

CARDINIA SHIRE COUNCIL

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

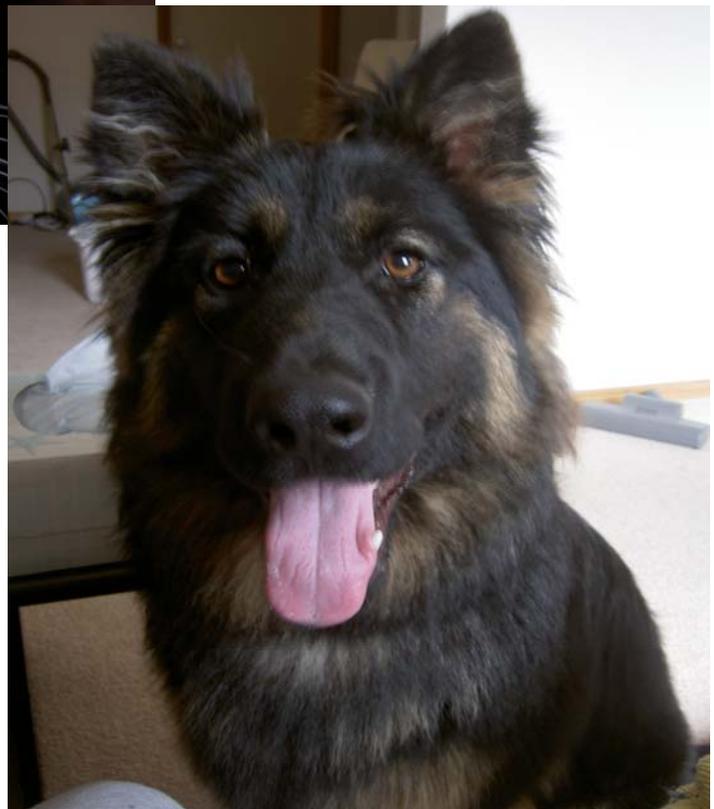


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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result to changes to the Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994, Cardinia Shire Council has prepared this plan to set the direction for domestic animal management and to meet the requirements under The Act.

Cardinia's Domestic Animal Management Plan details programs and actions to assist in implementing the mission statement of this plan. The plan has been developed with assistance from a broad range of stakeholders that seek to implement a balanced approach to domestic animal management in Cardinia.

The plan has identified a range of programs and actions for the service delivery of animal management. The implementation of these actions gives Council the opportunity to monitor the progress of actions and arrange further improvements to promote and facilitate responsible animal management programs on a regular basis.

Council is committed to providing a high standard of animal management in accordance with legislative requirements. The objectives of the plan are to:

- Ensure Animal Management Officers are appropriately trained in all aspects of responsible animal management;
- Encourage responsible dog and cat ownership;
- Reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats; and
- Promote the effective management of dogs and cats.

There is an increasing public view that punitive enforcement of laws alone will not result in lasting voluntary changes in behaviour. Therefore, enforcement of the Act and Local Laws should be balanced with media and public education material for responsible animal management.

There is now considerable evidence to support the benefits of owning pets. Accordingly, Cardinia Shire recognises that companion animals are part of the community, contributing to its quality of life. Cardinia is committed to harnessing the benefits of pet ownership for the community and the growing ownership of dogs and cats.

The strategies within this plan have been developed to provide Council with a sound foundation from which it can build, plan and co-ordinate sound animal management and ensure that future decisions meet the needs of the community.

In this progressively changing environment, it is essential that Council take a strategic approach to managing domestic pets.

2 OUR SHIRE

Cardinia Shire is diverse. From the hills to the plains, we have a rich range of natural and built environments and communities. We are experiencing areas of continuing stability and areas of rapid growth.

Physically, Cardinia shire comprises 1,280 square kilometres of land and is situated 50 kilometres south-east of Melbourne. With a population of more than 60,000 people, we are one of the fastest growing Victorian municipalities. The Shire is one of eight "interface Councils" forming the perimeter of metropolitan Melbourne and providing a transition between urban and rural areas.

Cardinia Shire Council has a huge responsibility to manage urban growth and support its diverse communities. Council embraces this challenge and responsibility. We are working to balance the needs and requirements of our 27 rural communities as well as the urban growth corridor of Beaconsfield, Officer and Pakenham.

By working together, Council and the people of Cardinia will build healthy strong and connected townships. This includes families with children and young adults, through farmers and business owners to older members of our community.

Council will promote access to housing, education, transport, employment and health services to meet the growing needs of the whole Cardinia community in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner.

3 PURPOSE

This plan has been developed to ensure Council meets its obligations under the provisions of Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 – Sec. 68A Part 5 Domestic Animal Management Plans. The plan will ensure a best practice consistent approach when dealing with animal issues in Cardinia.

4 MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage and facilitate responsible pet ownership through education and innovative strategies that allows people and pets to integrate safely and harmoniously within Cardinia Shire, while recognising the differing needs of the community and to establish strategies that will ensure the best animal management practices for the next 3 years and the future.

5 CONSULTATION PROCESS

The plan was developed in consultation with Cardinia Shire Councillors, Cardinia Shire Senior Management Team, Manager Local Laws, Cardinia Shire Animal Management Team, Cardinia community, Boarding Establishments and Pet Businesses.

6 KEY COMMUNITY ISSUES

Cardinia Shire Council recognised the importance of involving the community in preparation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan. To gauge community expectations and assist Council prepare the Domestic Animal Management Plan a survey was placed on Council's website. The survey included a range of questions relating to responsible animal management, animal welfare, customer service and enforcement issues. Respondents were also invited to form an online working party to review the draft Plan. Council received over 400 responses to the survey with a large majority providing additional comments and suggestions to be considered for the Plan.

The information gained from the survey together with the assistance of the working party enabled Council to share the experiences and perceptions of the community and involve them in planning the future for domestic animal management.

The following issues received extensive comment from the consultation process.

6.1 *Registration*

Through the consultation process and community survey there was strong support to encourage dog and cat registration. The problems associated with unregistered dogs and cats are well known. Stray pets can be promptly reunited with their owners with first time offenders normally avoiding any penalty. Registration reduces any potential of stress for both the pet and their owners. Investigations can take place to deal with dog attacks that may lead to considerable compensation to the victims which otherwise may have not been possible. The roaming habits of cats can be curbed by simple identification and contact with the owner.

BIS Shrapnel report of 1999 estimated that 40% of households own dogs at a rate of 1.44 dogs per household and 26% of households own cats at a rate of 1.47 per household.

Applying this formula to Cardinia residential households represents a 98% registration rate for dogs and 43% for cats. There are some reservations whether the formula applied to cats is accurate when considering the high registration rate for dogs and very high compliance rate for compulsory de-sexing of cats. This is also supported by the reducing rate of wandering cats reported over the last 3 years.

6.2 Nuisance cats

The issues of cat management relate predominately to the impact of cats on wildlife, cats attacking other cats and spraying. These behaviours are regarded as a nuisance to surrounding neighbours. A clear distinction needs to be made between feral, domestic and stray cats.

Cardinia Shire Council introduced a Local Law that requires all cats to be de-sexed. This has contributed to the reduction of feral cats in the community. Cardinia Shire has 3283 cats currently registered, with 3133 cats shown as being de-sexed. This represents a 95% compliance rate with Council Local Laws. Council allows exemptions on de-sexing for cats where they belong to a registered breeding establishment.

The numbers of reports of stray cats have fallen each year with current figures showing a potential 50% drop in the number of cats impounded for 2007/08 compared to the previous year. These figures reflect improved responsible community behaviours in managing and caring for their cats.

6.3 Dog faeces

If you own a dog you are legally responsible for disposing of any faeces that occurs external to your property. Dog faeces are a public health issue and dog owners who don't pick up after their pet are breaking the law. Uncollected faeces are offensive and harmful to the environment. Dog faeces cause inconvenience to humans who unsuspectingly tread on the mounds or the unfortunate gardener who sprays it through the air with their lawnmowers. Every time it rains, uncollected dog faeces wash into our stormwater drains and make their way into waterways including our beaches.

The high nutrients in dog faeces contribute to toxic algal blooms and aquatic weeds. These algal blooms and weeds can harm the marine organisms that keep our waterways healthy. Dog faeces contain bacteria and can also contain infectious roundworm eggs that can cause serious illness for humans.

Cardinia Shire Local Law requires a person in charge of a dog to remove the dog faeces from a public place and also to ensure the means to collect dog faeces are carried by the person in charge of the dog. Council will consider the introduction of litter receptacles for dog owners to dispose of their dog faeces in areas commonly used for exercising dogs. At a minimum, leash free areas would need to be provided with suitable rubbish receptacles.

6.4 Enforcement

Our survey shows extensive support from the community for enforcement of the Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act and Cardinia Local Laws. The benefits of an extensive education program supported by an appropriate level of enforcement aimed at responsible community animal management are well recognised. The best outcome for the community, companion animals and their owners will be achieved through a well informed community that supports Council's efforts to provide the community with sound animal management.

Voluntary compliance is achievable through education, awareness programs and supported by enforcement. The aim is to provide meaningful and lasting changes to the community's behaviour and attitude thereby providing the aims of sensible companion animal management in Cardinia.

6.5 Dog off-leash areas

Providing suitable dog off-leash areas is vital to the success of animal management in Cardinia. Our survey shows growing support to increase the number of dog off-leash areas throughout the municipality. Equally, other members of the community must have the ability to use amenities without fear of harassment by uncontrolled dogs. Presently, locations have been selected on the perceived use by persons in the company of a dog. A dog not under effective control can lead to unacceptable dog behaviour which can cause people to become apprehensive and cautious of sharing the same grounds.

Council will conduct a review of all off-leash areas and explore any potential opportunities to designate additional locations as off-leash areas.

6.6 De-sexing

The State Government has introduced legislation that allows Councils by order to require all dogs and cats in the municipality to be de-sexed other than those dogs or cats that may be exempt under the Act.

Cardinia Shire Council introduced local law that requires all cats over the age of 3 months to be de-sexed.

The community survey shows 50% support for dogs to be de-sexed, however, 63% of the community supported cats to be de-sexed.

The compulsory de-sexing of companion animals will reduce overpopulation of dogs/cats which is a key strategic action put forward by the Bureau of Animal Welfare. It will not improve or reduce the number of dogs or cats that are euthanased annually; this can only be achieved through responsible animal ownership.

6.7 Communication

The most overwhelming feedback received through the survey was the need for more information to be made available to the public via media or in the form of brochures. Information should outline a pet owner's duty of care and responsibilities, encouraging residents to report dog attacks or incidents. Most importantly people who wish to purchase a new pet should consider their own lifestyle and the time they have available to devote to their new pet.

Pet packs should be introduced for all new pet owners that consist of information from Cardinia Local Law that outlines the responsibility of pet owners. The pack can also include dog off-leash areas, list of obedience clubs, boarding establishments for cats and dogs, restricted breed dogs and annual Pet Expo information.

6.8 Future Strategies

The following actions will be considered and are dependent upon the availability of physical and human resources combined with legislative compliance for future planning of the animal management team actions:

- Provision of dog litter bins
- Subsidised de-sexing of cats
- Good behaviour incentives ie., pet leash, reduced registration fee

7 CURRENT ANIMAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE

Program/Service	Service level
Identification and registration of dogs and cats over 3 months of age.	85% of registrations received by June 30 each year.
Annual Pet Expo to promote responsible pet ownership, registration and micro-chipping conducted annually.	Provide discounted micro-chipping, pet grooming and training. Record number of pets micro-chipped for 2007 and 2008.
Brochures/education.	Brochures and pet information distributed with every registration renewal form. Articles regularly placed in Council Connect magazine. Extensive brochures and information available at Cardinia Civic Centre.
Routine street patrols.	Conducted daily throughout Cardinia including parks and reserves.
Domestic Animal Complaints	All complaints and requests are registered on Council's complaint system (Merit). Each complaint is allocated with a due date and escalates to a senior officer if not completed by the due date.
Injured animals and emergency complaints	All injured animal and emergency complaints are dealt with immediately. If an officer is unavailable assistance is sought from local police or veterinarian.
Dangerous Dog Complaints.	Dangerous Dog Complaints are dealt with immediately and if necessary with assistance from local police.
After hours service.	Council provides 24 hour 7 day a week after hours service for the collection of stray dogs and dog attacks.

Program/Service	Service level
Micro-chip Scanning.	Each animal management vehicle is equipped with up to date micro-chip scanners.
Impounded dogs and cats.	Each dog/cat taken to the pound is vet checked and scanned for micro-chip identification.
Rehousing of dogs/cats.	Council's animal pound endeavours to re-house all suitable dogs and cats after the mandatory 8 day holding period.

8 SPECIFIC DOMESTIC (FERAL and NUISANCE) ANIMALS ACT REQUIREMENTS

- Training of authorised animal management officers
- Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership
- Ensure compliance with Act and Regulations
- Minimise the risk of dog attacks
- Address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
- Encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats
- Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance
- Ensure all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs are identified and ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with the Act and regulations
- Review existing orders and Local Laws
- Review of any other matters related to dogs and cats
- Periodic evaluation of programs, services and strategies
- Method of monitoring performance and evaluating the effectiveness of services
- Review of Domestic Animal Management Plan

9 STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

The table below links the specific requirements of the Act to the section within this Plan.

Section of DF&NA Act	Requirement	Related section of Plan
S 68A (2)(a)	Method of monitoring performance, evaluating effectiveness of services	9.11
S 8A(2)(b)	Training of authorised officers:	9.1
S68A(2)(c)(i)	Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership	9.2
S68A(2)(c)(ii)	Ensure compliance with Act and regulations	9.3
S 68A(2)(c)(iii)	Minimise risk of dog attacks	9.4
S 68A(2)(c)(iv)	Over-population, high euthanasia rates	9.5

Section of DF&NA Act	Requirement	Related section of Plan
S 68A (2)(c)(v)	Encourage registration and identification of cats and dogs	9.6
S 68A(2)(c)(vi)	Minimise potential for nuisance	9.7
S 68(A)(2)(c)(vii)	Dangerous Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs	9.8
S 68A(2)(d)	Review of Orders and Local laws	9.9
S 68A(2)(e)	Any other matters	9.10
S 68A(2)(f)	Periodic evaluation of programs, services, and strategies	9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7, 9.8, 9.9, 9.10, 9.11 and 9.12
S 68A (3)(a)	Review of Domestic Animal Management Plan	9.12

9.1 *Training of Authorised Animal Management Officers (AMOs)*

Objective

To ensure all animal management officers are skilled and appropriately trained to deliver our services and programs.

The current training programs for Animal Management Officers at Cardinia include:

- Identify the training needs of all Cardinia AMOs.
- Prepare annual training development charts setting out target dates.
- Provide staff with clear procedures for animal management.
- Provide staff with identifiers, Reading Dogs Body Language.
- Provide staff with OH&S procedures when impounding / seizing dogs.

Planned Programs and Initiatives

- Register staff to attend animal management training when appropriate courses are available.
- Include training requirements during staff Performance Development Review.
- Arrange joint training programs with neighbouring Councils.

9.2 *Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership*

Objective

To improve community awareness in pet management recognising the health and social benefits that can be achieved through responsible pet ownership.

The current education activities and programs aimed at promoting responsible pet ownership at Cardinia include:

- The availability and distribution of pet brochures throughout the community.
- The introduction of Local Law that requires the de-sexing of cats.

- Provide educational material for display at Cardinia Civic Centre.
- Provide education via Council's Website.
- Provide and promote first year free pet registration.
- Conduct annual Pet Expo that provides discounted micro-chipping.
- Provide regular information through Council's Newsletter and local newspapers.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- Introduce dog off-leash areas throughout Cardinia.
- Distribute pet brochures throughout the Shire.
- Provide educational material for display at Cardinia Civic Centre.
- Provide up to date information through Council's website.
- Encourage re-homing practices, where pet owners are unable to care for their pet.
- Enforce Cardinia Local Law that requires all cats over 3 months of age to be de-sexed.

9.3 *Ensure compliance with Act and Regulations*

Objective

To achieve compliance with State and Local Legislation.

The current animal management and enforcement activities include:

- Provide 24 hour animal emergency service that deals with dog attacks and dog at large collections.
- Investigate barking dog complaints to resolution.
- Investigate dog attacks in accordance with procedures, includes dog seizure and immediate Open Court action for determination.
- Provide cat trapping service (cage hire, cat pickup and disposal).
- Conduct regular Domestic Animal Business inspections.
- Conduct mediation sessions to achieve resolution for a variety of animal complaints.
- Patrol shire and enforce any breach of the DF&NA Act.
- Issue Penalty Notices for any breach of the DF&NA Act.
- Annual mail out of Animal Registration Renewal notices.
- Mail out Reminder Notices for unpaid animal registrations.
- Conduct prosecutions in open court where necessary.
- Conduct annual dangerous dog housing inspections.

Planned Programs and Activities

- Review Council Local Law on number of animals permitted without a permit.
- Conduct annual doorknock for unregistered dogs and cats.
- Provide 24 hour response service.



9.4 Minimise the risk of dog attacks

Objective

To increase public safety and reduce the incidence of dog attacks.

Current activities conducted by the animal management unit to improve public safety:

- Provide media releases that inform the community of the benefits of dog/cat registration.
- Provide up-to-date brochures on responsible dog/cat ownership.
- Conduct ongoing patrols of the shire and impound all stray dogs.
- Initiate immediate court action and dog seizure following a dog attack.

Planned Programs and Activities:

- Monitor and review Cardinia dog off-leash areas.
- Conduct Cardinia annual Pet Expo Micro-chipping day.
- Conduct regular patrols of all council parks and reserves.
- Ensure properties have suitable fencing to contain dogs.
- Promote and encourage the reporting of dog attacks whether on private or public property.



9.5 Address any overpopulated and high euthanasia rates of dogs and cats

Objective

To minimise the nuisance potential of dogs and cats

Current activities that minimise nuisance dogs and cats:

- Compulsory de-sexing of all cats over the age of 3 months.
- Restrict the number of dogs and cats permitted on a property without a permit.
- Council Order that requires all cats to be kept secure on the owner's premises.
- Provide a cat trapping service.
- Impound all dogs and cats found at large.

Planned Programs and Activities:

- Encourage re-housing and adoption of unwanted dogs/cats.
- Trapping and euthanasia of feral cats.
- Education through literature and media.

9.6 Encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats

Objective

To maximise the number of registered dogs/cats

Current Programs and Activities:

- Annual mail out of dog/cat registration renewal forms.
- Compulsory micro-chipping of dogs and cats for first registration and transfer from another Council.
- An annual reminder notice for unpaid registrations.
- Media campaign.
- Conduct an annual doorknock and follow up of non renewal of registrations.
- Annual Pet Expo.
- Discount micro-chipping.
- Free registration of dogs and cats under the age of 3 months for first year of registration.

Planned Programs and Activities:

- Annual mail out of dog/cat registration renewal forms.
- Mail out of a reminder notice for unpaid registrations.
- Media campaign.
- Increase frequency of doorknocks.
- Annual Pet Expo.
- Discount micro chipping.

9.7 *Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance*

Objective

To minimise the potential nuisance that may be caused by dogs and cats.

Current Activities:

- Annual Pet Expo.
- Advise residents of any fireworks displays.
- Actively deal with barking dog complaints.
- Educate the community to keep cats and dogs secure on their properties.

Planned Programs and Activities:

- Encourage the use of cat enclosures.
- Annual Pet Expo.
- Promote pet owners to carry their own dog tidy bags.
- Encourage cat owners to de-sex cats.

9.8 *Ensure all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs are identified and ensure those dogs are kept in compliance with the Act and Regulations*

Objective

To minimise the risk of dog attacks from dangerous dogs throughout Cardinia.

Current Activities:

- Conduct annual inspections of all premises containing restricted breed, declared dangerous and menacing dogs.
- Ensure Warning Signs, Housing and Enclosures are displayed and constructed in accordance with the DF&NAA..
- Ensure the owners of any restricted breed, declared dangerous and menacing dogs are familiar with the requirements and controls of these dogs.
- Ensure all restricted breed dogs are recorded with the Bureau of Animal Welfare.

Planned Programs/ Activities

- Information on Council's website highlighting the restrictions on particular dog breeds.
- Increase inspections on premises that house restricted breed, dangerous and menacing dogs.



9.9 Review existing orders made under the Act and Local Laws

Objective

To introduce local laws that aim to improve community safety and welfare of dogs and cats.

Current Activities:

- Introduction of dog off-leash zones throughout Cardinia for a twelve month trial period.
- Dogs must be on leash at all times unless in designated off-leash zones.
- All cats over the age of three months must be de-sexed.
- All cats must be secured to the property of their owner.

Planned Programs and Activities:

- Restrict the number of dogs and cats permitted on a property without a permit.
- Review of all dog off-leash zones.

9.10 Review of any other matters

Objective

To reinforce the importance of responsible animal management in Cardinia

This Plan aims to address the issues associated with domestic animal management in Cardinia. The Cardinia Local Laws Team strives to provide the best animal management service possible. Staff review their animal management procedures on a regular basis to ensure service delivery meets community expectations.

Cardinia Shire Council provides its animal management team with all the resources necessary to carry out the activities described in this Plan. All equipment is regularly updated to ensure the safety of staff and pets and the prompt return of stray pets to their owners.

Cardinia Shire Council will act immediately to any legislative change or community influence to provide an efficient, responsive and supportive service.

9.11 Performance monitoring and evaluation

Performance of the animal management services will be monitored through data collected and reported by Council's service request systems.

Key Performance Indicators

The key performance indicators are reported quarterly to Council via Interplan. Example:

- Estimated dog population: 40% x 1.44 dogs/household [Source: BIS Shrapnel Report, 1999].
- ** Estimated cat population: 26% x 1.47 cats/household [Source: BIS Shrapnel Report, 1999].

KPIs: (indicative)	Target	Current
1. Estimated Cat Population in Cardinia		7644
2. Number of Registered Cats	7644	3283
3. Estimated Dog Population in Cardinia		11520
4. Number of Registered Dogs	11520	11298
5. Enforcement Success Rate: (% successful prosecutions / total prosecutions)		
6. Dog Complaints: (wandering)	495	551
7. Cat Complaints:	91	102
8. Dog Attacks:	65	73
9. Dog Rehousing Rate	70%	61%
10. Dog Euthanasia Rate	35%	39%
11. Cat Rehousing Rate:	33%	30%
12. Cat Reclaim Rate:	58%	52%
13. Cat Euthanasia Rate:	62%	69%
14. Declared dog Compliance Rates:	100%	100%
15. Domestic Animal Business Compliance Rates:	100%	100%

9.12 Review cycle/date for this plan

The Domestic Animal Management Plan will be reviewed annually by the Cardinia Local Laws Team. Any issues or improvements that can be identified through the operation of the plan will be reported to the General Manager Corporate Services.

10 ACTION PLAN

Sec	Program / Service Initiative	Action	Responsible Officer	When
9.1	Conduct Animal Management Officer Training.	Arrange attendance at all Bureau of Animal Welfare Training Seminars. Animal management and handling training. Training programs with other Councils.	Manager Local Laws	2008 -2010
9.2	Promote and Encourage responsible Pet Ownership.	Distribute pet brochures throughout Cardinia. Introduce dog off-leash areas. Display pet educational material at Cardinia Civic Centre and maintain and up date information on Council's website. Encourage re-housing practices, where pet owners are unable to care for their pet. Introduce Local Law that requires a permit to keep more than 2 dogs or 2 cats. Enforce Council Local Laws that require all cats over 3 months of age to be de-sexed.	Manager Local Laws Manager Governance	2008 - 2010
9.3	Ensure compliance with Act and Regulations.	Conduct an annual doorknock to identify and register all dogs and cats. Provide 24 hour 7 day per week response service. Enforce microchip requirements for all new pet registrations. Monitor compliance of dogs on leash in public areas.	Manager Local Laws. Animal Management Officer.	2008 - 2010
9.4	Minimise the risk of dog attacks.	Monitor and review dog off-leash areas. Conduct regular patrols of all council parks and reserves. Ensure properties have suitable fencing to securely contain dogs.	Animal Management Officers.	2008 -2010
9.5	Address over population and high euthanasia of dogs and cats.	Encourage re-housing and adoption of unwanted dogs and cats. Hire of cat cages for trapping of feral cats.	Manager Local Laws Animal Management Officers.	2007 -2010
9.6	Encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.	Annual mail out of dog/cat registration renewal forms. Mail out reminder notices for unpaid animal registrations.	Local Laws Administration Officer.	2008 - 2010
9.7	Minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.	Encourage the use of cat enclosures. Hire of anti-barking collars. Pet owners to carry dog tidy bags when walking dogs.	Manager Local Laws Animal Management Officers.	2008 - 2010
9.8	Dangerous Dogs, Menacing Dogs and Restricted	Programmed inspections of registered properties housing Restricted, Declared or Menacing	Animal Management Officers	2007 -2010

Sec	Program / Service Initiative	Action	Responsible Officer	When
	Breed Dogs.	Dogs. Ensure information is readily available that clearly outlines restrictions for the above dogs.		
8.9	Review existing orders made under the Act and Local Laws.	Restrict the number of dogs and cats permitted on a property without a permit. Review of dog off-leash zones.	Manager Local Laws. Manager Governance.	2008 -2009

11 CARDINIA SHIRE COUNCIL ANIMAL MANAGEMENT STAFFING AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

