

3.3 DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017-2021 YEAR 4 REVIEW  
DRAFT DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2026

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: MANAGER PLANNING, COMMUNITY & COMPLIANCE  
DEPARTMENT: PLANNING, COMMUNITY & COMPLIANCE  
REFERENCE: 5470

**OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Officers providing advice to Council must disclose any conflict of interest.

No person involved in the preparation of this report has a conflict of interest requiring disclosure.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to review the final year's performance of the *Domestic Animal Management Plan* (DAMP) and present a draft new plan for the coming four years.

**DISCUSSION**

Council is required to undertake an annual review of this document, with the current review overdue from 31 December 2021. Our Council, like many others, have received an extension of time to prepare this review until 31 July 2022.

The review report is provided to Council for its consideration. Key achievements over the last 4 years have been:

Adoption successes which have been enhanced by social media advertising and connection of animals with owners during 2 years of COVID.

- Interactions/communication with the community and empathy over the last 2 years.
- Training for members of the team in the field and improve performance.
- Improved work with internal departments to streamline activities.

These outcomes as well as the metrics of registrations, impounding, declarations and euthanasia are provided in the Year 4 report on the DAMP 2017-2021.

The new Domestic Animal Management Plan for 2022-2026 has now been drafted. The new plan has a simpler format with key performance indicators that tie to existing state reporting and focuses the actions of the team on key elements of the service.

It also defines more clearly the process Council will use in dealing with animals with no discernable owner or pets that have been handed in. It proposes that Council will continue to subsidise the re-homing of lost or unwanted pets where possible, though the rate of subsidy will be reduced to reflect more accurately the cost of preparing an animal for placement (the registration, sterilization and immunisation costs). This will still see the cost of acquiring a pound pet below cost of purchasing a registered breed, reflecting that animals from the pound may be of varying ages and pedigrees. Temperament checking remains a primary consideration prior to the rehoming of any incoming animal.

A review of alternative pet sources found that the fee for dog adoptions was on average more than 4 times the current Council cost of \$100 and similarly cat adoption fees were 2.25 to 4 times the current fee of \$50. It is proposed that there be some further work done on this issue and a report prepared for Council in September 2022. Buying a specific pedigree breed of cat or dog is a significantly different decision, both in terms of cost and availability, with households paying thousands of dollars and waiting up to 18 months for an animal.

In developing the new DAMP it is also proposed that there be a review of the animal registration costs in readiness for the 2023 animal renewal. The current cost does not seem to have been benchmarked or cross-checked to the cost-of-service provision in the last 10 years. The goal will be to make the pound operations cost neutral – with after-hours service, which is a mix of business covered in part by the registration. A report on this work is proposed to go to Council in November 2022 with a decision then made to set and promote the new fee prior to the registration for 2023/2024 being issued (Note: animal registration runs on a specific date range of 10 April to 9 April the following year under legislation).

In the 2022/2023 financial year it is also proposed to review the cost of pound fees for animals retained to ensure that these costs reflect the true service cost.

Within the life of the plan a review of the suitability of the pound and the implementation of arrangements for the retention of animals for more than a short stay specified in the legislation will be developed. This work is not critical at this time, but ensures we continue to plan for providing a quality service to our community and their pets.

Clarity about the value of animal registration is also not provided in the current document. Currently a registered animal is usually returned free of charge. This saves the owner, not only the pound fee and fine for this roaming, but time and household stress out looking for a furry friend. Traditionally this approach is not promoted, under some expectation that it will reduce people's care and attention. However, this is a lost opportunity to tell the good news that animal registration pays a real dividend in the same way people may hold insurance or have a car breakdown policy to avoid the inevitable negative consequences of such events.

On a practical level the document has also been revised to reflect the new *Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2022* and provide better clarity about the legal framework of animal legislation and the planning scheme.

#### *Community Engagement Process:*

In line with the Act and Council's Community Engagement Policy, Council is required to publish its intention to adopt the new *Domestic Animal Management Plan*.

A community engagement campaign is proposed to be carried out from 3 June 2022 to 4 July 2022. Submissions will be invited via *Engage Ararat*.

The Draft document will also be promoted on social media, on Council's website and in the Council's Rural City Focus page.

Input from agencies such as AgVictoria, RSPCA and our animal rescue partners will also be invited.

Following public exhibition any submissions will be reported back to Council's July 2022 meeting, together with proposed amendments to the document, as needed, allowing for the new document to be lodged with the state government before 31 July 2022 deadline.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### *Alignment to Council Plan Strategic Objectives*

#### **6. Strong and Effective Governance**

*We will work hard to build models of governance that place delivering public value at the centre through effective financial management, well measured risk management and implementation of effective community engagement practices.*

#### **Budget Implications**

The Animal Management function currently nets Council around \$148,000 per year. However, the current accounting process does not apportion staff costs to this function. Based on workload in this space, with staff expenses the unit functions on a break-even amount. The goal of the proposed changes to fees and charges

is not to significantly change this cost, but to bring better equity into the fees and charges applied and ensure that the service is self-sustaining.

#### ***Policy/Relevant Law***

Under Clause 68A (3) the Domestic Animals Act 1994 the Council is required to:

- a. *review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and*
- b. *provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and*
- c. *publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.*

This report on the Year 4 of the DAMP 2017-2021 is prepared in response to this requirement.

Under sub-section (1) of the same clause the Council is required to:

*prepare a domestic animal management plan on 4 December 2021 and at the end of each period of 4 years after that day.*

The Council has an extension to this due date to 31 July 2022 for the preparation of the new DAMP.

#### ***Sustainability Implications***

Managing domestic pets enhances the quality of life for flora and fauna as well as the health and wellbeing of pet owners.

#### ***Risk Assessment***

The DAMP seeks to provide a framework for managing legal responsibilities associated with pet ownership and Council's role in this process.

#### ***Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement***

The new DAMP is proposed to have a public exhibition period from 3 June 2022 to 4 July 2022, with the community and partner agencies being invited to have input.

#### ***RECOMMENDATION***

*That Council:*

- 1** *Adopts the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021 Year 4 Review;*
- 2** *Adopts the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026 for consultation purposes and input be sought from the community between 3 June 2022 to 4 July 2022; and*
- 3** *Present any submissions received and proposed amendments to the document, to the July 2022 Council Meeting.*

**MOVED CR R ARMSTRONG  
SECONDED CR WATERSTON**

**That Council:**

- 1** **Adopts the *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021 Year 4 Review*;**
- 2** **Adopts the draft *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026* for consultation purposes and input be sought from the community between 3 June 2022 to 4 July 2022; and**
- 3** **Present any submissions received and proposed amendments to the document, to the July 2022 Council Meeting.**

**CARRIED 4623/22**

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1** *Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017-2021 Year 4 Review* is provided as Attachment 3.3.1
- 2** *Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2026* is provided as Attachment 3.3.2