encourage exercising, socialisation and training of dogs.

Encourage desexing to reduce aggressive tendencies

Discourage use of extendable leads

Encourage confinement of dogs to their properties through safe fencing.

Provide school children in Bayside with training in bite avoidance.

Ensure dangerous and restricted breed dogs are properly identified and managed by their owners.

## **5.3 Servicing the needs of the community**

### **Objective**

To provide high quality animal management services that meet the expectations of the Bayside community.

## **Discussion**

The community expects Council to provide a high level of customer service in animal management.

This includes the quality of Council's programs and procedures and the animal management and customer service skills of its staff.

Council must continue to monitor community expectations, review its programs and procedures against best practice, ensure that Council staff are well trained in both animal management and customer service, and communicate well with the Bayside community.

## **Pound Operation**

An area of immediate concern is how Council operates its pound service. Concerns include the following:

- Delivering dogs to the pound in Cranbourne is perceived by Council staff and the community to be an inefficient use of Council resources.
- It is also perceived by the community to be a very cumbersome and unfriendly service to use.
- Enquiring after, and retrieving missing animals from the pound is difficult for members of the community because of its distance from Bayside. The recently introduced (user paid) home delivery service helps in this regard but is considered expensive.
- The current system of fines and fees for the return of a lost animal is seen as excessively punitive to many people and this encourages them to operate outside the Council system when they find a stray animal.
- There is a perception of a high rate of euthanasia by the pound. It is noted by the working group that Council has limited control over the criteria for euthanasing dogs and cats entering the pound as it is not Council operated.

Many of the above concerns could be avoided if Council established and operated its own pound facility within Bayside and thus the working group strongly recommends that an investigation into how this might be done be carried out as a matter of some priority.

## **Animal Registration is a Key to Delivery of Quality Service**

It is critical that Council is able to readily identify animals and their owners if it is to offer a high quality animal management service. To encourage registration, microchipping, and other forms of identification (i.e tags with personal details with

their Council registration tag) Council is proposing to introduce a significant incentive for people who register their animals (and identify them).

It has been noted that people are often reluctant to participate in the Council pound system for various reasons, but mostly because they do not wish the owners of wandering animals to receive large fines. For privacy reasons, Council is unable to accede to requests for the identity of the owner of an animal that is clearly registered and well looked after and residents. An alternative (that avoids the privacy issue) that has been proposed is that Council should pass the finder's name on to the owner, but Council has legal advice to suggest that this practice would be in contravention of the DAA. As an alternative, Council intends to try a strategy of free return of registered animals that are found wandering.

### **Free Animal Return Service**

It is hoped that a new strategy of free return of registered animals from the pound (except for repeat offenders) would encourage greater rates of registration and identification of pets. It is hoped that people would view registration as taking out an insurance policy against their animals being lost and would be aware that they would not be unfairly penalised if their animal strays through no fault of their own.

It is also hoped that if Council adopts a free return service for registered lost animals this will encourage members of the community to participate in Council's animal return system rather than operating independently and unofficially.

It is considered that free return should not be unlimited. Rather, one free return per registered animal per year is considered by the working group to be reasonable.

### **Record Keeping**

Council also provides a detailed list, including a photo, of each animal currently held by Council on its web site as a quick and easy method for pet owners to ascertain if their pet has been located by Council. This policy has been well received by the community and will be retained.

An extremely useful extension, however, would be to try to provide a single point of contact for those searching for a missing animal. As a starting point, the above-mentioned web site could be extended to provide links to other parties (e.g. vets and animal shelters) who might have custody of stray animals, and other parties could be encouraged to maintain web sites of a similar quality to list the animals that they are caring for.

It is also considered important that comprehensive records are kept of animals that are found deceased so that the owners of these animals can have closure about the fate of their pet.

## **Policy On Animal Treatment At Commercial Pounds**

All animal pounds and shelters are required by law to comply with the “*Code of Practice for the management of dogs and cats in shelters and pounds*”. This Code is made under the provisions of Section 59 of the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 (“the Act”). The purpose of the Code is to specify the minimum standards of accommodation, management and care which are appropriate to the physical and behavioural needs of dogs and cats housed in shelters and pounds.

It is the responsibility of the Council in which the pound is located to conduct regular inspections to ensure compliance with the Code.

Where animals need to be sent to a pound outside Bayside, Council should develop and adopt a clear criteria for their treatment and, consequently, for the selection of the successful tenderer at any future tender for providing these services.

## **Strategies**

Adopt a system that, as far as possible, is service based rather than penalty based to encourage registration and participation in Council’s animal return system rather than working outside of this system as is currently done by many people at present.

Promote the idea establishing a pound facility in Bayside and investigate the feasibility of doing this as a priority.

Provide suitable services to re-unite lost and impounded animals with their owners as quickly as possible.

Develop the means of providing a single point of contact for all lost and found animals.

Meet community expectations in terms of humane treatment of animals and adopt clear policies in respect of treatment of stray animals by pounds, whether in or outside of Bayside, including policies to minimise the numbers of animals euthanased.

Provide staff training and development in animal management and customer service.

Improve communication collaboration and co-operation between groups, organisations and other agencies.

Ensure Council responds to customer service requests in accordance with adopted procedures and protocols.

Continue to monitor and review Council’s animal management services.

Collect and analyse information to assist in the identification of issues and trends in the Bayside community.

## **5.4 Promoting animal welfare**

### **Objective**

To ensure that the welfare of companion animals in the community is well catered for, that the number of strays and lost animals is reduced, and that those animals that do stray are treated in a humane and compassionate manner.

### **Discussion**

Council believes that all companion animals have the right to be properly cared for by their owners and to be humanely treated if they stray or become lost.

Animal welfare must start with pet owners by ensuring that they meet their pet's basic needs and welfare.

These basic needs and welfare include adequate food and water, shelter, exercise and veterinary care when needed. It also includes ensuring the animal is properly confined to its owner's premises to prevent it wandering and sustaining injury or causing a safety hazard to others.

### **Impounding of Animals**

Of great concern is the high rate of impounding of cats and dogs in animal shelters.

The number of animals impounded is a function of:

- Unwanted litters.
- Unowned animals (this includes semi-owned animals, i.e., those that people will often feed but not otherwise take responsibility for).
- Lost animals. (Animals that are able to wander and are unidentified and/or unregistered cannot be returned to their owners).
- Relinquished and unclaimed animals. The likelihood of a pet being relinquished or unclaimed is reduced if people:
  - 1) do not make rash decisions about getting a pet;
  - 2) choose a breed that is appropriate to their lifestyle;
  - 3) undertake basic obedience training with their animal to reduce future unwanted behaviours; and
  - 4) are able to confine their pet to their property.

The number of animals that are euthanased in Victoria each year remains high. The rate is a function of:

- The number returned to their owners;
- The number of people willing to take responsibility for the strays they feed.
- The number of people willing to adopt an animal from a shelter; and
- The ability of the animal to be re-homed. Many animals in shelters are feral or display behaviours that make them unsuitable for re-homing.

Key strategies to reduce the number of animals in animal shelters are to increase the rates of:

- Desexing;
- Identification and registration of dogs and cats;
- Confinement of dogs to their premises;
- Obedience training;
- People taking responsibility for the strays they feed (including by formally adopting, identifying and registering them);
- Returning of pets to owners;
- Re-homing of lost and unwanted animals, e.g., encouraging people to obtain a pet from a shelter; and
- Ensuring pets receive an appropriate standard of care to maintain their welfare and encourage them not to wander.

### **New Policy for Returning Stray Pets**

Rapid return of lost or wandering animals is considered important to reduce stress on the animals (and their owners).

If Council officers find a lost or wandering dog or cat that is registered with the Council or microchipped, attempts will immediately be made to contact the owner.

As discussed in section 5.3, Council proposes to introduce a scheme under which registered pets found lost or wandering will be returned to their owner free of charge by Council on the first occasion during each registration year. It is envisaged this “get out of jail free” initiative will encourage and increase pet registrations.

Currently, any pet found lost or wandering during week days is kept at Council’s Day Stay facility in Sandringham until 4pm and if no contact has been made with the owner, and the pet has not been claimed by this time, it is transported to Council’s Animal Pound in Cranbourne. The community working group strongly supports extending the hours that Council can hold animals locally for easier collection by their owners and the establishment of a Council owned and managed animal pound within Bayside.

### **Mandatory Desexing**

Some Councils are looking at introducing a mandatory desexing requirement of all owned dogs and cats (with exceptions for approved breeders). The community working group strongly supports this stance, however this is a complex issue that is open to debate and, prior to possible implementation, requires thorough consideration by Council with appropriate evidence to show that the requirement will have the desired effect. In the interim, Council will encourage people to have their dogs and cats desexed and will continue to provide a pet desexing discount voucher to any Bayside resident who is the holder of one of the following cards:

- A Pensioner Concession Card issued by the Department of Social Security or the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- A Gold Card specifying War Widow issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs; or
- A Gold Card specifying TPI issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

### **Impulse Buying of Pets**

The practice of pets being offered for sale in shop-front displays was identified by the working group as being one of the main causes of impulse buying of pets where little or no proper consideration has been given to the appropriateness of the pet and all the issues concerning the pet's future care and welfare. The working group strongly recommends that Bayside Council ban this practice in Bayside and advocate to the State Government the banning of such shop-front displays.

### **Strategies**

Free return of lost pets that are registered (but not for repeat offenders) to encourage:

- registration of pets,
- identification of pets, and
- cooperation with Council Officers and participation in Council's animal management system.

Investigate the provision and operation of Bayside's own pound.

Encourage the desexing of dogs and cats.

Increase the number of returned animals.

Encourage microchipping and other means of identification.

Encourage pet owners to attend to their pet's basic needs and provide a quality environment in which to live.

Reduce the incidence of impulse buying of pets by banning shop-front displays of pets for sale to reduce the number of abandoned and relinquished animals.

Meet community expectations in terms of humane treatment of animals and adopt clear policies in respect of treatment of stray animals by pounds, whether in or outside of Bayside, including minimising the numbers of animals euthanised.

## **5.5 Protecting the environment**

### **Objective**

To minimise the impacts of domestic animals on the environment.

### **Discussion**

The main environmental issues associated with domestic animals are:

- The impact of unretrieved dog faeces; and
- The impact of cats on wildlife.

#### **Unretrieved Dog Faeces**

The management of dog faeces is an important environmental issue. Tonnes of dog faeces pollute our waterways and public places every year and it is an issue on which the community has strong feelings. Unretrieved dog faeces also has health impacts if the dog has not been properly vaccinated and is a major source of discord amongst the community who dislike its presence on paths, roads and in parks.

Council's Local Law No 2 requires dog owners to remove and dispose of dogs faeces. It is not proposed to amend this local law.

However compliance with the local law depends on people:

- Having a bag or other receptacle with them to pick up;
- Seeing the dog defecate (less likely perhaps in off leash areas);
- Overcoming the distaste factor; and
- Having somewhere to dispose of the bag conveniently.

Local Law No 2 also requires dog owners' carry with them a bag or dispenser suitable for picking up dog faeces when walking their dog. It is considered that this requirement should be retained.

In line with popular demand Council provides bags in parks for use by dog owners. This is a useful reminder to dog owners that picking up after their dog is now expected. Council will continue to provide dog poo bags at high use and other selected locations. The Council Plan specifies that these bags should be bio-degradable.

All communication with dog owners will make it clear that bags are provided as a backup, that they will only be provided in selected parks and that people should always carry their own bag with them.

Council will consider introducing the pooch pouch program. These are brightly coloured pouches attached to a dog's collar for dog poo bags to be stored in. This is another useful reminder that picking up dog faeces is now expected. Pooch

pouches could be distributed with registrations. Council could also consider making them available to key stakeholders for distribution amongst their members/clients.

Council believes that an improved rate of removal of dog's faeces is more likely to be brought about by education than enforcement. The City of Port Phillips high profile DNA testing of dog faeces a decade ago had more of an educative effect even though it was an enforcement action.

### **Impact Of Cats On Wildlife**

If cats are confined to their properties, the impacts on wildlife are reduced even though semi-owned cats are considered to be a major part of this problem. This can be achieved either by confinement indoors, through cat parks attached to a house and by cat proof fences around the perimeter of a property.

Whilst cat owners will be encouraged to confine their cats to their property at all times, it is not proposed to introduce this as a legal requirement at this time.

However it is proposed to introduce a night-time cat curfew (refer Section 5.6).

### **Strategies**

Educate dog owners about the importance of removing their dog's faeces from public places whilst continuing with enforcement action against those who fail to do so.

Encourage dog owners to carry a suitable device with them for removing dog faeces from public places.

Encourage confinement of cats.

Introduce a cat curfew between sunset and sunrise.

Encourage desexing of cats and consider mandatory desexing.

## **5.6 Cat Specific Issues**

### **Objective**

To recognise and manage the specific issues that arise in dealing with cats and to reduce unwanted and unowned or 'semi owned' cat populations in Bayside with humane policies.

### **Discussion**

Cats in the community can be divided roughly into three categories:

**Owned cats** – These are cats that owners recognize as their cats, however, it is suspected that a large number of these cats are not registered with Council.

Based on a sample local veterinarian clinic statistics around 95% of these cats are desexed.

**Semi-owned cats** – These cats are ex-strays or cats that have found their way to “caring” families, who feed and care for them to a certain degree because they “want to help”, but can not or will not take full responsibility for them. This category of cat appears to be a major problem since they are frequently not desexed and being fed and cared for assists in bringing them up to breeding condition with the result of unwanted litters of kittens.

**True feral cats** – This group of cats is now thought to be quite small in Bayside.

It is the strong recommendation of the community working group that mandatory desexing and early age desexing of cats be implemented by Council at the earliest opportunity.

The recommendation is aimed at providing a humane solution to reducing the number of dumped cats and euthanasing large numbers of unwanted kittens.

However this is a complex issue and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is not in favour of mandatory desexing. The AVA argues that the cost is unjustified and that compulsory desexing is largely ineffective as unowned or semi-owned cats are responsible for most unwanted offspring.

This issue will be the subject of a thorough investigation and report to Council for determination.

### **Cat Curfew**

Another welfare concern regarding cats on which the working group reached consensus was that a Cat Curfew (Sunset to Sunrise) would be a worthwhile objective and deserved of a high priority. The group identified the following issues:

- The impact on wildlife of cats hunting after dark
- the death of cats at night due to their behaviour with car headlights
- the cat may lay injured or limp away in pain
- the upsetting sight to both to children and adults of dead cats on the road in the morning,
- the danger that a motorist may swerve to avoid a cat at night
- cats roaming at night causing dogs to bark
- cats making a noise fighting/mating at night
- cats triggering security lights
- cats defecating in gardens, and
- Toms spraying doors etc.

### **Specialist Cat Control Officer**

Cat management is seen as a specialist area of Council animal management operations which up until now has not been adequately addressed by Bayside City Council. Issues such as desexing, cat curfews, elimination of stray cat colonies, and general community education regarding cats demand a significant amount of time, knowledge and effort to be properly catered for. Experience at other Councils, such as Frankston City Council, has shown that the appointment of a specialist cat control officer can be very beneficial.

### **Strategies**

Promote the benefits of cat desexing to the community.

Provide incentives for the community to register and desex owned cats.

Encourage formal adoption, registration, and desexing of semi-owned cats.

Establish a cat curfew between sunset and sunrise.

Council to appoint a specialist Cat Control officer.

Consider mandatory desexing.

## **5.7 Harnessing the benefits of pet ownership**

### **Objective**

To harness the health, companionship and social benefits of owning pets.

### **Discussion**

There is a wealth of scientific evidence that demonstrates the health, companionship and social benefits of owning pets.

Most of the studies suggest pet ownership is associated with a reduction in cardiovascular disease (heart attacks and stroke) associated with increased exercise. However a growing body of research indicates that there is an association between pet ownership/attachment and psychosocial wellbeing. The psychosocial benefits of pet ownership include facilitating normal child development, ameliorating loneliness and depression, and facilitating social support and interaction with other humans. It has been demonstrated that dogs are a social lubricant – having a dog with you stimulates conversations, and in some cases, friendships with other dog owners. This is generally seen as making a positive contribution to social capital.

Local government has a potential new role to play in harnessing the benefits of owning companion animals.

There are programs available that match frail elderly pet owners with volunteers who might walk, bath or take a pet to the vet. Pets are often taken into nursing

homes and hospitals to visit patients/residents. Council could be involved in facilitating programs like these.

### **Strategies**

Foster the ability of members of the community to own pets suitable for the environment in which they live.

Provide and maintain suitable areas for human and animal interaction.

Investigate ways Council could harness the benefits of pet ownership with a view to achieving positive health, companionship and social outcomes for the Bayside community.

## **6 Performance Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **Method of Evaluation**

The method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by Council are adequate to give effect to the requirements of the Act will be as follows:

### **Responsible Officer**

The Team Leader Local Laws will be assigned with responsibility for the successful implementation of the Plan.

### **Develop A Sound Basis For Recording Data**

The current development of Council's procedures for recording animal control data will provide an ongoing accurate and comprehensive basis to assess Council's performance in animal management.

### **Animal Management Liaison Group**

An Animal Management Liaison Group will be formed comprising interested residents and practitioners and relevant members of Council staff. It is expected that the Liaison Group will help with the implementation of the plan and act as a sounding board for exploring ideas.

It is envisaged that the Liaison Group would meet quarterly or as required.

### **Annual Review**

The Plan will be reviewed and amended each year as appropriate. The review will evaluate progress against an agreed set of key performance indicators for the Plan. If the indicators do not show that the strategies of the Plan are being

successful, then changes should be considered in light of the latest information available, both for the local context and by way of benchmarking with the success (or otherwise) of similar efforts by other Councils.

If the Plan is amended, Council must provide the Bureau with a copy of the amended Plan.

### **Key Performance Indicators**

In order that the assessment described above may be carried out, an early action under the Plan should be to determine a set of key performance indicators that are both strategic and measurable. Once these have been chosen, benchmark (i.e., starting date) data must be compiled and then compared periodically with data that must be monitored on an ongoing basis. Some suggestions for KPIs that are strategic in nature and measure outcomes of the Plan are as follows, but it should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list, and nor does inclusion in the list below indicate that the data required for monitoring would be readily available.

- Increased rate of animal registration
- Increased rates of microchipping (and other identification) of animals
- Increased rate of desexing of animals
- Increased community satisfaction of pet owners and non-owners.
- Reduction in number of strays
- Reduction in the number of semi-owned and unowned cats
- Reduction in numbers of animal related complaints (probably divided into complaint sub-groups)
- Reduction in kill rate for un-returned animals
- Increase in re-homing rates of un-returned animals
- Increase in return rate of impounded animals

### **Training of Authorised Officers (Animal Management Officers)**

All future appointed Council's Animal Management Officers will be required to have or attain the Certificate IV in Animal Control and Welfare. In addition to this they will receive ongoing on the job training. Council will also encourage officers to undergo further study to obtain higher animal management and welfare qualifications.

## 7 Action Plans

The Action Plans that follow list the actions that Council will implement over the next 3 years to achieve its vision and objectives. The Action Plans are based on the Key Objectives and Strategies developed in Section 5.

1. PROMOTING COMMUNITY HARMONY			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate the community, including pet owners, prospective pet owners, non-owners, and children regarding responsible pet ownership, animal behaviour and the benefits of pet ownership.</li> <li>Encourage and empower the community to resolve nuisance complaints without the need for enforcement and prosecution.</li> <li>Develop procedures to facilitate conciliation and resolution of animal management complaints.</li> <li>Identify the needs of the wider community and ensure they are reflected in Council's strategies and actions and in the implementation of the Plan</li> <li>Develop a code of conduct for responsible pet owners</li> <li>Encourage registration and identification of animals through incentives</li> </ul>			
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 1.1 Education (including through partnerships with others)	- At least two annual community events containing information presentations held each year.  -	- Local Laws.  -	- Annual
- 1.2 Encourage attendance at dog training	- Information and links to Bayside dog trainers published on Council's website	- Local Laws.  -	- Year 1
- 1.3 Responsible pet ownership	- An education and enforcement plan developed and implemented.	- Local Laws.  -	- Year 2

- ACTION	- TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	- TIMEFRAME
- 1.4 Include articles about positive experience of pet ownership in local media.	- At least 3 suitable articles a year as media releases for inclusion in local papers.	- Local Laws. -	- Annual
- 1.5 Review all animal management material provided by Council to determine how balanced is its consideration of animal management issues. Make amendments where necessary.	- Investigation and screening completed.	- Local Laws.	- Year 3
- 1.6 Ensure all Council staff understand the principles underpinning this Plan particularly those related to Council's recognition of the importance of pet ownership and the need to balance the needs of pet owners and other members of the community.	- Briefing on the Plan included in the Induction Plan for new Animal Management Staff. - Memo circulated to Council staff advising on the key principles of the Plan.	- Local Laws.	- Year 1
- 1.7 Disseminate the pet friendly housing design guidelines to the community and distribute to Council's planning and building departments. These deal with ways to help confine pets.	- Synopsis prepared and distributed.	- Local Laws	- Year 3.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
<p>1.8 Ensure locally provided puppy pre school programs include material on ways to help minimise excessive barking problems from developing.</p>	<p>- Review completed.</p>	<p>- Local Laws</p>	<p>Year 2.</p>
<p>- 1.9 Prepare material on how to minimise excessive barking problems from developing. Include in website and other promotional material. Prepare a press release for rotational inclusion in local media.</p> <p>-</p>	<p>- Material prepared on minimising excessive barking problems from developing and incorporated into Council provided information. Press release developed.</p> <p>Material supplied to local dog training facilities.</p>	<p>- Local Laws</p>	<p>- Year 2.</p>
<p>- 1.10 Prepare a panel of veterinary behaviourists that people with dogs that bark excessively can be referred to.</p> <p>-</p>	<p>- Panel developed.</p>	<p>- Local Laws</p>	<p>- Year 2</p>
<p>- 1.11 Develop and adopt a Code of Conduct for all users of on and off leash areas. Identify ways to disseminate and publicise the Code.</p>	<p>- Code of Conduct and dissemination/publicity recommendations prepared and adopted.</p>	<p>- Local Laws</p>	<p>- Year 1</p>

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
1.12 Incorporate the recommendations for disseminating and publicising the Code of Conduct into the Education and Enforcement Plan for ensuring compliance with dogs in public places laws (see below).	- Press release and plan for its release prepared.	Local Laws	Year 1
- 1.13 Continue to update and extend officers' skills in dealing with barking dog complaints.	- Incorporation into Staff Performance Reviews.	- Local Laws	- Year 1
- 1.14 Ensure new staff receive training in diagnosis and treatment of barking dog complaints and the need for engaging a trained behaviour specialist.	- Incorporation into Staff Induction Plans and Performance Reviews.	- Local Laws	- Year 1

## 2. ENSURING COMMUNITY SAFETY

- Provide information on appropriate breed selection.
- Encourage exercising, socialisation and training of dogs.
- Encourage desexing to reduce aggressive tendencies
- Discourage use of extendable leads
- Encourage confinement of dogs to their properties through safe fencing.
- Provide school children in Bayside with training in bite avoidance.
- Ensure dangerous and restricted breed dogs are properly identified and managed by their owners.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 2.1 Ensure prospective pet owners have access to information on appropriate breed selection and animal management responsibilities.	- Information provided on Council's website and other promotional material. Annual press release. -	- Local Laws	- Year 1. - Ongoing.
- 2.2 Ensure the Bayside community has access to appropriate puppy preschool and etiquette/obedience training programs. Provide links on Council's website and other promotional material.	- Review undertaken. - Recommendations implemented.	- Local Laws	- Year 2. - Year 3.
- 2.3 Develop a press release on the implications for your dog if it attacks or bites an animal or human.	- Release once a year.	- Local Laws	- Year 1

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 2.4 Review and approve procedures for dealing with dog attacks/harassment complaints.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws	- Year 1.
- 2.5 Consider augmenting the State Government's schools visitation program.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws.	- Year 2.
- 2.6 Consider introducing a standard for the Local Laws department to ensure Council has one or more officers trained in an appropriate Dog Safe Program.	- Review completed. - Recommendations implemented.	- Local Laws	- Year 2 - Year 3.
- 2.7 When the Safety Action Plan is reviewed, include a consideration of the safety issues associated with dog walking and ownership (both positive and negative safety impacts).	- Safety issues of dog walking and ownership considered in the next Safety Action Plan.	- Urban Strategy and Culture	- As required
- 2.8 Identify breeds or circumstances so that dogs may be less likely to wander and are more easily confined by a secure fence. Include this information in breed selection information and desexing education.	- Review completed. - Information provided.	- Local Laws	- Year 3

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 2.9 Ensure dangerous and restricted breed dogs are properly identified and managed by their owners.	- Conduct annual audit of properties containing dangerous and restricted breed dogs.	- Local Laws.	- Annual
- 2.10 Consider restricting the length of a lead that be used when walking a dog -	- Survey conducted via Community Forum - Report presented to Council recommending change if supported by survey findings.	- Local Laws.	- Year 2
2.11 Consider the construction of at least one “dog playground” ( designated open space area for dogs containing an agility course and specialised dog play equipment.)	- Report to Council on feasibility, costing and possible locations.	- Leisure and Recreation Department	- Year 2

### 3. SERVICING THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

- Adopt a system that, as far as possible, is service based rather than penalty based to encourage registration and participation in Council’s animal return system rather than working outside of this system as is currently done by many people at present.
- Promote the idea establishing a pound facility in Bayside and investigate the feasibility of doing this as a priority.
- Provide suitable services to re-unite lost and impounded animals with their owners as quickly as possible.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
3.1 Determine a set of key performance indicators that are both strategic and measurable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key performance indicators established</li> <li>• Key performance indicators benchmarked</li> </ul>	- Local Laws	- Year 1
- 3.2 Review the Plan each year and make adjustments as appropriate. The review should include a review of customer service standards provided.	- Review completed and Plan amended as appropriate.	- Local Laws.	- Annual
- 3.3 Review trends shown by data and ensure basis for recording data is sound	- Review carried out annually in July. Procedures for reviewing trends and recording data reviewed and updated.	- Local Laws.	- Annual
- 3.4 Review core qualifications and training requirements for Council's animal management staff.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws	- Year 1

- ACTION	- TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	- RESPONSIBILITY	- TIMEFRAME
- 3.5 Develop a list of external stakeholders who could/should be contacted in different circumstances.	- List developed.	- Local Laws	- Year 1
- 3.6 Review Councils procedures for dealing with lost and impounded animals.  - 3.7 Investigate the merits of establishing a full time pound facility in Bayside.	- Review completed.  Investigation carried out and report presented to Council for consideration	- Local Laws	- Year 2
- 3.8 Consider ways to reunite lost animals with their owners as soon as possible.  - 3.9 Develop procedure to ensure that owners are advised of the fate of deceased animals wherever possible  - 3.10 Assess adequacy of Councils long term record keeping of lost and found animals	- Current re-unification methods reviewed and ideas for improvements canvassed with community consultative group and other stakeholders  -	- Local Laws.	- Year 1
- 3.11 Engage all known pet rehoming operators and establish a single point of contact for all lost and found animals	- All rehoming operators in Bayside contacted and system established with willing partners.	- Local Laws.	- Year 1
- 3.12 Review all Council local laws and orders relating to animal management.	- Review completed.	- Local Laws.	- Year 3.

#### 4. PROMOTING/ENSURING ANIMAL WELFARE

- Free return of lost pets that are registered (but not for repeat offenders) to encourage:
  1. registration of pets,
  2. identification of pets, and
  3. cooperation with Council Officers and participation in Council's animal management system.
- Investigate the provision and operation of Bayside's own pound.
- Encourage the desexing of dogs and cats.
- Increase the number of returned animals.
- Encourage microchipping and other means of identification.
- Encourage pet owners to attend to their pet's basic needs and provide a quality environment in which to live.
- Reduce the incidence of impulse buying of pets by banning shop-front displays of pets for sale to reduce the number of abandoned and relinquished animals.
- Meet community expectations in terms of humane treatment of animals and adopt clear policies in respect of treatment of stray animals by pounds, whether in or outside of Bayside, including minimising the numbers of animals euthanised.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 4.1 Budget implications of free return policy to be assessed	- Report submitted to Council for consideration	- Local Laws	- Year 1
- 4.2 Prepare an Education Plan to encourage people to have their pets desexed.  - 4.3 Develop a range of incentives to have pets desexed	- Education Plan prepared.  - Incentives developed and implemented.	- Local Laws	- Year 2

- ACTION	- TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	- RESPONSIBILITY	- TIMEFRAME
4.4 Consider introducing a mandatory desexing requirement including a consideration of early age desexing.	Report to Council for consideration.	Local Laws.	Year 2
- 4.5 Screen Council provided information to include encouragement for prospective pet owners to consider obtaining a pet from an approved animal shelter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Screening and amendments completed.</li> <li>- Include free initial registration for any animal re-homed by Bayside residents from Council's pound</li> </ul>	- Local Laws	- Year 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4.6 Prepare annual report for Council on the numbers of animals entering shelters, the reasons why, what happens to them and what pet owners can do to minimise the problem.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual report prepared and presented to Council in August each years on previous financial year results.</li> <li>- Information disseminated to residents on Council's website and via press release.</li> </ul>	- Local Laws.	- Annual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4.7 Review procedures for dealing with animals entering Council's pound with a view to reducing the numbers of animal that are euthanised. Ensure pets entering shelters are treated humanely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review completed.</li> </ul>	- Local Laws.	- Year 2.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
4.8 Ensure Council's website has information on attending to pets' basic needs and that this is included in other relevant promotional material.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Council's website and other relevant promotion material amended.</li> <li>Include links to appropriate breed selection and information to help people to reduce problem behaviours in their pets that might result in them relinquishing their pets.</li> </ul>	Local Laws.	Year 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4.9 Establish criteria for contracts with pounds, including objectives for a significant reduction in kill rates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Criteria developed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 1</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4.10 Continue annual door knocks to identify unregistered dogs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Door knock completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4.11 Advocate the banning of pets for sale in shop-front displays.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Written representation made to the Department of Primary Industries recommending the practice is made illegal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 2</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4.12 Continue to treat incidents of dogs wandering at large as an issue demanding priority attention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue existing practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4.13 Review the procedures for dealing with dogs that are wandering at large.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 3.</li> </ul>

## 5. PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

- Educate dog owners about the importance of removing their dog's faeces from public places whilst continuing with enforcement action against those who fail to do so.
- Encourage dog owners to carry a suitable device with them for removing dog faeces from public places.
- Encourage confinement of cats.
- Introduce a cat curfew between sunset and sunrise.
- Encourage desexing of cats and consider mandatory desexing.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 5.1 Ensure bags provided by Council for use by dog owners to remove dog faeces are bio-degradable.	- Continuing existing practice.	- Properties Dept.	- Ongoing.
- 5.2 Ensure appropriate numbers of dog bags are made available at dog poo bag dispensers..	- Continue existing practice.	- Properties Dept.	- Ongoing.
- 5.3 Focus education and enforcement activities on getting dog owners to take a bag with them when they walk their dog.	- Review completed. - Recommendations implemented.	- Local Laws.	- Year 1-2.
- 5.4 Focus education and enforcement activities on getting people to pick up their dog's poo in the public realm.	- Review completed. - Recommendations implemented.	- Local Laws.	- Year 2-3.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5.5 Consider the provision of pooch pouch bags to encourage people to pick up their dog faeces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review completed.</li> <li>- Recommendations implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 2.</li> <li>- Year 3.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5.6 Review Council's faeces management program including a review of existing local laws relating to faeces removal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 3</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5.7 Review all Council provided information to ensure appropriate advice and encouragement is provided on the merits of confining cats. It should include information on the benefits of and ways to confine cats.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 2</li> </ul>

## 6. CAT SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Promote the benefits of cat desexing to the community.
- Provide incentives for the community to register and desex owned cats.
- Encourage formal adoption, registration, and desexing of semi-owned cats.
- Establish a cat curfew between sunset and sunrise.
- Council to appoint a specialist Cat Control officer.
- Consider mandatory desexing.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6.1 Investigate the feasibility of engaging a specialist cat management officer with specialist skills in cat management, community engagement and education.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigation completed.</li> <li>- Recommendations implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws</li> <li>- Local Laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 1</li> <li>- Year 1</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6.2 Investigate and prepare a report for Council on the issue of mandatory cat desexing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigation completed and report presented to Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 2</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6.3 Investigate the introduction of a cat curfew.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigation complete.</li> <li>- Report presented to Council for consideration.</li> <li>- Recommendations implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Year 3</li> </ul>

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 6.4 Investigate procedures for dealing feral or stray cat colonies with a view to reducing unwanted cat populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Investigation completed.</li> <li>- Recommendations implemented.</li> </ul>	- Local Laws	- Year 3
- 6.5 Develop procedures for the investigation of stray, lost and un-owned or feral cats and implement as necessary.	- Operational procedures developed.	- Local Laws	- Year 3
- 6.6 Promote cat cages for hire for property owners to humanely trap cats on their property for handing over to Council or another approved animal shelter.	- Review completed of Council provided promotional material to ensure this information is provided.	- Local Laws.	- Year 3
- 6.7 Consider options for excluding cats from bushland areas.	- Report presented to Council for consideration	- Local Laws.	- Year 1

## 7. HARNESSING THE BENEFITS OF PET OWNERSHIP

- Foster the ability of members of the community to own pets suitable for the environment in which they live.
- Provide and maintain suitable areas for human and animal interaction.
- Investigate ways Council could harness the benefits of pet ownership with a view to achieving positive health, companionship and social outcomes for the Bayside community.

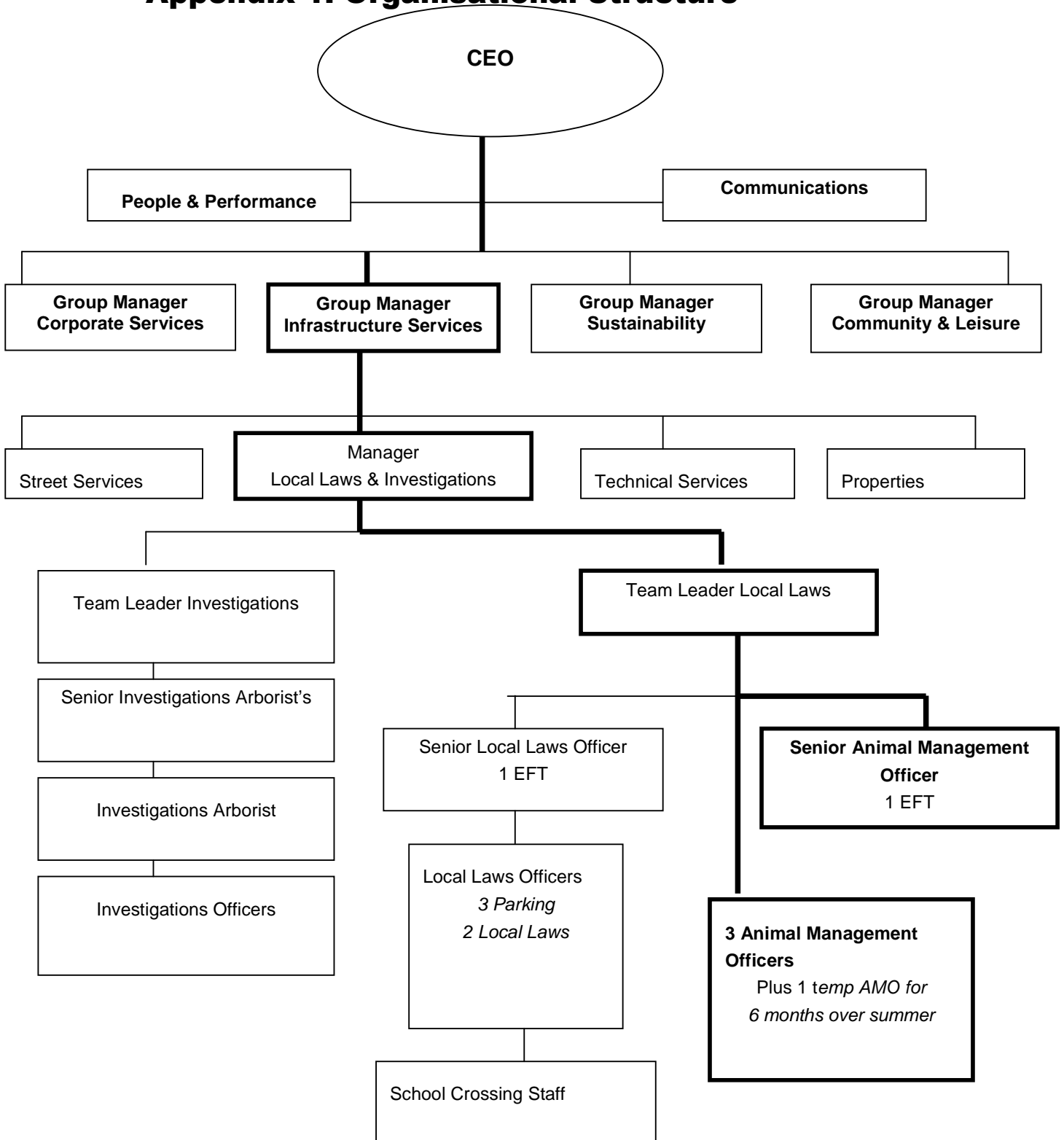
ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 7.1 Include articles about positive experience of pet ownership in local media.	- At least 3 suitable articles a year included in local papers.	- Local Laws.	- Annual
- 7.2 Review all animal management material provided by Council to determine how balanced is its consideration of animal management issues. Make amendments where necessary.	- Investigation and screening completed.	- Local Laws.	- Year 3
- 7.3 Disseminate the pet friendly housing design guidelines to the community and distribute to Council's planning and building departments. This will assist people to identify appropriate environments in which to keep pets.  -	- Synopsis prepared and distributed.	- Local Laws	- Year 3.

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
- 7.4 Continue to maintain and monitor the effective use of Council's off leash areas to allow for human and animal interaction.	- Off leash areas provided.	- Local Laws.	- Ongoing
- 7.5 Investigate the merits of sponsoring/facilitating a local community program of volunteers who support frail, older people and those with a disability with their pets at home	- Investigation completed.	- Health and Aged Services	- Year 3
- 7.6 Investigate if there is scope to sponsor a pet visitation program in local hospitals and nursing homes.	- Investigation completed.	- Health and Aged Services.	- Year 3
- 7.7 When the Open Space Strategy is reviewed, ensure the positive recreation impacts of dog walking are considered along with any conflicts arising from dogs' use of parks.	- Positive recreation impacts of dogs walking considered in the next Open Space Strategy.	- Properties Department	- As required
- 7.8 Consider potential conflicts when bicycle paths or off-leash areas are assessed.	- Off leash areas considered in the next Bicycle Strategy.	- Leisure and Recreation	- As required

ACTION	TASK COMPLETION INDICATORS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMEFRAME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7.9 When the Municipal Public Health Plan is reviewed, include an investigation of how Council might harness the health benefits of owning pet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health benefits of pets considered in the next Municipal Public Health Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health and Aged Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As required</li> </ul>

# 8 APPENDICES:

## Appendix 1: Organisational Structure



## **Appendix 2: Animal Management Working Group Members**

Ms Pam Weaver	Save a Dog Scheme
Dr Ann Nevill	Resident and South Road Animal Health
Mr Murray Solomon	Resident and non pet owner
Mr Martyn Bryan	Resident and volunteer with Cat Protection Society
Ms Kerrie Birch	Resident and Dog Behavioural Training Service
Ms Suzanne McCourt	Resident and member of FIDO & CO
Ms Gabrielle Humphris	Resident and member of Ricketts Point dog walkers and bird watchers group.
Dr Jacqui Ley	Resident and Animal Behaviour Consultant
Mr Terry Lack	Resident and President Bayside Dog Companion School Inc.
Mr Mark Ehrman	Resident and certified dog trainer
Ms Patricia Carden	Resident and President Humane Society for Animal Welfare
Dr Carole Webb	Cat Protection Society of Victoria
Cr Derek Wilson	Councillor – Bayside City Council
Cr Terry O'Brien	Councillor – Bayside City Council
Mr Bill Ryley	Manager Local Laws & Investigations – Bayside City Council
Mr Ken Waixel	Team Leader Local Laws – Bayside City Council

## **Appendix 3: Existing Council Programs and Services**

Current services and programmes align to the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act (DFNAA) and are based primarily on enforcement activities rather than compliance through education and conciliation. Service delivery is priority based and depends on resource availability.

### **Animal Management Programs and Services (Summary)**

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<b>Program/Service</b>	<b>Service Level</b>
Community Education	Publication and distribution of “Walking Your Dog in Bayside” brochure.  Distribution of Bureau of Animal Welfare Responsible Pet Ownership brochures  Extensive internet information on Council’s website.  Annual Bayside Cat Show promoting responsible pet ownership  Annual Bayside Microchipping and pet services day promoting responsible pet ownership  Extensive signage at parks and foreshore areas advising of regulations.

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Identification and Registration	<p>Micro chipping day</p> <p>Renewal notices posted</p> <p>Reminder notices in local paper</p> <p>Follow up telephone calls to owners</p> <p>Reminder letters sent to owners</p> <p>Annual Door knock program</p>
Dog Litter	<p>Provision of dog litter bins and dog litter bags at 34 locations in parks and reserves distributing 1.25 million bags annually.</p>
Domestic animal complaints	<p>Response ASAP generally within one working day</p>
Dangerous Dogs complaints	<p>Immediate Response</p>
Compliance and safety patrols	<p>Every day of the except Christmas Day and good Friday</p> <p>(all roads/streets, foreshores, parks and reserves)</p>
Lost and Found Enquiry Service	<p>Telephone service – Council business hours.</p>
Pet re-unification service	<p>Owner contacted and advised by telephone from details supplied by owner with registration.</p> <p>Found pets register on Council website containing photo of dog and brief description.</p>

Day Stay Program – pet kept at local vet during business hours on day found and only transported to pound at end of business day if not claimed.

Telephone notification to owner by Council if found dead registered cat or dog.

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Pound Holding Service

After hours Home Delivery Service of animal on a fee for service basis.

Pound Open 10am – 6pm (Lost Dogs Home Cranbourne, outsourced)

## Appendix 4: Report on Community Feedback

The Draft Plan was exhibited to the community for a period of three months from 1 December 2007 until 29 February 2008. During this time the Draft Plan was widely publicised and written submissions were sought from the community.

Forty written submissions were received in response to the exhibited Draft Plan containing 214 various comments. An analysis of the comments in the written submissions revealed:

1. **Mandatory desexing of cats** – 24 (11%) comments supported over 12 weeks of age unless registered breeder
2. **Cat curfews** – 13 (6%) comments want Council to appoint an officer to deal specifically with cat curfews
3. **Ban on pets for sale in shop windows** – 10 (5%) comments want a to discourage impulse buying/all pets for sale should be desexed/no backyard breeding
4. **Control of feral and stray cats** – 8 (4%) comments want control of feral and stray cats re native wildlife population/bushland.
5. **Generally positive comments** – 10 (5%) comments were positive about the draft plan
6. **General concerns** – 33 (15%) comments had general concerns about aspects of plan / general comments about plan / against certain aspects of the plan.

Remaining 54% were distributed over issues less than 4% for any one issue.

In addition, a survey of 5000 random households was conducted throughout Bayside with approximately 1000 respondents. The main issues identified in plan and surveyed in order of relative importance as judged by the community were:

1. **Mandatory Cat Desexing** - 92% either strongly approve or approve this proposal
2. **Cat Curfew** - 78% either strongly approve or approve this proposal
3. **Pets at home community volunteer program** - 78% either strongly approve or approve this proposal
4. **Pets into nursing homes and hospitals program** - 78% either strongly approve or approve this proposal
5. **Free return service of wandering pets with no fines and no release fees.**
  - Only a few thought it would strongly increase registrations and most thought it would have only minimal effect if any.
  - 84% of respondents were in favour of pet registration fees paying for this rather than an increase in rates.
6. **Establishment of a full time pound**
  - 55% either strongly approve or approve this proposal and 27% either strongly disapprove or disapprove
  - 63% of respondents were in favour of pet registration fees paying for this rather than an increase in rates.
7. **Establishment of a dog playground with specialised agility and play equipment**
  - 64% either strongly approve or approve and 19% either strongly disapprove or disapprove
  - 69% of respondents were in favour of pet registration fees paying for this rather than an increase in rates.

## **Appendix 5: Issues Identified By The Domestic Animal Management Plan Working Group**

<b>Issue</b>
<b>Community Harmony (Conflict) Issues</b>
Dog owners disregarding off leash rules
Barking dogs
Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership
Ensure compliance with regulations
Minimise animal nuisance
Dog faeces
Dog owners should be obliged to attend dog obedience training
Education in schools for children
Assessment of dog owners pre-acquisition
Encourage resolution of neighbour complaints through consultative approach
<b><i>Responsible Pet Ownership Issues</i></b>
Encourage Registration and identification
Off leash awareness and compliance
Effective control off leash
Impulse buying of animals
Discouragement of impulse buying of pets
Lobby State Government to legislate that all dogs and cats must be microchipped before being placed with a new owner
Require pet owners to sign a Responsible Pet Owner Agreement at time of registration
Dog curfew in 5 years
Review current barking dog complaint process

<b>Safety Issues</b>
Dog attacks
Effective identification and compliance by dangerous and restricted breed dogs
Dogs at large
Dog faeces spreading disease
Prohibit dogs on leash in playgrounds
Prohibit use of extendable leashes on footpaths
People feel safer walking with a dog
Passive surveillance of open space by dog walkers
<b>Service Issues</b>
Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership
Improved enforcement re faeces
Promote correct pet selection on council internet
Community awards for responsible pet ownership
Education via leaflets distribution
Training of Council officers
Method of evaluating effectiveness of Animal Control Services provided by Council
Periodic review of services and strategies
Free pet care services for elderly and disabled pet owners
Lack of good education for pet owners
Lack of resources necessary to deliver education programs
Clearly express overarching beliefs on animal management
Provide information dissemination and education on animal management and support services
Enable community to have on-going participation in evolution of plan
Breeding controls

Education re responsible pet ownership
More pro-active initiatives
Ensure compliance with regulations
Integration of all information in a central register
Include discount microchip voucher with registration renewals
Discount rate registration for dogs that have undergone a free 8-10 week training programme
Central information register able to be accessed by community
Establishment of a doggy playground ( tail trail)
Publicise process for handling cruelty to animal complaints
List Pound phone number in Bayside Community Booklet
Registration fee reduction for pensioners
No cost for initial return of wandering animals. Increase registration fee structure to pay for this service. Penalties for serial offenders.
Lack of incentives for registration
Lack of incentives for compliance
Free first pet registration
Animal nuisance owner education
Improve education for owners
Provide more AMO's in field
Provide more litter bags and bins
Protect off leash areas by integrating into relevant management plans
Dog Day Out - initiative
Simplify information in one brochure
Lack of dog training facilities
Less enforcement more education
Lack of access to private homes to enforce laws
Carry out door knocks to identity non desexed pets

Discouragement of impulse buying of pets by prohibiting display in shop windows
<b><i>Pound Operation</i></b>
Return of lost animals
No council owned pound
Impounding and re-unification
Residents reluctant to hand lost dogs to council
Improve reunification process between lost dogs and owners
Remove punitive processes in reunification of pets with owners
Identification of lost/dead animals
Record keeping by council re animals
Central register of lost and found animals
Mandatory microchipping
Notification to owner of dead animals
Minimise number of animals sent to pound for holding and processing
Promote local re-housing programs
<b>Animal Welfare Issues</b>
Impulse buying of animals
Sale of animals in pet shops
Puppy farming (back yard breeders)
Backyard breeders
Education and awareness of special needs dogs
Mandatory desexing
Mandatory desexing and microchipping prior to sale by pet shops
<b>Environmental Issues</b>
Dog faeces

Cats that prey on wildlife
Feral cat population
Cat curfew
<b>Cat Specific Issues</b>
Cat Overpopulation
Cats that prey on wildlife
Cat trespass
Cat curfew
Feral cats
Cat trapping code of practice
Appointment of cat control officer
<b>Benefits of Pet Ownership</b>
Benefits of companion animals for elderly
Incentives and flexibility to assist people to keep pets
Benefits of companion animals in society
Opportunities to socialise with other pet owners (e.g., in parks, etc.)
People feel safer walking with a dog
Passive surveillance of open space by dog walkers

# Appendix 6: Dog Barking Complaint Procedure Flow Chart

