

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029

Contents

Introduction	2
Background	2
1. Primary objective	3
1.1 Guiding Principles	3
2. Latrobe City Snapshot	3
3. Current Programs and Service Levels	4
3.1 Local Laws Team	4
3.2 Statistical Information	5
3.3 Council Standing Orders	6
3.3.1 Compulsory de-sexing of all cats for first time registrations	6
3.3.2 Cat Curfew	6
3.3.3 Dogs on leash	7
3.4 Community Amenity Local Law No. 2 2016	7
3.5 Council Procedures	8
3.6 Training of Authorised Officers	9
3.7 Registration and Identification	9
3.8 Animal Nuisance Complaints	10
3.9 Dog Attacks	11
3.10 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs	12
3.11 Over-Population and High Euthanasia	13
3.12 Domestic Animal Businesses	14
4. Four-year action plan	16
4.1 Training of Authorised Officers	16
4.2 Registration and Identification	17
4.3 Animal Nuisance Complaints	18
4.4 Dog Attacks	18
4.5 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs	19
4.6 Over-Population and High Euthanasia	19
4.7 Domestic Animal Businesses	20
5. Annual Review and Annual Reporting	20

Introduction

The primary focus of this Domestic Animal Management Plan is the management of domestic companion animals, namely dogs and cats. Latrobe City Council acknowledges the role it plays in promoting responsible pet ownership and enforcing legislation.

We are committed to balancing the needs of pet owners with those in our community who do not own pets. Consideration has been given to both parties in the development of our Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029.

This Plan has been developed in accordance with Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and sets out a formalised approach to increase the awareness of domestic animal management practices within Latrobe City.

Latrobe City Council recognises the value domestic pets contribute to making Latrobe City a vibrant and livable City. Domestic pets are not only considered part of a family but are an integral part of a wider community. Research demonstrates that pets contribute to building a strong sense of community and developing active social capital; vital to any vibrant, healthy community.

Pet ownership is positively associated with social interactions, community involvement and increased feelings of neighbourhood friendliness and sense of community.

With around 69 percent of Australians owning a dog or cat, these benefits, when aggregated across the whole community, are of significant interest to Council and others concerned with building healthier, happier neighbourhoods.

In addition, these benefits create a ripple effect that extends beyond pet owners into the broader community, with pets helping to smooth the way for social interaction and general recreation.

Pets provide increased opportunities for families to be more active; companionship to those who may be feeling isolated or lonely and assist people with a disability or illness to maintain independence and participate more fully in community life.

Background

Local Government has long been the level of government primarily responsible for domestic animal management.

Section 68A of the *Domestic Animal Act 1994* (the Act) requires all Victorian councils to prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan (the Plan) at four yearly intervals. A copy of the plan and any subsequent amendments must be provided to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture. Council is required to then report on the plan's implementation in its annual report.

1. Primary objective

The primary objective of the Plan is to provide a strategic map to support the community towards the goal of responsible pet ownership and to assist Council in achieving a professional, consistent and proactive approach to domestic animal management practices.

The Plan identifies current activities and future actions to address the following areas, as required by Section 68A of the Act: -

- Identify methods for evaluating animal control services
- Promote responsible pet ownership
- Ensure compliance with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* and Domestic Animal Regulations 2015
- Minimise the risk of dog attacks
- Address over population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats
- Encourage registration and identification of dogs and cats
- Minimise the potential for nuisance
- Identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs
- Review all existing Council orders and local laws that relate to dogs and cats
- Identify programs for training of authorised animal management officers
- Provide for the periodic evaluation of programs and service strategies

1.1 Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin the actions of this Plan regarding domestic animals:

- The belief that pets contribute to quality of life
- A requirement to balance the needs of those who own pets and those who do not
- Valuing responsible pet ownership
- Proactive animal management and education within the community
- Protection of the environment from any negative impacts of dogs and cats
- Working in partnership with others to achieve positive outcomes for the community
- Local Government plays a leadership role in animal management

2. Latrobe City Snapshot

Latrobe City, Victoria's only regional city situated in the eastern part of the state, encompasses an area of 1,422 square kms with a population of approximately 78,154 (ABS 2021).

Situated approximately 150 kms east of Melbourne, in the centre of Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley, Latrobe City is one of four Victorian regional cities.

Latrobe City includes the four major towns of Churchill, Moe/Newborough, Morwell and Traralgon as well as the seven outer lying townships of Boolarra, Glengarry, Toongabbie, Traralgon South, Tyers, Yallourn North and Yinnar.

During the 2023-2024 registration period there were 9789 dogs and 2713 cats registered within the municipality. There were 13 registered domestic animal businesses, including 1 training establishment, 4 boarding establishments, 6 breeding and rearing establishments and 2 pet shops.

3. Current Programs and Service Levels

Latrobe City's Local Laws Team administers and provides a broad range of services to ensure that Council meets its legislative responsibilities relating to the management of domestic animals. They include but are not limited to:

- Educating residents and promoting responsible pet ownership
- Management of Council's domestic animal pound facility
- Maintaining a domestic animal register
- Providing advice on domestic animal matters
- Dealing with and investigating animal complaints for the community
- Impounding of wandering, unwanted/surrendered and/or feral dogs and cats
- Undertaking random annual registration door knocks
- Administration and control of Dangerous and Restricted Breed dogs for compliance
- Investigating dog attacks
- Providing a 24-hour 7 day a week emergency service
- Inspection and registration of domestic animal businesses
- Developing and maintaining partnerships with organisations for the care of impounded animals

3.1 Local Laws Team

The Local Laws team consists of 1 full-time Coordinator, 2 full-time team leaders, six full-time Local Laws Officers, a Senior Regulations Officer and a full time Animal Attendant, 2 part-time administration support staff. These staff delivering general local laws, animal and parking management services.

- Coordinator Local Laws (1 EFT)
- Team Leader Local Laws - Animal Management and Traffic & Compliance (2 EFT)
- Local Laws Operations Administrator (1.8 EFT)
- Local Laws Officers (6 EFT)
- Animal Attendant (1 EFT)

3.2 Statistical Information

Animal Registrations	Cats	Dogs
2020/2021	3066	10082
2021/2022	2947	9938
2022/2023	2820	9735
2023/2024	2713	9789

Impounded	Total number of dogs impounded	Total number of dogs returned to owner	Total number of dogs rehoused
2020/2021	528	406	77
2021/2022	597	393	131
2022/2023	706	428	135
2023/2024	729	419	131

Impounded	Total number of cats impounded	Total number of cats returned to owner	Total number of cats rehoused
2020/2021	681	136	277
2021/2022	573	82	242
2022/2023	664	91	255
2023/2024	674	124	271

Dog attack pathways	Total dog attack pathways	Total number of dog attacks	Dog Attack – Immediate auto dispatch	Dog Declared Dangerous / Menacing
2020/2021	171	130	13	28
2021/2022	142	94	11	37
2022/2023	124	82	5	37
2023/2024	166	107	3	56

Declarations made	Dangerous	Menacing
2020/2021	15	16
2021/2022	2	12
2022/2023	13	14
2023/2024	3	19

3.3 Council Standing Orders

Latrobe City Council has Standing Orders, Local Laws and procedures in place to assist in the effective management of dogs and cats. The current Standing Orders are:

- Compulsory de-sexing of all cats registered for the first time (unless member of applicable organisations or registered as Domestic Animal Business or upon veterinary advice) effective 10 April 2008
- Cat curfew between 9PM to 6AM, seven days a week effective 18 September 2017
 - Review of this standing order to be undertaken in 2026/2027
- Dogs must be kept on leash except when in a designated off leash area effective 18 September 2017

3.3.1 Compulsory de-sexing of all cats for first time registrations

Cat overpopulation presents a significant challenge for council, shelters, community foster care networks, and rescue groups, who are often managing more cats than can be sustainably housed or rehomed. Councils' order for the de-sexing of all cats prior to their first time registration promotes responsible cat ownership and a reduction in registration costs for cat owners.

3.3.2 Cat Curfew

Promoting Responsible Cat Ownership in Our Community

Council is working toward a future where cats are highly valued as companion animals, and every cat belongs to a caring owner who understands how to keep their pet happy, healthy, and safe at home within our municipality.

As of the end of 2024, 52 Victorian councils have introduced a cat curfew, including 10 with 24-hour curfews. In 2017, our Council implemented a cat curfew requiring cats to be confined indoors between 9:00 PM and 6:00 AM, seven days a week. This initiative aims to reduce threats to native wildlife, enhance community amenity, and prevent cats from enduring difficult lives on the streets.

The curfew complements broader work led by Council's Animal Management team to promote cat welfare and address overpopulation. This includes efforts to increase desexing and containment rates through education and awareness campaigns that encourage a shift in community attitudes toward responsible pet ownership.

The *Act* supports these efforts by making it an offence to allow a cat to wander onto a neighbouring property at any time. Council's Authorised Officers have the authority to impound roaming cats and, in some circumstances, issue trespass notices on behalf of affected property owners.

Council will continue to work collaboratively with the State Government and local stakeholders to:

- Minimise the environmental impact of free-roaming cats
- Improve the welfare and quality of life for cats in our municipality
- Enhance neighbourhood amenity and safety

Together, we can foster a more harmonious coexistence between people, pets, and wildlife in our community.

3.3.3 Dogs on leash

Dogs must be on leash except at the following designated Off-leash areas:

- College Park Newborough
- Burrage Reserve Newborough
- Waterhole Creek Reserve West Bank Morwell
- Ashman Park Churchill
- Burnett Park Traralgon
- Bert Thompson Reserve Traralgon

3.4 Community Amenity Local Law No. 2 2016

Division 21 Keeping of Animals

110. Keeping of Animals

1. An owner or occupier of land must not, without a permit, keep or allow to be kept any more in number for each type of animal than as set out in the following table except for farming areas:

Type of Animal	Definition	Multi-unit Development	All other areas (except farming area)
Dogs		2	2
Cats		2	2
Poultry	Fowls, Bantams, Pheasants, Ducks and Geese	Not permitted	5
Free flying pigeons		0	0
Rooster		0	0
Domestic Mice		10	10
Guinea Pigs		2	4
Ferrets, Hamsters		2	4
Domestic Rabbits		2	4
Reptiles		2	2
Other Animals	Cattle, Horse, Goat, Pig, Sheep, Alpaca, Lama, Ostrich and any other agricultural animal	Not permitted	Residential: 0 Rural Living Zone: 10

2. A permit issued for the keeping of dogs and /or cats under this division will be granted for the life of the animal although if an offence or nuisance be proven the permit can be revoked.
3. Sub clause 110.1 does not apply where animals are kept in accordance with a planning permit or where a Wildlife Licence has been obtained in accordance with the Wildlife Regulations 2013.
4. A person keeping animals in accordance with clause 110.1 must ensure that the animals do not create a nuisance or danger to neighbours or other persons.

NOTE: “Multi-Unit Development” describes several units on a residential lot

“All other areas” describes single residential dwellings etc

111. Dogs and Cats on Farming Properties

Except where a planning permit is issued an owner or occupier of a working farm within a farming area must not, without a permit, keep or allow to be kept more than four adult dogs and/or four adult cats on that land except where allowed by the planning scheme.

112. Maximum number of Dogs and Cats on any land

Except where a planning permit is issued a person must not keep more than five dogs or five cats on any land except where allowed by the planning scheme.

113. Litters of Animals

For the purpose of calculating the maximum limit of the numbers of animals kept, the progeny of any animal lawfully kept will be exempt for a period of 3 months after their birth.

114. Animal Excrement

A person in charge of an animal on a road or other Municipal Place must:

- a. Carry a device suitable for the removal of any excrement that may be deposited by the animal; and
- b. Not allow any part of the animal's excrement to remain on a road or other Municipal Place; and
- c. Produce the device on demand by an authorised officer.

3.5 Council Procedures

- Animal Registration Renewal forms are reviewed annually and amended as required
- Animal Registration Fees are considered and determined by Council during the annual budget process
- Animal Deterrent Spray Procedure 2022
- Barking Dog Procedure 2022
- Cat Trap Loan Procedure 2024
- Dealing with Sick or Injured Animals Procedure 2022.
- De-sexing of Dogs and Cats released from the Pound Procedure 2022
- Dog and Cat Impounding Procedure 2022
- Keeping of Animals Permit Approvals Guidelines 2025
- Notice of Seizure (Dogs and Cats) Procedure 2022
- Scanning of Impounded Dogs and Cats Procedure 2022
- Removal and Identification of Dead Dogs and Cats Procedure 2024
- Voluntary Surrender of Dogs and Cats Procedure 2023
- Dog Handling and Seizure Procedure 2023
- Working on Roads Procedure 2023
- Dog Attack Procedure 2024

3.6 Training of Authorised Officers

Latrobe City Council is committed to the training of our Local Laws Officers. An annual training program is developed for each officer to ensure they receive appropriate training. The objective of any training and development is to support all Local Laws staff in having the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work.

A training register detailing all qualifications and training courses completed by each Local Laws Officer is maintained and updated annually to reflect any training undertaken or required.

In addition to specialised training, all staff have access to a suite of personal and professional training opportunities delivered through Council's Learning and Development programs.

2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan Highlights:

- Review of dog attack investigations procedure resulting in increased community compliance and safety outcomes
- All Local Laws Officers completed legal based training with Council's contracted legal firm
- Review of the process for managing Section 84Y agreements resulting in a process less onerous for groups wishing to maintain an agreement with Council

3.7 Registration and Identification

Latrobe City Council issues registration renewal notices prior to 10 April each year.

Any renewal payments not received by the due date of 10 April are followed up with a reminder notice advising of penalties for failing to register a dog or cat.

Registration forms are also used as an opportunity to advertise legislative changes i.e. requirement to register dog/cat by age three months and compulsory microchipping and desexing of all new cats being registered and cat curfew details.

When issuing these notices, we can include inserts to further inform and educate our community on domestic animal matters.

New registration applications are available at all Council service centres and libraries in Churchill, Moe, Morwell and Traralgon; via Council's website; and at Council's pound facility.

From April 2025, Council will offer animal owners the ability to receive their registration renewal notice via email.

2020-2024 Animal Registration Comparisons

Financial Year	Cats	Dogs
2020/2021	3066	10082
2021/2022	2947	9938
2022/2023	2820	9735
2023/2024	2713	9789

Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Animal Registration forms available at Council service centres and libraries; on Council's website and can be requested by contacting Council
- Door knock "hot spot" areas or areas where complaints have been received in relation to registration requirements
- Maintenance of computerised registration database

- Use of Council's social media platforms to promote benefits of animal registration and to answer frequently asked questions

Compliance Activities

- Investigate all complaints received
- Encourage complainants to speak directly to dog owners to alert them to their dog barking
- Record all nuisance complaints in Council's record management systems
- Provide cat cages to residents for containing trespassing cats as requested
- Impound unregistered dogs found at large
- Issue infringement notices for dogs found at large
- Impound or return wandering registered pets to owners
- Attending properties unannounced to conduct on the spot inspections where there have been ongoing or serious complaints against a property or person
- Seizure of unregistered and/or non-compliant declared dangerous dogs
- Seizure of dogs reasonably suspected of attack causing serious injury

3.8 Animal Nuisance Complaints

All animal nuisance complaints received are investigated in a timely manner to minimise the potential for complaints escalating. Officers will make every effort to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of both parties.

For the most part, nuisance complaints received by Latrobe City Council relate to either barking dogs or stray cats. It is recognised that barking dog complaints can at times cause great frustration for both parties. Local Laws Officers work to balance the interests and rights of both the dog owner and the complainant.

Dog owners can become desensitised to the sound of their own dog barking and may be unaware it is a nuisance to neighbours. An effective resolution is often achieved by alerting the dog owner to the fact their dog's barking is becoming a nuisance.

Neighbours who are unable, or find it difficult, to speak to their neighbours regarding this matter can contact Latrobe City Council for assistance.

Council Officers will first work with the dog owner to support them in identifying the cause of the barking and discuss possible solutions. Most cases involve dogs that are bored or responding to visual stimulation. Both causes are often easily resolved with training, toys, blocking a view or exercising the dog more frequently.

Complainants may be asked to keep noise logs (records of dates, times and duration of barking) should the matter continue, and further intervention be required. Noise logs form part of the Barking Dog Complaint Form and are available from the Latrobe City web page or from Service Centres and Libraries, and Local Laws Officers can assist with explaining how these are to be completed.

Barking dog complaints are investigated under Section 32 of the *Act*.

Council use the following factors when determining if noise is causing a nuisance:

- its volume, intensity and duration
- the time, place and other circumstances in which it is emitted

For Council to determine whether a noise constitutes a nuisance, Council must conduct a thorough investigation.

This investigation process requires the complainant to complete a Barking Dog Noise Log for a period of 14 days. This noise log assists Council in determining the duration and frequency of the noise and will become evidence if the matter is heard in a Magistrate's Court.

In reference to a noise log, officers are required to consider the following:

- The duration of the noise is unreasonable
- Time that the noise is omitted during the day is unreasonable
- The frequency of the noise is unreasonable
- The volume of noise is above what would be expected

Where a log is submitted with entries that are inconsistent and infrequent over the period of 14 days, for example a period of 12-24 hrs between instances of noise that last less than 2 hrs each time, and no corroborating evidence is available from a third party, officers would consider that the noise does not reach the threshold of nuisance and could not progress the matter to the Magistrates Court.

In response to nuisance complaints received about stray cats Latrobe City offers residents' cat cages to assist in safely containing offending animals trespassing on their property or wandering during the curfew period. Local Laws Officers will then attend during business hours and impound any contained cats. These cages are available to members of our community free of charge.

To proactively combat cat nuisance issues, Council adopted a cat curfew on 18 September 2017 under the *Act* Section 25. Cat owners are required to keep cats contained to their premises between the hours of 9pm and 6am, seven days a week.

Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Make information available at Council service centres and libraries and on Council's website
- Promote the various resources available to encourage the correct selection of a new pet such as Animal Welfare Victoria and RSPCA website
- Provide a wide range of pamphlets
- Distribute brochures to residents when requested and when investigating complaints
- Signage to identify the areas designated for exercising dogs off lead

Compliance Activities

- Investigate all complaints received
- Encourage complainants to speak directly to dog owners to alert them to their dog barking
- Record all nuisance complaints in Council's record management systems
- Provide cat cages to residents for containing trespassing cats as requested
- Issue trespass notices on behalf of property owners where applicable
- Impound all unregistered dogs found at large
- Issue infringements for dogs found at large
- Impound or return wandering registered pets to owners
- Attend properties unannounced to conduct on the spot inspections where there have been ongoing or serious complaints against a property or person

3.9 Dog Attacks

Latrobe City Council considers any reported dog attack as the highest priority and dispatches a Local Laws Officer immediately to investigate and action as appropriate.

Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Promote responsible pet ownership to new and existing dog owners
- Promote the benefits of dog training, socialisation and frequent exercise
- Provide a range of pamphlets that raise awareness of the risk of dog attacks in the home, on the street and in parks which include information on how to reduce risks
- Distribute brochures to residents when requested and when investigating complaints
- Promotion of the need for dogs to be under effective control, always, including the need to ensure dogs can be effectively contained and/or fenced on their own property to ensure they cannot escape
- Promote de-sexing of dogs to reduce aggressive tendencies and wandering at large
- Promote the need for supervision of children when dogs are present
- Promote Council's emergency 24-hour 7 day a week service for reporting a dog attack

Compliance Activities

- Declaration of all identified dangerous/menacing dogs in line with the *Act*
- Respond to all reported dog attacks immediately as the top priority for Local Laws Officers
- Record all reported dog attacks in Council's record management systems
- Ensure all reported dog attacks are thoroughly investigated with findings and evidence accurately recorded and maintained
- Ensure owners of declared dogs are fully informed of their requirements under the *Act*
- Declaring dogs dangerous or menacing where evidence leads to that outcome
- Ensure unclaimed dogs at the pound are temperament tested to determine whether they are suitable for re-housing
- Seize dogs involved in serious attacks during investigation and prosecution action
- Provision of a 24 hour 7 days a week emergency service to report a dog attack
- Conduct regular patrols at locations where there is a high incidence of wandering dogs

2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan Highlights:

- All investigations of dog attacks finalised within required timeframes
- Court brief training for all Local Laws Officers that will result in an increased number of prosecutions for dog attacks
- Review of dog attack procedure implementing further guidance for on road officers investigating and responding to dog attacks

3.10 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

Latrobe City Council Local Laws Officers investigate all reports or complaints regarding dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs, immediately.

Local Laws Officers currently use the Department of Primary Industry 'Standard for Restricted Breed Dogs in Victoria' to identify restricted breeds.

Latrobe City Council currently utilises the Domestic Animals Act 1994 in relation to dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.

Reports of suspected undeclared restricted breed dogs are rare in Latrobe City. Officers believe there is a high level of compliance regarding the ownership and management of declared dogs within the municipality.

Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Information pamphlets at all Council service centres and libraries
- Information available on council's website
- Ensuring all owners of declared dogs are aware of their obligations under the Act regarding identification and the keeping of these dogs
- Promotion of regulations for restricted breed dogs

Compliance Activities

- Ensure that all Declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs are registered accurately with the Victorian Declared Dog Registry
- Attending properties unannounced to conduct on the spot inspections and annual audits where there are registered declared dogs
- Investigating and making a declaration following legislated timeframes where the evidence supports a declaration
- Follow-up non-compliance issues found during inspections and audits
- Review all dog attack cases to determine if it is appropriate to declare the dog dangerous or menacing
- Maintain a register of all declared dogs registered and housed in Latrobe City Council

2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan Highlights:

- Audited all properties where there are registered declared dogs
- Declared Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed dogs registered accurately with the Victorian Declared Dog Registry

3.11 Over-Population and High Euthanasia

Latrobe City Council is aware of the high euthanasia rates for dogs and in particular cats and continues to promote the benefits of de-sexing. The introduction of compulsory de-sexing for all cats registered for the first time or released from the pound facility was implemented in 2008.

Council has in place twelve Section 84Y Domestic Animal Act agreements to re-house dogs and cats that have found their way to the pound.

Section 84Y agreements

In Victoria, dogs and cats may be impounded due for many reasons. When an owner is unidentifiable, unable or unwilling to collect that animal it may require extra care or be assessed as suitable for rehoming.

Under the provisions of the *Act*, Section 84Y allows for Councils to enter into a written agreement for the seizure, holding and disposal of dogs and cats. These agreements may be made between the Council and a pound, shelter, vet clinic, community foster care network or foster carer depending on the needs of the animals.

The provisions of the *Act*, allow for a person or body (that has a Section 84Y (a)(b) &/or (c) with a Council i.e. a pound, shelter or vet clinic) to have a Section 84Y(ca) agreement with a community

foster care network on the condition that the dog or cat is desexed and microchipped prior to leaving the ownership of the person or body.

Animals moving to a Community Foster Care Network under a Section 84Y(c) agreement are not required to have been desexed or microchipped prior to leaving the pound. Under a Section 84Y(c) agreement it is the responsibility of the person or group that take possession of the animal directly from the pound to desex and microchip the animal before it leaves their ownership. Carers are limited to caring for the number of animals permitted by their municipal (local) council.

Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Promote responsible pet ownership to new and existing dog owners
- Promote Council's cat curfew
- Promote the benefits of de-sexing, such as no surprise litters, fewer unwanted animals in the community, fewer animals euthanised, reduced aggression and reduced wandering, via local radio spots, local newspaper articles and on Council's website
- Offer dogs and cats for sale from the pound at an affordable price which includes de-sexing and microchipping costs

Compliance Activities

- Investigating complaints and reports of numbers of dogs/cats on residential properties
- Provide cat cages to residents for containing trespassing cats as requested, subject to availability
- Investigate reports of animal hoarding and work with owners to reduce these to permitted numbers
- Enter into Section 84Y Domestic Animal Act agreements with local organisations and vets to re-house dogs and cats that are impounded
- Investigate reports of unauthorised 'backyard breeders' to ascertain whether they should be registered as a domestic animal business

2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan Highlights

- Renegotiation of Section 84Y Domestic Animal Act agreements with local organisations and vets to re-house dogs and cats that have been impounded
- Streamlining of the Section 84Y agreement process to alleviate the renewal function
- Continued receipting at the Pound Facility

3.12 Domestic Animal Businesses

Latrobe City Council currently has 13 Registered Domestic Animal Businesses. These businesses are issued with registration renewal notices each year and Council conducts annual inspections in relation to their compliance with relevant codes of practice.

In Victoria, the *Act* defines Domestic Animal Businesses as any of the following:

- A Council pound (operated by the Council or a contractor on behalf of Council)
- A dog and/or cat breeding business - where there are three or more fertile females and animals are sold (whether a profit is made or not), and the proprietor is not a member of an Applicable Organisation. If the proprietor is a member of an Applicable Organisation, they are exempt from registering as a breeding Domestic Animal Business if they have less than 10 fertile female animals AND no more than 2 are not registered with an Applicable Organisation
- A dog training establishment (where the business is run for profit)

- A pet shop (operated in a permanent location that must be open at least 5 days per week)
- An animal shelter (e.g. welfare organisations such as the RSPCA and The Lost Dogs' Home)
- An establishment boarding dogs or cats (where the business is run for profit to provide overnight, day-care or homecare boarding)
- An establishment that is rearing dogs or cats (where the business is run for profit)

All domestic animal businesses must be registered annually with their local council and comply with the appropriate mandatory Code of Practice. Local council will often require an inspection of the facilities prior to registration each year. Councils are required to report the number of domestic animal businesses registered with them to DEDJTR on an annual basis

Council provides all registered Domestic Animal Businesses with any changes to the legislation or Code of Practice information relevant to the business and encourages business owners to be involved in any review of the mandatory Code of Practice

Any new registration applications are received and processed in line with the Code of Practice

Educational and/or Promotional Activities

- Provide relevant mandatory Code of Practice to proprietors of existing and proposed domestic animal businesses
- Ensure all relevant Domestic Animal Businesses are advised and involved in any review of the mandatory Code of Practice for their type of business
- Invite Domestic Animal Businesses to be involved in Council's animal related community events

Compliance Activities

- Conduct annual inspections/audits of each Domestic Animal Business premises to determine compliance with the Act, relevant mandatory Code of Practice, and any terms, conditions, limitations or restrictions on that registration
- Use the audit documents on Animal Welfare Victoria Animal Management website
- Follow-up Domestic Animal Business non-compliance issues with information on required actions and timeframe for resolution, further inspections, and prosecutions where necessary
- In the case of serious non-compliance issues, suspend or cancel registration
- Liaise with other units within Council to provide advice when planning applications for Domestic Animal Businesses are received, to ensure appropriate conditions are placed on construction, operation, etc
- Use of the Pet Exchange Register to identify unknown breeders

2021-2025 Domestic Animal Management Plan Highlights

- All registered Domestic Animal Businesses have been inspected annually for compliance in the four-year period
- All reports of non-compliance have been investigated and actioned accordingly

4. Four-year action plan

The following pages outline Latrobe City Council's four-year action plan which has been designed to build on the successes of the previous Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Actions have been developed with a focus on staff training; community awareness; the provision of accessible, relevant and timely information and a simplified process for the reporting of issues.

4.1 Training of Authorised Officers

GOAL: To ensure all staff involved in animal management have the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out their work safely and effectively.

OUTCOMES: Confident, skilled and knowledgeable team members responding to customers which will result in an increased customer confidence that their enquiry will be professionally dealt with.

Action	Measure	When
Review and finalise, in consultation with relevant team members, training required for all Authorised Officers undertaking animal management duties.	Consultation with relevant team members, agreed list of skills required to undertake animal management duties developed.	Annually
Ensure all Authorised Officers have commenced or are enrolled to commence relevant training programs within 24 months of appointment.	The number of newly appointed officers who are undertaking or have completed training in required skills.	Ongoing
Maintain a central training register which includes individual Authorised Officers current level of training and agreed future training requirements.	Central training register reviewed and maintained on a regular basis.	Annually
Ensure that all team members are kept informed of and trained in changes to relevant legislation, policies, procedure and compliance codes within reasonable timeframes.	Changes to legislation, policy, procedure and compliance codes to be distributed to all team members via e- mail. All changes to be highlighted as agenda items during team meetings. Ongoing training as required.	Ongoing
Update all Local Laws Procedures to ensure compliance with current legislation and in line with industry best practice.	Completion of all animal procedure updates by end of 2026.	2025/2026

4.2 Registration and Identification

GOAL: Maximise the number of registered and identifiable domestic animals residing within Latrobe City to aid compliance and facilitate reuniting lost pets with their owners in a timely manner.

OUTCOMES: Improved accuracy of Councils pet registration database. Improved adherence to legislation and increased registration of new animals.

Action	Measure	When
Registration reminder notices to be sent out to all animal owners that have failed to re-register their pets by the 10th of April each year.	Reminder notices mailed out to owners of previously registered animals that have not been renewed.	Mail out completed by 31 May annually
Partner with local veterinarians and Section 84Y agreement holders to distribute animal registration information to new animal owners.	The number of veterinarians and Section 84Y agreement holders actively distributing registration information.	Ongoing
Offer animal registration renewal notices by email where requested by animal owner.	This program is working in a live environment available to the community.	2025
Ensure that all seized and impounded animals are registered in accordance with legislation prior to release to their owner.	Cross check pound release forms with Councils animal registration database.	Ongoing
Undertake targeted annual door knocks of the municipality to check for unregistered dogs and cats.	Completion of targeted door knocks undertaken in the municipality.	Annually

4.3 Animal Nuisance Complaints

GOAL: Minimise the number of complaints received by Council while increasing community satisfaction with Council's response to investigating complaints.

OUTCOMES: Improved community awareness and education to residents with an emphasis on responsible animal ownership. A reduction in animal complaints and an enhanced level of customer service and improved adherence to legislation.

Action	Measure	When
Provide / make available the most current educational material to animal owners in the municipality.	Preparation, sourcing and distribution of educational material to residents of the municipality.	Ongoing
Maintain a supply of cat cages for the community to utilise to control problem or feral cats.	Ensure a register of community members interested in utilizing cat cages is current and that they are contacted as soon as cages become available.	Ongoing
Maintain accurate and relevant information on Council's website advising how customers can make a complaint about nuisance animals.	A dedicated page has been set up this needs to be maintained and updated on a regular basis.	Ongoing
Review the barking dog complaint procedure.	The procedure is reviewed to deliver high quality investigations in line with Section 32 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.	2026

4.4 Dog Attacks

GOAL: Minimise the risk to the community of dog attacks while increasing community understanding of potential aggressive animal behaviour and the benefits of dog socialisation and obedience training.

OUTCOMES: Increased community awareness of responsible pet ownership. A reduction in complaints and increased adherence to legislation.

Action	Measure	Outcome	When
Increased public awareness of what constitutes a dog attack and how to report them.	Update Council's web site with a dedicated section on dog attacks. Use Council's Social Media page to inform the community of dog attack information. Utilise local press to highlight successful prosecutions, when appropriate.	Increased community awareness of responsible pet ownership; a reduction in complaints and increased adherence to legislation.	ongoing

4.5 Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breed Dogs

GOAL: Meeting legislative requirements relating to dangerous, menacing and Restricted Breed dogs while educating the community about such breeds.

OUTCOME: Improved community awareness of responsible pet ownership and a reduction in complaints and improved adherence to legislation.

Action	Measure	When
Random property inspections of declared dogs to ensure compliance.	Review internal register of declared dogs and determine checks to be conducted, undertake an inspection of each property.	Annually
Prosecute repeat offenders or serious breaches detected.	Number of successful outcomes from prosecutions conducted.	As occurs
After hours patrols for unregistered guard dogs.	Number of patrols conducted, and the number of unregistered guard dogs detected.	As occurs
Educate the community about what is a declared dog.	Half year updates on council social media site.	Half yearly

4.6 Over-Population and High Euthanasia

GOAL: Encourage responsible pet ownership by promoting de-sexing and confinement of dogs and cats to reduce the incidence of unwanted pet litters and feral domestic animals, while increasing the number of animals successfully re-housed.

OUTCOME: Improved community awareness of responsible pet ownership. A reduction in complaints and improved adherence to legislation and reduction in the number of animals euthanised.

Action	Measure	When
Promote Animal Welfare Victoria's responsible pet ownership program.	Regular utilisation of Councils Social Media site to promote responsible pet ownership.	Ongoing
Review existing Section 84Y Agreements and seek out other potential Section 84Y providers to enhance the re-homing of unclaimed dogs and cats.	Minimum 85% of impounded animals returned to owner, adopted or re-housed.	Ongoing
Utilise social media to promote available and suitable animals, unclaimed in the Pound.	Regular utilisation of Councils Social Media site to promote animals for adoption.	Ongoing

4.7 Domestic Animal Businesses

GOAL: To support and regulate domestic animal businesses established within the municipality.

OUTCOME: Improved accuracy of Councils pet registration database and greater adherence to legislation and improved community awareness and education with an emphasis on responsible animal ownership. A reduction in animal complaints and greater adherence to legislation. Increased access to Council services.

Action	Measure	When
Audit all Domestic Animal Businesses annually to ensure compliance to legislation.	Number of Audits conducted.	Annually
Maintain accurate and relevant information on Councils website advising how to register a Domestic Animal Business.	Dedicated page on Domestic Animal Businesses to be developed and regularly checked for accuracy. Number of hits the webpage receives.	Bi-monthly
Ensure that details of all registered Domestic animal Businesses are reported to Animal Welfare Victoria annually.	Number of Domestic Animal Businesses reported annually to Animal Welfare Victoria.	Annually

5. Annual Review and Annual Reporting

Actions identified in the Plan will commence in the 2025-2026 financial year and conclude at the end of the 2029-2030 financial year.

Latrobe City Council will review the Plan annually and, if appropriate, amend. Any amendment of the Plan will be provided to the Department of Agriculture's Secretary. An evaluation of our implementation of the Plan will be published in Latrobe City Council's Annual Report.

A full review of this Plan will be undertaken during the 2028/2029 financial year and will inform the development of any future Domestic Animal Management Plans.

Any questions relating to this Plan should be directed to the Coordinator Local Laws on 1300 367 700; or via email at latrobe@latrobe.vic.gov.au; or via post to Latrobe City Council, PO Box 264, Morwell Victoria 3840.

To obtain this information in languages other than English, or in other formats including audio, electronic, Braille or large print, please contact Latrobe City Council on 1300 367 700.