

# Pawsome Pets Pawsome People



## Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022-2025

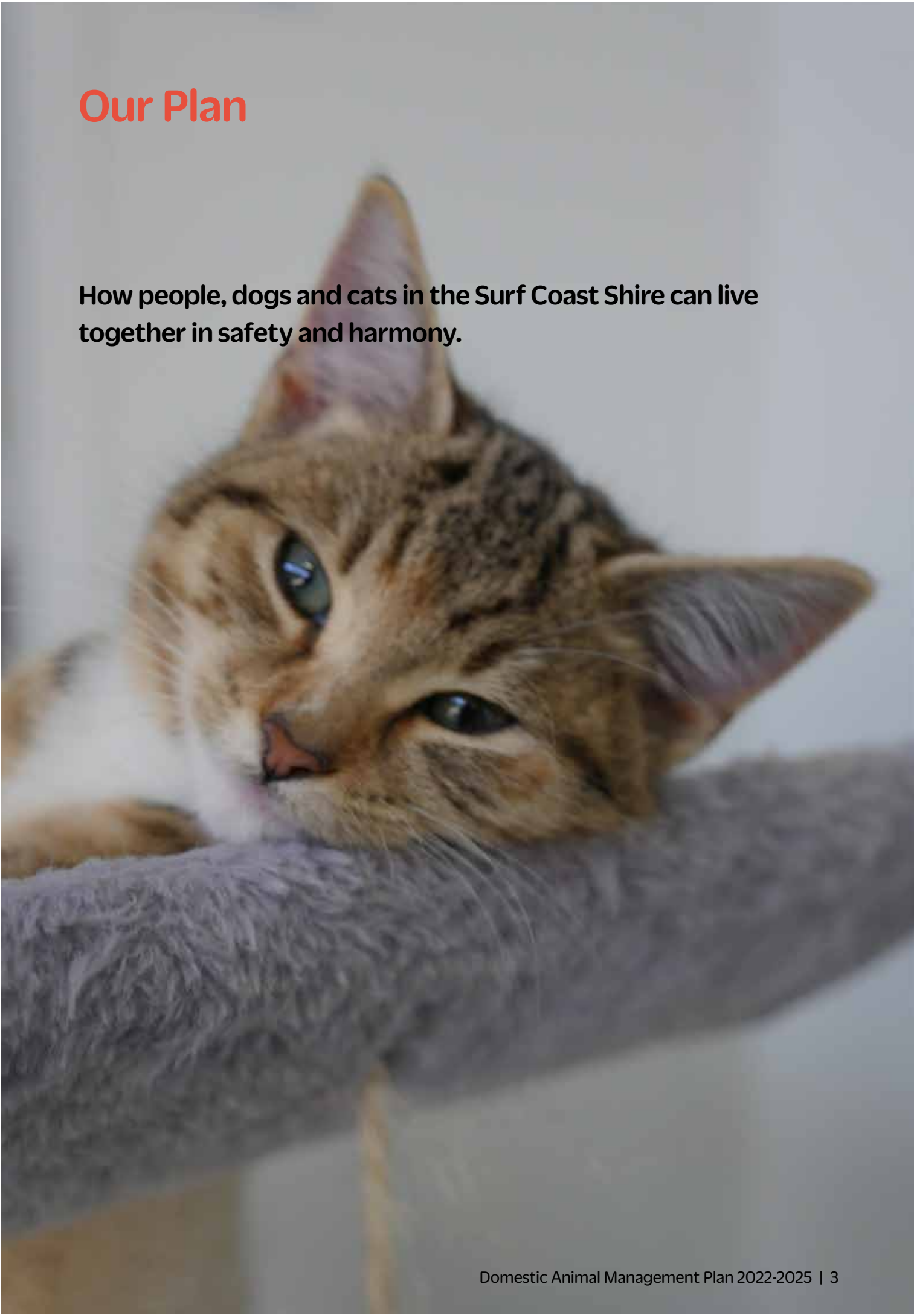


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# Our Plan

**How people, dogs and cats in the Surf Coast Shire can live together in safety and harmony.**





## Purpose statement

Surf Coast Shire recognises that companion animals are part of our community and contribute to the health and wellbeing of many people. The Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) aims to achieve responsible dog and cat ownership through education and community and Council led action plans that allow pets and people to live together in harmony and safety across the Surf Coast Shire. It complies with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (The Act), which requires Victorian Councils to have a current DAMP informing the management of cats and dogs.



# The four “Paw-ticipation” Principles of our Plan

We’ve worked with the community to make sure we all understand what responsible pet ownership means to us all here in our Shire. To achieve this, we are guided by the four “Paw-ticipation” Principles. These four principles apply to residents, visitors and Council. To make sure we achieve these, Council balances the need for both enforcement and community education, aiming for friendly relationships between pet-owners, pets and the rest of the community.



## Responsibility

You are responsible for your pet and its behaviour. So it’s fair that you are penalised for any of their actions that cause harm or concern. In this Shire, we are very serious about the following dangerous or threatening behaviours:

- Dog attacks on people or other animals are not acceptable under any circumstances.
- Cats and dogs threatening or harming birds and wildlife is also unacceptable. Some of the birds and animals living in our coastal and hinterland environments are endangered or fragile, like the hooded plover. It’s up to all of us to look out for them. Keeping our dogs and cats away from them, and their habitats, is essential. There are no exceptions.
- Dogs threatening livestock is not acceptable either. As the Shire includes hinterland and rural properties, livestock are the way some of us make a living and therefore are very valuable.

## Awareness

Not everyone is comfortable around animals and not everyone loves your dog or cat as much as you do. It’s important to be aware of the needs of pet owners and the rest of our community.

- Some people are wary or even scared of dogs and cats. Imagine how they might feel if a dog rushes up and jumps on them or another dog. Even friendly advances can intimidate adults and children who are not used to dogs.
- Menacing dogs on leashes and those who might aggressively defend their territory can also be frightening to some people.
- Some small dogs have had a bad experience with a larger dog, so ask the owner if your dog may approach.
- If you see another dog while walking your dog, it’s good to ask permission for your dog to approach. If the other dog is on the leash, please put your own dog on the leash. The other dog may be in training, or the owner may not have the recall required yet.
- Barking dogs can have a negative impact on people’s well-being. If your dog is a ‘barker’, Council can point you in the right direction to get advice on what might help to stop this. Your dog will be happier, you will be happier and so will your neighbours.
- Cats straying onto other people’s property, marking their territory and doing their business in someone’s garden may not be welcomed. Encourage cats to be kept inside or in cat enclosures. A cat curfew is in place across the municipality from 8pm to 6am daily (except in rural areas).

Some animals (and their owners!) need a bit of training about how to behave and how to be more community-minded. The region is home to many experienced trainers and behaviourists who are available to help train your pet.

You will learn valuable information and be shown practical tips for keeping your dog under control. You’ll meet and socialise with others and develop an even better relationship with your dog ... all great outcomes!

## Stick to the rules

If we respect some simple rules, we can achieve safe and friendly relationships. Your responsibility is to know the rules and stick to them.

Restrictions are only made and enforced when necessary. They can really help us live together and share space with pets in the community. The rules also help us protect our precious natural environment and local wildlife.

- Pick up the poo! Animal waste is a health hazard for you, your pet, the community and the environment. It can be easily avoided with a little thought. When you walk on our walking paths, in our parks and on beaches, take a bag with you, pick up after your dog and put it in the bin. Or if there isn’t a bin please take it home and place in your own bin.
- Off the leash, only in off-leash areas! Off-leash walking areas are provided so your dog can run free and socialise. It’s also an opportunity for you to socialise. But please, only walk your dog off the leash in off-leash areas. Walking your pet in other areas without a leash can cause tension with those who don’t want to walk and socialise with dogs.
- Keep your cat inside or in a cat run so they don’t roam. Be aware of cat curfews.
- De-sex and trap! The stray and feral cat population threatens our endangered and fragile wildlife. You can help manage the cat population by doing a couple of simple things: Desex your own cat. Use the soon-to-be-expanded cat trap service at Council if you are experiencing unwanted visits from cats. These actions help reduce unwanted litters and the cross-over into the feral cat population.

## Balance

Council will do its bit to achieve a balance between enforcement and educating our community on these four “Paw-ticipation Principles”. We are committed to promoting ways to be great animal owners.

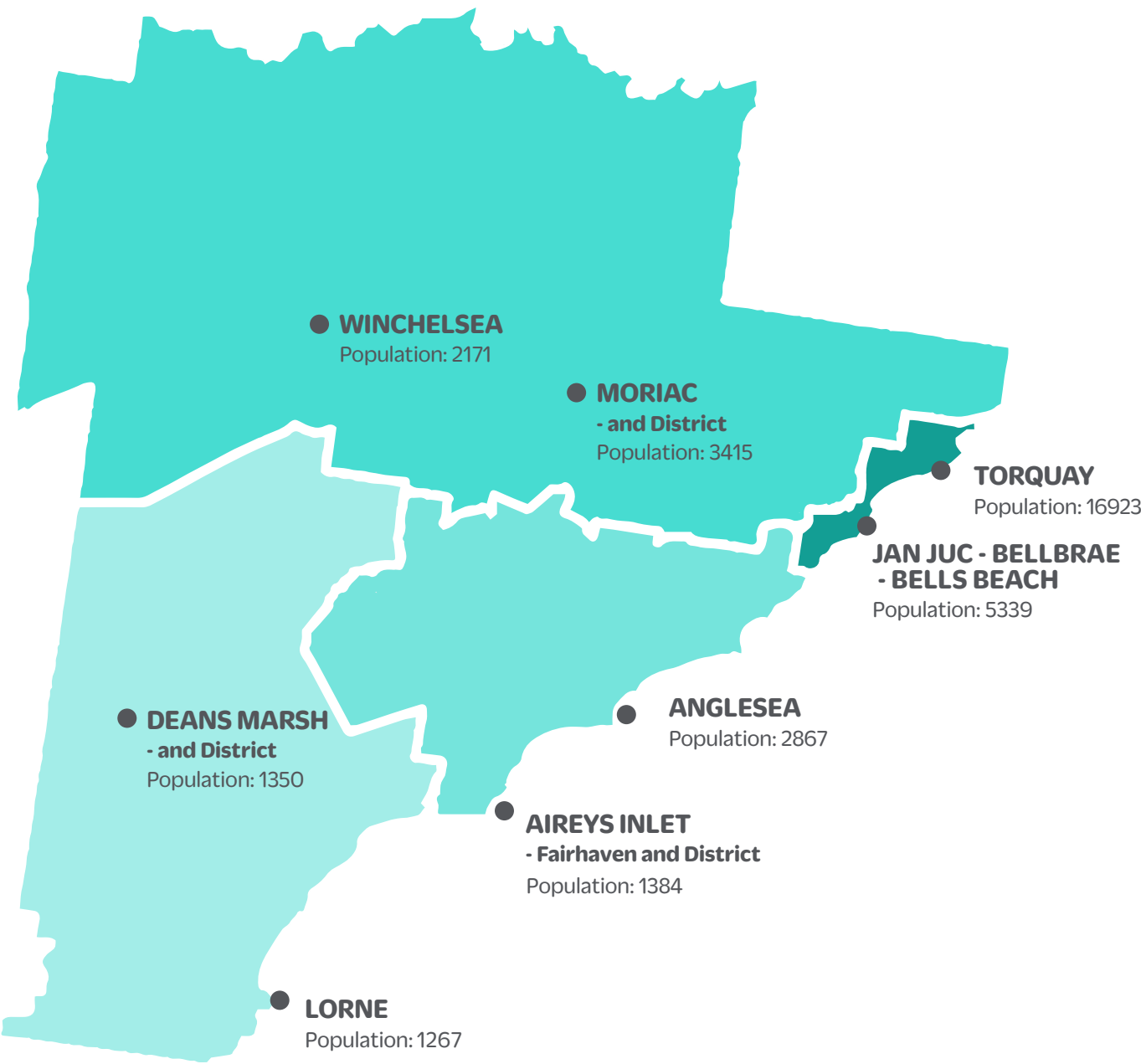
So, to build positive attitudes and outcomes around pets being part of our community, we will:

- Make sure signage around the rules of behaviour is clear.
- Patrol shared spaces to check that people and their pets are following the rules.
- Keep in touch with community input on social media posts about lost pets, dog attacks, etc., when Rangers can’t be there in person.
- Continue to ensure animals are registered and microchipped.
- Continue programs, so our young people learn how to be effective pet owners and influence others in the community to be the same.
- When someone breaks the rules we will provide feedback on the action and why.
- Work with Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) to determine appropriate management arrangements for dogs on beaches and other pieces of GORCAPA land



# Our Shire - demographics and domestic animals

Surf Coast Shire is a fast-growing municipality located in south-west Victoria. It has a relatively low level of unemployment and median weekly incomes are higher than Victoria and Australia as a whole. The principal settlement of Torquay/Jan Juc is 120km from Melbourne and 21km south of Geelong. Other coast settlements include Anglesea, Aireys Inlet and Lorne.



Inland Winchelsea provides a local service centre for the surrounding rural hinterland along with two smaller villages of Moriac and Deans Marsh. The geographical location and connecting road networks make the Shire a popular place to live and visit.

The permanent population has grown 35% over the past ten years and as at 2020 had an estimated population of 30,521 with around 45% of that population living in Torquay and Jan Juc. The Shire remains popular for older people in retirement but also with young families with over 20% of our population being children aged 0-14.

The 2016 census recorded 41.9% of private dwellings are not permanently occupied. These are predominantly holiday homes and over the summer and at weekends the populations of the coastal townships increase significantly. This trend is shifting as more people are calling the Shire their permanent home following improved regional employment opportunities and the increasing ability to be able to work from home. Along with new residents, holidaymakers and day visitors come more companion animals. There are 6,398 dogs and 924 cats registered with Surf Coast Council.

The Shire has a large geographical footprint of 1,560 square kilometres that includes both rural and peri urban settlements. There are over 70 kms of coastline comprising of some of the premier beaches and surf in Victoria, interconnected by coastal walks and bushland. This is unique to us and a challenge to provide the resources required for enforcement and compliance. There are also different animal management issues in the rural and urban areas. Our hinterland areas are being farmed near Geelong, the largest and fastest growing regional centre in Victoria.





# Community engagement summary

Our DAMP recognises the community’s vital role in helping us to develop the plan through the “Pawsome Pets, Pawsome People” community engagement process. The ideas expressed are summarised in this updated DAMP. The community engagement information is a combination of both the 2017-2021 and 2021 – 2025 processes.

## Objectives

The “Pawsome Pets, Pawsome People” community engagement process was created as an opportunity for the community to have their say about the issues that concern them and affect their lifestyle regarding cats and dogs.

It aimed to engage with a wide range of pet owners and non-pet owners, including non-permanent rate payers, across all townships in the Shire and allowed for pet owners to understand the current issues from non-pet owners and vice versa. A survey was developed that included community and Ranger concerns, using a variety of innovative communication channels. Community feedback captured from this process is central to this DAMP.

A summary of the survey from the community engagement activity is attached to this document as an Appendix.

## People involved

- A community survey attracted **734** responses. Survey respondents were:
- **570** Pet Owners & **164** Non pet owners
- **Mostly dog owners**, with 2 dogs in their household
- **513 registered** pet owners **57 non-registered** pet owners
- **Mainly from Torquay ward**, whether non-pet owners or pet owners.

## Key insights

Overall, the majority of residents (70%) are having a positive experience, including 54% of non-pet owners.

## The three biggest concerns to come out of the engagement were:

### Non-pet owners’ issues:

- Dog litter on walking tracks and the beach, poo bags left on beach
- Dog behaviour – barking and recall
- Cats harming wildlife.

### Pet owners have the same concerns in reverse order of priority:

- Cats harming wildlife
- Dog behaviour
- Dog litter.



### Dog Poo

There is ongoing concern about dog litter in public places.

- The community knows it is an environmental hazard.
- Most people carry a poo bag.
- Only 20% of responders think it is ok to leave your poo bag on the beach and collect later.
- There is a strong call for more enforcement.
- The situation on the coast is worse than in the hinterland, although it is a constant issue in both areas.



### Dog behaviour on beaches

The majority of people were happy with their experiences in off-leash areas; however, some had concerns about the general management of dog behaviour in these areas, particularly the lack of voice command recall that owners have over their dogs.

Survey respondents advised of a need for increased education to be promoted for inexperienced dog owners. This issue was highlighted to be especially true in Torquay at Fisherman’s Beach.



### Dog Park Requests

Torquay residents expressed a high need for a dog park with fences, shelter, and separate areas for small dogs and large dogs.



### Cat Curfews

A high number of residents, especially in urban areas, would like cats to stay inside. 55% would like 24-hour curfew in both rural and urban areas, to minimise trespassing by cats and to help protect the native wildlife, especially birds.



### Signage/Timeshare

Most people are happy with the signage wording, however, would like the Torquay signs relocated to more visible areas.



### Ranger presence

We received many comments all the way through the survey requesting more presence from rangers on our beaches and walking paths in areas of peak demand to encourage compliance.



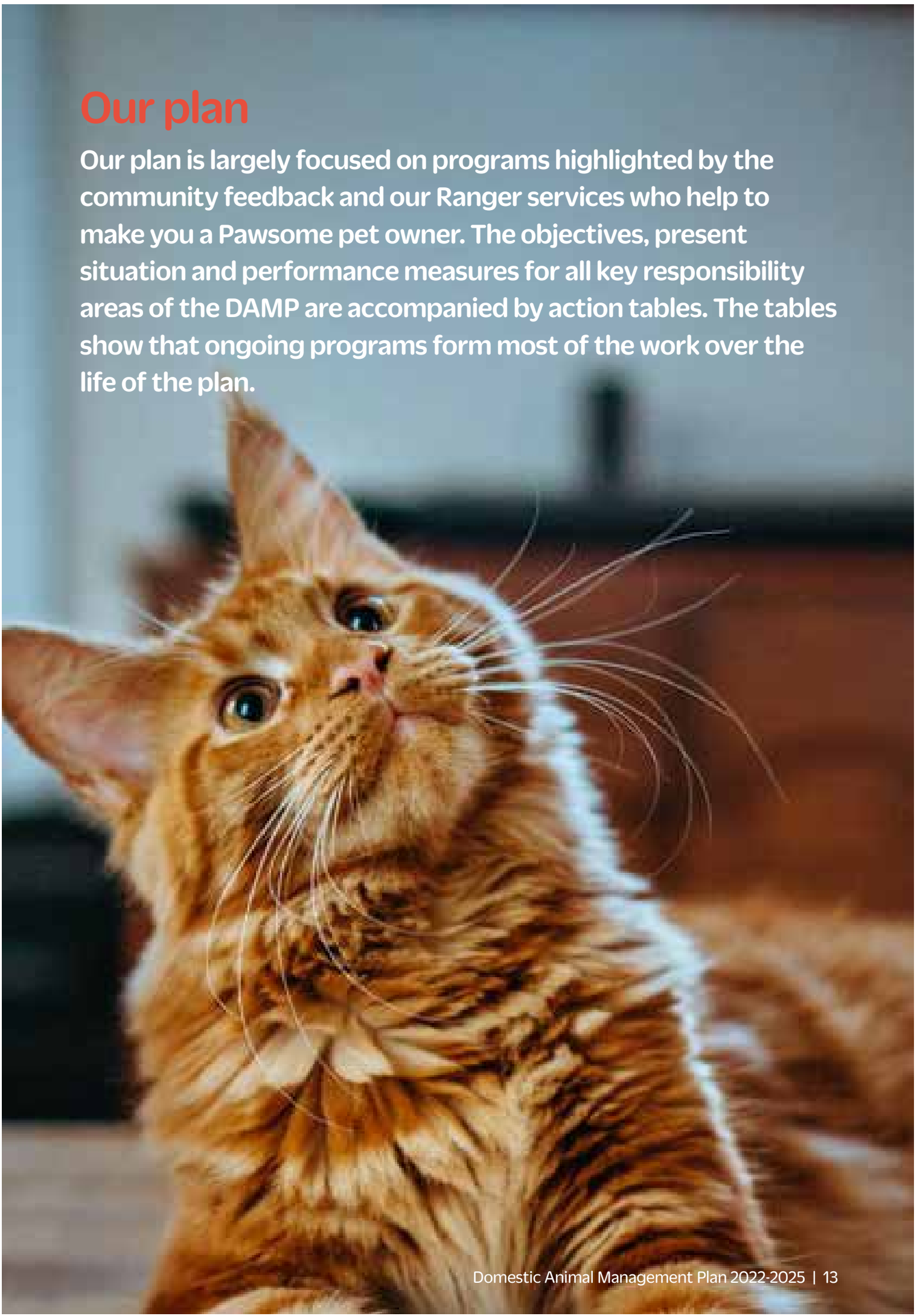
### Considerations

In Torquay areas, tolerance levels are lower, due to COVID pressures and the increased population.

We had 640 animal-related customer requests in the last financial year, which include a variety of matters from lost dogs and cats to registration etc.

Outside of the survey data, we have a low complaint rate for these issues





# Our plan

Our plan is largely focused on programs highlighted by the community feedback and our Ranger services who help to make you a Pawsome pet owner. The objectives, present situation and performance measures for all key responsibility areas of the DAMP are accompanied by action tables. The tables show that ongoing programs form most of the work over the life of the plan.

## Action plan

### What could Council do better?

- More enforcement
- Education
- Better signage
- More communication throughout the year to pet owners and visitors

### What could community do?

- Pick up dog litter
- Follow the rules
- Be mindful of others

## Changes afoot

In addition to community feedback, another key factor that will influence the way Council manages domestic animals in the future is the introduction of the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Amendment Bill 2021. This may change Council's ongoing involvement in the management of dogs and cats on GORCAPA land. One of the important actions proposed is to work actively with GORCAPA on this change as it develops.

For the full survey summary data go [here](#)



# Our people

This section of the plan addresses the requirement of Section 68A (2) (b) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. It deals with Council’s human resourcing for the animal management task, the current skills of the team and planned training.

## Present situation

The Ranger Services team is part of the Environment and Development Division. The Ranger Services team is responsible for domestic animal management, school crossings, local law enforcement, responding to stock on roads and parking control. Enforcement activities often place officers in confronting situations, so ensuring staff safety is a priority, as is ensuring officers are trained in all aspects of the role. Seasonal population fluctuations strain the resources available for all aspects of the Ranger Services team.

Planning for growth in the demand on animal services poses significant challenges. Demand on the service is occurring due to the increasing population of permanent domestic animals on the coast, holiday house owners travelling with pets, and our proximity to Geelong and the Armstrong Creek growth area. The current cost of delivering animal management services is \$569,000 per year.

The recent introduction of the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Amendment Bill 2021 into State Parliament is likely to have impact on how domestic animals are managed on coastal land in the Shire during the term of this DAMP.

The Bill, if adopted, will provide the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) with important powers under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 for land it manages. The Bill will empower GORCAPA to make an order to prohibit dogs and cats from its land or to impose conditions on the presence of dogs or cats on that land, including times they can be present and rules around restraining animals. The Bill also empowers GORCAPA to have its Officers authorised under the Domestic Animals Act and then enforce any orders it has made with respect to its land.

Currently GORCAPA relies on Council to make these orders and to enforce compliance on its land as it is not authorised under the Domestic Animals Act. It should be noted that GORCAPA incur large annual expenses to manage dogs on land it manages including provision of dog waste bags, signage and joint beach patrols with Council’s Rangers. GORCAPA do not receive any revenue from animal registrations or through any infringements issued to animal owners by Rangers on land it manages. Council will work closely with GORCAPA to understand the implications of this new Bill and how this may affect our Ranger services staffing moving forward.

## Staffing

The Ranger Services team is comprised of 13 team members, delivering a range of services and administration: local law enforcement, managing the school crossing supervisor program, parking restrictions, responding to stock on roads and domestic animal management. Rangers are trained to deliver multiple services. As a smaller municipality, the practicalities of dedicating rangers to a single service responsibility has not been possible particularly with large seasonal fluctuations in demand. Resource levels are being constantly reviewed as the Shire continues to grow.

## Training




Surf Coast Shire is committed to ensuring all staff have the necessary training to be able to undertake the tasks associated with the administration and enforcement of the Act. The majority of Rangers are fully trained. A training plan has identified areas for further training, with newer staff being priority.

## Our Objectives

- Provide sufficient resources to effectively deliver the domestic animal management service over the four-year period and respond to the seasonal demands and unique challenges of our coastal areas.
- Ensure employees are fully trained to deliver the service, supported by best practice in procedures and occupational health and safety.
- Establish collaborative working relationships between the Ranger team and the community; roles and responsibilities between the community, Council and other open space managers are made clear.
- Partner with and promote Animal Welfare Victoria to deliver best practice animal management outcomes for the community

## Performance measures

- All individual training plans for Rangers are completed
- All Rangers are fully trained for the requirements of their position
- Positive community engagement about domestic animal management
- Clarity and cooperation between land managers and Council for enforcement in open space areas
- Number of patrols and associated enforcement activity

Actions	2022	2023	2024	2025
Work actively with Great Ocean Roads GORCAPA regarding roles and responsibilities on GORCAPA land following the introduction of the Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Amendment Bill 2021				
Continue to develop and deliver individual training plans for the Rangers				
Rangers to engage with Animal Welfare Victoria delivered training courses				
Participate in State Government programs and initiatives as they arise such as the current review of animal welfare legislation				
Better utilise Animal Welfare Victoria for operational advice to ensure best practice service is provided to community				



# Our processes

This section of the plan addresses the requirement of Section 68A (2) (c) (v) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. It deals with Council’s programs and strategies for the registration and identification of dogs and cats.

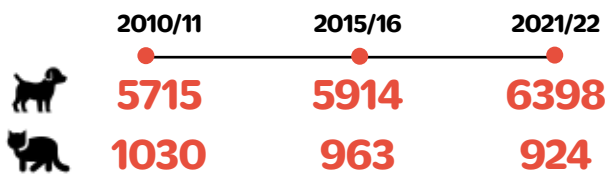
## Present situation

### Registration

In 2021 there were 6,398 dogs and 924 cats registered in the Shire. The following chart shows the number of registered dogs grew by 12% from 2011 to 2021. This reflects the increasing residential growth occurring in Surf Coast. It is expected that the growth will continue. In the same period the number of registered cats decreased by 10%. This may reflect an increase in unregistered cats rather than a reduction in the number of cats in the Shire.

52% of dogs and 52% of cats are located in Torquay and Jan Juc. 72% of dogs and 75% of cats are located in the top five locations.

No. of registered dogs and cats by year



### Identification

100% of dogs and 98% of cats were microchipped in 2021. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of both registered dogs and cats being micro-chipped. This identification strategy has been well accepted by animal owners. Compulsory micro-chipping as a prerequisite to registration has resulted in there being only a small population of animals that are not microchipped.

### Desexing

The percentage of dogs and cats desexed is also high. The percentage of registered dogs desexed is 83% while 100% of registered cats are desexed. Desexed, micro-chipped or pensioner-owned animals are able to be registered for a third of the costs under the Act as a reduced registration.

## Our Objectives

Ensure all cats and dogs over the age of three months residing in the municipality are registered annually with minimal delay and implanted with a microchip. Continue to monitor registration fees to ensure animal owners are making a fair contribution to the costs of running animal management services.

## Performance measures

- Timely conduct of the registration process with a reduction in the percentage of late registrations
- Percentage of registered animals microchipped
- Net cost of the service to Council is not increased

Actions	2022	2023	2024	2025
Strong communications and engagement to promote pet registration in the lead-up to the registration period				
Continue to provide 12 month free registration for adopted animals				
Better publicise discounted desexing program available to concession card holders				
Further promote ability for animal owners to register animals, including renewals, online				



# Nuisance management

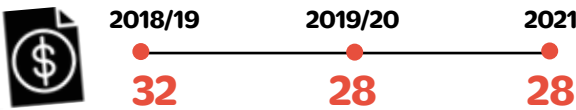
This section of the plan aims to minimise nuisances that may be caused by dogs or cats under Section 68A(2)(c)(vi) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Nuisance behaviours include wandering dogs and cats, threats to wildlife and livestock, barking dogs and unsocial behaviour of dogs including dog litter.

### Present situation

The issues of responsible pet ownership and fair compliance are priority areas for animal owners and the rest of the community. Balancing the needs of responsible dog and cat owners with the wider community, and having effective compliance processes remain key community priorities. The general view is that communication and education strategies are preferable to enforcement, and it is also felt that irresponsible owners are causing a problem for everyone. Council will continue to employ an “educate, enforce” methodology.

#### Total Infringements by year



Enforcement should focus on owners who do not respect the rules. There is a need to clearly state what “responsible pet ownership” means in Surf Coast. The standards need to be unambiguous so enforcement can be fair.

Another issue is the need for a feedback loop about the actions taken to resolve customer requests. People who take the trouble to make a request want to know what action is taken.

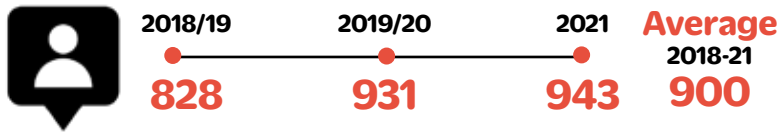
943 customer requests for animal management issues were made in 2020-21. Requests for registration, lost animals and animals at large are the highest request topics. Customer action requests are generally remaining steady. This is an encouraging trend, given the growth in the dog and cat population. It indicates that the level of service provided by Council has been increasing.

#### Customer action requests by year

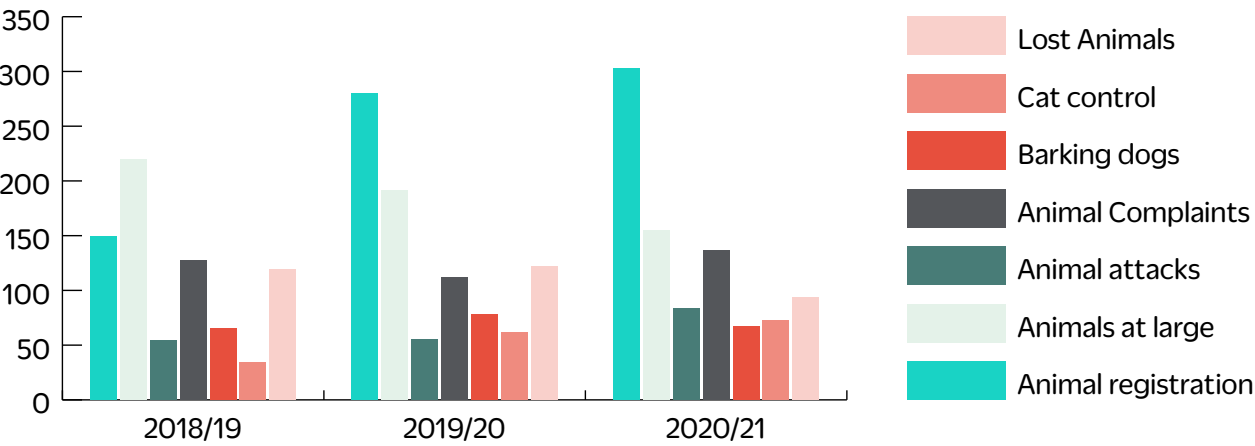
Similarly, the number of days to complete customer requests has reduced, with barking dog complaints taking the longest time to resolve. Over the past four years, Council has improved response times through identification of more effective ways of addressing nuisance issues. Since 2018, there has also been a focus on the timely closing out of customer requests, which is reflected in the reduced times. Equally though, this service area has been the subject of high visibility, regularly featuring in press articles and letters to the editor along with social media interest. The service has been given a priority over other areas, resulting in an improved level of service overall.

Infringements have remained consistent. The use of cautions and warnings for first time offenders has become a standard practice. There is a community desire for more penalties to be applied to those owners not being responsible, however Rangers will continue to provide people with an opportunity to comply with any directions before issuing an infringement.

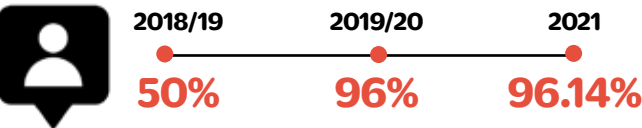
#### Customer action requests:



#### Customer action requests by year



#### Customer Requests complete on time



#### Citronella collars

In line with RSPCA Australia advice, Council is discontinuing the use of citronella collars to manage barking dogs that can be a nuisance in the community.

By identifying the reason for a dog barking excessively, it is possible to manage the problem behaviour. Causes for barking can include loneliness, boredom, fear, anxiety or illness. Dogs may be trying to warn you of something they see as a potential threat (e.g., other people, animals or vehicles moving outside the property), to get some attention (possibly even preferring scolding rather than no attention), or because they are cold, hungry or thirsty.

Some simple ways to solve the problem include:

- giving a dog obedience training
- giving it more attention or some enrichment (such as toys or walks)
- blocking its view of movement outside the property
- allowing it in the house (or an area where it has regular contact with people).





A veterinarian, veterinary behaviourist or qualified dog trainer can assist with identifying the reason, and provide advice or training to reduce or stop the barking behaviour.

A review of infringement numbers highlights that a large portion of infringements issued are for dog at large i.e. dogs that the Rangers collect and care for in the pound before finding owners. These are reducing as the community, though facebook primarily, are reuniting lost dogs with owners without needing Council's involvement. It is also worth highlighting that there is not an increase in infringement numbers compared to reported animal attacks. This is because a large percentage of reported dog attacks (mostly dog rushes and minor altercations between dogs) reported to Council come with no identifiable information i.e. offending owners details etc so there is little Rangers can do to investigate or take enforcement action from these reports.

### Objectives

- Balance the needs of responsible dog and cat owners with those of the community.
- Ensure information on animal nuisances and regulations is available and accessible to the community, including clearly defined enforcement standards with informed and responsible pet owners.
- Establish effective ways to monitor and enforce compliance with regulations and laws that will provide for safe and clean community spaces.

### Performance measures

- Number of community requests for service
- Time taken to resolve service requests
- Community satisfaction with responsible animal ownership
- Evidence of improved owner attitude

Actions	2022	2023	2024	2025
Identify a suitable location for a dog park in Torquay				
Seek funding for a dog park in Torquay at the identified location				
Finalise actions for management of dogs on sports grounds. This will include extensive communication and education and may include bag dispensers and extra bins				
Discontinue use and support of Citronella collars and instead promote positive reinforcement training techniques to reduce barking				
Investigate and make recommendations on the option to extend the current cat curfew				
Double the number of cat cages available and remove hire costs for customers				
Investigate the development of an app, in partnership with other adjoining land managers, to provide better advice about on/off-leash areas for dogs and for pet owner education/information.				
Deliver consistent community education on key topics through a variety of channels (social media, print media, direct emails) – minimum of 8 campaigns per year. May include a quarterly info newsletter to registered owners.				
Partner with GORCAPA to deliver 'pop-up' education booths at known problem locations. Include local service providers including vets, trainers etc.				
Deliver a minimum of 30 hours of proactive patrols per week in peak period, 20 hours in off-peak period. Increase use of beach all-terrain vehicle. Primary aim to engage and educate dog owners regarding responsibilities.				
Investigate option for people to attend training / behavior courses (at owner's cost) in lieu of receiving fines for minor enforcement matters.				
Investigate and seek funding for a scheme to reward pawsome pet owners.				
Investigate partnership opportunities with local dog trainers to provide discounted services, particularly in areas of concern such as recall.				
Partner with GORCAPA and the community to develop alternative, playful signage styles to try and cut through on key messages, particularly around dog poo.				
Continue to deliver a 24/7 on-call service for urgent animal matters				
Continue proactive trapping of cats on Shire managed sites such as landfill sites, parks and reserves				
Advocate to Council's Waste Management team and GORCAPA to include Food Organic Green Organic bins, or similar alternative, at popular dog walking locations for dog owners to dispose of dog poo.				



# Dog attacks and dangerous dogs

This section of the plan aims to minimise the risk of dog attacks throughout Surf Coast Shire under Section 68A(2)(c)(iii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. It also addresses the identification and control of dangerous and menacing dogs and restricted dog breeds under Section 68A(2)(c)(vii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

The notion of attack is not just confined to dangerous and aggressive breeds. Dog attacks include attacks on people, dogs, livestock and other animals. A dog attack includes where a dog may rush or lunge at a person or other animal.

Details of dangerous, menacing and registered breed dogs in the Shire are maintained on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry (VDDR).

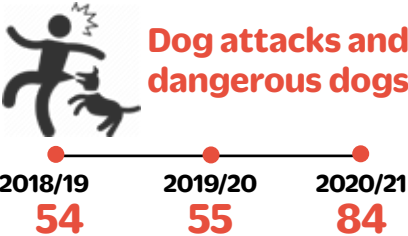
Legislation exists in Victoria restricting the following dog breeds: American Pitbull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier) and Perro de Presa Canario (or Presa Canario), Japanese Tosa, Fila Brasileiro, Dogo Argentino.

If Council declares a dog to be dangerous, it must be appropriately identified and restrained within premises that display compliant warning signs.

### Present situation

As at December 2021, there were no restricted breed or declared menacing dogs within the Shire. There was one dog declared as dangerous which is registered on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.

Over the last four years, there has been a 55.5 % increase in reported dog attacks. The current ratio of dog attacks to registered dogs in the municipality is 1:76.



Reported dog attacks for the period 2015 to 2020 were relatively stable with an average of 54 reported attacks per year. This figure increased significantly during the 20/21 reporting period to 84 reported incidents. These are predominantly reports of dogs attacking other dogs and the majority are minor in nature.

This increase may be due to a greater propensity to report incidents, as well as a higher level of activity in public spaces with dogs during COVID lock downs. This increase will be a focus for Council's communications and education program.

Council encourages the community to report all dog attacks for investigation. Appropriate enforcement action and court outcomes from prosecutions of serious attacks are published to keep the community informed and encourage secure containment of dogs. If an attack is reported, Rangers conduct a full investigation and may prosecute the owner. Dog attacks are treated seriously and are fully investigated when appropriate details can be provided about the offending dog or owner. Communication with the

public is essential to give community members every option to lodge a complaint. Rangers may exercise discretionary power under legislation to euthanise dogs in certain circumstances, impose a Dangerous Dog declaration or a Menacing Dog declaration as an outcome, depending on the severity of the attack and the danger to the community if the dog were returned to its owner.

### Our Objectives

- Progressively lower the current ratio of dog attacks to registered dog numbers in the municipality over the four years of the plan.
- Prompt and thorough response to reported dog attacks
- Provide improved education to assist the aim to have all dogs in public spaces under effective control.
- High community awareness of dog attacks, with all dog owners aware of the consequences of their dog attacking a person or another animal.
- Full regulatory compliance for registered dangerous dogs and restricted breeds.

### Performance measures

- Number of dog attacks
- Number of dog attack complaints
- Time taken to attend dog attacks
- Time taken to resolve dog attacks
- Accuracy of records
- Number of inspections of declared dogs conducted
- Number of prosecutions of owners of dangerous and restricted dogs for non-compliance
- Community perceptions of safety from dog attack

Actions	2022	2023	2024	2025
Specific communications campaigns regarding animal-on-animal attacks – provide education and promotion for training options				
Continue to encourage reporting of dog attacks – promote Council contact channels				
Complete random inspections of declared Dangerous Dog premises to make sure owners are meeting obligations				



# Domestic Animal Businesses

This section of the plan aim to ensure Council is complaint with Section 68A (2)(c)(ii) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) include:

- Breeding and rearing establishments
- Pet shops
- Shelters and pounds
- Boarding establishments
- Dog training operations

### Dog trainers and DAB requirements

The only dog training courses or programs endorsed by the Minister for Agriculture are those linked with the four approved Dog Obedience Training Organisations. They are:

- DOGS Victoria
- Australian Association of Professional Dog Trainers Inc
- The Gentle Dog Trainers Association
- Four Paws K9 Training

A person can operate as a trainer without being affiliated with the above training organisations. They must, however, comply with the Code of Practice for the Operation of Dog Training Establishments. All dog training businesses that operate for profit must register as a domestic animal business with Council and undergo an annual audit.

### Present situation

There are nine registered DABs in the Shire.

They include:

Dog training establishments      3  
Shelters and pounds:              1 dog and 1 cat  
Boarding establishments:          6

There are no council orders in place relating to DABs, so officers rely on the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. Random and scheduled audits are conducted and complaints followed up.

Pre-permit inspections are carried out prior to registration.

### Our Objectives

- Manage all Domestic Animal Businesses in accordance with legislated standards.
- Protect the welfare of animals being traded through domestic animal businesses.

### Performance measures

- Accurate register of domestic animal businesses
- Number of registered domestic animal businesses
- Compliance with regulations
- Protection of animal welfare

### Domestic Animal Businesses

Actions	2022	2023	2024	2025
Develop and promote website guidance for dog owners regarding animal trainers and behaviourists operating in our region				
Educate dog trainers operating in the Shire on registration requirements				
Ensure all dog trainers operating for profit, or other unregistered DABs, are registered as DABs				
Random inspection of dog trainers and establishments to ensure compliance with Animal Welfare Victoria Code of Practice, in addition to prescribed yearly audit.				



# Domestic animal overpopulation and euthanasia

This section of the plan addresses over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats under Section 68A (2)(c)(iv) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. It reinforces the need to have animals registered and identified to avoid impoundment and be returned home, avoiding euthanasia. Trapping wandering domestic cats and stray cats combined with sterilisation reduces the potential for feral cat populations developing.

This helps with the conservation of local flora and fauna. Surf Coast Shire has extensive public lands and National Park areas. The Threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats 2015 identifies the important role of local government in the management of feral populations.

Under the national plan, cats can be grouped into categories according to how and where they live. The definitions and categories used vary widely, so the following terms are used for the purposes of this plan:

- feral cats are those that live and reproduce in the wild (e.g., forests, woodlands, grasslands, deserts) and survive by hunting or scavenging; none of their needs are satisfied intentionally by humans;
- stray cats are those found in and around cities, towns and rural properties; they may depend on some resources provided by humans but are not owned; and
- domestic cats are those owned by an individual household, a business or corporation; most or all of their needs are supplied by their owners. If the confinement of domestic cats becomes more common, the category of a domestic cat may need to be divided to confined and unconfined cats because the potential for these two groups to impact on native fauna is different.

### Present situation

The number of dogs being impounded is trending down from a high of 115 in 2018/19.

On average, 34 cats are impounded each year. The low number of animals being euthanised and re-homed indicates successful stray animal identification and owner reclaim. Identification has been greatly assisted by the micro-chipping program.

Cats within the Shire, except the rural zone, must be confined to their owners' premises between 8pm and 6am daily. Our cat curfew is in response to community concerns about the negative environmental impact of cats on native animals, and the nuisance issue of animals wandering into neighbouring households.

The curfew doesn't apply in areas zoned rural in the planning scheme as it is difficult to confine cats to a farm, and they often help control vermin.

Under the curfew, Rangers can seize cats found at large in any public area or outside their owner's property between 8pm and 6am.

Within the current Domestic Animal Management Plan, we undertake to:

- Investigate and make recommendations on the option to extend the current cat curfew.
- Double the number of cat cages available and remove hire costs for customers.
- Continue proactive trapping of cats on Shire-managed sites, such as landfill sites, parks and reserves.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Dogs impounded	115	84	47
Cats Impounded	47	41	15
Dogs euthanised	4	1	3
Cats euthanised	1	5	3

### Our Objectives

- Encourage cat owners to confine domestic cats.
- Reduce the population of stray and feral cats to lower the need for euthanasia resulting from over-population of stray and feral cats.
- Maintain high reclaiming rates for dogs.
- Minimise animal hoarding by acting on all reports and assisting owners to remove excess animals.

### Performance measures

- Percentage of dogs and cats registered and micro-chipped
- Number of dogs and cats impounded (trend)
- Number of dogs and cats reclaimed by their owner
- Number of dogs and feral cats euthanised
- Lower impacts on local flora and fauna
- Number of registered cats and dogs returned home

### Domestic Animal Population and Euthanasia

Actions	2022	2023	2024	2025
Develop and promote website guidance to promote local adoption and shelter services				
Continue to utilise the services of Geelong Animal Welfare Society				
Continue to provide 12 month free registration for adopted animals				
Double the number of cat cages available and remove hire costs for customers				



# Annual review, reporting and performance management

This section addresses compliance with Section 68A(3) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*.

### Present situation

The collection and use of data to help with performance measurement has improved. More could be done to communicate performance with the community through improved website

### Our Objectives

- A current and well-maintained plan
- Assessment of actions taken and annual performance
- A data set that guides continual improvement of processes
- Updated local orders and local laws
- Inclusion of new projects and programs
- Published evaluation of plan implementation in Council's annual report

### Performance measures

- Completion of the DAMP annual review
- Publication of the DAMP annual implementation report
- Provision of a copy of the DAMP to State Government
- Implementation of the revised performance measurement system

### Annual Report and Performance Management

Actions	2022	2023	2024	2025
Undertake annual review of the DAMP in November				
Present annual review of the DAMP to the community via Council Meeting minutes				
Provide a copy of DAMP review to State Government annually				

# Appendix

## 1. Legislative requirement of the Domestic Animals Act

### Domestic Animal Management Plans

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, every Council must prepare a domestic animal management plan, as follows:

#### 68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

1. Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources), prepare at 4-year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
2. A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—
  - a) Set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations;
  - 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;
  - c) Outline programs, services and strategies that the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
    - i) To promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats;
    - ii) To ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation;
    - iii) To minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals;
    - iv) To address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats;
    - v) To encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats;
    - vi) To minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
  - d) 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;
  - e) 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;
  - f) 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
  - g) Provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
3. Every Council must—
  - a) Review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan;
  - b) Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
  - c) Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.



## 4. Surf Coast Shire Community Amenity Local Law No 1

### PART 5 - KEEPING OF ANIMALS

#### 5.1 Keeping Extra Animals

1. A person must not, without a permit, keep domestic animals, in a dwelling, in residential zones, a rural living zone or a built up area:
  - a) Any animal that is not listed in Table 1; or
  - b) More than 5 different types of animals or more than the number prescribed for each type of animal in Table 1.
2. A person must not, without a permit, keep animals in flats and units in a residential area:
  - a) Any animal that is not listed in the Table 2; or
  - b) More than the number prescribed for each type of animal in Table 2.
3. A person must not, without a permit for keeping animals, also applies to a person keeping more than 5 dogs or 5 cats on any other land in the municipal district.
4. The following animals and the maximum number permitted are allowed to be kept in residential zones, a rural living zone or a built-up area to:

Table 1

TYPE OF ANIMAL	MAXIMUM PERMITTED
Dog	2
Cat	2

The following animals and the maximum number permitted are allowed to be kept in flats and units in residential areas are:

Table 2

TYPE OF ANIMAL	MAXIMUM PERMITTED (Without permit)
Dog	1
Cat	1

#### 5.2 Trespassing Animal

The owner or occupier of any land where any animal is kept, other than a dog or cat, must ensure the type of animal being kept on the land does not trespass on any Council land or a road.

#### 5.3 Animal Litter

The owner or person in charge of an animal must:

- a) Whilst on Council land or a road or in a public place, have in their possession a bag or container which can be used for the collection of that animal's excrement.
- b) Immediately collect and remove all of the excrement left by the animal on Council land or a road or a public place.

## 5. Council's current orders, local laws, policies and procedures

The following table details the orders, local laws and work instructions that are in place to manage dogs and cats across the Shire.

Name	Purpose
<i>Domestic Animals Act 1994</i>	Compulsory de-sexing of all cats over the age of 3 months.
Surf Coast Shire Community Amenity Local Law	Designated 'Off-Leash Areas' Dogs must be on leash at all times unless in designated off-leash areas. Designated 'Time Share Areas' where dogs are not allowed and during particular periods allowed off-leash. Designated 'No Dogs Allowed' areas. Limitation of two (2) dogs and (2) cats in residential areas without a permit.
<i>Domestic Animals Act 1994</i>	All areas except rural areas 8pm to 6am– Cat Curfew. The cat curfew was introduced in 2007 and has proved effective by reducing cats from trespassing and nuisance complaints of cats on private properties. Compulsory de-sexing of all cats over the age of 3 months. De-sexing of cats prior to registrations, encourages responsible ownership, prevents potential feral and unwanted litters.
Work Instruction 102	Livestock Control D14/52107
Work Instruction 104	Dangerous Dog & Dog Attack D14/52112
Work Instruction 110	Attending Call-Outs After Hours D14/52167 After Hours Procedure that manages all requests that come in after hours.
Work Instruction 120	Stress Management D14/52095
Work Instruction 121	Personal Safety D14/52096
Work Instruction 123	Handling of Firearms D14/52098
Work Instruction 126	Nuisance Barking Dogs D14/52101
Victorian Declared Dog Registry (VDDR) (s.44AE).	The Local Laws Team Leader maintains and provides details of Dangerous Dogs, Restricted Breed Dogs and Menacing Dogs
Domestic Animal Businesses	Surf Coast Shire currently has no orders in place relating to Domestic Animal Businesses. Therefore, Council acts in accordance with the requirements set in the Act.
2.3 Behaviour in Municipal Buildings	A person must not: Bring any animal into, or allow any animal under his or her control to remain in a Municipal Building, without the consent of Council or an authorised officer, except for a guide dog being used by a visually impaired person, a hearing dog being used by a hearing impaired person or a dog being used to assist a person with limited mobility.



6. Dog regulation Maps

The dog regulations areas are indicated on the maps on the following page. No change to the dog regulation areas is proposed here, though is likely to be considered as the transition of the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority progresses.

What do the symbols mean?

D1

**OFF LEASH AREAS 1**  
Dogs allowed off leash



Within these areas, dogs are allowed off leash at all times, provided they are kept under effective control.

- 1. Dog to be immediately controllable by voice commands
- 2. Dog to always be within close proximity to owner
- 3. Prevent dogs from approaching people or other dogs unless invited. If in doubt place your dog back on lead out of respect and harmony for all.

D2

**D2 OFF LEASH AREAS 2**  
Dogs allowed off leash  
Dogs allowed on leash during events


Within these areas dogs are allowed off leash except when organised events are occurring or being prepared for. In this instance dogs must be on leash, provided they are under effective control.

D

**TIMESHARE ZONE**  
Active from 1 Dec – 28 Feb and over Easter  
9am - 7pm No dogs allowed  
7pm - 9am Dogs allowed off leash


Dogs are only allowed with the following times and conditions:

**9am–7pm: No Dogs allowed** (except on defined paths and on a leash).

**7pm–9am: Dogs allowed** in these areas off leash but under effective control.

Outside the active timeshare zone dates: Dogs are allowed off leash but under effective control.



**NO DOGS ALLOWED**



In these areas dogs are not allowed, with the exception of defined pathways, where they must be on a leash.

**Note:** Includes all fenced dune or vegetation areas and playgrounds.

