

LODDON SHIRE COUNCIL

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2018 - 2021



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Loddon Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land comprising the Loddon Shire Council area. Council would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 What is the purpose of the Domestic Animal Management Plan?

The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) provides Council with a decision-making framework for the planning and management of animal management services over the next four years. It establishes the principles that will guide the service, and actions that will help Council achieve its service objectives.

Section 68A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 (“the Act”) requires all councils to prepare an Animal Management Plan every four years to address a number of generic matters, as well as issues that may be specific to the Loddon Shire Council. In particular, the Act requires Council to detail new initiatives and show how it will:

- evaluate the effectiveness of its service
- undertake the annual review of the DAMP
- review and make policies, local laws and orders
- train Authorised Officers
- encourage responsible pet ownership
- minimise risk associated with domestic pets, and in particular dog attacks
- minimise the incidence of nuisance caused by cats and dogs
- ensure cats and dogs are registered and identified
- minimise the number of unwanted pets and high euthanasia rates, particularly in relation to cats, and
- provide for the needs of animals in times of emergency.

The DAMP also provides an outline of the ongoing compliance and education activities provided by Council’s Animal Management Services.

1.2 What are domestic animals for the purpose of the DAMP?

The Act refers only to cats and dogs when it references the term ‘domestic animals’. These cats and dogs can be:

- cats and dogs that reside primarily as pets or companion animals
- farm working dogs
- assistance and/or therapy dogs
- unowned and semi-owned cats and dogs, though generally these animals are cats.

Although residents have a large variety of other species of animals living with them as their pets, Council is not required under the Act to address management issues relating to them. Other animals kept as pets include birds, reptiles, horses, fish and various farming animal species are also kept as domestic pets.

2 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Programs and actions identified in the plan will be undertaken within existing budget allocations.

Any new initiatives that evolve from an action in the plan must first be presented and considered within the annual Council budget preparation process.

3 RISK ANALYSIS

Council would risk non-compliance with its statutory obligations and community responsibilities if it did not prepare and implement a DAMP within the necessary timeframes.

4 KEY PET OWNERSHIP TRENDS AND BENEFITS

4.1 Trends

The following provides an overview of pet ownership trends as identified in Pet Ownership in Australia¹:

- Since 2013 cat and dog ownership has increased in line with population growth by 6% and 3% respectively. This is likely to continue over the next five years.
- The primary deterrent to pet ownership is the cost and responsibility of care. Cost as a barrier to pet ownership has significantly increased since 2013. Other barriers include; restrictive body corporate regulations, cost of holiday care, and busy lifestyles.
- Dogs are the most popular pet with 38% of Australian households having at least one dog. There is an estimated 4.8 million dogs in Australia. 52% of which are pure breeds, 41% mixed breeds and 7% are designer breeds.
- Cats are the second most common type of pet, with 29% of Australian households owning a cat. There are an estimated 3.9 million cats in Australia, 75% of which are mixed breeds and 24% pure breeds.
- Pet owners are likely to be female (64%), 18-49 years of age, earning middle higher incomes, from an English-speaking background (64%), and living in a 'family group'.
- In Australia 62% of households are likely to have a pet, globally, around 57% of households own a pet. Only the USA and New Zealand have a higher penetration of pet ownership with 65% and 64% of households in those countries owning a pet.
- In Australia, 20% of Generation Y pet owners have pet insurance, compared to 12% of their baby boomer counterparts.
- There has been a marked change in the role dogs and cats play in the household since 2013. The relationship between humans and their pets has become much closer with a significant lift in the proportion of owners who consider their pets to be members of the family, not merely companions.
- In 2016 Australians are spending more on premium products, services and insurance for pets than they did in 2013.

4.2 The benefit of pets

There has been a marked change in the role dogs and cats play in Australian households since 2013 according to 'Pet Ownership in Australia'. The relationship between humans and their pets has become much closer with significantly more pet owners viewing their pets as members of the family rather than merely a companion.²

This is supported by research undertaken for a number of DAMPs in Melbourne's outer east where over 80% of survey respondents claimed their pets are an important part of their family, give them great comfort in times of need; and 89% said it was important for them to have a pet in their life.

The health and wellbeing benefits pet owners have over non-pet owners include higher self-esteem among children, a 3% reduced likelihood of a heart attack, and fewer visits to the doctor.

The economy has also benefited the shift in attitudes about pets. In line with a move towards more premium products, more pet owners are shopping at specialty stores for pet food. Pet owners who make the majority of their pet food purchased through pet or specialty stores has increased from 16% to 26% between 2013 and 2016. Australians now spend 35% more on their cats and 33% more on their dogs than they did in 2013, a spend of \$12.2 billion in 2016³.

¹ Pet Ownership in Australia, 2016; <https://www.petsecure.com.au/pet-care/a-guide-to-worldwide-pet-ownership>

² Pet Ownership in Australia, p10. 65% of pet owners consider their cat or dog a member of the family

³ Pet Ownership in Australia, 2016; p31

5 ANIMAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

5.1 Focus of the service

Animal Management Services are delivered through the Development and Compliance Department, which is part of Council's Operations Directorate.

The equivalent of 1.0 Effective Full Time (EFT) position is dedicated to delivering the service, with support from Council's customer service staff, and has a focus on:

- enforcing state legislation and Council policies relating to cats and dogs
- attending to cats and dogs that have escaped their property
- management of the cat and dog registration database and the collection of registration fees (co-ordinated and maintained by customer service and finance staff in addition to the 1.0 EFT position)
- inspections of animal businesses and animals with special registration requirements, and
- attending to complaints, investigating of incidents, and attending to court proceedings.

5.2 'Local Laws' and 'Orders'

There are a number of ordinances that residents must comply with if they own or are responsible for the care of animals, or operate a domestic animal business.

Council has a number of Local Laws that regulate aspects of domestic animal ownership and will undertake a local law review to ensure the various requirements meet ongoing community needs and expectations.

The following provides a summary of existing ordinances:

Municipal Places Local Law - Clause 12

This Local Law requires dogs to be on a leash in built up areas unless in a designated off-leash area.

Municipal Places Local Law - Clause 13

This Local Law requires dog owners to remove their dog's faeces from a public place.

Environment Local Law – Clause 8

This Local Law restricts the number of dogs and cats in township and rural residential areas to a maximum of two dogs and/or two cats per property without a permit.

'Orders' or exemptions made under the Domestic Animals Act 1994

Council exempts farm working dogs from the requirement to be implanted with a permanent identification device (microchip).

6 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES 2018-2021

This section provides an overview of the priorities for animal management services over the term of the DAMP. Each key component lists the strategic outcomes that are to be achieved. A separate Action Plan identifies the timing, stakeholders and criteria that will be used to achieve each strategic outcome.



6.1 Training of 'Authorised Officers'

Strategic outcomes:

- A four-year training program for staff
- A comprehensive list of existing policies and procedures, and those that need to be developed to address service needs

6.1.1 What we understand

- Staff need to be appropriately trained so they can address service requirements in line with best practice.
- Community expectations of a modern-day animal management service have changed, and the scope of the service needs to address these expectations when determining service priorities.
- The attitude towards domestic pets, particularly in relation to animal welfare, can be more polarised in rural areas than in most township areas.
- The physical location of many communities in the Shire means there is not the same opportunity to forge partnerships to address service issues as there is in urban communities. This distance challenge means there is not the access to veterinary networks, animal shelter and rehoming groups, community dog groups, and commercial providers of services such as dog obedience training.
- As a result, there is not a strong community network focused on domestic pets as there is in urban areas where pets are more integrated into domestic life than in more rural areas. This limits opportunities for community based initiatives around pets, such as pet therapy programs in schools, and to bring about behavioural and attitudinal change relating to pets.
- The lack of veterinary and animal welfare networks in particular means there is limited opportunity for Council to introduce local microchipping initiatives via this avenue.
- Training for animal management staff for the next four years will focus on formalising operational procedures, domestic violence response, microchip insertion, and identification of restricted breeds dogs.
- Educational and training requirements for animal management staff have significantly increased over recent years.

6.1.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|--|
| 1. | Formalise a four-year training and education program for animal management staff to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ attain the Certificate IV in Animal Control and Welfare▪ explore the feasibility of being qualified to implant microchips▪ have a current firearms licence, and▪ have the opportunity to attend industry training and education programs relating to best industry practice. |
| 2. | Document a list of policies and procedures that are in place and those that need to be developed. |

6.2 Pet ownership, registration and identification

6.2.1 What we understand



Strategic outcomes:

- Increased registrations of cats and dogs as a proportion of the resident population
- Increased rates of microchipping of cats and dogs

- During the past 4 years, there was a steady decline in the number of pets being registered each year. Both cat and dog registrations have declined by approximately 21% or 421 dogs and 81 cats. This far exceeds the population decline of 7.2% or 568 residents.
- Given the population has not changed dramatically over this time nor the mix of

urban and rural communities, it is supposed that this decrease relates more to the non-registration of pets rather than a decline in actual pet numbers.

- However, there are 26 registered dogs for every 100 residents which compares to an estimated 20 dogs for every 100 residents Australia wide⁴. A significantly higher rate of dog ownership is to be expected given the prevalence of working dogs in rural communities.
- Registrations in some areas are significantly lower than expected compared to industry benchmarks for comparable areas such as urban areas.
- Poor access to microchipping services makes it difficult for dog owners to comply with the registration requirement for cats and dogs to be microchipped before they can be registered.
- Industry feedback indicates that an online registration process, as opposed to a manual or in-person process, is likely to increase voluntary compliance with registration requirements. This option is not currently available for residents.
- Accurate registration and microchipping records allows Council to return pets to their owners without having to subject pets to the trauma of being unnecessarily impounded; ensures that valued working dogs are reunited with owners; and allows for the verification of pets so they can be quickly rehomed if required.
- Recent changes to the Domestic Animals Act further define the specifications for a 'farm working dog' for the purpose of registration. This is to ensure that reduced registration fees and Council's microchip exemptions apply only to legitimate farm working dogs.
- Reduced registration fees are also available for desexed cats/dogs, cats/dogs over 10 years, cats/dogs kept for breeding at a domestic animal business, cats/dogs registered with an applicable organisation (as declared by the Minister for Agriculture), and dogs that have undergone obedience training. A reduced fee is also offered to owners with a valid pensioner concession.

Requirement for cats and dogs to be registered:

- All cats and dogs being registered with Council for the first time must be microchipped prior to registration. Fines can be applied if pets are not registered.
- Councils have the power to require compulsory microchipping of cats and dogs.

⁴ Pet Ownership in Australia 2016; Animal Medicines Australia

6.2.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|--|
| 3. | Consider strategies to increase the level of cat and dog registrations, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ media campaigns ▪ moratorium to allow non-registered pets to be registered ▪ school campaigns. |
| 4. | Cross reference Council's registration database with microchip databases to identify cats and dogs that may not be on Council's registration database. |
| 5. | Within existing resources, undertake random door knocks to identify pets that are not registered and/or microchipped. |
| 6. | Investigate initiatives that provide cat and dog owners with access to microchipping services e.g. mobile microchipping service, training of Council staff, free microchipping days. |
| 7. | Develop a streamlined and integrated online registration process that enables all registration requirements to be completed online. |

6.3 Dealing with nuisance issues



Strategic outcomes:

- Greater community awareness of the process for reporting nuisance issues associated with domestic pets
- Information for pet owners on how they can minimise nuisance reports associated with their pets
- A better understanding of nuisance issues associated with pets that need to be addressed

6.3.1 What we understand

- In the 2016/17 financial year Council recorded 41 customer service requests or complaints relating to pets.
- The primary sources of complaint related to:
 - ❖ wandering dogs
 - ❖ stray or feral cats
 - ❖ dog attacks on livestock.
- The majority of complaints come from township and residential areas.
- Colonies of cats are prevalent in a number of areas throughout the Shire, particularly Tarnagulla and Wedderburn, which has significant implications. Many colony cats suffer poor health and live fearful lives; cat colonies tend to intensify negative attitudes towards cats and often attract inhumane treatment of cats; colony cats, including feral cats pose a threat to wildlife and can cause a local nuisance associated with cat fights and spraying.
- There is a need to ensure that the trapping of cats is carried out in a humane manner.

In township areas, the primary source of 'nuisance complaint' is likely to relate to:

- dog owners not picking up after their dog
- dogs barking
- cats not confined at night
- dog owners letting their dogs annoy other people / other dogs / not controlling their dogs in public places etc.
- cats trespassing.

Ref: Metro DAM Plan Surveys, LMH Consulting

- There is an opportunity to use the Geographic Information System (GIS) to plot complaints and to specifically target these areas with information and advice. Specifically targeted strategies are likely to have greater impact than widespread and generic strategies.
- Barking dog complaints is an issue that is best dealt with through education and awareness.

6.3.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|---|
| 8. | Develop a process where different types of complaints are plotted using a GIS. |
| 9. | Target information and advice strategies to specific areas/localities of complaint. |
| 10. | Investigate the financial and public relations benefits of contracting an animal behaviourist as an intervention in relation to barking dog issues. |
| 11. | Review cat trapping information and protocols. |
| 12. | Consider the need for a dawn to dusk cat curfew as part of the review of Local Laws. |

6.4 Dog attacks



Strategic outcomes:

- A decrease in the incidence of dog attacks on people and on other animals
- Efficient Council processes and protocols for dealing with dog attacks
- Greater community awareness about:
 - ❖ what constitutes a dog 'attack'
 - ❖ the process for reporting dog attacks/suspected dog attacks
 - ❖ how to avoid dog attacks

6.4.1 What we understand

- Reported dog attacks or rushes have remained an infrequent but recurring problem. Reports included attacks on livestock and rushing at people.
- The rate of Australians being attacked has increased by almost 60% from 2003 to 2013⁵.
- Data needs to differentiate dog 'attacks' from dog 'rushes' to better distinguish between acts of aggression resulting in bites and other incidents such as when a dog runs up to a person but does not make contact.
- Generally, dog attacks on people are most likely to occur in the home or immediate vicinity of the home rather than in public places with young children being the primary victim.
- Anecdotal industry information and hospital admissions data indicates there are likely to be a significant number of dog attacks that are not being reported. The full extent of these issues needs to be understood so that Council can respond with appropriate initiatives.

More accurate information relating to the location of dog attacks may assist Council target problem locations and dog owners.

⁵ University of Tasmania's Menzies Institute for Medical Research

- RSPCA data shows that larger working breeds are more likely than other breeds of dog to be seized by Council officers for menacing and/or dangerous behaviour. There are more Pitbull terriers in the community than other restricted breed dogs, however only 2 out of total of 110 dogs seized by councils were pitbulls. Further, 13 other breeds were more commonly seized than pitbulls⁶.
- Dog owners need to better understand that dogs can behave unexpectedly and even erratically given the right circumstance.

6.4.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|--|
| 13. | Review Council's procedures for documenting dog attack reports and dealing with incidents. |
| 14. | Promote information that is available via the Department of Agriculture relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the appropriate selection of pets ▪ managing children around dogs. |
| 15. | Undertake industry research to identify successful initiatives trialled by other councils to address dog attacks on stock. |

6.5 Managing dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs



Strategic outcomes:

- Identification of restricted breed dogs
- Monitoring regimes for dangerous, menacing, and restricted breed dogs to ensure they are appropriately managed and housed

6.5.1 What we understand

- There are no restricted breed dogs, or dogs declared as menacing or dangerous, on Council's dog registration database.
Council recognises that some of these dogs are likely to reside in the Shire and that owners may either not register their dog or register their dog as another breed in order to avoid the restrictions that come with a restricted breed dog.
- Ownership of a restricted breed dog is not allowed in Victoria, unless proof can be shown that the dog was owned before 1 September 2010. As of September 2017, these dogs must be registered with Council.
- Restricted breed dogs include Japanese Tosa, Fila Brasileiro, Dogo Argentino, Perro de Presa Canario / Presa Canario, and American Pit Bull Terrier / Pitbull Terrier.

'Menacing Dog' – A dog that has chased or rushed at a person, or has bitten an animal or person resulting in injury that is not deemed 'serious'. If a dog incurs 2 menacing dog violations then it is declared a 'dangerous dog'

'Dangerous dog' – A dog that has caused a serious injury to or death of another animal or person

'Declared dog' – A restricted breed, 'menacing' or 'dangerous' dog

⁶ Preventing dog attacks in the community; RSPCA Information Paper

- Residents must not assume that it is only 'restricted breed dogs' that may have a predisposition to aggressive behaviour. State legislation states that these dogs pose a greater risk because of the nature of the breed.
- Dogs that are not appropriately trained, socialised and controlled can develop behaviour that results in them being declared as a 'menacing' or 'dangerous' dog. Appropriate management and education of dogs will reduce anti-social behaviour.

6.5.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|---|
| 16. | Review current procedures and protocols in relation to dogs that will be declared 'dangerous' or 'menacing' to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. |
| 17. | Promote information that explains why it is best to avoid owning a restricted breed dog. |

6.6 Overpopulation (including euthanasia) and abandonment of pets



Strategic outcomes:

- A reduction in the number of stray, abandoned and unwanted pets
- Enhanced rehoming opportunities for unwanted pets

6.6.1 What we understand

- Council proposes to build a new compliant animal pound that will accommodate lost or unowned cats and dogs. Animals can be held at the facility for up to eight days until they are reclaimed, rehomed, or relocated to an alternative rehoming facility/shelter.
- Abandoned and unwanted pets have limited opportunity to be rehomed locally. The lack of an integrated pound shelter service within the Shire further diminishes the opportunity for this to occur. Over the past four years there has been a slight increase in the number of animals being surrendered to Council.
- Council has agreements in place with agencies including Pets Haven (Woodend)⁷. This organisation takes animals from the pound that have been temperament tested and subsequently considered suitable for rehoming. There are not any rehabilitation services or programs that other animals can be referred to if they are considered unsuitable for rehabilitation.
- In the past, all stray cats, including those that may be semi-owned, were classified as 'feral'.⁸ This DAMP recognises a need to differentiate 'stray' or 'semi-wild' cats from 'feral' cats and put in place a more appropriate and humane management strategy for other than feral cats. The DAMP also recognises the need to address issues associated with cat colonies.

Stray cats are pets that have become lost or been abandoned. These cats can often be rehabilitated into being pets.

Semi wild cats have possibly once been pet cats which have not had socialisation with humans. They will live around rubbish dumps or a food source. They may be less inclined to hunt, but are opportunistic when it comes to food.

Feral cats have never been domesticated, have nothing to do with humans and don't rely on humans. They live in the wild, killing wildlife and scavenging.

Ref: Animal Welfare League

⁷ Agreement in line with Section 84Y of the Domestic Animals Act 1994;

⁸ Animal Welfare League;

awl.org.au/advice-education/pet-advice/cat-tips-advice/what-difference-between-feral-and-stray-cats

The RSPCA (Bendigo) and the organisation 'Getting2Zero (G2Z) have indicated an interest in exploring a pilot project to address animal welfare and nuisance issues associated with cat colonies. This would potentially result in an integrated and holistic approach to dealing with the issue.

6.6.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|--|
| 18. | Establish an integrated animal pound facility. |
| 19. | Review current procedures and protocols in relation to stray, abandoned and unwanted pets to ensure compliance with legislative requirements. |
| 20. | Promote information that explains responsible pet ownership. |
| 21. | Investigate the feasibility of conducting a pilot program in a nominated township to explore the issues of stray, semi wild and feral cat populations. |

6.7 Domestic animal businesses (DAB)



6.7.1 What we understand

- All pet related businesses that are classified as a 'Domestic Animal Business' (DAB) under the Domestic Animals Act must be registered with Council.
- In November 2017, the Victorian State Government passed legislation that prohibits the sale of cats and dogs via pet shops unless they have come from an ethical source such as an animal shelter or pound, or registered foster carer.
Any person selling or giving away a cat or dog must be enrolled on the Pet Exchange Register, show where the animal has come from and ensure the animal is microchipped. The legislation has been introduced to ensure pets come from ethical sources and so pet owners can trace the history of their pet.
- In the past, there have been a number of unethical breeders operating in the Shire. Council, together with appropriate organisations, will continue to monitor for unethical breeders and where necessary, take action to ensure compliance with the Domestic Animals Act.
- Council will also work with all DABs and peak associations to identify opportunities to improve compliance with codes of practice.

Strategic outcomes:

- DABs enhance their operational practices
- DABs comply with legislative responsibilities and relevant codes of practice

DABs are establishments such as animal shelters, pet shops, animal breeding and/or rearing establishments, and boarding and/or training facilities that are run for profit.

In Loddon Shire, there is currently one registered domestic animal business, which is a defined breeding establishment.

Registration of a breeding establishment

The *Domestic Animals Act* 1994 provides that a dog breeding business with three or more fertile female dogs must register as a domestic animal business with the local Council that it resides. If the breeder is a member of an 'applicable organisation' (such as Dogs Victoria), the proprietor must only register if they have more than nine fertile female dogs, OR if more than two are not registered with the 'applicable organisation'.

6.7.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|--|
| 22. | Identify opportunities to work with Domestic Animal Businesses to improve compliance with legislation and codes of practice. |
| 23. | Increase the number of inspections of previously non-compliant Domestic Animal Businesses. |
| 24. | Review type and availability of information available for Domestic Animal Businesses to ensure information is easily accessible. |

6.8 Pet welfare



Strategic outcome:

- A decrease in the incidence of pet abuse or mistreatment
- Enhanced opportunities for pets associated with people impacted by family violence

6.8.1 What we understand

Family violence

- Council's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan has identified the need for a Family Violence Network and to optimise support networks for people experiencing family violence. Research identifies that women in rural, regional or remote areas are more likely to have experienced partner violence than women in metropolitan areas.
- In Loddon in the last four years there has been a 50% increase in family violence reports to police; a 33% increase in family violence police reports in the period October 2015-September 2016; and children were present at more than 30% of all reported family violence incidents. The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan⁹ highlights the need for greater awareness and training for personnel who may be involved in dealing with family violence related matters.
- Family violence has significant implications for family pets.
- National and international research shows that up to 60% of women choose to stay and keep their children in violent relationships because they do not want to leave their pet behind.¹⁰

Pet welfare

- The RSPCA received twenty eight reports of alleged cruelty to animals from within the Shire during the 2016/17 financial year. Fourteen involved dogs or puppies and one involved a cat or kitten. Other reports related to concerns for horses or farm animals. This ranks the Shire sixth in terms of the number of reports per capita, the equivalent of one report for every two hundred and sixty eight residents.¹¹

Some statistics – Family Violence (FV)

- In around 70% of FV cases the perpetrator was also abusing pets, compared to 6% in households not experiencing FV
- 15% of respondents delayed reporting DV to police due to fears for their animals
- 15% of respondents returned to violent homes due to fears for their animals
- 42% of children in FV households witnessed abuse to animals within the home

Ref: Tong 2015 as cited in 'The Link Between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence'

⁹ <http://www.loddon.vic.gov.au/Our-documents/Plans-and-strategies>

¹⁰ Tong 2015 as cited in presentation by Senior Constable Ingrid REILLY; 'The Link Between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence'

¹¹ www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/4857013/dogs-top-animal-cruelty-reports-in-bendigo/

- It is not the responsibility of Council to investigate or prosecute incidents of pet abuse, these should be reported to the RSPCA. However, Council is committed to working with relevant authorities to eliminate incidents of pet abuse and ensure action is taken against perpetrators.
- Council recognises the need to better understand wider pet welfare issues that may be relevant in Loddon, and the need to work with relevant organisations to address these issues.
- Research undertaken for DAMPs in other municipalities indicates community concern about dogs not being restrained in vehicles, particularly in the back of utes.

The law in Victoria requires that dogs on utes are restrained either via a tether or cage, so that the dog cannot fall off or be injured when the vehicle moves. The only exception is for dogs that are actively working livestock.¹²

6.8.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|--|
| 25. | Establish partnerships with other stakeholders / service providers to better understand the needs of pet owners and how these must be addressed in times of family violence. |
| 26. | Develop protocols and procedures for animal management staff to ensure issues associated with family violence are handled appropriately. |
| 27. | Ensure information about the safe and legal requirements relating to the restraint of dogs is available on Council's website. |

6.9 People and pets tourism



Strategic outcomes:

- An enhanced understanding of:
 - ❖ the potential benefits associated with pet related tourism in the Shire
 - ❖ short and longer-term pet related tourism initiatives that might expand Loddon's tourism appeal

6.9.1 What we understand

- Discussions with local caravan park operators indicate the value of the pet-owner market to these businesses. All sites in Loddon Shire accommodate pets, some with restrictions during peak holiday periods, and state that there are further opportunities to capitalise on this market.

So significant is this market to the Bridgewater Caravan Park, that the operators have recently installed a dog wash facility and have a large partially fenced area where dogs can run off leash. Operators of the Boort Holiday Park believe there is significant potential and opportunities should consider pet friendly cabins.

The need for additional pet friendly accommodation is recognised by a number of peak associations interviewed for the DAMP including the Pet Industry Association of Australia and Tourism Accommodation Victoria.

¹² www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/pets/dogs/legal-requirements-for-dog-owners/dogs-on-moving-vehicles

- A survey of more than 1,100 travelers conducted by TripAdvisor found that 53% of respondents travel with their pets, and 52% will only stay at pet-friendly properties. The report also found that 35% of pet owners take shorter vacations than they otherwise would, and 25% take fewer vacations overall because of their pets.¹³
- A survey of 5,000 pet owners in an outer Melbourne council area indicates that up to 60% of pet owners will make holiday and recreation activity choices based on the availability of pet friendly accommodation or facilities.
- There is merit in Loddon tourism operators to consider further opportunities in the growing pet owner visitor market.

6.9.2 Actions to address service priorities

| No. | ACTION |
|-----|---|
| 28. | In conjunction with Council's tourism staff, work with caravan park operators and camping ground managers to collect statistics relating to pet owner visitation demand. |
| 29. | Work with caravan park operators and camping ground managers to identify opportunities to further capitalise on the pet owner visitor market, with a priority on accommodation and marketing opportunities. |

7 HOW WE PREPARED THE (DRAFT) DAMP

The DAMP was developed following a review of; the 2013-2017 plan, new state government initiatives and emerging issues and trends that were identified within townships and communities during the previous plan's lifecycle.

LMH Consulting Group was appointed to assist in the development of the plan bringing strategic planning and policy skills and knowledge in domestic animal management to the project, which complemented the local knowledge and expertise of Council staff.

Information was drawn from recent community consultation and surveys conducted as part of service planning for Council's customer services, early years, tourism and community health and wellbeing portfolios.

The draft document was then released for final community comment and feedback before being presented to Council for adoption.

Council resolved to adopt the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2018-2021 at its Ordinary Meeting held on 26 June 2018.

¹³ <https://skift.com/2017/01/31/pet-friendly-travel-is-growing-yet-still-complicated/>

8 HOW WE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE DAMP

8.1 Setting priorities for the next four years

Priorities in the Domestic Animal Management Plan may change over the life of the plan depending on:

- changing animal management service demands and priorities
- other Council service delivery priorities
- partnership opportunities
- external funding opportunities.

In line with the requirements of the Act:

- Council will review the Domestic Animal Management Plan annually to ensure actions and priorities are still relevant and can be completed within available resources
- Council will undertake a major review of the plan in year four.

8.2 Council's role

The Local Government Act 1989 and Domestic Animals Act 1994 outline Council's role and responsibilities in domestic animal management.

Some of the services provided include:

- educate and promote responsible pet ownership
- maintain an annual dog and cat registration program
- identify the location of any unregistered dogs and cats
- investigation of dog attacks
- investigation of nuisance animal complaints
- maintain and manage an animal pound facility
- registration and inspection of domestic animal businesses
- maintain a 24-hour emergency service with regard to domestic animals
- collect lost or stray dogs and cats and reunite them with their owners
- facilitate rehoming of unclaimed dogs and cats.



9 COSTING AND FUNDING OF ACTIONS

As provided for in Section 2, programs and actions identified in the plan will be undertaken within existing budget allocations. Any new initiatives that evolve from an action of the plan must first be presented and considered within the annual Council budget preparation process.

Appendix 1 – The Domestic Animals Act requirement of Council

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

68A Councils to prepare Domestic Animal Management Plans

(1) *Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (of the Department of Primary Industries), prepare at 4 year intervals a Domestic Animal Management Plan.*

(2) *A Domestic Animal Management Plan prepared by a Council must—*

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

(3) *Every Council must—*

- (a) review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; 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.*