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CITY OF MITCHAM

Dog & Cat Management Plan

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Around 63% of Australian households own a pet.
39%
own a dog
29%
own a cat

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dog and Cat Management Plan provides a framework for managing of Councils' dogs and cats. Other animals are managed by City of Mitcham's' By-Laws and the Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act.

The Plan acknowledges that while dogs and cats are subject to specific statutory requirements, such as licensing and registration. By addressing both dogs and cats The Plan aims to provide comprehensive guidance for managing animal-related issues within the City of Mitcham. This includes considerations for public safety, dog and cat welfare, and harmonious coexistence between animals and residents. Overall, The Plan reflects a proactive approach to animal management that recognises the diversity of animal species within the community and seeks to address their respective needs and challenges.

Additional to the learnings from the 2018-2023 Dog and Cat Management Plan. A detailed community engagement process was adopted to ensure the development of the new 2024-2028 Dog and Cat Management Plan (The Plan) will harmonise findings and priorities set by the community feedback. The identification of these key community engagement findings serves as a valuable guide for shaping the objectives, strategies, and initiatives. This community engagement was known as phase 1. Upon review and evaluation of the phase 1 community engagement data, several key findings emerged regarding animal management within the City of Mitcham. These findings likely reflect the concerns, values, and aspirations of the community members who participated in the engagement activities.

The Plan has been developed with the key findings highlighted throughout the phase 1 community engagement process, these priority findings encompass areas such as responsible pet ownership, animal welfare, public safety, environmental conservation, and community harmony. The significant participation of approximately 300 community members indicates a high level of interest and engagement in the development of the Dog and Cat Management Plan. This broad participation helps ensure that the priorities and concerns of a wide cross-section of the community are considered.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT KEY FEEDBACK FOCUS AREAS INCLUDE:

- Introduction of Cat Confinement
- Open Space Areas and Dogs
- Dog Attacks and Dog Behaviour
- Links with Vet and Other Agencies
- What Makes a Responsible Dog / Cat Owner
- QR codes for signage.

The identification of these key feedback focus areas serves as a valuable guide for shaping the objectives, strategies, and initiatives. Including:

Dog and Cat management

- Community education and compliance
- Dogs in public places
- Open Space areas and Dogs
- Dog Attacks and Dog Behaviour
- Dog faeces
- Nuisance barking
- Wandering dogs
- Cat management
- Cat registration
- Introduction of Cat Confinement (new Cat By-Law)
- Compulsory microchipping of dogs and cats
- Compulsory de-sexing of dogs and cats.
- Compulsory dog registration
- Animal management team

Project summary

The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (the Act) requires councils to prepare a Plan of Management Relating to Dogs and Cats within their area. Council must meet and follow the provision of the Dog and Cat Management Act as amended with particular reference to Section 26A. A plan of management must include provisions for parks where dogs may be exercised off-leash and for parks where dogs must be under effective control by means of physical restraint, and may include provisions for parks where dogs are prohibited. A plan of management must cover a 5 year period.

2 INTRODUCTION

The executive summary outlines the scope and purpose of the Dog and Cat Management Plan for the City of Mitcham, particularly focusing on the period spanning the next five financial years (2024-2028). It serves as a strategic document that guides the council in addressing various dog and cat- related issues within the community. The Plan also provides an opportunity for the council to consider dog and cat management from a strategic perspective. This involves identifying priority areas and emerging issues related to animal management and setting out actions to address them effectively.

Whilst this Plan primary focus is on domestic dogs and cats. It reflects their significant presence and impact within the urban environment and the community. Overall, the Dog and Cat Management Plan for the City of Mitcham aims to provide a comprehensive framework for effectively managing dogs and cats within the municipality, addressing both regulatory requirements and community needs.



Dogs have about 1,700 taste buds, whereas cats have around 473.

This might explain why dogs seem to enjoy a wide variety of foods compared to cats, who can be notoriously picky eaters!

3 PREVIOUS PLAN

The 2018-2023 Dog and Cat Management Plan facilitated the introduction of new statewide animal management requirements, including a new online portal to be known as Dogs and Cats Online (DACO) which replaced individual council animal registration registers. The statewide animal requirements included:

- All dogs and cats over the age of three months be required to be microchipped.
- All new generations of dogs and cats will be required to be desexed.

SUMMARY OF KEY ACTION AREAS IN THE 2018-23 PLAN:

1. Existing requirements, procedures and databases will be reviewed and updated to accommodate the forthcoming statewide changes to the Dog and Cat Management Act and the introduction of DACO.

2. A comprehensive education program will be developed and implemented that covers the suite of local and statewide requirements applying to dogs and cats.

3. Further targeted consulation to occur in the immediate vicinity of Hannaford Park (Reserve) with all stakeholders to consider a range of improvements to Hannaford Park as an enhanced dog off leash area.

4. List of off-leash parks that could be considered for enhancement over the life of the Plan.

5. A cat confinement requirement will be considered during the life of the Plan.

6. Additional education initiatives will be undertaken in relation to the presence of dogs in public places (streets, footpaths, parks and reserves). Dogs must be on a leash within 10m of an unfenced playground; and

7. A dog barking forum will be held with residents and identified stakeholders.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Council has performed well on all the Key Action Areas contained in the last Dog and Cat Management Plan for 2018- 2023. It also performs well against the animal management measures collated by the Dog and Cat Management Board (compared to other Councils) and on statewide averages. Noting, there were no standout issues that were considered to warrant urgent attention.

The DACO system has provided administration with a streamlined approach to dog and cat ownership data. It has proven to be efficient when animals are found outside of their Council area, historically to obtain ownership data a neighbouring Council would be contacted. This step has now been removed, providing a more efficient return to home service.

The Council's first dedicated Dog Park, opened in 2009, at CC Hood Reserve Panorama. Whilst dedicated dog parks are not a key focus area of this Plan, it is important to note an expansion to the dedicated dog park at CC Hood Reserve will shortly commence construction. This park expansion will specifically cater for small dogs.

This model and expansion was supported as it forms part of the overall detailed design and redevelopment of CC Hood Reserve, together with evidence that parks tailored to dog size can assist with interaction and socialisation of all dogs.

Following further interactive consultation with key stakeholders within the immediate vicinity, it was concluded that Hannaford Reserve was most suitable off leash enhanced dog park. The off leash enhanced area includes dog poo bags, bag dispensers, waste bins and increased frequency of waste disposal. It is understood Hannaford Reserve has performed well in its hybrid shared use capacity, this learning has been observed and captured within the new draft Dog and Cat Management Plan. By addressing both dogs and cats the The Plan aims to provide comprehensive guidance for managing dog and cat-related issues within the City of Mitcham. This includes considerations for public safety, animal welfare, and harmonious coexistence between animals and residents. The list of off-leash parks that could be considered for enhancement has been carried over to the new Dog and Cat Management Plan.

The previous Plan reflected a proactive approach to animal management that recognises the diversity of animal species within the community and seeks to address their respective needs and challenges. A number of dog barking forums and webinars were held with identified stakeholders, together with the introduction of education signage initiatives within parks and reserves. The feedback, stakeholder feedback and learnings have been welcomed and reinforced within the draft Dog and Cat Management Plan.

Acknowledging Council members awareness of the recent introduction of the Cat By-Law.

The Dog and Cat Management Plan proposes to synchronise with the By-Law limitations.Specifically, all cats born or registered on or after 1 January 2024 will need to be confined to a property at all times unless on a leash or similar restraint. Cats can still go outside, as long as they remain on private property. The Dog and Cat Management Plan proposes to synchronise with the By- Law limitations. Specifically, all cats born or registered after 1 January 2024 will need to be confined to a property at all times unless on a leash or similar restraint. Cats can still go outside, as long as they remain on private property.



The 10 most popular cat names in the City of Mitcham are:

Luna	**Max**
Bella	**Oscar**
Molly	**Milo**
Charlie	**George**
Coco	**Jasper**

4 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

In South Australia, the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 provides for the management of dogs and cats in the community.
The objectives of the Act are to:

- Encourage responsible dog and cat ownership.
- Reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats.
- Promote the effective management of dogs and cats.

City of Mitcham is interested in the views of the community on its animal management service and the development of this Plan. This legislation also requires all Councils to produce a Plan of Management relating to dogs and cats within their local area every five years. The provided principles outline the guiding philosophy and objectives of the Dog and Cat Management Plan 2024–2028 for the City of Mitcham.

Belief in pets contribution to quality of life



This principle recognises the positive impact that pets have on people's lives, acknowledging the companionship, joy, and emotional support they provide to their owners and the community at large.

Balancing needs of pet & non-pet owners



Emphasises on the importance of striking a balance between the needs and rights of pet owners and those who may not own pets. Ensuring that policies and practices consider the well-being and interests of all residents.

Valuing & encouraging responsible pet ownership



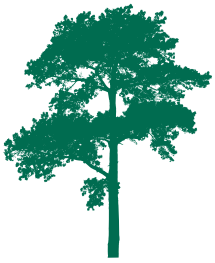
Responsible pet ownership is promoted and valued, emphasising the importance of properly caring for pets, adhering to regulations, and minimising negative impacts on the community and the environment.

Proactive animal management & education



The plan advocates for proactive measures in animal management, including education initiatives aimed at promoting understanding, awareness, and responsible behaviour among pet owners and the public.

Protecting the natural environment



Recognising the potential environmental impacts of dogs and cats, this principle emphasises the need to safeguard the natural environment from negative effects such as habitat destruction, wildlife disturbance, and pollution.

Balanced approach to open space management



Given the competing demands for limited open space, the plan advocates for a balanced approach that considers the needs of pets, and their owners alongside other community uses and environmental considerations.

Collaboration with stakeholders



Collaboration with various stakeholders, including government agencies, community groups, and animal welfare organisations, is highlighted as essential for effective animal management and achieving shared goals.

Leadership in animal management



The plan underscores the role of the council in providing leadership and direction in animal management practices, policies, and initiatives within the community. These principles collectively reflect a holistic and proactive approach to animal management that prioritises community well-being, responsible ownership, environmental stewardship, and collaboration among stakeholders.

5 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Council must meet and follow the provision of the Dog and Cat Management Act as amended with reference to Section 26A. Which includes, but is not limited to:

- A plan of management must include provisions for parks where dogs may be exercised off-leash and for parks where dogs must be under effective control by means of physical restraint and may include provisions for parks where dogs are prohibited.
- A plan of management must cover 5 year periods and each plan must be prepared and presented to the Board at least 6 months before it is to take effect.
- A plan of management must be approved by the Board before it takes effect.

6 PLANNING FOR PETS

Companion animals like dogs and cats hold significant importance in the lives of many Australians. Pets have a remarkable ability to enrich the lives of their owners. Their presence brings joy, companionship, and emotional support to individuals and families, contributing to overall well-being and happiness.

Numerous studies have shown that owning pets can have positive effects on both physical and mental health. Interacting with pets can lower blood pressure, reduce stress levels, and increase serotonin and dopamine levels, which are neurotransmitters associated with feelings of happiness and relaxation. Dogs and cats are loyal companions that provide unconditional love and support to their owners. They offer a sense of security and comfort, particularly for those living alone or facing challenging circumstances.

Pets can act as social catalysts, helping their owners connect with others in their community. Walking a dog, for example, often leads to interactions with neighbours and other dog owners, fostering a sense of belonging and community engagement. Overall, the bond between humans and companion animals is deeply ingrained in Australian culture, with pets being valued members of countless households across the country. Their positive impact on physical health, mental well-being, and social connectedness underscores their significance in Australian society.

Best practices in animal management relevant to local councils include the following: Positive reinforcement training and handling techniques; the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) recommends the use of positive reinforcement dog training methods as the preferred method of training. The Dog and Cat Management Board "believes a commitment to positive reinforcement training is an aspect of being a responsible dog owner. The Board does not condone training methods that cause a dog to feel pain, fear, aggression, or anxiety." (DCMB 2017) The RSPCA of South Australia promotes the use of Force-Free dog training methods and have a list of qualified Force-Free Dog Trainers in SA.

SCAN **RSPCA's Force-free Dog Trainers in SA**

The City of Mitcham's stance against the use of citronella, electronic, or prong collars for managing barking aligns with the positions of respected animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and AVA (Australian Veterinary Association). The City of Mitcham's decision to refrain from endorsing the use of these collars reflects a commitment to promoting humane and effective methods of managing barking behaviour. Instead, they likely advocate for positive reinforcement techniques, behaviour modification strategies, and training methods that focus on addressing the underlying causes of barking in a respectful and compassionate manner. By aligning with the positions of organisations like the RSPCA and AVA, the City of Mitcham demonstrates its dedication to upholding high standards of animal welfare and promoting responsible pet ownership within the community.

EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF DOGS IN EXERCISE (OFF LEASH) AREAS

The responsibility of dog owners to manage their dogs while in public places is essential for ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone in the community, including children, adults, and other animals. Reasons why effective control of dogs is crucial:

Safety

Dogs that are not under effective control pose potential risks to the safety of people and other animals. They may exhibit behaviours such as aggression, chasing, or jumping, which can lead to accidents, injuries, or conflicts.

Respect for others

Keeping a dog under effective control demonstrates respect for the rights and boundaries of others who may be sharing the same public spaces. It acknowledges the need to consider the comfort and safety of everyone in the community, regardless of whether they are dog owners or not.

Prevention of incidents

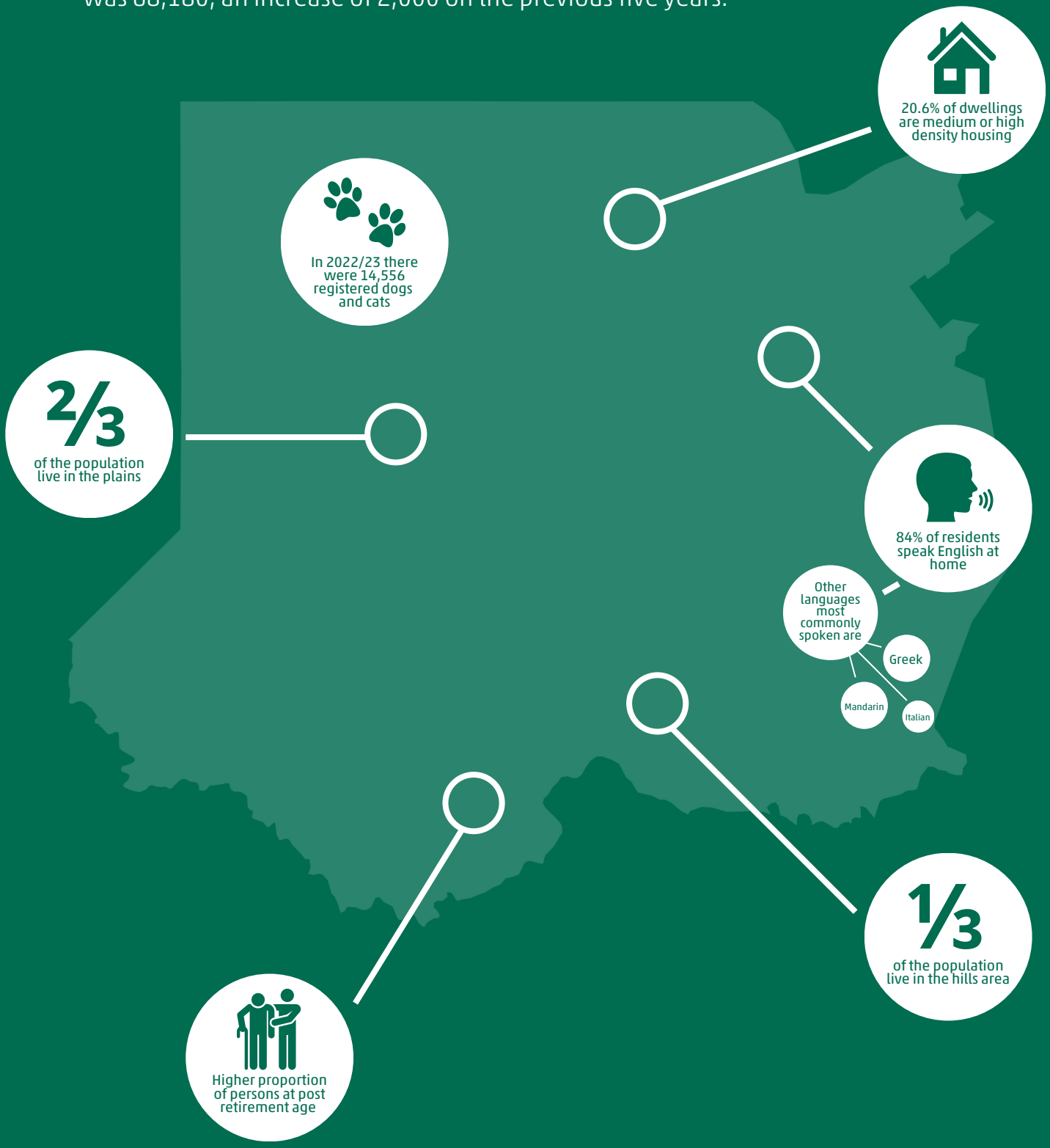
Maintaining control over a dog helps prevent unwanted incidents and clashes that can arise from the dog's behaviour. By being vigilant and attentive to their dog's actions, owners can intervene promptly to prevent potential altercations and ensure a positive experience for everyone involved. Overall, effective control of dogs in public spaces is not only a matter of safety and legal compliance but also a demonstration of consideration and respect for the well-being of others. It fosters harmonious coexistence within the community and promotes positive interactions between dogs and humans in shared environments.

Effective control is a statutory requirement under the Act. This means the person responsible for the dog must:

- *Have the dog under voice control e.g., being able to have a reliable recall so the dog comes back.*
- *Have the dog close at all times so the owner/handler can see the dog and recall the dog when needed.*

OUR COMMUNITY

The City of Mitcham covers 30 suburbs, an area of 75 square kilometres and stretches from Cross Road in the north, Sturt River in the south, from Mount Barker Road in the east to South Road in the west. In 2016, the total population was 68,180, an increase of 2,000 on the previous five years.





The City of Mitcham was home to 10,529 registered dogs in 2022/2023.

7 DOGS IN THE CITY OF MITCHAM

The provided excerpt outlines the structure and responsibilities related to the management of dogs and cats within the City of Mitcham. Here's a breakdown: The responsibility for managing dogs and cats within the City of Mitcham lies with the Community Safety Team. This department oversees various aspects of municipal services, including animal control and regulation. According to the requirements outlined in Section 26 of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995, the Team Leader, Community Safety has been appointed as the Registrar. The Registrar is responsible for overseeing and managing the registration of dogs and cats within The City of Mitcham. The council employs one full-time Animal Management Officer (AMO) who is also an authorised person, who is tasked with carrying out specific functions and powers as outlined in the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995. Our Animal Management Officer typically enforces animal control regulations, investigates complaints, issues warnings or fines, and ensures compliance with relevant laws and regulations. The Animal Management Officer is supported by a Team Leader and additional support staff. This support team assists in administrative tasks, coordination of activities, responding to inquiries from the public, and other operational aspects related to animal management within the city.

Overall, this structure reflects the commitment of The City of Mitcham to effectively manage and regulate the population of dogs and cats within its jurisdiction, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and promoting responsible pet ownership within the community.

Community Safety Officers are on duty seven days a week and on-call officers are available to handle emergency calls. Council's dog management services are funded by a combination of general rate revenue, dog registrations, and expiation fees and fines for breaches of the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995. By combining these funding sources, councils can ensure adequate resources are available to provide effective dog management services, promote responsible pet ownership, and maintain community safety and well-being.

Dog registration fees collected in 2022/2023 totalled $545,173.60. Twenty-four percent (24%) of these fees are transferred to the Dog and Cat Management Board, with the remaining funds allocated to dog management services within The City of Mitcham including:

- Reuniting lost dogs with their owners.
- Providing after-hours call-out services.
- Investigating incidences of dog harassment, attacks, and nuisance barking.

- Providing funds to support impounded animals at the nominated detention facility.
- Liaising and educating pet owners about responsible pet ownership.
- Patrolling parks and reserves.

Council has developed standard operating procedures for the management of dogs including:

- Dog attack and harassment.
- Dog wandering.
- Dog waste bag dispensers.
- Dog barking and noisy animals.
- Destruction and control orders.
- Prosecution and enforcement.

These procedures are reviewed every five (5) years in line with the Dog and Cat Management Plan.

ON-LEASH EXERCISE INCLUDING OFF-LEASH AND DOG FREE AREAS

The City of Mitcham has established specific regulations and guidelines regarding dog control and access to public spaces. A breakdown of the existing dog controls:

On-leash areas

Designated parks and reserves. Dogs are required to be always on-leash in these areas:

- Roads, footpaths, nature strips, public parking areas, and shopping centres.

Dog free areas

No dogs allowed at any time. Designed parks, reserves and fenced playground areas are deemed as no dogs allowed at any time.

Exercise (off-leash) areas

Designated parks and reserves. Dogs are allowed off-leash at all times, except during sporting activities. Additionally, there is a time-share arrangement where dogs can be off-leash daily.

On-leash areas

Designated parks and reserves. Within 10 meters of any unfenced playground and/or fitness equipment at all times.

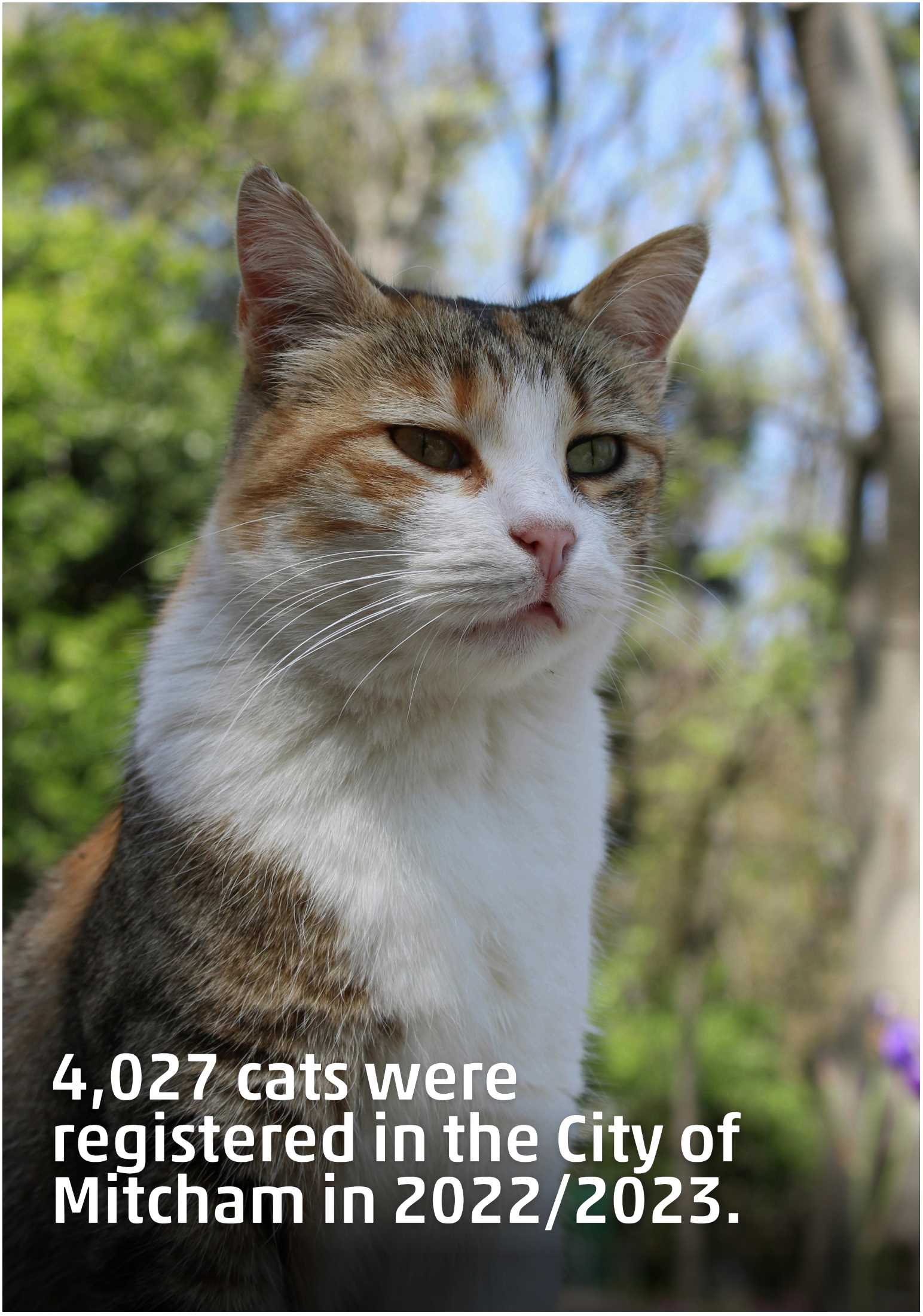
Off leash dog parks have several benefits including physical and mental exercise for dogs. Well exercised dogs are less likely to behave in a destructive or annoying way such as excessive barking. Parks also provide socialisation for dogs along with the opportunity to have frequent interaction with other dogs and people.

It is supported that dogs that are well socialised and exercised are healthier and happier as well as less likely to be aggressive.

Administration have identified a number reserves over the life time of the plan which are suitable for enhancement to support off lead areas. The overarching vision is enhancement of existing underutilised reserves or open spaces to create a safe environment for the exercise and socialisation of dogs off lead. This vison and commitment has been sponsored as part of off section 7.2 of the Dog and Cat Management Plan.

Proposed Action 3 within the Dog and Cat Management Plan commits to community consultation of multiple reserves throughout the life of the plan, with the vision to incorporate enhanced off leash dog areas. The project and delivery will be determined by a separate report to Council where Council will determine prioritisation, budget allocation and resources required. Majority of the identified reserves have been selected from a previously commissioned independent off leash area suitability study.




4,027 cats were registered in the City of Mitcham in 2022/2023.

8 CATS IN THE CITY OF MITCHAM

The City of Mitcham has implemented cat confinement measures starting from 1 January 2024, to promote the well-being of cats and protect native wildlife. All new cats born or registered on or after 1 January 2024, must be always confined to their owner's property. This means that cats can still go outside but must remain within the boundaries of the owner's property.

Keeping cats confined to the property is intended to enhance their safety and health. It reduces the risks of cats getting lost, being hit by cars, or getting into fights with other cats. Cats born and registered prior to 1st of January 2024, are exempt from the confinement requirement. However, owners of these cats are encouraged to ensure that their pets do not cause any nuisance to the community. Confinement measures also aim to protect native wildlife by limiting cats' ability to roam freely and hunt wildlife outside of their owners' properties.

The introduction of cat confinement measures reflects The City of Mitcham's commitment to promoting responsible pet ownership, safeguarding the well- being of cats, and preserving local ecosystems. The City of Mitcham encourages cat owners to take proactive steps to ensure the safety of their pets and minimise their impact on the environment.

PUREBRED CATS OF MITCHAM

1. Abyssinian
2. American Short Hair
3. Bengal
4. British Short Hair
5. Birman
6. Burmilla
7. Burmese
8. Bombay
9. Chartreux
10. Chinchilla
11. Cornish Rex
12. Egyptian Mau
13. Exotic
14. Main Coon
15. Siamese



CAT COMPLAINTS

It's your responsibility to control your cat and prevent it from annoying your neighbours. If your neighbours complain, you must stop your cat from entering their premises.

Cats are active animals that love to run, jump, and climb and it can be difficult to keep them in your yard if there aren't enough things to engage and entertain them. Fencing may discourage your cat from leaving your property, and an enclosed 'cat run' will give them something to do. Give your cat a well-turned mulched area to use as an outside toilet or train your cat to use a litter box inside.

We often get complaints about stray and wandering cats, and if cats are coming onto your property, we recommend talking to your neighbour face-to-face to try and fix the problem. If you don't know who the cat belongs to, try these deterrents:

- Make loud noises to startle the cat.
- Keep the most visited areas consistently wet to deter the cat from digging, defecating, urinating, or sunning there.
- Place citrus peel, sprigs of rue (this is a herb), naphthalene flakes, or sprinkle pepper on the problem area until the habit is broken. You can also use cat repellent sprays and gels available from plant nurseries or vets (this will only work if the cat does not like the smell of the product!).
- Place cacti or other prickly plants around the areas where the cat visits.
- Electronic deterrents that emit a high-pitched sound are also available, but these may also deter other wildlife from entering your yard, like birds.

9 COMMUNITY & COMPLIANCE

The City of Mitcham is responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations related to dog and cat management, including the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 and The City of Mitcham's By-Laws.

Dog owners are required to register their dogs with the council and renew the registration annually. Registration helps authorities keep track of dogs in the community and ensures they are up to date on vaccinations. Dogs and cats must be microchipped, which involves implanting a small identification chip under the animal's skin. Microchipping helps reunite lost pets with their owners and facilitates responsible pet ownership.

Dog owners are required to keep their dogs under 'effective control' when in public places. This typically means keeping dogs on a leash or under verbal command to prevent them from causing harm or nuisance to others.

Compliance with these legal obligations helps promote responsible pet ownership, ensure public safety, and protect the welfare of dogs and cats in the community. The City of Mitcham plays a crucial role in enforcing these laws and regulations to maintain harmony and safety among residents and their pets.

SCAN City of Mitcham By-Laws

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS A DOG & CAT OWNER

Category	Legal responsibilities & penalties for non-compliance	Relevant Legislation
Registration of dogs	Dogs to be registered annually. *Penalty $170*	Dog and Cat Management Act 1995
Registration of cats	Registration of microchip and owner details must be registered in DACO. *Penalty $170*	Dog and Cat Management Act 1995
Number of dogs per household	No more than two dogs per household A permit is required from Council to keep more than two dogs. *Penalty $187.50*	City of Mitcham By-Law No 5 - Dogs Consolidated at 6 July 2023 and amended via By-Law 8 Amendment By-Law
Dogs in public places	If you are walking your dog, he/she must be on-leash on local streets, and in shopping centre car parks. *Penalty $210.00* There are some designated areas for dog exercise (off-leash), and in these areas, you must still carry a leash and have your dog under effective control at all times. *Penalty $187.50* Dogs are not permitted whether restrained or otherwise within three (3) metres of children's playgrounds. *Penalty $187.50*	Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 City of Mitcham By- Law No 5 - Dogs Consolidated at 6 July 2023 and amended via By-Law 8 Amendment By-Law

10 KEY FOCUS AREAS

Key Focus Areas contained in this Plan are:
10.1 Introduction of Cat Confinement (new Cat By-Law No 6)
10.2 Nuisance barking
10.3 Open Space areas and Dogs
10.4 Dog Attacks and Dog Behaviour
10.5 Links with Vet and Other Agencies
10.6 Animal Management Team

Each Key Focus Area is expanded on below, with objectives and strategies identified. Specific Key Performance Measures have been applied to each Key Focus Area. A compiled list of proposed action timeframes and measures is stipulated in section 12.

INTRODUCTION OF CAT CONFINEMENT (NEW CAT BY-LAW NO. 6)

Cats born or registered on or after 1 January 2024, must be confined to their owner's property at all times, unless they are on a leash or similar restraint. However, they are still allowed to go outside if they remain within the boundaries of the owner's property.

While cats registered before 1 January 2024, are not legally required to be confined, owners are encouraged to keep their cats indoors, especially at night. This helps protect local wildlife from hunting behaviours and reduces the risk of the cat being involved in accidents or fights with other animals.

The City of Mitcham emphasises the importance of keeping cats indoors, to protect them from potential harm, such as being injured by a car or getting lost.

Additionally, indoor cats are less likely to engage in fights with other cats, which can lead to costly vet visits and injuries.

1. How to manage unwanted/unowned cats and managing wandering cats.
2. What is our strategy in relation to cat impounding and unowned cat colonies?
3. Consideration for introduction of a Cat Management Plan.

Key performance measures

1. Number of complaints received and resolved.
2. Number of feral versus domestic cats collected by Council.
3. Reduction in the number of cat complaints over time.
4. 12 monthly review effectiveness of By-Law.

NUISANCE BARKING

Enforcing compliance and responding to nuisance barking complaints indeed constitutes a significant responsibility for Council Community Safety Officers. While some complaints may be resolved relatively easily, others can indeed be quite challenging and time- consuming for all parties involved. It's crucial for Council Community Safety Officers to have effective strategies and procedures in place to address these complaints efficiently and fairly.

Our plan

Establish clear guidelines
Clearly define what constitutes nuisance barking and the procedures for lodging complaints. This clarity helps both the complainants, and the Council Community Safety Officers understand the expectations and processes involved.

Educational initiatives
Conduct educational campaigns to raise awareness about responsible pet ownership and the impact of nuisance barking on communities. Many times, dog owners may not realise that their pet's behaviour is causing a disturbance.

Mediation
Attempt to mediate disputes between the parties involved. Sometimes, a constructive conversation facilitated by a neutral third party can resolve issues without escalating the situation.

Documentation and evidence collection
Gather evidence of the nuisance barking, including dates, times, and duration of the incidents. This documentation can be crucial in resolving disputes and taking appropriate action.

Communication
Maintain open and transparent communication with both the complainants and the dog owners. Keep them informed about the progress of the investigation and any actions being taken.

Enforcement of regulations
Enforce relevant regulations and bylaws related to nuisance barking. This may involve issuing warnings, fines, or other penalties to dog owners who fail to address the problem within the given time frame.

Support for dog owners
Offer support and resources to owners who are struggling to address their dog's barking behaviours. This could include providing information about training programs, behaviour modification techniques, or referrals to appropriate and qualified trainers or veterinarians.

Follow up
Follow up with both the complainants and the dog owners after the issue has been resolved to ensure that the problem has been adequately addressed and to address any lingering concerns.

Other strategies

a. Barking Dog Library and Reference Centre – Dog Library of enrichment toys, videos etc on website, holding info sessions and drop-in sessions – a library for animal management

b. Barking dog forum – recognising that some dog owners don't know how to address barking or where to turn for help.

c. Link with dog clubs and other places – what can they offer to help dog owners.
Our priority of enforcing compliance and responding to nuisance barking complaints is driven by several factors.

Community concerns

The priority addresses a key complaint identified in community survey results. Nuisance barking is a common issue that affects the quality of life for many residents. It can cause disturbances, disrupt neighbourhoods, and create tensions among neighbours

Public health and safety

Nuisance barking can have adverse effects on public health and safety. Excessive barking can lead to stress, anxiety, and sleep disturbances for residents. In extreme cases, it may even escalate to Neighbourhood disputes or conflicts

Regulatory compliance

Councils have a responsibility to uphold local regulations and bylaws related to noise pollution and pet ownership. Enforcing compliance with these regulations helps maintain order and harmony within the community

Quality of life

Addressing nuisance barking complaints improves the overall quality of life for residents. It allows people to enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods without undue disturbances or disruptions.

Promoting responsible dog ownership

By addressing nuisance barking complaints, councils can promote responsible pet ownership and encourage dog owners to take proactive measures to control their dogs' behaviour.

Overall, prioritising the enforcement of compliance and response to nuisance barking complaints aligns with the goal of fostering safe, healthy, and harmonious communities. It demonstrates a commitment to addressing the concerns and needs of residents while upholding regulatory standards and promoting responsible pet ownership.

Key performance measures

1. Number of complaints received and resolved.
2. Reduction in the number of barking dog complaints over time.
3. Barking forum held / interaction with dog clubs.
4. Post forum review undertaken of its effectiveness.

OPEN SPACE AREAS & DOGS

The provision of public open spaces where dogs can be exercised, along with regulations regarding leash requirements and off-leash areas, is a common practice in many municipalities.

Off-leash areas are often shared with various other activities and users, including children, adults, and other animals. Effective control of off-leash dogs helps ensure the safety of these individuals and prevents potential conflicts or accidents.

Dogs that are not under effective control may exhibit behaviours that can disturb or intimidate other park users. This can include excessive barking, jumping on people, or chasing other animals. Effective control helps maintain a peaceful and enjoyable environment for everyone.

Off-leash areas are typically designated based on specific regulations and guidelines set by the local council or authorities. Dog owners are expected to adhere to these regulations, which often include requirements for effective control of off-leash dogs.

Effective control of off-leash dogs can also help minimise the environmental impact on the surrounding area. Dogs that roam freely may disturb vegetation, wildlife habitats, or sensitive ecosystems within parks and reserves.

Overall, the requirement for effective control of off-leash dogs in designated areas reflects a balanced approach to promoting recreational opportunities for dog owners while prioritising the safety, well-being, and enjoyment of all park users. It underscores the importance of responsible pet ownership and community harmony within shared public spaces.

Other strategies will include:

- Review previous open spaces identified as part 2018-2023 for suitability for dog access areas (defining dog on leash, off leash and dog prohibited areas)
- Look at suitable shared reserves that people know that if they visit that reserve there may be dogs present off leash.
- Large interactive map that members of the public can click on a reserve and see what facilities are there, what the access is and the rules for use – also where the closest park for their needs is.
- Look at signage – traffic light style signage for ease of recognising.
- QR Code signs at each park – what are the rules at the park, is it on lead, off leash or no dogs – if no dogs or dog on leash, where is the closest off leash park.

Key performance measures

1. Review completed and appropriate changes to parks/reserves status made.
2. Implementation of interactive map.
3. Roll out of signage and QR codes at identified off leash parks.
4. Number of patrols undertaken. Reduction in the number of complaints about dogs in Council parks and reserves.

The 10 most popular dog names in the City of Mitcham are:

Ollie	**Toby**
Bailey	**Maggie**
Oscar	**Bonnie**
Millie	**Luna**
Frankie	**Cooper**

DOG ATTACKS & DOG BEHAVIOURS

It is an offence for a dog to attack, harass, or chase a person, another animal, or a bird owned by a person in many jurisdictions. These regulations are typically put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of both people and animals within the community.

Residents and visitors to the City of Mitcham have the right to use public land without fear of being attacked by a dog. This highlights the importance of creating safe and welcoming public spaces where people can enjoy recreational activities without the risk of harm from aggressive dogs.

Dog attacks are considered very serious matters due to the potential for causing physical harm, emotional distress, and property damage. They can result in serious injuries, trauma, and long-term consequences for victims and their families. Both the registered dog owner and the person in control of the dog may be held responsible in the event of a dog attack.

This emphasises the need for dog owners to take proactive measures to prevent their pets from behaving aggressively or causing harm to others. It is important to report all dog attacks to the Council, regardless of whether an injury has been sustained.

Reporting allows Council Animal Management Officers to investigate the incident, gather information, and take appropriate action to address the situation. This may include educating dog owners, issuing warnings or fines, implementing safety measures, or initiating legal proceedings if necessary.

Reporting dog attacks also provides an opportunity to educate dog owners and minimise future risks to the community. By addressing underlying issues such as inadequate training, socialisation, or supervision of dogs, Councils can help prevent future incidents and promote responsible pet ownership. These statements reflect a commitment to promoting public safety, protecting the rights of residents and visitors, and holding individuals accountable for the behaviour of their dogs. They emphasise the importance of proactive measures, community awareness, and collaboration between authorities and the public to create safe and inclusive environments for everyone.

a. Develop strategies for reducing instances of dog attacks/harass (especially at home or occurring form private properties)

b. Use of forums – info sessions

c. More information in the public about animal behaviour in the community

d. More about how and why dog attacks occur.

e. A better understanding by dog owners – people in the home looking at their dog differently.

Key performance measures

1. Number of dog attacks reported.

LINKS WITH VETS & OTHER AGENCIES

Feedback from key stakeholders such as veterinarians and pet retail shops has assisted in understanding the importance these agencies within the City of Mitcham and their role in keeping animals healthy and vaccinated. There is a number of veterinary practices in the council area.

Desexing of animals helps prevent the tendency to wander at large and significantly reduces the possibility of multiple health threats. The Plan offers continual relationship building with veterinary practices to assist in promotion of the plan, information sessions and desexing incentives by way of a registration fee discount.

Key performance measures

1. Marketing and promotion material supported and disturbed by relevant agency.

ANIMAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

Ensure Authorised Persons acting under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 have appropriate training:

- Staff of the Animal Management Team are required to attend relevant training for Authorised Officers (Persons) this includes but is not limited to animal handling and conflict resolution training.
- Review skills of staff to identify areas where additional training would be of benefit to the staff and Council.

Key performance measures

1. Type and number of training sessions attended by staff.

11 INNOVATIONS

QR CODES FOR SIGNAGE

The community engagement feedback has identified the need for signage replacement and upgrades at selected high impact parks and reserves. Signage which is deteriorated, outdated and defuncted has been noted, a fresh easily read signage strategy throughout parks is required to maintain best practice. A recent learning, supported with feedback was the display of temporary signage with the use of QR codes (to assist with promoting phase 1).

This marketing tactic was utilised at reserves and parks frequented by dog owners to capture consultation for phase 1.

This success, has identified an innovation worth consideration. QR codes would allow users to identify dog off lead times or restrictions associated with a reserve or park, and identify the location of the nearest off lead exercise area.

Key performance measures

1. Roll out of QR Signage to identified enhanced and dedicated dog parks.

DOG POO BAGS

The community safety team noted a gap in the frequency dog poo bags at parks were being refilled. This was highlighted by requests and comments from the public. Once highlighted, the team identified a customer focused solution which could be retrofitted to the existing dog poo bag dispensers. This was a weather suitable sticker with a QR code. (Refer photo below).

This allows a resident to scan, and be taken directly to a Customer Request with the correct category and sub category pre-filled. This customer focused innovation is simple, however is broad insofar as implantation slowly going Council wide. The trial has been successful and the use of QR codes is envisaged throughout more signage to advise restrictions and locations of dog friendly areas during the cycle of the Plan.

SCAN City of Mitcham By-Laws

12 MONITORING & REVIEW

The plan requires a mechanism to ensure the Plan is implemented, monitored, reviewed and amended where appropriate.

Ensure the Plan is implemented, monitored, reviewed and updated where appropriate.

- Obtain Board approval of the Plan.
- Assign responsibility for implementing the Plan to a nominated Council officer.
- Establish an internal project team and meet quarterly to review progress.
- Conduct an annual review and report on the Plan's currency, implementation and performance against KPIs.

Key performance measures

1. Plan is implemented as planned.

Signs that cats are in the same social group:

- Mutual grooming
- Mutual rubbing
- Sleeping together touching
- Choosing to spend time together

SCAN

Find out if your cats are friends or foes


MITCHAM
COME TO
D RESERVE
og Park
ovided by the City of Mitcham.
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please contact
888
sponsible dog owner

13 COMPILATION OF PROPOSED ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION OF CAT CONFINEMENT

Key performance indicator

- Number of cat complaints received.
- Number of cat complaints resolved.
- Cat By-law reviewed and updated.

Action	When	Responsibility	Resources
Continue to provide educational material on Council's website	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Continue to include information and steps available for managing trespassing cats	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Review skills of staff and identify areas where additional animal management training would be of benefit eg. conflict resolution. Investigation techniques	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Continue to offer cat trap hire	Awaiting review	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Provide on site education to residents in relation to cat confinement practices	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Review procedures for dealing with cats found to be un-microchipped including options for accommodating seizure / impounded cats	Year 3	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Review the Cats By-Law No 6 considering and update as appropriate	Year 5	Community Safety Team	Within existing

NUISANCE BARKING

Key performance indicator

- Number of barking complaints received.
- Number of barking complaints resolved.

Action	When	Responsibility	Resources
Continue to use the Council's SOP for investigating barking dog complaints	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Continue to provide educational material on Council's website.	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Monitor best practice for dealing with barking dog complaints	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Hold (2) barking & Q&A forums with residents and identified stakeholders throughout the life of the Dog and Cat Management Plan	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing

OPEN SPACE AREAS & DOGS

Key performance indicator

- Number of dog attacks received in open space areas.

Action	When	Responsibility	Resources
Identify a number of open space areas which are suitable for enhancement encourage dog exercise	Life of plan	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Establish an enhanced dog park open space project plan, identifying the feasibility, suitability, delivery and of each identified open space area to be presented to Council for endorsement and funding allocation	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Continue to provide educational material and mapping of open space 'dog friendly' areas on Councils website.	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Continue to patrol Council's parks and reserves to ensure responsible dog ownership and compliance with the requirements applying to dogs.	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Undertake a review and amend of Dogs By law as appropriate and implement changes to parks and reserves status.	Life of plan	Community Safety Team	Within existing

WHAT MAKES A RESPONSIBLE DOG/CAT OWNER

Key performance indicator

- Reduction over time in the number of certain expiations
- Percentage of animals registered prior to the renewal date.

Action	When	Responsibility	Resources
Continue to provide educational material on Council's website and other promotional platforms formats	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Maintain registration renewal courtesy reminder practices.	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Continue to educate for initial breaches of Council requirements.	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing
Maintain partnerships with community organisations that promote rescue and return to home of dogs and cats.	Ongoing	Community Safety Team	Within existing

QR CODES FOR SIGNAGE

Key performance indicator

- Identification of reserves for signage upgrade / replacement identified.
- Percentage of reserves signage installed.

Action	When	Responsibility	Resources
Undertake a review and identify reserves with deteriorated or incorrect signage	Year 2	Community Safety Team, Depot Operations Team	Within existing
Design and create new signage in line with Councils branding and QR code application	Year 2	Community Safety Team, Depot Operations Team	Within existing
Install new signage as required to identified reserves, starting with reserves identified in Key Performance Indicator: Open Space Areas and Dogs	Ongoing	Community Safety Team, Depot Operations Team	Within existing

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