



Domestic Animal Management Plan 2009-2012

Adopted 26 May 2009



Domestic Animal Management Plan

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Council will be able to improve its service to the community ensuring Knox is a more harmonious and safer place to live, work and play.

1.0 Introduction and context of this plan

1.1 Purpose of this Domestic Animal Management Plan

The State Government has amended the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994 to further improve animal management. Councils in Victoria are now required by legislation to prepare and implement a *Domestic Animal Management (DAM) Plan*. The Plan is for a three year period and is to be reviewed annually.

The statutory requirements of the Plan are:

(a) set out a **method for evaluating** whether the **animal control services** provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and

(b) outline **programs for the training of authorised officers** to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and

(c) outline **programs, services and strategies** which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—

(i) to **promote and encourage the responsible ownership** of dogs and cats; and

(ii) to **ensure that people comply** with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and

(iii) to **minimise the risk of attacks by dogs** on people and animals; and

(iv) to **address any over-population and high euthanasia rates** for dogs and cats; and

(v) to **encourage the registration and identification** of dogs and cats; and

(vi) to **minimise the potential for** dogs and cats to create a **nuisance**; and

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(vii) to effectively **identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs** in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and

(d) provide for the **review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws** that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and

(e) provide for the **review of any other matters** related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and

(f) provide for the **periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan (emphasis added)**¹.

By undertaking this Plan, Council will be able to improve its service to the community increasing the likelihood of animals being reunited with their owners and reducing the number of cats and dogs being surrendered or brought in to animal shelters and consequently euthanased.

Another goal of this Plan is to have pet owners accept responsibility for the animals in their care ensuring they are healthy and content. This in turn will promote community harmony.

It is equally important that non pet owners gain an appreciation of the important role domestic animals play within the social fabric of our society. The Plan will also increase the awareness of the Community as to the importance of the role pets have in supporting their owners' physical, social, and psychological health.

¹Section 68A of the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animal Act 1994

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To create an environment where people and pets coexist within the community.

1.2 Statement of purpose

1.2.1 The Knox vision

The Knox City Council Vision:

Knox City Council and the community: a partnership in progress; **creating a safe, healthy and connected community** with high quality services, transport options, facilities and culturally rich experiences; committed to protecting our green, leafy neighbourhoods and natural environment, and enhancing economic sustainability for future generations.

1.2.2 The Knox mission

Council's core purpose is to improve the quality of life of the Knox community. Council realises this mission by:

- Providing leadership in building strong alliances, partnerships and networks with other key stakeholders in the Community.
- Planning for the future growth and sustainability of the City.
- Providing high quality services that respond to an identified need which would otherwise not be accessible to the Community.
- Maintaining City infrastructure and assets on behalf of the Community.
- Ensuring highest standards of corporate governance.
- Making and enforcing local law.
- Providing a voice for the Community and advocating in its best interests.
- Fostering Community cohesion and encouraging active participation in City life.
- Building the ongoing capacity and capability of the Community to manage local issues.
- Building the ongoing capacity and capability of the Organisation.

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1. 2. 3 Core purposes of the animal management service

The core purposes of the Knox City Council's animal management services are:

- To create an environment where **people and pets can peacefully coexist** within the community.
- To **inform and educate** the community about the needs of companion animals and promote responsible pet ownership.
- To **increase the understanding** of normal animal behaviour within the non-pet owner population.
- To ensure that the needs of the wider community are reflected through Council's domestic animal management policies.
- To **enforce animal management legislation**.

1. 3 Process applied in developing this Plan

The Domestic Animal Management Plan is driven by two factors:

- The needs and concerns of the residents of Knox; and
- The statutory requirements for the Plan to address specified matters.

In August 2007 a Project Plan was prepared to guide the development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan.

As a key part of that Plan Council undertook a comprehensive program of community and internal cross-functional consultation – all aimed at establishing the needs and concerns of the residents of Knox in the management of domestic animals.

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The initial consultation program incorporated the following aspects:

- **Community Surveys:** an online survey was conducted through the Council web site and a direct community on-site survey was conducted at the October 2007 Stringybark Festival. Council received 180 responses to its Stringybark Festival survey and 88 to its on-line survey.
- **Focus Groups:** one Group was held especially for Pet Industry representatives (6) and a second was conducted as an open community forum (45).
- **Council Internal Cross-functional Planning Committee:** the Committee was established to assist in the development of this Plan and incorporated delegates from Local Laws, Governance, a Community Engagement Advocate, Strategic Planning, Bushland Conservation, Place Management, Parks, People and Culture and Community Wellbeing. This provided a solid base of whole-of-Council input with expertise shared by delegates on the impact pets had to their respective functions.

Past papers and studies on animal management were also reviewed for relevant material.

A SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis was developed from the consultative processes together with the outcomes of the Focus Groups and the findings of the preliminary research.

Knox City Council Environment Advisory Committee operates to inform and advise Council on environmental and sustainability related issues and Council's role in improving the environment in Knox. Input was sought from this Committee to obtain a response to the findings from the preliminary research and for input on any other issues of particular interest to the committee.

A draft Plan was presented to Council on 14 October 2008 which was adopted in principle and referred off for further community consultation. Consultation undertaken on the draft Plan included:

- **Focus Groups:** An open community form was held inviting direct feedback from the community on the recommendations in the draft Plan (23) attendees.

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- Submissions: Submissions were sought from the community utilising the following options:
 - Copy of the draft Plan was placed on Council's website inviting submissions;
 - Advertisements were placed in Knox Horizons from mid October through to late January inviting submissions; and
 - A Local Laws tent was set up at the Stringybark Festival providing an opportunity for people to see the draft Plan at which time written submissions were also invited.

Smaller properties and properties with multi-unit developments will mean smaller areas in which to confine pets and will therefore impact on pet selection and exercising options.

1.4 The Knox City Council – demographic and municipal profile

The City of Knox is located approximately 25kms from the Melbourne GPO. Knox is one of the most populous municipalities in Victoria with almost 154,000 residents living in eleven localities, covering the suburbs of Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Boronia, The Basin, Rowville, Wantirna, Wantirna South, Lysterfield, Knoxfield, Scoresby and Bayswater.

Knox residents are proud of their city's leafy green image. They are protective of the nearby Foothills and other special places of biological significance.

Knox residents are truly diverse coming from over 130 different countries and speaking 54 languages. One in four residents identify themselves as being born overseas.

The Knox municipal district is moving from one of urban expansion to one of consolidation. In residential areas, with Knox's strong land use planning framework, this consolidation will be reflected in the balanced growth of medium to higher density, particularly in proximity to commercial activity centres.

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The total population is projected to grow to 162,000 by the year 2031². It is estimated that Knox will need to accommodate an additional 8,000 persons and 12,000 households by 2031³.

Demographic trends indicate smaller household sizes which are expected to decrease from the existing 2.8 persons per household to an average of approximately 2.4 persons by 2031. This will occur through a net increase in *Lone Person Households* and a decrease in *Family Households*.⁴ **The increase in Lone Person Households may reflect in an increased demand for animals for companionship.** This is consistent with the projection that the 60-69 age group will almost double and 70-79 and 80+ age groups triple by 2031. **There is a correspondingly projected fall in the 0-9 age group in Knox by over a quarter (28%) by 2031⁵ which may result in a reduction in demand for dogs and cats as children's pets.**

There will also be pressure on existing non-residential land uses, particularly within commercial activity centres. As land available for development becomes scarcer, urban renewal will occur. The increased density of population will impact on Council's management of both the demand for open space and supporting infrastructure. **Smaller properties and multi-unit developments will mean smaller areas in which to confine pets and will therefore impact on pet selection and exercising options. Pressure on off-lead areas for dogs will follow.**

The proportion of families purchasing homes in Knox is substantially higher than the metropolitan average.

Consequently, the high level of home ownership in Knox has meant that there are only 14% of dwellings available for renting (12% private and 2% in government rental properties), much lower than the metropolitan average of 20%⁶. **This will have implications for the permanency of residents and hence improved likelihood of achieving better levels of animal registration.** Anecdotally, Council's Animal Management staff have reported that a disproportional number of problem animals are associated with rental accommodation. Therefore, Knox's prospects for coping with animal management problems associated with rental accommodation are greater than for many other Councils.

One of the implications of the changing demographics is the importance of the requisite annual review of this Plan.

² Department of Sustainability and Environment: *Victoria in the Future 2004*

³ Eastern Regional Housing Working Group - *DSE demographic data projections 2005*

⁴ Local Government Area Profile: Knox, April 2008

⁵ Knox Supplementary Social Profile, 2005

⁶ Knox Housing Statement June 2005

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1.5 Domestic animal statistics and data

The following table sets out key statistics for animal management relating to the City of Knox with comparative figures for like Councils.

TABLE 1: KEY DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS

	Knox Council (#1)	Like Councils (#2) (Ave.)
Population	152,388	136,930
No. of residential assessments	52,810	51,963
Area (sq km)	114	90 (#3)
No. of EFT authorised officers (animal control)	2.5	3.1
Hours training per officer annually	30	67
No. of registered dogs	17,582	14,692
Estimated dog population	29,047 (#4)	28,608 (#5)
No. of registered cats	5,721	6,154
Estimated cat population	18,483 (#4)	18,187 (#5)
No. of registered declared dogs	21	18
No. of animal prosecutions completed	19 (#6)	69
No. of successful animal prosecutions	18 (#6)	69

Notes on Table 1:

#1 Statistics for the 12 month period ending 31st December 2007.

#2 Like Councils assessed in this analysis are: Monash, Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Maroondah, Manningham and Yarra Ranges.

#3 The area of the Shire of Yarra Ranges has been omitted from the 'Like Councils' Area, as its 2,500 sq km area distorts a meaningful comparison.

#4 These figures are based on estimates developed by BIS Shrapnel Pty Limited for a report in September 2006 on the 'Contribution of the Pet Care Industry to the Australian Economy' prepared for the Australian Companion Animal Council Incorporated, a non-profit organization described as a peak body representing pet ownership and the pet industry in Australia. The survey is based on research by TNS Social Research.

The proportion of households which own cats and dogs are estimated at:

Dogs 38.5% of household have one or more dogs

Cats 25% of household have one or more cats

The number of pets per pet-owning household is estimated at:

Dogs 1.43 dogs per dog owning household

Cats 1.40 cats per cat owning households

Applied to the City of Knox these statistics mean that there are 20,332 households with one or more dogs and a total of 29,047 dogs and 13,202 households with one or more cats, a total of 18,483 cats.

#5 These figures have been standardised using the same ratios (in #4) as were applied to the Knox figures.

#6 A number of Councils prosecute animal infringements directly to open court rather than through the infringements court as is done by Knox.

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The following table sets out the details of numbers of animals impounded and the outcomes of those impoundments.

TABLE 2: IMPOUNDED ANIMAL STATISTICS

	2005	2006	2007	Like Councils (Ave.)*
No. of dogs impounded:	690	775	738	685
Percentage of dogs returned to owner	72%	76%	77%	78%
Percentage of dogs sent to Shelter #	24%	19%	9%	
Percentage of dogs rehoused #			6%	8%
Percentage of dogs euthanased #	2%	3%	8%	14%
No. of cats impounded:	172	213	323	400
Percentage of cats returned to owner	12%	12%	10%	9%
Percentage of cats sent to Shelter #	70%	68%	18%	
Percentage of cats rehoused #			23%	21%
Percentage of cats euthanased #	18%	19%	48%	70%

*Like Councils assessed in this analysis are: Monash, Greater Dandenong, Frankston, Maroondah, Manningham and Yarra Ranges.

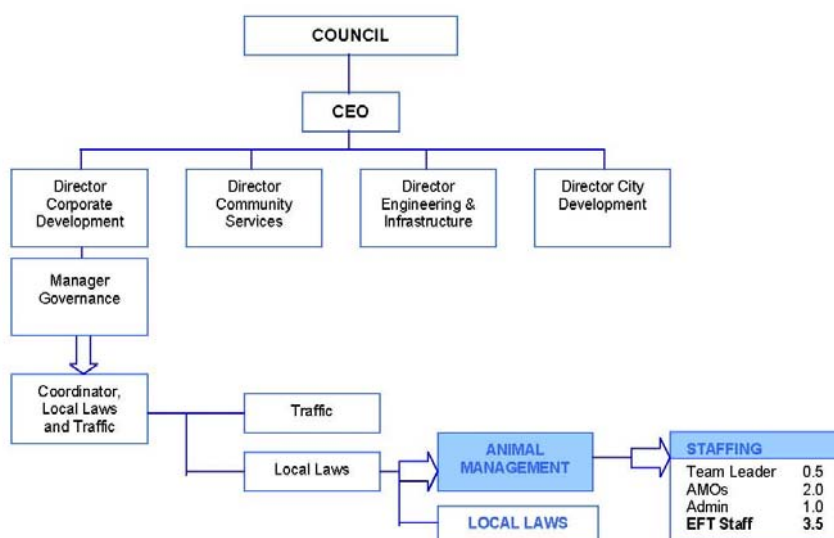
During 2005, 2006 and part of 2007 Knox City Council utilised the services of a pound that rehoused animals through several shelters.

Statistics are not available as to the destiny of those animals once they left the pound. In July 2007, Council commenced directly using a pound service provider that incorporated a shelter. Therefore the statistics listed as "Percentage of dogs/cats rehoused" reflect the known outcome of animals impounded and not collected by their owners after that date.

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1.6 Domestic animal statistics and data

Animal Management functions at the City of Knox are conducted by the Local Laws Unit within the Local Laws and Traffic Department. This Department has responsibility for a series of Council community education and compliance functions. The organisational relationship is depicted below:



1.7 Current programs and services – service levels

Council's Animal Management service deals with a broad range of issues associated with the management of domestic animals in our community. The services, service levels and volumes are:

Program/Service	Service Level and Volumes (2006/07)
Dog attack investigations	Commenced within 30 minutes – all days 174 per annum
Dog 'rush' investigations	Commenced within 1 hour – all days 127 per annum
Investigation of dangerous/aggressive dogs at large complaints	Commenced within 30 minutes – all days
Inspection of non-compliance/complaints of declared dogs	Commence within 30 minutes on business days
Barking dog investigations	Commenced within 2 business days 299 per annum

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Investigation of domestic animal (unregistered and unsecured) complaints	Commenced within 2 business days 2,436 per annum during business hours 550 per annum after hours
Dogs in public places	12 on lead parks, all other off lead
Registration of dogs and cats	Annual renewal process conducted annually from February through to May 17,582 Dogs 5,721 Cats
Microchipping	Monthly April '06 – Dec '07 Jan '08 onwards through RSPCA 7days/week 771 per annum
Declared dog property inspections	Conducted annually 21 per annum
Routine street patrols	During business hours whilst undertaking CRS investigations
Domestic animal business inspections	Conducted annually 19 per annum
Multiple animal permits on issue	88 permits
Identification via door knock campaign, of unregistered dogs and cats	Every three years (last undertaken in 2003)
Pound – hours open	54 hours per week, over seven (7) days
Impounded animal photographed	On Council web within 2 business days
Microchipping program for dogs	4 partnership programs conducted per year
Eastern Regional Pet Expo	Annually
Community education (media items)	4 responsible pet ownership items per year
School information sessions (responsible pet ownership)	State Government's Responsible Pet Ownership Program – Animal Management Officers attend when available (no schedule)
Responsible Pet Ownership Competition	Monthly
Educational material – brochures, posters, website	Revised annually
Cat trapping program (hire of cages)	27 cages available for hire by the public 352 hire events per year

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2.0 Key issues identified in Knox

2.1 Introduction

The incidence of pet ownership in Australia is one of the highest in the world, with an estimated 63% of households owning some kind of pet. There are over 38 million pets of various species throughout Australia. The current estimate of cat and dog populations is 2.43 and 3.75 million respectively⁷.

Each year in Australia tens of thousands of mostly healthy dogs and cats are euthanased (put to sleep) in animal shelters and veterinary clinics because there are simply not enough homes for them. In Victoria alone, 48,000 cats are received by shelters each year, of which 35,000 are destroyed. This figure has remained constant for over 10 years. This occurs despite an apparent progressive decrease in the total population of cats and dogs⁸.

As shown in *TABLE 2: IMPOUNDED ANIMAL STATISTICS* an average of 70% of cats and 14% of dogs impounded in the neighbouring municipalities ('Like Councils') are euthanased. Whilst the corresponding levels for the City of Knox are significantly lower – 48% and 8% respectively - these are still disturbingly high levels.

This Plan is required to address a range of prescribed matters some of which are key issues of particular concern to residents of Knox. These have been identified through the public consultation process.

The key issues identified as concerns within the City of Knox can be summarised as:

- The number of animals which are euthanased, particularly cats, because they -
 - are **unregistered, unidentified or feral** and cannot be reunited with owners, or
 - are **unwanted** by their owners.
- Dog attacks and dog aggression in public places **threatening public safety**.
- Barking and noisy dogs, wandering dogs and dogs exercised in public places – all causing **nuisance in the community**.
- Wandering and feral cats **causing nuisance to residents and a threat to native fauna**.

Often these issues are complex and interdependent. For example, wandering dogs are more likely to be unregistered and cats causing nuisance are often unwanted.

⁷ BIS Shrapnel Report entitled *Contribution of the Pet Care industry to the Australian Economy* 6th Edition 2006.

⁸ *Ibid*

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The following analysis examines the key issues addressed in this Plan.

2.2 Unregistered, unidentified and unwanted animals

National Animal Population: BIS Shrapnel in their study, *Contribution of the Pet Care Industry to the Australian Economy, 2006*, reported that the number of dogs in Australia has been decreasing over the past few years. The study concluded that as population density increases in urban areas, and as is projected in Knox, it is estimated that the percentage of households owning a dog and the incidence of multiple dog ownership will decrease, continuing an overall decline in the dog population⁹.

Similarly, the cat population has been in a state of decline. The number of cats per cat-owning household has declined. In contrast, however, while the population of cats and number of cats per household has been in decline, the percentage of households with cats has been increasing indicating that single cat ownership is increasing¹⁰.

The BIS Shrapnel study found that dog and cat ownership had decreased from 59% of householders in 1994 to 53% in 2006 with 37.3% owning a dog and 25.3% owning a cat. (It should be noted that estimates to 1999 advanced by the Cat Coalition and the Cat Preservation Society maintain that the decline in the numbers of cats has 'plateaued')¹¹.

One of the problems with planning for animal management is the quality of reliable data available about animal population trends¹². (As distinct from the numbers of animal registered which are well known to Council). This lack of authoritative data leads to differing views prevailing and detracts from consensus on the optimum approach to addressing animal management issues.

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ Irrespective of whether the population is declining or has plateaued there is agreement that there is a surplus of animals – particularly cats – leading to very considerable levels of euthanasia.

¹² The last authoritative data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics was produced in 2002-03. Prior to that 'A National People and Pets Survey' was undertaken in 1995 for the Urban Animal Management Coalition (A coalition drawing its representatives from the major institutional interests concerned with the well-being, health and safety of People & Pets-the scientific community, animal welfare agencies, and the pet industry) In 2006 BIS Shrapnel produced "Contribution of the Pet Care Industry to the Australian Economy" for the Australian Companion Animal Council with estimates based on market research by TNS Social Research. No information is available as to how TNS undertook their research.

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Strategy:

Council will advocate to the Department to Primary Industry that it undertake a definitive study to determine the population of domestic animals and the trends and composition for each municipality across the State. (The Department of Primary Industry receives \$1.00 of each registration fee for a cat; and \$2.50 for each dog to fund the promotion of responsible dog and cat ownership and animal welfare; and to fund research into domestic animal management.)

Knox Animal Population: Based on the BIS Shrapnel data the total estimated dog and cat population in the City of Knox is 29,047 dogs and 18,483 cats. Notwithstanding the projected decrease in the population of cats and dogs, the number of animals, particularly cats, which cannot be returned to their owners (or are ownerless) within the City of Knox continues to be a community problem. Of the 323 cats impounded in 2007 some 48% (155) were euthanased. The proportion of the 738 impounded dogs euthanased in 2007 is much less at 8% (59). The higher level of dog registrations at Knox and therefore the ability to reunite dogs with their owners is likely to account for these differences in returned animal rates.

Registration Levels: As the following table shows Knox Council's current estimated proportion of dog registrations is significantly more favourable by 17.7% (9.1 percentage points) than 'Like Councils' in the region.

TABLE 3: PROPORTION OF REGISTERED DOGS

	Knox	Like Councils (Ave)
No. of Registered Dogs	17,582	14,692
Estimated Dog Population	29,047	28,608
% Registered	60.5%	51.4%

In the case of cats the current estimated proportion of registrations in the following table is 8.5% (2.8 percentage points) lower than with 'Like Councils' in the region.

TABLE 4: PROPORTION OF REGISTERED CATS

	Knox	Like Councils (Ave)
No. of Registered Cats	5,721	6,154
Estimated Cat Population	18,483	18,187
% Registered	31%	33.8%

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Impact of Registrations: As can be seen by the following table the rates at which impounded animals are returned to their owners against results for 'Like Councils' is comparable for dogs and better for cats.

TABLE 5: PROPORTION OF IMPOUNDED ANIMALS RETURNED TO OWNERS

	Knox 2007	Like Councils (Ave.)
Percentage of impounded dogs returned to owner	77%	78%
Percentage of impounded cats returned to owner	10%	9%

Evidence shows that owners who register their pets are more likely to act as responsible pet owners. Council favours achieving high level of pet registration (and microchipping and desexing) through education, incentive and encouragement and is proposing a blend of initiatives to achieve improvements in registration levels.

Figures in this report confirm that 81% of registered dogs are desexed and 94% of cats are desexed at the time of registration. As a result of the recent changes in legislation, microchipping for dogs and cats is growing steadily (40% and 29% respectively).

This figure will grow substantially over the coming years as all new dogs and cats registered must now be microchipped.

A survey undertaken at a number of major 'on lead' parks during the consultation phase of the Plan demonstrated that 96% of dogs were registered and around 80% of people walking dogs had them microchipped, wearing tags and carrying doggy bags. Conversely 80% of dogs impounded were not wearing tags.

Strategy:

Council will -

1. Conduct an amnesty for unregistered pets through widespread publicity offering registration without fines or retrospective fees.
2. Advise property owners (where no pets are registered) of the intention to conduct property inspections.
3. Implement a pilot property inspection project of 1,000 properties selected at random from all properties where no animals are registered – levying fines for unregistered animals (currently \$227).
4. Determine the feasibility of using an external service provider to undertake the pilot project on a cost neutral basis.

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5. Analyse the results of the inspections to:
 - determine indicative levels of unregistered pets;
 - assess the feasibility of property inspections; and
 - identify optimum techniques for increasing registration levels.
6. Implement a program of follow up for animals where previous year registrations are not renewed.
7. Implement a process for linking to microchipping databases in order to identify unregistered (but microchipped) animals.

A number of measures have been successful in addressing animal identification and population issues and further measures are widely advocated as additional solutions. **Microchipping** has proved most advantageous in improving the identification of wandering animals. **Desexing** is cited as a major contributing factor to a reduction in the population and **compulsory desexing** is widely advocated as a means of further population reduction.

Registration and Microchipping Requirements: The *Domestic (Feral & Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* requires that all dogs and cats over the age of three months must be registered with the Council in the area where they are normally kept. Legislative changes in May 2007 required that all dogs and cats **when registered with Council for the first time, or transferring to another Council**, must be microchipped prior to the registration being accepted.

Microchipping: As expected the mandatory microchipping by inserting an RFID (**R**adio **F**requency **I**Dentification) tag - electronic tags for storing data beneath the skin of an animal - has had a marked impact on the number of animals being microchipped. Anecdotally, there are indications that Council's investment in community education surrounding this change has been successful in achieving excellent levels of microchipping. In the past, it was rare to have an animal enter the pound system with a microchip. By 2008, microchips appeared in most impounded animals. However, there is a significant incidence where the owner's contact details linked to the microchip are no longer current, with the owners having moved residence without notifying the Council for animal registration purposes.

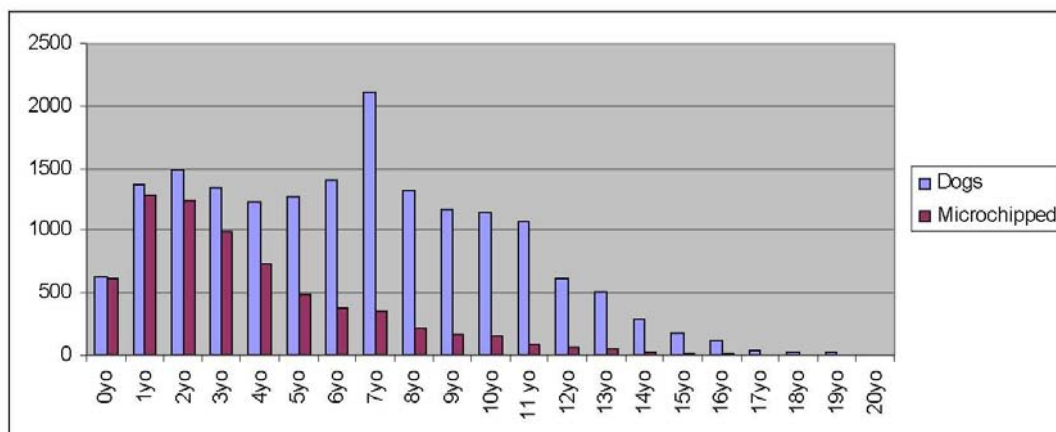
The most important benefit of registration together with microchipping is that lost and stray animals can be identified as owned and reunited with their owners at the earliest possible time reducing stress for both the pet and the family members. The ability to identify dogs when they are first found wandering also impacts the overall cost to the community. If an animal can be returned to their owners directly, without the animal being transported to the RSPCA pound, then the cost saving is significant (\$110 per dog and \$75 per cat).

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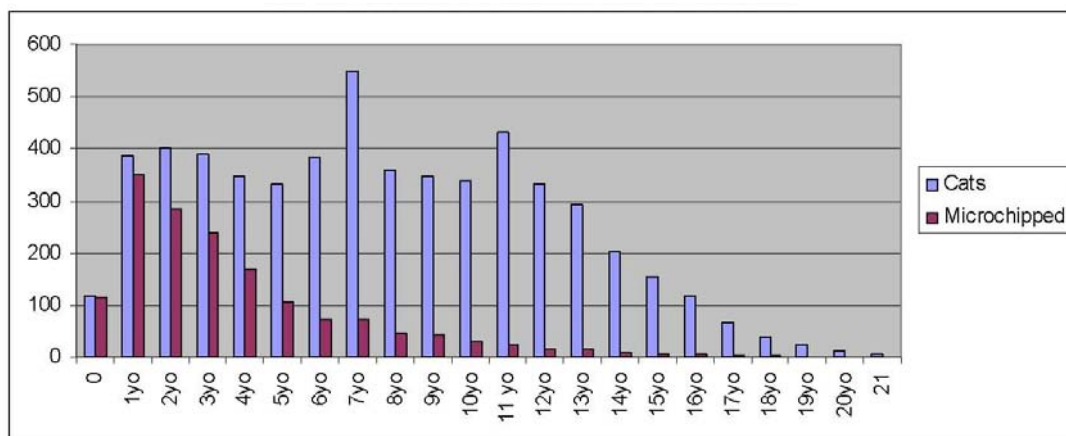
Councils also have the power to require all dogs and cats kept in that municipality to be microchipped at any point irrespective of whether the animal is being registered for the first time. Knox City Council has not yet made this a requirement, based on the research undertaken in preparing this Plan, it is not proposed to introduce compulsory microchipping for all registrations within the first three years of the rolling plan. The legislation also provides Council with the ability to exempt a class of dog or cat from any requirement to be implanted with a microchip for the purposes of the renewal of registration, similarly no exemptions are proposed.

As the following tables show the level of microchipping varies considerably depending on the age of the pet – given that it did not become compulsory for first time registrations until 2007, the level of microchipping in younger pets is remarkably high.

GRAPH 1: DOGS MICROCHIPPED AT LAST REGISTRATION



GRAPH 2: CATS MICROCHIPPED AT LAST REGISTRATION



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Both the community surveys at the 2007 Stringybark Festival and the on-line survey show that the majority of the respondents strongly support the compulsory microchipping of dogs (89.6%) and cats (89.9%). Currently overall 39.8% of dogs and 28.7% cats **registered** with the City of Knox are microchipped, although this proportion increases significantly for younger animals.

As the animal population ages compulsory 'first time' microchipping will see the overall level of microchipped animal rise significantly. This will occur with almost no intervention by Council.

Desexing: The City of Knox recommends to pet owners that their pets be desexed if they are not intended for breeding.

Whilst not without dispute, there is general Industry agreement that desexing will have the following benefits:

Health

- Reduced risk of getting cancer or other diseases of the reproductive organs, such as testicular cancer, prostate cancer/disorders in males, and cystic ovaries, ovarian tumors, acute uterine infections and breast cancer in females, and also other diseases like mammary cancer, perianal tumors and perianal hernias.
- Females can suffer from physical and nutritional exhaustion if continually breeding.
- Pets generally live longer and healthier lives.

Behavioural

- Pets are less prone to wander, fight, and are less likely to get lost or injured.
- Reduces territorial behaviour such as spraying indoors.
- Less likely to suffer from anti-social behaviours. They become more affectionate and become better companions.
- Eliminates "heat" cycles in female cats and their efforts to get outside in search for a mate.

Cost

- Reduces the cost to the community of having to care for unwanted puppies and kittens in pounds and shelters.
- No additional food or vet bills for the offspring.
- No need to find homes for unwanted or unexpected litters of puppies or kittens.
- Save money from expensive surgeries from car accidents or fights, which are less likely to occur if your pet doesn't roam around.

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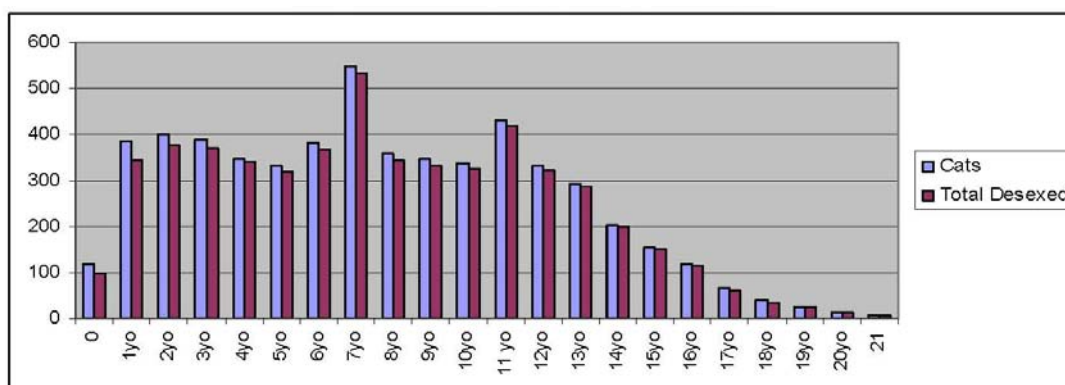
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- Dumping puppies and kittens is an ethical cost, as well as being illegal and inhumane.
- The price of desexing is more affordable to those in financial need with the assistance of organisations such as the National Desexing Network¹³.

One of the initiatives Council is continuing to pursue is to emphasise the benefits of desexing animals, as often the wider advantages to owners and animals are not well recognised.

Cats Desexed in Knox: As the following graph shows, the proportion of **registered** cats that are desexed is considerable.

GRAPH 3: CATS DESEXED AT LAST REGISTRATION



Overall 94.14% of **registered** cats are desexed. A further portion of these animals will be exempt from desexing.

It is significant that only 5.86% of registered cats are capable of breeding. The Cat Coalition have expressed the view that 97% of cats need to be desexed (leaving 3% capable of breeding) for there not to be an excess that is required to be destroyed¹⁴.

The State Government in recognition of the importance of cat population control has introduced legislation that enables Councils to make an Order requiring all dogs and cats in a municipality to be desexed other than those that are exempt.

Council introduced a desexing voucher scheme in 2008 to assist lower income pet owners with the expense of desexing their pet.

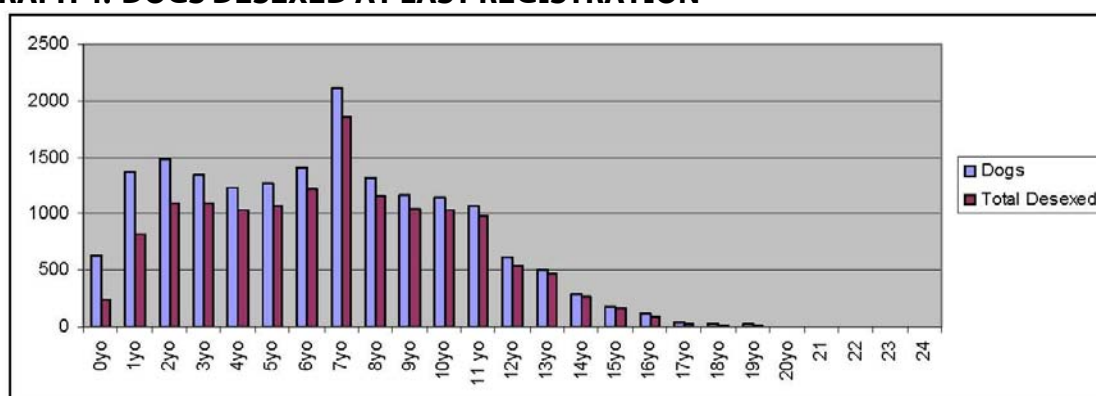
¹³ National Desexing Network, a program of the Animal Welfare League of Queensland Inc.

¹⁴ The Cat Coalition "The Case of Compulsory Desexing: Fact Sheet"

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Dogs Desexed in Knox: The proportion of registered dogs which are desexed whilst not as high as cats is also significant, as the following table shows:

GRAPH 4: DOGS DESEXED AT LAST REGISTRATION



These statistics show that 80.87% of registered dogs are desexed. A further portion of these animals will be exempt from desexing.

However, more research should go into a decision to require the compulsory desexing of dogs – especially as they pose less of a population problem with their population declining faster than for cats.

The Victorian Canine Association Inc. (trading as DOGS Victoria) shares the public's concern about the overpopulation of dogs and the resulting euthanasing of large numbers of dogs. The VCA believes this problem results from inadequate animal control and irresponsible breeding and marketing practices of "commercial" and "unethical" breeders. They support measures to educate people who breed pets and the potential pet buying public about responsible breeding practices and the responsibilities of pet ownership. They endorse strengthened enforcement of the laws governing "commercial" breeders.

Until now microchipping has attracted the same discounted registration fee as desexing. A new fee structure was introduced for the 2009 animal registration renewals with a greater fee differential for those pets that are both desexed and microchipped (\$25 versus \$32). This will reward responsible and caring pet owners. It will also assist in addressing the issue raised in community forums that the high costs for multiple pets is a disincentive to desexing¹⁵.

¹⁵ The cost of animal ownership – including desexing, microchipping and registration (without immunisation) can vary between \$100.00 and \$300.00 per pet. When the \$102 cost of a permit and the cost of mandatory animal accommodation are added for more than two dogs or two cats is included with desexing, microchipping and registration, the cost becomes significant.

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Strategy:

It is proposed that the fee structure be revised again for 2010 with a view to further increasing the differential in fees favouring cats and dogs which are both desexed and microchipped in order to further encourage desexing.

Compulsory Desexing: One of the more contentious proposals in animal management is the compulsory desexing of animals, other than those which are exempt¹⁶. This is despite there being such a relatively high proportion of owners with registered pets who have desexed their animals.

The surveys at both the Stringybark Festival and the on-line survey - show that the majority (73.6%) of the respondents support the compulsory desexing of cats. Both the surveys also show that the majority (56%) of the respondents support the compulsory desexing of dogs – although this is significantly lower than for cats.

Eleven animal welfare organisations have formed the Cat Crisis Coalition to address the issue of compulsory desexing. The Coalition has written to Council along with other key stakeholders to support the introduction of compulsory desexing of cats. Their concern is for the 75% of cats and kittens which enter shelters, are unidentified, cannot be placed in homes and are therefore destroyed.

The RSPCA, Cat Protection Society of Victoria and the Lost Dogs Home also jointly submitted that Councils should introduce mandatory desexing of pet cats at 3 months.

Conversely, whilst the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) supports desexing of companion animals and says that desexing is important in population control and has other benefits for the behaviour and health of animals, the AVA does not support compulsory desexing, and considers that owner education is the most effective approach to encouraging owners to have their pets desexed¹⁷.

It is difficult to justify compulsory desexing until there is a clear picture of the impact on the already declining cat population of voluntary desexing and community education. This position is supported in a paper prepared by the Animal Welfare Science Centre of Monash University, which was titled 'Cat Admissions to Melbourne Shelters'. This is a relatively recent study that was produced for the Bureau of Animal Welfare in December 2006. One of the authors was Linda Marston who is a resident of Knox and has participated in the Knox forums which have helped framed the Plan.

¹⁶ The *Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* specifies a series of exemptions for cats and dogs, including dogs and cats that are used as part of a registered domestic animal breeding establishment, where the owner is a current member of a recognised organisation and the animal is registered with that applicable Organisation i.e. Victorian Canine Association, Feline Control Council (Victoria), a working dog or on medical grounds.

¹⁷ Mandatory Desexing Statement, December 2007

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This very extensive report, based on research undertaken at three major Melbourne animal shelters found that a large majority (78.5%) of cats admitted during the study were stray cats. The report in summary provides that “the most effective strategy for controlling cat over-population, should it exist, will almost certainly depend upon which sub-population of cats is producing the bulk of animals contributing to the problem. Determining this is a logical first step towards finding a suitable solution”.

This is consistent with the strategy proposed by this Knox City Council Domestic Animal Management Plan. The Plan focuses on educating the community, removing/trapping semi-owned and unowned cats and developing a greater level of understanding of the cat population and trends in Knox over the first two years of the plan and then proposes to further consider the introduction of compulsory desexing for cats in the 2011/12 annual registration year.

Strategy:

1. That Council indicates its intention to introduce compulsory desexing of cats from the 2011/12 registration year.
2. That in conjunction with the introduction of compulsory desexing of cats in 2011/12, the registration fee structure be revised to allow for desexing beyond three months but within 12 months without financial penalty to the owner.
3. That the report presented to Council, in conjunction with compulsory desexing in 2011/12, include the outcomes from the public awareness campaign and the property inspections designed to identify unregistered dogs and cats.

2.3 Dog attacks and dog aggression in public places threatening public safety

Of the 3,304 Customer Service Requests received by Council in relation to dogs attended to by Council Animal Management Officers in 2007/08 a total of 174 were related to dog attacks. A further 127 related to dog rushes¹⁸. These are significant levels of undesirable incidents.

Dog attacks and dog aggression in public places represent the highest risk aspect of animal management – both to the Community and to Animal Management Officers who must pursue and resolve these problems.

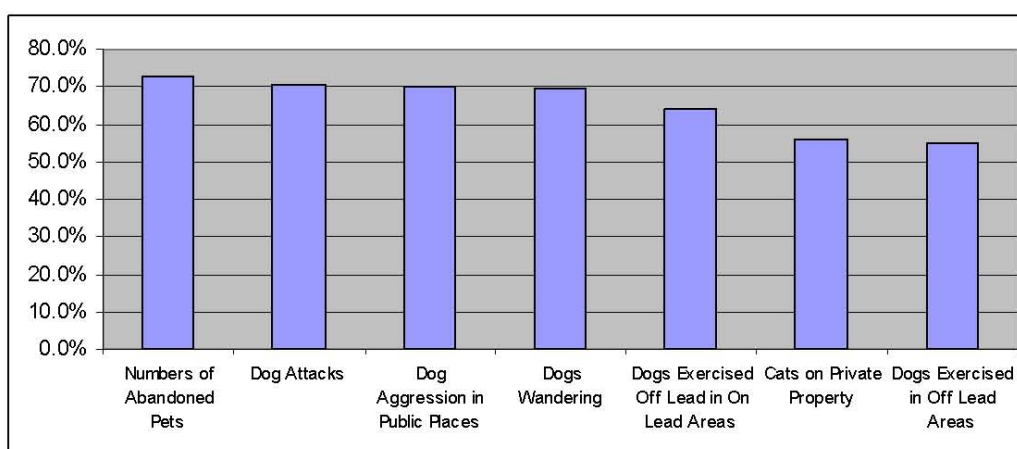
Both the surveys at the Stringybark Festival and the on-line survey - show that the greatest concern of respondents, after the Number of Animals Abandoned, was Dog Attacks and Dog Aggression in Public Places.

¹⁸ 'Rush' means to approach a person to a distance of less than 3 metres in a menacing manner, displaying aggressive tendencies that may include snarling, growling and raised hackles

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The distribution in the following table reflects the strength of the concerns:

GRAPH 5: ISSUES OF CONCERN TO SURVEY RESPONDENTS



It is clear from this research that respondents are concerned about such things as dogs wandering, aggression in public places and dog attacks. Whilst this plan will address these issues through a range of other recommendations it is important to respond to this perception.

Strategy:

Council will actively promote and reinforce the law in regards to on and off lead management of dogs in public places. This will include a program of regular surveillance particularly at on lead parks to ensure compliance with the current provisions. This will also include enforcement where there is found to be non compliance with the relevant provisions.

Knox City Council is well placed to consider the matter of dog attacks with the benefit of comprehensive local research. Between 1997 and 1999 Knox was one of six Victorian metropolitan Councils which took part in a study of dog attacks. That study was undertaken by the Bureau of Animal Welfare, now a branch of the Department of Primary Industry¹⁹.

Further, in 2001 Knox City Council participated in a campaign with eleven other metropolitan Councils to prevent dog attacks in public places. The campaign was also conducted in cooperation with the Bureau of Animal Welfare²⁰.

¹⁹ 'Dog attacks in Public Places: A survey conducted by the Bureau of Animal Welfare 1997-1999'. At this time the Bureau of Animal Welfare was a branch of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

²⁰ 'Prevention of Dog Attacks in Public Places: A strategy undertaken by Knox City Council 2001'. Bureau of Animal Welfare

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The 1997-1999 Dog Attack Study considered 700 incidents over 6 Councils. The Study concluded that the major contributing factor to dog attacks in urban public areas was inadequate confinement of dogs to their properties. Most incidents occurred on the footpath or road bordering the dog owners' property, as a result of dogs displaying territorial aggression towards people passing by or attempting to access the front door. The report further concluded that if owners ensured their dogs were adequately confined to the house or back yards, over 80% of dog attack incidents in public places could be prevented.

The 2001 Prevention of Dog Attacks campaign involved three phases:

Education Stage: There were three months of intensive education activities including:

- Letters and brochures distributed to residents in the targeted areas.
- Dog attack brochures distributed with every infringement notice issued.
- Publication of articles regarding the prevention program in local papers.
- Display of campaign posters in places such as police stations and employment agencies.
- The issuing of wash gift certificates and 'show bags' to responsible dog owners in the target area.

Enforcement Stage:

- Council staff rigorously policed the adequate confinement of dogs through additional patrols – particularly during peak attack times (10am to noon and smaller peaks around 8am and 3pm to 4pm).
- Impounding of dogs at large.
- Issuing of infringement notices to owners.

Post Project Monitoring:

- Staff continued to monitor the frequency of dog attacks.

The number of dog attack incidents in Knox over the 10 month campaign period was 124. 76% of these were attacks and 19% were rushes, involving no physical contact. In the other Municipalities involved in the study there was a surge in reported attacks – attributed to greater awareness from the education phase of the campaign. In Knox no surge occurred and the number of incidents reported remained stable.

The Australian Companion Animal Council (ACAC) believes that the harm caused by dog bites can be minimised, and supports strategies that aim to achieve a measurable reduction in the incidence of dog bites in the home and in public places. Legislation and punitive measures that target dangerous and stray dogs, and place controls on dogs in public areas have proven to be only marginally effective in addressing this problem.

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Dog bites are often a human problem, associated with:

- inappropriate selection of dogs;
- ignorance of dog care and management; and
- inappropriate behaviour around dogs.

Establishing an environment where dogs are carefully selected, properly cared for, socialised and trained, and supervised around children, is more likely reduce the incidence of dog attacks on humans.²¹

(See also earlier proposals for encouraging the desexing of dogs – with benefit of reducing aggressive tendencies.)

There are three classes of dogs which are subject to specific legislative requirements:

Dangerous Dog: Can be two types of dogs:

- A dog declared as dangerous by a Council²² (includes a menacing dog).
- A dog kept as a guard dog for the purpose of guarding non-residential premises; or a dog trained to attack or bite any person or any thing when attached to or worn by a person.

Menacing Dog: Is a dog declared menacing by a council because:

- The dog has rushed at or chased a person; or
- A dog declared a menacing dog under a law of another State.

Restricted Breed Dog: Is a dog of a breed whose importation into Australia is prohibited under the

Customs (Prohibited Imports) Regulations 1956²³.

Dangerous Dogs: There are 21 Registered Declared Dogs registered with Knox City Council. These are comprised of:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| • 'Pet' Dangerous Dogs | 6 |
| • Guard Dogs | 9 |
| • Menacing Dogs | 1 |
| • Restricted Breed Dogs | 5 |

²¹ "Dogs In Society Position Paper: Dog Bite Incidence and Dog Bite Prevention", Australian Companion Animal Council Inc.

²² If the dog has caused serious injury to a person or animal, if the dog is a menacing dog and its owner has received at least 2 infringement notices for failing to comply with restraint requirements, if the dog has been declared dangerous under corresponding legislation in another State/Territory, or for any other reason prescribed. Serious injury to a person is an injury in the nature of broken bones, lacerations requiring multiple sutures or cosmetic surgery or the total or partial loss of sensation or function in a part of the body.

²³ Breeds restricted by legislation are Dogo Argentino, the Japanese Tosa, the Fila Brasileiro, the Perro de Presa Canario (or Presa Canario) and the American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier). Of these, only the American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier) are currently known to exist in Australia

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Menacing Dogs: The owner of a dog declared menacing must, when the dog is outside its resident premises, ensure that the dog is muzzled in a manner which is sufficient to prevent it causing injury by biting and is under the effective control of some person by means of a chain, cord or leash.

Restricted Breeds: Persons applying to register their dog must make a declaration as to whether their dog is a restricted breed. A council authorised officer also has the power to declare the dog a restricted breed. If declared by an authorised officer, the officer must serve written notice of the declaration on the owner within seven days, setting out the legal requirement applying to the keeping of a restricted breed dog and their rights of appeal.

Owners wishing to appeal the officer's declaration must make application to the Minister for Agriculture within 30 days. A review panel of experts in breed identification will be arranged to review the officer's decision.

There is widespread dissent to the notion that restricting particular breeds helps reduce dog attacks. Breed specific legislative measures are not seen to address the multiple causal factors involved in dog attacks. Solutions are available but of necessity, they must involve a multidimensional approach involving dog owners, parents, children, the community at large, local authorities and legislators²⁴.

(See also later comments on the importance of selection of an appropriate breed of dog.)

Animal Management Officers: Dog attacks are potentially one of the most serious matters facing the community and Animal Management Officers. As a result, Council's procedure for dealing with dog attacks is a priority and officers respond immediately to ensure any risk or potential risk to the community is minimised.

Council's present approach to the prevention of dog attacks and aggression is for Animal Management Officers to give priority attention to dogs being contained under effective control at all times by being on a lead or similar when in public places or being confined to their property to minimise risk to the Community.

²⁴ "Does Breed Specific Legislation reduce dog aggression on humans and other animals? A review paper" by Linda Watson

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The main tools available to reduce the risk of dog attacks include:

- Breed choice that is appropriate to the dog owner's lifestyle
- Desexing to reduce aggressive tendencies and wandering at large
- Early socialisation and training of dogs
- Confinement to the home property
- Regular exercise in accordance with Council requirements for dogs in public places
- Environmental enrichment at home to relieve pent up energy

Council already promotes each of these tools through information available in brochures and on its website and at Festivals and various 'Animal Days'.

The State Government provides children with training in bite avoidance through its school visitation program. Council will continue to promote the availability of these programs to local schools.

Council Liability: One of the risks for a Council occurs if it acts responsibly and thoughtfully in declaring a dog dangerous but thereafter does nothing to follow up to see if the rules are being complied with. This failure exposes the Council to risk. A reasonable follow up of compliance is necessary. Expert opinion in this area asserts that Councils must have guidelines in place for the:

- Seizing and declaring of dangerous dog
- Destruction of dogs
- Monitoring of compliance with the legislation by dangerous dog owners

and must effectively comply with these guidelines. Animal Officers must therefore receive initial and ongoing training in relation to the legislation and guidelines.

Further once a first dog attack comes to the notice of the Council then poor administration and poor performance can lead to tragedy and legal liability. Importantly once the Council knows about the first attack it has to consider its response. The Council will be subsequently judged by the response that it makes.

Strategy:

Council will -

1. Continue patrols of all commercial and industrial areas to identify dogs on premises.
2. Review its guidelines for managing dangerous dogs and audit the implementation of the guidelines.

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2.4 Barking and noisy dogs, wandering dogs, dogs exercised off lead in on lead areas and dogs exercised in off lead areas – all causing nuisance in the community

A dog (or cat) will be regarded as a nuisance if it injures or endangers the health of any person or creates noise that unreasonably interferes with the peace, and comfort of its neighbours. Legislation requires owners of dogs and cats to look after them responsibly so they do not become a *nuisance* or danger to others.

The type of behaviour which can cause nuisance includes:

- Barking
- Straying
- Property damage
- Faeces in public areas

Acquiring of New Pets: One issue highlighted throughout the consultation process was that information (on the size, breed, grooming, animal hierarchy, animal care, cost expectations, registration and microchipping requirements) needs to be made available to pet owners at the point that they acquire a pet – or preferably before. Whether it is through pet shops, registered breeders, shelters or an individual who has a dog or cat that has a litter, the objective is to provide this information at the point of acquisition.

The importance of acquiring a suitable pet is illustrated by the fact that due to behavioural problems the average age of dogs in Australia is only 3½ years²⁵. In fact the largest cause of death of puppies less than one year of age is euthanasia due to behaviour problems and is not due to accidents or illness²⁶. The selection of the right pet at the outset can obviate many problems.

Strategy:

Council will seek to develop a partnership with Domestic Animal Businesses in the City of Knox to achieve Council's domestic animal management goals.

Education: Education of new owners in responsible pet ownership is essential to the needs of the pet. With more numbers of properties being developed to accommodate multiple units, backyards are getting smaller and the need for dog owners to be conscious of the needs of their pet is at the fore. Education of owners at the point of acquisition helps ensure that a dog which is trained, exercised, socialised, mentally stimulated and content will seldom become a nuisance barker.

²⁵ In Knox the average age of registered cats is 8.22 years and registered dogs is 6.92 years – probably indicative of a healthy and more cared for population of animals.

²⁶ 'How to prevent dog bites - the Canine Good Citizen', by Dr Kersti Seksel

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It is important to include non pet owners in education programs, as often they are unaware of normal pet behaviour and of pet owners' rights. It is vital that they are included as a stakeholder in the animal management process. By educating the whole community, the social capital of pets can be appreciated, tolerances may be lifted and a greater understanding of the benefits to the whole community may be achieved.

Animal Training: Owners are encouraged to ensure that their dog is trained and has the chance to meet other dogs and other people from the time it is young. The age between 6 - 12 weeks is ideal when events, situations and experiences have the most impact on a dog. Socialising and introducing positive experiences will assist in raising a happy and content dog that can be taken to public places.

Strategy:

Council will develop a free training program with local training establishments for dog owners in Knox.

The Bureau of Animal Welfare is launching a new program aimed at new parents. Studies conducted at the Monash University Animal Welfare Research Centre have found that 21% of cats are surrendered to shelters due to a new baby in the home. The program will focus on the integration of a new family member with the pet, and hopefully reduce the numbers of animals entering the shelter system when they have no behavioural or temperamental issues. Council will work closely with the Bureau of Animal Welfare in the promotion of this program through antenatal facilities and doctors in Knox.

Exercising Dogs: The exercising of pet is seen as critical to the health of the animal. The Knox Open Space Plan 2004-2014 specifically deals with dogs and says:

Many metropolitan councils have introduced regulations to provide for on- and off-leash areas, and to make owners responsible for collecting dog droppings. The City of Knox needs to consider public safety, and the environmental and social issues associated with dogs. Monitoring of impacts is desirable followed by the development of policies on restraint and dropping disposal. Community consultation and education will be important elements of any new policies and regulations²⁷.

²⁷ Knox Open Space Plan 2004-2014

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A variety of approaches are taken by Councils in allowing access for animals to exercise in public areas. Some 9 bushland reserves²⁸ are designated on-lead parks, as are public places such as footpaths, bike tracks, walking tracks, shopping centres and car parks.

Dogs may be exercised "off lead" provided they remain under effective control in other public parks.

An issue raised by a member of the Knox Environmental Advisory Committee is that of waste collection at off-lead dog areas. Pet waste appears to be not only an environmental issue but a social problem within Knox. Provision of pet waste bins, together with disposal bags, should be considered. A pilot installation of bags and bins should be trialled.

An evaluation of other options is also important as the cost of multiple bins on multiple reserves and the servicing of those bin is likely to be very considerable. Other options which should be evaluated include collar and lead pouches, signage, education and enforcement, dog toilets and dung beetles.

Of 187 individuals and groups surveyed using Council parks (between April and July 2006) 91% favoured a legal requirement of owners to remove pet waste and 83% favoured a legal requirement for pet owners to carry bags and scoops.

Strategy:

Council will -

1. Undertake a pilot installation at both Kings Park and Knox Park of pet waste bins, together with disposal bags.
2. Evaluate the feasibility of other options for managing dogs faeces in public areas.

Many people in our community experience difficulty managing their pets without some outside assistance. In this regard Council will promote the Pet Companion Program.

Strategy:

Council will promote the work of volunteer groups within Knox who assist frail older pet owners and people with a disability in the community with pet care. Flyers will be distributed via Council aged services unit and through stands in shopping centres.

28 Conservation bushland areas include:

- Egan Lee Reserve
- Flamingo Road Reserve
- Gilmore Park Retarding Basin
- J W Manson Reserve
- Koolunga Native Reserve (except the lawn areas)
- Lakewood Reserve
- Wicks Reserve (east and west)
- W G Morris Reserve
- Tim Neville Arboretum

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Barking Dogs: Of the 3,304 Customer Service Requests in relation to dogs attended to by Council Animal Management Officers in 2007/08 a total of 299 were to relation to barking dogs. As portion of these requests involves long periods of investigation and mediation they pose a significant challenge in animal management within the community.

Some of the reasons dogs bark can be:

- Territorial
- Playfulness
- Provoked intentionally or unintentionally by humans, wildlife or other domesticated pets
- Hunger or thirst
- Boredom
- Neglect
- Sickness or poor diet
- Attention seeking or communication
- Lack of space or exercise
- Separation anxiety

The preferable approach to the problem of dog barking is prevention. There are several ways prevention can be assisted, including:

- Dogs should be engaged in training or puppy school at a young age to prevent them from learning the nuisance barking habit
- Exercise and attention
- Avoiding spoiling
- Provision of a kennel to provide shelter and warmth for a pet
- Provision of a large, raw bone to draw their attention for long period of time
- Moving the pet to the backyard or away from the direct line of vision from people walking past
- Environmental enrichment of the dog
- Mental stimulation

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Notwithstanding all attempts in the first instance at education, mediation, and empathy every complaint has the potential to go to Court and each case must be substantiated with evidence to be present at Court.

The current management practices for resolving barking nuisance complaints are often considered unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

- They are argued on the basis of assumptions rather than objective measurements
- They are subject to the emotive assessment of stressed people and are often quantified only by the person making the complaint eg diaries
- They cause community angst because everyone (including the regulating authority) tends to end up feeling like a loser
- They fail to deliver either equity or transparency of the regulatory process that is involved²⁹

Further, tolerance levels vary between different neighbours.

One of the frustrations in managing the problem of a barking dog is collecting reliable evidence and the analysis of that evidence. The emergence of a bark counting collar and research into barking nuisance may assist in overcoming these issues. The device is collar mounted and when fixed to the dog, rests against the dog's throat and records the sound spike of each bark.

This is clearly an issue of significant frustration with the community having been raised as an important issue at each of the forums and through the submission stage. More efficient accountabilities need to be considered in managing ongoing complaints into the future.

Strategy:

Council will -

1. Monitor the progress of the bark counting collars and of research into barking nuisance.
2. Review Council's General Provisions Local Law to provide where possible for greater accountability for dog owners in regards to barking dog offences.

²⁹ Bark Counter: seeking objectivity in bark nuisance assessment Dr Dick Murray, Veterinarian, Western Suburbs Vet Clinic, & Mr Shane Scriggins, Caloundra City Council

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2.5 Wandering cats causing nuisances to residents and threaten native fauna

Nuisance Issues with Cats: Roaming cats cause disputes and anxiety between neighbours - trespassing on a neighbour's property and causing damage to garden beds by defecating or creating health concerns in children's sandpits; causing undue noise due to fighting with owned or stray cats; calling and crying when seeking a mate; spraying offensively on doors, mats and other areas and by causing dogs to bark.

Wandering cats are also vulnerable to disease and attacks from other cats or dogs. Feline Aids, which is ultimately fatal for a cat, is transmitted from cat to cat through fighting. Motor vehicles are also a major hazard for roaming cats. Cats allowed to roam freely have a greater likelihood of becoming lost, and if not recovered, joining packs of stray cats.

If owned-cats are confined and desexed, there is much less chance of their being involved in fights, being killed on the roads or breeding with the semi owned community.

Semi-owned and un-owned populations are also a serious issue. A campaign called 'Who's for Cats?' has been developed by the Animal Welfare Science Centre, Australian Veterinary Association, Cat Protection Society, Department of Primary Industries, Lort Smith Animal Hospital, Lost Dogs' Home, Monash University, Municipal Association of Victoria, RSPCA and Victorian Animal Aid. The campaign is aimed at people who feed cats that don't belong to them. The campaign aims to educate the community about the impact that feeding stray cats has on the cat over population problem. It encourages the community to accept responsibility for the cat and desex, confine and register it or to contact their local council and have the cat trapped and removed. Council will be promoting this campaign throughout the municipality to reduce the unowned cat population, and the numbers of nuisance complaints received.

In 2007/08, Council had 353 requests for loan of its 12 cages to allow residents to catch roaming cats – a recent increase in the number of cages will improve Council's response to this demand.

Strategy:

Council will promote the 'Who's for Cats?' initiative to discourage residents from feeding cats that don't belong to them – including a link to the 'Who's for Cats' web site and participation in the Knox Festival, Stringybark Festival and Pet Expos.

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Cats and Wildlife: Another of the concerns reflected in public consultation – from the surveys, consultative forums and the input of the Knox Environment Advisory Committee³⁰ - was the matter of the threat to biodiversity from domestic animals (principally cats). There is much research to show that feral and wandering domestic animals have a devastating effect on native wildlife and have been the major cause of the decline in many species. Cats will hunt wildlife whether they are hungry or not and bells (even three) on a cats collar do not stop cats attacking wildlife. They only make a difference in outcomes in one out of three attacks. The Australian Nature Conservation Agency estimates that the average domestic cat kills about 25 native animals a year. This implies about 75 million native animals are destroyed by domestic cats each year³¹.

The matter of the impact of cats on wildlife has been considered in two relevant reports with particular reference to the City of Knox.

- Parks Victoria's Management Plan (May 2005) for the Dandenong Ranges National Park specifically considers the impact of domestic animals in the Park. The City of Knox's eastern boundary shares a border of more than 13.2 kilometres with the National Park. Their Plan reports that:

"Parks Victoria is currently monitoring the prevalence of dogs and cats in the Park. If the results show that domestic pets are still entering in significant numbers, it may be necessary to consider ways to better target education programs in responsible pet ownership and to encourage stronger enforcement of regulations."

- Secondly, there is significant remnant vegetation in the City of Knox – 5% of the total area, with 118 sites of biological significance. The recently updated Sites of Biological Significance in Knox Report prepared for Council by Graeme Lorimer of Biosphere Pty Ltd reports:

"Feral cats pose a serious threat to native animals in Knox. Feral cats kill prey up to their own body size, and their diet in Victoria includes over 18 species of native birds, 24 mammal species, and 3 reptile species. Frogs and numerous invertebrate animals also contribute to a feral cat's diet. Many feral cats carry and transmit infectious diseases such as toxoplasmosis and sarcosporidiosis (parasitic diseases) that can debilitate and kill native animals, livestock and humans."

³⁰ At its meeting on 19 March 2008 the Environmental Advisory Committee considered the matter of the Domestic Animal Management Plan and provided feedback on:

- Cat curfews
- Restriction of cats to specific sites
- Free registration days
- Appropriate resourcing of enforcement
- The threat to biodiversity from domestic animals

³¹ Australian Nature Conservation Agency (1994) Cats in Australia

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And

"It is not clear whether pets such as cats and dogs may be having a severe impact on fauna in Knox through hunting, spreading disease, disturbing nests, harassing wildlife, and frightening wildlife from their habitat. Indigenous plants may be trampled or dug up by pets, and soil disturbance from scratching provides an ideal seed bed for weeds. Also, nutrients in cat and dog faeces contaminate soil and waterways. Although many cat owners insist that their pet does not wander, studies have shown that domestic cats often travel as far or further than feral cats – up to 11 km in a night. This means that a cat at large anywhere in Knox is within hunting range of a site of biological significance. Even well-fed cats catch 25 creatures per year on average. Cats can also spread toxoplasmosis and other diseases that may be innocuous to cats but fatal to wildlife. Cats are presently regulated under the Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1995 and under Knox's General Provisions Local Law No.2. The latter requires that all pets must be confined to the owner's property and not be allowed to stray or roam."³²

Parks Victoria has responded to an enquiry regarding the status of their monitoring of the prevalence of dogs and cats in the Dandenong Ranges National Park. The Officer managing the Predator Program advises that their main focus is foxes. Over the last four (4) years the Officer had seen a reduction in the number of roaming dogs and cats in the Park.

Further, most studies have concluded that the destruction of habitat is the single greatest threat to native fauna.

In the community survey at the Stringybark Festival respondents were also asked if they believe there is a problem with feral cats in the City of Knox. Of the 185 people who responded to this question, 59 or 32% said there was a problem with feral cats in Knox and 102 or 66% responded that there was not a problem with feral cats in Knox. Given that 32% of respondents believe that feral cats are an issue, the matter warrants further research to establish the extent to which the perception is translating to damage to native fauna.

32 The Knox General Provisions Local Law No 2 was revoked in November 2004. However, the *Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* at section 23 provides that it is an offence for a cat to remain on private property without permission and landowners or occupiers may trap cats (both owned and unowned) found trespassing on their property.

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Strategy:

1. Council will establish a specific purpose working party jointly with representatives of Parks Victoria Dandenong Ranges National Park staff to explore the results of their monitoring of the prevalence of cats and dogs in the Park and to identify options to address any issues identified with the interface between domestic animals in Knox and the National Park.
2. Council will undertake research on the impact of domestic animals on areas of remnant vegetation which will be designed to identify options for Council to minimise adverse impacts.

Confinement Requirements: Probably the single most controversial measure in animal management is the confinement of cats.

The *Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* at section 23 makes it an offence for a cat to remain on private property without permission and landowners or occupiers may trap cats (both owned and un-owned) found trespassing on their property. However, there is no specific legislative provision which confines cats to their owners' properties, although Council has the power (section 26) to make an Order to specify the confinement of cats or a timed curfew.

Confinement of Cats: One of the more contentious issues with the management of the interface between cats and wildlife are proposals for the compulsory confinement of cats. The case for confinement is strong - it would resolve numerous community issues. However, the case against is well supported and highly emotive.

The introduction of night curfews can be difficult to justify as they can raise public expectations for enforcement and will not necessarily obtain the desired result. Effective measures for achieving confinement are problematical, particularly as the cost of enforcement is prohibitive. A night time curfew becomes unenforceable without majority cat owner compliance. Research by the Bureau of Animal Welfare demonstrated that 80% of owners were currently containing their cats at night. Confinement is best achieved with overall population control and a strong education program supported by enforcement.

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In 1991, the then Shire of Sherbrooke was the first Council in Australia to have introduced a local law to control cats³³. An early draft proposed a buffer zone around the National Park and State Forest within the Municipality. That draft was considered too narrow and strategically defective. A working party subsequently proposed a local law which incorporated:

- an animal owners licence system;
- a demerit point system;
- 24 hour confinement of cats; and
- on-the-spot fines³⁴

Sherbrooke Council ultimately adopted a more moderate approach, by including an education and enforcement emphasis extending beyond the initial focus of protecting wildlife in the National Park and State Forest. The education process recognised that there were also significant issues relating to predation in urban bushland areas, significant nuisance factors impacting on residents, a degree of threat to the welfare of owned pets, and the need to encourage the owners of some pets to act more responsibly. This included the welfare of all animals.

An authoritative review of the impact of the Sherbrooke Cat Local Law concluded, in part that:

*Local populations of the superb lyrebird in Sherbrooke Forest declined in population numbers from approximately 120 birds in 1970 to around 60 birds in 1983 and were threatened with local extinction. It has been suggested that cats were responsible for a large proportion of the juvenile mortality. Following introduction of cat control measures by the Sherbrooke Council, lyrebird numbers increased from 75 to 80 birds by 1994, and there was reported to be an increase in survival rates of young birds. Interpretation of these results is complicated by confounding effects such as concurrent fox control programs (1994), and possible habitat disturbance. However, it appears likely that domestic cat predation played a role in the decline of the local lyrebird population, and that domestic cat control measures have, in part, contributed to recovery.*³⁵

However, the Sherbrooke Local Law with its night time curfew took six (6) years of consultation to develop. Following municipal amalgamation the night time curfew was continued by the successor Council – the Shire of Yarra Ranges³⁶.

³⁴ The Sherbrooke Cat Law - does it work? by Garrique Pergl

³⁵ "Managing impacts of domestic cats in peri-urban reserves" by Dr Sally McCarthy, The Australian National University 1995

³⁶ Shire of Yarra Ranges Animal Control Local Law 2007

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The Department of Natural Resources proposes measures such as:

- Building a cattery
- Desexing of cats
- Trapping and euthanising of **feral** cats
- Placing of bells on cats' collars
- Use of harness³⁷

Strategy:

Council will consider:

1. the outcome of the deliberations of the proposed specific purpose working party with representatives of Parks Victoria Dandenong Ranges National Park staff to explore the results of the monitoring of the prevalence of cats and dogs in the Park and to identify options to address any issues identified with interface between domestic animals in Knox and the National Park
2. the outcome of proposed research into the impact of domestic animals on areas of remnant vegetation – particularly in Knox - and to identify options for Council to minimise any adverse impacts
3. purchasing additional cat traps to support the above programs and then determine its position on compulsory confinement of cats after taking into account the effect of these initiatives.

³⁷ The Department of Natural Resources 2002 'Cats and wildlife - how you can protect both'.

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3.0 Strategic directions for domestic animal management

3.1 Values

Taking account of Council's Vision and Mission together with the core purposes of the Knox City Council's animal management services there are a number of **values** which can be identified to support the strategic direction of Council animal management program. These are that Council:

1. Commits to balancing the needs and wishes of pet owners with the amenity of other members of the community and with the environment.
2. Commits to achieving change in animal management policy and practice principally through community education, incentive and encouragement and secondly through regulation and enforcement.
3. Commits to adopting practical approaches in developing solutions to animal management issues.

3.2 Strategies

The strategies proposed for the implementation of this Plan are:

1. Increasing animal registrations and microchipping in order to reduce the level of animal euthanasia.
2. Initiatives to reduce the cat population, euthanasia, nuisance and damage to fauna.
3. Reducing the threat to public safety from dog attacks and dangerous dogs.
4. Minimising any nuisance posed by dogs in the community.

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Further, in order to support the implementation of this Plan two additional initiatives are proposed:

1. Ensuring that Council's Animal Management Officers have sufficient knowledge and skills to allow them to properly perform their functions and to deliver service at best practice standards achieved through the application of continual improvements techniques.
2. Providing mechanisms to evaluate the implementation of this Plan and of Council's ongoing Animal Management programs and services.

3.3 Strategy one:

Increasing animal registrations and microchipping in order to reduce the level of animal euthanasia

Objective:

To achieve at least an 75% level of dog registration and 50% level of cat registrations in the life of this Plan (3 years).

Current/Ongoing Activities: Acceptance

- Issuing annual dog/cat registration renewal notices.
- Issuing of reminder notices for unpaid registrations.
- Placement of advertising and editorial promoting registration and identification in local papers.
- Compulsory microchipping of dogs and cats for first registrations and animal transfers from another Council.
- State Government's Pet Registration Incentive Scheme's package of discounts and service vouchers.
- Annual inspections of all Domestic Animal Businesses.
- Inserts of registration applications and information into New Resident's Kits.
- An extensive web page on Council's website dedicated to animal registration and identification.
- The use of the telephone system 'on-hold messages' to promote registration and microchipping.
- Registration applications and information brochures available at veterinary clinics.
- Conduct of random doorknocks.
- A program of follow-up for new pet owners.
- Discounted microchipping.

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Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- Evaluating the option of free registration of dogs under the age of 3 months for first year of registration.
- Planning and introducing a trial discounted desexing voucher scheme in conjunction with RSPCA.
- Implementing a program of follow up where previous year registrations are not renewed.
- Implementing a process for linking to microchipping databases in order to identify any unregistered (but microchipped) animals.
- Conducting an amnesty for unregistered pets through widespread publicity offering registration without fines or retrospective fees in association with the proposed property inspection and implement conclusions.
- Implementing a pilot property inspection project of 1,000 properties selected at random from all properties where no animals are registered – levying fines for unregistered animals.
- Determining the feasibility of using an external service provider to undertake the pilot project on a cost neutral basis.
- Seeking a partnership with Domestic Animal Businesses to achieve Council's domestic animal management goals.
- Offering workshops to Domestic Animal Businesses in relation to legislation requirements.
- Considering extending agent's agreements with Domestic Animal Businesses to capture point-of-sale registrations and distribute Council information to new pet owners.
- Reviewing the Local Laws webpage content and create a Domestic Animal Business Information page.

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Action Plan:

Actions	When	Resources Required
Continue discounted desexing voucher scheme in conjunction with RSPCA.	Year 1 of Plan	\$3,000 allocated.
Assess advantages of an amnesty associated with proposed property inspection and implement conclusions.	Year 1 of Plan	Self funding – provided for in 08/09 Budget.
Advise all households without registered pets of amnesty followed by proposed property inspection.	Year 1 of Plan	Self funding – provided for in 08/09 Budget.
Undertake a pilot property inspection of unregistered pets.	Year 1 of Plan	Self funding – provided for in 08/09 Budget.
Advise all households within pilot area of proposed property inspection.	Year 1 of Plan	Self funding – provided for in 08/09 Budget.
Implement Pilot project and analyse the results of the inspections to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine indicative level of unregistered pets; assess the economics of property inspections; and identify techniques for increasing registration levels. Implement a program for future property inspections.	Year 1 of Plan	Self funding – provided for in 08/09 Budget.
Prepare a submission to the Department of Primary Industry advocating that they undertake a definitive study to determine the population, registration and microchipping numbers of domestic animals and the trends and composition for each municipality across the State, including owned and semi-owned cats.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Analyse the revenue implications of free registration of desexed and microchipped dogs under the age of 3 months for first year of registration and prepare a report and recommendation on the basis of this analysis, including publicity proposals.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Examine the feasibility and economics of extending agents agreements with Domestic Animal Businesses to capture point-of-sale registrations and provide new pet owners with local information.	Year 2 of Plan	Funding requirements yet to be assessed.
Conduct workshops for proprietors of Domestic Animal Businesses in relation to legislation requirements.	Year 2 of Plan	\$1,000
Examine the feasibility and economics of using real estate agents to promote animal registration with new property tenants.	Year 2 of Plan	\$2,000
Develop public awareness campaign to advise community of Knox's intention to introduce compulsory desexing of cats from the 2011/12 renewal period.	Year 2 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Review cat registration fees for the 2011/12 period to provide for desexing beyond three months without penalty to the cat owner.	Year 2 of Plan	Within existing resources.

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3.4 Strategy two:

Initiatives to reduce the cat population, euthanasia, nuisance and damage to fauna

Objective:

To further reduce the 5.89% proportion of registered cats which are not desexed and maintain lower level of desexing with newly registered cats.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

- Broadly promoting the desexing of cats.
- Education on cat desexing through literature and media.
- Restricting the number of cats permitted on a property without a permit through Local Law.
- Encouraging re-housing and adoption of unwanted dogs/cats.
- Impounding all cats found at large.
- Offering a cat trapping service for the capture and euthanasia of stray and feral cats.
- Introducing a desexing voucher scheme in 2008 to assist lower income pet owners with the expense of desexing their pet.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- Promoting the 'Who's for Cats?' initiative to discourage residents from feeding stray cats – including a link to the 'Who's for Cats' web site and participation in the Knox Festival, Stringybark Festival and Pet Expos.
- Forming a joint specific purpose working party with Parks Victoria Dandenong Ranges National Park management to explore the results of their monitoring of the prevalence of cats and dogs in the Park.
- Making submission to the Department of Primary Industry advocating that they undertake research on the impact of domestic animals on areas of remnant vegetation.
- Increasing publicity of Council facilities for capturing stray and feral cats.
- Investigating the need for cat curfews at night time.

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Action Plan:

Actions	When	Resources Required
Promote the 'Who's for Cats?' initiative to discourage residents from feeding cats that don't belong to them – including a link to the 'Who's for Cats' web site and participation in the Knox Festival, Stringybark Festival and Pet Expo.	Year 2 of Plan	With in existing resources.
Invite the Parks Victoria Dandenong Ranges National Park management to form a joint specific purpose working party to explore the results of their monitoring of the prevalence of cats and dogs in the Park and identify options to address any issues identified with the interface between domestic animals in Knox and the National Park.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Undertake pilot research projects on the impact of domestic animals on areas of remnant vegetation and associated fauna - particularly in Knox - and to identify options for Council to minimise adverse impacts including the possibility of introducing a cat curfew.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Purchase additional cat cages.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.

3.5 Strategy three:

Reducing the threat to public safety from dog attacks and dangerous dogs

Objective:

To minimise the risks of dog attack to the community from dangerous dogs.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

- Initiate immediate court action and dog seizure following a dog attack.
- Investigate dog attacks through to resolution.
- Promote and encourage the reporting of dog attacks whether on private or public property.
- Annual audit for compliance of the premises housings the 21 declared dogs in the City of Knox.
- Record all declared dogs on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.

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Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- Introducing patrols of all commercial and industrial areas to identify dogs on premises.
- Further education for Customer Services staff on Dangerous Dog legislation and requirements to enable them to better inform the community.
- Form a partnership with local Australia Post offices, meter readers, and similar parties to proactively identify potential risk situations where dogs may escape confinement and attack.
- Reviewing the in-house matrix for managing dangerous dogs and policy to ensure best practice.
- Continuing lobbying for improvement to the workability of the Declared Dogs Registry.

Action Plan:

Actions	When	Resources Required
Develop rosters and conduct patrols of all commercial and industrial areas to identify dogs on premises.	Year 1 of Plan	Reallocation of existing resources.
Develop roster and conduct patrols of on lead parks. Roster to include surveillance being undertaken at prime times for dog patrols including weekends, early mornings and evenings.	Year 1 of Plan and ongoing	Reallocation of existing resources.
Define knowledge needs for all Customer Services staff on Dangerous Dog legislation and requirements and deliver through Customer Service officer meetings.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Evaluate forming a partnership with local Australia Post offices, meter readers, and similar parties to proactively identify potential risk situations where dogs may escape confinement and attack.	Year 2 of Plan	Funding requirements yet to be assessed.
Review in-house matrix for managing dangerous dogs and policy in line with legislative changes to ensure best practice and instruct Local Law staff on outcomes.	Year 2 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Lobby the State Government for improvement to the workability of the declared dogs registry.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.

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3.6 Strategy four: Minimising any nuisance posed by dogs in the community

Objective:

To improve the amenity of the City of Knox by encouraging owners to manage pets in a way that protects the welfare of the animal and progressively minimises the nuisance caused by dogs.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

- Reactively investigate Customer Service Requests for animal management nuisance issues.
- Provide an after hours on-call and back-up service for emergency calls.
- Conduct a Media Release Strategy targeting seasonal issues in local papers, incorporating 'snippets' weekly in a Council section.
- Use telephone system 'on-hold messages' for important programs.
- Participate in the annual Eastern Regional Pet Expo.
- Conduct a stand at the Knox Festival, Stringybark Festival, Million Paws Walk (RSPCA) and All Creatures Open Day (RSPCA).
- Participate in the State Government's Responsible Pet Ownership Program to local pre and primary schools.
- Conducting an annual Responsible Pet Ownership Competition.
- Making available published information on Council's website.
- Extending the Knox Lost Animals page on the website.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- Developing partnership with Pound Contractor (RSPCA) to promote Responsible Pet Ownership through its existing education programs.
- Developing pages for the website to educate children on Responsible Pet Ownership with interactive information and/or provide link on Council website to "fun stuff for kids" on the www.pets.info.vic.gov.au web site and/or conduct a workshop with a group of children to identify best optimum approach to reaching them.
- Developing a free training program with local training establishments for dog owners in Knox.
- Increasing participation and/or sponsorship in the Eastern Regional Pet Expo.

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- Conducting information displays in shopping centres around the municipality.
- Promoting the work of volunteer groups within Knox who assist frail older pet owners and people with a disability in the community with pet care. Flyers will be distributed via Council aged services unit and through stands in shopping centres.
- Undertaking a pilot installation of pet waste bins, together with disposal bags, at the Tim Neville Arboretum.
- Identifying and evaluating options for the control of dog faeces including collar and lead pouches, signage, education and enforcement, dog toilets and dung beetles.
- Promoting the Australian Institute of Animal Management Inc. initiative “Dogs 101” aimed at better managing nuisance dogs.
- Monitoring the progress of the bark counting collar and research into barking nuisance.
- Developing bark counting collar as part of Knox Barking Dog procedure.
- Investigating the options of installing fenced off-leash areas in parks.
- Further developing the Knox Responsible Pet Ownership Pack.
- Continuing promotion of State Government initiatives and opportunities.
- Reviewing the current General Provisions Local Law No 1 to ensure alignment with this Plan and with focus on controlling backyard breeders.

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Action Plan:

Actions	When	Resources Required
Develop partnership with the RSPCA Victoria to promote their education programs offered on pet selection and animal behaviour to further educate the community.	Year 1 of Plan	\$2,000
Conduct an annual Responsible Pet Owner competition.	Year 1 of Plan	\$2,000
Develop pages (or links) for the website to educate children on Responsible Pet Ownership.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Examine options for conducting free training program with local training establishments for dog owners in Knox.	Year 3 of Plan	Funding requirements yet to be addressed.
Identify potential participants/ sponsors and seek their participation and/or sponsorship in the Eastern Regional Pet Expo.	Year 1 of Plan	Potential to generate increased income.
Plan and conduct information displays in shopping centres around the municipality, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source display structure. • Book Bureau of Animal Welfare resources. • Develop program incorporating all shopping precincts. • Promote initiative. 	Year 2 of Plan	\$10,000
Assist in the education of responsible pet ownership of the elderly by visiting retirement villages and shopping centres.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Undertake a pilot installation of pet waste bins, together with disposal bags, at Kings Park and Knox Park.	Year 2 of Plan	\$10,000
Identify and evaluate options for the control of dog faeces including collar and lead pouches, signage, education and enforcement, dog toilets and dung beetles.	Year 2 of Plan	\$2,000
Promote the Australian Institute of Animal Management Inc initiative "Dogs 101" aimed at better managing nuisance dogs.	Year 2 of Plan	NIL
Monitor the progress of the bark counting collar and research into barking nuisance.	Year 2 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Review the current General Provisions Local Law to ensure alignment with this Plan in regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permitted animal numbers • Conditions of permits for keeping of cats ie size of property/flat/unit/block. • Penalties. 	Year 2 or 3 of Plan	\$1,000
Investigate the options of installing fenced off leash areas in parks.	Year 3 of Plan	Funding requirements yet to be addressed. Potentially \$20K to \$30K.

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3.7 Strategy five:

Ensuring the Council's Animal Management Officers have sufficient knowledge and skills to allow them to properly perform their functions

Objective:

To ensure that all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work and to deliver service at best practice standards achieved through the application of continual improvements techniques.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

- Seek Certificate IV (Animal Control and Regulation) or Certificate IV (Statutory Compliance) level training for staff.
- Attendance of Animal Management Officers (AMO) at Bureau of Animal Welfare training.

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- Achieve Certificate IV (Animal Control and Regulation) or Certificate IV (Statutory Compliance) level training for all staff.
- Achieve Microchip Implanters qualifications.
- Skill Animal Management Officers in animal behaviour – identifying risk behaviours and managing barking dogs.
- Skill Animal Management Officers in mediation.
- Attendance by staff and involvement in industry committees.
- Conduct Customer Service training.

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Action Plan:

Actions	When	Resources Required
Define the knowledge and skill set required for each role in animal management.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Complete skill audits for each animal management officer and produce 'gap' analysis of skills.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Schedule Animal Management Officers for animal management skill training.	Year 1 and 2 of Plan	\$18,000
Prepare application for Bureau of Animal Welfare scholarship (\$1,500).	Year 2 of Plan	(\$7,500)
Source Registered Training Organisation for Microchip Implanters qualifications.	Year 1 of Plan	NIL
Schedule Animal Management Officers for Microchip Implanters training.	Year 2 of Plan	\$2,000
Define the knowledge required by each Customer Service officer on domestic animal administration and deliver through Customer Service officer meetings.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Identify industry committees with relevance for Animal Management Officers attendance and report back.	Year 2 of Plan	\$1,500

3.8 Strategy six:

Monitor Council's performance in implementing the Domestic Animal Management Plan and in ongoing animal management

Objective:

To establish and report against a set of Key Performance Indicators.

Current/Ongoing Activities:

Planned Programs and Initiatives:

- Implementing the adopted Domestic Animal Management Plan.
- Report against the Domestic Animal Management Plan targets and on the ongoing performance of Council's animal management services using adopted Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

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Action Plan:

Actions	When	Resources Required
Assign responsibility for the implementation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Evaluate the set of Key Performance Indicators (below) and adopt a set for reporting purposes.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Review existing measurement systems to ensure capture of all the proposed data to enable reporting against the adopted Key Performance Indicators.	Year 1 of Plan	\$5,000
Commence quarterly reporting against adopted KPI's.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Produce an annual report on the progress in implementing the Animal Management Plan with recommendations for amendments to Council and for inclusion into Council's Annual Report.	Year 1 of Plan	Within existing resources.
Conduct a review of the Domestic Animal Management Plan every three years.	Year 3 of Plan	\$10,000

Key Performance Indicators	Target (Over the Life of the Plan)	Current
1. Dog Registration Rate (% dogs registered/estimated dog population)	75%	17,582 60.5%
2. Cat Registration Rate (% cats registered/estimated cat population)	50%	5,721 31%
3. Enforcement Success Rate (% successful prosecutions/total prosecution)	100%	95%
4. Dog Complaints (number of dog complaints per 1,000 population)	Maintain current levels whilst increasing public awareness	21.7
5. Cat Complaints (number of cat complaints per 1,000 population)	Maintain current levels whilst increasing public awareness	6.3
6. Dog Attacks (number of dog attacks causing injury per 1,000 population)	Maintain current levels whilst increasing public awareness	1.14
7. Dog Rehousing Rate (% total dogs rehoused/total dogs impounded)	Increase by 20%	6%
8. Cat Rehousing Rate (% total cats rehoused/total cats impounded)	Increase by 20%	23%
9. Cat Reclaim Rate (% total cats reclaimed/total cats impounded)	Increase by 20%	10%
10. Cat Euthanasia Rate (% total cats euthanased/total cats impounded)	Decrease by 20%	48%
11. Declared Dog Compliance Rates (number declared/number complaint/number of audits)	100%	100%
12. Domestic Animal Business Compliance Rates (number registered/number compliant/number of audits)	100%	100%

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3.9 Statutory requirements:

The table below lists the Sections of the *Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994* that this Plan is required to cover, and cross references to the strategies set out above.

Requirement of the Act		The Strategy which responds to the Plan requirement					
		3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8
S.68A(2)(a)	Method of monitoring performance and evaluating the effectiveness of services						
S.68A(2)(b)	Training of authorised officers						
S.68A(2)(c)(i)	Promote and encourage responsible pet ownership						
S.68A(2)(c)(ii)	Ensure compliance with Act and regulations						
S.68A(2)(c)(iii)	Minimise risk of dog attacks						
S.68A(2)(c)(iv)	Over-population and high euthanasia rates						
S.68A(2)(c)(v)	Encourage registration and identification of cats and dogs						
S.68A(2)(c)(vi)	Minimise potential for nuisance						
S.68A(2)(c)(vii)	Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs						
S.68A(2)(d)	Review of Orders and Local Laws						
S.68A(2)(e)	Any other matters						
S.68A(2)(f)	Periodic evaluation of programs, services and strategies						
S.68A(3)(a)	Review of Domestic Animal Management Plan						