

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2017-2021



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Foreword

Under the *Domestic Animals Act* 1994 (the Act), every Council must prepare a domestic animal management plan. Section 68A of the Act states:

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (of the Department of Primary Industries), prepare at 4 year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
- (2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—
 - a. set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
 - b. outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
 - c. outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
 - i. to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
 - ii. to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
 - iii. to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
 - iv. to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
 - v. to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
 - vi. to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
 - vii. to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act and the regulations; and
 - d. provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and

- e. provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
- f. provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.

(3) Every Council must—

- a. review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
- b. provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
- c. publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

1. Introduction

Brimbank City Council supports the objectives and provisions of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) which requires that each municipal council prepare an animal management plan. Council has developed this plan in accordance with the legislative guidelines. This plan is also consistent with the Council Plan 2017-2021.

The programs and activities set out in the plan have been developed with the aim to encourage more people to enjoy the pleasure derived from animal companionship, within a framework of responsible ownership. In this plan, Council has sought to balance the needs of animal owners, the broader community and the animals that share people's lives. Council also recognises the positive health and wellbeing outcomes that arise from pet ownership.

The plan is designed and presented in a format recommended by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources.

Context

The City of Brimbank covers 123 square kilometres of which approximately 60% is residential, and 30% is industrial.

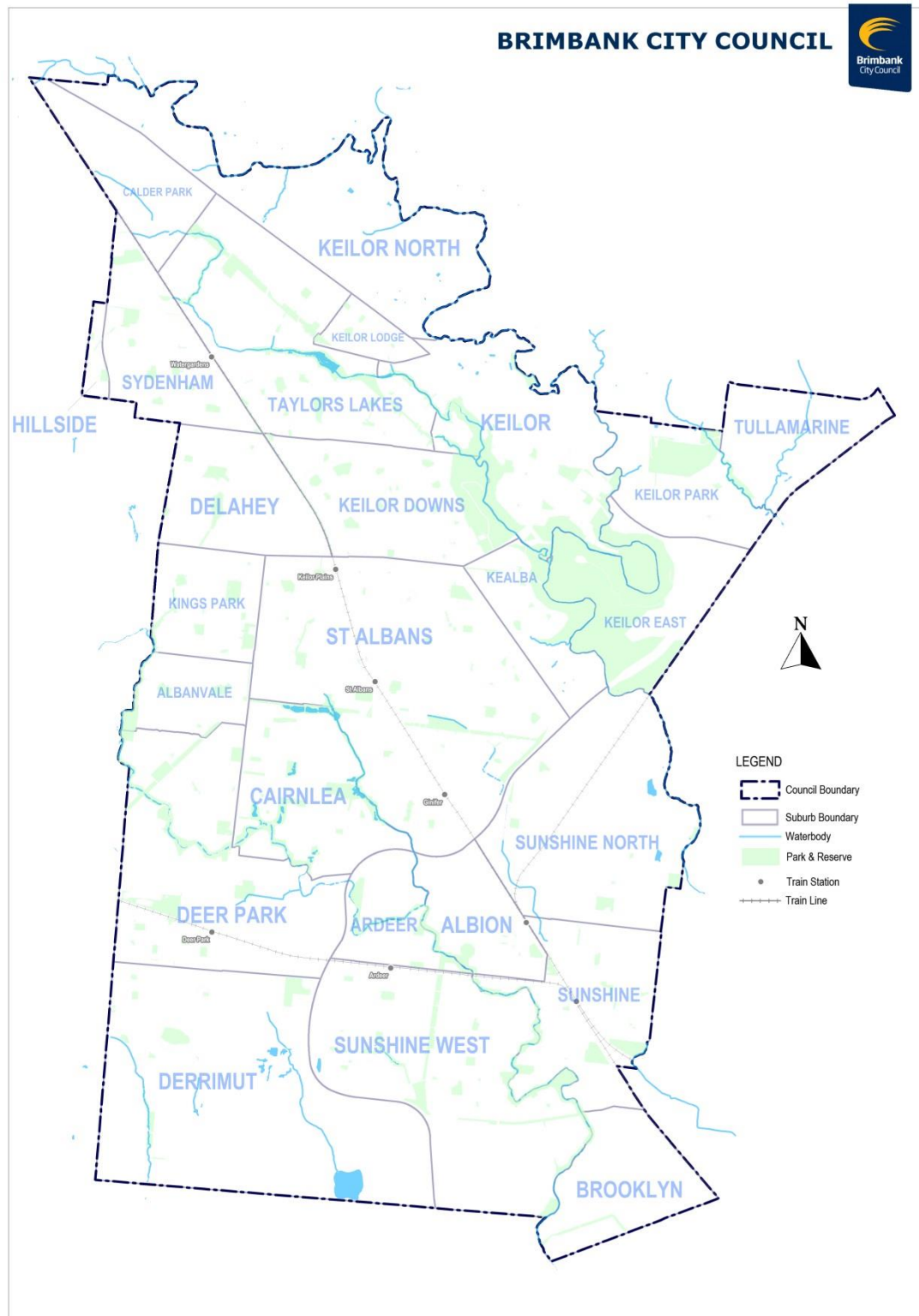
The City of Brimbank is the third most populous municipality in metropolitan Melbourne and at its closest point is located only 12 kilometres from the Melbourne CBD. Brimbank's estimated resident population in 2016 was 202,863.

Population increases, combined with a large proportion of younger families in Brimbank, may lead to increases in pet ownership, reversing the current trend of decline. Population growth will also lead to increased use of open space and other public spaces from all sectors of the community, including pet owners.

Brimbank has embraced cultures of more than 96 nationalities; with more than half of all residents born overseas and around 56.2 per cent speaking a language other than English.

Council's Animal Management Unit is part of the City Compliance Department. Four (4) Animal Management Officers and 0.5 EFT Administration Officer are employed to deliver services relating to nuisance complaints, investigation of dog attacks, dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and management of animals in public spaces such as parks and city streets. The officers are also responsible for administering inspections of domestic animal businesses within the municipality.

City of Brimbank



There are over 10,000 registered dogs in the City of Brimbank, and over 3,000 registered cats. This is a decrease over recent years. Some fluctuations appear from year to year, largely due to people moving into or out of the municipality with their animals. Council received over 5,400 requests for animal management services last financial year, mostly related to complaints about dogs and stray/feral cats. Council collected over almost 1,000 dogs and 1,832 cats that included dogs found at large and stray/feral cats collected as part of Council's cat-trapping program.

Registration and service statistics

| | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Registrations | | | | | |
| Dogs | 13362 | 13026 | 12517 | 12324 | 10583 |
| Cats | 3311 | 3278 | 3256 | 3223 | 3072 |
| Service statistics | | | | | |
| Overall requests | 4767 | 5196 | 4942 | 4567 | 5551 |
| Noise – barking dogs | 241 | 248 | 220 | 227 | 245 |
| Dogs complaints | 434 | 451 | 364 | 384 | 368 |
| Dog attacks and rushes | 96 | 92 | 95 | 99 | 163 |
| Assisted RSPCA / Police | | | | | New data 32 |
| Other animals (e.g. livestock) | 442 | 438 | 252 | 239 | 202 |
| Collections & impounds | | | | | |
| Dogs | 1057 | 965 | 1026 | 965 | 960 |
| Cats | 1461 | 1652 | 1652 | 1659 | 1832 |
| Domestic animals businesses | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 8 |

Source: Brimbank City Council

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 the Act in the municipal district.

Context

It is important that all Animal Management Officers are skilled and appropriately trained to deliver services and programs in accordance with the Act.

To ensure that all staff involved in animal management has the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work, a set of minimum training qualifications has been established and is set out in officer position descriptions. Officers are also encouraged to identify and attend 'in house' corporate training programs applicable to their roles.

Each Officer has an individual annual performance plan, which includes a section related to training and development. Plans are reviewed annually, with training requirements being updated at that time. Responsibility for ensuring that nominated training is completed then becomes a shared responsibility for the individual officer and their supervisor.

Officers attend Bureau of Animal Welfare training sessions and other specific animal management programs to stay abreast of developments in the animal management areas.

A program of current and proposed training is included.

Current and planned training

| Authorised Officer Training - Basic | 2017 Status | Planned |
|---|--------------------|----------------|
| Certificate IV in Animal Control and Regulation | | |
| Officer 1 | Completed | - |
| Officer 2 | Completed | - |
| Officer 3 | Completed | - |
| Officer 4 | Underway | 2017/18 |

| Authorised Officer Training - Basic | 2017 Status | Planned |
|--|---------------|---|
| Microchip implantation training (for limited use in the release of animals) | | |
| Officer 1 | Not completed | { 2018/19 |
| Officer 2 | Not completed | |
| Officer 3 | Not completed | |
| Officer 4 | Not completed | |
| Industry training – animal handling, animal assessment, statement taking, prosecution, computer skills | | |
| Officer 1 | Completed | 2017/18 |
| Officer 2 | Completed | |
| Officer 3 | Completed | |
| Officer 4 | Underway | |
| OH&S training – dealing with difficult people | | |
| Officer 1 | Completed | { Refresher training annually |
| Officer 2 | Completed | |
| Officer 3 | Completed | |
| Officer 4 | Completed | |
| Customer service training – conflict resolution, telephone manner | | |
| Officer 1 | Completed | { Refresher training annually |
| Officer 2 | Completed | |
| Officer 3 | Completed | |
| Officer 4 | Completed | |
| Bureau of Animal Welfare – training and information days | | |
| Officer 1 | Attended 2015 | { Officers to attend as further training opportunities are offered and as deemed appropriate. |
| Officer 2 | Attended 2015 | |
| Officer 3 | Attended 2015 | |
| Officer 4 | Underway | |

| Authorised Officer Training - Additional | 2017 Status | Planned |
|---|--|----------------|
| Induction program for new staff | | |
| All officers | All new staff inducted | As required |
| Other (specify) – e.g. firearms training | | |
| All officers | No plans for officers to complete firearms training – not required. | Not planned |
| | Refresher training on use and management of extendable baton, if officers select for baton to be deployed. | As required |
| Diploma in Justice | | |
| All officers | No plans are in place to provide this training as the City Compliance Department has a Prosecutions Officer. | Not required |
| Certificate IV in Local Government | | |
| Officer 1 | Completed | - |
| Officer 2 | Completed | - |
| Officer 3 | Completed | - |
| Officer 4 | Underway | 2017/18 |
| Industry training – time management | | |
| All officers | In-house training package is available to all officers. | As required |

| Authorised Officer Training - Additional | 2017 Status | Planned |
|--|--|----------------|
| <hr/> | | |
| OH&S training – DECA driver training & assessment | | |
| Officer 1 | Completed | 2018 |
| Officer 2 | Completed | 2018 |
| Officer 3 | Completed | 2018 |
| Officer 4 | Completed | 2018 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Customer service training – public speaking | | |
| Officer 1 | Not completed | By 2018 |
| Officer 2 | Not completed | By 2018 |
| Officer 3 | Not completed | By 2018 |
| Officer 4 | Not completed | By 2018 |
| <hr/> | | |
| Municipal Association of Victoria and Local Government Professionals – training and information days | | |
| All officers | Opportunities for training considered based on course topics offered by the MAV | As required |
| <hr/> | | |
| Australian Institute of Animal Management annual conference | Senior AMO committee Member 2015 - current | |
| All officers | A Council representative usually attends each year. The choice of attendee is based on conference content and whether an officer is making a presentation or otherwise involved. | |
| <hr/> | | |

Other (specify) Working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities

| | | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|
| Officer 1 | Not completed | By 2019 |
| Officer 2 | Not completed | By 2019 |
| Officer 3 | Not completed | By 2019 |
| Officer 4 | Not completed | By 2019 |

Our plans

Objective 1: Ensure that all officers have access to relevant and up to date training opportunities.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|---------|--------------------------------|
| Council will continue to investigate and offer current, appropriate effective training opportunities to all Officers. | Ongoing | Annual performance discussion. |

Objective 2: Ensure all activities are compliant with current legislation.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|---------|--|
| Council will keep up to date with all legislation affecting animal management and any requirements for further training that is required. | Ongoing | Customer satisfaction surveys. Annual report. Requirements for further training identified by staff. |

3. 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.

Current situation

Registration figures over the last three years indicate that there is a decline in both cat and dog registrations. This correlates to a national decline in pet ownership.

Council recognises the challenge of increasing the proportion of pets being registered. Currently, registration rates are higher for dogs compared to cats. Securing first and repeat registrations will be an ongoing challenge for Council.

Based on anecdotal reports it is believed that Council's requirement for the de-sexing of dogs and cats prior to registration may have a negative effect on registration levels. In order to determine suitable actions to address this issue there is a need for quantifiable research to be carried out.

Over 50% of residents in Brimbank were born overseas and there is a significant cultural and linguistic diversity in the community. This creates a variety of communication and engagement needs with Council's animal management services and a broader understanding of responsible pet ownership, which includes the necessity to registration of dogs and cats.

It is proposed to undertake research about methods to engage with culturally and linguistically diverse communities regarding animals as pets so that evidence-based decisions can be made about Council's approach to ensuring high levels of registration.

Our current data

There are almost 10,500 registered dogs in the City of Brimbank, and more than 3,000 registered cats. This figure represents renewals for existing animals and new registrations from the previous registration year.

The introduction of mandatory micro-chipping is seen as a significant step forward in identifying animals and then being able to return them to their owners.

Our current orders, local laws, council policies and procedures

Brimbank City Council is one of only 6 Victorian municipalities which has an order in place under Section 26(2) of the Act, making it compulsory for all animals to be de-sexed prior to registration, unless exempt. Exemptions are in line with those listed in the Act and relate to the health of the animal and the owner's membership of applicable organisations.

Our current education/promotion activities

Current education activities regarding registration and identification include:

- Media releases promoting pet registration in local newspapers, and on Council's website.
- Participation in regular 'Living In Your Neighbourhood' sessions, targeted at newly arrived migrant groups, particularly from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Our current compliance activities

Current compliance activities regarding registration and identification include:

- Annual mail out of dog and cat registration renewal forms, followed up with a reminder and final notice.
- Annual registration of dog and cats, including the requirement to be microchipped and de-sexed.
- Periodic doorknock of parts of the municipality to query householders on pet ownership and registration.
- Extended registration for animals newly registered within 3 months of the annual registration period.

Summary

Ensuring that a high proportion, if not all, dogs and cats are registered with Council is an ongoing challenge. A range of promotional, educational and regulatory actions are needed to achieve high registration rates.

Extensive education and awareness programs throughout the municipality will include building on the work of the 'Living in Your Neighbourhood' sessions, with the development of multi-lingual publications and brochures highlighting the requirements for registration and identification.

Council will also seek to work more closely with stakeholder groups within the municipality; these will include veterinarians, dog clubs, training providers and businesses involved in the pet care industry. These relationships will be developed to allow promotion of the benefits of registration to residents.

The registration process will also be examined to determine if improvements can be made, particularly through the use of online registrations.

Our plans

Objective 1: Increase the number of pets registered within Brimbank.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|---------|--|
| Conduct research in the form of phone surveys on the reasons for not registering pets. | 2018/19 | Conduct, analysis and reporting on phone survey results |
| Undertake targeted contact with communities in Brimbank to encourage pet registration. | | Number and effect of community contact, events and door-knocks. |
| Implement an information campaign to promote the requirement to register pets. | | Additional multi-lingual documentation to be produced and distributed. |

Objective 2: Increase awareness among culturally and linguistically diverse communities of pet registration requirements within Brimbank.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|---------|--|
| Production of information regarding registration and de-sexing requirements in multi-lingual formats. | 2018/19 | Additional multi-lingual documentation produced and distributed. |
| Making animal registration forms and other documentation available in appropriate languages. | 2018/19 | Multi-lingual animal registration forms produced and available. |
| Attendance at information sessions targeted at culturally and linguistically diverse communities. | Ongoing | Feedback from session participants and community groups. |

Objective 3: Improve the level of registration.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|------------------|--|
| Examination of the need for more widespread community contact, including door knocking and survey research, based on the results obtained from objective 1. | 2019 | Based on the results and benefits obtained from the initial research programs and the financial feasibility of a larger program. |
| Ensure all seized and impounded animals are registered to their owner prior to release. | Prior to release | Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded which are not registered to their owner. |
| Enforcement where residents have failed to comply with registration requirements. | Ongoing | Amount of offences reported and the increase in proportional animal registration figures. |

4. 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

Current situation

Barking dogs is the most common source of nuisance for residents in Brimbank. Barking is usually a result of separation anxiety, boredom, external stimuli, traffic, other dogs barking, cats trespassing and territorialism. Council investigates barking dog complaints and consults with both the dog owner and affected residents in trying to resolve the issue. Most complaints can be resolved by gathering data showing the frequency of barking and the impact on neighbours, and then educating owners on how to reduce or eliminate unwanted barking.

Dogs at large are also a cause of nuisance and concern. This is caused by a failure for the animal to be secured within a property, and dogs 'escaping' or being startled when being walked off-leash, or situations where the animal has been brought into the area by a tradesperson.

Feral and semi-owned cats are a cause of nuisance for residents. This problem is characterised by cats fighting at night, wandering onto neighbouring properties, and spraying on neighbouring properties.

Council operates a fee-based cat-trapping program for residents. This process involves the applicant placing a notice in the mailboxes of neighbouring properties advising them that a cat-trapping program will be taking place. A trap is then provided and, as cats are caught, they are collected by an Animal Management Officer. This service is comparable to or exceeds those offered by other councils. Many councils offer a limited service or no service at all.

In relation to both dogs and cats, a small percentage of animals are reclaimed by their owners after being impounded. Most animals are offered for re-housing if they meet temperament and health requirements. If an animal cannot be re-housed, this may result in it being euthanised.

A recent change to the Act means there is now no limit on the time animals can be kept in shelters (it was previously 28 days, after which the animal needed to be euthanised). This is expected to reduce the euthanasia rate.

The keeping of excess animals can also be a cause of complaint. Where a person wishes to keep more than two dogs and/or two cats on a residential property, a permit is required. Officer's conduct assessments to ensure that properties are suitable for housing excess numbers of animals, and that owners have the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their animals. Permits also have conditions attached to them, to ensure a balance between the needs of the animals and the amenity of surrounding neighbours.

Council also responds to complaints regarding people allowing their dog to defecate on nature-strips and other public places and failing to collect the droppings for disposal.

Our current data

In 2016, Council responded to 1,296 calls regarding dogs roaming or a stray dog needing collection. The number of cats collected in the same period was 1,832.

Our orders, local laws, council policies and procedures

Currently, Council's General Local Law requires an owner to obtain a permit from Council if they wish to have more than 2 dogs or 2 cats on their property.

Council's General Local Law requires dog owners to collect and dispose of their dog's droppings in public places and always carry a suitable device for the collection of animal excrement.

The General Local Law is being reviewed in 2017.

Our current education/promotion activities

Current education activities regarding nuisance animals include:

- Educational material through renewal notices, Council's customer service centres, Council's website and periodic letterbox drops about responsible pet ownership relating to confinement of dogs and cats and animal nuisance.
- Information on Council's website to report nuisance animal complaints.
- Notification and reminders to residents about fireworks displays at New Year's Eve, Lunar Festival and other times.
- Media releases on preventing animal nuisance.

Our current compliance activities

Current compliance activities regarding nuisance animals include:

- Providing a 7 day 24 hour service for the collection of dogs, nuisance animals, stray animals and dog attacks.
- Actively dealing with barking dog complaints and taking enforcement action.
- Prosecuting pet owners in relation to breaches of Council's Local Law and non-compliance with the Act, where applicable.
- Programmed patrols of public areas, including parks.
- Providing cat traps and service to residents.
- Annual inspection of all excess animal permit holders.

Summary

Issues regarding nuisance animals are often time consuming and difficult to resolve to the satisfaction of everyone. This is particularly the case with barking dogs where the tolerance for barking can vary markedly between different people. In addition, the standard of evidence required to enable a prosecution for a nuisance matter is high. Currently, this evidence is obtained via the complainant filling out a noise diary that documents the incidence of dog barking.

The use of internet based information and forms will help reduce the time taken for the process and enable easier access by the customer. Customers will also be able to access information through computers located at Council's libraries.

Our plans

Objective 1: Reduce nuisance complaints regarding dogs, and allow more streamlined investigation.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|------|--|
| Make the barking dog diary available online, allowing customers to download information at the time of lodging the complaint. A statutory declaration form will also be available so that the information received back has a higher evidentiary value for possible court proceedings. | 2018 | Reduction in timeframes for responses to barking dog complaints. Outcome of possible prosecutions. Feedback received from customers. |

Objective 2: Improve the cat-trapping program

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|---------|--|
| Implement changes to the cat trapping request system, including making request forms available on Council's website, enabling customers to download and print required documentation that must be completed prior to a trap being allocated. | 2018/19 | Reductions in timeframes for completion of administrative stage of cat trap requests. Feedback obtained from customers in the customer satisfaction survey and through 'call back' surveys. |
| Review cat trapping service fees, including assessment of a hire fee option, with a deposit being refunded to the resident on completion of the cat trapping program. | 2018/19 | Feedback from customers. Level of usage of the service. |
| If an endemic feral cat problem is identified in a residential area, a targeted program will be undertaken by Council without the need for hire fees, with resident cooperation. | 2018/19 | Feedback from customers. Level of usage of the service. Number of cats impounded/number of complaints received from the area after the program. |
| Investigate research opportunities regarding a trap-neuter-release program, subject to legislative compliance. | 2019/20 | Prepare scoping study and research proposal. |

Objective 3: Create greater awareness of how to avoid nuisance issues.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|----------|--|
| Targeted awareness program relating to nuisance issues, including barking dogs, feral cats, and dog droppings. | Annually | Reduction in complaints received concerning nuisance issues. |
| Strengthen relationships with vets, animal businesses, and pet shops to use as a conduit of communication with the community. | By 2018 | Information provided through stakeholder contacts. |

5. 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.

Current situation

In the last five years, Council has received around 100 reports of dog aggression each year. These range from minor displays of aggressive behaviour through to serious attacks. Tragically, a fatal dog attack occurred within Brimbank in August 2011. In all of these instances, people and other animals may be injured or suffer trauma. Approximately 80% of dog attacks occur in or around the home.

A confirmed attack is one where a victim (an animal or a person) is presented and there is physical evidence of an attack. Some reports, upon investigation, are classified as a 'rush' – where there is no contact made between dog and victim, or a person simply being scared by a dog barking at them. These can be traumatic experiences and may reflect on the competency of the dog owner as a responsible pet owner.

Council's Animal Management Officers provide education and advice on the effective control and confinement of animals to prevent attacks. Council issues fines and prosecutes attacks and has successfully prosecuted owners in such cases. In instances where a dog is identified as a serious threat to the community, Council or a magistrate may order that the dog be destroyed, or Council may declare the dog as a dangerous dog. This declaration places further and stricter controls on the dog and its owner in order to protect the community.

Our current data

In 2016, Council received 129 reports of a dog attack requiring investigation. In all cases full investigations were carried out and either infringements or prosecutions followed.

There were some cases where the offending dog was impounded but due to it not being registered or not microchipped for identification, the owner was not able to be contacted. Efforts to increase registrations where microchipping is compulsory will assist in reducing the incidence of a dog's owner not being able to be identified.

Our current orders, local laws, council policies and procedures

Council has an order in place regarding designated off-leash areas under section 26(2) of the Act. In 2016, there were no reported attacks in off-leash areas.

Our current education/promotion activities

Current education activities regarding dog attacks include:

- Media releases in local newspapers, on Council's website and 'Brimbank Buzz' advocating owners to control and confine their dog.
- Visiting schools to give talks to students regarding safety around dogs.
- Website and other information encouraging residents and visitors to immediately report all dog attacks.

Our current compliance activities

Current compliance activities regarding dog attacks include:

- Full investigations into all complaints regarding alleged dog attacks (rush and/or physical attack).
- Enforcement action including the issuing of infringement notices and prosecution action where appropriate.
- Firm enforcement regarding dogs wandering at large, attacks and rushes; and consistent use of declaration and destruction powers.
- Proactive patrolling by Animal Management Officers to ensure compliance in public places, including designated off-leash parks.

Summary

Council will continue to enforce the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* with regards to dog attacks. There is now also a need to work more closely with Police. Changes to the *Crimes Act 1958* now mean that if a dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dog is responsible for an attack the owner may face charges that could lead to a term of imprisonment.

As well as focussing on investigation and enforcement of reported dog attacks, Council will also be seeking to implement programs to reduce the instance of dog attack and protect community safety. It is recognised that the focus of these programs will need to be on the actions and responsibilities of dog owners, particularly around the home.

Our plans

Objective 1: Ensure thorough and prompt investigations are carried out.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|---------|---|
| Investigate reports of dog attack, taking appropriate action under current legislation. | Ongoing | Successful outcomes achieved under available legislation. |

Objective 2: Improve education to reduce dog aggression incidences and improve safety.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|----------|--|
| Visiting schools to educate the next generation of pet owners on the issues of responsible pet ownership. | 2018-19. | Feedback obtained from schools, and the demand for visits as knowledge of the program grows. |
| Development of a presentation that can be delivered at schools making use of power point, hands-on activities, and other materials. | | |

Objective 3: Ensure owners are aware as to their pet ownership responsibilities.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|---------|--|
| Production of awareness and educative materials aimed at dog owners' responsibilities, and advising the community of the best way to react to dogs in public | Ongoing | Reductions in the instances of dog attacks reported to Council. Customer satisfaction surveys regarding community safety expectations and realities |

Objective 4: Limit bites and attacks from dogs being able to access pedestrians through fences.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|------|--|
| Introduce new controls prohibiting an animal from being able to put any part of its body over, under or through any perimeter fencing. | 2018 | Reductions in the instances of dog attacks reported to Council. Customer satisfaction surveys regarding community safety expectations and realities |

6. 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 the municipality and to ensure that these dogs are kept in compliance with the Act and the regulations.

Current situation

Council administers and enforces the provisions of the Act to identify and control dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs to ensure the safety of the community. Council has 63 dogs registered as either: dangerous, menacing or restricted breed. These dogs are routinely checked to ensure that the animals are being kept in accordance with regulatory requirements. This involves an annual inspection and periodic, unannounced visits to the properties.

Our current data

Current registrations include:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Dangerous Dogs | 39 (all guard dogs, no dogs declared as dangerous) |
| Menacing Dogs | 1 |
| Restricted Breed Dogs | 23 |

These figures represent a decline from past years due mainly to animals being reported as having died, or left the municipality. In the cases where an owner has left the municipality, inquiries are carried out to determine the new location of the dog and to inform the 'receiving' council. Unfortunately, in some cases owners have not complied with legislative requirements and advised Council of the movement of the dog.

Due to legislative changes and state government moratorium, officers were not carrying out assessments of restricted breed dogs in 2016.

In 2016, 6 dangerous dogs were surrendered to Council. It is important to note that the term 'Dangerous Dog' is defined in legislation, and refers only to dogs that;

- are kept at non-residential properties for the purpose of guarding; or
- has been declared by Council as a dangerous dog because they have been found responsible for an attack where a person or animal has sustained serious injury.

Our current orders, local laws, council policies and procedures

Council ensures compliance with the requirements of the Act and accompanying regulations with regard to the housing, declaration, and other controls relating to dangerous, menacing, and restricted breed dogs.

Officers use the gazetted standard for restricted breed dogs in the identification of dogs suspected to be of a restricted breed.

Our current education/promotion activities

Current education activities regarding dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs include:

- Media releases in local newspapers and on Council's website advising people to choose pets carefully.

Our current compliance activities

Current compliance activities regarding dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs include:

- Annual and unscheduled inspections of all properties housing declared dangerous, restricted breed and menacing dogs.
- Patrolling by Animal Management Officers of all areas of municipality to monitor dog behaviour and possible breaches relating to dogs being walked off-lead or at large.
- Maintenance of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dog listings on the Victorian Declared Dog Registry.
- Investigation of all public reports of restricted breed dogs.

Summary

Council is proactive in administering and enforcing legislative requirements regarding dangerous, menacing, and restricted breed dogs. A program of regular inspections of known properties will continue to be implemented. This program is complemented by an vigilant approach to the detection of any dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs that may not be registered, properly house or area uncontrolled in public places.

Understanding the difference between dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs is important and will be part of Council's awareness and education program. A key message will be that all dogs can cause injury and may attack and that safe and responsible practices need are paramount, in terms of both the owner's responsibilities, and the way in which the community interacts with dogs. This message will also be part of the education and awareness materials targeting minimisation of dog attacks in the community.

Our plans

Objective 1: Continue enforcement of current restricted breed legislation.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|---------|---|
| Council Authorised officers to continue to use the Government Gazetted Standard for Restricted Breed Dogs. | Ongoing | Successful declarations of restricted breed dogs. Reduction in the number of restricted breed dogs found wandering at large. |

Objective 2: Improve monitoring of existing restricted breed dogs within Brimbank.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|---------|---|
| Continued audit inspections and spot checks to be carried out at premises housing dangerous, menacing, and restricted breed dogs, any breaches of requirements to be dealt with under legislative and regulatory provisions. | Ongoing | Reports compiled during each inspection. Minimum detected breaches due to compliance with requirements |

7. Overpopulation and 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.

Current situation

Brimbank is one of only six Victorian councils which have an order in place making it compulsory for all animals to be de-sexed prior to registration, unless exempt. This requirement is aimed at reducing overpopulation and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats. This requirement may have an effect on registration rates as some owners choose not to register their pet with Council as they do not want to de-sex the animal and they do not qualify for an exemption. The financial cost of de-sexing is also often suggested as a barrier to complying with this requirement.

It is still considered that the requirement for de-sexing has an overall benefit of controlling the population of dogs and cats.

Our current data

In 2016 Council responded to 1,296 calls regarding dogs roaming at large or a stray dog needing collection. The number of cats impounded in the same period was 1,832.

Following impoundment, a small percentage of animals are reclaimed by their owners, most are offered for re-housing if they meet temperament and health requirements, or as a last resort the animal may be euthanized.

Currently, Council's pound services are contracted to the Lost Dogs Home, this includes the functions of re-housing suitable animals that are impounded.

Under the Act, Council also has the ability to enter into agreements with other welfare groups to facilitate further re-housing or adoption measures. These '84Y' agreements may further serve to reduce the euthanasia rates and the feasibility and suitability of such agreements will be examined during the Plan period.

Our current orders, local laws, Council policies and procedures

As mentioned, Council's order under section 10A of the *Domestic Animals Act* 1994 requires that all dogs and cats be de-sexed prior to registration. Brimbank is one of only six municipalities that have this type of order covering both dogs and cats. The order allows exemptions in the case of an animal's health or if the owner meets requirements to be termed as a breeder and the animal is a purebred.

Our current education/promotion activities

Current education activities regarding overpopulation and euthanasia include:

- Stalls at other community events, providing information regarding responsible pet ownership in general.
- Media releases promoting responsible pet ownership and issues relating to breeding and de-sexing in local newspapers and on Council's website.
- Readily accessible information through brochures and fact sheets from the Department of Primary Industries relating to animal keeping.

Our current compliance activities

Current compliance activities regarding overpopulation and euthanasia include:

- Ensuring all dogs and cats are de-sexed prior to registration
- Enforcement of registration, micro-chipping and tag wearing requirements
- Fee based use of cat traps
- Issuing infringement notices for dogs and cats found at large

Summary

The challenges of over-population and high euthanasia rates are some of the most serious animal management issues facing municipalities across Victoria. Brimbank is better suited than most municipalities with the order regarding de-sexing of animals already being in place. The majority of experts in the field of animal welfare and management agree that this measure is a vital step in addressing over-population.

Unfortunately, de-sexing of pets still carries a stigma amongst certain members of the community, some feel it is cruel to the animal, or it will affect its health and temperament. The benefits that de-sexing include the elimination or reduction is the likelihood of some health issues. De-sexing means that, the animal does not add to the problem of over-population through accidental or unplanned litters.

The message will also be part of general awareness and educational programs and those aimed at increasing registration levels.

Our plans

Objective 1: Raise awareness of the benefits of desexing and microchipping.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|------|--|
| Increased responsible pet ownership materials targeted at de-sexing, and the benefits of micro-chipping. | 2018 | Reduction in animal collection statistics and euthanasia rates. Increased proportional registration rates within the municipality |

Objective 2: Strengthen relationships with vets as animal care professionals.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|----------------|---------------------|
| Strengthening of partnerships with local veterinarians to assist in promoting the benefits of de-sexing. The strengthening of these relationships may lead to vets agreeing to take part in the subsidised de-sexing scheme operated by the MAV. | 2017 - ongoing | Feedback from vets. |

Objective 3: Investigate reducing the financial burden of de-sexing.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|---|--|
| Investigation of the suitability of entering into section 84Y agreements with animal welfare, re-housing and adoption groups. A section 84Y agreement can allow for a person or body to seize, retain or dispose of cats or dogs. There are a large number of groups that are currently operating in this area. | 2018 | This will be evaluated against the figures for euthanasia, after the programs have been specifically investigated and deemed appropriate for Brimbank. |
| Continue partnerships with Lost Dogs Home and like bodies to bring and make available mobile de-sexing services to Brimbank residents for their cats. | Initial program 2017, visits to continue in future. | Appointments with the service, level of interest. Reduction in complaints and cat impoundments. |

8. Domestic Animal Businesses

Section 68A(2)(c)(ii) of the Act 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.

Current situation

Council has a focus on ensuring that businesses are operating in accordance with legislative requirements. Council's Animal Management Officers undertake annual and random inspections of all Domestic Animal Businesses. Whilst many businesses are focused around pet accessories, services and feeding requirements there are only six businesses within Brimbank which can be termed as Domestic Animal Businesses.

Our current data

Currently within Brimbank there are 8 Domestic Animal Businesses operating which require regular inspection to ensure their obligation under the appropriate codes of practice are being met.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Pet shops | 5 |
| Boarding kennels | 1 |
| Training establishments or providers | 2 |
| Total | 8 |

Our current orders, local laws, council policies and procedures

Council has no specific local law directed at Domestic Animal Businesses, but these businesses can be affected by the orders in place regarding off leash areas and the order which is in place requiring the de-sexing of animals prior to registration, these may indirectly affect the conduct of the businesses. Businesses may also be affected by the provisions of the Brimbank Planning Scheme.

Our current education/promotion activities

Current education activities regarding domestic animal businesses include:

- Bureau of Animal Welfare fact sheets are available at the Council offices and distributed to all domestic animal businesses as required.
- Information relating to domestic animal businesses on Council's website.
- Providing all domestic animal businesses with a copy of Code of Practice.
- Regular contact with proprietors to keep an open dialogue to ensure Council and businesses are sharing current information and concerns.

Our current compliance activities

Current compliance activities regarding domestic animal businesses include:

- Registration and renewal of all domestic animal businesses.
- Annual and random audits of all domestic animal businesses.
- Enforcement of breaches in relation to permit conditions, non-compliance and unregistered businesses.

Summary

Council recognises the asset that Domestic Animal Businesses are to the community, this extends to businesses that may not fall within the definition contained in legislation but still operate within the field of pet care and associated goods and services.

For many residents these businesses represent either their first point of contact with regards to purchasing a pet or are a more regular point of contact than Council.

As such Council is seeking to collaborate with these businesses in its efforts to educate the community and raise awareness of responsible pet ownership practices. This will be achieved through strengthening the relationship between Council and these businesses.

Our plans

Objective 1: Ensure DABs operating within Brimbank are compliant.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|--|---|
| Continued inspection and regulation of Domestic Animal Businesses. | Yearly inspection, with regular visits | Compliance reports obtained during inspections. |

Objective 2: Utilise DABs as point of contact to further awareness of responsible pet ownership message.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|---------|--|
| Strengthening of relationships between proprietors and Council, enabling education and awareness activities and publications to be displayed at the sites. | Ongoing | Yearly Council satisfaction surveys, reports from the community and proprietors. |

Objective 3: Promote Council activity programs and initiatives.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|---------|--|
| Display of council publications and information regarding responsible pet ownership at ancillary pet related businesses. | Ongoing | Yearly Council satisfaction surveys, reports from the community and proprietors. |

9. Other Matters

Section 68A(2)(e) of the Act requires council to provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the municipality.

Local laws and orders

Brimbank City Council General Local Law requires dog owners to collect and dispose of their dog's droppings in public places and always carry a suitable device for the collection of animal excrement.

Brimbank is one of only six Victorian municipalities which have an order in place under Section 10A of the Act, making it compulsory for all animals to be de-sexed prior to registration, unless exempt. The exemptions that are provided for are in line with the Act and relate to the health of the animal and the owner's membership of applicable organisations.

Council also has an order under Section 26(2) of the Act that requires dogs to be leashed in public places, except for designated off-leash areas. The parks detailed on page 31 have designated off-leash areas.

Notwithstanding the list, dogs must be on a leash:

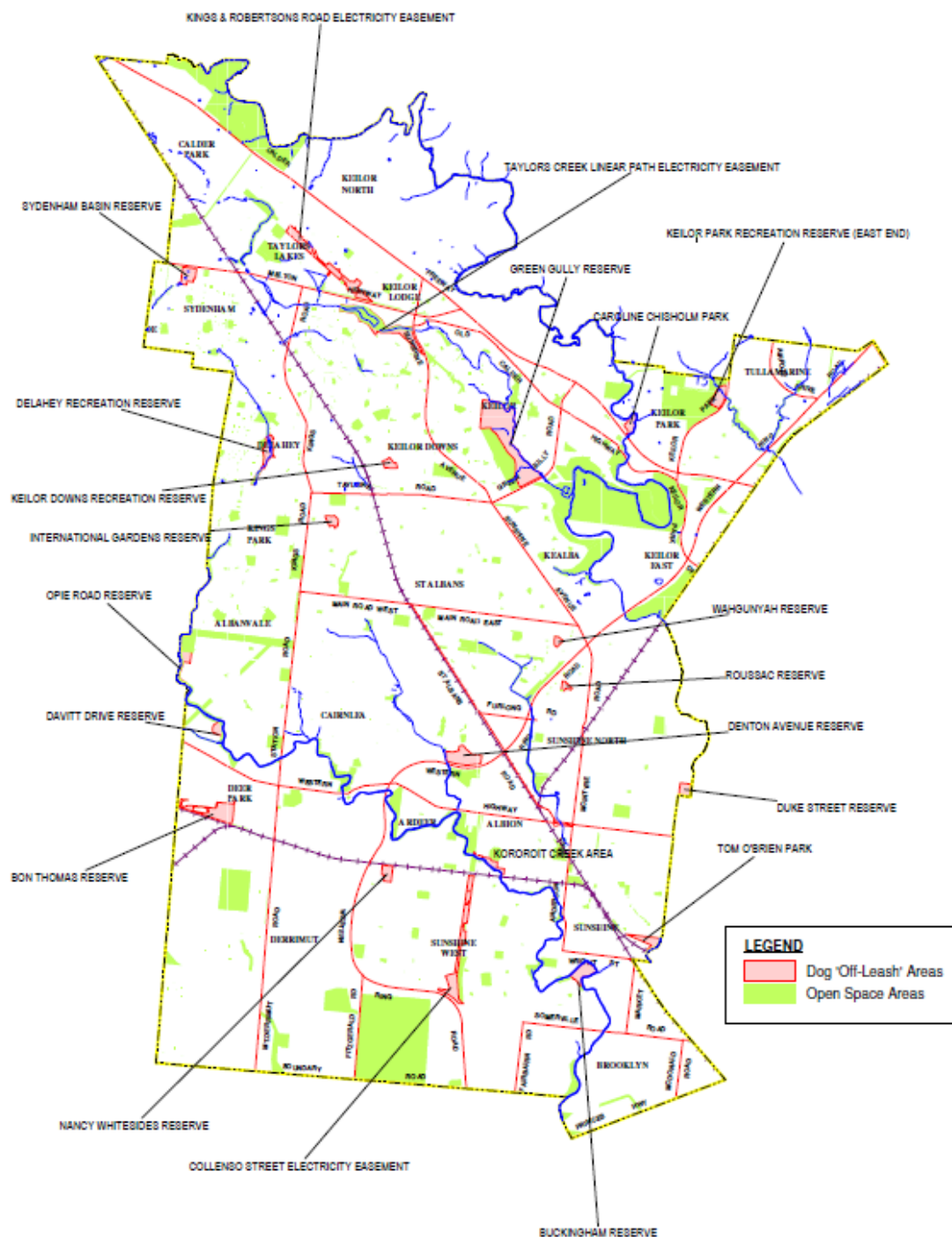
- During formal sports events (nominating specific times of events)
- In conservation areas
- In the vicinity of BBQ and outdoor eating areas
- In the vicinity of informal sports or social events
- Within 5m of a walking or bike path
- Within 30m of children's play areas
- Where there may be heavy pedestrian traffic to or from a school

Public parks where dogs can be exercised off a leash are important to the health and well-being of dogs. Balancing the needs of dog owners and non-dog owners in parks is a consideration Council makes in open space planning and management.

City of Brimbank Off Leash Areas

| Reserve Name | Address | Suburb |
|--|------------------------|----------------|
| Bon Thomas Reserve | Quinn Street | Deer Park |
| Buckingham Reserve | 2A Buckingham Crescent | Sunshine West |
| Caroline Chisholm Park | Old Calder Highway | Keilor |
| Collenso Street Electricity Easement (Ridgeway Pde to Western Ring Road) | Collenso Street | Sunshine West |
| Davitt Drive Reserve (north of Nash Place alignment) | Davitt Drive | Deer Park |
| Delahey Recreation Reserve/linear path (south of Goldsmith Ave) | 53 Goldsmith Avenue | Delahey |
| Denton Avenue Reserve (west of the conservation area) | Denton Avenue | St Albans |
| Duke Street Reserve | Duke Street | Sunshine North |
| Green Gully Reserve (east of McCrae Blvd) | Green Gully Road | Keilor Downs |
| International Gardens Reserve | Cordelia Grove | St Albans |
| Keilor Downs Recreation Reserve | 30 Belmont Avenue | Keilor Downs |
| Keilor Park Recreation Reserve | Stadium Drive | Keilor Park |
| Road Electricity Easement (inc Pintail Park but excluding the soccer grounds) | Kings/Robertsons | Taylors Lakes |
| Kororoit Creek Area | behind Rockbank Road | Albion |
| Nancy/Whitesides Reserve | 2-20 Fitzgerald Road | Sunshine West |
| Opie Road Reserve | 151 Neale Road | Deer Park |
| Roussac Reserve | 14-28 Somerset Drive | Sunshine North |
| Sydenham Basin Reserve | Melton Highway | Sydenham |
| Taylors Creek Linear Path Electricity Easement | along Chichester Drive | Taylors Lakes |
| Tom O'Brien Park | 1-41 Matthews Street | Sunshine |
| Wahgunyah Reserve | 14-42 Wahgunyah Drive | St Albans |

City of Brimbank Off Leash Areas - Map



BRIMBANK CITY COUNCIL
Designated Dogs 'Off-Leash' Areas

Our plans

Objective 1: Promote Council's off leash network.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|---------|--|
| Comprehensive awareness and educational programs to be developed and implemented. | ongoing | Methods for evaluation outlined previously under specific initiatives. |

Objective 2: Ensure off leash areas are adequately identified.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|------|----------------------------|
| Finalisation of the review of Council's gazetted order under section 26(2) of the Act. | 2018 | Gazettal of amended order. |

Objective 3: Ensure users of off leash areas are compliant with requirements.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|---|---------|---|
| Increased patrols in dog off-leash areas to ensure compliance and to raise awareness of amended requirements. | ongoing | Increased awareness within the Community, number of infringements or warnings issued for contravention. |
| Following formal Gazettal of Council's amended Order under section 26(2) of the Domestic Animals Act, and the erection of signage and fencing at appropriate locations. | | |

Education

There is evidence and an increasing community understanding that enforcement of laws alone will not result in lasting voluntary changes in behaviour. Therefore, enforcement of the Act and local laws will be complemented with a focus on community education about responsible pet management. A range of education programs and services are provided, including:

- brochures and information kits
- displays, demonstrations, information and activities.
- information on the Council's website
- media releases and advertisements
- use of the Council's message-on-hold service to deliver responsible pet ownership messages

Brimbank's education priorities over the last four years have focussed on:

- control and confinement of pets
- de-sexing of pets
- identifying and adopting the appropriate controls for dangerous and restricted breed dogs
- 'Living In Your Neighbourhood' sessions for newly arrived migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds
- pet health and wellbeing
- registration and identification of pets
- visits to schools to speak about animal safety

An increased proportion of registration revenue is provided to the State Government to use in the development of state-wide education programs. These have included education in schools programs (particularly educating primary school age children in safety around dogs) and the 'Who's for Cats' campaign which has sought to reduce the incidence of semi-owned cats in the community.

Council will continue to work closely with State Government and other agencies to coordinate efforts in education about domestic animal management.

10. Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting

Section 68A(3) of the Act requires Council to —

- (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan
- (b) provide the Department of Primary Industries' Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan
- (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report

At the end of each financial year a summary report outlining progress in achievement of the plan's targets and objectives will be provided as part of the Annual Report process. That report will include any amendments to the plan as required by Section 68A (3)(a) of the Act.

In accordance with the legislation, a full review of the plan will be conducted every four years. The Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries will be consulted on the major review and then provided with a copy of the adopted plan.

The Secretary will also be advised and provided a copy of any other amendments to the plan which may arise from the annual review process.

Our plans

Objective 1: Ensure objectives and initiatives of DAMP are met.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|---|---|
| Review the commencement and performance of initiatives identified in the Domestic Animal Management Plan, and ongoing animal management activities | Annually, prior to the publication of Council's Annual Report | Reporting of performance within the Annual Report |

Objective 2: Implement any changes required to the DAMP.

| Activity | When | Evaluation |
|--|--|---|
| Implement amendments to the Domestic Animal Management Plan identified as part of any review, and report these to the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries. | As and if required following annual review | Report to Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries |

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Hearing or speech impaired?

- TTY dial 133 677
- Speak & Listen 1300 555 727
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Brimbank Language Link



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