

Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029

Engagement Report August 2025

Phase 1

Contents

- Executive Summary - Engagement
- Background
- Who We Heard From
- What We Heard
- Community Priorities
- Outcome and Next Steps

Executive Summary Overview

The first phase of community consultation for the development of Strathbogie Shire's **Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025–2029** was conducted from **9 July to 1 August 2025**. This early engagement aimed to give the community an opportunity to help shape the direction, priorities and actions of the draft Plan.

To ensure the draft Plan reflects local needs and expectations, Council adopted a **targeted and inclusive approach** that included both online and in-person methods to reach a broad cross-section of the Shire.

Engagement Activities

Engagement methods included:

- An **online survey** hosted on the *Share Strathbogie* platform
- **“Meet the Local Laws Team”** pop-up sessions held in seven towns across the Shire including Strathbogie, Ruffy, Longwood, Euroa, Nagambie, Violet Town, and Avenel
- **Social media promotion** via Council's official channels
- **Direct outreach** to Community Action Groups and Business Associations, Vet clinics, stock agents and other key identified key stakeholders

These activities provided residents the opportunity to share their views on key topics such as responsible pet ownership, registration, cat curfews, desexing, nuisance behaviour, and off-leash areas.

Reach and Participation

- **Social Media**
 - Reach: **3,547 people**
 - Reactions: **22**
 - Comments: **8**
- **Share Strathbogie (online engagement platform)**
 - Page Views: **304**
 - Surveys Completed: **45**
- **In-Person Engagement**
 - Local Laws Team visited **7 towns** engaging with over **100 people**
 - Direct conversations and information shared with residents

Key Community Insights

From the **45 completed surveys** and in-person discussions, several key themes emerged:

- **Strong support** for initiatives that promote responsible pet ownership, and animal welfare
- A clear interest in **cat containment policies, desexing programs, and community education**
- Concerns raised about **roaming/stray cats** and **nuisance behaviour** from dogs (e.g., barking, lack of control in public spaces)

- Desire for improved **infrastructure** to support pet owners (e.g., off-leash areas, bins, signage)

This feedback provides a valuable foundation to guide the drafting of the Domestic Animal Management Plan, ensuring it balances community expectations, public safety, and animal welfare across Strathbogie Shire.

Background

Under the Domestic Animals Act 1994, Victorian councils are required to develop a Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) every four years. The plan must detail how Council will manage dogs and cats within the municipality, encourage responsible pet ownership, and ensure community safety and animal welfare.

The Strathbogie Shire Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026–2029 will address:

- Promotion of responsible pet ownership
- Support for registration, microchipping and desexing
- Management of dog and cat nuisance issues
- Education and enforcement approaches
- Management of unowned and semi-owned animals
- Provision of animal-related infrastructure and services

Who We Heard From

Throughout the engagement, participants had the opportunity to engage online through Share Strathbogie page. This is a snapshot of who we heard from:

Share Strathbogie Survey Contributions 45

Respondent Postcodes

Postcode	Percentage
3608	6.67%
3664	13.33%
3665	2.22%
3666	62.22%
3669	11.11%
No answer	4.44%

Age Breakdown

Age Range	Percentage
Under 18	0%
18-24	2.33%
25-44	28.89%
45-65	24.44%
Over 65	44.44%

Gender Breakdown

Answer Choices	Percent
Male	31.82%
Female	65.91%
Other	0%
Prefer not to say	2.27%

Pet Ownership

Types of Pets

Answer Choices	Percent
Yes, a dog	41.86%
Yes, a cat	4.65%
Yes, both a dog and a cat	4.65%
No	39.53%
Other	9.30%

Pet Registration Details

Answer Choices	Percent
Registered with Council	90.910%
Microchipped	95.45%
Desexed	86.36%
None of the above	0%

What We Heard

Pet Ownership is Promoted and Supported in the Community

Answer Choices	Percent
Very well	9.30%
Somewhat well	30.23%
Neutral	37.21%
Poorly	13.95%

What Will Help Improve Responsible Pet Ownership

Answer Choices	Percent
More community education	65.91%
Access to affordable desexing	65.91%
Increased enforcement of laws	50.00%
More off-leash areas	40.91%
Other	6.82%

How to Encourage More People to Register Their Pets

Answer Choices	Percent
Greater understanding of what pet registration supports	53.85%
Easier online registration process	48.72%
Community awareness campaigns	46.15%
Other	20.51%

How Do You Want to Receive Information

Answer Choices	Percent
Social media	67.44%
Council website	39.53%
Community events	27.91%
Local newspaper	62.79%
Other	23.26%

What Information Do You Want to Receive

Answer Choices	Percent
Why microchipping is important	65.85%
Why you need to register your pet	63.41%
Responsibilities of dog owners when walking/exercising their dog	80.49%
What 'effective control' of a dog means	70.73%
Why cat containment is important	73.17%
Why de-sexing is important	73.17%
How to renew or add a pet registration on-line	51.22%
Dog on-leash areas and the rules	73.17%
What to do if you can no longer care for your pet	53.66%
What to do if you find a lost pet	56.10%
What to do if you lose your pet	48.78%
Barking dogs in your neighbourhood	73.17%
Making a complaint about another pet or owner	53.66%
Other	7.32%

Support for Cat Curfews

Answer Choices	Percent
Introduce a Sunset to Sunrise Curfew where cats must be confined between 7.00pm – 7.00am	52.38%
Introduce 24hr Cat Curfew – Cats must be confined to their registered property at all times	33.33%
No Cat Curfew	7.14%
I don't have a response	7.14%

Cat Containment Support to Protect Environment and Wildlife

Answer Choices	Percent
Very supportive	76.19%
Somewhat supportive	9.52%
Neutral	4.76%
Not supportive	9.52%

Preferred Curfew Implementation Period

Answer Choices	Percent
3 months	26.83%
6 months	41.46%
12 months	12.20%
Other	19.51%

Nuisance Issues Identified

Answer Choices	Percent
Barking dogs	40.00%
Dogs off-leash where they shouldn't be	40.00%
Wandering/stray cats	62.50%
Dog attacks	17.50%
Other	15.00%

How Often Nuisance Animals Have had an Impact

Answer Choices	Percent
Frequently	39.02%
Occasionally	21.95%
Rarely	29.27%
Never	9.76%

Community Priorities

An overriding concern is the issue of barking dogs, which many residents identified as a persistent nuisance, particularly in areas such as Avenel and Euroa. This issue is often linked to dogs being left unattended or inadequately managed, with some respondents noting the impact on mental health and quality of life. Roaming animals, especially cats and dogs, were also frequently mentioned. Cats particularly were identified as a major threat to native wildlife, with strong support for the introduction of cat curfews and containment requirements.

There is a clear call for stricter enforcement of existing laws, including higher penalties for unregistered pets, repeat offenders, and those who fail to contain their animals. Some respondents advocated for a “three strikes” policy for roaming or unregistered pets, leading to rehoming or euthanasia. Others suggested that council officers should be more visible and proactive in the community, including conducting property checks for unregistered animals and enforcing fencing standards.

Affordability was another recurring theme. Many residents cited the cost of registration and desexing as a barrier to compliance. Suggestions included reducing or removing registration fees, offering financial support for desexing, and participating in national desexing programs. There was also a desire for more accessible registration options, particularly for elderly residents who may struggle with online systems.

The community expressed a strong interest in education and awareness initiatives. Respondents recommended more signage, community engagement, and educational materials—such as infographics or videos—on topics like responsible pet ownership, dealing with nuisance animals, and the benefits of registration and microchipping. Collaboration with veterinary professionals and local shelters was also encouraged.

A number of submissions, including one from Avenel Active, advocated for the creation of off-leash dog parks, particularly in Avenel, to support responsible dog ownership and provide safe spaces for exercise. This was linked to broader concerns about dogs wandering off-leash and the need for designated areas to reduce conflict and improve safety.

Other concerns included animal welfare, particularly for neglected or mistreated pets and livestock within town limits, and the need for quicker responses to complaints and cruelty reports. There was also support for limiting the number of animals per household and improving the council’s website to make information and services more accessible.

Conclusively the feedback is reflective of a community that values responsible pet ownership, effective enforcement, and practical support.

There is a strong appetite for improved education, infrastructure, and affordability measures, alongside tougher regulations for those who fail to meet their responsibilities. These insights should guide the development of the next Domestic Animal Management Plan to ensure it aligns with community expectations and promotes the wellbeing of both residents and animals.

Outcome and Next Steps

The feedback received during this initial consultation will directly inform the drafting of the Plan. Once the draft is complete, it will be presented to Councillors for endorsement and released for a second round of community consultation requesting submissions to the draft later in 2025.