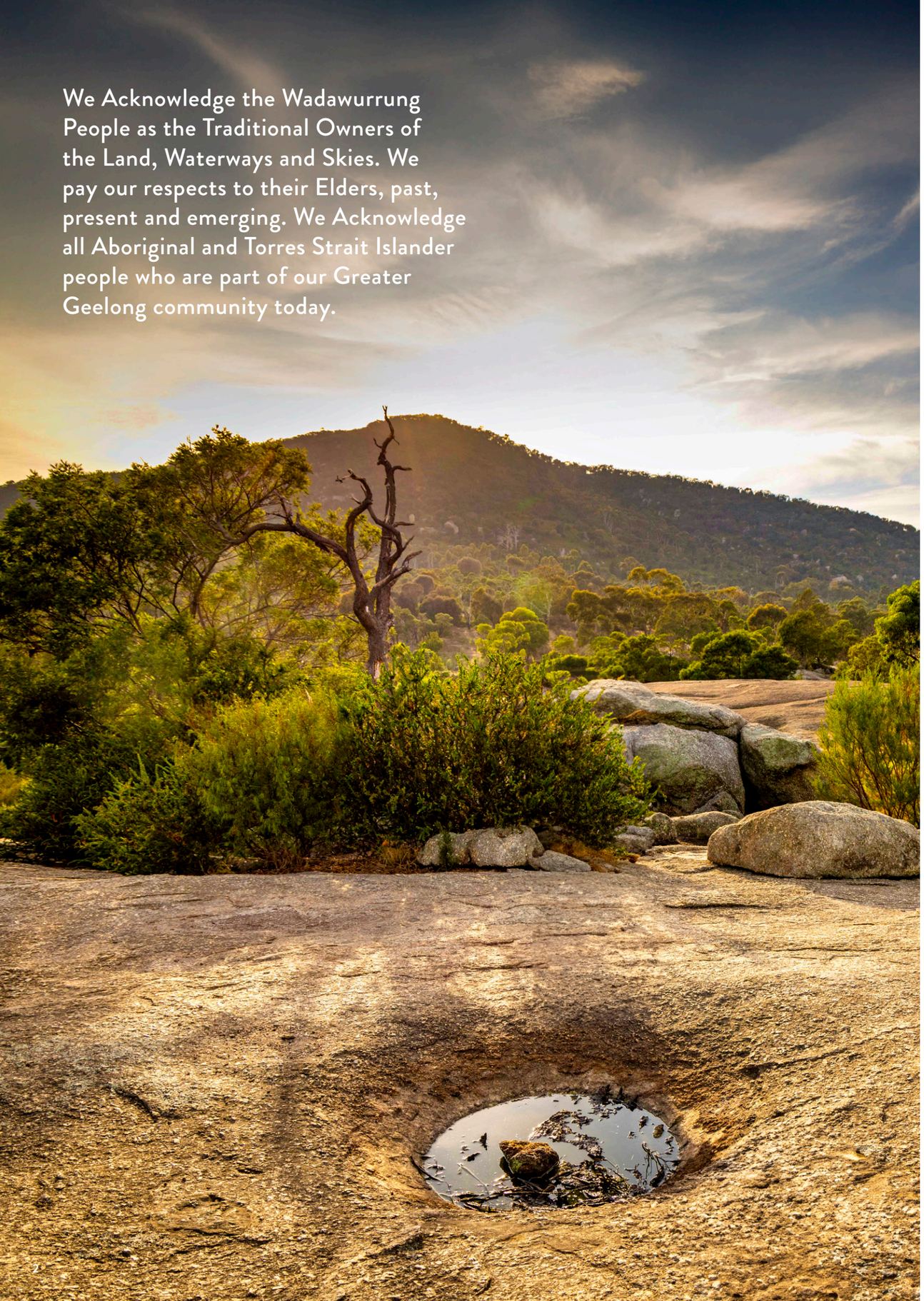
THE CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

2026 - 2029

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG



We Acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the Land, Waterways and Skies. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We Acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are part of our Greater Geelong community today.

CONTENTS

MAYOR'S MESSAGE 4

OUR PURPOSE 5

OUR REGION, PEOPLE AND PETS 6

- Population 6
- Our people 6
- Our pets 6
- Tourism 6
- Our land 7

OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 8

- Community consultation 8
- Our respondents 8
- What we heard 8
- What can the City do better? 9
- What can the community do better? 9

OUR PLAN 11

OUR ANIMAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES 13

- What we do 13
- Our current programs and services 14
- Requests for service 15
- Community consultations 15
- Training 16
- What we asked and what we heard 17
- What we will do 17

PET IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION 18

- What we do 18
- Registration fees 18
- Registration processes 18
- Registration statistics 18
- What we asked and what we heard 19
- What we will do 19

RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP 20

- What we do 20
- What we asked and what we heard 20
- What we will do 21

ANIMAL WELFARE 23

- What we do 23
- Pound services 23
- Semi-owned cats 24
- Desexing 24
- Cat management strategy - Animal Welfare Victoria 25
- What we asked and what we heard 25
- What we will do 25

NUISANCE CATS 26

- What we do 26
- Cat curfew order 26
- Cat trap service 26
- Rethink Roaming 26
- What we asked and what we heard 27
- What we will do 27

NUISANCE DOGS 28

- What we do 28
- Barking dogs 28
- Dog litter 28
- What we asked and what we heard 29
- What we will do 29

COMMUNITY AND OPEN SPACE NEEDS 30

- What we do 30
- Dog parks 30
- Timed access to sporting reserves and equestrian areas 30
- Events 30
- Safety 30
- What we asked and what we heard 31
- What we will do 31

DOG ATTACKS 32

- What we do 32
- Proactive actions and education 32
- Investigate dog attack reports 32
- Dog seizure 32
- Enforcement outcomes 33
- What we will do 33

ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORTING 34

- What we do 34
- What we will do 34

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

For many of us, our pets are cherished members of our families.

Our four-legged friends provide companionship, teach us responsibility, and enrich our lives in many ways.

The City of Greater Geelong has one of the largest animal populations of any Victorian municipality, with 35,019 registered dogs and 10,428 registered cats as of December 2024.

As our population grows, so too will our community of animal lovers and pets. That's why we need clear plans to account for our future pet PAWpulation, as outlined in the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026–29.

This plan is a direct result of valuable community feedback and aims to support both pet owners and the wider public. It balances the needs of all residents, addressing a range of issues from responsible ownership and public space use to animal health and safety.

Most of us encounter pets daily when venturing into Geelong's public spaces. We wanted to create a plan that reflects our broad community attitudes toward domestic animals, so we to continue to share our spaces safely, have healthy pets and protect the environment.

Our Animal Management team responded to over 7,500 animal-related requests in the last financial year, and this plan will also serve as a vital resource to help them meet the changing needs of the region.

Whether you're a pet owner, a park visitor, or a resident, this plan provides a clear framework for how we can continue to share our spaces safely and responsibly. By working together, we can ensure our pets stay healthy, our community remains safe, and our unique native wildlife is protected.

Cr Strech Kontelj OAM
Mayor, City of Greater Geelong

OUR PURPOSE

The City aims to help our residents, cats and dogs live harmoniously alongside each other in the beautiful habitats our region calls home.

Our four-legged friends are part of our families, often encouraging us to live healthier lifestyles, reduce stress, build connections and live longer.

The City celebrates the joy pets bring to our lives, while also balancing the needs of animals with those of residents, community groups, native wildlife and the environment.

The City's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2026–2029 seeks to encourage and support responsible pet ownership through increased education, promotion and assistance, while also strengthening our Animal Management Services.

The DAMP guides our educational and community-focused pet projects, as well as general services and amenities, and aims to improve outcomes for cats and dogs across the region.

OUR REGION, PEOPLE AND PETS

POPULATION

OUR PEOPLE

The City of Greater Geelong is a large and varied geographical council area, measuring 1,252 km² and includes metropolitan, coastal, rural and forest areas.

Our municipality has experienced a great deal of growth over the five years between our last census' in 2016 and 2021, with more than 271,000 people calling our region home – an increase of 16.1 per cent.

At the time of the last census in 2021, the three areas with the highest levels of growth were Armstrong Creek/ Mount Duneed 312.9 per cent, Curlewis 265.6 per cent, and Marshall/Charlemont 219.0 percent.

According to .id (2024) the 10 suburbs (or combined suburbs) with the highest populations currently are:

- Highton/Wandana Heights – 22,931
- Lara – 19,014
- Ocean Grove – 17,714
- Armstrong Creek/Mount Duneed – 16,997
- Corio – 15,497
- Belmont – 15,066
- Grovedale – 14,869
- Leopold – 13,272
- Newtown – 10,445
- Geelong West/Manifold Heights – 10,026

It is estimated that by 2041, 407,540 people will call Greater Geelong home.

OUR PETS

The City of Greater Geelong has one of the largest animal populations of any Victorian municipality, with 35,019 registered dogs and 10,428 registered cats as of December 2024.

Data collected from microchip registries in 2023 indicates there are over 101,000 pet microchips linked to our region, implying that many of the domestic animals residing here are not currently registered.

Registration of domestic animals (cats and dogs) with Council is a legal requirement, as prescribed by S10 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. In addition to being a legal requirement, registering pets with Council is imperative to understanding the number of animals in each region. Accurate animal registration numbers will allow us to ensure our services, projects and programs are planned, budgeted and delivered appropriately.

Just as importantly, pets who are registered, get reunited. Accurate registration details are the most efficient and effective way to return cats and dogs to their owners, avoiding the distress and financial burden impounding causes pets, their owners and the City.

TOURISM

Our region is a popular holiday destination for both people and their pets. Over the summer months, the municipality's population increases significantly, placing greater demand on animal management services.

The most recent data from 2018 shows that 1.14 million overnight visitors stayed on the Bellarine Peninsula, and a further 713,356 stayed in Geelong's urban centre.

Daytrip visitation to Geelong and its surrounding coastal regions on the Bellarine that year was also significant with:

- 274,964 visitors to the northern Bellarine
- 350,325 visitors to the southern Bellarine
- 2,326,730 visitors to Geelong's urban centre

This overnight and daytrip tourism brought $828,661,000 of direct and indirect economic income to the Bellarine, and 908,264,000 to metropolitan Geelong in 2018.

It's projected that by 2027, visitation to our region will increase to 7.5 million people and inject $1.7 billion into the local economy.

OUR LAND

Greater Geelong features a diverse range of natural landscapes, including world-class beaches, wetlands, river systems, granite mountains, grasslands, bushland, dense residential areas and significant rural holdings.

Some areas within the City, such as select beaches on the Bellarine Peninsula and various national parks, are governed by land management authorities. In these areas, dog controls are determined by the relevant authority and, where agreed upon by Council, enforced by the City.

The land management authorities and their respective jurisdictions are outlined in the table below.

Authority	Area
Barwon Coast Committee of Management	Southern Bellarine beaches and foreshore running through Breamlea, Barwon Heads, Ocean Grove and Collendina.
Bellarine Bayside Coastal Management	Northern Bellarine beaches and foreshore running through Portarlington, Indented Head and St Leonards
Corangamite Catchment Authority	The banks of the Barwon River from Newtown to Breakwater
Parks Victoria	You Yangs, Lake Connewarre, Breamlea Flora and Fauna Reserve, Mouth of Barwon River (Barwon Heads)

To conserve these environmentally and culturally sensitive areas, and in recognition of the shared access by a variety of users, often dogs are required on leash at minimum, or may be totally prohibited.

OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The City wants to support our community of pets and people to live in "PAWfect harmony" and further enable responsible pet ownership. Community views were therefore integral to informing the development of this DAMP, which needs to reflect the views of the community it is intended to impact and service.

The City engaged with our community over a six-week period to better understand what is working well within our Animal Management Services, what isn't, what the community would like to see in the future, and whether there are areas where community members may lack knowledge of animal laws and regulations or find them difficult to follow.

OUR RESPONDENTS

- 756 survey responses were completed during our community engagement.
- 81.4 per cent (615) owned one or more domestic pets and 18.6 per cent (141) were not pet owners.
- The highest response rates came from residents of Ocean Grove (80), Lara (57), Armstrong Creek (44), Highton (41) and Newtown (36).
- Other interests cited for DAMP involvement included:
  - "Local park user" (64.55 per cent)
  - "Recreational bird/wildlife watcher" (19.44 per cent)
  - "Sports club player/volunteer/member" (8.2 per cent)
  - "Member of wildlife/conservation group" (7.14 per cent)
  - "Animal fosterer" (6.08 per cent)
  - "Member of animal advocacy or rescue group" (5.03 per cent)
  - "Animal business operator" (2.12 per cent)
  - "Vet/Vet nurse" (2.12 per cent)
  - "Registered cat/dog breeder" (1.98 per cent)
  - "Registered domestic animal business" (1.06 per cent).
- Feedback was also sought and received from Geelong Animal Welfare Society, and the internal City departments of Parks and Natural Assets, Waste Service, Urban Design and Place and Community Participation.

WHAT WE HEARD

Key areas for action identified from the feedback received, as well as themes and trends in the data, have helped shape this DAMP and its actions.

Some of these key themes are outlined below.

DOGS

- Too many dog owners letting their dogs off-leash in on-leash areas
- Many dog owners not collecting their dog's poo and disposing of it properly
- More fully fenced dog parks are desired.

CATS

- Roaming restriction for cats and dogs should be the same – that is, cats contained to their own property at all times for the benefit of wildlife, neighbours and the cat's wellbeing
- Council should support cat owners who create cat enclosures financially, by reducing registration costs, subsidising enclosure materials and/or coordinating volunteer services regarding their construction.

ANIMAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

- Greater staffing numbers and presence required for patrolling, nuisance investigations and the like
- Running more education sessions and community events
- City-led dog training and animal behaviour courses
- Streamline nuisance complaint services, for faster outcomes and less burden on complainants.

WHAT CAN THE CITY DO BETTER?

1. Create more fully fenced dog parks to reduce demand on sports reserves and meet the open space needs of dog owners, particularly those living in medium to high density areas.
2. Increase our Animal Management Officer staffing levels, so that nuisance complaints can be handled more swiftly, and there is greater officer presence for patrolling and issuing infringements where necessary to increase compliance.
3. Assist the community with the construction of cat enclosures through fiscal or labour assistance.
4. Conduct more educational programs (especially in schools), focusing on dog on leash, pick up poo and effective control messaging, as well as cat curfew and containment information.
5. City-led promotions and events, such as dog training and animal behaviour workshops, pet-centric expos, registration drives and discount desexing campaigns.

WHAT CAN THE COMMUNITY DO BETTER?

1. Comply with dog regulations, especially those requiring dogs on leash unless otherwise signed, dog poo collection and effective control when in off leash areas.
2. Comply with cat curfew (dusk to dawn containment).
3. Keep cats contained to their own properties as much as possible to improve their health outcomes, reduce impoundment levels and their negative impact on wildlife and neighbours.
4. Proactively engage with pet selection tools, animal behaviour training and puppy school/dog training to reduce pet-ownership complications.

OUR PLAN

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act) requires councils in Victoria to develop a domestic animal management plan (DAMP) every four years.

The DAMP must outline council services, programs and policies established to address the administration of the Act, and Councils' management of dog and cat issues in their community. Council must review its DAMP annually and publish an evaluation of the implementation of the past year's actions in its Annual Report.

This DAMP has been shaped by community feedback, strategic planning and input from internal City departments.

To facilitate responsible pet ownership and allow all residents to live in PAWfect harmony, each section outlines what we do, what we asked, what we heard, and what we will do over the next four years. Together, these elements form the central pillar of the work we will undertake from 2026 to 2029.

The Plan is designed to address key areas of animal ownership while reflecting the City's commitment to balancing the needs of the wider community. These areas include:

- Our Animal Management Services
- Pet Registration and Identification
- Responsible Pet Ownership
- Animal Welfare
- Nuisance Cats
- Nuisance Dogs
- Community and Open Space Needs
- Dog Attacks

DAMP REQUIREMENTS

DAMPs must cover the following issues:

- Ensuring compliance with the Act, regulations and any related legislation.
- Minimising the risk of dog attacks on people and animals.
- Addressing over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.
- Encouraging the registration and identification of dogs and cats.
- Reducing the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.
- Effectively identifying all dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs within the district, and ensuring they are kept in compliance with the Act and regulations.
- Reviewing existing orders and local laws related to animal management to determine whether further measures are desirable.
- Reviewing any other matters relating to the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district as required.
- Periodically evaluating all programs, services, strategies and reviews outlined in the plan.

OUR ANIMAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES

This section of the plan addresses the requirement of Section 68A (2) (b) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. It outlines Council's human resourcing for animal management tasks, the teams' current skills and planned, ongoing training.

WHAT WE DO

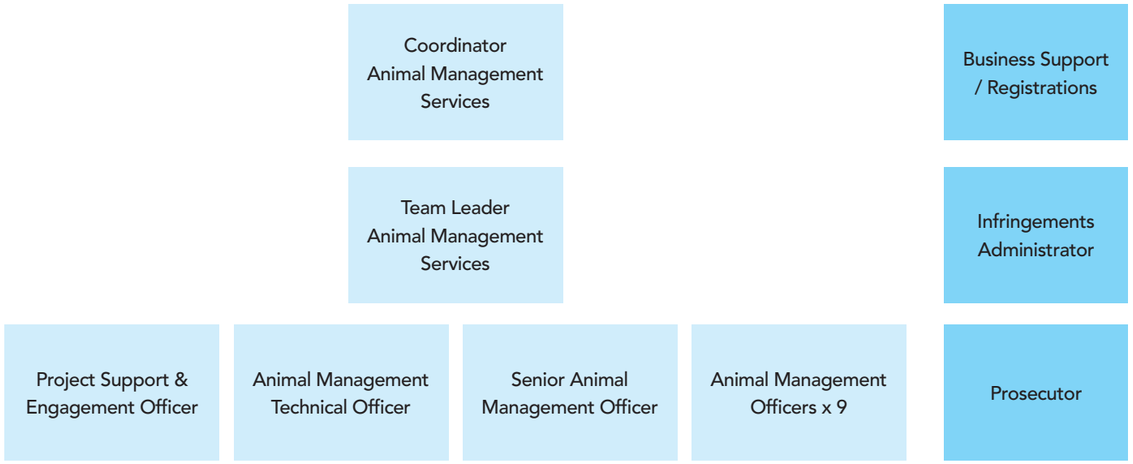
We maintain a qualified, competent, visible and responsive team to deliver high standards of service to the community. The City's Animal Management Services team is a specialist team that sits within the Community Safety & Regulation Department, as part of our City Life Directorate. Animal Management is staffed by a team of 14 people who provide services to our municipality 365 days a year. Our services are supported by a team of business support staff, an infringements administrator and a prosecutor. Our team structure is depicted below.

As Authorised Officers of Council, our team have responsibilities for the administration and enforcement of State and Local legislation including:

- Domestic Animals Act 1994 and associated Regulations and Codes of Practice
- Impoundment of Livestock Act 1994
- Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2024
- Dog Control in Public Places Policy 2018
- Cat Curfew and Desexing Order 2015.

Our team work 365 days a year to provide animal management services to our community and their pets. We provide a limited on-call service to respond to emergency situations that present a risk to community safety, including dog attacks and wandering livestock.

As a large municipality with several growth corridors and a high animal ownership rate, the City is mindful of the pressure on our animal management team and resources, and as such, will continually review staffing and service levels as the City continues to grow.



OUR CURRENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Program	Services Provided	
Identification and Registration	› Annual dog and cat registration renewal notices and follow-up processes, including text message reminders and follow up phone calls. › Online or in person pet registrations. › Reduced registration for concession card holders and appropriately trained assistance dogs. › Data collection from Central Animal Records to determine registration compliance using microchipping data.	› Officers reuniting registered pets directly with owners. › Investigation and follow up of unregistered animal reports. › Mandatory registration of impounded animals upon reclaim. › Proactive registration checks and follow up of newly adopted animals.
Dog Attack Complaints and Investigation	› Investigation and prosecution of dog attacks and menacing rushes. › Seizure of dogs for community safety pending investigation outcome.	› Immediate response for serious dog attack reports, otherwise response within 24 hours.
Dog Nuisance / Amenity Complaints	› Investigation of nuisance barking complaints. › Information materials sent to complainant and dog owner regarding barking behaviours.	› Noise monitoring used in some circumstances. › Investigate multiple animal complaints.
Cat Nuisance / Amenity Complaints	› Investigation and enforcement of cat nuisance / trespass complaints. › Delivery of cat trapping service.	› Proactive letterbox drops in areas of high complaint. › Dusk to dawn cat curfew order enforcement.
Proactive Reserve, Trail, Street and Beach Patrols	› Proactive patrols in all areas of municipality during business hours. › Additional beach patrols in summer months.	› Evening patrols during daylight savings months.
Animal Pound Facility (contracted to Geelong Animal Welfare Society)	› GAWS is open to the public seven days per week (except Christmas Day and Good Friday). › Located 325 Portarlington Road, Moolap.	› Receive and house lost and stray animals. › Reunite animals with owners.
Community Education and Promotion	› Marketing materials and communication strategy to promote responsible pet ownership, including brochures, media releases, social and print media. › Attendance at community events such as Paws for GAWS Walk, RUN4Geelong, Open Days. › Education material on City website.	› New arrival information sessions for CALD communities. › Community engagement projects. › TAFE talks for animal studies students. › Attendance at internal events upon request.
After Hours	After hours response to: › Collection of contained dogs (5pm - 7pm Weekdays, 8am - 7pm Weekends) › Dog attacks	› Livestock on roads › Assistance in emergencies or requests from Victoria Police.
Domestic Animal Business Program	› Annual audits of all Domestic Animal Businesses. › Issue annual registration renewal invoices and certificates. › Inspect and process new Domestic Animal Business applications.	› Investigate complaints and enforce where appropriate. › Proactively identify illegal Domestic Animal Businesses and prosecute where appropriate.
Dog Friendly Areas	› Dog off leash areas and fenced dog parks provided across the municipality.	› Dogs allowed off leash in sporting reserves when no sports taking place.
Subsidised Cat Desexing	› Subsidised desexing programs offered at GAWS.	› Free registration for participating animals.
Declared Dogs (Dangerous / Menacing or Restricted Breed)	› Conduct annual inspections ensuring requirements of Domestic Animals Act are complied with and enforcement action taken where appropriate. › Investigation and follow-up of all declared dogs that remain unpaid after 10 April each year.	› Proactive inspections of industrial areas to identify undeclared guard dogs. › Assess restricted breed complaints against the Standard.

REQUESTS FOR SERVICE

Our reactive service delivery is facilitated by customer Requests for Service (RFS). Since 2021/22 we have seen a 33.5 per cent growth in service requests, with a significant spike in 2024/25 where our team responded to 7,689 customer requests. See below breakdown of RFS actioned over the past four years:

RFS Type	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Barking dog complaints	1,145	1,616	1,717	1,908
Cat nuisance / trespass	187	215	257	204
Request for cat trap	527	657	291	326
Menacing / Rushing Dog	303	473	414	503
Dog at large	627	766	844	844
Animal patrol request	67	75	43	58
Unregistered animal complaint	416	261	88	516
Multiple animal complaint	64	100	121	122
Animal collection - with ID	94	73	99	140
Animal collection - without ID	1,439	1,642	1,848	1,753
Dog attack investigations (Serious Human)	11	12	23	32
Dog attack investigations (Serious Animal)	60	62	69	64
Dog attack investigations (Non-serious Human)	53	45	72	59
Dog attack investigations (Non-serious Animal)	93	85	75	96
Livestock at large	116	129	143	186
Declared dog / restricted breed assessment	0	0	18	22
Miscellaneous animal enquiry	557	610	850	856
Total	**5,759**	**6,821**	**6,972**	**7,689**

In the 2024/25 financial year our team conducted 988 hours of rostered proactive patrols, audited 57 Domestic Animal Businesses, issued 958 infringements and successfully prosecuted 11 matters in Court. See below breakdown of infringements issued over the past three years:

Offence Type	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Dog at large daytime	500	372	402
Dog at large night-time	5	6	2
Dog in prohibited public place	29	10	34
Dog or cat creating a nuisance	13	14	6
Fail to register dog/cat	504	410	427
Fail to renew registration dog/cat	87	66	57
Dog attack non-serious injury	14	18	15
Dog rush	0	7	6
Other	6	4	9
Total	**1,158**	**907**	**958**

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Within the last DAMP period (2022-25), the Animal Management team conducted three community engagement projects regarding:

- Dogs in Public Places review and orders to cover eight new reserves and review dog orders at seven equestrian centres (2023)
- Cat curfew review (2023)
- Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026 – 2029 (2025).

From these consultations, we heard from 4,490 community members who shared their views over a total of 18 weeks, and the feedback received helped shape the decisions made regarding cat and dog controls in our region, and how we can further improve our animal management services.

TRAINING

To deliver animal services that meet the requirements of the Act and the expectations of the community, it is essential that all Animal Management Officers (AMO) receive appropriate training and have access to a strong professional development program.

Officers build their skills and knowledge through a mix of practical, on-the-job experience, structured and accredited courses and industry training. Additional training needs are identified during annual performance development reviews to support ongoing development and maintain high service standards.

Animal Management Officers are encouraged to hold, or be working towards, one of the following qualifications:

- Certificate IV in Animal Control and Compliance
- Certificate IV in Government (Statutory Compliance)
- A higher-level relevant qualification.

The table below outlines the current and planned training for Animal Management Officers.

Planned Training		Timeframe
Core compliance training		
› Manual Handling › Work Health & Safety › Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity › Sexual Harassment Prevention › Workplace Bullying › Fraud, Anti-Bribery and Corruption	› Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities › Privacy › Victorian Child Safe Standards › Electronic Communications and Social Media › Record Keeping Essentials	New officer induction and bi-annual thereafter
In House / On-the-job training		
› Animal Handling › Brief Preparation and Prosecution › Investigations and Evidence › Stock Handling	› Domestic Animal Business Auditing › Freedom of Information and Privacy › Barking Dog Management	On the job training provided by Senior Officer / Team Leader and Councils Prosecutor upon commencement and renewed as required
Building Resilience and Capacity for Emergencies (BRACE)		
› Managing Animals in Emergencies › Emergency Management Awareness › Working in an Emergency Relief Centre	› Introduction to Psychological First Aid/ Personal Support › Practical Exercises	Annual
Industry training		
› Conflict Resolution › Aggressive Animal Handling › Understanding Animal Behaviour › Basic Animal First Aid › Restricted Breed Identification › Accredited First Aid and CPR refresher		Annual Annual Annual Annual As available / required Upon commencement and renewed as required
Animal Management training		
Information sessions, conferences and seminars offered by State Government, RSPCA, Municipal Association of Victoria, LGPro, Australian Institute of Animal Management and other relevant organisations.		As available

WHAT WE ASKED AND WHAT WE HEARD

Is there enough AMO presence in the community?

"No" (62 per cent)

Where would you like to see AMOs more?

Parks (65.3 per cent)
Beaches (64.8 per cent)
Trails (38.6 per cent)

How would you rate your interaction with an AMO?

4/5

Where would you like to see AMOs focus their energy?

Patrolling; Preventing/ addressing dog attacks

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Ensure team resources are sufficient to meet service delivery requirements and community expectation.
- Enhance animal management services reputation as a team of highly skilled professionals, with the knowledge to support community and animal needs.

Activity	When	Evaluation
Ensure sufficient staffing levels to deliver efficient Animal Management services by reviewing resourcing each year	Annually	Capacity meets demand
Explore the addition of a dedicated Patrol & Safety Officer to the team, pending funding, to better meet community expectation	Year 2	Position considered
Develop and maintain a training register, detailing all the qualifications and training courses completed by each animal management officer	Year 1	Register developed
Review all work instructions and procedures to ensure they are customer focused and fit for purpose	Year 2	Procedures reviewed
Promote animal management services internally and externally by celebrating achievements and profiling officers on internal and external channels	Year 1	Promotion completed

PET IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION

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.

All dogs and cats over three months of age must be registered with the City each year, as required by law. We know that many pets in the region are not currently registered. The City aims to improve registration compliance across Greater Geelong.

WHAT WE DO

REGISTRATION FEES

Animal registration fees help fund the delivery of the City's Animal Management Services and programs. In the 2024/25 financial year, these services cost $4.3 million to deliver. This includes contract payments to the Geelong Animal Welfare Society for the operation of the City's pound service. In the same year, $2.01 million was collected through registration fees, leaving a gap of $2.29 million that was subsidised by the City to maintain these services.

Registration fees help support a wide range of activities, including:

- Employment of animal management staff.
- Collection and return of animals to their owners.
- Provision of registration tags for each registered animal.
- Investigation and prosecution of animal attacks and other offences.
- Pound service delivery.
- Registration and auditing of Domestic Animal Businesses (including pet shops, boarding facilities and breeders).
- Investigation of nuisance complaints.
- After-hours services.
- Management of declared dogs.
- Maintenance of animal-related facilities across the City, including dog parks, reserves and the pound.
- Events, information materials and education campaigns.
- Programs that support responsible pet ownership.
- Mandatory levy payments to the State Government — in 2025, this included $4.51 per registered animal and $20 per Domestic Animal Business, totalling $178,000.

REGISTRATION PROCESSES

To make animal registration as simple as possible for the community, the City offers both online and in-person registration options. Renewal notices are sent each year, either electronically or by post. Reminder text messages are issued for unpaid registrations, prompting owners to make payment or update their animal's status.

To encourage registration, the City runs an annual marketing campaign during the renewal period. This campaign uses a range of channels, including print, radio, social media and billboards, to remind the community to update their details and pay their registration.

REGISTRATION STATISTICS

Despite simplified registration processes and promotion activities, registration numbers have declined over the past four years.

In 2025, 30,296 dogs and 9,061 cats were registered with the City. Registration numbers over the last four years were as follows:

Year	Cats	Dogs
2022	10,232	34,287
2023	9,151	31,461
2024	9,620	31,931
2025	9,061	30,296

Cat registrations have fluctuated slightly over this period, but overall the trend is downward. Dog registrations follow a similar pattern, with a sharper decline between 2022 and 2023. This decrease may be influenced by rising cost-of-living pressures on the community, as well as feedback from cat owners regarding a perceived lack of value for registering their pets.

Data collected from microchip registries in 2023 indicates there are over 101,000 pet microchips linked to our region, implying that approximately 60 per cent of the domestic animals residing here are not currently registered.

To combat low registration numbers, the City ran a registration amnesty for six weeks in 2024, offering free registration for new cat and dog registrations. The amnesty resulted in 2,000 new registrations, and whilst this is a positive result, our unregistered animal population remains high.

Suburbs with the highest registration numbers:

1. Lara
2. Highton
3. Ocean Grove
4. Grovedale
5. Leopold.

Top 10 registered dog breeds:

WHAT WE ASKED AND WHAT WE HEARD

Why registration is important?

54.8 per cent of DAMP respondents feel this topic needs more promotion.

How to register or renew registration online

40.6 per cent of survey respondents felt it would be helpful to share this information more with the community.

MAP for more than two animals residing at a property

63.9 per cent of respondents knew a Multi-Animal Permit was required for more than two pets on your property.

What to do if your pet goes missing

65.1 per cent thought more information on this topic would be helpful.

What to do if you find a lost pet

Over 67 per cent of DAMP survey respondents felt greater promotion on what to do with a lost pet would benefit the community.

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Encourage and ensure all cats and dogs living within our municipality and who are older than three months of age, are registered annually.
- Encourage and ensure all cats, and most dogs are desexed from three months of age, to not only improve their health outcomes but to also minimise unwanted litters and the strain caused on pound services.

Action	When	Evaluation
Free first year registration for newly registered cats and dogs in our municipality	Year 1	10 per cent increase in registrations year on year
Increase education and communications regarding registration benefits	Year 2	10 per cent increase in registrations year on year
Half price cat registration for owners who have approved cat enclosures and commit to cat containment	Year 1	10 per cent increase in registrations year on year
Request GAWS to register newly adopted cats and dogs for free as part of the adoption process	Year 1	All adopted animals are registered at adoption
Develop a comprehensive annual registration plan with a timeline to ensure all registration activities are conducted within appropriate timeframes	Year 1	10 per cent increase in renewed registrations year on year

RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP

Owning a pet can be highly rewarding. Pets provide companionship, unconditional love, and can help reduce stress and anxiety. However, pet ownership also carries important responsibilities.

As a local government, the City's role is to help the community understand what responsible pet ownership involves, in order to minimise potential harm to animals, people, property, other animals, and the environment.

Helping pet owners choose the right pet for their lifestyle and home is an important first step. Dogs, for example, are great for encouraging family exercise, but they can be high maintenance. Depending on the breed and age, dogs may require significant training and grooming. Cats are more independent and generally content indoors, making them a suitable option for busy households. They are usually quiet, have long life spans, and require minimal house training. However, cats must also be properly managed to prevent problems for other cats and native wildlife.

A responsible pet owner is someone who:

- Considers the needs of all users of public space.
- Prevents their animal from causing harm or intimidation to others.
- Attends to the welfare and social needs of their animal, including vaccination, socialisation and training.
- Abides by dog control orders in public spaces.
- Minimises nuisance to others and the environment through effective containment and behaviour management.
- Has an animal that is desexed, microchipped and registered.

The City aims to empower all pet owners to responsibly care for their animals while respecting the rights of others to use public spaces safely.

WHAT WE DO

Community education aimed at understanding how to be a responsible pet owner is central to having happy and healthy pets and a safe harmonious community. We have a range of programs and services that empower our community to be responsible pet owners including:

- Regulate animal ownership through the issuance of Multiple Animal Permits.
- Provide advice, links and resources on responsible pet ownership on our website.
- Distribute brochures, fact sheets and other materials.
- Attend community events to answer questions, provide advice and materials relevant to responsible pet ownership.
- Provide information on State and local legal obligations related to pet ownership.
- Signage in areas where dogs are allowed to be off leash or where they are prohibited.
- Have a Project Support & Engagement Officer in our team focused on animal management project design and delivery.
- Employ a team who are knowledgeable and respond to every animal related request or enquiry, providing advice and information to community members.
- Patrol public spaces to promote and enforce compliance with responsible pet requirements including dog control orders, effective control and picking up after your dog.

WHAT WE ASKED AND WHAT WE HEARD

What local laws do pet owners need help abiding to?

- Dogs off leash in on leash areas
- Dog poo left uncollected or not disposed of properly
- Cats roaming at night

What are pet owners doing well?

- Cats are infrequently damaging property (48.9 per cent)
- Dogs are rarely seen chasing or attacking wildlife (37.8 per cent)
- Cats fighting other cats

What do you think are the main barriers to being a responsible pet owner?

- Self-entitlement
- Lack of care for others wellbeing/ sense of safety
- Lack of consequence when breaking the laws

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Increase education opportunities related to responsible pet ownership.
- Increase opportunities to engage with our Animal Management team.

Actions	When	Evaluation
Explore establishing access to RSPCA's "Happy Pet Portal" for all registered pet owners	Year 1	Decision made about Portal access
Targeted marketing campaign related to "doggy etiquette" in our shared public spaces	Year 3	Campaign complete
Creation of a quarterly newsletter for registered pet owners containing information on the many aspects of responsible pet ownership	Year 2	Number distributed
Review and refresh all web content on the City's pets and animals page	Year 2	Up to date information
Explore opportunities to strengthen partnerships with local dog trainers and businesses to promote and encourage puppy/dog training and behaviour correction	Year 2	Number of businesses engaged
Explore the delivery of an annual pet expo / pets in the park event	Year 3	First expo delivered
Create a forward annual marketing plan aimed at delivering key messages at appropriate times throughout the year	Year 1	Plan developed
Design and deliver responsible pet ownership program in schools	Year 3	Number of sessions

ANIMAL WELFARE

This section of the plan addresses 68A(2)(c)(iv) and 68A(2)(a),(c)(i),(c) (ii),(d),(f) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining programs, services and strategies to address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.

The City of Greater Geelong is committed to ensuring that as many animals as possible are reunited with their owners. Pets are valued members of the family, and it can be distressing for owners and animals when they are missing or being held within the pound.

WHAT WE DO

Animal Management Officers reunite registered dogs and cats with their owners wherever possible to avoid the need to impound animals. This can only be achieved where animals are identifiable; it is anticipated that as animal registration numbers increase through the actions of our DAMP, officers will be able to reunite more animals and impounds will subsequently decrease.

POUND SERVICES

Geelong Animal Welfare Society (GAWS) is contracted to deliver pound services on behalf of the City of Greater Geelong. GAWS believes "every life is precious" and as such, has a mission to "promote the welfare and value of companion animals to improve the health and wellbeing of the wider community." GAWS establish and maintain relationships with animal rescue groups and foster care providers to assist them in their work.

As the City's pound provider, GAWS conduct behavioural and health examinations on animals that have been impounded to assess if they are suitable for adoption. At the end of an eight-day quarantine period, GAWS work to rehome animals that are deemed appropriate for adoption.

Cats and dogs from the City of Greater Geelong can be brought to GAWS either via Council officers or members of the public. In the 2024/25 financial year, 1,475 cats and dogs were impounded by animal management officers: 697 dogs, 60 puppies, 500 cats and 218 kittens. A breakdown on the incoming and outgoing circumstances for each of these animals is included below:

Council-initiated Impounds		Incoming Circumstance			Outgoing Circumstance			
Animals admitted		Stray	Owner surrender	Seized	Reclaimed	Adopted	Euthanised	Other
Dogs	697	529	104	64	51 per cent	24 per cent	14 per cent	11 per cent
Puppies	60	26	30	4	23 per cent	58 per cent	0 per cent	19 per cent
Cats	500	454	46	0	12 per cent	52 per cent	20 per cent	16 per cent
Kittens	218	199	19	0	1 per cent	77 per cent	11 per cent	1 per cent
Total	1,475	1,208	199	68	23 per cent	54 per cent	11 per cent	12 per cent

*Note: "Other" outgoing circumstances involved a variety of status categories, including "preparation for adoption", "deceased on arrival", "in foster care" and "transferred out".

Community-initiated Impounds		Incoming Circumstance			Outgoing Circumstance			
Animals admitted		Stray	Owner surrender	Seized	Reclaimed	Adopted	Euthanised	Other
Dogs	331	133	191	7	28 per cent	39 per cent	9 per cent	24 per cent
Puppies	56	7	49	0	2 per cent	53 per cent	2 per cent	43 per cent
Cats	635	355	280	0	2 per cent	68 per cent	12 per cent	18 per cent
Kittens	401	298	97	6	1 per cent	82 per cent	6 per cent	11 per cent
Total	1,423	793	617	13	8 per cent	61 per cent	7 per cent	24 per cent

Incoming animals from members of the public in 2024/25 have been separately calculated. A total of 1,423 cats and dogs came into GAWS' care for a variety of reasons. A breakdown on the circumstances for each of these animals is included above.

Euthanasia rates at the City are higher for cats than for dogs. This statistic is due to large numbers of cats in our community not being microchipped or registered with Council. If a cat has no microchip, it limits the ability to trace its owner and can lead to euthanasia. Community education on the benefits of microchipping and registration is important to further reducing impoundment and euthanasia rates for cats.

SEMI-OWNED CATS

Many of the cats impounded at GAWS are categorised as semi-owned, unowned or feral. With no chance of being reclaimed by an owner, these cats place significant strain on pound and shelter resources. A semi-owned cat is a cat that has no owner but has a well-intentioned member (or members) of the community feeding it without taking on the full legal responsibility. These cats therefore receive no veterinary treatment or vaccinations and are not microchipped, registered or desexed.

Cats breed incredibly fast, which is why desexing cats to prevent unwanted litters and manage populations is so important. Feeding a semi-owned or unowned cat and not taking full responsibility can contribute to cat overpopulation issues; the cats are strong enough to reproduce and therefore more kittens are born into a life of disease and neglect. This can have significant impacts on local wildlife and create amenity issues for residents.

Educating and promoting the awareness of semi-owned cat populations with our residents is integral to minimise and address cat overpopulation in our region. The City will encourage residents who are feeding unowned or semi-owned cats to take full ownership or to call us for assistance in the removal of the cat.

In 2024, the City of Greater Geelong Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2024 came into effect. Clause 20(4) prohibits a person feeding a dog or cat that they do not own unless: a) the owner provides consent or, b) the animal has been legally trapped or, c) the animal is in need of emergency care and the owner is unable to be located. This provision was intended to manage semi-owned cat populations and we are working through how this can be promoted and enforced if required.

DESEXING

We recognise the importance of desexing cats as integral to managing cat populations and reducing euthanasia rates. The City have taken a proactive stance on cat desexing; we have orders and incentives in place to support cat desexing. Unfortunately, budget restrictions have hindered the City's ability to commit to a subsidised desexing program in 2024 and 2025, but it is our intention to reinstate this offering to our community again in this DAMP period.

The City has a mandatory cat desexing Order in place. Exercising its powers under Section 10A of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Council made the Order on 16 April 2015. The Order imposes a condition on the registration of cats within the City of Greater Geelong, stating that all newly registered cats must be desexed unless exempt under the Act.

CAT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - ANIMAL WELFARE VICTORIA

Animal Welfare Victoria have developed the first ever State cat management strategy, a comprehensive, long-term plan designed to improve cat management across the State. The Victorian Cat Management Strategy 2025-2035 recognises that cat management is a shared responsibility, and success requires collaboration from multiple levels of government, community members and relevant organisations. The Strategy is built on seven key themes and outlines 24 actions for delivery. The City have a role to play in 12 of these actions either solely or in partnership with other agencies.

The themes outlined in the Strategy focus on:

- Responsible cat ownership.
- Increased desexing rates.
- Expanding cat containment.
- Urban cat population control.
- Feral cat management.
- Enhanced collaboration and information sharing.
- Improved laws and processes.

WHAT WE ASKED AND WHAT WE HEARD

What are the main benefits you feel from being a pet owner?

- Companionship
- Cuddles and comfort
- Exercise
- Socialisation with other pet owners

Do you know what to do if you can no longer care for your pet?

- 75.5 per cent of respondents want more education on this

Do you know what to do with unowned cats in your neighbourhood?

- 71 per cent respondents want more education on this

Do you know what to do if you find a lost pet?

- 67.1 per cent respondents want more education on this

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Encourage community members to take full ownership of community cats they may be feeding.
- Commitment to ensuring our animal management programs and services are aligned with the themes and aims of the *Victorian Cat Management Strategy 2025-2035*.
- Partner with Geelong Animal Welfare Society in efforts to achieve positive animal welfare outcomes for Greater Geelong's animals.
- Continued efforts to see as many cats desexed as possible and see a reduction in unowned cats entering the pound.

Actions	When	Evaluation
Review of pound services, including delivery models and future service sustainability	Year 1	Review completed
Targeted desexing drive to minimise the impact of unwanted litters, semi-owned and feral cats on the pound	Annually	Number of cats desexed
Promotion of GAWS adoption drives, campaigns and events via City platforms	Annually	Number of activities promoted
Develop a communications plan to educate residents on the impact of having unowned / semi-owned cats in the community	Year 2	Plan developed and delivered
Promote the health benefits of desexing and the long-term positive outcomes for the environment and euthanasia rates	Ongoing	Information available More cats desexed

NUISANCE CATS

This section of the plan addresses Sections 68A(2)(c)(vi) and 68A(2) (a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for cats to create a nuisance.

Whilst the City understands that cats offer loving, gentle and contained companionship and provide their owners with much joy, it is also noted that "the role of cats as pets, pests or natural pest controls varies based on cultural and ecological contexts, which sparks ongoing debates about their management. In Australia, cats are an introduced species that can have significant impact on ecosystems when they move outside the domestic environment. All cats, if given the chance, will hunt and kill small animals (both native and introduced) at any time of day. Even well-fed pet cats maintain a strong instinct to hunt". (Animal Welfare Victoria, 2024)

The City is committed to supporting the needs of our cat owners, while also aiming to proactively minimise the impacts cats have on native birds, small marsupials, lizards and frogs who often become their prey.

Animal nuisance caused by cats can also affect a person's enjoyment of their home and impact on the safety and wellbeing of community members. Educating pet owners on minimising nuisance caused by their pets will be a key focus for this plan.

WHAT WE DO

Wandering cats are a common nuisance complaint for our residents. Our Animal Management Officers responded to 204 nuisance cat complaints and 326 requests for cat traps in 2024/25.

CAT CURFEW ORDER

To protect the health of pet cats and reduce the negative impact they may have on native wildlife, environments and neighbourhoods the City has a dusk to dawn cat curfew in place.

In exercising its powers prescribed in Section 26(2)(b)(i),(ii)(iii) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Council made an Order on 16 April 2015 which imposes a condition on the presence of cats and their means of restriction to owners property in any area of the municipal district of the City of Greater Geelong. The Order imposes a night curfew for cats and states that all cats must be securely confined to the owner's property between sunset and sunrise each day.

Whilst not mandated in the City of Greater Geelong, we strongly encourage owners to contain cats at all times. Containment is the most effective way to ensure the health and wellbeing of their pet and avoid them becoming a nuisance to neighbours or a threat to the environment. Actions to promote this as best practice are important in this DAMP.

CAT TRAP SERVICE

The City provides a cat-trapping service for residents experiencing nuisance cat issues. Residents can request a cat trap, which is delivered and kept at their property for one week.

Cats that are humanely trapped are collected by Council officers. Registered cats are returned to their owners, while unregistered cats are impounded. Follow-up enforcement action is taken for registered cat owners where necessary.

The infringement penalty for a wandering cat is lower than for a similar offence involving dogs. The relatively low penalty may contribute to the number of cat nuisance complaints, as it may not provide a sufficient deterrent.

RETHINK ROAMING

In 2025, the City of Greater Geelong was one of six Councils identified to partner with the RSPCA on a "Rethink Roaming" campaign. This campaign is designed to encourage cat containment through education and practical tips owners can use to safely and successfully contain their pet.

The Rethink Roaming campaign provides information on:

- Injuries and illness cats are likely to sustain whist outside, and the cost of treatment for these issues.
- How far cats roam when wandering, including an interactive map to depict risks in your local area.
- How a cats life expectancy can be significantly increased by keeping them indoors.
- How owners can contain their cat, build enclosures and manage transitioning their cat to indoor life.
- Different enrichment strategies for indoor cats.
- Other key elements of responsible cat ownership such as desexing, registration and microchipping.
- Short courses and a pet behaviour helpline.

The City will partner with the RSPCA and Bunnings to provide low cost cat enclosure construction demonstrations.

WHAT WE ASKED AND WHAT WE HEARD

Did you know, cats must be contained to their property from sunset to sunrise?

Yes (98.1 per cent)

Did you know, cats can be deemed a 'nuisance' re: trespassing on neighbouring properties?

Yes (78.3 per cent)

Do you see cats roaming at night?

- Always (21.6 per cent)
- Often (23 per cent)
- Sometimes (24.3 per cent)
- Rarely (19.6 per cent)
- Never (11.5 per cent)

Do you see cats preying on wildlife?

- Always (10.4 per cent)
- Often (16.4 per cent)
- Sometimes (17.7 per cent)
- Rarely (28.7 per cent)
- Never (26.8 per cent)

Do you see cats appearing unowned?

- Always (7.1 per cent)
- Often (11.9 per cent)
- Sometimes (26 per cent)
- Rarely (27.7 per cent)
- Never (27.3 per cent)

Do you see cats fighting other cats?

- Always (3.9 per cent)
- Often (8.7 per cent)
- Sometimes (21 per cent)
- Rarely (33.2 per cent)
- Never (33.2 per cent)

Do you see cats confined to their property?

- Always (5.2 per cent)
- Often (30.1 per cent)
- Sometimes (30 per cent)
- Rarely (23.5 per cent)
- Never (11.2 per cent)

Do you see/experience cats damaging property?

- Always (3.2 per cent)
- Often (3.9 per cent)
- Sometimes (15.6 per cent)
- Rarely (28.5 per cent)
- Never (48.8 per cent)

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Promote cat containment as an effective means of reducing nuisance complaints, enabling cats to live long healthy lives and protect our natural environment.
- Support our community to transition to cat containment.
- Ensure our cat management strategies are aligned with best practice in animal welfare.

Actions	When	Evaluation
Support the implementation of the State Cat Management Strategy across as many areas of the City's cat-related services as possible	Ongoing	Alignment with Strategy
Reintroduction of a discount cat desexing program, by exploring partnership with the NDN and/or other welfare groups	Year 2	Subsidised desexing funded and implemented
Explore partnering with local community groups in our region to aid with the construction of cat enclosures for community members with low means or physical ability	Year 3	Owners feel empowered and supported
Increased promotion of cat-related messaging regarding desexing benefits and discounted programs, cat curfew and benefits of containment, "what to do when…"	Quarterly	Reduction in nuisance complaints
Advocacy for the State Government to increase the infringement penalty of wandering cats	Year 1	Submission made
Continued partnership in RSPCA's Rethink Roaming campaign	Ongoing	More cats contained, reduction in nuisance complaints

NUISANCE DOGS

This section of the plan addresses Sections 68A(2)(c)(vi) and 68A(2) (a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs to create a nuisance.

Animal nuisance caused by dogs can considerably affect a person's enjoyment of their home and impact on the safety of community members. Educating pet owners on how to minimise nuisance from their pets is a key focus of this Plan.

WHAT WE DO

Animal Management respond to and investigate all nuisance dog complaints and attempt to achieve a positive resolution for all parties.

BARKING DOGS

Barking dog complaints are one of the most common nuisance complaints the City receives, with 1,908 complaints received in 2024/25. With smaller property sizes, and significant development occurring, it is anticipated that this number will increase with population growth.

Barking dogs can be a significant source of irritation for community members. Barking is a natural form of communication for dogs, but excessive barking may indicate that the dog is experiencing a problem or has an unmet need.

Barking dog complaints can be highly emotive and stressful for both the complainant and the dog owner, and they can be time-intensive for Council officers to investigate and resolve. Investigations often rely on evidence provided by complainants, such as barking dog diaries, which can sometimes increase frustration. Many complaints can be resolved quickly by notifying the owner, as they may be unaware that their dog is barking excessively and causing a nuisance.

We know that assistance is needed by the City to provide owners information on how to resolve nuisance barking, and how an aggrieved resident could resolve the matter independent of Council. The DAMP will focus on providing readily accessible information to the public relating to nuisance animals. It will also focus on ensuring our processes are transparent and evidence requirements are understood by complainants.

DOG LITTER

Dog litter is also a common cause of concern and complaint of our community. Failing to pick up after a dog can cause harm to the environment, potential health impacts to other animals and people, and cause a nuisance to members of the community.

Councils Neighbourhood Amenity Local Laws 2024 prescribes that a person in control of an animal must not allow any excrement to remain in any public place, and that a person in control of an animal must carry a litter device suitable to clean up animal excrement.

The City provide limited dog poo bag dispensers and bins across many reserves and trails. This program costs the City a significant amount of money, with each bin and dispenser costing $1,300 per annum. Unfortunately, this service is sometimes abused, where residents at times take more than what is needed for their walk. Due to cost of this service, the City is not able to expand this program, and residents need to provide their own bags which can be placed in any available waste bin.

Our Animal Management team regularly provides free portable bag dispensers at community events and to owners who are found without the necessary means to clean up after their dogs.

WHAT WE ASKED AND WHAT WE HEARD

Do you see dogs off-leash in on-leash areas?

- Always (21.3 per cent)
- Often (33.3 per cent)
- Sometimes (29.9 per cent)
- Rarely (12.8 per cent)
- Never (2.7 per cent)

Do you see dogs in playgrounds?

- Always (3.0 per cent)
- Often (14.4 per cent)
- Sometimes (27.0 per cent)
- Rarely (31.2 per cent)
- Never (24.4 per cent)

Have you noticed dogs barking excessively in your local area?

- Always (7.3 per cent)
- Often (18.4 per cent)
- Sometimes (34.3 per cent)
- Rarely (32.8 per cent)
- Never (7.2 per cent)

Do you see dogs annoying or menacing other dogs?

- Always (5.2 per cent)
- Often (17.5 per cent)
- Sometimes (35.5 per cent)
- Rarely (32.6 per cent)
- Never (9.2 per cent)

How often do you see dog poo left on the ground?

- Always (30 per cent)
- Often (35.9 per cent)
- Sometimes (24.3 per cent)
- Rarely (8.8 per cent)
- Never (1.0 per cent)

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Support our residents to ensure their dogs do not create a nuisance in the community.
- Provide valuable information across a range of mediums that assist residents in meeting their legal responsibilities.
- Empower our community to resolve issues that impact them.

Action	When	Evaluation
Review and streamline our barking dog process and provide more upfront transparency around procedure requirements	Year 1	Retrospective pulse touch with complainants regarding experience
To better communicate nuisance investigation actions, progress and outcomes, ensuring a customer first focus	Ongoing	Reduction in escalated complaints
Explore more robust messaging in public campaigns and signage related to dog poo	Year 2	Campaign delivered

COMMUNITY AND OPEN SPACE NEEDS

Limited lot sizes in new residential estates and a lack of open space for exercising dogs can present challenges for residents in growth areas. These conditions can contribute to problem behaviours in dogs, such as frequent escaping, digging, chewing and excessive barking.

To provide dog owners with opportunities to exercise and socialise their pets, designated off-leash areas are available in many reserves and coastal locations. However, these spaces are also used by other members of the community. For shared spaces to meet the needs of all users, dog owners must follow certain rules, such as keeping their animal under effective control, when their dog is off-leash.

In Greater Geelong, dogs must be kept on-leash in all public areas unless signage indicates otherwise. This requirement helps reduce conflicts between dogs and the community and protects areas of cultural or environmental significance. Due to the size of the municipality, enforcement of these rules can be challenging.

WHAT WE DO

Information regarding the City's dog control orders, including leashing requirement and areas where dogs are prohibited are depicted on an interactive map on the City's website.

DOG PARKS

Throughout our previous DAMP, the City delivered several fully-fenced dog parks across Greater Geelong including Stead Park Corio, Belmont Dog Park, Lara Dog Park and Aldershot Reserve in St Albans Park.

Dog parks are designed to give dogs a space to exercise and socialise under the close supervision of their owners. Dog parks are a great asset for everyone within our community. As well as providing fully fenced spaces for dogs to explore and play, they separate off-leash animals from those in the community who may feel less comfortable around dogs.

TIMED ACCESS TO SPORTING RESERVES AND EQUESTRIAN AREAS

In addition to dedicated dog parks, the City maintains many grassed sporting reserves where dogs under effective control may be exercised off-lead when no organised sport is taking place. Dogs may also be exercised off-lead at some equestrian areas when horses are not present.

This vastly increases the availability of open spaces for dogs to enjoy off-leash exercise and socialisation.

EVENTS

The Animal Management team attends domestic pet–focused and City-run events throughout the year, including Million Paws Walk, Paws for GAWS, Warralily Pet Market, WWRG Dog's Day Out and other relevant events as appropriate.

SAFETY

It remains the responsibility of dog owners to ensure they are acting responsibly and abiding by dog leashing requirements when out in public, including the requirement to have dogs under effective control. We know there are many in our community who feel that this does not always happen, and that improved compliance is needed for the safety and wellbeing of all open space users.

The Animal Management team completes a combined 20 hours of proactive patrolling per week, focused on many high traffic areas such as beaches, trails and reserves across Greater Geelong. This presence helps motivate dog owners to do the right thing, and in turn creates an improved feeling of safety as a result of better compliance.

WHAT WE ASKED AND WHAT WE HEARD

What are the main benefits of being a pet owner?

- Companionship
- Cuddles & comfort
- Physical exercise
- Increased social interaction
- Sense of responsibiility
- Protection

Do you feel safe in the presence of domestic animals when using the City's open spaces?

- Yes, all the time (23 per cent)
- Most of the time (54 per cent)
- Sometimes (16 per cent)
- Rarely (5 per cent)
- No, never (2 per cent)

Why do you feel unsafe?

- Dogs off-leash in on-leash areas
- Lack of owner control and responsibility
- Aggressive or unpredicatable dog behaviour

What ideas do you have to improve experiences with pets in the community?

- More dog parks
- Infrastructure improvements including:
  - Added lighting
  - Water fountains for pets
  - Clearer signage
  - More fully fenced areas
- Community events:
  - Pet markets and festivals
  - Meet-the-ranger days
  - Council led dog training and pet behaviour classes
- School-based and community pet education
- Tech innovation:
  - Booking system for dog parks
  - Smart reporting apps for pet incidences
  - QR coded pet tags

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Support residents to share open spaces to improve feelings of safety for some through education and enforcement where appropriate.
- Maintain proactive patrols and expand this where possible.
- Further educate community on regulations and what it means to have your dog under effective control.
- Respond to complaints and target our resourcing to areas of high complaint.

Actions	When	Evaluation
Commitment to building a minimum of two new dog parks; one at Sparrowvale (confirmed and funded), and one on the Bellarine (pending funding and location)	Year 1 Ongoing	Construction completed
Design and deliver school-based pet education sessions	Year 3	Number of sessions delivered
Explore the addition of a dedicated Patrol & Safety Officer to the team, pending funding, to better meet community expectation	Year 2	Position considered
Targeted marketing campaign related to "doggy etiquette" in our shared public spaces	Year 3	Campaign completed
Explore the delivery of an annual pet expo / pets in the park event	Year 3	First expo delivered
Reviews the City's Dog Control Orders	Year 2	Review completed

DOG ATTACKS

This section of the Plan address Sections 68A(2)(c)(iii) and 68A(2) (a),(c)(i),(c)(ii),(d),(f) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 by outlining strategies to minimise the risk of injury to people and other animals resulting from dog attacks.

Responding to dog attacks remains a top priority for our Animal Management officers. Aggressive dogs pose a significant safety risk and are treated with the highest priority.

Most dog attacks occur when dogs are not contained to their property or are not adequately controlled by an owner in public. Dogs that have not been effectively socialised with other animals, or have known triggers that have not been addressed, are more likely to demonstrate aggression. Responsible pet ownership is the key theme of our Plan, and through implementing the actions in our Plan it is hoped dog attack reports will decrease over time.

WHAT WE DO

PROACTIVE ACTIONS AND EDUCATION

- We conduct inspections of properties where dogs have escaped through improper fencing, and issue Notices to Comply for rectification of improper containment.
- Inspect properties of all declared Dangerous and Menacing dogs to ensure they are being kept in compliance with requirements and take follow up actions where necessary.
- Respond to all reports of dogs at large and collect dogs found wandering to ensure animal and community safety.
- Hold dogs at the pound pending fencing rectification works.
- Dog attack prevention information distributed via brochures and on the City's website.
- Regularly review our dog attack investigation processes to ensure best practice and procedural fairness.
- Train our officers to respond to dog attacks and execute thorough investigations.

INVESTIGATE DOG ATTACK REPORTS

During the 2024/25 financial year, officers investigated 251 reported dog attacks. The dog attacks have been against people and other animals and have been non-serious and serious in nature. See below table depicting dog attack types across the previous four years:

Attack type	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Serious Human	11	12	23	32
Serious Animal	60	62	69	64
Non-serious Human	53	45	72	59
Non-serious Animal	93	85	75	96
Total	**217**	**204**	**239**	**251**

Based on the above data, dog attack numbers are increasing both in number and severity, with notably more human victims in the previous 12 months. These statistics are alarming and require further analysis.

At the commencement of an investigation, an information pack is provided to both the victim and the dog owner. This pack is beneficial in helping the parties understand the process of the investigation and manages their expectations with transparency.

The dog owner pack contains information on all aspects of an investigation, including possible dog seizure, attending a record of interview, and potential outcomes such as an appearance at the Magistrates' Court or a Dangerous Dog Declaration.

The victim pack contains information on the investigation process, providing a formal statement, giving evidence in court, and the support services available to them.

DOG SEIZURE

When a dog attack is reported, officers make an initial assessment to determine whether the dog should be seized. The primary consideration in this assessment is community safety. This decision is based on several factors, including the seriousness of the attack, any known history of the dog's behaviour, and the owner's actions and ability to securely contain the animal. In 2024–25, officers seized 64 dogs while investigations into reported attacks were underway.

ENFORCEMENT OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of an investigation and based on the available evidence, Council will determine what offences are alleged to have occurred and what outcomes are appropriate in the circumstances. Serious injury offences are prosecuted at the Magistrates Court. In 2024/25 Council successfully prosecuted eight serious dog attack matters.

Non-serious dog attack offences can be enforced via infringement; 15 were issued in 2024/25.

Pursuant to Clause 25 of Council's Neighbourhood Amenity Local Law 2024, officers can also place conditions on dogs who have previously attacked to reduce the chance of them re-offending, via an Individual Animal Permit.

We may also seek to declare dogs as Menacing or Dangerous pursuant to Section 34(1) Domestic Animals Act 1994 if deemed appropriate. A Declaration places significant control measures on dogs and their owners and as such is done so with careful deliberation, community safety being the primary consideration.

WHAT WE WILL DO

- Analyse available information to understand where and why dog attacks are occurring so as to better direct our resources and target our messaging.
- Ensure our community are empowered and educated on how to both prevent and report dog attacks.

Actions	When	Evaluation
Track where and how dog attacks are most commonly occurring; including dog breed and status, circumstances and demographics of those primarily affected to inform prevention initiatives	Year 1	Data tracking established and embedded into practice
Increase visibility of officers in public spaces	Ongoing	Reduction in dog attack occurrences
Review our website content related to dog attacks – response and prevention	Year 1	Website reviewed and updated
Establish and maintain a database of every animal that has attacked people, pets, wildlife and livestock	Year 1	Database established
Work with GAWS to offer pet behaviour expertise to our community	Year 2	Establishment of a joint education project
Consider publishing enforcement and prosecution outcomes across media platforms	Year 1	Considered and actioned if agreed

ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORTING

This section of the Plan addresses Section 68A(3) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, outlining review and reporting requirements.

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 states that every Council must:

- Review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually and if appropriate, amend the plan.
- Provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan.
- Publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

WHAT WE DO

- Establish a yearly action plan designed to allocate resources, track actions and evaluate plan implementation.
- Identify, monitor and evaluate actions and programs through the department's annual Business Plan process.
- Monitor data and trends throughout the life of the plan to respond and amend our services where required.
- Publish an evaluation of the plan in Councils Annual Report.
- Review our DAMP annually in December and provide any amendments to the relevant State Government Secretary.
- Report annually through Council's established reporting systems, in accordance with the requirements of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework. (LGPRF)

WHAT WE WILL DO

Actions	When	Evaluation
Provide the relevant State Department Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan	December 2025 and annually thereafter	Copy provided to Secretary
Review the DAMP annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan	Annually	Review completed
Publish an evaluation of implementation of the plan in Council's Annual Report	Annually	Report published
Full review and update of plan including community engagement to inform the next DAMP	Year 4	Review completed

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG
Wadawurrung Country
PO Box 104
Geelong VIC 3220
P: 5272 5272
E: contactus@geelongcity.vic.gov.au
www.geelongaustralia.com.au

© City of Greater Geelong 2025

LATEST NEWS:

@CityofGreaterGeelong

@GreaterGeelong

@CityofGreaterGeelong

CityofGreaterGeelong

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG