Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan - Community Engagement Report

This report provides information on the community consultation for the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) project and reports on the engagement outcomes. The consultation opened on Monday 19 May and closed at 9am on Monday 16 June 2025.

Overview

Project background

The Victorian Government amended *the Domestic Animals Act 1994* (the Act) to require that all Councils have a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). This amendment aimed to improve animal management in Victoria. The DAMP is a strategic plan for Councils to effectively manage animals and encourage responsible pet ownership. As its purpose is based on servicing communities, it must be based on local issues.

Council has clear and defined roles in animal management as outlined by the Plan and the Act. These include:

- promoting responsible pet ownership in the City of Yarra
- responding to issues raised by the community about nuisance animals (e.g. barking dogs)
- enforcing the legislation relating to animals
- encouraging the registration of companion animals
- educating the community on topics related to animal management and control.

Yarra City Council encourages responsible animal ownership and recognises the positive benefits associated with pets. Animal ownership can provide community members with opportunities to connect with other people and encourages greater use of open space.

Our current DAMP is up for renewal based on a 4-year legislated cycle (2021-24). A community engagement was required to get feedback on key requirements of the DAMP before it is presented to Council for adoption.

Objectives of this engagement

1. Inform and educate the community of the purpose of a DAMP and Council's role in animal management.
2. Investigate the community sentiment regarding a 24-hour cat curfew to inform its feasibility.
3. Understand the level of agreement from community for the key initiatives within the revised plan to help inform the urgency of their rollout and delivery. These include:
    a) Enhancing the pet registration and identification process by simplifying the registration, renewal, and update procedures for pet owners.
    b) Launching a campaign to educate residents on responsible pet ownership practices.
    c) Reducing public nuisance and risk through public education initiatives.
    d) Reducing dog attacks and education around dog behaviour.
    e) Improving public spaces to better accommodate pet and other activities.
    f) Strengthening the capabilities of Animal Management Officers to provide enhanced community support, education and enforcement
4. Gather feedback and insights into community experiences on key animal management issues and potential solutions that may not be addressed within the current plan.

5. Collect feedback from our diverse community with additional steps taken to hear from traditionally underrepresented voices such as culturally and linguistically diverse community members.

Level of community influence

1. Community feedback helped us to understand support and views of a 24-hour cat curfew.
2. Community feedback indicated level of agreement with the following key initiatives to help understand their support of the programs, their priorities and the areas that may require additional education:
    a. Enhancing the pet registration and identification process by simplifying the registration, renewal, and update procedures for pet owners.
    b. Launching a campaign to educate residents on responsible pet ownership practices.
    c. Reducing public nuisance and risk through public education initiatives.
    d. Reducing dog attacks and education around dog behaviour.
    e. Improving public spaces to better accommodate pet activities and other activities
    f. Strengthening the capabilities of Animal Management Officers to provide enhanced community support, education and enforcement.
3. Community feedback helped us to identify key animal management issues and potential solutions that may not be addressed within the current plan to understand if any priority areas are missing from the document. These include, but are not limited to:
    a. The types of workshops, campaigns, or materials the community would find most beneficial for promoting responsible pet ownership.
    b. Key enforcement focus priority areas such as managing barking dogs, cat containment, or stray animal capture procedures.
    c. Potential events or campaigns to promote pet education and engagement.
    d. Community priority areas of current animal management service delivery and focus areas for improvement and enhanced community support

Engagement methods:

- Online survey tool available through Your Say Yarra engagement platform
- 4 x place-based pop-ups at the following locations:
    - Fairfield Park (near the carpark on Fairfield Park Drive) on Saturday 31 May at 10am to 12 midday
    - Curtain Square on Tuesday 3 June from 7.30am to 9.30am
    - Victoria Park on Thursday 12 June from 3.30pm to 5.30pm
    - Gleadell Street Market on Saturday 14 June from 10am to 12 midday
- Targeted drop-in information sessions at the following locations:
    - Bargonnga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library on Tuesday 3 June from 5pm to 6pm
    - Cambridge Street Reserve on Thursday 5 June from 4.30pm to 5.30pm
    - Yarra Youth Centre on Tuesday 10 June from 4pm to 5pm
    - Willowview Centre on Wednesday 11 June from 10.30am to 11.30am
- Children's activity designed for primary school aged students distributed through pop ups and Council services
- Targeted stakeholder engagement with the following groups:
    - Yarra Resident Voice Group at Collingwood College on Wednesday 28 May 2025 from 6pm to 8pm
    - Collingwood Neighbourhood Centre – Children's Workshop on Friday 13 June from 4.30pm to 5.00pm

Engagement Questions

The questions were broken into two sections:

- Questions on the Domestic Animal Management Plan
- Questions on Animal Management Services at Yarra City Council

Questions on the Domestic Animal Management Plan

Do you agree that the following programs and initiatives will help Council manage domestic animals and pets?

Please indicate your level of agreement from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”.

- Enhancing the pet registration and identification process by simplifying the registration, renewal, and update procedures for pet owners.
- Launching a campaign to educate residents on responsible pet ownership practices.
- Reducing public nuisance and risk through public education initiatives.
- Reducing dog attacks and education around dog behaviour.
- Improving public spaces to better accommodate pet activities.
- Strengthening the capabilities of Animal Management Officers to provide enhanced community support, education and enforcement.

One of the actions proposed within the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan is to understand the feasibility of a 24-hour cat curfew across the City of Yarra.

If this was feasible, would you support Council exploring a 24-hour cat curfew to help manage domestic animals?

Please note: Council currently has a 7pm to 7am cat curfew that came into place on 1 January 2024

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain your response.

Which of the following are most important to you when using parks and public spaces?' Please select up to 5

- Being able to enjoy public spaces without being approached by off-leash dogs
- Having public space that is clean and free of dog poo
- Having space where my dog and other dogs can socialise freely both on or off a leash
- Having fenced off-leash areas
- Having unfenced off-leash areas
- Having clear and set times where dogs can be off-leash in parks or reserves
- Having parks and public spaces near me that are free of dogs
- Having access to bins or poo bags to pick up and remove my dog’s waste
- Other (specify)

Are there any issues or ideas relating to animal management that are not addressed within the draft Plan?

Questions on Animal Management Services at Yarra City Council

Do you own or care for a dog or cat?

- Yes, one or more cats
- Yes, one or more dogs

- Yes, both dogs and cats
- No

[LOGIC – If "Do you own or care for a dog or cat?" was marked as any response but No]

Please mark Yes, No or Unsure to the following questions.

- Are your dogs or cats microchipped?
- Are your dogs or cats registered with Yarra?

[LOGIC – If "Do you own or care for a dog or cat?" was marked as any response but No]
Are your dogs or cats desexed?

[LOGIC – if "Are your dogs or cats desexed?" was responded with No]
What do you think is the primary reason dogs and cats in Yarra are not desexed?

Have you ever contacted Yarra City Council regarding a dog or cat issue?

- Yes
- No

[LOGIC – if "Have you ever contacted Yarra City Council regarding a dog or cat issue?" was responded with Yes]
What was your experience with Council?

[LOGIC – if "Have you ever contacted Yarra City Council regarding a dog or cat issue?" was responded with Yes]
Please tell us your level of agreement with the following statements. Please indicate your level of agreement from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".

- Council's Animal Management staff are quick to respond to my queries.
- Council's Animal Management staff are informative and knowledgeable.
- Council's website provides all the information needed for pet owners to responsibly care for their animals.
- It is easy to register my pet or update my details within Council's systems (either via the phone, email or online).

Would you like to receive responsible pet ownership information?

- Yes
- No

[LOGIC – if "Would you like to receive responsible pet ownership information?" was responded with Yes]
What type of responsible pet ownership information are you interested in?

Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve animal management services for the benefit of the community?

Do you have any other comments on the Domestic Animal Management Plan or Animal Management Services at Yarra City Council??

Engagement reach

Engagement promotion:
Social media channels (including social media advertisements) reaching over 17,000 people.
Council email newsletters including Yarra Life, Your Say Yarra email newsletter and an email to all registered pet owners. This reached over 13,500 subscribers who opened these emails.
Promoted via April/May 2025 edition of Yarra News which is distributed to every household in Yarra (over 60,000 properties).
News story on Yarra City Council's website and promoted on homepage.
Postcards and posters available at events and postcards were distributed to 23 Council venues. These include town halls, neighbourhood houses, seniors' centres, libraries and leisure centres.
22 A1 corflutes with English and translated calls to action and a scannable QR code across the following sites across Yarra: • 3 at Edinburgh Gardens • 2 at Quarries Park • 2 at Barkley Gardens • 2 at Curtain Square • 1 at Citizens Park • 1 at Victoria Park • 2 at Burnley Park • 1 at Alphington Park • 1 at Fairfield Park Oval • 2 at Darling Gardens • 1 at Atherton Reserve • 1 at Gahan Reserve • 3 at the Yarra Leisure centres

Your Say Yarra project page:

The success of the Your Say Yarra page is tracked against the following metrics:

- **Views** - The number of times the page was seen.
- **Visitors** – The number of unique visitors that saw the page.
- **Responses** – The number of feedback responses that were submitted.

Views	Visitors	Responses
5,118	2,954	637

In person engagement opportunities:

In-person session (including date and location)	Approximate number of people we spoke to	Responses
Fairfield Park (near the carpark on Fairfield Park Drive) on Saturday 31 May at 10am to 12 midday	5	0
Curtain Square on Tuesday 3 June from 7.30am to 9.30am	14	3
Bargonnga Nganjin North Fitzroy Library on Tuesday 3 June from 5pm to 6pm	10	0
Cambridge Street Reserve on Thursday 5 June from 4.30pm to 5.30pm	15	2
Yarra Youth Centre on Tuesday 10 June from 5pm to 6pm	14	0
Willowview Centre on Wednesday 11 June from 10.30am to 11.30am	8	1
Victoria Park on Thursday 12 June from 3.30pm to 5.30pm	12	2
Gleadell Street Market on Saturday 14 June from 10am to 12 midday	50	10
TOTAL	128	18

Please note:

- Yarra Resident Voice Group at Collingwood College – 10 people
- Collingwood Neighbourhood Centre – Children's Workshop – over 30 children at this stage have not provided children's activity back despite follow up.

Engagement results

Who did we hear from?

Demographic data was collected via the 637 hard and online copies of the engagement tool.

- One respondent did not complete the demographic section of the hard copy survey when they responded. This is reflected in the number of responses in the table below.

What's your connection to Yarra? *Respondents could select multiple options*	Numbers	Percentage
Live in Yarra, in a property I own (either outright or with a mortgage)	506	79.31%
Live in Yarra, in a property I rent	107	16.77%

Own a property in Yarra but live outside of Yarra	9	1.41%
Work in Yarra	64	10.03%
Own a business/business occupier in Yarra	34	5.33%
Study in Yarra	2	0.31%
None of the above	7	1.10%
I prefer not to say	8	1.25%
What gender do you identify as?	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Man	203	31.87%
Woman	402	63.11%
Self-described	3	0.47%
I prefer not to say	29	4.55%
What is your age range?	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Under 11	0	0%
12 to 17	1	0.16%
18 to 24	6	0.94%
25 to 34	66	10.36%
35 to 49	212	33.28%
50 to 59	140	21.98%
60 to 69	109	17.11%
70 to 84	73	11.46%
85 and older	1	0.16%
I prefer not to say	29	4.55%
What suburb do you live in	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Abbotsford	57	8.95%

Alphington	34	5.34%
Burnley	17	2.67%
Carlton North	56	8.79%
Clifton Hill	56	8.79%
Collingwood	47	7.38%
Cremorne	9	1.41%
Fairfield	7	1.10%
Fitzroy	54	8.48%
Fitzroy North	86	13.50%
Princes Hill	14	2.20%
Richmond	183	28.73%
I live outside of Yarra	17	2.67%
Select all that apply. I am.... *Respondents could select multiple options*	**Numbers**	**Percentage**
Someone who speaks a language other than English at home.	43	6.75%
A person who was born overseas.	125	19.62%
A person living with a disability.	50	7.85%
A member of the LGBTIQA+ community.	72	11.30%
Someone of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.	2	0.31%
None of the above.	354	55.57%
I prefer not to say.	54	8.48%

What did we hear?

Do you agree that the following programs and initiatives will help Council manage domestic animals and pets?

This question aimed to test community sentiment across six strategic initiatives designed to improve how Council manages domestic animals and pets in Yarra. Of the **637 respondents**, all provided input on each initiative, giving a robust sample of feedback across the board.

Overall, there is a high level of support for all six initiatives, with particularly strong endorsement for education campaigns, reducing dog attacks, and improving pet-friendly public spaces. The data provides a clear signal that the community values education, prevention, and responsible pet management as central pillars of Council's future approach.

Enhancing the pet registration and identification process	Launching a campaign to educate residents on responsible pet ownership	Reducing public nuisance and risk through public education and enforcement	Reducing dog attacks and education around dog behaviour.	Improving public spaces to better accommodate dog walking and recreation	Strengthening the capabilities of Animal Management Officers	
32.70%	33.40%	28.30%	40.20%	44.30%	27.50%	Strongly agree
39.20%	37%	39.60%	33.90%	29%	29.70%	Agree
71.90%	70.40%	67.90%	74.10%	73.30%	57.20%	Combine Total
16.60%	15.70%	16.30%	14.40%	13.30%	19.80%	Neither agree nor disagree
4.60%	7.70%	9.70%	4.90%	5.70%	10.50%	Disagree
4.20%	4.70%	3.90%	3.30%	4.90%	8.30%	Strongly disagree
8.80%	12.40%	13.60%	8.20%	10.60%	18.80%	Combine Total

Some specific themes that emerged:

- **Enhancing the pet registration and identification process**
  71.9% agree or strongly agree
  While this received solid support, the presence of 16.6% neutral responses suggests the community may need more information about what enhancements are being proposed. Simplifying the process and making it easier for new pet owners may help drive stronger support.
- **Launching a campaign to educate residents on responsible pet ownership**
  70.4% agree or strongly agree
  This initiative was well-received. Community sentiment strongly supports education, particularly in relation to off-leash etiquette, nuisance behaviours, and dog park safety. It reflects a proactive desire to inform rather than penalise.
- **Reducing public nuisance and risk through public education and enforcement**
  67.9% agree or strongly agree.

  This initiative had a slightly higher disagreement rate (13.6%), possibly due to concerns around overregulation or how enforcement would be applied. The neutral rating (16.3%) suggests more clarity around what constitutes “nuisance” would be beneficial.
- **Reducing dog attacks and education around dog behaviour and safety**
  74.1% agree or strongly agree.

  The highest level of support among all themes community members overwhelmingly supported this initiative, reflecting strong community concern for safety in shared spaces. Support spanned a wide

demographic, including families, older residents, and dog owners. This highlights the importance of preventative education and incident reporting.

- **Improving public spaces to better accommodate dog walking and recreation**
  73.3% agree or strongly agree.
  This was the second most popular initiative. Feedback supports a desire for more off-leash areas, better signage, and amenities like water fountains, bins, and shade. The 13.3% neutral response rate could indicate uncertainty about what "improvement" entails or may not be a pet owner, underscoring the importance of community co-design.
- **Strengthening the capabilities of Animal Management Officers**
  57.2% agree or strongly agree.

  Community members recognised the need for more active enforcement and support on the ground. This includes education roles as well as response capability. However, a combined 18.8 % disagreement suggests concerns around heavy-handedness or resourcing constraints.

Based on these insights, Council may consider the following actions:

Education and Awareness

- Develop targeted campaigns on responsible pet ownership, including off-leash etiquette, barking prevention, waste disposal, and community harmony.
- Include culturally and linguistically diverse materials to ensure broader reach.

Enforcement and Support

- Explore opportunities to further empower Animal Management Officers with the right tools, training, and processes.
- Review protocols for how nuisance complaints are assessed, responded to, and resolved.

Infrastructure and Amenity Improvements

- Invest in well-maintained, clearly signed off-leash areas that support both dogs and people.
- Consider infrastructure upgrades such as shaded areas, agility equipment, and safe fencing in designated off-leash parks.

Registration and Administration

- Review and streamline the registration process, making it user-friendly and digitally accessible.
- Consider incentives for early or lifetime registration to boost compliance.

In conclusion, the feedback shows strong community alignment with Council's proposed directions. The results clearly indicate a readiness to support initiatives that promote responsible ownership, protect public safety, and enhance animal welfare through proactive education, improved infrastructure, and strengthened Council support services.

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Pet Registration and Identification	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Registration renewals should be easier online and linked to microchip info."* • *"Make lifetime registration an option."*	**Summary:** Suggestions focused on simplifying the registration process and improving links between Council and microchip databases. **Partial In Scope.** Opportunities to streamline the registration experience will be explored. Suggestions such as lifetime registration may not be obtainable due to clause 10(2) of the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*. Digital reminders will be reviewed currently and scoping to commence for ERP in conjunction with

	Customer Experience and rates to centralise Council related notices.

Responsible Pet Ownership Education	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"People don't know how to behave in off-leash areas — they need more education."* • *"Lots of dogs off-lead in on-lead areas. Clearer signage and awareness would help."*	**Summary:** Strong support for campaigns around etiquette in public spaces, including understanding on- and off-leash zones and responsible behaviour. **In Scope.** These education campaigns are a key focus of the DAMP and will be tailored to address behaviour in shared spaces.

Nuisance Issues and Enforcement	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Some dogs bark all day when the owners are out - it's so frustrating."* • *"I'm sick of poo being left on my nature strip every day!"*	**Summary:** Comments frequently mentioned barking and waste management as common community grievances. **In Scope.** Nuisance-related issues form part of the enforcement and education objectives in the DAMP, supported by updated guidelines and Animal Management officer (AMO) response strategies. Education around existing processes to deal with nuisance complaints and making the information readily available.

Dog Attacks and Behaviour	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"I was knocked over by an off-lead dog — the owner just laughed."* • *"There should be mandatory training for aggressive dogs."*	**Summary:** Community members expressed concern about aggressive or poorly controlled dogs, particularly in off-leash settings. **Partially In Scope.** Reducing dog attacks is a priority area. New behavioural education and intervention tools will be explored. More visible signage, clearer expectations, and pathways for reporting will be considered.

Public Space Design and Amenities	
What did we hear	**Our response**

• *"We need more fenced off-leash areas with shade and water."* • *"Dog parks are overcrowded — more space would help with safety."*	**Summary:** Desire for improved facilities and expanded access to dog-friendly spaces was a strong recurring theme. **Partially In Scope** *(with support from other departments)*. These insights will be shared with Open Space Planning for inclusion in future capital works planning for Open Spaces and Dog Parks.
Animal Management Officer Resourcing	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"We never see Council officers in our area."* • *"Officers should do more education, not just issue fines."*	**Summary:** Feedback included concerns about visibility, consistency, and education roles of officers. **In Scope.** The DAMP includes actions to improve AMO training, community presence, and clarify the balance between education and enforcement. Review resourcing to ensure visibility within parks across Yarra.
Cats and Containment	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Roaming cats fight, kill birds, and spray near homes."*	**Summary:** Many residents raised issues with free-roaming cats, particularly in relation to wildlife impacts and neighbourhood disturbance. **In Scope.** The DAMP will explore increased education and potential future containment measures, including potentially expanding the Cat Trapping Program.
Wildlife Protection	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Council should do more to protect wildlife from roaming pets."* • *"Domestic cats are devastating to native animals."*	**Summary:** Concerns related to domestic pets harming wildlife were often raised alongside cat containment comments. **Partially In Scope.** While wildlife conservation sits outside DAMP's primary scope, Council will liaise with biodiversity and environment teams to align messaging.
Pet Shops and Breeders	
What did we hear	**Our response**

• *"Pet shops shouldn't be allowed to sell animals from dodgy breeders."* • *"Do more to stop puppy farming."*	**Summary:** Comments reflected concern about animal welfare standards in commercial breeding and sales. **Out of Scope.** This is regulated at the State level through Agriculture Victoria. Council will continue to advocate for ethical practices and refer complaints to the appropriate authority.

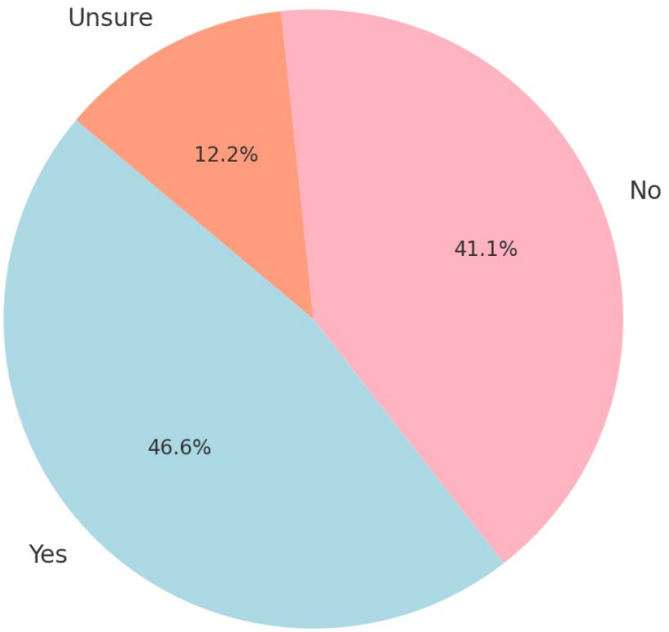
Stray Animals and Lost Pets	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Better systems needed for reuniting lost pets - shelters are too far away."* • *"Why do I have to go to another suburb to pick up my dog?"*	**Summary:** Concerns around reunification and shelter access were common. **In Scope.** Council will explore ways to enhance local return-to-owner processes and promote microchipping and registration to reduce shelter impoundments.

Would you support Council exploring a 24-hour cat curfew to help manage domestic animals?

This question was designed to gauge community sentiment around the potential introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew across Yarra. This would require domestic cats to be confined to their owners' properties at all times, as opposed to a night-time curfew only (which is already in place).

From the **637 responses**, the results were split evenly:

- 46.6% supported the idea of exploring a 24-hour cat curfew
- 41.1% opposed it
- 12.2% were unsure and requested more information or expressed conditional support



This even distribution highlights that the topic of cat containment is polarising in the community. And further education and engagement would be needed if Council were to progress this as a policy direction.

What did we hear from the community?

Some clear themes emerged from the **526 qualitative responses** submitted as part of this question:

- **Support for Cat Curfews to Protect Wildlife and Cats Themselves**
    - Many residents voiced strong support for the curfew, citing harm caused to local wildlife by free-roaming cats, including native birds and small mammals.
    - Several respondents felt that keeping cats indoors promotes their safety, reducing risk of injury, disease, or getting lost.
- **Concerns About Feasibility and Cat Welfare**
    - A large number of residents who were opposed felt a 24-hour curfew would be difficult to enforce and too restrictive on cat behaviour, especially for cats already used to outdoor access.
    - Concerns were raised around stress and wellbeing impacts on cats confined indoors full-time.
- **Calls for Gradual or Compromise Approaches**
    - Several community members suggested exploring staged or night-time-only curfews first, or applying curfews only in high-risk ecological zones.
    - Others asked for support measures (such as subsidised cat enclosures or training) to be introduced before any regulation.
- **Requests for More Information**
    - Many "Unsure" responses reflected a lack of clarity about how the curfew would be implemented, what exceptions might apply, and how it would be enforced.
    - Some asked for evidence about cat impacts on wildlife specific to Yarra before supporting a blanket policy.

Based on these insights, Council may consider the following actions:

- **Supporting Responsible Cat Ownership through Education and Resources**
    - Develop targeted campaigns to raise awareness of cat behaviour, enrichment strategies for indoor cats, and the benefits of containment for pet safety and wildlife protection.
    - Provide guidance and tools for transitioning outdoor cats to indoor lifestyles, including how-to resources and links to affordable enclosure options.
    - Translate materials into multiple languages and tailor content for different housing types (e.g. renters, apartment dwellers).
- **Improving Complaint Handling and Enforcement Pathways**
    - Ensure enforcement is proportionate and supported by education and clear evidence requirements.
    - Provide training and support for Animal Management Officers to respond with a mix of education and compliance action.
- **Continuing to Prioritise Wildlife and Community Amenity**
    - Reinforce the environmental benefits of cat containment in public messaging, especially relating to native bird and small mammal protection.
    - Ensure that enforcement and policy directions are aligned with Council's broader biodiversity and community safety goals.

In conclusion, the community's views on cat containment are diverse and passionate. While there is strong support for protecting wildlife and promoting responsible ownership, there are also valid concerns about animal welfare, feasibility, and the practicalities of enforcement. These insights highlight the importance of flexibility, clear communication, and inclusive support strategies**.**

Council currently has a nighttime curfew and given there is no overwhelming support for a 24/7 cat curfew, the commitment to explore the feasibility of implementing a 24/7 cat curfew will not be included as part of this DAMP.

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Wildlife Protection	
What did we hear	**Our response**

• *"Cats should not be let outside to kill birds."* • *"Roaming cats cause serious harm to native wildlife."* • *"A 24hr curfew will help reduce the burden on shelters and save wildlife."*	**Summary:** Respondents supported the 24-hour cat curfew as a way to protect native wildlife, reduce injury to cats, and limit nuisance behaviours like fighting and soiling gardens. There is a consistent view that roaming cats contribute to wildlife decline in urban areas. **In Scope.** Feedback directly relates to Council's draft policy direction and will inform implementation, communication, and education strategies.
Already Effective Measures	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"The 7pm–7am curfew is working well."* • *"We've already seen improvements—why make the rules stricter?* • *"Current measures are fair and effective without being too harsh."*	**Summary:** Some respondents believe the existing part-time curfew is already delivering positive outcomes, including reduced cat fights and less wildlife harm. They questioned the need for a stricter policy without supporting data. **In Scope.** Feedback will help Council consider whether current restrictions are sufficient and whether stronger evidence is required to justify further changes.
Cats' Freedom and Wellbeing	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Cats are natural roamers—locking them up 24/7 is cruel."* • *"Some cats suffer mental and physical distress when confined."* • *"Not all households are suitable for indoor-only pets."*	**Summary:** Respondents raised concerns about the welfare impacts of 24-hour containment, particularly for older cats or those used to outdoor access. Stress behaviours, obesity, and loss of quality of life were common themes. **In Scope.** These perspectives highlight the need for balanced messaging and supportive resources for owners transitioning to indoor containment.
Owner Responsibility	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Cat owners should be responsible like dog owners."* • *"Cats should be confined to their own property."* • *"There's a lack of accountability among some cat owners.*	**Summary:** There was strong support for holding cat owners to the same standards as dog owners. Respondents called for stricter rules and education to ensure cats don't cause nuisance or harm wildlife. **Partially In Scope.** Feedback affirms the need for clear policy expectations, community education, and consistent enforcement aligned with responsible pet

	ownership. 'Rules (legislation)' for dogs predominately specified

Enforcement Issues	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Enforcement is difficult and puts too much pressure on neighbours."* • *"Council doesn't have the staff or systems to follow up."* • *"Gathering evidence is daunting and impractical."*	**Summary:** While some support enforcement, many raised practical concerns about how a 24-hour curfew would be policed. Comments highlighted enforcement inequities and the emotional toll on residents reporting breaches. **In Scope.** These issues will inform Council's enforcement policy and the need for transparent, fair, and resource-efficient approaches.

Feasibility Concerns	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"It's not realistic for renters or low-income households to build cat enclosures."* • *"Many homes don't have outdoor space for cats."* • *"This would create inequality between wealthier and disadvantaged residents."*	**Summary:** Many residents believe that a 24-hour curfew would unfairly impact renters, apartment dwellers, and those with limited income or space. The cost and practicality of enclosures were frequently raised. **Partially In Scope.** While social equity is a broader issue, Council can consider support schemes (e.g. subsidies, education) and apply flexibility where possible.

Impact on Residents	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Roaming cats cause noise and damage to gardens."* • *"Cat fights and spraying are disruptive."* • *"Council needs to support residents dealing with irresponsible cat owners."*	**Summary:** Feedback reflected frustration from residents impacted by roaming cats. Issues included noise, hygiene, and concerns for family safety. **In Scope.** This feedback validates enforcement of containment rules and further investment in community education, complaint pathways, and support services.

General	
What did we hear	**Our response**

- *"I support the cat curfew—it's good for cats and wildlife."*
- *"Council is showing leadership."*
- *"Let's protect our pets and native animals."*

Summary: Many respondents offered clear support for the proposed changes, recognising the benefits for animal safety, public amenity, and biodiversity.

In Scope. Feedback affirms the direction of the Domestic Animal Management Plan and will be reflected in final engagement reporting.

Which of the following are most important to you when using parks and public spaces? (Select up to 5)

This question was designed to identify key priorities for the community when it comes to using Yarra's parks and public spaces, with a specific focus on co-use between dog owners and non-dog owners. Respondents could select up to five options to reflect their top concerns.

A total of **637 people** participated in this question, providing clear insight into what features and services they value most in public open space.

	Being able to enjoy public spaces without being approached by off-leash dogs	Having public space that is clean and free of dog poo	Having space where my dog and other dogs can socialise freely both on or off a leash	Having fenced off-leash areas	Having unfenced off-leash areas	Having clear and set times where dogs can be off leash in parks or reserves	Having parks and public spaces near me that are free of dogs	Having access to bins or poo bags to pick up and remove my dog's waste	Other
Total	238	444	346	160	353	171	124	405	44
% of Respondents	37.30%	69.60%	54.20%	25.10%	55.30%	26.80%	19.4	63.50%	6.90%

What did we hear from the community?

Overall, the feedback highlights a strong desire for shared, respectful, and well-maintained spaces that cater to both dog owners and other park users. Cleanliness, safety, and clarity of rules were common threads across most responses.

Some specific themes that emerged:

- **Clean and rubbish-free spaces**
  69.6% of respondents selected this as a key priority.
  This was the highest-rated feature, showing a strong demand for proactive cleaning and maintenance of parks and public spaces, including managing dog waste and litter.
- **Access to bins and poo bags**
  63.5% of respondents supported this.
  There is a strong call for infrastructure that supports responsible pet ownership, such as accessible dog waste bins and free bag dispensers across all parks.
- **Fenced off-leash areas**
  55.3% of respondents rated this as important.
  Many dog owners value designated and secure off-leash zones where dogs can exercise safely without affecting other park users.
- **Spaces for dogs to socialise and exercise safely**
  54.2% of respondents endorsed this.
  This reflects a community interest in positive dog interaction spaces that are safe and well-managed.
- **Enjoyment of public space without unwanted dog interaction**
  37.3% of respondents chose this.
  This indicates that a significant portion of the community wants to ensure dogs are under control and that dog-free enjoyment of public space remains an option.

Other: 45 community responses revealed the following key insights:

- **Dog Owner Responsibility** - Many respondents emphasised the need for owners to take responsibility for their pets, this included cleaning up after dogs, keeping them under control, and ensuring respectful behaviour in shared spaces.
- **Facilities & Amenities** - Participants frequently raised the importance of adequate facilities in off-leash areas, such as access to drinking water, shade, seating, and bins for waste disposal.
- **On-leash Requirements** - Concerns were shared around the need for clearer or stricter on-leash rules, particularly in shared parks and walking trails, to reduce unwanted dog interactions.
- **Dog Zones/Areas** - Several respondents supported the idea of dedicated dog areas, including fenced zones or agility spaces, to cater to different breeds and sizes while ensuring safety.
- **Dog Safety & Conflict** - Comments highlighted fears around off-leash dogs approaching or intimidating people or other pets, particularly vulnerable dogs or children.
- **Rules & Enforcement** - A notable number of responses called for stronger enforcement, fines, and presence of rangers to manage compliance with existing dog regulations.
- **Inclusive Design** - Feedback included support for more inclusive planning—such as designated areas for small or low-risk dogs to ensure all users feel comfortable.
- **Other** - A small number of responses did not clearly align with the above themes but still offered valuable insights, including broader suggestions or general commentary.

Based on these insights, Council may consider the following actions:

Maintenance and Waste Management

- Increase cleaning frequency in high-use parks.
- Expand installation of bag dispensers and dog waste bins in all off-leash areas.

Clear Design and Signage

- Design and maintain fenced off-leash areas with clear entry/exit points.
- Improve signage outlining on-leash/off-leash zones, park rules, and responsible pet behaviour.

Shared Space Planning

- Explore options for timed or zoned access to ensure shared use is safe and respectful.
- Co-design park upgrades with both pet owners and non-pet users to ensure all voices are included.

Community Education

- Deliver targeted campaigns on leash etiquette, waste disposal, and respectful co-use of space.

In conclusion, the feedback demonstrates that the Yarra community places high value on clean, safe, and inclusive public spaces that support both dog-related activity and general recreation. While there is strong support for dog-friendly infrastructure, such as bins, bag dispensers, and secure off-leash areas, there is also a clear desire for respectful co-use, better signage, and improved enforcement of rules.

Residents want to enjoy parks without conflict, whether they are dog owners or not. Many are calling for a balance between providing engaging spaces for dogs and ensuring non-dog owners can use public spaces without unwanted interactions. Strong themes around owner responsibility, safety, and maintenance highlight the need for shared responsibility and better infrastructure planning. These insights provide a valuable foundation for Council to guide future park design, investment in amenities, and community education, with the goal of creating welcoming, well-managed spaces for all users.

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Clean and Rubbish-free parks	
What did we hear	**Our response**

• *"There's dog poo everywhere — we need better cleaning and more bins."*	**Summary:** Cleanliness was the top concern. Respondents want consistently clean spaces. **In Scope.** Feeback to be provided to help form part of other strategies, plans or capital works programs relating to assets. Feedback to be shared with our City Works team, including specific locations provide as part of the engagement. Education campaign for the community around dog faeces to assist with mitigating this issue.
Dog Waste Infrastructure	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Sometimes I can't find a bin for my dog bags - please fix this."*	**Summary:** Strong request for bins and bag dispensers to be available in all public spaces. **In Scope.** Feeback to be provided to help form part of other strategies, plans or capital works programs relating to assets. Feedback to be shared with our City Works team, including specific locations provide as part of the engagement.
Safe Off-Leash Areas	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"My dog needs space to run but I worry about safety near roads."*	**Summary:** Many dog owners want secure, fenced spaces where dogs can exercise safely. **In Scope**. Feedback to be provided to help form part of other strategies, plans or capital works programs relating to assets. Feedback to be shared with our Open Space/Urban Design team for future open space consideration.
Unwanted Approach by Dogs	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Not everyone wants a dog jumping on them – I want to feel safe too."*	**Summary:** Many non-dog owners value clear rules and respectful behaviour in public spaces. **In Scope.** Education, signage, and enforcement can help balance the needs of all park users.
Clear Rules and Better Signage	
What did we hear	**Our response**

• *"It's not obvious where off-leash is allowed — every park is different."*	**Summary:** There's a need for consistent, visible signage outlining dog rules. **In Scope.** A signage audit and new design standards will be considered under the DAMP implementation plan.
Shaded, Accessible and Inclusive spaces	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Make parks better for everyone — water, seating, shade, access."*	**Summary:** While dog facilities were the focus, broader park amenity and inclusivity were also raised. **Partially In Scope.** Broader accessibility and amenity upgrades will be referred to Open Space and Urban Design teams.

Are there any issues or ideas relating to animal management that are not addressed within the Draft Plan?

This open-ended question invited the community to raise any further thoughts, concerns, or ideas regarding domestic animal management in Yarra that they felt had not been adequately captured in the draft Plan.

From the **307 responses received**, several recurring themes emerged. While some reinforced priorities raised elsewhere in the consultation, others provided new or nuanced suggestions for future consideration.

What did we hear from the community?

The responses reveal strong community interest in responsible pet ownership, enforcement, and more inclusive public space planning. A consistent theme was the desire for Council to take a balanced approach—supporting pet owners while ensuring safety and amenity for all.

Some specific themes that emerged:

- **Policy Criticism & Gaps**

  Respondents offered valuable feedback on the draft plan, identifying areas for improvement. Their input highlighted perceived omissions, opportunities for greater clarity, and suggestions to more comprehensively address key animal management concerns.
- **General Suggestions**

  A large number of submissions included constructive suggestions or broader ideas for how the plan could be improved, often reflecting a proactive community mindset. There was a strong support for re-introducing 'dogs in pubs', reflecting limited awareness that this is governed by State Legislation and outside Council's jurisdiction.
- **Urban Density, Space Concerns & Parks**

  Comments highlighted concerns about the rising number of pets, especially in high-density housing developments, and the lack of adequate open space or dog infrastructure to support this**.**
- **Dog Owner Responsibility & Enforcement / Patrols / Dog Waste**

  Respondents want to see more active enforcement of leash laws, registration, and waste management, particularly in parks and high-use areas.
- **Other**

  Some feedback did not align with the key themes or was too general to categorise.

Based on these insights, Council may consider the following actions:

- Expanding enforcement capacity and visibility of Animal Management Officers, including patrols in parks and high-use public areas.
- Reviewing how dog access is managed in shared spaces, including off-leash area design, signage, and timed use where appropriate.
- Promoting responsible pet ownership through expanded community education, with an emphasis on nuisance prevention, obedience training, and cat containment.
- Considering design improvements or rotation policies in popular dog parks to reduce noise, crowding, and conflict.
- Coordinating with Strategic Planning and Open Space teams to explore broader solutions to pet density in high-density areas.

In conclusion, the feedback reveals a community that is passionate, engaged, and seeking balance between freedom, responsibility, and safety in shared spaces. Strong themes around enforcement, education, space pressure, and infrastructure suggest opportunities for Council to modernise its approach while maintaining fairness and compassion.

By investing in smarter enforcement, shared design principles, and more inclusive planning, especially in high-density areas, Council can build a DAMP that is responsive to Yarra's unique urban context and aligned with community expectations.

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Urban Density, Space Concerns and Parks	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"There's not enough green space for the number of dogs."* • *"Off-leash dogs are creating safety issues on bike paths."* • *"Apartment living makes pet management harder."*	**Summary:** Residents expressed concern about rising pet ownership in high-density housing, limited green space, and conflicts in shared park areas. There were calls for better spatial planning, clearer rules, and greater accountability from high-density developments. **In Scope.** Feeback to be provided to help form part of other strategies, plans or capital works programs relating to assets. Feedback to be shared with our Open Space/Urban Design team for future open space consideration.
Enforcement and Patrols	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"On-leash zones are ignored—there's no follow-up."* • *"Council needs more rangers enforcing the rules."* • *"Dog-related incidents are not taken seriously enough."*	**Summary:** Many respondents requested more visible enforcement, better compliance, and appropriate penalties. Several highlighted safety concerns for children and cyclists due to uncontrolled dogs. **In Scope.** This feedback supports increased patrol presence, stronger enforcement protocols, and investment in proactive animal management.

Dog Waste (Bins and Poo Bags)	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"There aren't enough bins in high-traffic areas."* • *"People leave full poo bags everywhere—it's disgusting."* • *"Why don't councils clean it more often?"*	**Summary:** Cleanliness remains a top priority, with frequent requests for more bins, regular maintenance, and shared responsibility. Some residents suggested fines or levies to improve outcomes. **In Scope.** Feeback to be provided to help form part of other strategies, plans or capital works programs relating to assets. Feedback to be shared with our City Works team, including specific locations.
Policy Criticism and Gaps	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"The plan doesn't address feral and unowned cats."* • *"Council's pound provider has a poor reputation—consider alternatives."*	**Summary:** Several submissions raised concerns about missing or unclear strategies—particularly around cat management, shelter partnerships, and transparency of decision-making. **In Scope.** Feedback will help strengthen the final Plan with further clarity on Council initiative and programs to address the raised concerns.
General Suggestions and Community Education	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Cats wander onto my property and attack native birds."*	**Summary:** Ongoing concern about roaming cats and their environmental impact. **In Scope**. The DAMP will explore increased education and potential future containment measures, including potentially expanding the Cat Trapping Program.
Better Training and Support	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"We need to teach people how to interact with dogs safely."* • *"Promote the positive impact of pets—don't just focus on enforcement."* • *"Off-leash areas are misunderstood—educate parents and dog owners alike."*	**Summary:** Respondents called for broader education initiatives, including how to safely approach dogs, promote responsible ownership, and improve co-use of space. **In Scope.** These insights will shape community education programs and engagement efforts, especially in schools and public spaces.

Dog Access to Sports Grounds and Shared-Use Areas	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Dogs damage sports ovals—kids get injured."* • *"Dog access to sport fields should be limited."* • *"Create separate fenced zones or time-sharing rules."*	**Summary:** Comments suggested planning tools be used to manage pet impacts in high-density living. **Partially In Scope.** Feeback to be provided to help form part of other strategies, plans or capital works programs.

Understanding Pet Ownership in Yarra

These questions (below) were conducted to gather essential data and insights directly from residents about pet ownership practices and attitudes within the Yarra municipality. The feedback collected is crucial for developing an effective, targeted, and community-responsive plan for pet management. The following provides a summary of the key findings from the community consultation.

Do you own or care for a dog or cat?

637 respondents answered this question and, it was noted that:

- 142 indicated that they own or care for one or more **cats.**
- 303 indicated that they own or care for one or more **dogs.**
- 70 indicated that they own or care for both **dogs and cats.**
- 122 indicated that they **do not own** or care for a dog or cat.

This shows that a large majority of respondents own or care for a least one animal. The input from ensures that community wide concerns regarding domestic animals are also reflected in the submissions.

Are your dogs or cats microchipping?

637 respondents answered this question and, it was noted that:

- 510 indicated that their pet is microchipped.
- 4 indicated that their pet was not microchipped.
- 1 indicated that they were unsure.
- 122 did not answer as they do not own or care for a pet.

This shows a high compliance with mandatory microchipping as regulated by the *Domestic Animal Act 1994*.

Are your dogs or cats registered with Yarra?

637 respondents answered this question and, it was noted that:

- 477 indicated that their pet was registered with Yarra.
- 29 indicated that their pet was not registered with Yarra.
- 9 indicated they were unsure.
- 122 did not answer as they do not own or care for a pet.

While the compliance rate is high, the data indicates there is still an opportunity to improve registration rates within the municipality.

Are your dogs or cats desexed?

637 respondents answered this question and, it was noted that:

- 495 indicated that their pet was desexed.
- 18 indicated that their pet was not desexed.
- 122 did not answer as they do not own or care for a pet.

This finding confirms that the majority of Yarra's pet-owning community undertakes desexing procedures for their animals.

What do you think is the primary reason dogs and cats in Yarra are not desexed?

Based on the provided feedback, the primary reasons dogs and cats in Yarra are not desexed, according to the respondents who have not desexed their pets, are:

- **Health and Development Concerns**
  Several respondents cited concerns about the potential negative health impacts of desexing. They believe that desexing can be "extremely harmful," lead to health issues, interfere with the development of growing plates in large breeds, and that sex hormones are vital for a pet's health. Some also feel it is an unnecessary surgery.
- **Financial Reasons**
  The cost of the procedure was a common reason. The responses mention the general expense of desexing and that it is an issue for those with a "low income."
- **Breeding and Showing Purposes**
  Pets that are part of a "champion bloodline" or registered for breeding with organisations like Dogs Victoria are kept intact. Desexing would prevent them from being shown or used for breeding.
- **Age and Maturity**
  Many respondents believe their pets are too young for the procedure, suggesting that a dog should be at least 12 months old or have reached "full sexual maturity" before being desexed. One person specifically mentioned waiting until after the first "season" for a female dog
  .

What did we hear from the community?

Overall, there is strong compliance with key regulations, as most pets are both microchipped and registered with the municipality. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents have desexed their pets.

For the small portion of the community that has not desexed their animals, the reasons provided fell into several key themes noted above. This suggests that targeted educational initiatives are essential to address these concerns, and potentially feasibility studies to see if reduced cost desexing programs can be provided to the community.

Based on these insights, Council may consider the following actions:

Education Initiatives

- The data indicates a need to address knowledge gaps, particularly regarding the age for desexing and its health benefits. The Council should develop and distribute accurate, evidence-based information to pet owners to address concerns around desexing.

Feasibility Study for Reduced Cost Desexing Programs

- A portion of the community cited the high cost of desexing as a barrier. The Council should explore the possibility of offering reduced-cost or subsidized desexing programs in line with its financial sustainability strategy to assist low-income households and help increase compliance rates and animal wellbeing.

Improve Animal Registration Rates

- While registration rates are high among survey respondents, the data shows there is still room for improvement. In addition, it is believed that there are a number of pet owners within Yarra that have not registered their dog(s) or cat(s).

  Explore new strategies to encourage pet owners to register their animals, potentially by raising awareness about the importance of registration for pet safety and reunification. In addition, explore partnerships with shelters/pounds to further facilitate registrations.

In conclusion, the community consultation on pet ownership revealed a generally strong compliance with key regulations. The vast majority of pet owners who responded have microchipped, registered, and desexed their animals.

For the small percentage of pets that are not desexed, the primary reasons cited include a belief that the pet is too young, concerns about health impacts, the high cost of the procedure, and the need to keep animals intact for breeding or showing purposes.

Based on these findings, the Council has an opportunity to further enhance regulatory compliance. Suggested actions include implementing targeted educational initiatives to address the health benefits and optimal age for desexing. Furthermore, the Council may consider a feasibility study for reduced-cost desexing programs to assist low-income households.

Finally, while registration rates are already high among survey participants, continued efforts to promote and facilitate pet registration are crucial to ensure the safety and well-being of all animals within the municipality.

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Desexing Health Concerns	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Growth plates on large breed dogs need to develop. Also, hormones are seriously affected upon Desexing"*	**Summary:** Feedback highlighted concerns about desexing negatively impacting pet health, citing effects on hormones and physical development. **In Scope.** This aligns with the Council's consideration for targeted educational initiatives to address knowledge gaps regarding the health benefits and optimal timing of desexing.
Veterinary Advice	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Mine is younger than 12 months which is not recommended by the vet."* • *"The approach to desexing of dogs now encourages them to be at least 12 months and for females after 1 season. I am adhering to this view and will desex my bitch after her first season"*	**Summary:** Responses indicated that pet owners are often following advice from veterinarians regarding waiting periods for desexing, particularly for large breeds. **In Scope.** This aligns with the Council's consideration for targeted educational initiatives to address current veterinary best practices and engage with local vets to ensure consistent advice is provided to the community.
Cost of Desexing	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Low income"* • *"Strays, price of desexing"*	**Summary:** Comments identified the cost of desexing as a significant barrier for some residents, especially those with low incomes. **In Scope.** This directly supports the Council's plan to explore a feasibility study for reduced-cost or subsidized desexing programs to improve affordability and compliance.

Have you ever contacted Yarra City Council regarding a dog or cat issue? What was your experience with Council?
Community feedback on their experience with Council services in relation to animal management reveals a mixed picture. While some residents reported positive or helpful interactions, many others experienced delays, poor follow-up, unclear processes, and frustration with enforcement or communication.

Key issues include difficulties using the online system for pet registration, a perceived lack of enforcement around off-leash and nuisance dogs, limited Council authority or willingness to respond in certain cases (e.g. aggressive dogs, barking), and inconsistent communication. At the same time, a smaller group of respondents reported helpful and courteous service from staff.

Some specific themes that emerged:

Summary of Insights

- 145 of the 637 responses contacted Council.
- 1 in 3 people (34.8%) reported a positive experience with Council, highlighting helpful, prompt, or respectful service.
- 26% of responses were explicitly negative, citing frustration, lack of help, or poor treatment.
- A smaller proportion described mixed or adequate experiences, often noting good initial contact but poor follow-through.
- A key recurring issue was lack of enforcement or action, especially for barking or nuisance dog complaints.
- Cat containment, trap processes, and online system issues also appeared in various individual responses.

Based on these insights, Council may consider the following actions:

Process and Technology Improvements

- Simplify online registration and cancellation processes.
- Introduce confirmation notifications for key actions (e.g. pet death, transfers).
- Improve integration between customer service and back-office systems.

Enforcement and Complaint Handling

- Review and streamline nuisance complaint procedures to reduce resident burden.
- Provide clearer updates and status tracking for enforcement actions.
- Increase patrols in known problem areas, especially where repeat complaints occur.

Communication and Customer Support

- Ensure staff can clearly explain Council's role and limits.
- Improve referral pathways to external agencies like RSPCA when needed.
- Offer training and scripting to front-line staff to handle sensitive or complex issues.

Policy Review and Flexibility

- Consider opening policy discussion windows more frequently or allowing public input between scheduled reviews.
- Use feedback data to assess need for increased animal management resourcing.

In conclusion, Community feedback reveals that while some residents have had positive interactions with animal management services, many experience confusion, lack of follow-up, and dissatisfaction with outcomes, particularly around enforcement, online systems, and registration processes. These concerns highlight the need for a more responsive, transparent, and efficient service model.

By investing in process improvements, better communication, and proactive enforcement, Council can build trust and deliver a more consistent, user-friendly experience for residents engaging with animal services.

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Animal Registration Process/Renewals	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"My cat died, and I took the vet certificate to cancel registration - it took three times for Council to stop renewal notices"* • *"My reason for calling was trying to renew the cat registration online and failing. I hope you have rectified all problems with that. It was an incredibly frustrating time-wasting problem with something to do with a number that couldn't be found as I remember."* • *"Great to have an online form but to move my pet registration from other council was unclear and confusing"*	**Summary:** Residents reported frustration with the online registration and renewal process, citing technical issues, lack of clarity when transferring from other councils, and poor follow-up when updating pet records (e.g., after a pet's death). **Partially In Scope.** This directly supports the Council's plan for Process and Technology Improvements, including simplifying online systems and introducing confirmation notifications through ERP. Review in the interim to be completed with current systems to provide a better customer experience.

Animal Collections	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"When I lost my dog on a weekend, neither myself or the people that found her could reunite us until council opened on the Monday. This needs to improve"* • *"We found a stray dog. We got bounced around to different numbers. The ranger came a few hours later and was rude and bad tempered."*	**Summary: F**eedback highlighted a lack of after-hours support for lost or found pets, and inconsistent, sometimes negative, interactions with rangers. **In Scope.** Improving referral pathways and providing staff training to handle sensitive or complex issues with professionalism.

Animal Management Complaints Negative	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Cremorne specifically should be designated a strictly onlead area and officers enforce mornings and evenings"* • *"I received no response"* • *"Very slow to act"*	**Summary:** Complaints focused on a perceived lack of enforcement, slow response times, and failure to act on issues like off-leash or nuisance dogs. **In Scope.** This feedback directly informs the Council's plan to review and streamline complaint handling, provide clearer status updates, and increase patrols in problem areas.

Animal Management Complaints Positive	
What did we hear	**Our response**

• *"Efficient in acting and took the concern seriously"* • *"I sent an email, and it was responded to accordingly."* • *"No issues - always helpful"*	**Summary:** Some residents praised the Council's animal management services, citing prompt, helpful, and courteous staff who took their concerns seriously. **In Scope.** The positive feedback provides a baseline and examples of successful service delivery that can be used to model best practices across the entire team.

Please tell us your level of agreement with the following statements.

- Council's Animal Management staff are quick to respond to my queries.
- Council's Animal Management staff are informative and knowledgeable.
- Council's website provides all the information needed for pet owners to responsibly care for their animals.
- It is easy to register my pet or update my details within Council's systems (either via the phone, email or online).

The community was asked to reflect on their experiences interacting with Council's Animal Management services, specifically responsiveness, access to information, and ease of registering pets.

From **147 responses**, most participants shared constructive feedback on service delivery, identifying areas for both positive reinforcement and improvement. While overall sentiment was generally favourable, particularly for registration processes, some respondents expressed uncertainty or dissatisfaction, particularly in relation to access to information and timeliness of officer responses.

What did we hear from the community?

- **Pet Registration Process (most positively rated)**
  - *48.3% agree or strongly agree* that registering or updating pet details is easy
  - However, **14.3%** were unsure, and **21.1%** disagreed to some extent
  - This suggests the process is working well for most but may benefit from improved visibility or simplification for others.
- **Staff Responsiveness**
  - *44.9% agree or strongly agree* that Animal Management Officers respond quickly to concerns
  - Yet **15% disagreed** and **8.8% strongly disagreed**, indicating room for improvement in community perception of response times.
- **Staff Knowledge and Helpfulness**
  - *42.2% agree or strongly agree* that staff are helpful and knowledgeable
  - Nearly 30% were neutral and 8.8% unsure, suggesting a potential gap in community awareness or direct contact with staff.
- **Council Website as an Information Hub (lowest rated)**
  - Only *32.7% agree or strongly agree* the website provides everything needed
  - With 16.3% disagreeing, 17% unsure, and high neutrality, this signals an opportunity to enhance online guidance and access to services.

Council's Animal Management staff are quick to respond to my queries.	Council's Animal Management staff are informative and knowledgeable.	Council's website provides all the information needed for pet owners to responsibly care for their animals.	It is easy to register my pet or update my details within Council's systems (either via the phone, email or online).	
14.00%	14.00%	10.50%	14.00%	Strongly agree
33.00%	30%	31.00%	37.00%	Agree
47.00%	44.00%	41.50%	51.00%	Combine Total
29.00%	28.00%	32.00%	22.00%	Neither agree or disagree
2.00%	5.00%	4.00%	4.00%	Don't know / Can't say
31.00%	33.00%	36.00%	26.00%	Combine Total
12.00%	14.00%	16.50%	15.00%	Disagree
10.00%	9.00%	6.00%	8.00%	Strongly disagree
22.00%	23.00%	22.50%	23.00%	Combine Total

Based on these insights, Council may consider the following actions:

Process, Technology Enhancements and Information Access:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the Council's website for pet owners to improve its user-friendliness, content clarity, and comprehensiveness.
- Improving this digital platform would address a key pain point and serve as a central hub for all pet-related information, from registration guides to responsible care tips.

Staff Responsiveness and Communication:

- Review internal processes for handling and responding to animal management queries to ensure more consistent and timely communication.
- Provide Officers with the necessary tools to facilitate responsive action for animal management related enquiries and complaints.

Improve Staff Visibility

- Implement initiatives to increase community awareness of the role and expertise of Animal Management staff.

Simplify and Clarify Registration Processes:

- While most people find the registration process easy, there is a clear opportunity to simplify it further for others.
- Investigate the specific pain points (e.g., online system issues, phone or email processes) to ensure a seamless experience for all residents, regardless of their chosen method of interaction.

In conclusion, the community's feedback on Animal Management services presents a nuanced picture. While a significant portion of residents found the pet registration process easy, and many reported positive interactions with staff, there are clear areas for improvement. Notably, the Council's website was identified as the weakest link, with many finding it lacking in comprehensive information. Furthermore, a considerable number of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with staff responsiveness and a lack of awareness.

These insights highlight the need for the Council to enhance its digital platforms, streamline communication and responses, and increase the visibility and perceived expertise of its Animal Management team to ensure a consistently positive and efficient experience for all pet owners

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Registering Pet Positive	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"The online pet registration was simple to complete."* • *"Updating details was easy, especially during renewal."*	**Summary:** Most respondents found the registration process user-friendly. **In Scope.** These positive practices will be retained, with further refinement to ensure they're inclusive and accessible for all users.
Website Information	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"I couldn't find answers to basic questions about pet registration."* • *"Too many broken links or outdated information."*	**Summary:** Respondents reported frustration navigating the Council website for pet-related services. **In Scope**. Improvements to online content, navigation, and search functions will be considered, including smart form logic to assist with the customer journey.
Officers Communication	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Once I got hold of someone, they were great – but it took days."* • *"Phone response times need to be improved."*	**Summary:** While AMOs are perceived as helpful, some respondents had issues with accessibility and timeliness. **In Scope.** These insights will guide improvements to customer service protocols and officer resourcing, particularly during peak complaint periods.
Understanding of Animal Management Officers	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"I've never needed to contact them, so I don't know."* • *"I'm not sure what they actually do."*	**Summary:** A significant portion of respondents (up to 17%) selected "Don't know / Can't say," suggesting low visibility of the service. **In Scope.** The DAMP will include actions to raise awareness of Animal Management roles, services, and community education activities.
Digital Services	
What did we hear	**Our response**

• *"Council's whole website needs an overhaul."* • *"Hard to find anything, not just pet stuff."*	**Summary:** Some feedback reflects broader website concerns not limited to Animal Management. **Partially In Scope.** This directly supports the Council's plan for Process and Technology Improvements, including simplifying online systems and introducing confirmation notifications through ERP. Review in the interim to be completed with current systems to provide a better customer experience.

Would you like to receive responsible pet ownership information? What type of responsible pet ownership information are you interested in?

As part of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) engagement, respondents were asked to provide suggestions and feedback on how Council can improve pet management in the City of Yarra. A total of **356 responses** were reviewed and coded against the following themes.

Some specific themes that emerged:

- Strong interest in practical information, especially around managing off-leash behaviour, barking, cat containment, and how to protect pets and wildlife in shared spaces.
- Education campaigns about registration, desexing, and microchipping were also common, especially for those seeking affordable or accessible support.
- Many respondents expressed a desire for clear, proactive communication from Council, including signage, email updates, and info sessions.
- Several people noted the importance of reminders for basic etiquette (e.g. leashing, picking up poo, avoiding nuisance).
- A handful of respondents wanted support tailored to specific needs like apartment living, cultural background, or first-time pet ownership.

In addition to theme-based feedback, participants were also asked whether they would like to receive more information about responsible pet ownership. An overwhelming **84.2% of respondents (537 out of 637)** indicated they would **not** like to receive this information.

This highlights a potential challenge for Council in designing pet education initiatives that are seen as engaging and relevant by the community.

In conclusion, the feedback reveals strong community support for better education and enforcement, enhanced dog park infrastructure, and stronger measures to manage cat containment. However, this is contrasted by the majority's stated disinterest in receiving formal pet education material, suggesting the need for more targeted, user-friendly delivery approaches.

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Cat Curfew and Containment	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• "Tips on how to make a cat happy being 100% indoors." • "Cat containment advice/resources." • "How to care for your cat in the City of Yarra."	**Summary:** Community members expressed a strong interest in education around indoor cat care, benefits of containment, and compliance with curfew rules. **In Scope:** Council will continue to educate on the importance of containment and curfew requirements through resources and campaigns.

Dog Parks and Facilities	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Please provide more poo bags and bins."* • *"Fenced play areas would be great."* • *"Clear signage about dog rules in parks."*	**Summary:** Requests focused on improved facilities for dogs including amenities (bins, bags), fencing, and signage. **Partially In Scope:** These matters relate to responsible pet infrastructure and will be referred to the relevant internal teams.
Dog Related Matters	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Clear boundaries for off-lead areas."* • *"Address off-leash dogs near on-leash areas."* • *"Owners don't pick up after their dogs.*	**Summary:** Concerns about dog behaviour in public areas, especially off-lead control, waste management, and shared space etiquette. **In Scope. T**hese issues directly relate to responsible dog ownership and can be addressed through enforcement, signage, and education.
Education and Awareness	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"I want to know about flea and worm treatment."* • *"Tips on pet health during fireworks."* • *"Behaviour education for dog owners."* • *"Off-leash responsible dog rules/enforcement."*	**Summary:** Desire for general and targeted education, including seasonal tips, behavioural strategies, and rights/responsibilities. **In Scope.** Council will review how and when it shares responsible pet ownership messaging, including clearer guidance and reminders.
Fines, Enforcement and Patrols	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"There should be stronger penalties for aggressive dogs."* • *"We need better leash enforcement in parks."*	**Summary:** Some community members called for tougher penalties and more proactive patrols to ensure compliance. **In Scope.** Enforcement activities and patrols fall under DAMP responsibilities. Resourcing and scheduling will be reviewed as part of this Plan.
Reporting Mechanisms and Website Improvements	

What did we hear	Our response
• *"Clarify leash rules and times in dog parks."* • *"Clear map of off-leash areas."* • "Make it easier to report issues online." "More responsive website tools."	**Summary:** Residents highlighted the need for simpler, more accessible digital tools for reporting issues and accessing information. Desire for better communication of existing rules and designated spaces. **Partially In Scope.** This directly supports the Council's plan for Process and Technology Improvements, through ERP. Review in the interim to be completed with current systems to provide a better customer experience.

Pets in Venues	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Council should work with venues to allow well-behaved dogs."* • *"Info about animals in food venues."*	**Summary:** Mixed views on allowing dogs in public or commercial spaces, often linked to shared etiquette. **Out of Scope.** Council does not regulate pet access to food premises and is a state regulation. Feedback will be noted but is not governed through the DAMP.

Registration / Fees	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Why can't registration be for life?"* • *"Link registration and microchip systems."* • *"The online renewal system is confusing."*	**Summary:** Feedback focused on simplifying and modernising registration, fee structures, and renewals. **In Scope.** Explore how to improve the registration process, including alignment with microchip systems and clearer communications.

Staffing / Resourcing	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Need more compliance officers in parks."* • *"Not enough staff to respond to barking dog complaints."*	**Summary:** Concerns that Animal Management is under-resourced and unable to respond quickly to concerns. **In Scope.** The feedback highlights a potential need to review resourcing levels to meet community expectations for responsiveness and on-the-ground presence.

Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve animal management services for the benefit of the community?

This open-ended question invited community members to suggest ways Yarra City Council could improve its animal management services. A total of **356 responses** were received, covering a broad range of ideas. Suggestions reflected the community's desire for stronger enforcement, better infrastructure, balanced public space use, with particularly strong endorsement for education campaigns, reducing dog attacks, and improving pet-friendly public spaces.

The data provides a clear signal that the community values education, prevention, and responsible pet management as central pillars of Council's future approach.

Some specific themes that emerged:

- **Enhancing Pet Registration and Identification**
  There was general support for improving registration and identification processes, particularly around making systems easier to use and more accessible online. Some community members suggested integrating microchip data more effectively and offering options like lifetime registration. Others noted the need to streamline the experience for new pet owners.
- **Education for Responsible Pet Ownership**
  Community members strongly supported education over punishment. Feedback highlighted a desire for campaigns focused on leash etiquette, barking prevention, cleaning up after pets, and understanding pet responsibilities. Several comments called for better outreach to culturally diverse communities and new residents who may not be familiar with local rules.
- **Managing Public Nuisance and Risk**
  While many agreed with the goal of reducing nuisance behaviours (like barking or aggressive dogs), there were concerns about the tone and approach of enforcement. People sought clarity on how nuisance is defined and emphasised the importance of proportionate, fair enforcement paired with education.
- **Reducing Dog Attacks and Promoting Safety**
  This was a strong area of concern, particularly for families, elderly residents, and other dog owners. Respondents wanted more education for owners about dog behaviour and clear avenues to report incidents. There was a strong call for preventative measures that reduce risks in shared spaces, such as playgrounds, footpaths, and parks.
- **Improving Public Spaces for Pets**
  Community members expressed a desire for more and better-equipped dog-friendly spaces. Suggestions included clear signage, accessible water stations, shaded rest areas, bins, and more off-leash options. Residents also called for these improvements to be designed with input from both pet owners and non-pet owners to balance community needs.
- **Strengthening Animal Management Capabilities**
  There was support for increased officer presence and proactive engagement, particularly in education and community-facing roles. However, some feedback reflected concern about perceived overreach or inconsistency in enforcement. Others questioned whether Council had the resources to implement proposed actions effectively and equitably.

Based on these insights, Council may consider the following actions:

Education and Awareness

- Develop targeted campaigns on responsible pet ownership, including off-leash etiquette, barking prevention, waste disposal, and community harmony.
- Include culturally and linguistically diverse materials to ensure broader reach**.**

Enforcement and Support

- Explore opportunities to further empower Animal Management Officers with the right tools, training, and processes.
- Review protocols for how nuisance complaints are assessed, responded to, and resolved.

Infrastructure and Amenity Improvements

- Invest in well-maintained, clearly signed off-leash areas that support both dogs and people.
- Infrastructure improvements fall outside the direct scope of the DAMP. However, this valuable feedback will be provided to the relevant Council teams, such as Open Space and Capital Works, for consideration in their future strategies, plans, and programs.

Registration and Administration

- Review and streamline the registration process, making it user-friendly and digitally accessible.
- Consider further incentives for early registration or specific circumstances to increase compliance.

In conclusion, the feedback shows strong community alignment with Council's proposed directions. The results clearly indicate a readiness to support initiatives that promote responsible ownership, protect public safety, and enhance animal welfare through proactive education, improved infrastructure, and strengthened Council support services.

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Enhancing Pet Registration and Identification	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Make registration easier to do online."* • *"Link microchips to registration properly."* • *"Offer lifetime registration—it's more practical."*	**Summary:** Many respondents supported simplifying and modernising the registration process to make it more accessible and reduce administrative burden. **In Scope.** This directly supports the Council's plan for Process and Technology Improvements, through ERP. Review in the interim to be completed with current systems to provide a better customer experience.
Education for Responsible Pet Ownership	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Educate new pet owners—many don't know the rules."* • *"Off-leash etiquette and barking issues should be part of public messaging."* • *"Don't punish - educate!"*	**Summary:** There was strong support for education over enforcement, with an emphasis on practical, targeted campaigns. **In Scope.** Feedback affirms the campaign approach and will guide messaging priorities, including multicultural outreach.
Reducing Dog Attacks and Promoting Safety	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"I've seen dogs attack others in parks—owners need to be more responsible."* • *"We need education about dog behaviour, especially around kids."* • *"It's hard to know what to do when a dog attacks."*	**Summary:** Safety in public spaces is a key concern. Respondents supported preventative education and clearer pathways for reporting incidents. **In Scope.** Feedback reinforces the need for behaviour education, clear reporting channels, and incident prevention strategies.
Improving Public Spaces for Pets	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"We need more off-leash areas in high-density areas.*	**Summary:** There was a strong push for improved amenities and shared space design to support both dog owners and non-owners.

• *"Please install more bins and water stations."* • *"Co-design improvements with both dog owners and others."*	**Partially In Scope.** Feedback will directly inform amenity upgrades, signage, and community co-design initiatives.

Strengthening Animal Management Capabilities	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"We need more officers to respond to complaints quickly."* • *"They should be trained in education, not just enforcement."* • *"Don't turn the officers into dog police—just help them help us."*	**Summary:** Community members supported a visible, helpful officer presence, but raised concerns about over-enforcement and resourcing. **In Scope.** Feedback will shape officer training ensuring a balance of education and compliance capacity.

Do you have any other comments on the Domestic Animal Management Plan or Animal Management Operations at Yarra City Council?

This open-ended question gave respondents a final opportunity to share general feedback about the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) and Council's Animal Management services. Of the total submissions, **183 comments** were received.

These provided a mix of positive reinforcement, constructive critique, and forward-looking ideas. Some feedback reiterated themes raised in earlier questions, while others focused strong support for measures that promote responsible ownership, and improvements to public spaces. However, some concerns were raised about enforcement, feasibility of cat containment, and clarity of policy direction.

Some specific themes that emerged:

- **Cat Curfew and Containment**
  This was one of the most discussed topics. Comments were highly polarised. Some strongly supported a 24-hour containment policy to protect wildlife and reduce nuisance, while others viewed it as cruel or unfeasible. Key concerns included animal welfare, practicality in urban settings, and how such a policy would be enforced.
- **Dog Parks and Facilities**
  Many supported more investment in dog-friendly infrastructure. Suggestions included better maintenance of dog parks, additional waste stations, water fountains, and clearer signage for off-leash areas. There was a desire for more spaces that accommodate both dogs and non-dog owners.
- **Dog Related Matters**
  Residents raised concerns about aggressive dogs, barking, and off-leash behaviour outside designated areas. Calls were made for stricter rules and enforcement of existing regulations.
- **Education / Awareness**
  There was widespread support for proactive campaigns on responsible pet ownership. This includes behaviour training, leash etiquette, waste management, and promoting desexing. Community members emphasised education over enforcement.
- **Fines, Enforcement and Patrols**
  Mixed views were received on the role of enforcement. Some supported increased patrols and fines for irresponsible behaviour, while others were wary of over-policing and questioned current enforcement effectiveness.
- **Improved Reporting Mechanisms and Website Improvements**
  Some commenters flagged difficulties in reporting animal-related issues through Council channels. Suggestions included better online tools, simpler complaint pathways, and more transparency in follow-up processes.
- **Other**
  A smaller number of responses fell outside core themes but still offered valuable insights, such as requests for pet-friendly events or broader wildlife protection strategies.

- **Policy Criticism and Gaps**
  Some respondents felt the Plan lacked detail or failed to address certain groups (e.g. renters, multicultural communities, or residents without pets). There were calls for clearer definitions of terms like “nuisance” or “safety”.
- **Pets in Venues**
  There was a small but clear interest in allowing pets in more public venues such as cafés and markets, provided health and safety standards are maintained. Not that this is not governed by Council and is a state regulation.
- **Registration and Incentives**
  Several comments suggested streamlining registration processes, reducing fees, and offering incentives for registration or discounts for desexed animals.
- **Staffing and Resources**
  Concerns were raised about whether Council had sufficient Animal Management Officers to implement new initiatives. Calls were made to increase staffing and ensure officers are well-trained in both education and enforcement.
- **Supportive**
  Many comments expressed general support for the direction of the Plan. These typically praised the balance of education, infrastructure, and regulation.

In conclusion, the feedback shows strong community interest in responsible pet ownership, education, and infrastructure improvements. While views differ on enforcement and containment policies, most residents agree on the importance of supporting both animal and community wellbeing.

This community insight can help refine Council’s priorities, particularly around:
- Investing in education and amenity
- Clarifying and communicating policies
- Ensuring fair and consistent enforcement
- Empowering officers with resources and training

Specific Feedback Examples (in Scope/Out of Scope):

Dog-Related Matters	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *“Being rushed by dogs while walking is unsafe.”* • *“Keep dogs off sporting ovals.”* • *“Ban dogs on bike paths.”*	**Summary:** Concerns raised around safety, inappropriate off-leash behaviour, and dog aggression. **Partially In Scope.** These issues are addressed through a combination of education, signage, enforcement, and the Council Order. As part of the DAMP, periodic reviews may prompt future amendments to the Council Order regarding dogs in public spaces.
Education / Awareness	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *“Pet owners need to be educated, especially those new to Yarra.”* • *“Don’t lecture responsible owners – target irresponsible ones.”*	**Summary:** Strong support for education-based solutions, especially for newcomers and irresponsible owners.

• *"Educate people on their rights after dog attacks*	**In Scope.** This is a core focus of the DAMP and aligns with multiple planned campaigns

Fines / Enforcement / Patrols	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Enforce off-leash areas properly – on-the-spot fines."* • *"Recognise dangerous breeds and act."* • *"Current enforcement is ineffective – more accountability is needed."*	**Summary:** Support for stronger, consistent enforcement – but also concern around current practice and overreach. **In Scope.** The DAMP outlines improved enforcement strategies and community expectations. Feedback will inform how Council balances enforcement with fairness.

Registration and Fees	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Registration is too expensive."* • *"Use the microchip ID instead of tags."* • *"Stop penalising owners for not desexing."*	**Summary:** Desire for reduced fees, simplified registration, and fairness in desexing penalties. **In Scope.** This directly supports the Council's plan to explore a feasibility study for reduced-cost or subsidised desexing programs to improve affordability and compliance.

Staffing and Resources	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"Any plan is only as good as it is resourced."* • *"The cat curfew idea suggests staff have too much time."*	**Summary:** Some questioned the resourcing and prioritisation behind proposed initiatives. **In Scope.** Council will consider workforce planning and prioritisation as part of DAMP implementation.

Supportive	
What did we hear	**Our response**
• *"All good ideas!"* • *"Appreciate the care you are taking."* • *"Comprehensive plan."*	**Summary:** Positive feedback affirming Council's direction. **In Scope.** These comments support strategic alignment and will be captured in reporting.