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SUSTAINABLE  
PENINSULA



# Mornington Peninsula Domestic Animal Management Plan 2008

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## Executive Summary

Research from The Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Veterinary Society indicates that pet owners represent the majority of residents in our municipality.

Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world, with two out of three Australian households keeping pets. Dog ownership on the Peninsula is higher than the national average and the Shire has responded by introducing diverse opportunities and programmes for dog owners.

The Shire supports responsible pet ownership through a range of awareness programmes, the provision of leash free areas, animal shelter facilities and a range of Shire Ranger services.

The Shire recognises the importance of pet ownership for providing an important positive emotional connection as well as for the mental and physical health benefits, especially to the elderly and those who live alone. In many cases pets provide an important means of contact for these people with other members of the community who also have, or have had, pets as part of their household. This benefit for people is identified in the Shire's Community Health and Wellbeing Plan.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire also recognises that there are people who are not pet owners, and who prefer not to interact with dogs and cats. It is recognised that the actions of an irresponsible minority of pet owners have the potential for causing a detrimental impact on amenity and the environment. Consequently it is important to achieve a reasonable balance in regard to how the Shire manages issues affecting both the owners of pets and non-pet owners, to ensure the Shire's services in this regard reflect our community's expectations and values.

The State Government has amended the Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 to require Local Government to produce a Domestic Animal Management Plan. The objective of this new legislative requirement for all Councils in Victoria is to increase the relative profile and importance of the domestic animal management function in the local government sector.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council has run several consultative processes in recent years, particularly in regard to matters such as leash free areas for dogs and the requirement for compulsory de-sexing of pets. These consultative processes have identified that animal management is an important issue in the eyes of our community. The latest review was undertaken with the intention of identifying community awareness and satisfaction regarding current domestic animal management services and programmes, and to gauge community expectations concerning future services and programmes, and the promotion of responsible pet ownership.

This plan was endorsed by the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2008.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

### 1.1 Purpose

In November 2005 the Parliament of Victoria enacted a number of amendments to the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animal Act 1994, including the introduction of a new statutory obligation for all Councils in Victoria to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (herein known as the DAM Plan).

Animal management service levels, standards and methods of dealing with domestic animals throughout Victoria remain very diverse. The Victorian Government considers that, through a formalised approach to domestic animal management planning, services and methods of dealing with pets will improve across the whole local government sector.

The purpose of the requirement for all Councils to develop a DAM Plan is to raise the standard of animal management services to the community across Victoria, and to increase the relative profile and importance of the domestic animal management function in the local government sector.

One of the important outcomes of the DAM Plan process will be to increase the number of lost animals being reunited with their owners and consequently reduce the high numbers of cats and dogs being brought to animal shelters and euthanised.

The DAM Plan's focus is to:

- Set out a method of evaluating animal control services
- Outline programmes for training of authorised animal management officers
- Outline programmes, services and strategies to;
  - promote and encourage responsible pet ownership
  - ensure compliance with the Act and Regulations
  - minimise the risk of dog attacks
  - address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
  - encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats
  - minimise potential for nuisance
  - identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs
- Review all related Orders and consider the need for further Orders
- Provide for any other matters of local significance, and
- Provide a periodic evaluation of all programmes, services and strategies.

The purposes of strategic planning are:

- To critically reflect on (at a high-level), what we do and how we do it
- To work out ways to improve the things we do and how we do them
- To agree/define future strategic directions and action plans to achieve our objectives.

## 1.2 Process Applied

In preparing this plan, the Shire's existing domestic animal management services were reviewed against the requirements of the Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act and compared with community expectations identified during the consultation process. A Community Survey was conducted and officers also consulted with a group of specialist key stakeholders; including dog clubs, cat protection society, animal welfare groups, veterinarians, ratepayers groups, and the Department of Human Services. Council at its Forward Planning Committee meeting on 21 July, 2008, resolved to give public notice of its intention to adopt a Domestic Animal Management Plan and for the draft DAM Plan to be on public display for community comment for a minimum period of six weeks.

The key 'Responsible Pet Ownership' issues of interest and discussion communicated to the Shire by the community and key stakeholders were;

- Continuing community education and raising awareness
- Services to cat owners
- Barking dog nuisances
- Dogs on beaches
- Wandering cats & dogs
- Dog & cat 'poo' in public places
- Aggressive dogs
- Leash-free areas for dog owners
- Compliance activities of the Shire
- Services at the Community Animal Shelter
- Re-homing services for unclaimed lost or surrendered pets
- Incentives to reward responsible pet owners
- Incentives to encourage de-sexing of pets
- Maximising the numbers of pets registered with the Shire

## 1.3 The Mornington Peninsula Shire –Demographic and Shire Profile

The Mornington Peninsula Shire, situated approximately 50 kilometres south-east of central Melbourne and located between Port Phillip Bay and Western Port is made up of a unique blend of coastal, urban and rural landscapes.

With a coastline extending more than 190 kilometres the Mornington Peninsula Shire has upwards of 720 square kilometres of land that is comprised of productive rural, scenic landscape, coastline, business and residential areas in over 40 townships.

The increasing population of the Mornington Peninsula Shire encompasses a large number of cultures, age groups and economic levels. This diverse population makes for broad demographic requirements to which Council policies and strategies must be tailored.

The Shire has a permanent population of over 142,000<sup>1</sup>. This figure rises to more than 180,000<sup>2</sup> during the peak summer tourism period. The current rate of population growth is approximately one percent per annum, with the Mornington Peninsula Shire population projected to have increased by 24,000 in 2021<sup>3</sup>.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire recognises the positive effects of pet ownership and the importance of providing support and services to the approximately 65,500 households that own at least one domestic animal within our Shire. The support and services for so many local pet owners also include programmes to involve volunteers as well to provide free dog training and community information and education incentives.



<sup>1</sup> Figures obtained from 2006 Census

<sup>2</sup> Figures obtained 2001 Census.

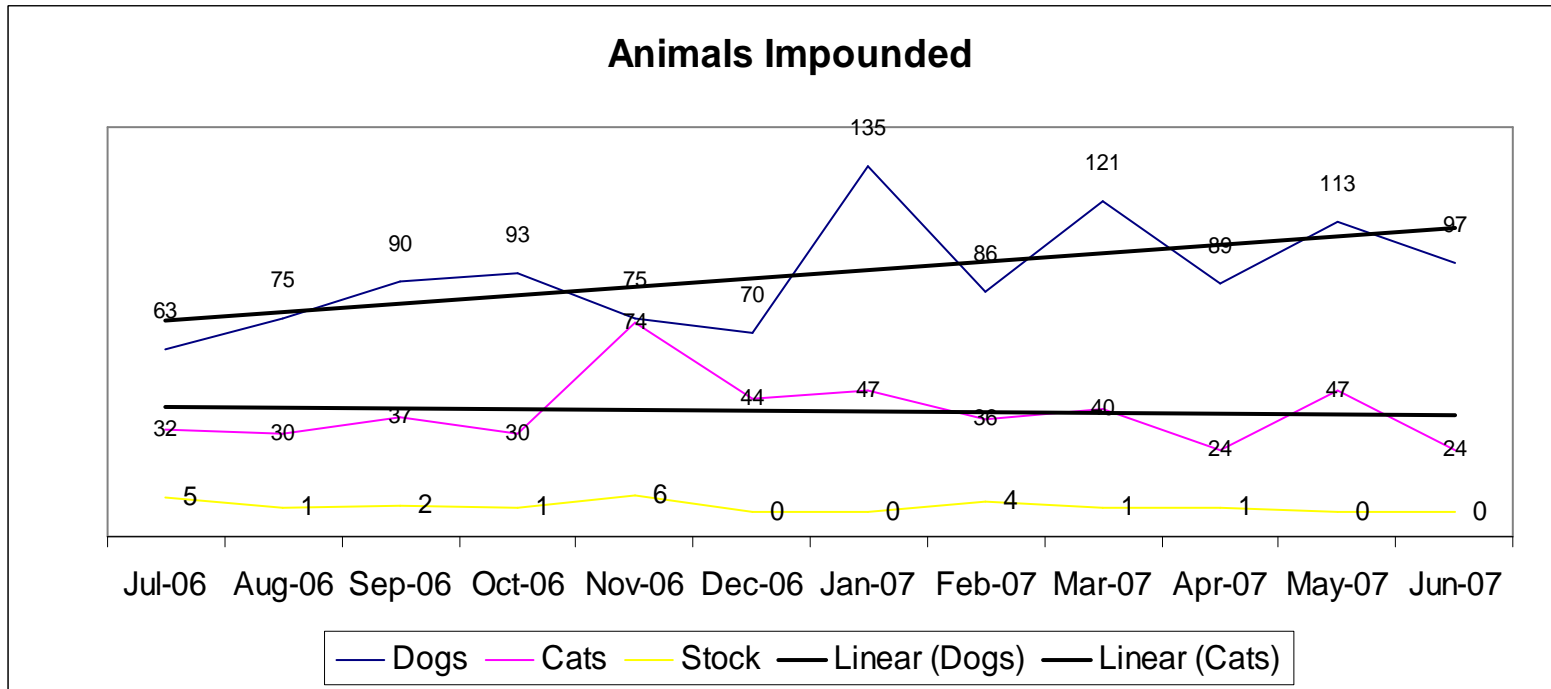
<sup>3</sup> Figures obtained from population projections detailed by Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 1.4 Domestic Animal Statistics and Data

Key Statistics	Mornington Peninsula Shire Council	Bayside City Council	Brimbank City Council
Population	142,000	89,000	175,000
Area	720 sq km	37 sq km	123 sq km
No. of EFT Authorised Officers (Animal Management Officers AMO)	11 (multi skilled) = 5 AMO	4 AMO	3 AMO
Hours training per officer annually	Approx. 10 hours	20 hours	24 hours
Private Dwellings	Approx. 65,500	35,540	65,000
<b>Dogs</b>			
Estimated total number of dogs	Approx. 37,700	20,471	37,440
No. of Registered Dogs	23,088	12,001	17,898
Estimated Dog Population <i>Not registered</i>	Approx. 14,612	8,470	19,542
No. of Registered Declared Dogs	15	3	102
<b>Cats</b>			
Estimated total number of (owned) cats	Approx. 25,000	13,583	24,843
No. of Registered Cats	6,355	5,108	4,592
Estimated Cat (owned) Population <i>Not registered</i>	Approx. 18,645	8,475	20,251
<b>Prosecutions</b>			
No. of Prosecutions	22	140	N/A
No. of Successful Prosecutions	22	135	25
<b>Impoundments</b>			
No. of impoundments (dogs)	1,269	228	1449
No. of dogs returned to owner	869	201	449
No. of dogs rehoused	188	6	304
No. of dogs euthanised	212	21	696
No. of impoundments (cats)	659	41	1787
No. of cats returned to owner	155	12	71
No. of cats rehoused	13	8	71
No. of cats euthanised	491	21	1645

### Animals Impounded at the Community Animal Shelter – July 2006 to June 2007

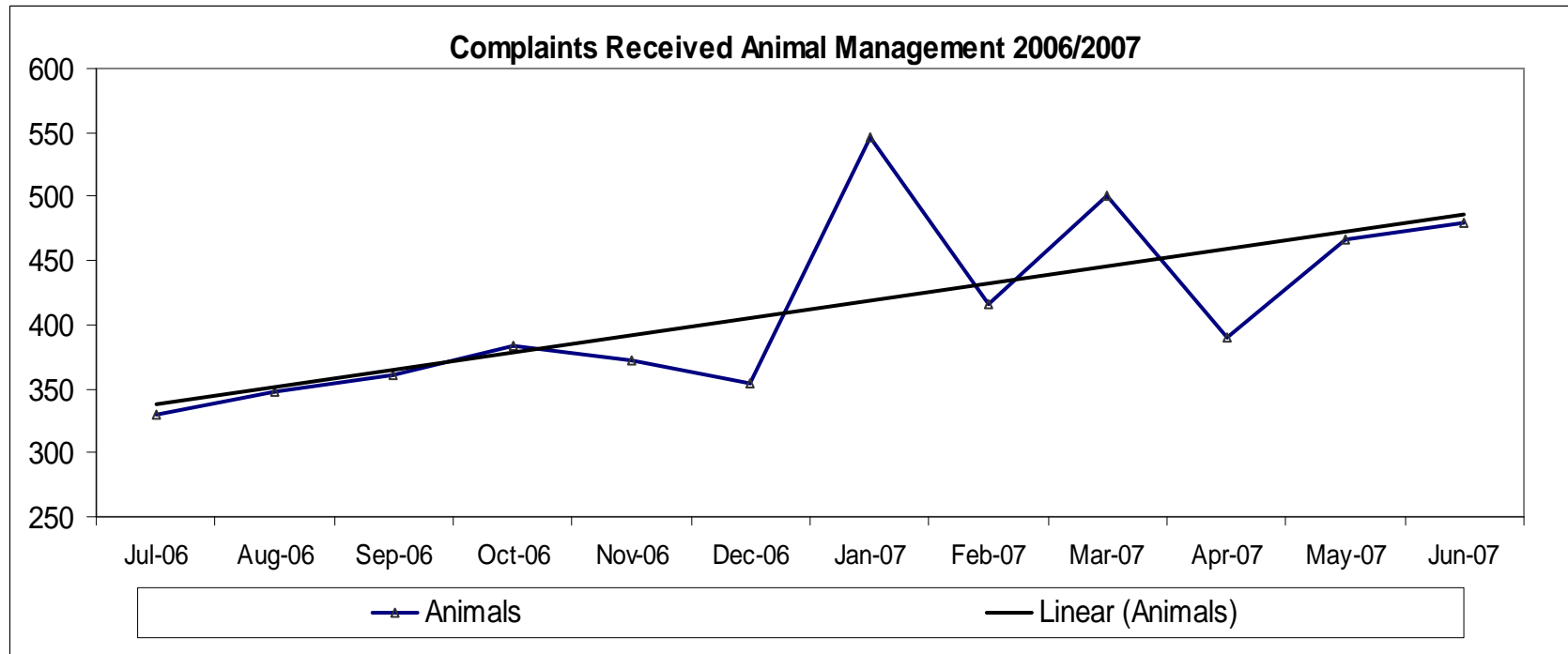
The number of dogs and cats impounded at the Community Animal Shelter is increasing. The 12 months from July 2006 to July 2007 showed an increase of approximately 50% in the number of dogs impounded. The Shire’s Domestic Animal Management Plan will seek to address this increase by encouraging the registration, identification of animals and by encouraging owners to securely confine their animals to their property.





### Request for Animal Management services from the Community July 2006 – June 2007

Statistics show that the community is requesting more animal management services from the Shire Ranger Team. Services include such things as stray animal collection, investigating nuisance complaints and investigations into attacks. Below are the figures for July 2006 to June 2007, which show a gradual increase and also shows that requests for Shire services peaks during the summer months.



## **1.5 The Mornington Peninsula Shire**

Animal management staffing and operational structure is part of the Environment Protection Unit, which is a Unit of the Sustainable Environment Directorate, one of four Directorates of the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

### **Community Animal Shelter**

The Shire's Community Animal Shelter is operated by one full time Animal Shelter Co-ordinator, a team of casual staff equating to two full time staff, and a dedicated group of volunteers.

The tradition of volunteering is strong on the Mornington Peninsula and assisting at the Animal Shelter not only improves the welfare of animals but also provides volunteers with the opportunity to share their time and expertise with like minded people.

### **Shire Ranger Team**

The Shire has 11 full time multi skilled Shire Rangers, this equates to approximately five full time Animal Management Officers. They are supported by casual staff including a dedicated animal management van operator over the busy summer period.

### **Administration Staff**

The Community Animal Shelter and the Shire Rangers are supported by a multi skilled Administration Team and the Shire's Customer Service Team. This support equates to approximately five full time administration staff.

### **Management Structure**

Each team is supported by a Team Leader who reports to the Manager Environment Protection. The Manager reports to the Director Sustainable Environment who reports to the Chief Executive Officer.

## 1.6 Community Consultation

The purpose of the DAM Plan community consultation process was to seek feedback in regard to community awareness and satisfaction regarding current domestic animal management services and programmes. It was also aimed at gauging community expectations concerning future services and programmes, and the promotion of responsible pet ownership.

Officers of Council published a Community Survey document<sup>4</sup> which was posted to 5,000 random properties throughout the Shire. It was also available via the Mornington Peninsula Shire Website, Shire Customer Service Centres, Shire Libraries, the Community Animal Shelter and Tourism Information Centres.

### Community Survey Results

The Shire received a total of 2,129 survey submissions, which is a very encouraging indication of the high level of community interest in this issue.

After all the data analysis and consultation information had been collated, it was necessary to analyse it, with a view to:

- identifying the key local trends in terms of animal management
- comparing how our community compares to other communities on a State-wide and like-Council basis; and
- identifying the priority issues facing the Shire in terms of domestic animal management.

The results of the survey have provided an indication of the community's values and expectations in regard to a range of companion animal issues in our municipality. These survey results will be important factors when consideration is being given to determining our community's most important issues regarding domestic animal management.

The survey identified a number of matters that are of concern, including problems/nuisance experienced by residents with the following issues:

- 17% barking dogs
- 28% dogs on beaches
- 14% wandering dogs
- 16% dog/cat waste in public places
- 45% wandering cats
- 9% aggressive dogs/cats
- 18% leash-free areas were too far away
- 25% dog behaviour at leash-free areas
- 22% lack of fencing at some leash-free areas
- 10% lack of signage at leash-free areas
- 10% lack of facilities (water, poo-bins, exercise equipment) at leash-free areas

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<sup>4</sup> Domestic Animal Management Plan – Community Survey Results Summary  
– Appendix B

## Community Survey Results (cont)

- 66% not aware the Shire regulates compliance with minimum standards for animal businesses
- 51% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' that the Shire had resolved their complaint about pets
- 17% did not 'agree' or 'disagree' that the Shire had resolved their complaint about pets

Given the range of community education and awareness programmes (ongoing) conducted by the Shire in recent years, it is interesting (in some cases, pleasing) to note the following feedback from those who participated in the survey:

- 86% were aware that cats and dogs need to be registered and micro-chipped at three months of age
- 93% were aware that the Shire has provided areas where dogs may be exercised off-leash
- 99% were aware that dog owners were required to pick up their dog's waste in public places
- 95% were aware that dog owners were required to carry bags etc to pick up their dog's waste
- 20% have obtained a free 'POO-ch Pouch' from the Shire to assist in collecting dog waste
- 33% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that dog owners generally pick up dog waste
- 91% were aware of on-leash/off-leash & time restrictions for dog owners accessing beaches
- 52% take their dogs to the beach
- 20% want dogs on-leash at beaches
- 41% want leash-free time restrictions on dogs at beaches
- 37% want sections of all beaches dedicated for leash-free use
- 84% were aware that cats must be confined to owners' premises
- 45% were aware the Shire loans cat traps to residents with cat nuisances
- 84% were aware the Shire has an Animal Shelter to care for lost pets
- 78% want the Shire to re-home unclaimed pets
- 94% were aware that dogs outside the owners premises must be on-leash, except when in off-leash areas
- 51% 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that dog owners generally walk their dogs on-leash
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A more detailed summary of the survey results is attached to this plan.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Domestic Animal Management Plan – Community Survey Results Summary  
– Appendix B

## 1.7 External Focus Group Consultation

The Shire consulted with a range of qualified key stakeholders in our community. Veterinarians, animal welfare organisations, resident's associations, cat and dog clubs, as well as the Department of Human Services were all invited to participate with Officers of Council in this process.

The purpose of this External Focus Group consultation was to seek expert advice from within our own community in regard to domestic animal management issues of concern to them, to obtain their views in regard to the community's expectations of the Shire and to discuss strategies that may assist to address identified issues of concern.

Issues raised and discussed by the External Focus Group included;

- support for a new pet owner's kit being developed and supplied by the Shire with all new pet registrations,
- discussion about the need for more community education and a raised awareness about a range of responsible pet ownership issues,
- support for raising awareness about the consequences of choosing the incorrect breed of animal for your lifestyle,
- support for the concept of giving positive rewards to responsible pet owners and tougher penalties being imposed on those pet owners who do the wrong thing,
- additional financial incentives, through lower registration fees etc, were recommended for pet owners who de-sexed their pets,
- support for an increased focus on returning lost pets and for finding new homes for unclaimed pets,
- general support for the introduction of a door-knock programme to check pets were being registered with the Shire,
- support for the concept of giving infringing pet owners an option to successfully complete a Responsible Dog Ownership Training Programme in lieu of being fined,
- support for the establishment of leash-free areas, and poo-bins, for dog owners on the Western Port side of the Peninsula,
- discussion about the need to introduce a cat management programme with a multi-pronged approach. Suggestions included a strategic trapping programme, as well as de-sexing, confinement, and permanent identification micro-chipping and registration.

Notes of the issues raised and discussion by the External Focus Group and the suggested strategies are attached to this plan.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Domestic Animal Management Plan – External Focal Group – Summary of Discussion Topics – Appendix C

## 1.8 Public Display of Draft Plan and Community Comment

Following Council's resolution at its Forward Planning Committee meeting on 21 July, 2008, to give public notice of its intention to adopt a Domestic Animal Management Plan in November 2008 and for the DAM plan to be put on public display for not less than six (6) weeks for community comment, Officers arranged for advertising and news releases in a number of local newspapers; for the draft DAM Plan to be available for viewing at all of Council's Customer Service offices, libraries, and information centres; for the draft DAM Plan to also be available via the Mornington Peninsula Shire's Internet website; as well as for copies of the draft DAM Plan to be sent to one hundred and sixty-three (163) community groups and organisations – including chambers of commerce, community gardens, dog clubs, elder citizens' groups, pre-schools, primary schools, Probus clubs, Rotary Clubs, and secondary schools – with invitations welcoming their comments.

During the public display of the draft DAM Plan, written submissions were received from the community and Officers of Council. A number of minor amendments to the DAM Plan, resulting from submissions received, have been made, including some updated statistics and a revision of a foot note on page 6 of the Plan.

Updated statistics indicate:

- approx 65,500 residential dwellings of various categories
- approx 37,700 dogs in our community
- approx 14,600 dogs are not registered
- approx 25,000 cats in our community
- approx 18,600 cats are not registered

Submissions from the community during the public display of the *draft* DAM Plan indicated general support for the DAM Plan, and expressed opinions and expectations in regard to a range of domestic animal issues and Shire services. (see Appendix D)

It is proposed to address the community expectations identified with the introduction of a range of new programmes and services.

## 1.9 Additional Research

A number of academic/professional papers and research documents have been identified as being of interest to the Mornington Peninsula Shire in regard to a range of issues associated with domestic animal management matters affecting Officers of Council, residents, and visitors of the Mornington Peninsula. These documents include the following:

- 'People Pets Planning' Symposium Proceedings – Deakin University 2007
- Making Sure there is Room for Pets in Our Society - Virginia Jackson, Harlock Jackson Pty Ltd
- Oh Behave! Understanding the Causes of Companion Animal Behaviour Problems in our Community - Dr. Joanne Righetti
- Compliance Theory – Virginia Jackson, Harlock Jackson Pty Ltd

- Triple Bottom Line and Urban Animal Management – Ian Henderson, City of Port Phillip
- Meeting in the Park - Virginia Jackson, Harlock Jackson Pty Ltd
- Turning Research into Reality: Managing Pets in the Community – N. Van de Kuyt, Department of Primary Industry/ Bureau of Animal Welfare
- A dangerous Occupation: Dealing with Dogs, an OH&S Issue – Dr. Joanne Righetti
- Cat Crisis Coalition Fact Sheet and Launch information – Dr. Carole Webb, Cat Protection Society
- Shared Community Solutions for Life & Death Matters – Joy Verrinder, Animal welfare League Queensland
- Community Attitudes towards Semi-Owned Cats – Dr. Samia Toukhsati, Monash University
- Shelter Shakeup – Dr. Linda Marston, Monash University
- Perpetration Induced Traumatic Stress – Vanessa Rohlf, Monash University
- Compassion/ Enthusiasm Fatigue – John Snyder, American Humane Society
- Lost & Found in Melbourne – Dr. Linda Marston, Monash University
- Barking Problems Solved – Dr. Joanne Righetti,
- Bark Counter: Seeking Objectivity in Bark Nuisance Assessment – Dr. Dick Murray
- The Barking Dog Owner – Paul Frisby, Rockhampton City Council
- Barked Enough! – Peter Chandler, City of Palmerson
- Shut that Bloody Dog Up !!! – Chris Button, City of Onkaparinga
- A Quick Fix? Solutions for Animal Behaviour Problems – Dr. Joanne Righetti
- The Right Person for the Job: Reduce Risk, Turnover and expense through Selective Recruitment – Tania Small, Business Development Manager ARIC
- Educating for Today: Taking Care of Tomorrow – Virginia Soderstrom, Department of Primary Industry/ Bureau of Animal Welfare

**Research conducted by the Australian Veterinary Society shows:**

- 12 Million Australians are associated with pets
- 63% of the 7.5 million households in Australia own pets
- 91% of pet owners report feeling very close to their pet, reinforcing that pets are an integral member of the family unit
- pets were a normal part of childhood for more than 83% of Australians
- of the Australians who do not currently own a pet, 53% would like to do so in the future
- 60% of pet owners were more likely to be actively engaged in community activities
- young girls that walked dogs exercised 29 minutes more on average than those who did not
- mothers that walked dogs were 70% more likely to meet exercise guidelines than otherwise
- while only 45% of Australians achieve the sufficient amount of physical activity, 80% of dog owners manage to achieve the recommended levels
- the pet care industry contributes around \$4.62 billion to the economy annually and employs 44,700 people across Australia.

**Health Benefits of Australia's Pet Owners/ Compared to Non- Pet Owners:**

- people who own pets typically visit the doctor less often and use less medication
- pet owners, on average, have lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure
- pet owners recover more quickly from illness and surgery
- pet owners deal better with stressful situations
- pet owners are less likely to report feeling lonely





## **2.0 KEY ISSUES**

The State Government has imposed a Statutory Obligation on all Councils in Victoria to implement a DAM Plan, as specified in Section 68A of the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994, to address the issues detailed in 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7 below.

### **2.1 Promote and Encourage Responsible Pet Ownership**

The Mornington Peninsula Shire is committed to a range of programmes to educate, inform and positively influence pet owners in our community. These programmes include the provision of information brochures, community signs, newspaper advertising and editorial, free dog training courses, discounted micro-chipping, leash-free exercise areas for dog owners and free 'POO-ch Pouches' to facilitate the individual collection and disposal of dog waste in public places, etc.

### **2.2 Ensure Compliance with The Act and Regulations**

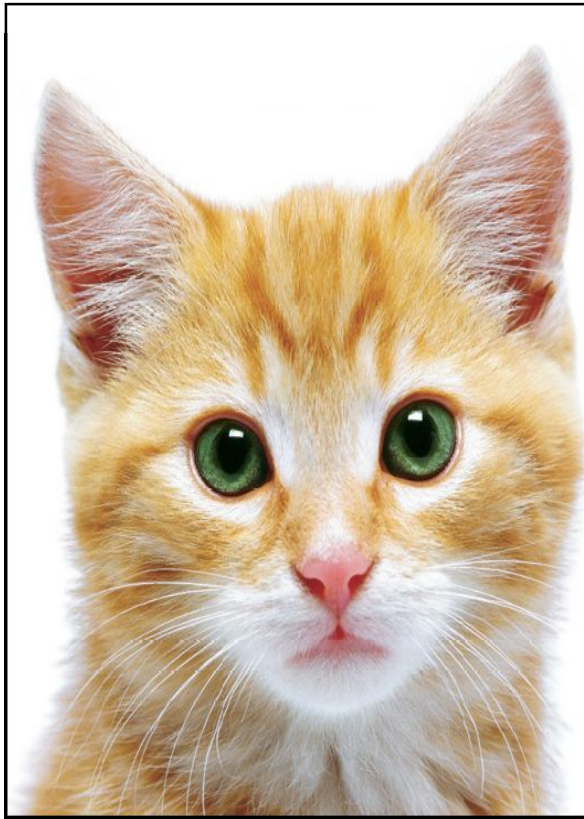
Shire Rangers respond to a range of complaints from the community in regard to domestic animal management issues (60% – 70% of their overall work load). These complaints are investigated and, when evidence indicates there has been an infringement of The Act/ Regulations, the appropriate level of enforcement action is taken. Shire Rangers also conduct beach patrols on some Shire managed beaches during the busiest part of the summer season. Door-knocks for registration checks are conducted at the homes of new pet owners that have not registered their new pets (a follow-up to pet shops advising the Shire of new owners' details in regard to the sale of pets). Shire Rangers also conduct annual inspections of premises of Registered Domestic Animal Businesses and of the owners of Restricted Breed Dogs, declared Dangerous Dogs, and declared Menacing Dogs.

### **2.3 Minimise the Risk of Dog Attacks**

As part of the process of investigating and resolving numerous complaints about aggressive dog incidents each year, Shire Rangers issue formal warnings, on-the-spot fines and Summonses for prosecutions through the Magistrates' Court system. These penalties for the owners of uncontrolled aggressive dogs are intended to act as a deterrent to other irresponsible dog owners in the community.

### **2.4 Address Over-Population and High Euthanasia Rates for Dogs and Cats**

Ongoing community education by the Mornington Peninsula Shire is raising awareness and promoting the benefits of pet de-sexing, together with compulsory de-sexing requirements for cats at three months, and for dogs being sold or given away through the Mornington Peninsula Shire Local Law No. 5. This process of ongoing community education, together with enforcement in regard to those who decline to cooperate, is expected to produce a long term positive impact for the overall reduction of unwanted litters in our community. Where possible the Community Animal Shelter attempts to re-home healthy unwanted pets.



## **2.5 Encourage Registration and Identification of Dogs and Cats**

The Shire has an ongoing public education programme that promotes the registration and micro-chipping of pets through the provision of information brochures at numerous locations, community information promotional signs, as well as newspaper advertising and editorial.

## **2.6 Minimise Potential for Nuisance**

The Shire includes information regarding nuisance barking as part of its community education programme, which is implemented through the provision of information brochures at numerous locations, community information promotional signs, as well as newspaper advertising and editorial.

## **2.7 Identify Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs**

Complaints concerning aggressive dogs are investigated throughout the year and, when evidence indicates the dog is a Restricted Breed Dog, a Dangerous Dog or a Menacing Dog, Shire Rangers then implement a process for formally declaring these dogs as Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs – and ensure that the requirements for keeping such dogs are complied with by the owners of these dogs.

### 3.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

This review was undertaken with the intention of identifying community awareness and satisfaction regarding current domestic animal management services and programmes, and to gauge community expectations concerning future services and programmes, and the promotion of responsible pet ownership. The Mornington Peninsula Shire has undertaken the development of its DAM Plan in accordance with the template and recommendations provided by the Department of Primary Industry's Bureau of Animal Welfare.

#### 3.1 Animal Management Officer Training and Development

The Mornington Peninsula Shire's objective is to ensure that all staff and volunteers involved in the management of domestic animals have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their duties in line with industry best practice standards, and in keeping with the values and expectations of our community.

##### Current Training and Development

###### Shire Rangers

- Conflict resolution
- Animal management/handling

###### Community Animal Shelter, Permanent & Casual Staff

- Certificate IV Animal Management and Regulation (TAFE) (one staff member)
- On-the-Job training plus ongoing coaching
- In-house training for computer systems
- Dog aggression training

###### Community Animal Shelter, Volunteers

- On-the-Job training plus ongoing coaching
- Dog aggression training

###### Administration & Customer Service Staff

- Dealing with difficult customers
- System training

##### Planned Programmes and Initiatives

###### Shire Rangers

- Certificate IV Animal Management and Regulation (TAFE)

###### Community Animal Shelter Staff

- Certificate IV Animal Management and Regulation (TAFE)
- Computer Systems training

###### Community Animal Shelter, Volunteers

- Animal Shelter Operational training for Volunteers.

###### Administration & Customer Service

- Familiarisation training at the Animal Shelter

### 3.2 Encouraging Responsible Pet Ownership – Community Education

The Shire aims to educate and encourage people to manage pets in a way that protects the health and welfare of the animal, maximises the companion benefits of keeping pets, and minimises the potential for nuisance or harm to others. Positive interaction with pets is recognised as having a positive impact on the individual pet owner's health and wellbeing and is also acknowledged by Social Planners as an important ingredient of the social capital in our community.

#### Current and Ongoing Programmes

- Provision of leash-free areas for dog owners to use for exercising with their pets
- Provision of dog prohibited areas to protect sensitive conservation areas and to provide places where people can recreate without interaction with dog owners and their pets
- Discount de-sexing programme for cats in October each year
- Cat cages loaned *free* to residents experiencing nuisance problems with feral and wandering cats
- Discount micro-chipping offered at the annual Pet and Pony Expo
- Annual distribution of 5,000 *free* 'POO-ch Pouches' for resident dog owners
- Eight-week *free* responsible pet ownership training courses available for resident dog owners throughout the year
- Signs with a range of pet owner education themes regularly displayed at community signage locations
- Education and information stalls at selected community events
- Large range of education/ information brochures for pet owners available from Shire brochure displays at all the Shire's customer service locations and most Mornington Peninsula veterinary clinics
- Advertising and editorial each month in local newspapers as well as the Shire's 'Peninsula Wide' publication with education/ information for pet owners
- School visits to the animal shelter (approximately 15 visits per year)
- Support for the Mornington Peninsula Community Dog Club to assist in the provision of public training facilities with a positive (fun) approach for new dog owners and their pets.

#### Planned programmes and initiatives

- The introduction of a new pet owner's kit, to be developed and supplied by the Shire with all new pet registrations.
- Explore the possibility of establishing suitable leash-free areas and 'poo-bins', for dog owners on the Western Port side of the Peninsula, as well as exploring more leash-free areas generally, to ensure they are within reasonable walking distance of most residents.
- Support was noted from the community for the concept of some infringing pet owners being given an option to successfully complete an eight-week 'Responsible Dog Ownership' training programme in lieu of being fined.

### Planned programmes and initiatives (cont)

- With the appropriate support and resources, Officers could introduce a new volunteer 'Community Watch Dog' programme, similar to one that has been implemented in Sydney. The aim of the programme is to connect with dog owners in public places and engage with them in regard to the obligation to pick up their dog's 'poo', by training and facilitating volunteer dog owners to be able to approach other dog owners in parks etc with educational material, 'give-way' dog leads, POO-ch Pouches, and 'POO-bags'.
- The Shire's Elderly Citizen Strategy speaks about the positive impacts pets can have on an elderly person's quality of life. This plan will support the initiatives outlined in that strategy including offering financial support for the registration of pets and increase proactive compliance activities in areas where elderly people feel vulnerable to dog nuisance.



### 3.3 Identification and Registration

The Shire's aim is to maximise the number of registered and permanently identified domestic animals in our community; to aid compliance activities and to help reunite lost pets with their owners – which all helps towards reducing the number of animals being euthanised. The Shire aims to ensure that all domestic animal businesses are registered and comply with the minimum animal welfare standards specified under applicable State Government Codes of Practice.

### **Current and ongoing programmes**

- Annual audits and inspections of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses to ensure they comply with minimum animal welfare standards established by State Govt under specific Codes of Practices (pet shops, boarding kennels, catteries, etc).
- All impounded cats and dogs are checked for current registration with the Shire.
- Door-Knock registration checks for new owners of pets acquired from pet shops, who fail to register with the Shire (new pet owner contact details provided by pet shops).

### **Planned programmes and initiatives**

- Community feedback has indicated the desire for rewards to be available for responsible pet owners, through a modification to the pet registration process, by offering more financial incentives for responsible pet owners. Financial incentives for owners who de-sex their pets would also contribute towards the Shire's obligations in regard to addressing the issues of preventing unwanted litters and reducing the high rates of euthanasia, as well as reducing the potential for aggressive behaviour in pets.
- Increase in the number of door-knocks to check that pets are registered with the Shire.

## **3.4 Compliance and Enforcement – Local Laws and Orders**

The Shire's aim is to control nuisances and to provide a safe and healthy environment in which the residents of the Mornington Peninsula Shire and visitors are able to enjoy a quality of life that meets the general expectations of the community. Compliance with related legislation, including the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Orders of Council, and Mornington Peninsula Shire Local Laws that apply to domestic animal management matters, is considered to be an important tool in ensuring issues that are dangerous or unsafe or detrimental to the quality of life are minimised or eliminated in our community.

### **Current and ongoing programmes**

- Issue cautions and infringement notices.
- Investigate complaints.
- Use enforcement and prosecution to achieve positive outcomes.

### **Planned Programmes and Initiatives**

- Explore an extension of the after hours collection of stray dogs.
- Explore the option of establishing ongoing contract cat-trapping programmes for sensitive conservation areas, bushland reserves, and foreshores managed by Council.
- Increase patrols of leash-free areas, as well as areas where dogs are being walked off-leash in on-leash areas, dogs on beaches - to take action and educate owners who allow their dogs to act in an inappropriate or aggressive manner. These patrols could also address another 'hot topic' of continuing and significant concern in the community – that of people not picking up their dog's 'poo'.

**Council Orders and Local Laws include:**

- Council Order 1996 - Control of Dogs in Public Places (dogs to be on-leash, not to swim in any lake, not to damage vegetation or property, owners to collect and remove dog 'poo')
- Council Order 1997 – Cat Controls (cats to be confined to owners' premises 24 hours)
- Council Order 2007 – Leash-Free Areas/Dogs Prohibited Areas
- Local Law No. 2 (2005) – Environment – Part 4 – Animals and Birds

**Planned Programmes and Initiatives**

- Officers to review the domestic animal management provisions of Local Law No. 2 and make recommendations to Council in regard to any additional Orders under The Act. Recommendations by officers may include making a Local Law to put in place appropriate obligations and controls for the owners of cross-breeds of Restricted Breed Dogs.

**Review Domestic Animal Management component of other Shire Plans and Policies**

Officers have considered the following Shire plans, policies and strategy documents in the preparation of the DAM Plan and reflected on how they directly or indirectly affect any animal management issues:

- Community Plan 2006/7 to 2010/11
- Community Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Elderly Citizen's Strategy
- Financial Hardship Assistance – Animal Shelter Release & Animal Registration
- Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme

**3.5 Domestic Animal Businesses**

Shire Rangers work in close cooperation with domestic animals businesses to ensure compliance with the State Government's Codes of Practice for each type of Domestic Animal Business – these Codes of Practice impose minimum animal welfare standards for each type of business. The Shire currently has 19 domestic animal businesses registered.

**Current and ongoing programmes**

- Annual compliance inspections
- Investigation of complaints/enforcement action for non compliance

**Planned programmes and initiatives**

- Examine the possibility of implementing a programme to pro-actively identify and investigate unregistered domestic animal businesses including backyard breeding of pets. This will compliment the Shire's efforts in regard to Council's obligation to State Government concerning over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.
- Develop and implement agreements with domestic animal businesses to act as registration agents for registering pets with the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

- Implement agreements with pet shops in regard to providing the proposed new pet owner's kit to people who purchase pets.

### 3.6 Declared Dogs

The objective of the Shire is to minimise risk to our community from declared dangerous, restricted breed and menacing dogs. The Mornington Peninsula Shire currently has nine declared dangerous, seven restricted breed and one declared menacing dogs. The Shire Ranger team aims to minimise risk to the community of these dogs being able to do harm.

#### Current and ongoing programmes

- Annual compliance inspections
- Prosecute non compliant owners
- Investigation of complaints

#### Planned programmes and initiatives

- Work with Government Agencies to administer legislation
- Increase proactive inspections of industrial areas to identify businesses and people using guard dogs that are being kept contrary to the minimum requirements specified in Regulations of The Act.

### 3.7 Community Animal Shelter

The Mornington Peninsula Shire operates a Community Animal Shelter/Municipal Animal Pound. The aim of the Shelter is to provide care and accommodation for people's lost pets, to maximise the number of lost pets reunited with their owners and to help facilitate re-homing of unclaimed pets. Community Animal Shelters need to be user friendly, customer focused, as positive as possible an environment for the pets and run in accordance with the State Government's Code of Practice for Pounds and Animal Shelters.

#### Current and Ongoing Programmes

- Animal releases are conducted, by appointment, seven days a week
  - Monday – Friday 8.30am to 5pm
  - Weekends & public holidays 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm
- Dogs, cats and livestock are impounded, scanned for micro-chips and other forms of ID and then attempts are made to reunite the pet with their owner.
- The Community Animal Shelter accepts surrendered cats and dogs and attempts to rehouse them.
- The Community Animal Shelter arranges de-sexing and micro-chipping of animals prior to release where required.
- With the aid of a dedicated group of volunteers the Shire attempts to rehouse unwanted animals.
- 20 dog pens, plus six temporary pens
- 20 cat pens
- One isolation pen for dogs
- Provision for isolation facility with local veterinary clinics where required.



The Shire's website [www.mornpen.vic.gov.au](http://www.mornpen.vic.gov.au) provides an online link to the Animal Shelter, allowing residents and visitors to find 'lost' pets simply by logging on and viewing photographs of 'lost' pets being cared for by the Shire. The information, which is up-dated every 24 hours, features cats and dogs currently being cared for at the Shelter. This makes it easier and quicker for those with web access to discover if their 'lost' family pet is safe and sound at the Community Animal Shelter.



### Planned programmes and initiatives

- A programme review of Community Animal Shelter services and facilities will be undertaken in the new financial year. The review will include an examination of:
  - Customer Service facilities at the Shelter
  - capacity of the Shelter to ensure it meets the demand of the community, for the care of dogs and cats
  - facilities at the Shelter to ensure best-practice and compliance with Code of Practice standards for animal welfare and OH & S legislation, plus
  - a range of services delivered at the Shelter, including the re-homing of unwanted pets and the volunteer programme.



## 4.0 PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### 4.1 Our Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Process

The Mornington Peninsula Shire will monitor performance of the animal management services that are detailed in this plan by reporting monthly through the Shire's established monthly reporting systems.

### 4.2 Key Performance Indicators

The KPIs are designed to measure success with the identified key issues in section 2 of this plan.

KPI Description	Target	Current
Community Knowledge of requirement to keep dogs on leash & pick up 'dog poo'.	100%	96%
Number of nuisance complaints – dogs on beaches (per 1000 head of population)	.80	.82
Number of reported dog attacks (per 1000 head of population)	1.5	1.6
Dog euthanasia rates (% total dogs euthanised/ total dogs impounded)	15%	16.5%
Cat euthanasia rates (% total cats euthanised/ total cats impounded)	70%	75% pa
Dog registration rate (% registered/ estimated pop)	100%	61%
Cat registration rates (% registered/ estimated pop)	100%	25%
Number of animal (nuisance) complaints received (per 1000 head of population)	25	28
Inspection of properties where Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs are housed.	40 per annum	20 per annum

### 4.3 Review Cycle/Date for this Plan

The DAM Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Manager, Environment Protection Unit in consultation with the Community Focus Group and a report will be presented to Council.

The Plan will be reviewed and a new DAM Plan will be completed on or before 30 June 2011.



## APPENDICES

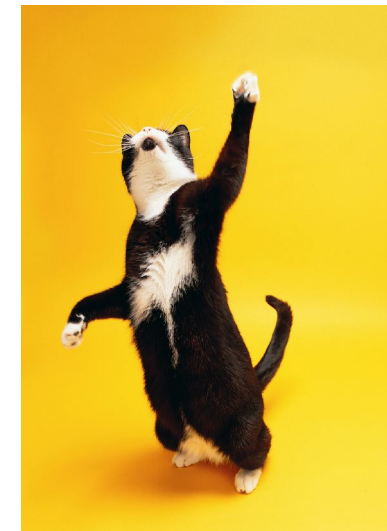
- Appendix A: Action Plan
- Appendix B Domestic Animal Management Plan – Community Survey Results Summary
- Appendix 3 Domestic Animal Management Plan – External Focal Group – Summary of Discussion Topics



## APPENDIX A: ACTION PLAN

Communications research has demonstrated that negative themes in public education messages and implementation of compliance programmes are not retained as well by the community as are positive messages. Recent overseas experience through community based social marketing projects has shown the positive approach has clearly demonstrated results in community cooperation – over time. This is because there is likely to be much higher levels of compliance, as well as peer-pressure being applied, when the community understands why there are particular restrictions, as well as what positive benefits result for the environment from community cooperation in these matters.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire currently provides a range of services to pet owners and to the community generally; services that more than satisfy Council’s statutory obligations in regard to minimum standards imposed by the State Government. However, feedback during the DAM Plan consultation process has indicated an expectation by our community for the Shire to provide more than the minimum standard in regard to a number of domestic animal management issues, including more community education and awareness programmes. The Mornington Peninsula Shire aspires to achieving best-practice and continuous improvement of our services. Officers will introduce new initiatives over the three years of this Plan to improve our service and to help meet the community desire to see domestic animals managed in a way that minimises nuisance and encourages responsible pet ownership.



No.	Description of Programme	Programmed Service Objective	New Initiatives
1	<b>Animal Management Officer Training &amp; Development</b>	<b>Objective: That all staff and volunteers involved in the management of domestic animals have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their duties.</b>	
	Shire Rangers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Animal management/handling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificate IV Animal Management and Regulation (TAFE).</li> </ul>
	Community Animal Shelter, Permanent & Casual Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificate IV Animal Management and Regulation (TAFE) (one staff member)</li> <li>• On-the-job training plus ongoing coaching</li> <li>• In-house training for computer systems</li> <li>• Dog aggression training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certificate IV Animal Management and Regulation (TAFE), if resourced</li> <li>• Computer Systems training</li> </ul>
	Community Animal Shelter Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-the-job training plus ongoing coaching</li> <li>• Dog aggression training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animal Shelter Operational training for Volunteers.</li> </ul>
	Administration and Customer Service Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing with difficult customers.</li> <li>• System training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarisation training at Animal Shelter</li> </ul>

No.	Description of Programme	Programmed Service Objective	New Initiatives
2	Responsible Pet Ownership	<p><b>Objective: To educate and encourage the community to manage pets in a way that protects the health and welfare of the animal, maximises the benefits of owning an animal and minimises the potential for the animal to cause nuisance.</b></p>	
	Programmes & Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of leash-free areas for dogs.</li> <li>• Provision of dog prohibited areas for recreation and sensitive conservation areas.</li> <li>• Discount de-sexing programme for cats in October each year.</li> <li>• Cat cages loaned to residents for dealing with feral and wandering cats</li> <li>• Discount micro-chipping offered at the annual Pet and Pony Expo.</li> <li>• Annual distribution of 5,000 free 'POO-ch Pouches'.</li> <li>• Free responsible pet ownership training courses.</li> <li>• Educational signs with a range of pet owner education themes.</li> <li>• Education and information stalls at community events.</li> <li>• Education/information brochures for pet owners available from Shire.</li> <li>• Advertising and editorial each month in local newspapers as well as the Shire's 'Peninsula Wide' publication, with education/information for pet owners.</li> <li>• School visits to the animal shelter.</li> <li>• Support for the Mornington Peninsula Community Dog Club to assist in the provision of training for new dog owners and their pets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction of a new pet owner's information kit.</li> <li>• Explore the possibility of establishing suitable leash-free areas and 'poo-bins', for dog owners on the Western Port side of the Peninsula.</li> <li>• Explore providing more leash-free areas.</li> <li>• Explore the possibility of giving animal owners an option to successfully complete an eight-week 'Responsible Dog Ownership' training programme in lieu of being fined.</li> <li>• Explore the development of a 'Community Watch Dog' programme to engage with dog owners in public places in regard to their obligation to behave responsibly.</li> <li>• Support the programmes in the Shire's Elderly Citizen Strategy, financial support for pet registration for the elderly and extra proactive Shire Ranger presence at leash free areas.</li> </ul>

No.	Description of Programme	Programmed Service Objective	New Initiatives
3	Identification & Registration	<b>Objective: To maximise the number of registered and permanently identified domestic animals and register Domestic Animal Businesses.</b>	
	Identification and Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual inspections of all registered Domestic Animal Businesses.</li> <li>• All impounded cats and dogs are checked for current registration with the Shire.</li> <li>• Door-knock registration checks for new owners of pets.</li> <li>• Lifetime registration tags are provided by the Shire.</li> <li>• Subsidised micro-chipping provided at Pet &amp; Pony Expo.</li> <li>• Registration of approximately 22,220 dogs annually.</li> <li>• Registration of approximately 5,888 cats annually,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage responsible pet ownership through registration incentives.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of door-knocks to check that pets are registered with the Shire.</li> </ul>



No.	Description of Programme	Programmed Service Objective	New Initiatives
4	<b>Compliance &amp; Enforcement – Local Laws &amp; Orders</b>	<b>Objective: Control nuisances and to help provide a safe and healthy environment through the management of domestic animals.</b>	
	Domestic Animal Complaints	<p>All complaints/requests are logged through the Merit system and assigned to Shire Rangers for action. Shire Rangers respond to approximately 4000 requests per year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog at large</li> <li>• Cat at large</li> <li>• Feral cat nuisance complaints</li> <li>• Stray dog for collection</li> <li>• Dog rush/attack investigation</li> <li>• Nuisance complaints including barking</li> <li>• Excess number of animals on property</li> <li>• Use enforcement and prosecution to achieve positive outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase patrols of leash-free areas, as well as areas where dogs are being walked off-leash in on-leash areas, dogs on beaches.</li> </ul>
	Cat Cages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free loan of cat cages to residents experiencing problems with feral/wandering cats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the option of establishing ongoing contract cat trapping programmes.</li> </ul>
	After hours service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to priority one animal issues 24 hours a day, for example dog attack and emergencies.</li> <li>• Arrange delivery of stray cats to the Community Animal Shelter</li> <li>• Collection of dogs at large (contained) up to 7.30pm during winter and 8.30pm during summer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore an extension of the after hours collection of stray dogs.</li> </ul>

No.	Description of Programme	Programmed Service Objective	New Initiatives
5	<b>Domestic Animal Business</b>	<b>Objective: To ensure that domestic animal businesses comply with the State Government Codes of Practice.</b>	
	Register Domestic Animal Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual registration of 19 domestic animal businesses.</li> <li>• Annual inspection programme to ensure compliance prior to registration being renewed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the possibility of implementing a programme to proactively identify and investigate unregistered domestic animal businesses.</li> <li>• Develop and implement agreements with domestic animal businesses to act as registration agents for registering pets with the Mornington Peninsula Shire.</li> <li>• Implement agreements with pet shops in regard to providing the proposed new pet owner’s kit to people who purchase pets.</li> </ul>

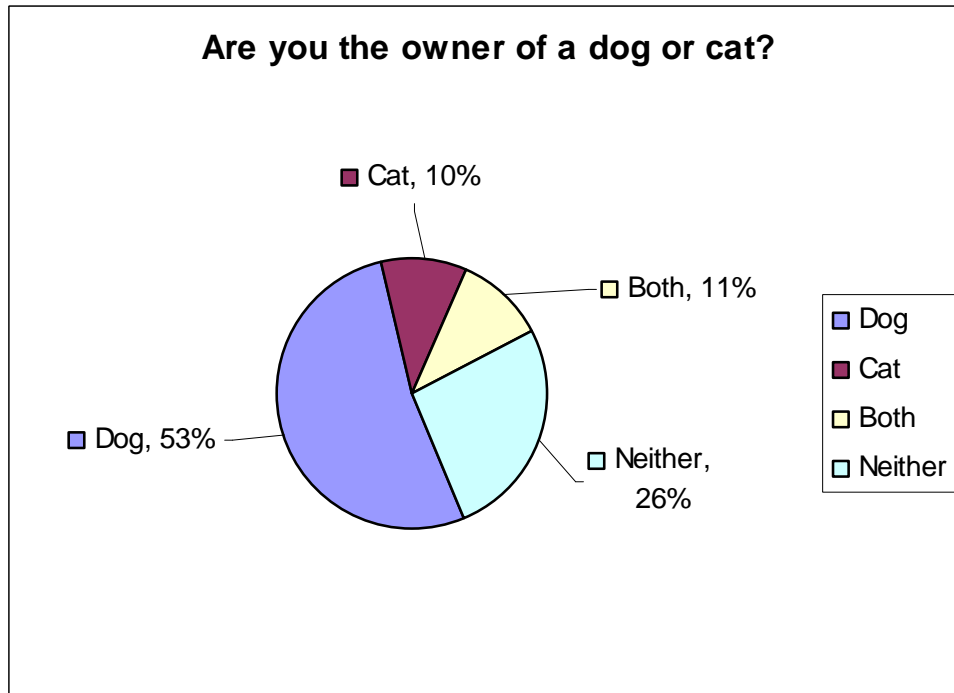
No.	Description of Programme	Programmed Service Objective	New Initiatives
6	Restricted Breed & Dangerous Dogs	<b>Objective: To minimise the risk to our community from declared dangerous, restricted breed and menacing dogs.</b>	
	Restricted Breed Dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to all allegations of the keeping of Restricted Breed dogs.</li> <li>• Annual inspection of properties housing restricted breed dogs.</li> <li>• Maintain Mornington Peninsula Shire data on the Department of Primary Industries register of Restricted Breed Dogs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Government Agencies to administer legislation.</li> <li>• Explore the possibility of introducing a Local Law to restrict cross breed restricted breed dogs.</li> </ul>
	Dangerous Dog Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All complaints are investigated.</li> <li>• A data base is maintained of declared dangerous dogs and properties where these dogs reside are inspected annually.</li> <li>• Maintain Mornington Peninsula Shire data on the Department of Primary Industries register of Restricted Breed Dogs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase proactive inspections of industrial areas to identifying businesses and people using guard dogs that are being kept contrary to the minimum requirements specified in the Regulations of The Act.</li> </ul>
	Declared Dangerous Dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual inspections are conducted to ensure compliance with regulations.</li> <li>• A data base is maintained of declared dangerous dogs and properties where these dogs reside are inspected annually.</li> <li>• Maintain Mornington Peninsula Shire data on the Department of Primary Industries register of Restricted Breed Dogs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Government Agencies to administer legislation.</li> </ul>

No.	Description of Programme	Programmed Service Objective	New Initiatives
7	<b>Community Animal Shelter</b>	<b>Objective: To provide care and accommodation to lost pets, to maximise the number of pets that are reunited with their owners.</b>	
	Community Animal Shelter The animal shelter is open for the release of animals seven days a week	<p>The Community Animal Shelter is open to the community during the following hours - releases are made by appointment.                      Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5pm                      Weekends 10am – 12pm &amp; 1pm – 4pm</p> <p>The shelter impounds stray dogs/cats as well as livestock and houses them in accordance with the Department of Primary Industry Code for Pounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impounding of livestock</li> <li>• Scanning of lost pets</li> <li>• Reuniting/releasing lost pets to owners</li> <li>• Acceptance of surrendered cats and dogs</li> <li>• Arranging de-sexing and micro-chipping of animals prior to release of animal where required.</li> <li>• Rehousing programme</li> <li>• Volunteer programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Peninsula Way Programme Review of Community Animal Shelter services and facilities will be undertaken during 2008/9.</li> </ul> <p>The review will include an examination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Service facilities at the Shelter</li> <li>• capacity of the Shelter to ensure it meets the demand into the future</li> <li>• facilities at the Shelter to ensure best-practice and compliance with the Code of Practice standards for animal welfare and Occupational Health &amp; Safety legislation,</li> <li>• a range of services delivered at the Shelter, including the re-homing of unwanted pets and the volunteer programme.</li> </ul>
	Lost and Found Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a register of lost and found animals which is checked daily and matched against animals in the Community Animal Shelter.</li> <li>• Pictures of the impounded animals are available on the Shire's website.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve on-line services at the Community Animal Shelter</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B – COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

As part of the process to prepare the Shire’s DAM Plan (2008) the Shire consulted with the Community via a Community Survey.

The Shire received a total of 2,129 submissions, which was very pleasing.

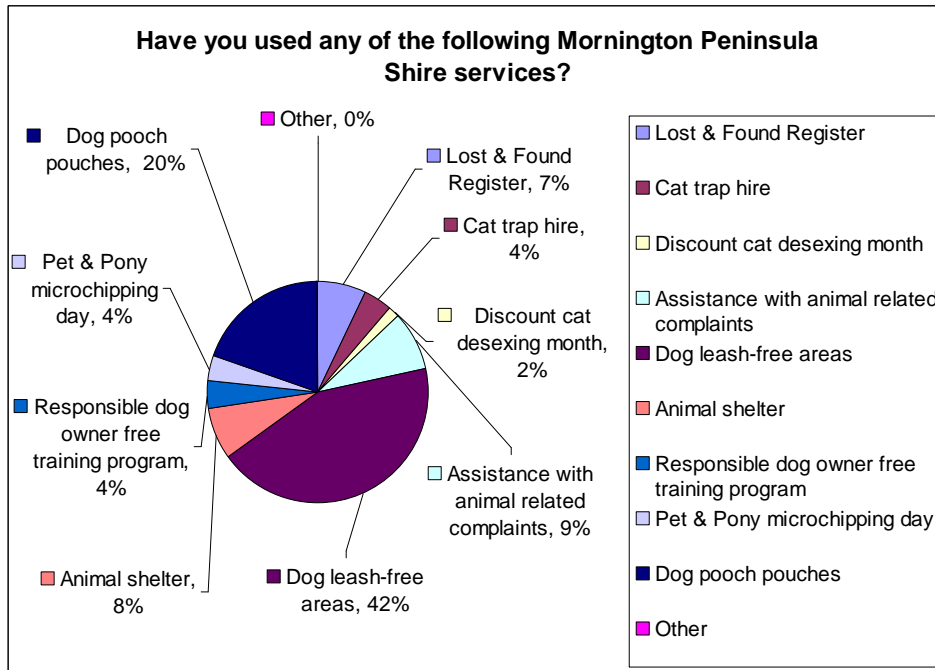


- 865 people owned one pet
- 1012 people owned two pets
- 549 people owned three or more pets

Did you know that dogs and cats in the Mornington Peninsula Shire need to be registered and microchipped by 3 months of age?

- 86% yes, 14% no

### Use of Mornington Peninsula Shire Services

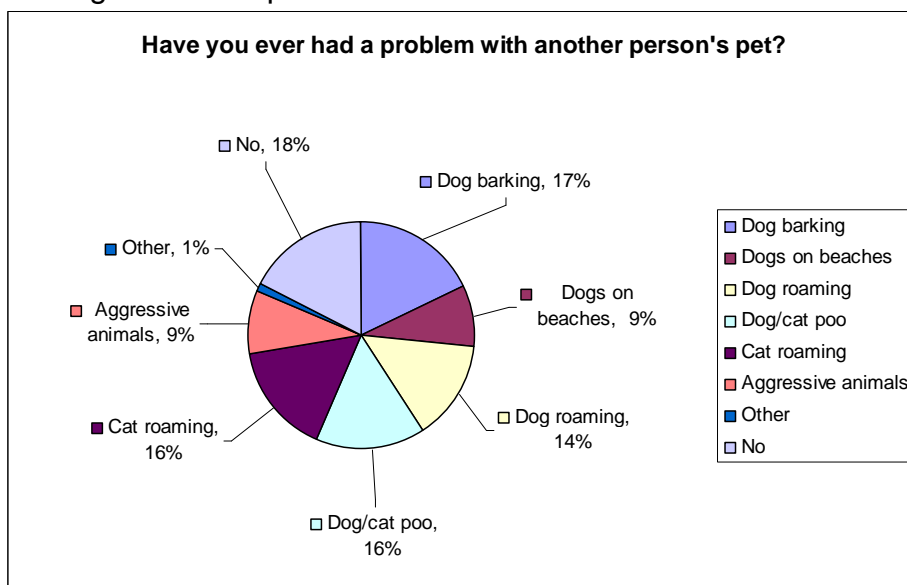


### Enforcement Services

- 3,687 responses were collected from 2,219 survey responses showing that some people had experienced multiple issues.
- Out of the surveyed people, 488 reported the problem to the Shire and 1193 did not report the problem to the Shire.

General comments included responses such as;

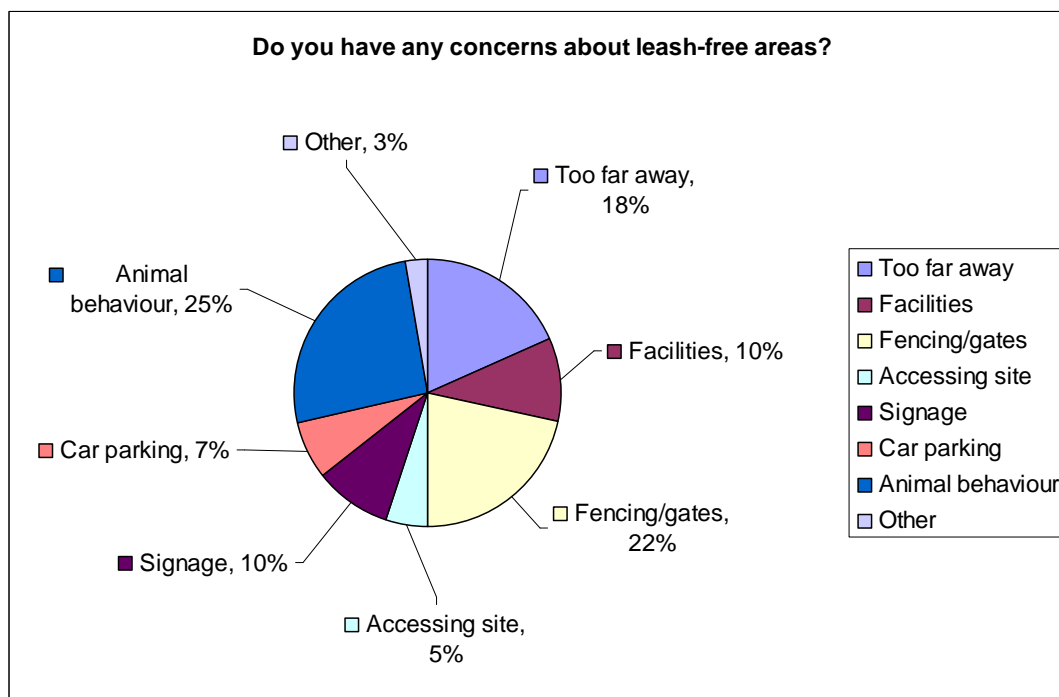
- "Great job!"
- "Problem still occurring",
- "More staffing to enforce dogs on beaches"
- "More thorough/faster response times needed".



## Leash Free Areas

Comments about the leash free areas provided by the Shire included:

- Separation of small versus large dogs within leash-free areas is required
- Public toilets are needed
- Provide poo bags for dog owners to use
- Leash-free areas are valuable for socialising animals
- Problem with unfenced leash-free areas
- Public seating needed.



## Dogs on Beaches

Do you visit the Shire’s beaches?

- 90% yes, 10% no.

Do you take your dog to the beach?

- 52% yes, 48% no.

Are you aware there are times and on-leash/off leash restrictions for dogs on beaches in the Mornington Peninsula Shire?

- 91% yes, 9% no.

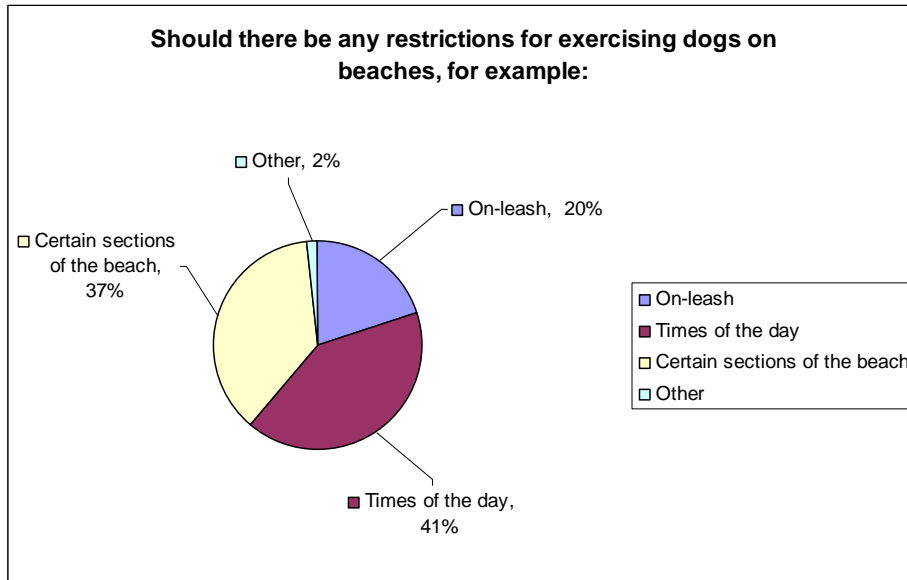
Have you experienced any problems with dogs on beaches?

- 28% yes, 72% no.

Comments about dogs on beaches included:

- 1926 people indicated that they felt people should be allowed to exercise their dogs on beaches if they do so at the right time and correct location.
- 203 people disagreed and commented that dogs should not be allowed on beaches.
- Owners not picking up dog excrement was a problem.
- There should be beaches set aside just for dogs.

- Start with education rather than handing out fines.
- 1035 people felt that the Shire should increase patrols of beaches to enforce restrictions, 1094 people felt that increased patrols were not necessary.
- More enforcement/patrols needed.



### Cats

Did you know that cats in the Mornington Peninsula Shire are required to be confined to their owner’s premises 24 hours a day?

- 84% yes, 16% no.

Have roaming cats ever caused you a nuisance?

- 45% yes, 55% no.

Could the Shire provide more services to cat owners? If yes, what services would you like provided?

- Provide assistance with cat enclosures - both financial and technical advice on how to build.
- Education in relation to the damage cats can cause to fauna.
- Subsidise/finance cat de-sexing for concession card holders.
- Collection of trapped cats from customer's home.

### Animal Shelter

Did you know the Mornington Peninsula Shire has a Community Animal Shelter that cares for people’s lost pets?

- 85% yes, 15% no. 51% of people knew the location of the Shelter.

Have you ever lost your pet?

- 18% yes, 82% no.

Have you ever looked at the Shire’s website to view the photos of lost pets?

- 17% yes, 83% no.

78% of respondents agreed that the Shire should help to find new homes for unclaimed pets.



### **Responsible Pet Ownership**

Are you aware that dog owners must keep their dog on a leash in public, unless in a designated leash-free area?

- 94% yes, 16% no.

Do you think dog owners generally walk their dogs on leads?

- 8% strongly disagree, 78% did not feel strongly about the issue, 24% strongly agree

Are you aware that dog owners are required to pick up and dispose of their pet's poo in public places?

- 99% yes, 1% no.

Are you aware that dog owners are required to ensure their dog is not a nuisance to others?

- 95% yes, 5% no.

Have financial circumstances ever made it difficult for you to care for your pet?

- 9% yes, 91% no.

### **Additional Comments**

- Education and enforcement on poo collection and on/off leash areas needed.
- Community Animal Shelter location in Rosebud required.
- Ban dogs from attending market days and community festivals.
- More leash-free areas required.
- Set up a rotating information booth at various locations to offer advice and assistance to the public, enforce regulations on nuisance animals.
- Enforcement regulations on nuisance animals.
- Assistance with cat enclosures.

## APPENDIX C – EXTERNAL FOCAL GROUP – SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION TOPICS

### Introduction

The Shire consulted with an External Focus Group as part of the consultation process during the preparation of the DAM Plan. The group workshopped seven key issues and below is a summary of their discussion.

#### 1. **Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership**

- Education is important - not just the issuing of penalties.
- First offence for dog related offences, responsible pet ownership course done, located at various locations across the Peninsula.
- Challenges of gaining voluntary compliance, but giving an option instead of infringements should be viewed positively.
- Shire provides a free eight week responsible dog ownership programme, operated by volunteers. Eight weeks includes normal obedience type training. Lectures and advice from vets. Lectures on legislation re: obligations to being a pet owner. Expectation that they do 5-10 minutes homework with their dog. At the end, basic tests are undertaken, and if passed receive a certificate – then eligible for lower registration fee.
- New pet owner pack - similar to educational information where pet control can be followed up, outline of enforcement rules and outcomes, how much are fines, and if the rules aren't complied with what happens then? Educational packages are distributed through schools, vets, etc.
- Encourage de-sexing of animals before they are acquired.

#### 2. **Ensure compliance with the Act and regulations**

- Information available on the Shire's website, community publications, signage, pamphlets, signage, vets, dog clubs etc.
- Shire billboards have been effective.
- It is a cultural thing on the Peninsula for people to walk their dogs off lead. There is a need to educate and engage, not just enforce.
- The Peninsula has a very diverse community. There are different levels of compliance in different areas.
- Feedback is required on how the message can be better delivered to the community.
- Many people walk their dogs off leash before they get to a leash free area – this needs to be addressed. Attitudes need to be changed through a programme of education and penalties.
- Penalties are not always effective as there are a number of people in the community that do not have the capacity to pay a fine.
- Reward people for doing the right thing – not just penalise those doing the wrong thing.

- There are only a small minority of people who do not comply with the regulations, unfortunately that small minority can cause a lot of problems.
- It is important to continue on with prolonged messages and to persist with those messages.
- Beach Patrol Officers distributed 'Poo-ch Pouches, educational leaflets and provided advice. Although there was occasional trouble with non-residents these patrols were generally effective. It was good to see responsible dog owners with bags and pouches. Having a presence on beaches is very good to effect cultural change but is difficult to sustain in the long run (funding and resources).
- Despite having four hours a day of uniformed people patrolling beaches there were still dog attacks.
- More education is required regarding picking up dog poo, not only on beaches but in parks etc.
- Bags need to be provided. The problem with bags is that when the bags run out owners revert back to poor behaviour and blame the Shire rather than considering their own actions.
- More bins would encourage compliance.

### **3. Minimise the risk of dog attacks**

- Lots of exposure to education.
- Pet packs (containing educational material) could be given out to all new pet owners.
- Rules of evidence under the relevant Acts apply when a dog attack is investigated. Some people do not want to provide statements thus impeding the enforcement process. We can only prosecute when evidence is available.
- Dogs declared dangerous by the Shire are inspected annually by Shire Rangers to ensure that they are being housed in accordance with the legislation.
- Confining dogs to their property.
- De-sexing.
- Educating people to be cautious around dogs. Children are often taught but not mums and dads.
- More education on breeds. People often purchase the wrong type of dog for themselves.
- Cat attacks do occur but are uncommon.

### **4. Address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats**

- De-sexing issue.
- Community is not comfortable with euthanising surplus animals.
- Increase the reuniting and rehousing of animals through improved publicity.
- Provide financial assistance to those owners in need to be reunited with their animals.
- Cat owners need to be made more aware of their responsibilities with regard to keeping their cats confined.

- Several prongs are required to a cat management plan. Need to attack from all fronts. Cats are far more likely to roam.
- De-sexing and identification are important strategies.
- Penalties alone won't solve the problem.
- Brochures and information on cat enclosures need to be available.
- The Cat Protection Society promotes the enclosures.
- Disparity between the requirement for animal shelters to de-sex animals but not pet shops. This issue is currently being put to the Minister.

#### **5. Encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats**

- Registration is very important.
- Cat owners don't see a great benefit and don't think they're going to be detected.
- Door knocking to check registrations could be useful in encouraging people to have their animals de-sexed and identified.
- Registration fees could finance a cat education officer.
- Information as to how registration fees are spent should be publicised to encourage compliance.

#### **6. Minimise potential for nuisance**

- Education
- Training

#### **7. Identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs**

- This process is undertaken when a pet is to be registered. A Shire Ranger inspects the animal prior to registration being completed. Numerous restrictions are imposed on that animal owner and they must comply.
- The process may also be undertaken if there has been a dog attack/rush/worry.

## APPENDIX D – COMMUNITY COMMENT FROM PUBLIC DISPLAY OF DRAFT PLAN

Submissions from the community during the public display of the *draft* DAM Plan indicated general support for the DAM Plan, and expressed opinions and expectations in regard to a range of domestic animal issues and Shire services, including the following matters:

- provision of more ‘poo-bins’ at leash-free areas and elsewhere
- provision of more leash-free areas, including beaches
- making more parks and beaches being available as leash-free areas outside the summer tourist season
- provision of better facilities at leash-free areas, such fencing and drinking water
- provision of more community education in regard to a range of responsible pet ownership issues
- establishment of pet information nights to assist people to choose the most appropriate pet for their circumstances (to minimise the risk of people obtaining the ‘wrong’ pet for their lifestyle, and any associated nuisance and safety issues)
- addressing high euthanasia rates for cats impounded by the Shire
- increasing after hours Shire Ranger services so that lost dogs do not have to be kept overnight at private residences where it may not be suitable or convenient to keep a strange dog
- provision of increased enforcement of the cat confinement requirements
- provision of incentives to encourage cat owners to register and de-sex their pets, and to use enclosures for confining cats to properties
- introduce process for new pet owners when registering for first time, to record where they purchased their pet (for follow up by Shire Rangers to address irresponsible back yard breeding and unwanted litters)
- require pet shops to register all cats and dogs that they sell
- increase door-knocks to detect unregistered pet owners, and introduce rewards for registered owners
- provision of more training at Community Animal Shelter for Shire Rangers and Volunteers
- provision of additional accommodation and better standard of accommodation for lost pets being cared for at Community Animal Shelter
- provision of more re-homing services for unclaimed pets at the Community Animal Shelter
- proposed pet information ‘show bags’ to also be available from Community Animal Shelter and from approved breeders of pets
- Volunteers wish to be involved in the review process for the Community Animal Shelter
- provision of increased numbers of Shire Rangers to raise the level of enforcement and improve response times
- provision of encouragement for veterinary clinics to reduce their fees to pet owners for micro-chipping and de-sexing

The Mornington Peninsula Community Dog Club commented on the draft DAM Plan to indicate general support for the Plan and for ‘dog patrols’ on beaches during the summer, and to advise they will be exploring the possibility to expand the free eight week dog training courses, which they conduct in partnership with the Shire, to include the Western Port and Rosebud areas. They also advised they believe dog owners who have been detected infringing against The Act, who are ‘first offenders’, should be given an option to attend one of these free training courses in lieu of paying a fine. This club recommended that more information to be made available by the Shire in regard to assisting people to select the right pet for each individual’s circumstances and lifestyle, and also indicated support for re-homing of unclaimed pets at the Community Animal Shelter in preference to euthanizing them.

The Mt. Martha Probus Club indicated their interest in seeing ‘poo bins’ & ‘poo bags’ being made available at entrances to all public parks, and also expressed their concern about the potential negative effect that the proposed reduction of plastic bags at supermarkets may have on dog owners picking up dog ‘poo’ in future years.