

Knox City Council

DRAFT Domestic Animal Management Plan

4 Year Plan

2026-2029

DRAFT

1 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

1.1 PURPOSE OF DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Knox Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) has been developed in line with the legislative requirement that all councils develop a DAMP every four years. Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) states that “each Council must, in consultation with the Secretary, prepare a domestic animal management plan on 4 December 2021 and at the end of each period of 4 years after that day.” The DAMP details Council’s strategies and actions for the management of dogs and cats, including providing education to the community, promoting responsible pet ownership, and minimising problems generated by irresponsible pet owners.

Knox City Council has used a consultative approach to the development of this Plan to consider opinions and feedback from residents, local domestic animal businesses and other relevant stakeholders. Through the consultation process many Knox residents emphasised that dogs and cats are important members of their family.

Animal management is now a specialised industry that has evolved from simply collecting stray dogs and addressing compliance issues. Council plays a key role in promoting responsible animal ownership in the community, essential to maintaining sustainable communities and a healthy environment. The Plan broadly outlines the following nine areas of focus:

1. Training of authorised officers;
2. Responsible Pet ownership;
3. Overpopulation and high euthanasia
4. Registration and identification;
5. Nuisances;
6. Dog attacks;
7. Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs;
8. Domestic animal businesses; and
9. Other matters (e.g. Council Orders).

Following a review of the 2021-2025 DAMP, it was identified that many of the 96 listed action items of that plan reflected business-as-usual activities already embedded in Knox’s day-to-day animal management operations. All of these actions have been highlighted in the current/ongoing activities section for each focus area. For this updated Plan, the focus has been on identifying clear, deliverable, and actionable items that will drive meaningful outcomes in addition to Council’s business as usual animal management practices over the next four years. Actions identified in the DAMP include initiatives to:

- Investigate initiatives to increase the number of desexed dogs
- Review animal management provisions in the Knox Amenity Local Law to ensure animal management clauses adequately address the needs of the community
- Address dog waste through investigating opportunities to provide dog waste bags to pet owners and review the provision of bins within our parkland and reserves

- Investigate the renewal of section 26 order, including a review of Councils off leash areas
- Implement programs to increase the number of pet registrations
- Review and update barking dog process and material provided to support the community
- Partner with Council's Biodiversity team to run targeted education campaigns where the impact of semi-owned cats on biologically significant areas is known
- Produce information or signage in multi-lingual formats including desexing and registration requirements.

1.2 PROCESS APPLIED IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN

The development of this Plan was informed by community and stakeholder consultation, feedback from elected Councillors, Council staff, research and benchmarking. This Plan builds on the previous Plans, with the aim to deliver better animal management services for the Knox community for the next 4 years.

The community engagement for the development of this plan included two rounds of consultation:

- Phase 1 – consultation to gather feedback from a broad range of stakeholders on their feedback and ideas for the next Plan (March/April 2025); and
- Phase 2 – consultation to gather feedback on the draft 2026-2029 Plan (TBC).

The Phase 1 engagement undertook consultation with the local community and domestic animal businesses, to hear and understand our community's views on how cats and dogs are managed in the Knox municipality, including feedback on Council's animal management services and suggestions on what could be improved. A total of 376 responses were received from the community, businesses, and internal engagement through the following channels:

Engagement Activity	Responses
Have Your Say Survey	351
Email responses	17
Internal consultations	8
Council Advisory Committees	6

The engagement was promoted through a range of Council's communication channels including: a flyer distributed to over all registered cats and dogs; pop up engagement sessions held at Council's Knox Festival and Pets in the Park events; signs installed in key parks across the municipality; news articles in Council's newsletters and website; Facebook advertising; and direct emails to a range of stakeholders, inviting them to provide feedback.

Key findings of the Phase 1 engagement included:

- Dogs off Leash improvements – including the opportunity to review Council's Section 26 order.
- Dog Waste management – including investigating the installation of additional waste bins and dog waste bag dispensers.

- Cat Containment – including support and opposition to the restrictions initiated by the previous 2021-2025 DAMP and implemented in 2022.
- Desexing and responsible pet ownership – including reduced cost desexing.
- Animal registration fees – including reducing or removing fees for cat owners that keep their cats inside and a fee structure for people who have not had any complaints regarding their pets.
- Responsible pet ownership – including increased education for dog and cat owners.
- Dog socialisation and training – including Council providing spaces for dog training, educating owners on the benefits of training and running regular free dog training sessions for the community.
- Dog nuisances – including the onerous process to report barking dogs to Council and dogs approaching people and their dogs in open spaces.
- Signage review – including installing additional signage for open spaces relating to dogs on/off leash and reminders for owners to pick up after their pets.
- Increased enforcement – including higher penalties for people doing the wrong thing and Officers increasing park patrols.

The Phase 2 engagement period in XXX offered the community an opportunity to provide their feedback on the draft Plan. A total of XX responses were provided....

The 2025 Annual Community Satisfaction Survey showed that Knox's Animal Management service received a score of 7.7 out of 10 for satisfaction. This has remained relatively stable from 2024 which saw a result of 7.9 out of 10 for satisfaction. Some of highest reported reasons for dissatisfaction were often seeing unleashed dogs, cats wandering, dogs barking and owners not picking up their animal waste.

1.3 DEMOGRAPHIC AND PROFILE OF COUNCIL

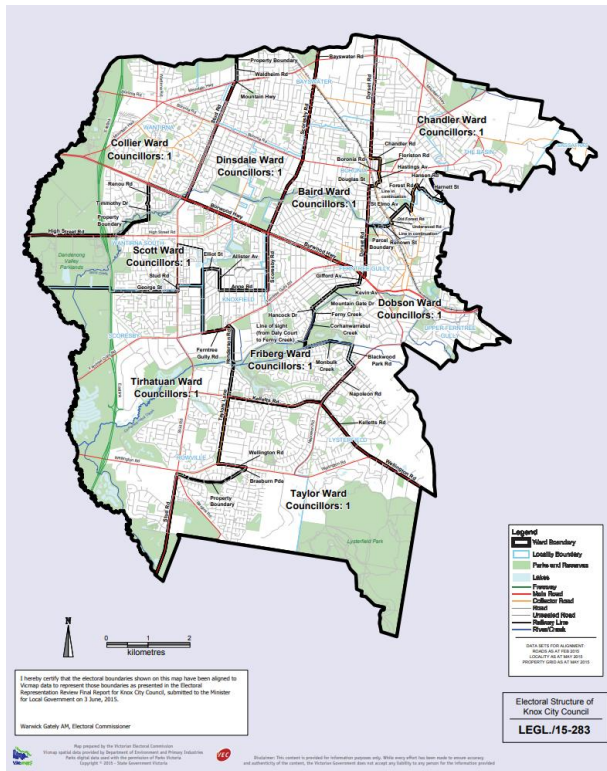
Knox is a municipality located approximately 25kms east of the Melbourne GPO, with over 163,000 residents living across eleven localities.

Knox covers an area spanning 114 square kilometres and includes the suburbs of Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Boronia, The Basin, Rowville, Wantirna, Wantirna South, Lysterfield, Knoxfield, Scoresby and Bayswater. The last census data from 2021 shows that, approximately 31% of households used a language other than English at home, with the top languages being Mandarin 7.3%, Cantonese 3.5%, Sinhalese 1.7%, Greek 1.1% and Hindi 0.9%. In 2021, the median age of all people in Knox was 40, with 23% of people under the age of 19 and 31% of people over the age of 55. It is forecast that the total population for the municipality will reach almost 185,000 by 2046.

As at June 2025, Knox had 16,640 dogs registered and 6,482 cats registered. For the 2056/2026 registration period, Knox had a total of 19 domestic animal businesses registered. They included:

- 6 pet shops
- 4 dog training businesses

- 8 boarding facilities
- 1 animal rearing facility.



1.4 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Knox City Council delivers over 100 services to support our community at all stages of life and they are aligned to six Council and Health and Wellbeing themes. The 2026-2029 DAMP aligns with 'Being a strong voice for safety', the Plan intends to keep the community feeling safe, respected and supported in public spaces and at home. We are committed to continuously improving our services to best meet the needs of our diverse community now and into the future.

Council's Community Laws team forms part of the City Safety and Health Department which sits in the broader City Liveability Directorate. Community Laws team aims to promote and protect the safety, health and amenity of the community so the objectives of the Knox Vision can be realised. This will be achieved through integrated planning, community education and engagement, service provision, community capacity building, regulation and enforcement.

Council's Community Laws business unit delivers a range of services and programs, which includes the education and enforcement of state and local legislation. The business unit's services include animal management, parking enforcement, local laws and emergency management.

The business unit consists of the following authorised Animal Management Officers:

- 1 Coordinator, Community Laws & Emergency Management
- 2 Team Leader Community Laws and Animal Management

- 1 Team Leader, Parking Management
- 1 Emergency Management Lead
- 6 Senior Community Laws/ Animal Management Officers
- 3 Community Laws/ Animal Management Officers
- 3 Parking Officers.

The department is further supported by dedicated Business Support and Prosecutions teams.

1.5 DOMESTIC ANIMAL STATISTICS

	2012-2013	2016-2017	2020-2021	2024-25
Population	>154,000	> 157,000	>165,000	>163,000
No. of authorised animal management officers	10	9	9	12
Number of Domestic Animal Businesses	22	22	28	19
Dogs in Knox				
No. of registered dogs (total)	18,805	18,839	18,233 at Sept 2021	16,640 At Feb 2025
No. of registered restricted breed dogs	6	3	1	0
No. of registered declared menacing dogs	3	1	1	0
No. of registered declared dangerous dogs	6	6	11	8
Dogs impounded at the pound	784	630	326	259
Dogs reclaimed from pound	579	501	275	186
Dogs adopted	130	71	29	40
Dogs reclaimed by owner or adopted %	90.4%	90.8%	93.3%	87.3%
Dogs euthanised	98	39	18	26
Dogs euthanised %	12.5%	6.2%	5.5%	10%
Customer requests responded to:				
. Dogs – Barking	597	394	51	36
. Dogs – Pick up	799	601	384	206
. Dogs – Wandering at large	453	266	169	184
. Dog – Attacks	122	95	140	106
. Dog - Rush	75	47	39	46
Cats in Knox				
No. of registered cats (total)	5,878	6,266	7,294 at Sept 2021	6482 At Feb 2025
Cats impounded at the pound	436	402	296	302
Cats reclaimed from pound	59	65	61	61
Cats adopted	236	215	147	154
Cats reclaimed by owner or adopted %	67.7%	69.7%	70.3%	71.2%
Cats euthanised	142	88	76	52
Cats euthanised %	32.6%	21.9%	26.7%	17.2%
Customer requests responded to:				
. Cat cage requests	196	150	100	244
. Cats picked up	244	199	182	224

During the life of the 2021–2025 Plan, Council observed a decrease in the number of registered cats and dogs. This decline is largely attributed to a number of registration initiatives including proactive door knocks, property inspections, and analysis of microchip registries being suspended during the

COVID-19 pandemic and in the years immediately following this period. Increasing animal registration compliance is a key focus of this Plan, as outlined in Section 5 below.

1.6 OUR ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS

CURRENT ORDERS MADE UNDER THE DOMESTIC ANIMALS ACT 1994:

Under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, Councils have the authority to make orders that regulate the keeping and management of dogs and cats within their municipality. These orders typically address matters such as cat confinement, designated off-leash areas for dogs, and mandatory desexing. Knox City Council currently have three such orders in place, as outlined below:

Dogs in public places (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 26) adopted by Council in November 2005

This order provides that dogs are permitted to be off lead, but under effective control in a public park or recreation reserve, subject to conditions. The order took effect from 10 April 2006.

Mandatory desexing of cats (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 10A(1)) adopted by Council in August 2010

The order provides that Knox City Council will not, after 10 April 2011, accept the registration of a cat unless the cat is desexed or exempted under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* from any requirements to be desexed. Any cat that is not desexed cannot be registered.

Cat containment (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 25(2)) adopted by Council in August 2021

This order requires all cats to be contained to property at all times and took effect from 10 April 2022.

CURRENT LOCAL LAWS UNDER KNOX AMENITY LOCAL LAW 2020:

Local Laws are rules made by Councils to support community safety, public health, and the effective management of local spaces within their municipality. These laws cover a range of issues that help to protect community well-being and local assets. Knox City Council currently have three Local Laws in place that specifically assist in managing cats and dogs, as outlined below:

Limits on number of animals kept (*Amenity Local Law 2020* section 4.1)

- An owner or occupier of private land, the area of which is less than or equal to 4,000 square metres must not, without a permit, keep or allow to be kept on that private land more than 2 dogs or 2 cats.

Removal of animal waste (*Amenity Local Law 2020* section 4.6 & 4.7)

- 4.6 A person in charge of an animal on Council land or on a road must carry a facility for the effective removal of any waste that may be deposited by that animal.
- 4.7 A person in charge of an animal on Council land or on a road must collect from the Council land or road and appropriately dispose of any waste deposited by that animal. Removal of animal waste (Amenity Local Law 2020 section 4.6 & 4.7)

Animal noise and odour (Amenity Local Law 2020 section 4.8 & 4.9)

- 4.8 The owner of an animal and the owner or occupier of the private land on which the animal is kept must not allow noise or odour to emanate from the animal as to interfere with the amenity of the immediate area.
- 4.9 Clause 4.8 does not apply to any class of animal where another Act or legislation applies.

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2. TRAINING OF AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Section 68(A)(2)(b) of the Act requires Council to 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.

The animal management staff within the Community Laws team are multi-skilled, and in addition to animal management matters, administer and enforce a range of other legislative and regulatory requirements. Knox Community Laws officers undertake regular training relevant to their role, including:

- Animal handling
- Customer service
- Conflict resolution
- Investigations
- Prosecutions.

2.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Knox City Council requires all authorised officers to possess adequate qualifications and skills, and ensure officers undergo appropriate training/ re-training relevant to their role. The table below highlights authorised officer training requirements for Knox Authorised Officers.

Core capabilities (required training or equivalent experience essential) are shown below.

Approved Officer Training	Current Status (2025)	Planned
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificate IV Animal Regulation & Management• Government (Statutory Compliance)• Government (Investigations)• Government (Court Compliance)	6 officers either have a minimum certificate IV qualification or in excess of five years' relevant experience	Training assigned as required and determined through Performance Development Review Process
Animal Management training and information days	All officers have the opportunity to attend this training	Offered regularly by the relevant State Government agency
Municipal Association of Victoria and Local Government Professionals training and Information days	All officers have the opportunity to attend this training	Offered regularly by the relevant State Government agency
Baton training	All officers have completed this training	Refresher training completed annually
Situational awareness	All officers have completed this training	Refresher training completed annually
Nationally accredited first aid and CPR training	All officers have the opportunity to attend this training	Training assigned as required and determined through Performance Development Review Process

Induction program for new staff, including familiarisation with work instructions and animal management tasks	All officers have completed this training	All new staff inducted upon commencement
Australian Institute of Animal Management – Annual Conference	All officers have the opportunity to attend this training	Participation when available
Industry training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal handling • Animal assessment • Statement taking • Prosecution • Restricted breed dog identification • DNA collection 	Ongoing	Training assigned as required and determined through Performance Development Review Process
OH&S – dealing with aggressive customers, dealing with aggressive animals	As required	Training assigned as required and determined through Performance Development Review Process
Customer Service – including Conflict Resolution	As required	Training assigned as required and determined through Performance Development Review Process
Family violence awareness training	All officers have completed this training	Participation when available

2.2 OUR PLANNED TRAINING FOR AUTHORISED OFFICERS

To ensure that all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work, and to deliver services in a manner which ensures officer and animal safety and welfare, current/ ongoing activities include:

- Seek qualifications (or equivalent) relevant to the role when recruiting new staff.
- Attendance of relevant animal management training and information days offered by the relevant State Government agency.
- Attendance of Animal Management Officers at Municipal Association of Victoria and Local Government Professionals training and information days.
- Attendance of Animal Management Officers at the Australian Institute of Animal Management annual conference.
- Provide all staff with access to Council's Corporate Learning calendar.
- All staff to complete Council's Corporate Compliance training.
- Attendance of Municipal Association of Victoria, Local Government Professionals, RSPCA and other relevant training sessions, workshops and seminars attended by officers.
- Enhance Animal Management Officers skills in animal behaviour – including, identifying risk behaviours and managing nuisance animals.
- Enhance Animal Management Officers mediation skills and customer service training
- Attendance by staff and involvement in relevant industry committees or forums.

2.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 2.0: Ensure all Officers involved in animal management are appropriately qualified and skilled

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
2.0.1	Develop training plans for each individual officer	Annually	Review annually to determine training goals and identification of skill gaps, as part of the work and development plan for each individual officer
2.0.2	Develop an induction program for all new officers	2026	Induction program implemented

3. PROGRAMS TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP AND COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION

Section 68A(2)(c)(i) of the Act requires Council to outline the programs, services and strategies to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats.

3.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The responsible ownership of dogs and cats encompasses a broad range of issues and stakeholders, to ensure the welfare needs of the animals are met, whilst ensuring that the animals do not pose any safety or nuisance concerns within the community.

A portion of every animal registration is paid to the State Government each year as a state levy, with the registered pet owners and animal businesses of Knox contributing in excess of \$103,000 in the 2024/2025 financial year. This funding is used by Animal Welfare Victoria to provide a range of community and education programs, including responsible pet ownership programs and We Are Family Program for children in our municipality.

The Responsible Pet Ownership (RPO) and 'We Are Family Program' programs are targeted at children from ages 0 to 12 and include:

- The RPO program teaches children aged 4 to 12 years old about living safely with dogs and responsible pet ownership. The pet educators and their dogs visit over 2,000 kindergartens and 800 primary schools in Victoria each year to promote the vital safety messages through animated presentations, song and role play.
- 'We Are Family Program' educates expectant parents and parents of children 0 to 4 years old on pet safety around young children. The program is delivered through antenatal centres in 70 hospitals and 680 maternal and child health centres each year.

Knox City Council has a number of ongoing education and promotional activities in place, which include:

- Responsible pet ownership is promoted through Pets in the Park; an event held annually.
- Promotion of information sessions about responsible animal ownership for both children and the community.
- Promotion of registration and responsible pet ownership in Council's Knox News publication.
- Website: Council's website contains a wide variety of information in relation to responsible pet ownership and annual registration.
- Patrols: Proactive and complaint-based park patrols are undertaken throughout the year.
- Social media: Council promotes a number of responsible pet ownership topics via social media channels including Facebook.

3.2 OUR ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS

CURRENT ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS APPLICABLE TO THIS SECTION:

- **Dogs in public places (*Domestic Animals Act 1994*, section 26) adopted in 2005**
- **Mandatory desexing of cats (*Domestic Animals Act 1994*, section 10A(1)) adopted in 2011**
- **Cat containment (*Domestic Animals Act 1994*, section 25(2)) adopted in 2021**
- **Limits on number of animals kept (*Amenity Local Law 2020* section 4.1)**
- **Removal of animal waste (*Amenity Local Law 2020* section 4.6 & 4.7)**

3.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 3.0: Educate and promote responsible pet ownership messaging to pet owners

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
3.0.1	Develop an annual communication plan to support animal management objectives, incorporating messaging on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The benefits of pet registration (i.e.. reuniting lost pets)• Containing and keeping dogs under effective control• Dogs on leash/off lead in Knox• Promote desexing of cats and dogs to prevent overpopulation• How to report and prevent dog attacks• Picking up dog waste/carrying waste bags• Managing barking dog complaints• Managing cat nuisances• Promoting State Government initiatives around responsible pet ownership	Ongoing	Annual communication plan developed, updated and implemented.
3.0.2	Investigate additional ways to provide Council and State Government educational materials to newly registered dog and cat owners	December 2028	Material provided to owners
3.0.3	Engage a qualified animal trainer to run free or discounted sessions in Council reserves.	Ongoing	Number of owners who participate in these sessions.
3.0.4	Investigate pro-active dog programs relating to education and engagement of dog owners.	December 2027	Report brought to Council by December 2026

4. PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS OVER-POPULATION RATES AND ANY HIGH EUTHANASIA RATES

Section 68A(2)(c)(iv) of the Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats.

4.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

During the life of the 2021-2025 DAMP, there has been an increase in the number of euthanised impounded cats and dogs. This is largely due to a rise in animal surrenders post-COVID and an increase in impounded cats from hoarding circumstances, many of which were diseased or had behavioural issues. Moving forward, Council will work closely with our Pound provider, Animal Aid, to implement early intervention strategies that help keep pets in their homes and address behavioural concerns—ultimately aiming to reduce euthanasia rates.

In 2021 Council received grant funding from State Government to provide a reduced cost desexing program for eligible vulnerable and/or disadvantaged residents. As a part of this funding, Knox helped desex 99 cats and dogs. This grant is now exhausted however Council will look to apply for any additional grants put forward by the State Government to reinitiate this program.

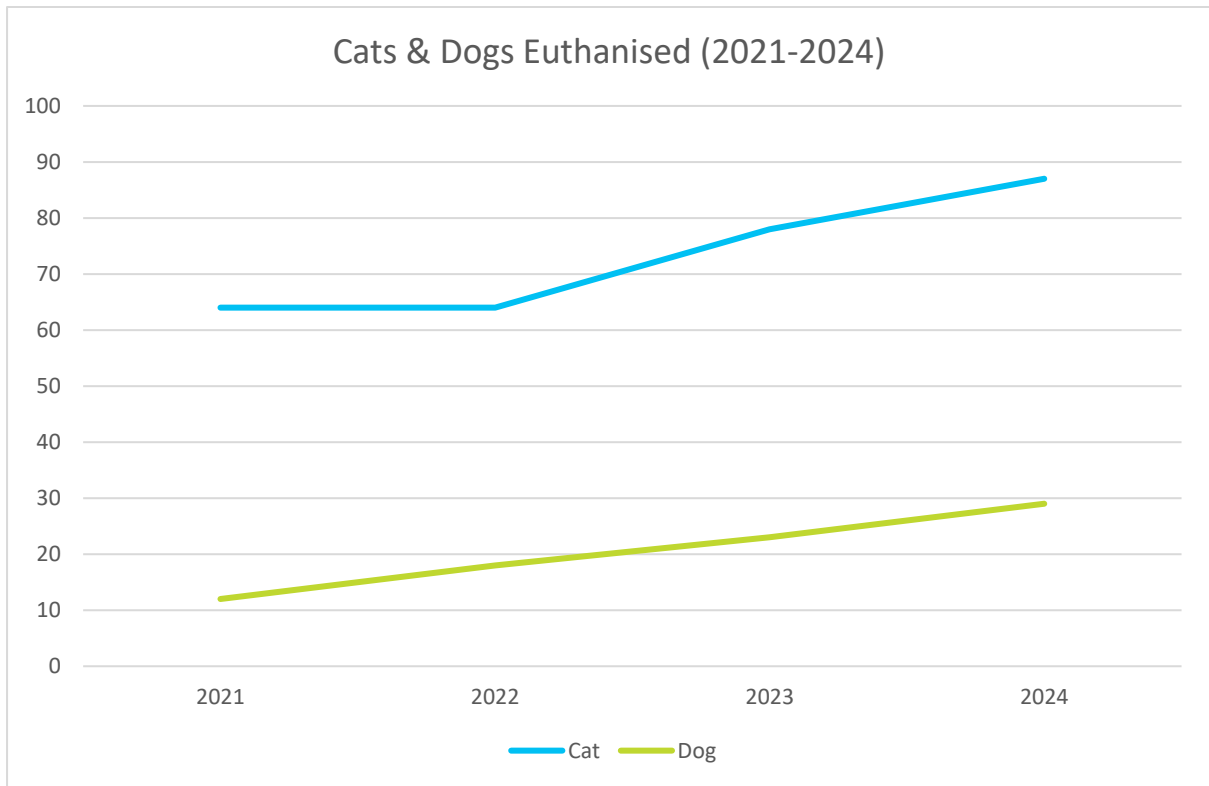
One potential measure to reduce euthanasia rates for dogs would be the introduction of an order made under Section 10A of the Act requiring the mandatory desexing of dogs, similar to the order already in place for cats. Increasing desexing rates of dogs offers several important benefits for both pets and the community. Such a measure though needs to be assessed against other initiatives that also encourage increased desexing rates.

One major advantage of increasing desexing rates is the reduction in unwanted litters and overpopulation, which in turn helps lower euthanasia rates in the shelter and pound environment. Desexed dogs are also less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviours and are generally calmer. Additionally, desexing reduces the urge for dogs to escape, leading to fewer strays and lost pets. Overall, increased desexing contributes to better behaviour and increased safety.

Our current and ongoing activities and programs to address overpopulation and euthanasia rates:

- Mandatory desexing order for cats.
- In 2017 Council reduced release fees of already registered cats and dogs from Council's pound facility.
- Implementation of the 24 hour cat containment requirement.
- Promotion of information sessions about responsible animal ownership for both children and the community.
- Promotion of registration and responsible pet ownership in Council's Knox News publication.
- Proactive and complaint-based park patrols are undertaken throughout the year.
- Council promotes a number of responsible pet ownership topics via social media channels including Facebook.

- In 2021 successfully obtained grant from the State Government to assist vulnerable community members desex their dogs and cats.
- Actively enforce and prosecute non-compliant dog and cat breeders.



4.2 OUR ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS

CURRENT ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS APPLICABLE TO THIS SECTION:

- **Mandatory desexing of cats (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 10A(1))** adopted in 2011
- **Cat containment (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 25(2))** adopted in 2021
- **Limits on number of animals kept (*Amenity Local Law 2020* section 4.1)**

4.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 4.0: Increase desexing and decrease euthanasia rates of dogs and cats

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
4.0.1	Investigate initiatives to increase the number of desexed dogs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Animal Management clauses in the Local Law • Collaborate with organisations that provide low cost desexing to vulnerable community members 	December 2026	Engagement completed and decision made on implementation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess efficacy of an order under section 10A of the Act requiring the mandatory desexing of dogs Reviewing registration fees for entire dogs Review of Council's annual budget to consider additional funding for a desexing program for vulnerable and disadvantaged community members. 		
4.0.2	Apply for government grants to run a low-cost desexing program to support disadvantaged Victorian families within our municipality	When available	Grant received from State Government and complete desexing of cats and dogs
4.0.3	Work with Council's pound provider to implement early intervention strategies to reduce the number of cats and dogs surrendered to Council	December 2027	Reduction in number of surrendered cats and dogs and decrease in euthanasia rates
4.0.4	Investigate how a community cat program or cat desexing program could be implemented	December 2026	Report brought to Council by December 2026

Objective 4.1: Raise awareness of semi-owned cat population and the impact on environmentally significant areas

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
4.1.1	Partner with Council's Biodiversity team to run targeted education campaigns where the effect of semi-owned cats on biologically significant areas is known.	December 2028	Education program rolled out

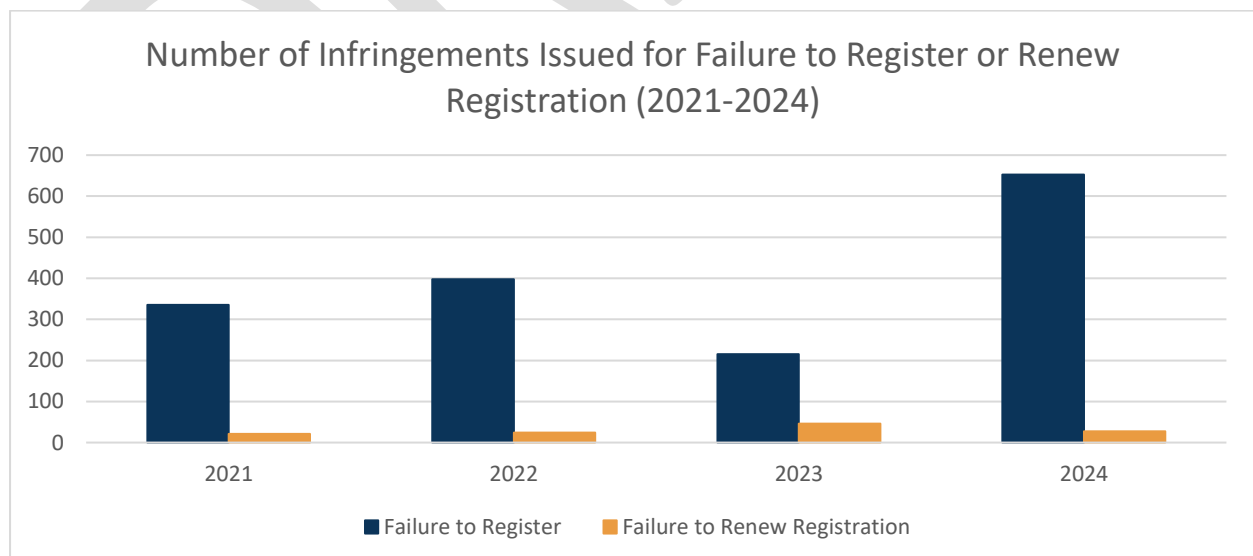
5. REGISTRATION AND IDENTIFICATION

Section 68A(2)(c)(v) of the Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats.

5.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

The Act requires all dogs and cats to be registered with Council at 3 months of age, with renewals due annually on 10 April. When a pet is registered with Council they are required to be microchipped and are provided with a Council identification tag. Knox makes every effort to reunite lost cats and dogs with their owners that are registered and wearing their Council tag. Animal registration fees go toward the ongoing operational costs associated with the running of Council's animal management services.

The number of registered dogs and cats in Knox has declined over the life of the previous 2021–2025 Plan. This is largely due to a number of registration programs, including proactive registration door knocks and property inspections and analysis of the various microchip registries being paused during the pandemic and in the years immediately after the pandemic. Every effort has been made to catch up on unpaid registrations for the years up to 2024, with door knocks for the 2025 registration year being completed in the second half of the year. A key focus of this updated Plan is to increase registration numbers for both cats and dogs. Council will continue to deliver core registration activities such as the annual doorknock of properties with unpaid animal registrations, follow-up on animal sales through Domestic Animal Businesses, and proactive park patrols to monitor compliance. In addition to these established practices, Council will also look to implement new strategies to further boost registration rates, such as re-introducing microchip database follow ups and investigating the feasibility of a registration amnesty to encourage owners to register their pets.



Our current and ongoing activities and programs to encourage registration and identification:

- Council will investigate and carry out enforcement action when identifying unregistered dogs or cats.
- All non-renewals of animal registration are followed up and reviewed by the annual registration audit.
- Domestic Animal Business notifications, including following up on the registration of a dog or cat after the owner has been sent their new owner letter.
- Ensure all impounded or seized dogs and cats are registered prior to being released to their owner.
- Act on referrals from State Government relating to Pet Exchange register and source number breaches in relation to the breeding and selling of cats and dogs.
- Conduct park patrols in Council reserves and open spaces to check that dogs are registered.

5.2 OUR ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS

CURRENT ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS APPLICABLE TO THIS SECTION:

- **Mandatory desexing of cats (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 10A(1)) adopted in 2011**
- **Limits on number of animals kept (*Amenity Local Law 2020* section 4.1)**

5.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 5.0: Increase the number of dog and cat registrations

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
5.0.1	Implement programs to further increase animal registration through proactive audits, initiatives and programs	Annual	Increase in numbers of pets registered with council following audit.
5.0.2	Investigate the feasibility of a registration drive/amnesty to encourage owners to register their pets.	2027	Increase in numbers of new pet registrations with Council.

Objective 5.1: Increase awareness among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities of per registration requirements

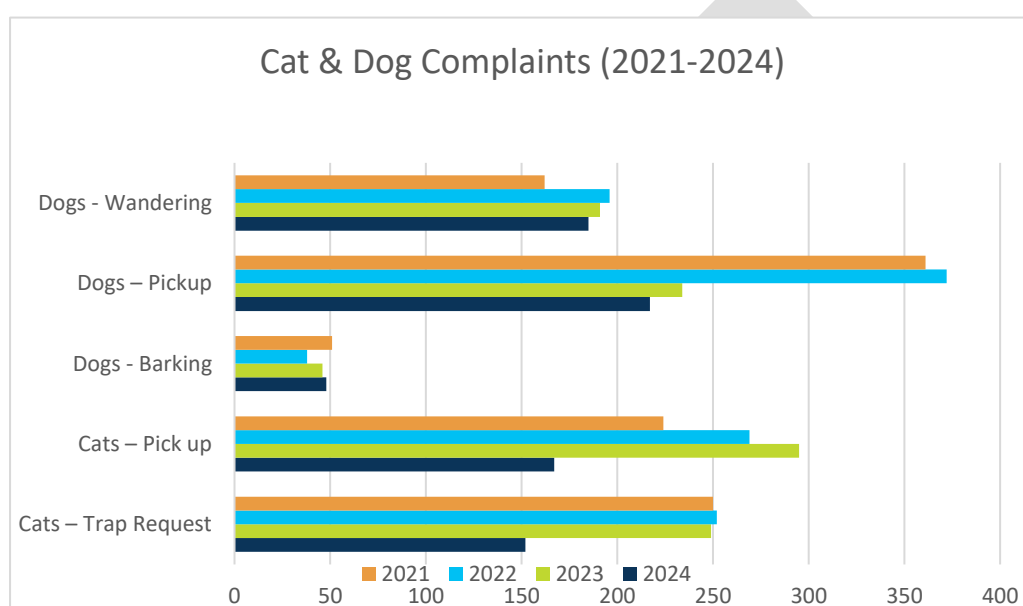
Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
5.1.1	Produce information in multi-lingual formats including desexing and registration requirements	2029	Material produced for use by Council and published on the Council website

6 NUISANCE

Section 68A(2)(c)(vi) of the Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance.

6.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council has been successful in dealing with nuisance complaints and promoting responsible pet ownership for a number of years. This has seen a reduction in the number of nuisance related complaints received over the last five years, as outlined in the graph below. With expected population growth, pet numbers are also expected to increase over the life of this Plan.



Nuisance barking

In recent years, Council has observed a decrease in nuisance barking complaints, largely due to a shift in 2019 toward a more educative approach involving both the complainant and dog owner. This change, along with the use of noise recording equipment, has reduced the number of complaints requiring formal enforcement.

Barking dog investigations can be resource intensive, though most are resolved quickly once the owner becomes aware and takes action. However, ongoing issues can impact individual and neighbourhood wellbeing.

Despite the overall decline, our *Have Your Say* survey found that 44% of respondents experienced nuisance barking at least once a week in the past year. This highlights the need to review and refine the current process to ensure it remains effective. There is also a need to review education material available for dog owners to ensure it is current, useful and meaningful.

Dog waste

Dog waste poses health and environmental risks, along with amenity and reserve useability impacts and being simply unpleasant, remaining as a common concern in the community. In the *Have Your Say* survey, 71% of respondents reported seeing dog waste left on the ground at least once a week, and 66% supported Council patrols in parks and reserves.

Under the Knox Amenity Local Law 2020, dog owners must carry a facility (bag) to clean up after their pet, which is enforced through officer patrols. There are a number of programs that can be investigated to increase compliance with the local law, including increased park patrols, a refresh of education material, the provision of free dog waste bags and increased access to bins within our parks and reserves. Generally, a combination of all of these activities would have the greatest positive impact for the community. The plan proposes ongoing work with Councils Waste team to review the provision on bins within our parkland and reserves.

Nuisance cats and dogs

Council regularly receives complaints about nuisance cats. To assist residents, a cat trap hire service is available to help manage semi-owned and stray cats. In 2022, Council introduced 24-hour cat containment restrictions (see Attachment C) to improve cat safety, reduce nuisance behaviours like spraying and fighting, and protect local wildlife.

Containment also prevents issues such as defecating, digging, and excessive noise on private property. State Government support is increasing through the Victorian Cat Management Strategy 2025–2035, which promotes wider containment, education programs, and simplified cat enclosure guidelines.

Our current and ongoing activities and programs to reduce nuisance cats and dogs:

- Reports of dogs wandering at large or not securely contained are investigated immediately. Fines may be issued to owners of offending dogs. If the animal is impounded the owner must also pay a reclaim fee.
- Issues of dog containment relating to inadequate fencing are investigated and the owner provided with relevant information.
- Reports of dogs off lead are investigated and the owner may be fined when they are able to be identified.
- Reports of dog owners not removing dog waste are investigated and owners may be fined when they are able to be identified
- Noise recording devices are available for nuisance barking complaints.
- Cat traps are available to the community to assist with nuisance cat complaints.
- Cats found wandering at large off their property and/or creating a nuisance are issued with infringements.
- Conduct park patrols in Council reserves and open spaces to check that owners are carrying dog waste bags.

6.2 OUR ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS

CURRENT ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS APPLICABLE TO THIS SECTION:

- **Dogs in public places** (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 26) adopted in 2005
- **Mandatory desexing of cats** (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 10A(1)) adopted in 2011
- **Cat containment** (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 25(2)) adopted in 2021
- **Limits on number of animals kept** (Amenity Local Law 2020 section 4.1)
- **Removal of animal waste** (Amenity Local Law 2020 section 4.6 & 4.7)
- **Animal noise and odour** (Amenity Local Law 2020 section 4.8 & 4.9)

6.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 6.0: Reduce nuisance dog complaints

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
6.0.1	Review infringement penalty amount for not carrying waste bag & not picking up waste as a part of Councils Local Law review	2026	reviewed infringement amounts implemented
6.0.2	Investigate opportunities to provide dog waste bags to pet owners in certain circumstances.	2026	Reduction in complaints of dog waste
6.0.3	Review the provision on bins for the disposal of dog waste within our parkland and reserves.	2026	Bin locations reviewed and changes implemented
6.0.4	Promote the use of Knox resident discount of dog waste composters available to Knox residents	Ongoing	Reduction in complaints of dog waste
6.0.5	Review and update barking dog process and material provided to the community. Investigate the feasibility of using noise recording devices such as Noise Net to manage difficult complaints	2027	Updated process and material on website

Objective 6.1: Reduce nuisance cat complaints

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
6.1.1	Promote the Victorian Government 'Cat Management Strategy 2025-2025' to the community	Ongoing	Reduction in nuisance cat complaints
6.1.2	Provide educational material to the community from the Victorian Government relating to cat containment and 'Safe Cats, Safe Wildlife'.	Ongoing	Reduction in nuisance cat complaints

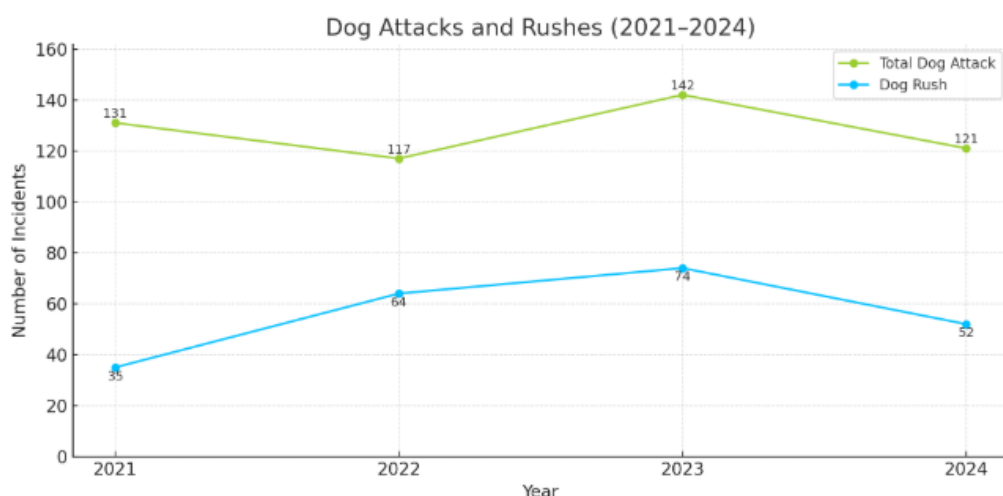
7 DOG ATTACKS

Section 68A(2)(c)(iii) of the Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals.

7.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Dog attacks and aggression in public places pose the highest risk in animal management—for the community, other animals, and the Animal Management Officers who respond to these incidents. Council investigates all reported attacks and prosecutes serious cases through the Magistrates' Court. Dogs suspected of involvement may be seized and impounded until proceedings are finalised. Reports come from a variety of sources, including victims, dog owners, other councils, government agencies, and veterinary clinics. Motivations to report can include public safety concerns, financial compensation, or a sense of duty.

Most attacks involve dogs that are not adequately socialised, not contained to their property, or not under effective control. The high number of off-lead areas in Knox may also contribute to increased risk. The following graph shows dog attack and dog rush complaints received over the past four years. A dog rush is when a dog aggressively approaches a person within 3 metres.



In 2024, Council received 401 requests related to dog pickups and reports of dogs wandering at large. Dogs that are not properly contained to their property are at increased risk of being involved in dog attacks or rush incidents. Currently, Council enforces these matters under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*. When addressing cases involving dogs escaping due to inadequate fencing, Council must apply for a fencing order through the Magistrates' Court — a process that can be both complex and time consuming.

Council is scheduled to review the Amenity Local Law in 2026, and as part of this process, this Plan proposes investigating the introduction of a new clause requiring dog owners to repair inadequate fencing when directed.

Current and ongoing activities and programs addressing dog attacks:

- Respond promptly to all reported dog attacks, rush incidents, and dogs found wandering at large. This includes both business hours and after-hours responses via the on-call officer to help prevent further incidents.
- Seize and impound dogs involved in serious attacks or with a known history of aggressive behaviour, pending investigation and/or legal action.
- Declare offending dogs as *Menacing* or *Dangerous* where appropriate, or seek Court Orders for their destruction in serious cases.
- Conduct targeted patrols in parks and reserves where off-lead dogs or aggressive behaviour have been reported.
- Liaise with other councils regarding the movement of declared dogs into or out of Knox.
- Maintain accurate and up-to-date records of all declared dogs in both the Victorian Declared Dog Registry and Council's internal systems.
- Carry out unannounced inspections at properties housing declared dogs or subject to Court orders to ensure compliance with containment requirements.

7.2 OUR ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS

CURRENT ORDERS & LOCAL LAWS APPLICABLE TO THIS SECTION:

- **Dogs in public places (*Domestic Animals Act 1994* section 26) adopted in 2005**
- **Limits on number of animals kept (*Amenity Local Law 2020* section 4.1)**

7.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 7.0: Increase awareness of Councils dog attack process and capabilities and outcomes

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
7.0.1	Increase transparency in dog attack investigations for victims and accused by creating dog attack information booklet that can be provided to involved parties.	2028	Feedback sought from users of the new kit
7.0.2	During the review of the Knox Amenity Local Law 2020 investigate animal management clauses to adequately address the needs of the community. Specifically develop clauses relating to containment of dogs.	2026	Adoption of the new amenity local law
7.0.3	Refer court outcomes to the communications team for media releases to generate public awareness.	Ongoing	Internal process developed to publicise Court outcomes

8. DANGEROUS, MENACING AND RESTRICTED BREED DOGS

Section 68A(2)(c)(vii) of the Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies 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

8.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council follows up all reports of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs promptly to reduce risk to the community. In addition, all declared dogs on Council's database are inspected annually to ensure that they are compliant with the relevant legislation and regulations.

Dangerous dogs can be three types of dogs:

- A dog declared dangerous by Council due to an attack;
- A dog kept as a guard dog for the purposes of guarding non-residential premises; or
- A dog trained to attack or bite any person.

Council may also declare a dog to be a dangerous dog if the dog is a menacing dog and the owner is in breach of the associated regulations or if the dog has been declared a dangerous dog under the law of another State or Territory of the Commonwealth.

A menacing dog is a dog declared as such by Council because:

- The dog has rushed at or chased a person;
- The dog bites any person or animal causing a non-serious injury; or
- The dog has been declared a menacing dog under a law of another State or Territory of the Commonwealth.

A restricted breed dog is a dog that is any one of the following breeds:

- Japanese Tosa
- Fila Brasileiro
- Dogo Argentino
- Perra de Presa Canario (or Presa Canario)
- American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier).

Council's authorised officers undertake the Ministerial approved Canine Anatomy Identification Training course under section 98A(4)(b) of the Act. This training assists officers in the identification of restricted breed dogs and the application of the restricted breed dog standard.

At the start of a prosecution for a serious dog attack, Council will decide whether to seek a destruction order from the Court. Any such recommendation must be approved by the Manager City Safety and Health or the Director City Liveability. The dog owner will be advised of Council's position

and informed that, if the destruction order is not granted, Council may consider declaring the dog dangerous.

If a declaration is considered, the owner will have the opportunity to provide written and/or oral submissions under the *Domestic Animals Act*, usually within 48 hours of the Court decision. This process is discussed with the owner in advance to minimise the dog's time in the pound.

The final decision on a dangerous dog declaration will be made by the Manager Governance & Risk or the Director Customer & Performance - neither of whom will have been involved in the prosecution.

Our ongoing activities and programs relating to declared restricted, menacing and dangerous dogs:

- Ensure all declared dogs are recorded on the Victorian Declared Dog Register, including any changes to details
- All declared dogs are recorded on an in-house register
- Inspections of declared dogs are conducted on an annual basis
- Communication with other councils in relation to declared dogs which have moved out of or into Knox
- Proactive inspections of industrial areas to identify undeclared guard dogs
- Issuing of infringement notices or summons when in breach of the Domestic Animals Act or Regulations
- Review of registration database of all industrial properties to identify un-declared guard dogs
- Monitor all new registrations for potential restricted breed dogs.

Declared dogs	2012/2013	2016/17	2020/21	2025/26
Menacing dogs	3	1	1	0
Restricted breed dogs	6	3	1	0
Dangerous dogs	6	6	11	9

8.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 8.0: Increase safety for the community around declared dogs

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
8.0.1	Develop a written process to assist decision making regarding the outcome for offending dogs involved in attacks	2027	Process implemented
8.0.2	Cross reference microchip details of all dogs reported as missing from the Victorian Declared Dog Registry	Annually in August/ September	Locating missing declared dogs

9 DOMESTIC ANIMAL BUSINESSES

Section 68A(2)(c)(ii) of the Act requires Council to outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation.

9.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council ensures all Domestic Animal Businesses (DABs) in Knox are registered and compliant with the relevant Code of Practice. Inspections are conducted at registration and annually thereafter, with additional checks as needed. Council works collaboratively with businesses to support compliance and will take enforcement action if required.

Council also investigates reports of backyard breeders and follows up on all cats and dogs sold to Knox residents to ensure they are microchipped and registered.

As of 2025, Knox had 19 registered Domestic Animal Businesses, comprising:

- 6 pet shops
- 4 dog training businesses
- 8 boarding facilities
- 1 animal rearing facility.

Council saw a marked decrease in the number of registered DABs over the life of the 2021-2025 Plan. In 2021 there was 28 registered and in 2025 there were only 19 registered. This Plan will look to identify any non-registered businesses through web searches, community boards, local papers and word of mouth.

Current and ongoing activities and programs related to domestic animal businesses (DABs):

- Community Laws Officers conduct annual inspections and provide education and support to DABs to help them understand and meet their legislative responsibilities and comply with relevant codes of practice.
- Non-compliance is followed up with further inspections and, where necessary, enforcement action such as infringements or prosecution for repeated breaches.
- Council actively monitors and investigates the illegal sale of pets.
- All complaints about DABs from the public are investigated.
- Council follows up on all cats and dogs sold to Knox residents to ensure they are microchipped and registered.

9.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 9.0: Identify and register all unregistered Domestic Animal Businesses

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
9.0.1	Identify all businesses that should be registered DABs in the municipality, including businesses selling pets / pet products / services in the municipality. Follow up to determine whether they are and should be registered with Council	Ongoing	Compare number of registered DABs before and after activity
9.0.2	Monitor Councils registration database and the Pet Exchange Register for owners that meet the criteria for a breeding DAB.	Annually in October	Compare number of registered DABs before and after activity

10 OTHER MATTERS

Section 68A(2)(e) of the Act provides 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.

10.1 CONTEXT AND CURRENT SITUATION

Council Order – dogs in public places

Council's permitted on/off leash areas are established under section 26 of the Act. The current Order was made in 2005 and was effective from 10 April 2006. In Knox City Council, dogs are permitted to be off leash in all open spaces and reserves aside from 9 conservation bushland reserves. Dogs are required to be on leash in public places, which includes footpaths, shopping centres, car parks, bike tracks, walking tracks, anywhere within an active reserve where an organised sporting event is being conducted, all children's play equipment areas, an organised public meeting and permanent barbecue or picnic areas.

Exercising a dog in an off leash area must only be done if the owner can maintain effective voice or hand control of the dog at all times. The dog is not allowed to bother, worry or annoy another person or a dog.

Initial stakeholder engagement indicated the opportunity to review the outdated Section 26 Order relating to dogs off lead across the municipality. This was of particular interest to sporting clubs and the relevant Council teams that manage sporting grounds and reserves for active recreation as dogs pose a number of issues such as digging holes and causing damage to playing fields, dog owners not picking up after their animals, and conflict between dog owners and sporting club members and players. Initial feedback to the *Have Your Say Survey* showed that 47% of respondents had seen dogs not under effective control by their owner in an off-leash area at least once per month in the previous 12 months.

Benchmarking of surrounding municipalities suggests that the Knox S26 Order is somewhat unique in that Knox currently allows dogs to be run off leash in the majority of reserves, including sporting fields, throughout the municipality, rather than limiting off leash areas to selected reserves that are best suited to this activity. It should also be noted that Council has not reviewed leash controls in line with improvements being carried out to areas of open space such as the creation of wetlands, revegetation and improvements to playing fields and facilities. Surrounding councils, including Whitehorse, Maroondah, Dandenong and Yarra Ranges generally restrict dogs to being off leash to a select number of suitable reserves.

Our current activities and programs to relating to all other dog and cat related matters:

- All animal complaints are investigated. Serious issues such as dog attacks, rushes and injured animals are dealt with as a high priority.

- All of Council's Community Laws officers are authorised under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 (POCTA) and will investigate and enforce any reports of alleged animal cruelty.
- Authorised Officers are trained in Family Violence awareness and on how safely refer affected people to organisations that can assist them further.
- Eastern Metropolitan Region Emergency Animal Welfare Plan – this Plan defines the roles and responsibilities of Animal Management Officers and support staff during an emergency. The Plan is reviewed annually to be aligned with the Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan to ensure Local Government responsibilities are addressed.

10.3 OUR PLAN

Objective 10.01: Review Council's Section 26 Order for dogs in public places

Action Number	Activity	When	Evaluation
10.0.1	Investigate a review of Council's off leash areas	December 2026	Order reviewed and recommendations implemented

11 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORTING

Under section 68A(3) of the Act, Council must review its DAMP annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan. Council must provide the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Secretary with a copy of the plan, including any amendments, and publish an evaluation of the plan's implementation in its annual report.

EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOMESTIC ANIMALS MANAGEMENT PLAN

Council will review this Plan annually with a full review being done in year four. Action items within the plan have time lines which will be reviewed on a regular basis throughout the life of the plan

An annual review will include:

- Activities completed in past 12 months
- Description of any changes made to the plan or planned activities
- Any new initiatives not included in the plan
- Any activities not completed
- Outcomes from activities completed.