



DOMESTIC ANIMAL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2026–2029

Engagement Summary
City of Darebin
September 2025

Conversation Co. proudly acknowledges and celebrates First Peoples of Australia and their ongoing strength in upholding some of the world's oldest living cultures. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout what is now Victoria – where we live, conduct pop-ups, and engage with our communities – and pay our respects to their Elders, past and present. Conversation Co. acknowledges First People's sovereignty has never been ceded. The strength, resilience and pride of First Peoples, their cultures, communities and identities continue to grow and thrive today despite the impact of colonisation and ongoing experiences of racism.

Executive Summary

Overview

Conversation Co was engaged by Darebin Council to analyse and report on community and stakeholder feedback and support the development of their Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2026-29.

The purpose of the engagement was to:

- Inform a new DAMP
- Understand the evidenced needs and understood needs of the community regarding the management of cats and dogs
- Understand the competing community priorities
- Identify potential solutions/activities for the DAMP
- Identify potential partners for delivery of DAMP actions

There are two engagement phases in this project. Each stage builds on the previous stage, both in the data collected and the intensity of engagement. The two engagement stages are:

- **Stage 1:** Interviews with key stakeholders (June - July 2025), broader community engagement (1 August - 31 August 2025)
- **Stage 2:** Test draft DAMP with the wider community (1 August - 31 August 2025)

This report summarises data collected from Stage 1 only. Public Exhibition of the DAMP in Stage 2 will be undertaken by the City of Darebin. The findings from this report will be used to inform the development of the Darebin Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2026-29.

Methodology

Engagement activities consisted of an online community survey, quick poll, 8 community place-based pops and 11 interviews with key stakeholders. The following table shows participation by engagement activity:

Table 1. Participation by Engagement Activity

Engagement Activity	No.	%
General online/hardcopy surveys	879	41
Quick poll activity	1136	52.9
Q&A session	0	0
Pop ups	114	5.3

Engagement Activity	No.	%
Stakeholder interviews	11	.5
Emails to Council	4	.2
Total	2144	99.9%

Key Findings

The Darebin community was engaged on a variety of issues surrounding domestic animal management. Key findings are summarised below.

Pet ownership

The statement with the highest selection of ‘strongly agree’ was - ‘*Pets give great comfort and support to many people in the community*’ (n=803, 92.5%). The statement with the lowest selections of ‘strongly agree’ was ‘*I/we talk to more people in our neighbourhood because I/we have a dog*’ (n=386, 44.8%).

Dog management

The key things participants noticed about dogs in the Darebin community were:

Dogs sitting next to their owners at cafes and dog poo being left on the ground.

The key things people saw ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ were:

Dogs chasing/attacking wildlife and grass or plants being trampled or dug up by dogs.

The majority of participants at the community pop ups knew that Darebin was an on-leash area except in designated areas with 65.9% selecting ‘yes’ and 34.1% selecting ‘no’.

Cat management

- The key things participants noticed ‘always’ or ‘very often’ about cats in the Darebin community were:
- Cats in the streets at night with many also noticing that cats were being kept inside houses during the day/night.
- Popup participants were asked if they knew that Darebin has a 7pm to 7am cat curfew. There were 56 participants who responded, with the majority selecting ‘yes’ (n=31, 57.1%).
- Survey participants were asked whether they had noticed any changes since the introduction of the cat curfew in 2021. A total of 872 participants responded to this question, with the majority of participants selecting ‘No’ (n=474, 54.4%) followed by ‘I didn’t know about the curfew’ (n=214, 24.5%) and ‘Yes’ (n=184, 21.1%).
- Survey participants were then asked if they would support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew. The majority of participants supported introducing a cat curfew (n=437, 70%) with a total of 332 (30%) in opposition. Figure 9. shows this breakdown.

Desexing

- Survey participants were asked 'Do you support a mandatory desexing requirement for dogs and cats (where the owner is NOT a registered breeder)?' The majority of participants 'strongly support' mandatory desexing (n=528, 63.7%) followed by 'Support' (n=189, 22.8%). A total of 59 (7.1%) 'Somewhat opposed' and 'Strongly opposed' (n=36, 4.3%).

Preferences for key services

Communications:

The top topics participants wished council to communicate and promote were:

- Responsibilities of dog owners when walking/exercising their dog (n=509)
- Information regarding cat confinement/cat curfew (n=493)
- What 'effective control' of a dog means (n=478)
- Why desexing is important (n=401)

Animal management services for pet owners

The top three themes in free text responses were

- Infrastructure and maintenance (n=148)
- Communications and education about services (n=129)
- Enforcement (n=123)

Animal management services for general community

The top three themes in free text responses were

- Enforcement (n=153)
- Infrastructure and maintenance (n=116)
- Communications and education about services (n=109)

Facilities

Survey participants were asked if they had visited the Council's animal pound (wat djerring Animal Facility). The majority of participants selected 'No' (n=547, 63.4%) followed by 'I didn't know about the wat djerring Animal Facility' (n=293, 34%), 'Yes, to collect a lost pet' (n=22, 2.5%) and 'Yes to adopt a pet' (n=1, 0.1%).

Community events

When asked if participants would like Council to host a community event to provide microchipping, education and promote local pet business, participants preferred 'smaller neighbourhood-based pet events throughout the year' (n=498, 58.1%), followed by 'No pet events at all - prefer rates/pet registration be spent on other things' (n=219, 25.6%) and 'Large annual pet event - in same place and same time of year' (n=140, 16.3%).

Areas to patrol

Key areas for patrol outline by participants were:

- Parks and open space (n=175)
- Off-leash dog areas (n=125)

- Environmentally sensitive areas: wetlands, wildlife corridors, lakes parklands (n=83)
- Creeks and trails (n=53)
- Local residential streets and surrounds (n=52)
- Near children's playgrounds, schools (n=44)
- Not Council's responsibility/ invest elsewhere (n=24)
- All areas (n=13)

Recommendations

Based on the feedback in this report, it is recommended that the City of Darebin:

- Analyse best practice programs and services that address the feedback outlined by the community.
- Explore opportunities to work with the key stakeholders to address identified issues.
- Identify partnership opportunities with surrounding Council's, Merri-bek City Council and City of Whittlesea.
- Keep the general community and key stakeholders updated in the development of the DAMP and their respective actions.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project background

Conversation Co was engaged by the Darebin Council to analyse and report on community and stakeholder feedback and support the development of their Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2026-29.

1.2 Engagement Purpose and scope

The purpose of the engagement was to:

- Inform a new DAMP
- Understand the evidenced needs and understood needs of the community regarding the management of dogs and cats
- Understand the competing community priorities
- Identify potential solutions/activities for the DAMP
- Identify potential partners for delivery of DAMP actions

There are two engagement phases in this project. Each stage builds on the previous stage, both in the data collected and the intensity of engagement. The two engagement stages are:

- **Stage 1:** Interviews with key stakeholders (June - July 2025), Broader community engagement (1 August - 31 August 2025)
- **Stage 2:** Test draft DAMP with the wider community (1 August - 31 August 2025)

This report summarises data collected from Stage 1 only. Public Exhibition of the DAMP in Stage 2 will be undertaken by the City of Darebin. The findings from this report will be used to inform the development of the Darebin Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2026-29.

2.Methodology

2.1 Engagement objectives:

- Gather data and high-level community themes to inform the development of the DAMP.
- Raise awareness within the community of domestic animal management and the role of the DAMP.
- Gather expert and key stakeholder feedback to inform the development of the DAMPs.
- Explore potential partnership opportunities to help deliver DAMP objectives.

Key engagement questions

Participants were asked their connection to the project and surveyed on key topics related to animal management including:

Broad community

- Do you support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew within the City of Darebin.
- Have you noticed any changes in your neighbourhood since the night-time cat curfew was introduced?
- Do you support a mandatory desexing requirement for cats and dogs?
- What areas/parks should be priorities for Council officers to patrol and why?
- Priorities for Council services
- Priorities for actions on pet ownership: microchipping, registration, responsible pet ownership, cat containment, desexing, lost pets, effective control
- How can Council improve its animal management services for pet owners and general community members?
- Visitation to animal pound (wat djerring Animal Facility)
- Community events preference

Targeted stakeholders:

- In your experience, what are the main animal management issues of concern for dogs and cats?
- What services or programs could Council provide to promote responsible pet ownership, minimise dog attacks, address overpopulation of animals and support registration?
- Are there any partnership opportunities for animal management programs or services?

A full list of engagement questions are available in Appendix 1 and 2.

2.2 Engagement methods

Following Council endorsement of the engagement program, community engagement was conducted from 1 August - 31 August 2025. Engagement activities consisted of online surveys, quick poll, community pop ups and stakeholder interviews.

Table 2: Engagement Activities

Activity	Description	Dates
Online survey, quick poll activity and project information <i>via Your Say Darebin</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants responded to a series of questions, via an online survey and/or answered a quick poll question.	August 2025
Online Q&A session	<ul style="list-style-type: none">An opportunity for community members to ask questions about the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029	27 August 5pm-5.30pm
Key stakeholder interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Phone interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, who were asked 10 questions about domestic animal management from the perspective of their organisation.An interview with the Darebin Domestic Animal Management Reference Group was also undertaken by Council officers.	June to July 2025

Activity	Description	Dates
Community pop up sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community pop-ups were held across the municipality, at different locations and times. Participants responded to a series of questions, in line with the online survey questions by engaging with posters at pop-up events. 	Friday 8 August Wednesday 13 August Wednesday 20 August Thursday 21 August Friday 22 August Monday 25 August Wednesday 27 August Thursday 28 August
Direct feedback to Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members were able to email the project team to provide feedback on the DAMP 	1 August - 31 August

Survey

A survey was provided online and promoted via the project's webpage, and also made available in hard copy format. The survey focused on the key engagement questions outlined above. Respondents were also asked to provide demographic information including the year they were born, postcode, household type, gender, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, languages spoken at home, disability status, and their connection to Darebin. For the Community Survey questionnaire, refer to Appendix 1.

Quick poll question

Participants on the Darebin Your Say page were able to respond to the question 'How did your pet come into your life?' with the ability to select one of three responses; 'bought from a breeder', 'adopted from a shelter' or 'took in a stray'.

Online Q&A Session

The online Q&A session was an opportunity for community members to ask questions about the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029, no community members attended this event.

Community Pop-ups

Eight place-based community pop-ups were held across the municipality, at different locations and times. The following locations were chosen because of their community appeal:

- Friday 8 August - Pet Barn Northcote 3pm - 5pm
- Wednesday 13 August - Edwardes Lake Dog Park - 2.30pm - 4pm
- Wednesday 20 August - Bundoora Park - 2.30pm - 4pm
- Thursday 21 August - Reservoir Neighbourhood House - 10am - 11.30am
- Friday 22 August - Preston Market - 11am - 1pm
- Monday 25 August - Fairfield Library - 11am - 12.30pm
- Wednesday 27 August - East Preston Community Centre - 10.30am - 12pm
- Thursday 28 August - Degani's Northcote (Opposite All Nations Park) - 3.00pm - 4.30pm

Participants responded to a series of questions, in line with the survey questions either through an online intercept or by engaging with posters and a select a bucket at pop-up events. For the Community Survey questionnaire, refer to Appendix 1.

Interviews with Key Stakeholders

10 phone interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, who were asked 10 questions about cat and dog management from the perspective of their organisation. These one-hour interviews sought to gather expertise from key organisations across Merri-Bek, Darebin and Whittlesea Councils. The interviewees were selected by Councils in collaboration and were based on a detailed stakeholder analysis that was completed as part of the engagement plan.

Phone interviews were conducted with the following key stakeholders:

- Rescue Rehabilitate Release
- Reservoir Vet Clinic
- RSPCA Victoria - Inspectorate
- Petbarn Preston
- Cat Protection Society
- Second Chance Animal Rescue
- Bundoora Veterinary Clinic and Hospital
- Friends of Merri Creek
- Pascoe Vale Veterinary Clinic
- Project Underdog Rescue

An interview with the Darebin Domestic Animal Management Reference Group was undertaken by Darebin Council officers and their feedback is included below in section 4.6. This group provides strategic advice and recommendations to Council in relation to the implementation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Image 1: Your Say Darebin DAMP Project Page

Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-29

We are developing a new DAMP to manage domestic animals, including dogs and cats. From 1 to 31 August 2025 you can help us shape this new plan by sharing your feedback.

[+ Follow](#)

[Home](#) / Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-29

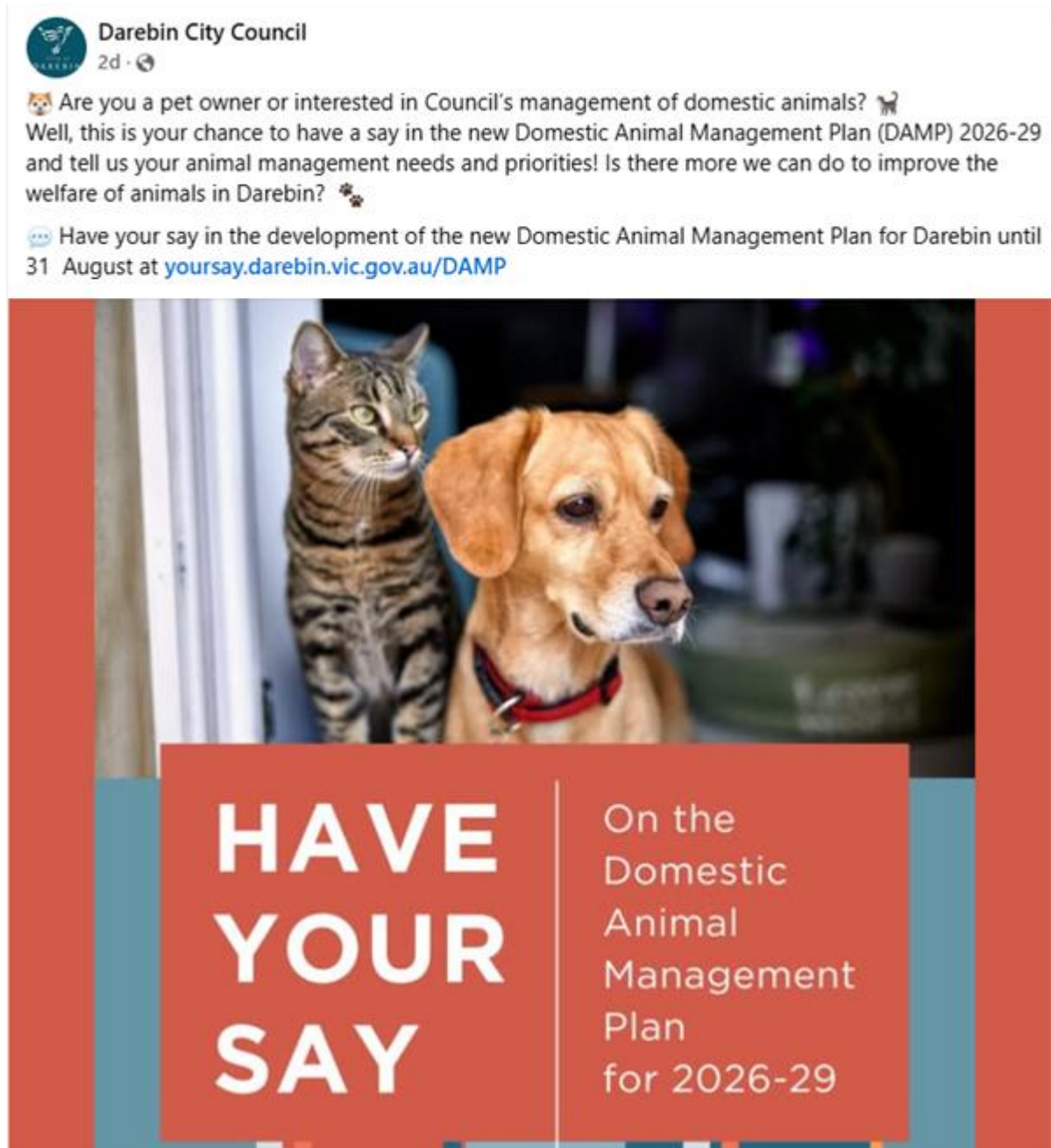
Source: [Your Say Darebin](#)

2.3 Communications strategies

Community engagement activities were supported by a communication campaign undertaken by the Darebin Council. The campaign had multiple touch points including the Council's website, social media, e-newsletters, posters and internal communications.

- Project page: The project page encouraged readers to provide feedback on the plan through an online survey. It also advertised the details for eight in-person community consultation pop-up events and an online Q&A session. No community members attend the Q&A session.
- Social media: Four posts were made on the Council's Facebook and Instagram pages, inviting feedback for the development of the plan.

Image 2: City of Darebin's DAMP social media content



Source: [Darebin City Council Facebook Post](#)

3. Who Participated?

Demographic data such as gender, age, and place of residency was obtained in the online survey. It must be noted that only members of the online portal via Your Say Darebin had their demographic data collected, and the only mandatory selection was postcode.

3.1 Participation by engagement activity

Table 3 shows a summary of the engagement activities by involvement. A total of 2144 participants were involved in the broad engagement. It is important to note some

participants may have participated in more than one activity, for example they may have completed an online survey and also attended a community pop-up.

Table 3. Participation by Engagement Activity

Engagement Activity	No.	%
General online/hardcopy surveys	879	41
Quick poll activity	1136	52.9
Q&A session	0	0
Pop ups	114	5.3
Stakeholder interviews	11	.5
Email submissions to Council	4	.2
Total	2144	99.9%

Throughout this report, the abbreviation “n=” is used to indicate the number of participants or responses. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place and as such may be subject to rounding errors (sum to 99.9% or 100.1%).

3.2 Characteristics of participants

The demographic characteristics of engagement participants are shown in Table 4. Percentages shown in Table 4 are of all responses received (excludes participants who did not provide this information). Demographic information was only collected in the online survey, other demographic questions were asked and this data can be provided upon request.

Table 4. Characteristics of participants

Selected characteristics	No.*	%	2021 Census %
Gender			
Woman	570	67%	51.4%
Man	195	23%	48.6%
Non-binary	24	3%	-
Prefer not to say	62	7.2%	-
Other	3	0.3%	-
Total respondents	854	100%	100%

Selected characteristics	No.*	%	2021 Census %
Age Group			
Under 17	0	0%	21.5%
18-24	7	0.9%	8.2%
25-34	121	15.1%	19.2%
35-49	340	42.3%	23%
50-59	166	20.7%	12.4%
60-69	108	13.4%	8.6%
70-84	54	6.7%	8.2%
85+	7	0.9%	2.7%
Total respondents	803	100%	100%
Communities of interest			
A person experiencing homelessness (responses)	1	0.1%	0.6%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders (responses)	8	1%	1%
Identify as someone with a disability	127	15%	6.6%
Prefer not to say	97	11.4%	-
Born in Australia	652	76.8%	64.4%
Born overseas	137	16.1%	31.4%
Prefer not to say	60	7.1%	-

Data sources: Your Say Darebin Survey

Source for 2021 Census data is

Disability approximated by Need for Assistance variable

This engagement program had greater representation from women than other genders (n=570, 67%), which aligns with patterns often seen in community engagement activities. Representation of men was lower than the population proportion (n=195, 23% compared to 48.6% in the Census), while a small proportion of participants identified as gender diverse (n=24, 3%), selected other (n=3, 0.3%) or preferred not to say (n=62, 7.2%).

Young adults aged 18–24 were underrepresented (n=7, 0.9%) in comparison to their makeup of the population (8.2%). The engagement had an over-representation among adults aged 35–49 years (n=340, 42.3%) compared to the Census (23%), as well as the age group 50–59 years (n=166, 20.7% compared to 12.4% in Census data). Again, this reflects a fairly typical pattern in community engagement activities.

Among participants who responded to the communities of interest question, participants who identified as someone with a disability (visible or invisible) were over-represented (n=127, 15%) compared to Census data (6.6%). Participants who were born overseas (n=137, 16.1%) were under-represented compared to Census data (31.4%).

Participants were also asked the open-ended questions - *‘Do you speak a language other than English at home?’* and *‘The language I speak at home is:’* There were a total of 73 (8.57%) responses to these questions. The top community languages other than English participants spoke were:

- Greek (17)
- Italian (13)
- Dutch (3)

3.3 Residential location

Community survey participants were asked to provide their residential location. There were a total of 879 responses to this question, with the majority of participants residing in the Darebin municipality. Table 5. shows the breakdown of participation by residential location.

Table 5. Participation by residential location

Residential location	No.*	%
Reservoir	229	26
Northcote	205	23
Preston	197	22
Thornbury	105	12
Alphington/Fairfield	99	11
Bundoora/Kingsbury	27	3
Macleod	14	1.5
Other	3	0.5
Total	879	100%

Source: Your Say Darbein Survey

A total of 3 participants lived in locations outside our Darebin. Locations included:

- Brunswick West (n= 1)
- Warrandyte (n=1)
- Coburg (n=1)

As seen in Table 5., the top suburbs were Reservoir (n=229, 26%), Northcote (n=205, 23%) and Preston (n=197, 22%). Alphington/Fairfield (n=99, 11%) and Bundoora/Kingsbury (n=27, 3%) had lower participation, however, this reflects the fact that only a small part of these suburbs are in Darebin as they border with other municipalities.

3.4 Connection to the project

Participants were asked about their connection to Darebin. There were a total of 876 respondents to this question with the following connections. Their responses are presented in descending order:

- 'I live' (n=861)
- 'I work' (n=165)
- 'I visit' (n=34)
- 'I own a business' (n=32)
- 'I study' (n= 18)
- 'I prefer not to say' (n=4)
- 'Other' (n=1)

3.4.1 Interest in the project

Participants were asked about their interest in this topic and able to select all that apply from a list of options. The most common topic of interest in the project was community members who use local parks, reserves and playgrounds (n=617) followed by dog owners (n=577) cat owners (n=361). Table 6. shows the breakdown of interest in the project.

Table 6. Participants' interest in the project

Residential location	No.
Use local parks, reserves or playgrounds	617
Dog owner	577
Cat owner	361
Member of a wildlife/environmental group	71
Sportsclub member/player/volunteer	79
Member of animal advocacy/rescue group	36
Member of a dog club	21
Other	7

Residential location	No.
Veterinarian/Vet Nurse	5
Business operator - animal behaviourist/trainer/walker	4
Registered dog or cat breeder	3
Registered Domestic Animal Business	3

Source: Your Say Darebin Survey

‘Use local parks, reserves or playgrounds’ (n=617) was the most selected interest in the project. ‘Dog owner’ (n=577) was next, followed by ‘cat owner’ (n=361). As multiple interests could be selected, it could be assumed that many of the selections of ‘use local parks, reserves or playgrounds’ were by participants who were also dog/cat owners.

4. Findings

The Darebin community was engaged on a variety of issues surrounding cat and dog management. Findings for community members across engagement activities are reported by theme in the following sections:

- 4.1 Pet ownership
- 4.2 Cat management
- 4.3 Dog management
- 4.4 Priorities for domestic animal management and Council services

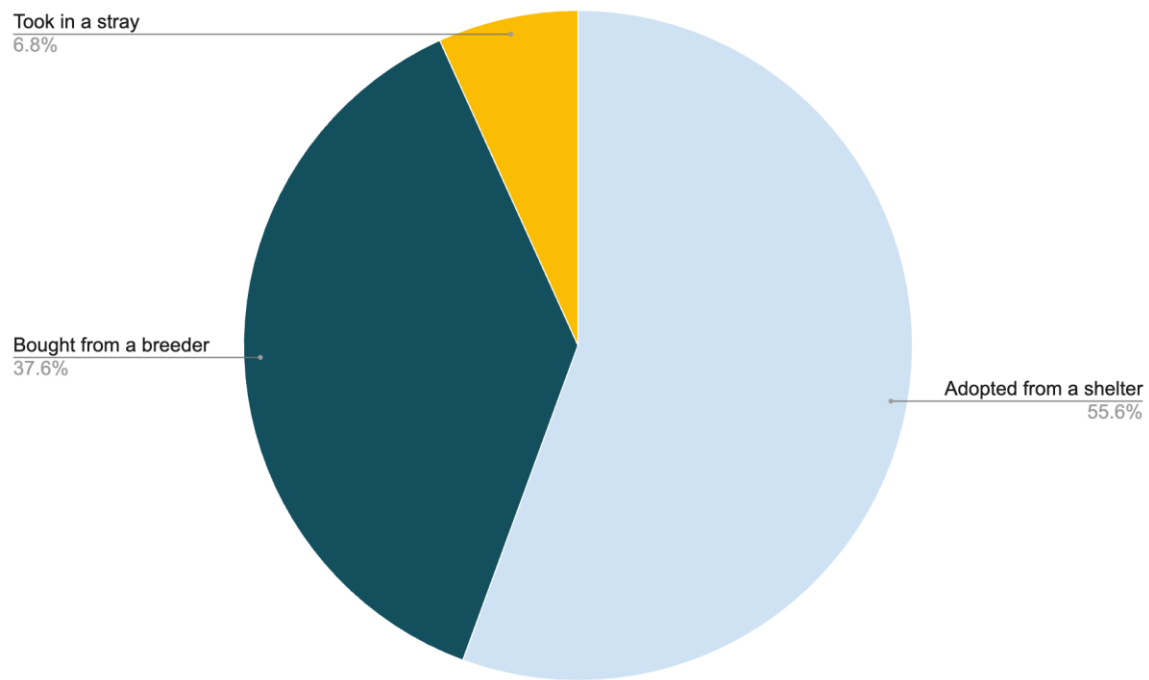
Findings from key stakeholders and submissions to Council have been reported separately in sections:

- 4.5 Submissions to Council
- 4.6 Key stakeholder interviews

4.1 Pet ownership

Darebin hosted a Quick Poll via the Your Say Darebin website. Participants could answer the following question as a stand-alone activity (without doing the entire survey): *‘How did your pet come into your life?’* There were 1,035 participants who did the quick poll, with following graph showing how they responded to this question:

Figure 1. How did your pet come into your life?

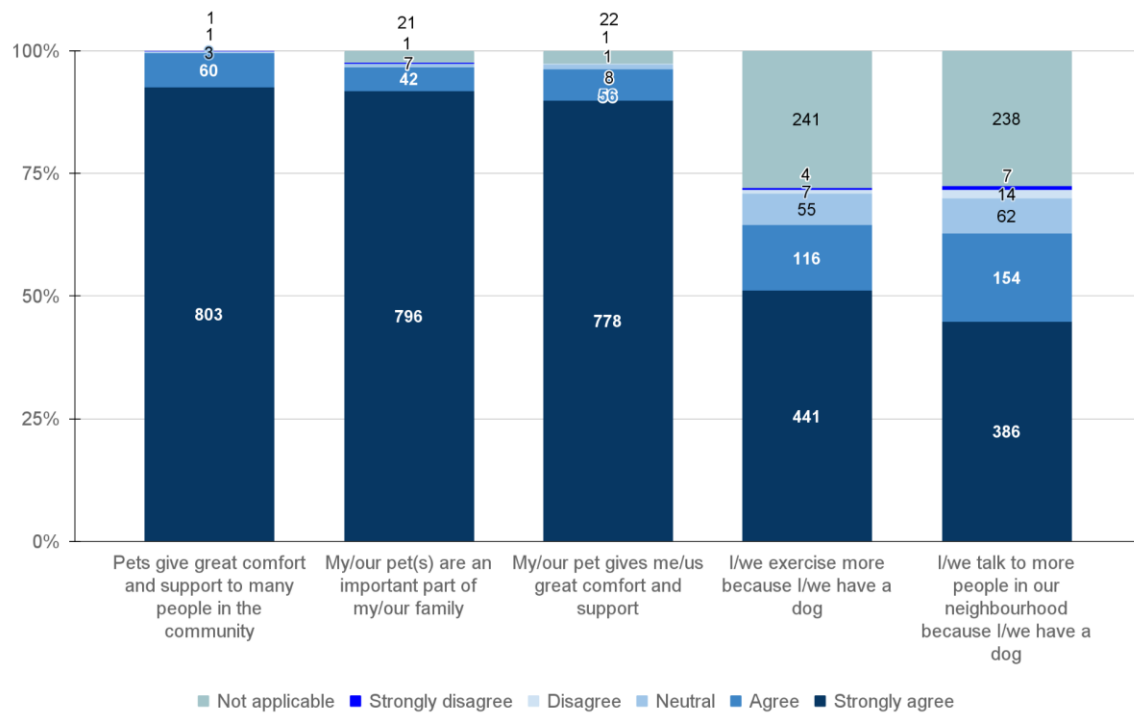


Data source: Your Say Darebin Quick Poll

As seen in Figure 1., the majority of participants selected 'adopted from a shelter' (n=631, 55.6%).

The benefits of pet ownership for people's health and wellbeing are well established. Whilst Domestic Animal Management Plans are concerned primarily with the management of dogs and cats within the community, it is important to note that pet ownership has a range of positive outcomes for the ongoing physical and mental health of community members. Survey participants were asked the following question - '*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?*' Figure 2. is a breakdown of how they responded.

Figure 2. Community attitudes to pets



Data source: Your Say Darebin Survey

As seen in the above graph, the statement with the highest selection of ‘strongly agree’ was - ‘*Pets give great comfort and support to many people in the community*’ (n=803, 92.5%). The statement with the lowest selections of ‘strongly agree’ was ‘*I/we talk to more people in our neighbourhood because I/we have a dog*’ (n=386, 44.8%). This could show a general trend of participants’ feelings towards pets as providing more of an emotional support rather than functional purpose for exercise and socialising.

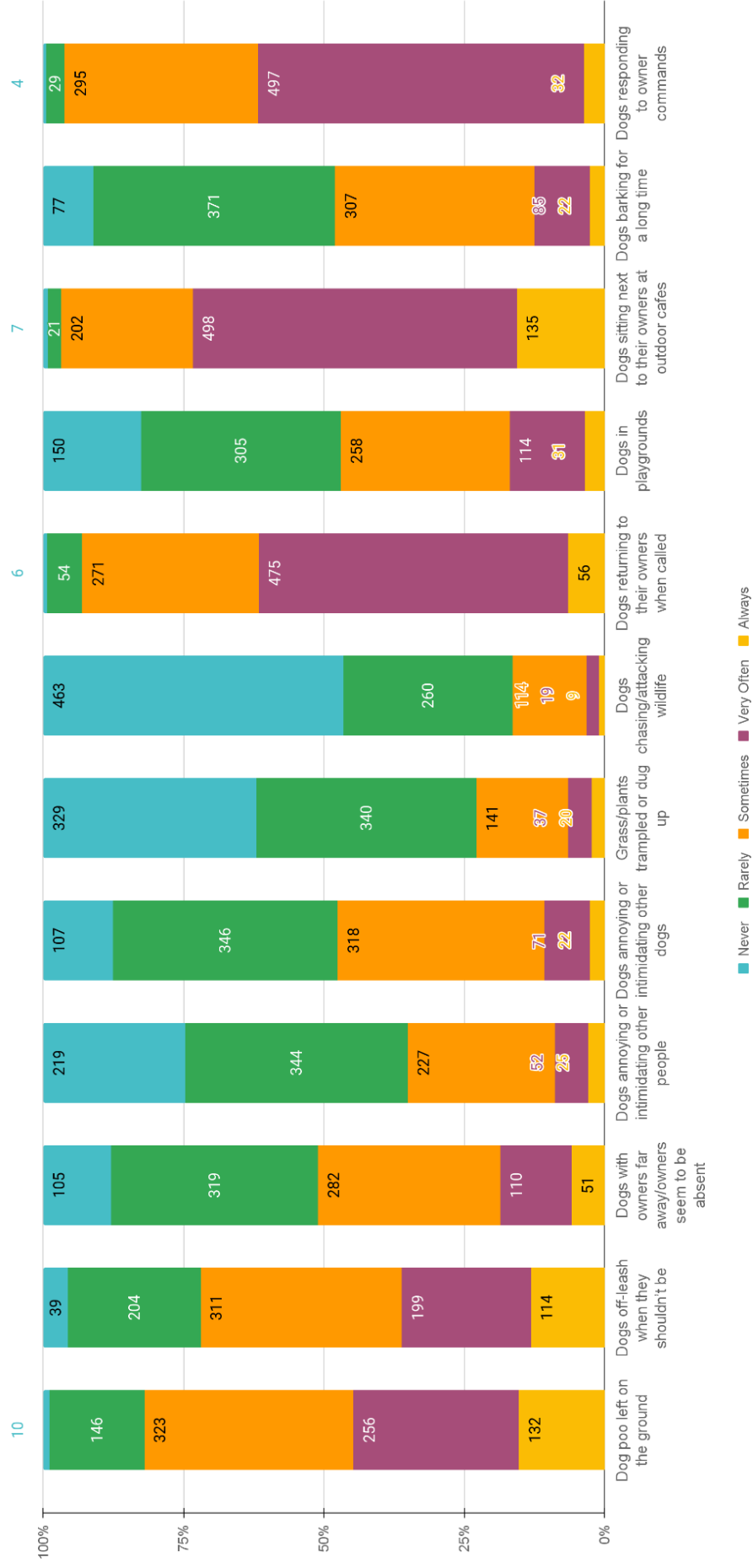
4.2 Dog management

The following section presents the findings specifically surrounding dogs in Darebin.

4.2.1 Dogs in the community

Survey participants were asked the question; ‘*In the last year, have you noticed any of the following things about dogs when out and about in your local area?*’ Survey participants were asked to indicate the level of frequency for each item on a list provided, as shown in Figure 3. (next page).

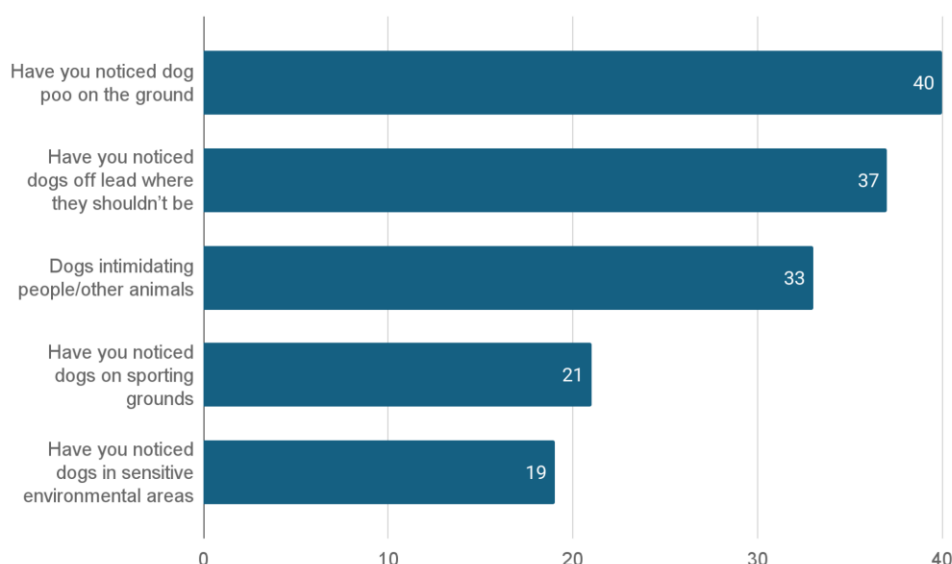
Figure 3. Community attitudes to dogs (survey)



As seen in Figure 3. displayed on the previous page, '*Dogs sitting next to their owners at outdoor cafes*' had the largest total of 'always' (n=135, 15.6%) and 'very often' (n=498, 57.71%). The statement with the largest number of selections of 'never' (n=463, 53.5%) and lowest number of selections for 'always' (n=9, 1.04%) was - '*Dogs chasing/attacking wildlife*'. Overall, the results showed more 'always' and 'very often' selections for positive statements rather than negative statements about dog and dog owner behaviour.

Pop-up participants were asked to reflect on common things about dogs they have noticed in the community. Participants could select from a range of options. '*Have you noticed dog poo on the ground?*' had the highest number of selections (n=40). This was followed closely by the statement '*Have you noticed dogs off lead where they shouldn't be?*' (n=37). Figure 4. below, demonstrates this breakdown.

Figure 4. Community attitudes to dogs (pop-ups)

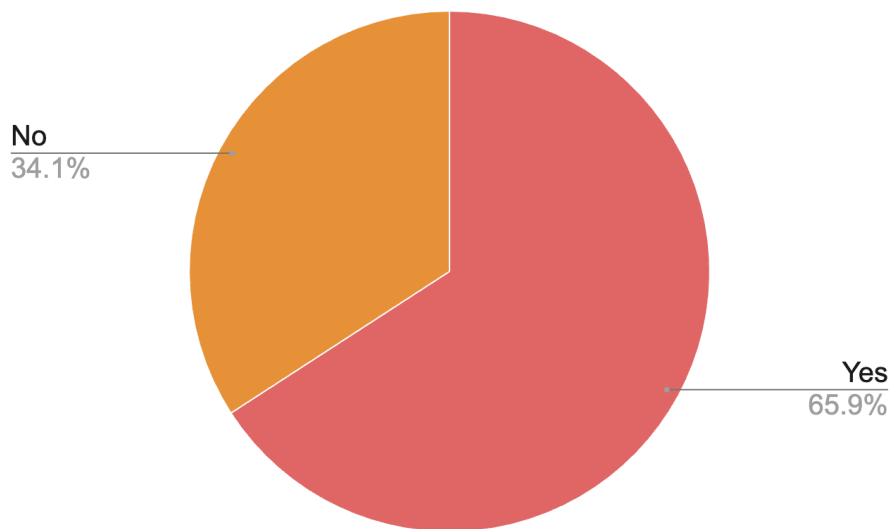


Data source: Community Pop-ups

4.2.2 Dogs off leash

Pop-up participants were asked the following 'yes/no' question - '*Did you know that Darebin is an on-leash area (except in designated off-leash parks)?*' There were a total of 41 participants who responded to the question, with the majority of participants selecting 'yes' (n=27, 65.9%). Figure 5. (below) shows the data as a pie graph.

Figure 5. Did you know that Darebin is an on-leash area (except in designated off-leash parks)?



Data source: Community Pop-ups

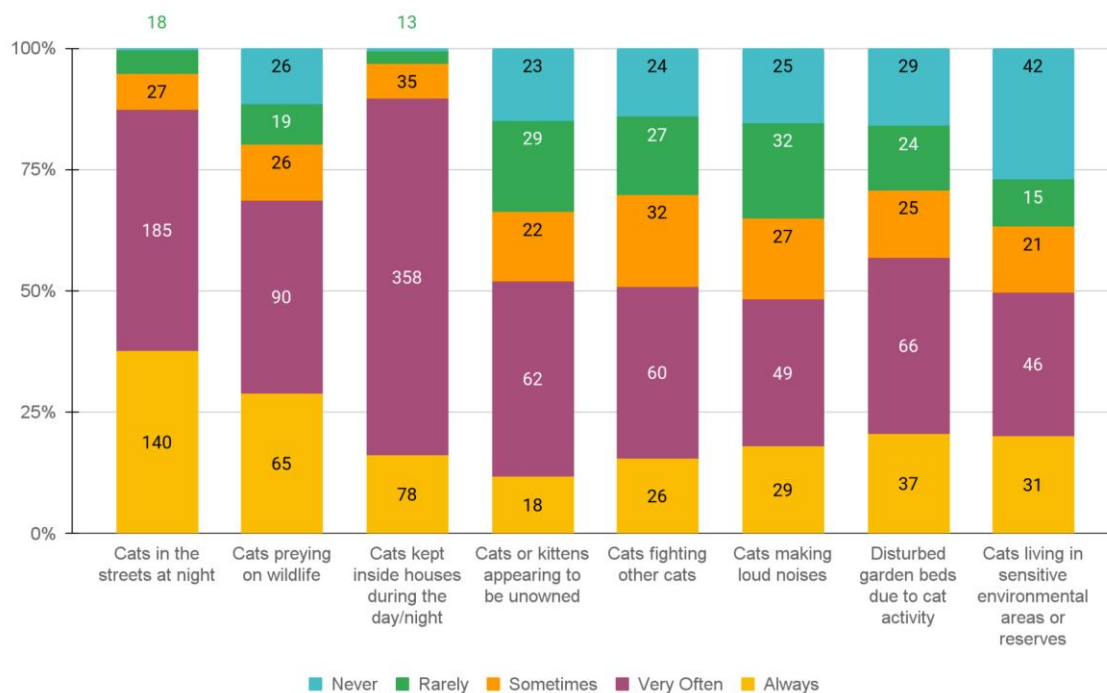
4.3 Cat management

The following section presents findings across engagement activities about cat management. Findings are presented by engagement activity.

4.3.1 Cats in the community

Survey participants were asked to respond to a range of statements with the overall question - *'In the last year, have you noticed any of the following things about cats when out and about in your local area?'* Figure 6. shows a breakdown of how participants responded.

Figure 6. Cats in the community

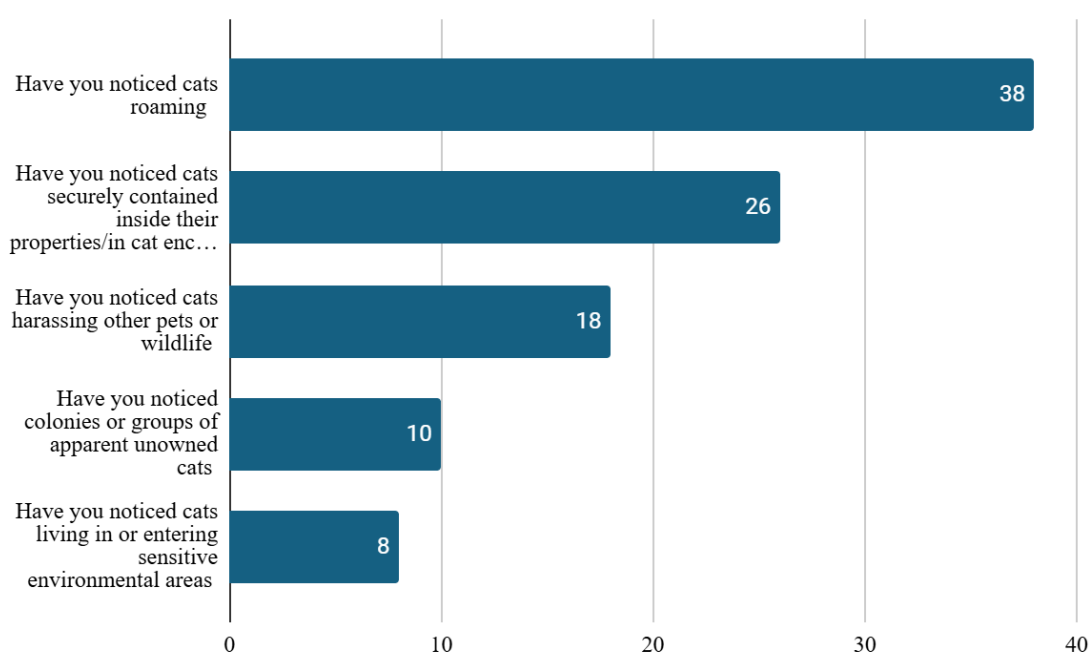


Data source: Your Say Darebin Survey

As seen in Figure 6., the statement with the largest number of participants' who selected 'always' (n=140, 16.2%) and the second highest number of 'very often' (n=185, 21.39%) was '*cats in the street at night*'. The statement with the second highest number of 'always' selections (n=78, 9.2%) and highest number of 'very often' (n=358, 42.2%) was '*cats kept inside houses during the day/night*'. While these results seem contradictory, it could also show that participants notice many people in their community adhering to the cat curfew and simultaneously many who do not, or a stray cat population.

Pop-up participants were asked to indicate if they agreed with a range of statements on cats. There were a total of 100 responses to this question. Figure 7. (below) shows how participants responded.

Figure 7. Community attitude towards cats



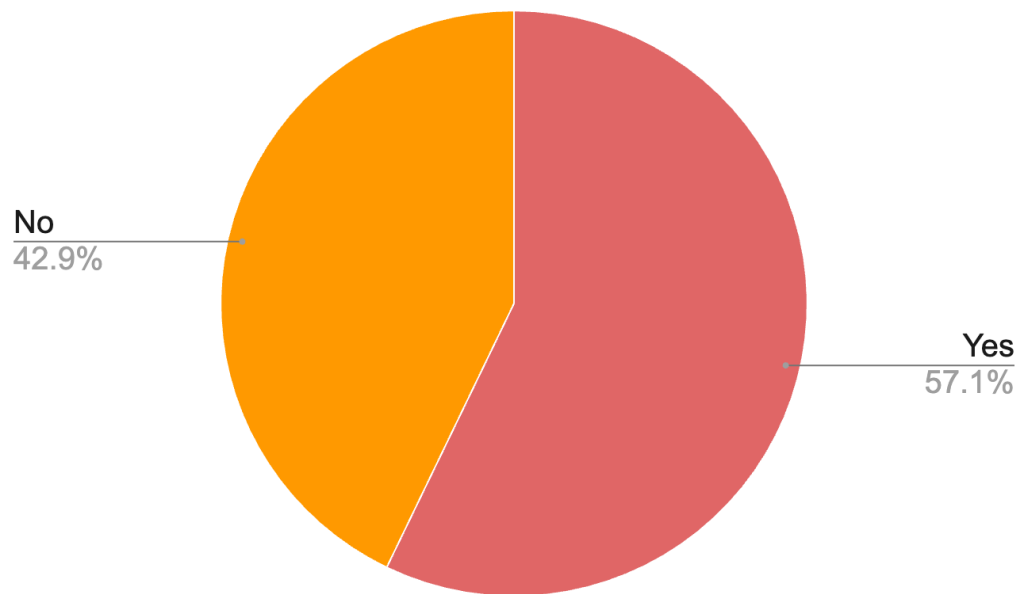
Data source: Community Pop-ups

As seen in Figure 7. '*Have you noticed cats roaming*' (n=38) had the highest number of selections. '*Have you noticed colonies or groups of apparent unowned cats*' (n=10) had the lowest number of selections.

4.3.2 Cat curfews

Pop-up participants were asked if they knew that Darebin has a 7pm to 7am cat curfew. There were 56 participants who responded, with the majority selecting 'yes' (n=31, 57.1%). Figure 8. presents the responses broken down as a pie graph.

Figure 8. Did you know that Darebin has a 7pm-7am cat curfew?



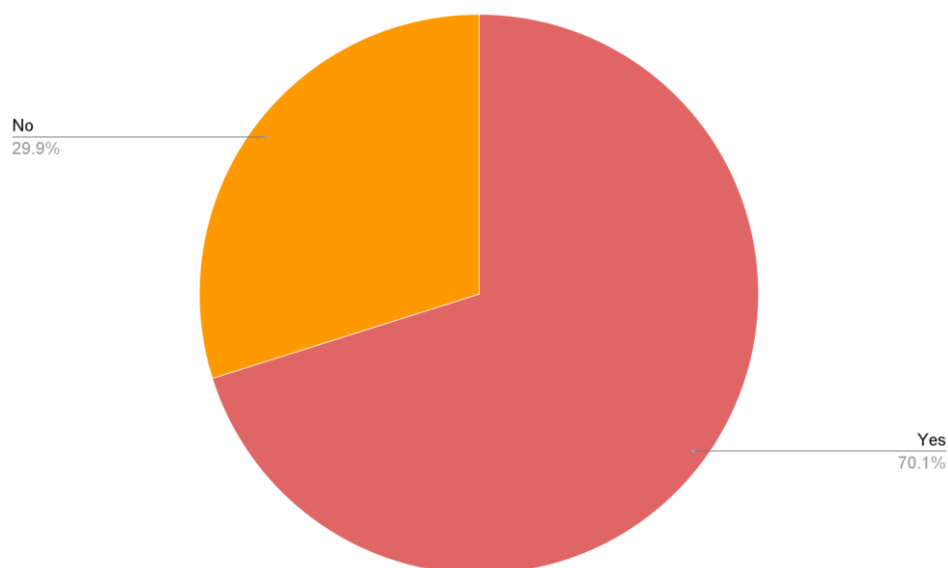
Data source: Community Pop-ups

Changes since introduction of cat curfew

Survey participants were asked ‘*Have you noticed any changes in your neighbourhood since the night-time cat curfew was introduced in 2021?*’ A total of 872 participants responded to this question, with the majority of participants selecting ‘No’ (n=474, 54.4%) followed by ‘I didn’t know about the curfew’ (n=214, 24.5%) and ‘Yes’ (n=184, 21.1%).

Survey participants were then asked if they would support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew. The majority of participants supported introducing a cat curfew (n=437, 70%) with a total of 332 (30%) in opposition. Figure 9. shows this breakdown.

Figure 9. Level of support for the introduction of 24-hour cat curfew



Data source: Your Say Darebin Survey

A total of 103 provided 'other' comments in response to this question. Comments were themed using a coding framework shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Introducing a 24-hour cat curfew (Other responses)

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
Cruelty or Harm to Cats (n=12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Absolutely not, this is cruel!!</i> • <i>No, because some cats get anxious such as my cat who used to be a stray.</i> • <i>It troubles me that cats now live in cages because they're not to roam. It is abnormal and therefore not healthy for a cat</i>
Support with Conditions (n=10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I would support a 24-hour cat curfew in Darebin, provided it's rolled out in a community-friendly, staged, and supportive way.</i> • <i>Yes but, but with multiple warnings before fines are issued.</i> • <i>Support only with new owners moving</i>
Too Hard to Enforce (n=8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Only if it could be implemented and enforced!</i> • <i>This would be hard to enforce and could lead to unintended consequences.</i> • <i>No, the curfew is currently unenforceable and while I am a strong supporter of indoor cats, I do not know how this would be enforced.</i>
Support for Wildlife Protection (n=7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Absolutely yes - As a cat lover but animal lover in general this has become a necessity to protect native wildlife.</i> • <i>Important for our wildlife but unfortunately some neighbours don't know about the curfew awareness or don't care.</i> • <i>I support protection of natural wildlife</i>
Alternative Solutions Suggested (n=7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do not put a 24hour cat curfew if they do not work. Instead put a Community Cat Program in place.</i> • <i>Yes, but you need to do mandatory desexing as well.</i> • <i>Desexing mandates seems more reasonable to me.</i>
Lack of clarity/confusion (n=6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What's a 24 hour cat curfew?</i> • <i>Not sure what that means</i> • <i>I'm not sure.</i>
Personal Experience / Already Compliant (n=6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My cat is elderly and rarely leaves the house anyway.</i> • <i>I walk my cat on a lead in my backyard.</i> • <i>I have leash trained my cat and take her for walks twice daily.</i>

Opposition to Government Overreach (n=6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Absolutely not - I would literally consider leaving the area if so.</i> • <i>100% emphatic NO, dusk until dawn is great, and meets the purpose of the curfew.</i> • <i>Absolutely not. This is huge overreach by council to even suggest.</i>
Equity and Access Concerns (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Phased intro for people who rent and can't build cat enclosures.</i> • <i>People need easy alternatives (like leash walking your cat) still available.</i> • <i>Also consider subsidising the installation of cat runs.</i>
Uncertain / Need More Info (n=4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not sure.</i> • <i>I'm not sure as I'm not a cat owner.</i> • <i>I don't know enough about the risks and benefits to have an opinion.</i>

Source: Your Say Darebin Survey

The most common 'other' response was opposition to cat curfew because of concern it could harm cats' wellbeing, especially those used to being outdoors. The second most common response was participants who supported it with caveats, including subsidies and support to access enclosures, education, or exemptions. Others noted that curfews are hard to implement and monitor, especially with current resourcing and compliance challenges. Others supported full or partial curfews to protect native wildlife from cat predation.

Council facilitators at pop-ups also reflected that general conversations raised the common themes:

- Strongly opposed to 24-hour cat curfew (n=3)
- Support 7pm-7am curfew (n= 3)
- Parasite information - to convey the importance for indoor cats(n=1)
- Don't actually know what Council is doing about cats (n=1)
- Cat curfew is pointless if not enforced (n=1)
- Supportive of cat curfew (n=1)

4.4 Priorities for domestic animal management and Council services

The following section is an analysis of engagement findings on community priorities for domestic animal management and Council services.

4.4.1 Registration

Survey participants were asked the following question; '*Why do you think people do not register their dog or cat?*' and were able to select from a list of options. There were a total of 872 responses to this question. The majority of participants selected; 'They might not know' (n=248, 50.4%), closely followed by 'I'm not sure/don't know' (n=248, 47.8%). Only 9 respondents selected that people might choose not to as pets a 'Too young to be registered' (1.8%).

A total of 380 participants provided an 'other' response to this question. Feedback has been summarised in the table below. It is important to note some comments mentioned more than one theme and were coded accordingly.

Table 7: Other reasons why people don't register their cat or dog

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
Cost / Financial Barriers (n=245)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Too expensive for little/no personal benefit.</i> • <i>Why should they? We already pay large vet bills and health insurance.</i> • <i>Registration costs are expensive now and many people are struggling with costs of living.</i>
Laziness / Apathy (n=59)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can't be bothered or don't want to spend the money</i> • <i>People are lazy or selfish.</i> • <i>Lazy & they can deny ownership so avoid fines.</i>
Don't see the value (n=54)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pointless.</i> • <i>Registration for indoor cats gives no benefit.</i> • <i>Waste of money for no return benefit.</i>
Irresponsible Ownership (n=52)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Owners who neglect responsibilities or ignore laws</i> • <i>Irresponsible – same sort of people don't pick up poo.</i> • <i>People don't care about their responsibilities to society.</i> • <i>They shouldn't be allowed to own a pet.</i>
Admin or System Barriers (n=47)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The registration process is unclear and the website form is rarely functional.</i> • <i>Difficult to navigate registration portal.</i> • <i>Only get to pay full fee even if a pet is registered late in the year.</i>
Lack of awareness (n=38)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Maybe they don't know they have to register their pet.</i> • <i>They don't understand the reason behind registration.</i> • <i>Unaware of risks to pets with no registration.</i>
Avoiding Detection (n=29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Desire more (in secret) than council allows.</i> • <i>Conceal animals from landlords, conceal illegal breeds.</i> • <i>Restricted breeds, backyard breeding.</i>

No Enforcement / Risk
(n=27).

- *No real penalties if (the) pet is not registered.*
- *Think they can get away without paying.*
- *Unlikely to be enforced.*

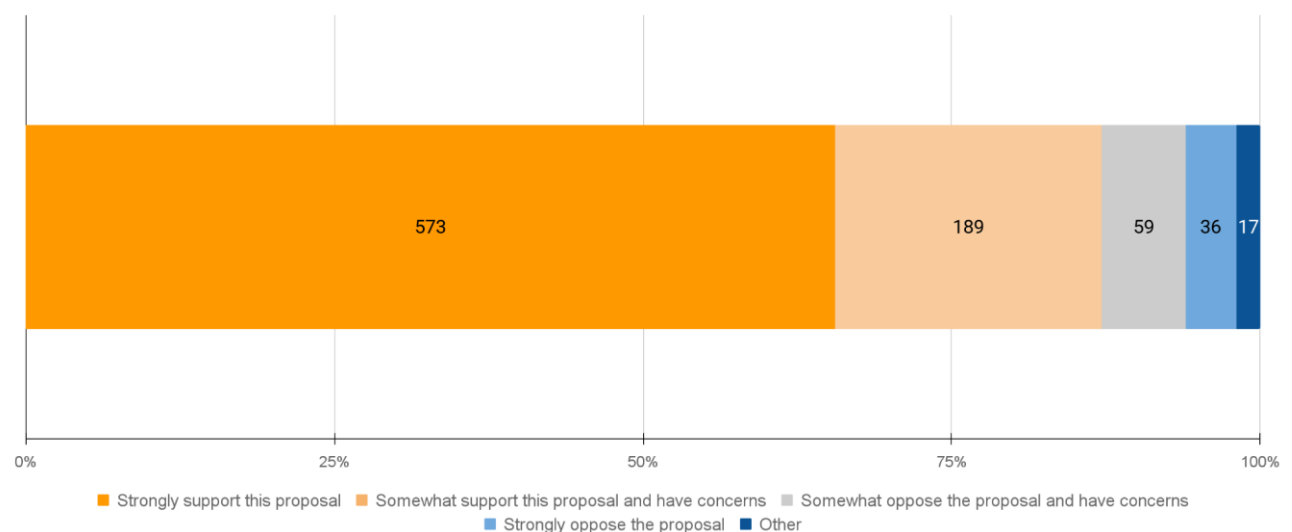
Source: Your Say Darbein Survey

Overall, the most common barrier to dog registration raised in free text comments was cost, with participants mentioning vulnerable households feeling cost of living pressures simply cannot afford it. Laziness was raised as the second most common barrier with participants perceiving (or admitting) that pet owners cannot be bothered with registration. Others mentioned a perceived lack of value for registration cost for both cats and dogs suggesting service improvements or better communication on how registration funds are used.

4.4.2 Animal Desexing

Survey participants were asked the following question; ‘*Do you support a mandatory desexing requirement for dogs and cats (where the owner is NOT a registered breeder)?*’ Figure 10. shows how participants responded to this question.

Figure 10. Mandatory desexing requirements



Data source: Your Say Darebin Survey

The majority of participants indicated they ‘strongly support this proposal’ of mandatory desexing (n=573, 65.6%) followed by ‘somewhat support this proposal and have concerns’ (n=189, 21.6%). A total of 59 (7.1%) ‘Somewhat opposed’ and ‘Strongly opposed’ (n=36, 4.3%). Figure 10. presents this breakdown.

A total of 17 participants provided an ‘other’ response to this question. Responses are themed in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Other comments about supporting a mandatory desexing requirement for dogs and cats

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
Conditional Support – Age/Health Considerations (n=5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People should be educated on health impacts of early desexing especially for large dogs, if there is a mandatory desexing it should be after adulthood is reached, not during puppyhood.</i> • <i>Some pets require desexing at a much later age to combat health concerns. A blanket rule rarely works.</i> • <i>I agree they should be desexed but at an age when it will not impact their bone growth and development.</i> • <i>At what age? Desexing is not good for larger breeds early on. Otherwise support</i> • <i>Agree for cats, dogs may need special conditions due to large breeds being negatively impacted from being desexed early in life (within 24 months).</i>
Strong Support for Desexing (n=3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Strongly agree for cats.</i> • <i>I am against breeding dogs and cats while so many companion animals are looking for a home.</i> • <i>I don't agree with breeding at all!</i>
Species-Specific Views (n=3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cats yes. Dogs - less important and potentially males only since owners of the females live with the consequences</i> • <i>Important for cats as they roam. Dogs not important as they are housed and contained.</i> • <i>Yes, for urban areas. NOT for farms and sheep cattle stations for working dogs.</i>
Other mixed responses (n=4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Neutral</i> • <i>Unsure</i> • <i>Support as long as appropriate financing for those who cannot afford.</i>

Source: Your Say Darebin Survey

Participants largely agreed with desexing programs. Participants who shared other comments gave caveats, most commonly about the age and health of the animal determining when desexing should occur, suggesting desexing programs should be sensitive to individual pet needs and different breeds.

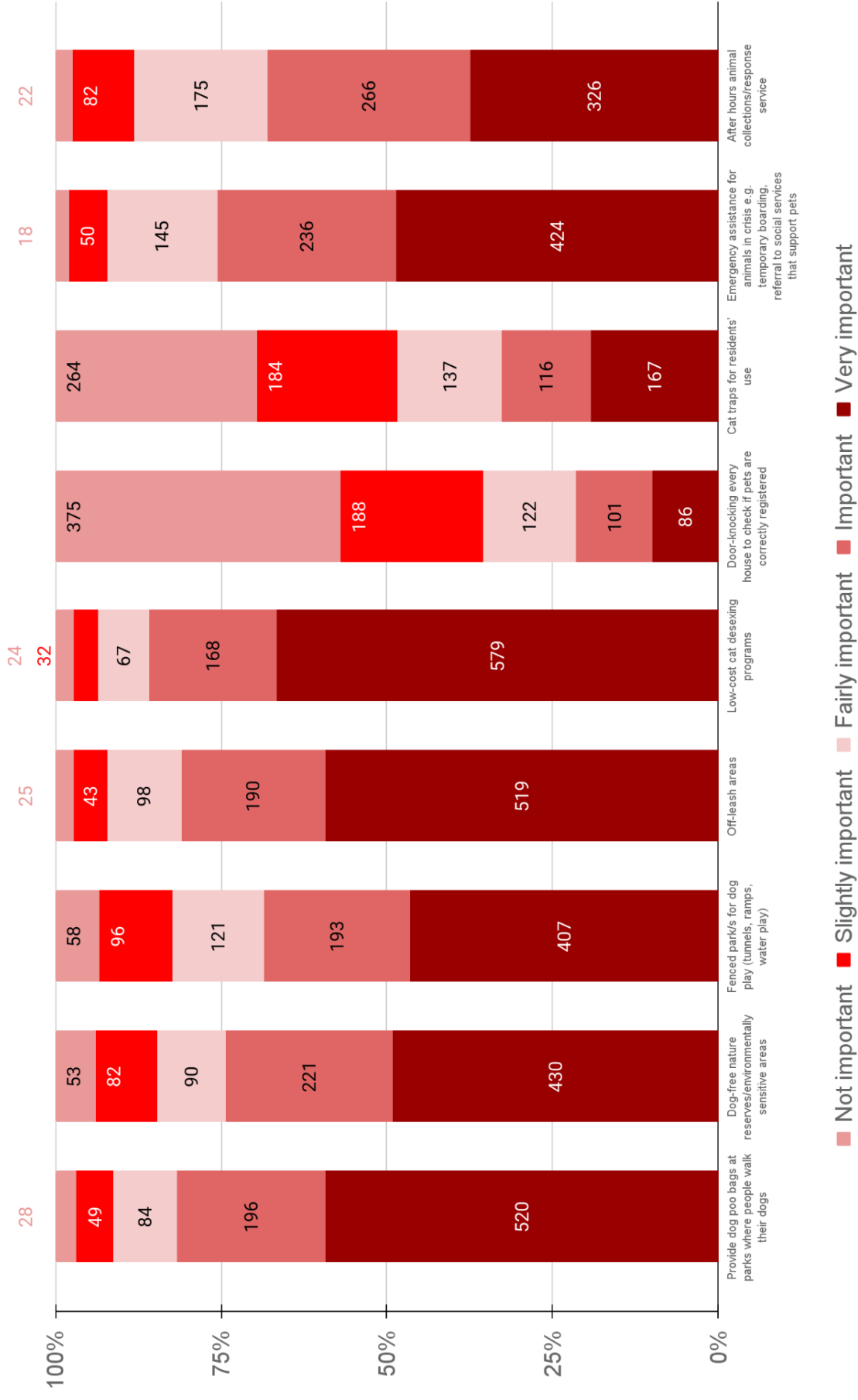
Facilitators at Council pop-ups also noted general support for mandatory cat desexing.

4.4.3 Preferences for key council services

Participants were asked the following question; *‘How important do you think it is for councils to provide the following services for the community?’* and asked to indicate importance from ‘not important at all’ to ‘very important’ from a list of select options.

Figure 11. shows a breakdown of how participants’ preference was distributed according to these 9 key service areas.

Figure 11. Preferences for key services



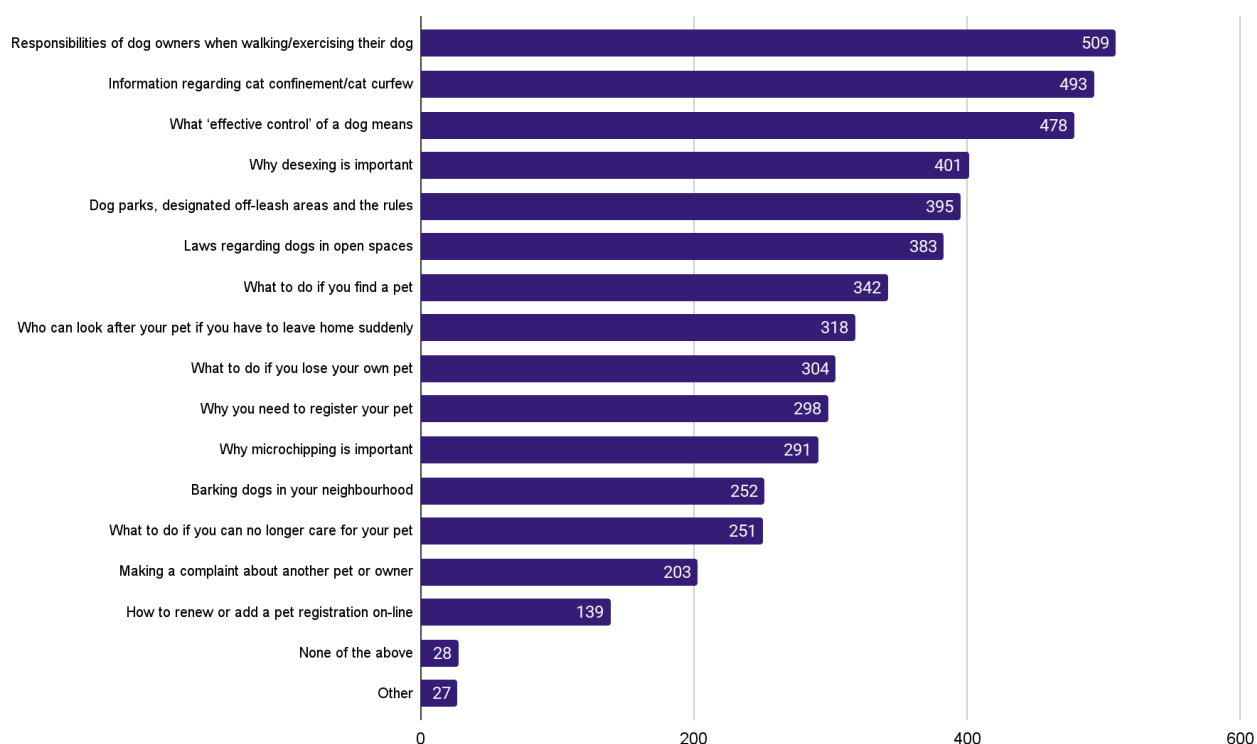
Data source: Your Say Darebin Survey

As seen in Figure 11 (previous page), the statement with the highest total of ‘very important’ was ‘*low-cost cat desexing programs*’ (n=579, 66.6%). ‘*Provide dog poo bags at parks where people walk their dogs*’ (n=520, 59.29%) had the second highest number of ‘very important’ selections. ‘*Door-knocking every house to check if pets are correctly registered*’ had the lowest selections of ‘very important’ (n=86, 9.9%) and the highest number of selections for ‘not important’ (n=375, 43.0%).

4.4.4 Communications

The following multi-choice question was asked to pop-up and survey participants; ‘*Council provides written and online information for residents and visitors, about the rules for owning a pet. Which of the following topics need more promotion in the general community?*’ Participants could select as many options as apply. Figure 12. (below) presents this breakdown.

Figure 12. Preferences for topics of promotion



Data source: Your Say Darebin Survey, Community Pop-ups

Overall, ‘*Responsibilities of dog owners when walking/exercising their dog*’ (n=509) had the highest number of selections followed by ‘*Information regarding cat confinement/cat curfew*’ (n=493); and communicating ‘*What ‘effective control’ of a dog means*’ (n=478).

There were a total of 27 participants who selected 'other' and gave a free text response for their answer. Participants shared the following common themes:

Dog ownership

- Always pick up dog waste; provide more signage and bins.
- Keep dogs on-lead except in designated areas.
- Reactive/aggressive dogs should avoid off-lead parks.
- Dogs must be restrained in vehicles.
- Address nuisance barking and promote training.
- Report dangerous dogs; improve council response.
- Clarify park access during sporting events.

Cat ownership

- Keep cats indoors, especially at night.
- Enforce curfews and containment on owner property.
- Support for managing feral cats.
- Encourage enrichment and use of collars.

General issues

- Improve education on responsible pet ownership.
- Simplify pet registration cancellation when moving.
- Increase signage near parks and playgrounds.
- Promote pet clubs and training groups.
- Raise awareness of neglect reporting and penalties.

4.4.5 Animal management services for pet owners

Survey participants were asked the question; 'How can Council improve its animal management services for pet owners?' There were 475 participants who provided free text responses. Table 9. below presents the common themes with verbatim quotes.

Table 9. Animal management services for pet owners

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
Infrastructure and maintenance (n=148)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rubbish bins in more public places</i> • <i>More off lead areas</i> • <i>Off leash areas for greyhounds</i> • <i>Create more offleash parks, particularly large bespoke fenced areas for dogs.</i> • <i>Clearer signage and implementation of dog on leash rules</i> • <i>More dog poo bags and making those dog poo bags biodegradable.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More: dog waste bags, street bins for dog waste, empty the street and park bins more often</i>
Communications and education about services (n=129)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Educate pet owners further regarding their responsibilities, to keep dogs under control, prevent barking, to keep cats inside overnight during the curfew, and to get both dogs and cats registered, microchipped and neutered.</i> • <i>Better advertise what the council offers and requires from pet owners. Ensuring it is easy & accessible to register and microchip animals.</i> • <i>Provide more how tos or cheap options for cat runs and incentives / disincentives for keeping cats inside and for desexing</i>
Enforcement (n=123)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enforce a 24hr cat curfew</i> • <i>PLEASE start applying the laws to pet owners who are breaching them: notably off lead practice in legally designated on lead areas.</i> • <i>Actively make people with dogs and cats microchip and desex them</i> • <i>Fine irresponsible dog owners</i> • <i>Prohibit cats roaming at night time</i> • <i>Penalties for dog owners who don't pick up after their dog</i>
Additional services, programs or regulations (n=83)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>By increasing the number of animal management ranges on patrol, a stronger presence on roads and in local areas.</i> • <i>Be available 24 hours, 7 days a week to check the chips of lost strays and to hold them if needed.</i> • <i>Resources on sourcing emergency and short term pet care would be beneficial.</i> • <i>Streamline connecting lost pets back with their owners</i> • <i>Re-design the council tags because they are ugly and likely not as comfortable as they could be for dogs.</i> • <i>Lifelong registration</i>
Responsible pet ownership (n=61)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Too many dogs are walking off leash.</i> • <i>I am extremely frustrated by neighbours' cats entering my property at night - especially as one (?) sprays on the front wire door.</i> • <i>Dogs off leash and owners preoccupied with phone or talking.</i> • <i>There's a need to curb the amount of dog droppings on the streets & in the parks in the Fairfield area.</i>

Accessible/subsidised programs and services (n=54)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Help low income households have companion animals, meet the needs of their companion animals, and keep them amid rising costs.</i> • <i>Help people with Pension or Health Care Cards afford/access quality pet food.</i> • <i>Free desexing for low income earners.</i> • <i>Incentive/support programs to help people comply with curfews specifically for cats</i> • <i>Many pet owners (are pensioners without personal transport with small dogs) relying on public transport, for pet car services</i>
Other - mixed responses (n=41)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Positive feedback on Council's animal management (n=21)</i> • <i>Don't introduce a cat curfew (n=6)</i> • <i>Not Council's responsibility (n=3)</i> • <i>Mixed responses (11)</i>

Source: Your Say Darebin Survey

Overall, the most common suggestions from participants to support pet owners were infrastructure and maintenance improvements, mostly related to the timely collection of rubbish, cleaning up after animals and providing fenced areas for shared use with dogs. Others in this group suggested increased public infrastructure for dogs like: small dogs off leash areas, off leash areas for greyhounds, making other public spaces more dog friendly like streets and cafes. The second most common response was suggestions for education and awareness raising including support for households to find animal trainers, how to guide for microchipping and desexing, how to guide for setting up cat enclosures, direct mailout for registration and education programs for responsible pet ownership. The third most commonly mentioned theme was enforcement; with participants suggesting stricter patrols and penalties particularly for cat curfews, picking up after animals and off leash dogs.

4.4.6 Animal management services for the general community

Participants were then asked the same question as the previous, but taking a community lens; *'How can Council improve its animal management services for the benefit of the general community?'* There were 86 participants who provided free text responses. Table 10 below presents the common themes that emerged with verbatim quotes.

Table 10. Animal management services for the community

Theme and no. of comments	Verbatim quotes
Enforcement (n=153)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enforce 24 hour curfew on unaccompanied cats outside their owners property.</i> • <i>Enforcement of on lead dog areas. Fines for not picking up dog poo. Enforcement of cat curfew.</i> • <i>PLEASE start applying the laws to pet owners who</i>

	<p><i>are breaching them: notably off lead practice in legally designated on lead areas. Owners are very often argumentative, abusive, and entitled when this is brought to their attention.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Restrictions / policing of where dogs can go, ie Preston market and where kids are (playgrounds)</i>
<p>Infrastructure and maintenance (n=116)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More dog poo disposal points</i> • <i>More off lead areas</i> • <i>Clearer signage and implementation of dog on leash rules</i> • <i>Have enclosed dog parks and playgrounds so children and dogs are safe</i> • <i>Drinking fountains and waste bag dispensers around all parks</i> • <i>At my local sporting ground too often sticks are left on the ground. We often have to clean the ground before playing</i> • <i>More pets friendly areas</i>
<p>Communications and education (n=109)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education, leaflets. On the ground community engagement. Encourage people to help stray cats by adopting them</i> • <i>Signs encouraging dog and cat adoption and not breeding at parks. Information about how young animals can breed and the health benefits of desexing early.</i> • <i>Label every single playground with the rules about dogs.</i> • <i>I'd really appreciate sending out strong guidance that cats should be kept inside at all times.</i> • <i>Letter drops in multiple languages.</i> • <i>I think if a dog is registered, it would be good to create an online module that is required to watch to learn about how to properly take care of an animal.</i>
<p>More staffing, services or funding for animal management (n=63)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More available rangers to collect missing pets</i> • <i>More cat trap services. I've had to buy my own, and lend my own, into the community.</i> • <i>More resources related to how to report a lost or found animal.</i> • <i>The Council can improve its animal management services for the benefit of the general community by developing a volunteering service.</i> • <i>I have never seen or observed any animal management staff.</i> • <i>Door knocking and checking animals are being looked after. Not just thrown in the back yard to defend for their self</i>

Extend cat curfew (n=43)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The cat curfew needs to be extended so cats are confined to their properties 24 hours a day.</i> • <i>Legislate that all cats must be indoors and/or in enclosures all the time.</i> • <i>Make cats indoors unless they are in a cage.</i>
Improve complaints handling, reporting and animal collection (n=40)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase the hours of Wat Djerring so that animals who have been found can be easily dropped off.</i> • <i>Make it easier for dog noise complaints to be lodged and ensure better follow up and action against irresponsible/entitled dog owners.</i> • <i>Service outside business hours.</i> • <i>Council should make far more effort to trace lost pets and return them home. There is no responsibility taken from Council to do this despite collecting registration fees.</i>
Subsidised and accessible services (n=26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Making it easier for people to take care of their pets well, and to keep their pets in face of rising pet care costs, is beneficial to the whole community. Alleviates financial and psychological burden on people working in pounds /shelters/foster groups.</i> • <i>More accessible methods to register pets for people who have less technology literacy.</i> • <i>Larger concession discount for pet registration. Options for pensioners with pets to receive more support to care for an animal.</i>
Other (n=36)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>General complaints dogs/cats (n=11)</i> • <i>More dog friendly areas (n= 10)</i> • <i>Participants who do not want cat curfews (cruel, not practical) (n=6)</i> • <i>Positive feedback for Council (n=5)</i> • <i>Concerns about vermin with cat curfew</i> • <i>Protect wildlife</i> • <i>Concerns about euthanasia</i>

Source: Your Say Darebin Survey

Overall the feedback about improvements for the general community was similar to feedback for improvements for pet owners with enforcement being a higher priority followed by infrastructure and maintenance and improved communications and education. Improving complaints handling and reporting was also identified as an improvement that would support the broader community with participants suggesting: more streamlined complaints handling and resolution, extended opening hours for Council animal management teams and pound services.

4.4.7 Facilities

Survey participants were asked if they had visited Council's animal pound (wat djerring Animal Facility). There were 863 respondents to this question. The majority of

participants selected 'No' (n=547, 63.4%) followed by 'I didn't know about the wat djerring Animal Facility' (n=293, 34%), 'Yes, to collect a lost pet' (n=22, 2.5%) and 'Yes to adopt a pet' (n=1, 0.1%).

4.4.9 Community events

Survey participants were asked the question; *'Many councils host a community event for pet owners providing free microchipping, pet education and showcasing local pet businesses. Which event format do you prefer?'* Participants were asked to select from a list of select options. Overall, participants preferred 'smaller neighbourhood-based pet events throughout the year' (n=498, 58.1%), followed by 'No pet events at all - prefer rates/pet registration be spent on other things' (n=219, 25.6%) and 'Large annual pet event - in same place and same time of year' (n=140, 16.3%).

4.4.10 Areas to patrol

Participants were asked what areas/parks should be priorities for Council officers to patrol and were able to give their reasoning beyond their decision. There were a total of 396 free text responses to this question.

The top locations mentioned by participants were:

- Parks and open space (n=175)
- Off-leash dog areas (n=125)
- Environmentally sensitive areas: wetlands, wildlife corridors, lakes parklands (n=83)
- Creeks and trails (n=53)
- Local residential streets and surrounds (n=52)
- Near children's playgrounds, schools (n=44)
- Not Council's responsibility/ invest elsewhere (n=24)
- All areas (n=13)

Among the specific parks mentioned the top priorities were:

- Edwardes Lake Park (n=21)
- Darebin Parklands/ Darebin Creek (n=16)
- All Nations Park (n=15)
- Merri Park/ Marri Creek trails (n=15)
- Johnson Park (n=5)
- Bundoora Park (n=4)
- Breavington Park (n=3)
- Penders Park (n=3)

When asked the reasons why Council should prioritise these areas, participants highlighted a number of common themes. The most commonly mentioned reasons were:

- Dogs observed off-leash with poor control or lack of recall (n=72)
- Protecting wildlife (flora and fauna) (n=49)
- Protecting multiuse space (children, high community use, sports, BBQs) (n=33)

- Common sightings of stray cats (n=18)
- Dog poo, hygiene and maintenance issues (n=14)
- Dangerous dogs: dog breeds, intimidating dogs/owners, safety (n=12)

4.5 Written feedback to Council

Council received four direct emails, each highlighting a variety of views, concerns, and suggestions for the Council to consider during the development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan for 2026-2029.

Table 11 provides the themes and key points from the written feedback received.

Table 11: Themes and key points from direct emails

Theme	Key points
Off-Leash Dogs Near Children and Sports Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about safety risks in playgrounds and sports fields. • Children cannot distinguish dangerous from friendly dogs • Reports of dog faeces on rugby fields posing health risks for junior players, due to frequent contact with the ground. • Suggested clearer signage, dog bag dispensers, and designated or fenced off-leash areas.
Enforcement and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived gap between council policy and ability to enforce. • Requests for more visible ranger patrols and action. • Suggested use of pet registration fees to help fund enforcement.
Cat Containment and Wildlife Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns that night-only cat curfews are not sufficient to protect native wildlife. • Calls for 24-hour containment and alignment of cat rules with those for dogs. • Support for night time cat curfew but opposed to 24 hour curfew on the grounds of being largely unenforceable and the cost to low-income households.
Support-Based Cat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference for supportive programs rather than punitive curfews or trapping.

Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognition that many impounded cats are semi-owned or unowned. ● Calls for accessible services like free desexing, microchipping, and registration.
Data-Driven Cat Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support for targeted Community Cat Programs using complaint and intake data. ● Recommendations to classify cats accurately (owned, semi-owned, unowned, feral). ● Emphasis on reducing euthanasia and increasing reclaim and adoption rates.
Consultation and Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concerns that earlier DAMP consultation was too limited. ● Recommendation to broaden engagement and include more community voices.
Practical Solutions and Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suggestions for ranger patrols during peak hours. ● Use of registration revenue for outreach and enforcement. ● Support for mobile clinics, multilingual outreach, and registration amnesties. ● Recommendation to adopt a 'support first' approach rather than fines.

4.6 Key Stakeholder Interviews

Phone interviews were conducted with 10 key stakeholders, who were asked 10 questions about domestic animal management from the perspective of their organisation. These interviews sought to gather expertise from key organisations across three Council areas about domestic animal management across Merri-bek, Darebin and Whittlesea.

Phone interviews were conducted with the following key stakeholders:

- Rescue Rehabilitate Release
- Reservoir Vet Clinic
- RSPCA Victoria – Inspectorate
- Petbarn Preston
- Cat Protection Society
- Second Chance Animal Rescue
- Bundoora Veterinary Clinic and Hospital
- Friends of Merri Creek

- Pascoe Vale Veterinary Clinic
- Project Underdog Rescue
- Darebin Domestic Animal Management Reference Group (DDAMRG)

For the Stakeholder Interview Questionnaire, refer to Appendix 2.

Below are some quotes from the key stakeholders.

"People willingly take their dogs into wildlife habitats. They chase kangaroos, cause stress injuries, and get them hit by cars. There's a 98% euthanasia rate if we're able to contain them."

"More messages in vet clinics, dog parks, and on social media linking to the 'why', explaining the positive impacts of human behaviour on animal outcomes."

"Even if we pool our resources, we can probably reach a larger audience than just doing it by ourselves separately."

"You could use council social media and flyers at local shops, we've got a brochure station. Just need approval through head office."

"Dogs off leash is a constant issue. From what I've read on the local Facebook page, some aren't controlled and are quite aggressive... I think it's in every area."

"Have a more approachable local laws team, people with a keen interest in keeping people and pets together. That really makes a difference."

"It was a cost-cutting decision, but it hurt the community. RSPCA provided great support and knowledge, we haven't had a partnership like that since."

"When the right person is in the role, local laws officers become part of the community rather than someone that's feared. That's when behaviour starts to change."

"I get worried when aggressive or dangerous dogs are in the community and the Council is potentially not aware of them. Imagine if the fence backs onto a school."

"Our Fear Free certified team would welcome opportunities to collaborate with Council on education, community welfare, and responsible pet ownership campaigns."

"Shift from compliance focus to community outreach."

4.6.1 Animal management issues of concern regarding dogs

Key stakeholder groups reported the following issues of concern regarding the management of dogs:

- A lack of education among dog owners regarding responsible ownership, including dog behaviour, training, and appropriate confinement. Several stakeholders linked behavioural issues to dogs being poorly socialised, particularly following COVID-19, when many owners did not attend puppy school or obedience classes.
- Dogs off-leash in on-leash areas, particularly in parks and natural reserves. This was frequently cited as a cause of distress for on-leash dogs and their owners, with reports of repeated dog-on-dog incidents and attacks.
- Dog attacks on wildlife, including birds and kangaroos, with some stakeholders reporting a high euthanasia rate for native animals injured by dogs. Concerns were raised about dogs being exercised off-leash in areas with known wildlife habitats, including creeks and revegetation zones.
- Poor understanding or enforcement of on-leash rules, with signage often ignored and community members reluctant to confront non-compliant dog owners. Several stakeholders emphasised the importance of visible local laws officers during peak times.
- Ongoing issues with unregistered dogs and backyard breeders, including concerns about breeding practices, lack of vaccinations, and dogs not being microchipped. Some stakeholders expressed concern about low registration rates in Darebin overall.
- Aggressive dogs not being adequately confined, with some stakeholders worried about the proximity of aggressive dogs to schools or other sensitive areas.
- Stray dogs being brought to vet clinics without Council support. Stakeholders reported that delayed pick-up or lack of after-hours services created a financial and emotional burden, especially when animals had no clinical history or were fearful.
- Barking complaints linked to poor dog management, such as a lack of enrichment or inappropriate dog selection for the owner's lifestyle. Some stakeholders felt that Council advice in these cases could be outdated or ineffective.
- Dog waste in parks and open spaces continues to be a problem, impacting amenity and causing frustration for staff and volunteers working in the community.
- A need for greater support for vulnerable community members, including access to low-cost desexing, vaccinations, and surrender pathways during times of crisis.

Some stakeholders suggested that holding Council events in dog parks could be an opportunity to model and promote responsible pet behaviour. Others noted that while dog ownership has increased significantly since COVID, the support and infrastructure to educate new owners has not kept pace.

4.6.2 Animal management issues of concern regarding cats

Key stakeholder groups reported the following issues of concern regarding the management of cats:

- Large numbers of stray, roaming, and semi-owned cats across the municipality, particularly in areas like Reservoir
- Low desexing rates and a need for greater awareness and enforcement of mandatory desexing requirements
- Community misunderstanding around cat ownership responsibility, particularly in cases where people feed but do not formally claim cats
- Inadequate enforcement of cat containment and a lack of penalties for roaming cats
- Roaming cats contributing to wildlife predation, nuisance behaviour, cat fights, and disease spread
- Lack of awareness of existing containment rules or cat curfews
- Difficulties accessing low-cost desexing and the need for targeted support in lower-income communities
- Delays or inconsistencies in Council response to reports of stray cats, including limited after-hours support
- Poor reclaim rates and low registration levels for cats, often due to out-of-date microchip details or lack of owner engagement
- Concern from veterinary clinics and shelters around caring for cats outside of council processes.

4.6.3 Services and programs to promote responsible pet ownership

Key stakeholder groups nominated the following services or programs to promote responsible pet ownership:

A focus on community education as the main tool, including:

- Educational seminars or online sessions led by vets or certified trainers, available via Council websites or hosted at local venues such as parks or community halls
- Increased visibility of Council officers through pop-up events at dog parks, offering free giveaways (e.g. leads, doggy bags), chip scanning, and one-on-one conversations about pet responsibilities
- Education targeting children and youth through school partnerships or scout group visits, to encourage early understanding of responsible pet care
- Greater promotion via mainstream and digital media around the costs of pet ownership, vaccination importance, and preventing impulse pet purchases
- Materials in Council rate notices and pet registration mailouts reminding residents of wildlife protection laws and the impact of domestic pets
- Encouraging the use of collars with visible ID tags alongside microchips, particularly for dogs and puppies that may not have updated chip details
- Awareness campaigns about curfews and containment, especially for cats, and the benefits of enrichment for indoor pets
- Supporting residents to understand and manage community cats, including clearer guidance around when and how to take responsibility

Low-cost and accessible services to reduce financial barriers, including:

- Free or low-cost desexing, microchipping, and vaccination days, particularly for low-income or vulnerable households
- Discounted or free registration events and clearer information on how to access concessions
- Emergency pet boarding for residents experiencing crisis, a dedicated emergency contact number, particularly for incidents such as dog attacks, was suggested to ensure rapid Council response and clear guidance for the community.
- Catch-desex-release programs for stray cat population management
- Promotion and support for DIY cat enclosures, such as instructional materials, in-person workshops, or grants to assist with building

Improved communication and partnerships, including:

- Clear, consistent communication between Council and vet clinics, with up-to-date guidance on containment laws, cat curfews, and registration requirements
- Dedicated efforts to reach multicultural communities with translated information and culturally sensitive messaging
- Partnerships between Council, local vets, and animal behaviour experts to co-deliver programs and ensure enforcement advice aligns with best-practice welfare standards
- Expanding training and socialisation sessions for pet owners was considered as important.

One vet clinic noted that clients often don't know the difference between microchipping and registration, and many dogs remain registered under breeders well after rehoming. Improved education around chip transfers and visibility of Council programs through vet clinics was considered essential.

4.6.4 Services and programs to minimise dog attacks on people and animals

The following suggestions were made for services or programs to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals:

- Greater community education on recognising dog stress signals, including signage with visual guides in off-leash areas to help owners identify when a dog is fearful or reactive (e.g. ears back, rigid body)
- Public seminars and workshops run by force-free, qualified animal behaviour professionals focusing on dog behaviour, body language, and safe human-dog and dog-dog interactions
- Promotion of humane, evidence-based training methods, with caution around aversive or punishment-based training approaches that may increase risk of aggression
- More low-cost or free access to puppy school, ongoing training, and behavioural support, particularly in communities experiencing financial hardship
- Public education campaigns (e.g. letterbox flyers, social media) featuring real stories from victims of dog attacks to raise awareness of their long-term impacts and promote responsible ownership

- Clearer education at the point of adoption or purchase around matching dogs to appropriate homes and lifestyles, with guidance on breed traits and behavioural needs
- Stricter requirements around the registration and monitoring of high-risk or restricted breed dogs, including education on muzzle use and containment
- More consistent fencing and containment advice for all owners, and stronger enforcement around secure confinement of dogs to properties
- Increased Council presence in off-leash parks and more frequent ranger patrols during peak times (e.g. mornings and evenings)
- Focused patrols in identified hot spots for incidents to maximise impact.
- Stronger enforcement of on-leash rules, particularly in areas with sensitive wildlife or high foot traffic
- Improved behaviour and risk screening at Council-operated pounds to ensure suitability of dogs for rehoming
- Use of colour-coded leads or harnesses to indicate reactive or nervous dogs, aligned with international conventions
- Support for accessible training options beyond puppyhood, with emphasis on behavioural development through adolescence (up to 18 months)
- Council support for or partnerships with ethical training providers, including promotion of accredited force-free training programs
- More educational materials at dog parks, in registration packs, and online explaining the links between poor socialisation and aggression
- Better data collection and sharing of dog attack statistics to understand risk factors, including whether dogs were off-leash, escaped, or unsupervised

Some stakeholders suggested Council involvement in promoting best practice training programs and supporting participation through subsidised fees. Others emphasised that education campaigns should extend beyond rules and enforcement and instead empower owners to understand and manage their dogs' emotional and behavioural needs.

4.6.5 Services and programs to address over-population and high euthanasia rates

The following suggestions were made for services or programs to address over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats. These are in addition to several raised previously in the sections *"Animal management issues of concern regarding dogs"* and *"Animal management issues of concern regarding cats"*. Suggestions included:

- Free or low-cost desexing days coordinated across multiple local vet clinics, including clinics with high capacity to perform bulk procedures
- Greater promotion and uptake of desexing vouchers, particularly for vulnerable residents, healthcare card holders, or pensioners

- Mandatory desexing for cats, alongside better education about when animals can begin to reproduce and common misconceptions (e.g. that siblings cannot breed)
- Stronger enforcement around excess animal numbers and backyard breeding, including better regulation of online pet sales and increased oversight of unregistered breeders
- Clearer public education on the responsibilities associated with stray or semi-owned pets, including defining ownership and the role of Council versus community members
- Built-in registration and microchipping services at vet clinics to streamline the process and reduce barriers to compliance
- Public information campaigns to explain why microchipping, desexing, and registration matter, and what outcomes they help achieve
- Behavioural support programs to reduce pet surrenders, including free seminars, vouchers for force-free trainers, and support for owners struggling with dog behavioural issues
- Programs to support aged care residents and people with disabilities to retain companion animals, recognising the emotional and health benefits of pet ownership
- Improved after-hours response for stray dogs to prevent further stress on rescue volunteers and reduce wildlife harm

Stakeholders emphasised that addressing over-population and reducing euthanasia rates requires a coordinated effort between Councils, vet clinics, and rescue organisations. Funding and collaboration were seen as critical enablers, both for desexing programs and to strengthen rehoming pathways. Education was also identified as key to addressing community misunderstandings about pet care responsibilities and to encourage preventative action before animals end up in the pound system.

4.6.6 Services and programs to encourage registration and identification

Key stakeholder groups suggested the following services or programs to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats:

- Free or discounted registration for residents experiencing financial hardship, such as those on Centrelink or students, with a simple application process
- Free microchipping and registration events, promoted through Council's website, social media, and local partners such as vet clinics or pet stores
- Incentives for newly registered pets, such as discounts on desexing, behaviour training, or pet products
- Education campaigns about the benefits of registration, not just the legal requirement, such as the role it plays in reuniting lost pets, and the real-world outcomes for animals
- Clear and accessible messaging explaining where registration fees go, and how they support services like rangers, shelter care, and community safety
- Use of posters, pamphlets and QR codes in public spaces (e.g. dog parks, vet clinics, pet stores) to simplify registration and chip-checking processes

- On-the-spot registration support in parks or at events, using Council officers with chip scanners and digital registration tools
- Promotion of microchip checks during routine vet visits, to ensure chip details are accurate and linked to current owners
- Review and reform of fee structures, particularly for desexed dogs whose procedures are now being delayed for behavioural and health reasons so owners aren't unfairly penalised
- Messaging that explains the 'why' behind registration from the pet's perspective, helping owners understand how identification keeps their animals safer

Stakeholders highlighted that many community members view registration as a tax, and recommended campaigns that shift the narrative from compliance to care. Council visibility in public spaces, use of engaging media formats (e.g. short videos or animations), and a positive, outcomes-based messaging approach were all recommended to build trust and increase registration rates.

4.6.7 Services and programs to effectively identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs

The following suggestions were made for services or programs to effectively identify dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with the Domestic Animals Act 1994:

- A need for stricter registration and clearer identification of aggressive or dangerous dogs, with Council maintaining updated records of where such dogs are located
- Consideration of additional physical inspections to confirm secure confinement of dangerous or menacing dogs, particularly in proximity to schools or other sensitive areas
- Education for the community on recognising early signs of aggression or stress in dogs and how to respond appropriately
- Increased enforcement of leash requirements and clearer signage in on-lead and off-lead areas, to reduce risk in public spaces
- Greater visibility of local laws officers and more patrols in parks, especially during peak times, to monitor compliance and intervene where unsafe behaviour is observed
- Education campaigns that promote responsible ownership, regardless of breed, with emphasis on the importance of socialisation, training and secure confinement
- Promotion of reporting pathways for the public to raise concerns about aggressive or non-compliant dogs, with reassurance around privacy and follow-up processes
- Support for behaviour training programs, particularly in cases where reactivity or aggression is identified early, to prevent escalation

Stakeholders noted that aggressive or dangerous dogs are not always on Council's radar due to lack of registration or failure to update details. Vet clinics and rescue groups identified a potential role for clinics to help flag concerning behaviours, but

expressed uncertainty about privacy constraints and what follow-up action Council could or would take. There was a call for stronger partnerships between Council and vets to ensure information sharing is effective and responsible.

Overall, a shift toward risk-based monitoring, focusing on individual behaviour rather than breed was seen as preferable by some, provided it is backed by clear procedures, consistent enforcement, and support for owners to take preventative action.

4.6.8 Improving Councils' animal management services for the benefit of pet owners and/or the general community

Key stakeholder groups suggested the following improvements to Council's animal management services for the benefit of pet owners and the wider community:

- Creating a more visible and approachable presence of Council officers at community events and in parks, with a focus on education and support rather than enforcement
- Providing multilingual education resources and targeting information through schools to reach a broader cross-section of the community
- Re-establishing or building partnerships with reputable animal welfare organisations to increase service capacity and deliver community support programs
- Offering grants or support to volunteer wildlife rescue groups, and recognising the contribution of these groups through collaboration and improved communication
- Ensuring that community education emphasises practical, compassionate pet care and builds understanding around dog behaviour, body language, and respectful interaction
- Improving responsiveness to community enquiries and increasing local laws staffing to meet demand, particularly in complex cases involving hoarding or multiple animals as well as the need for increased staffing and resourcing overall, with capacity to support elderly residents and aged care facilities through initiatives such as therapy animals.
- Delivering free or discounted pet care initiatives such as registration, microchipping, desexing, or pet food assistance for residents experiencing financial hardship
- Clearly communicating what Council's animal management team does, why they do it, and how their work benefits the broader community and animal welfare
- Including wildlife messaging in pet communications, such as reminder notices or pamphlets, to raise awareness about the impact of domestic pets on native species
- Enhancing customer service processes and streamlining animal pick-up procedures from vet clinics and members of the public

Several stakeholders expressed a desire for Council to be seen less as an enforcement body and more as a helpful resource for pet owners. Stakeholders recommended reframing public messaging to emphasise care, support, and shared responsibility between Council and the community in promoting responsible pet ownership.

A key stakeholder suggested a broader mindset shift from compliance to community outreach, conferences, integrating pet-related support into social services, and promoting the connection between human health and animal health as part of Council's public messaging.

4.6.9 Key topics requiring greater promotion in the community

Stakeholders were asked to identify the top three topics that require stronger promotion through Council's written and online communications. While views varied, several consistent themes emerged across the responses:

- Understanding pet behaviour and safe interaction, including how to read dog body language, interact with dogs respectfully, and promote safe greetings between pets and people
- Pet ownership responsibilities, such as desexing, registration, microchipping, and secure confinement, with an emphasis on the 'why' behind these requirements
- The importance of promoting responsible pet ownership more broadly, supporting people in choosing the right pet or breed for their lifestyle, and increasing awareness of available programs and support services through materials such as pamphlets, videos, and face to face sessions.
- The impact of pets on wildlife, including the need to keep dogs on-lead in sensitive areas and the importance of keeping cats contained to reduce harm to native species

Additional suggestions included making educational materials more accessible, particularly by using plain language, multiple formats (e.g. pamphlets, social media, signage), and translated resources for non-English speaking communities. Schools were also identified as key settings for early education, with children acting as messengers to their families.

4.6.10 Partnership opportunities for animal management programs and services

Stakeholders expressed strong interest in partnering with Council on animal management programs, particularly those that are humane, evidence based and community focused.

Key themes included:

- Willingness to collaborate - several organisations showed enthusiasm for partnerships, especially in outreach, education and event participation.

Suggestions included working in schools, libraries, shelters and local events to deliver accessible education.

- Support for education and outreach - Groups highlighted the importance of ongoing education and preventive programs, such as wildlife talks and behavioural sessions for pet owners. There was also interest in delivering low-cost or free training to improve pet outcomes.
- Existing partnerships - some stakeholders confirmed existing partnerships with Council, such as involvement in desexing programs.
- Specialist support - one stakeholder offered certified trainers and expressed a keen interest in delivering welfare and education initiatives.

5. Next Steps

Engagement on this project has created significant interest and aspirations for the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-29, for those who participated, walked past a pop-up or read a post online.

Keeping people updated

Issue a statement and update each Council project page thanking participants for participating in the project and for sharing their ideas. As we move into the next phase of the project we need to keep the wider community updated about the progress of this project.

Share the data

Even after this initial stage we have collected a large level of data that can be used by other agencies and organisations to plan the delivery of services. Consider ways you can share this data such as creating a snapshot of the engagement data, to bring the data to life with infographics to help participants digest the information in an easy form.

Adherence to the Local Government Act 2020

Keeping participants informed in engagement and the project is called 'closing the loop' - the information loop is currently open. Participants have shared their ideas and their feedback through the engagement process and are waiting to see what happens next. A new requirement of the Act requires councils to share the information that has been collected and inform the community as to how this will shape thinking.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Community Survey Questions

1. What is your interest in this topic? (Select one or more)

- Dog/cat owner
- Use local parks, reserves or playgrounds
- Sports club member/player/volunteer
- Veterinarian/Vet Nurse
- Member of animal advocacy/rescue group
- Member of a dog club
- Member of a wildlife/environmental group
- Registered dog or cat breeder
- Business operator – animal behaviourist/trainer/walker
- Registered Domestic Animal Business
- Other

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Pets give great comfort and support to many people in the community
- My/our pet/s are an important part of my/our family
- My/our pet gives me/us great comfort and support
- I/we exercise more because I/we have a dog
- I/we talk to more people in our neighbourhood because I/we have a dog

3. In the last year, have you noticed any of the following about dogs in your local area?

- Dog poo left on the ground
- Dogs off-leash when they shouldn't be
- Dogs with owners far away/owners seem to be absent
- Dogs annoying or intimidating other people
- Dogs annoying or intimidating other dogs
- Grass/plants trampled or dug up
- Dogs chasing/attacking wildlife
- Dogs in playgrounds
- Dogs sitting next to their owners at outdoor cafes
- Dogs barking for a long time
- Dogs not following commands of their owner

4. In the last year, have you noticed any of the following about cats in your local area?

- Cats in the streets at night
- Cats preying on wildlife
- Cats not being kept inside houses during the day/night
- Cats appearing to be unowned
- Cats fighting other cats
- Cats making loud noises
- Disturbed garden beds due to cat activity
- Cats living in sensitive environmental areas or reserves

5. Which of the following topics need more promotion in the general community? (Select one or more)

- Why microchipping is important
- Why you need to register your pet
- Responsibilities of dog owners when walking/exercising their dog
- What 'effective control' of a dog means
- Why cat containment is important
- Why de-sexing is important
- How to renew or add a pet registration online
- Dog on-leash areas and the rules
- Dog off-leash areas and the rules
- Who can look after your pet if you have to leave home suddenly
- What to do if you can no longer care for your pet
- What to do if you find a lost pet
- What to do if you lose your pet
- Barking dogs in your neighbourhood
- Making a complaint about another pet or owner
- Other (please specify)

6. How can Council improve its animal management services for pet owners?

(Open text response)

7. How can Council improve its animal management services for the benefit of the general community?

(Open text response)

8. In the last 12 months have you visited Darebin Council's pound, the wat djerring Animal Facility?

- Yes, to collect a lost pet
- Yes, to adopt a pet
- No
- I didn't know about the wat djerring Animal Facility

9. Many councils host a community event for pet owners providing free microchipping, pet education and showcasing local pet businesses. Which event format do you prefer?

- Large annual pet event – in same place and same time of year
- Smaller neighbourhood-based pet events throughout the year
- No pet events at all – prefer rates/pet registration be spent on other things

10. How important do you think it is for councils to provide the following services for the community?

- Dog-free nature reserves/environmentally sensitive areas
- Fenced park/s for dog play (tunnels, ramps, water play)

- Free cat de-sexing program
- Door-knocking every house to check if pets are correctly registered
- Cat traps for resident's use
- Emergency assistance for animals in crisis e.g. temporary boarding, referral to social services that support pets
- After hours animal collections/response service

11. Do you support a mandatory desexing requirement for dogs and cats (where the owner is NOT a registered breeder)?

- Strongly support this proposal
- Somewhat support this proposal and have concerns
- Somewhat oppose the proposal and have concerns
- Strongly oppose the proposal
- Other (please specify)

12. Have you noticed any changes in your neighbourhood since the night-time cat curfew was introduced in 2021?

- Yes
- No
- I didn't know about the curfew

13. Would you support the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew within the City of Darebin?

- Yes
- No
- Comments:

14. What areas/parks should be priorities for Council officers to patrol and why?

15. Why do you think people do not register their dog or cat?

- Not sure/don't know
- Too young to be registered
- They might not know they have to register their pet
- Other (please specify)

About you:

Only question about your postcode is mandatory.

What is your postcode? Required

- 3070 (Northcote)
- 3071 (Thornbury)
- 3072 (Preston)
- 3073 (Reservoir)
- 3078 (Alphington/Fairfield)
- 3083 (Bundoora/Kingsbury)
- 3085 (Macleod)

- Other (please specify)

What is your connection to Darebin?

Select all that apply.

- I live
- I work
- I own a business
- I study
- I visit
- I prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

What year were you born in?

Type your answer here...

What is your gender?

- I am a woman
- I am a man
- I am non-binary
- I prefer not to say
- I use a different term (please specify)

Which of the following best describes you?

- I am straight
- I am gay
- I am lesbian
- I am bisexual
- I don't know
- I prefer not to say
- Other sexual orientation (please describe)

Are you trans or gender diverse?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or both?

- Yes, Aboriginal
- Yes, Torres Strait Islander
- Yes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- I prefer not to say
- No

Do you have a disability (including visible and non-visible disabilities)?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

Do you speak a language other than English at home?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to say

Where were you born?

- I prefer not to say
- I was born in Australia
- I was born overseas in

Would you describe yourself as homeless?

- Yes
- No

- I prefer not to say

What is the structure of your household?

- Sole person household
- Couple only household
- Couple or sole parent family, children aged 0-17 living at home
- Couple or sole parent family, adult children living at home
- Extended or multiple families
- Group household

Appendix 2. Stakeholder Interview Questionnaire

- In your experience, what are the main animal management issues of concern for dogs?
- In your experience, what are the main animal management issues of concern for cats?
- What services or programs could Council provide to promote responsible pet ownership?
- What services or programs could Council provide to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals?
- What services or programs could Council provide to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats?
- What services or programs could Council provide to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats?
- What services or programs could Council provide to effectively identify all dangerous dogs, menacing dogs and restricted breed dogs in that district and to ensure that those dogs are kept in compliance with this Act
- How could Council improve its animal management services for the benefit of pet owners and/or the general community?
- Council provides written and on-line information for residents and visitors, about the rules for owning a pet. What do you believe are the top three topics that need more promotion in the general community?
- Are there any partnership opportunities for animal management programs or services?