



# Domestic Animal Management Plan 2017 - 2021



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## Executive Summary

Baw Baw Shire Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan sets the strategic direction for the Council's animal management activities until 2021. The Plan will be reviewed annually and has been developed in line with Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act* 1994.

Agriculture Victoria requires all councils to provide their Domestic Animal Management Plans in a format specifically outlined in their guidelines.

Under this format, items covered in this Plan include:

- Training of authorised officers;
- Registration and identification;
- Nuisance animals;
- Dog attacks;
- Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs;
- Overpopulation and high euthanasia;
- Domestic animal businesses; and
- Other matters, of which Baw Baw has included responsible pet ownership and planning for the future of the pound facility.

Each section provides an outline of the current situation in Baw Baw, as well as future plans, actions and timelines to improve the level of service provided in these areas.

Some of the key activities planned to be undertaken as part of this Plan include:

- Further officer training.
- Targeted door knocking throughout the municipality to check for unregistered dogs and cats.
- Communication and education campaigns to promote responsible pet ownership.
- Introduce additional methods of payment (including online and phone payments) for new animal registrations.
- Finalising the designated off leash areas.
- Review and update procedures for recording barking dog investigations.
- Assist residents with dealing with cat trespass / nuisance problems by improving the accessibility of cat cage hire.
- Review the expansion of Council's after hours service in relation to wandering animals.

- Develop a formalised dog attack enforcement and investigation policy in line with the requirements of the *Domestic Animals Act*.
- Finalise Council's Dog Control Decision policy in relation to dog declarations and controls following a reported dog rush, chase or attack.
- Investigate partnership with vets to run a discount desexing day or ongoing subsidised desexing program for pets of low income earners.
- Identify all businesses that should be registered domestic animal businesses in the municipality.
- In conjunction with local vets, businesses, and rescue groups, run a bi-annual Pet Expo and Adoption Day.
- Finalise the repurposing of Utopia Pet Lodge in to Council's new pound facility.

During the Plan's development, consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders including local veterinary clinics, Council-contracted animal agencies, Council's Community Compliance Team, and the broader community. Feedback and suggestions confirmed that the key deliverables within the DAM Plan are in line with community expectations, and provided further depth to inform the actions of Officers as they address each of the key deliverables.

The Community Compliance team undertook a Best Value Review in 2013. The review included community consultation, involving 500 surveys being sent to identified service users. Of the 500 surveys sent 103 were returned. Benchmarking was also undertaken with nine other councils to gauge our service delivery in a number of fields, including animal management.

The findings from the review have been taken into consideration in this Plan.

Our progress in the implementation of this Plan will be reported annually via the Council's annual report.

Through the Plan, the Council has sought to balance the competing needs of pet owners, the broader community and the animals that share people's lives. Council recognises the benefits of pet ownership, and acknowledges the role we play in promoting responsible pet ownership and animal-related enforcement.

## **Introduction**

Baw Baw Shire Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan sets the strategic direction for the Council's animal management activities until 2021. The Plan will be reviewed annually.

The Plan has been developed in line with Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act* 1994.

### ***What are domestic animals and what are the benefits of being a pet owner?***

Domestic animals are animals that live with Baw Baw residents, most commonly dogs and cats.

A wealth of research exists which highlights the benefits of pet ownership, including research undertaken for 'Australians and Their Pets: The Facts'. These include:

- People who own pets typically visit the doctor less often and use less medication;
- On average, pet owners have lower cholesterol and blood pressure levels and are less likely to report feeling lonely;
- Pet owners recover more quickly from illness and surgery and deal better with stressful situations;
- Pet owners show lower levels of risk factors associated with heart disease;
- Pets have been shown to greatly increase quality of life for the elderly; and
- Self-esteem has shown to be higher in young people who have a pet.

### ***Principles in Developing the Plan***

The following provides an outline of the principles used when developing the Plan:

- Pets are an important part of the community and bring health, wellbeing and social benefits to pet owners;
- All animals will be treated humanely;
- Pet owners must take responsibility for their pets, including their health and safety;
- The needs of pet owners are to be balanced with the needs of other community members and the environment;
- We respect that not all community members want to have contact with pets or animals; and
- We will work to educate pet owners to be responsible, however we accept that enforcement action may be necessary on some occasions.

### ***Baw Baw Population***

Baw Baw Shire is made up of over 100 localities spread over 4,028 square kilometres, featuring both larger towns and rural areas.

The townships along the Princes Highway are experiencing rapid population growth with a number of new residential and industrial subdivisions being approved. As of 2016, Baw Baw Shire's estimated population was 48,479 (up 13.1 per cent from 2011) across 18,698 households (ABS, 2016). The population is made up of a number of demographics, including balancing an ageing population with young families moving into the area.

With Baw Baw's growing population, we would expect to see a growth in Baw Baw's pet population. However, as of August 2017, there were 2,149 cats and 7,777 dogs registered in Baw Baw Shire, which is a reduction in registrations from October 2014 at which time 2,452 cats and 8,938 dogs were registered in Baw Baw Shire. This may be because of a Council wide restructure in 2016, which resulted in a reduction in resources for the Community Compliance team, and an increase in responsibilities including Planning Enforcement and Asset Protection. These factors in turn impacted on the ability of the team to undertake proactive doorknocks to identify unregistered animals, and to follow up on animal registrations that were not renewed.

Baw Baw Shire is also home to twelve registered domestic animal businesses which includes pet shops, boarding kennels, training establishments, and breeding and rearing establishments, as well as Council's Municipal Pound.

Some of the existing animal management issues within the shire include:

- Failure to register and re-register pets by existing and new residents;
- Dogs at large or not under effective control;
- Barking dogs;
- Dog attacks on people and other animals;
- Dog excrement in public places;
- Overpopulation of cats, including feral cats;
- High cat euthanasia rates; and
- Excessive animal numbers without applicable permits.

### ***Animal Management Services***

The animal management services provided by the Community Compliance team are:

- Impounding of animals;
- Facilitating adoptions and the rehoming of animals, and forming partnerships with external agencies to increase rehoming and reduce euthanasia rates;
- Managing complaints relating to domestic animals and livestock;
- Promoting responsible pet ownership;
- Investigating reports of dog attacks, rushes and chase, and undertaking prosecutions and enforcement action where applicable;
- Ensuring compliance with legislation and codes of practice relevant to domestic animals and livestock;
- Animal registration process;
- Referring detected animal welfare issues to the relevant authorities;
- Management of domestic animal businesses;
- Providing advice to pet owners and the community; and
- After hours animal emergencies.

### ***Resourcing***

Baw Baw Shire Council's Community Compliance team undertakes animal management activities on behalf of the Council.

The Community Compliance Team sits within the Building and Regulatory Services department, under the Growth and Economic Development directorate.

There are five full time Community Compliance Officers and one Senior Compliance Officer that report directly to the Compliance Coordinator, who in turn reports to the

Manager Building and Regulatory Services. All of the Community Compliance Officers are multi-skilled, and responsible for animal management as part of their role. Currently, a casual animal attendant is engaged to perform basic pound responsibilities including cleaning, feeding and caring for the animals. A full time pound attendant will be employed to undertake pound operations following the opening of the new pound facility.

### ***Consultation***

Through the Plan, the Council has sought to balance the competing needs of pet owners, the broader community and the animals that share people's lives. Council recognises the benefits of pet ownership, and acknowledges the role we play in promoting responsible pet ownership and animal-related enforcement.

During the Plan's development, consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders including local veterinary clinics, Council-contracted animal agencies, Council's Community Compliance Team, and the broader community. Feedback and suggestions confirmed that the key deliverables within the DAM Plan are in line with community expectations, and provided further depth to inform the actions of Officers as they address each of the key deliverables.

The Community Compliance Team also undertook a Best Value Review in 2013. The review included community consultation, involving 500 surveys being sent to identified service users. Of the 500 surveys sent 103 were returned, representing a 20 per cent response rate.

The findings from the review have been taken into consideration in this plan.

### ***Format of this Plan***

The Bureau of Animal Welfare requires all councils to provide their Domestic Animal Management Plans in a format specifically outlined in their guidelines.

Items covered in this Plan include:

- Training of authorised officers;
- Registration and identification;
- Nuisance animals;
- Dog attacks;
- Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs;
- Overpopulation and high euthanasia;
- Domestic animal businesses; and
- Other matters, of which Baw Baw has included responsible pet ownership and planning for the future of the pound facility.

### ***Council Framework***

#### **Council Plan**

The Council Plan represents a four year road map for the Council, and describes the key services and priorities that Council will focus on between 2017 and 2021.

The Community Compliance Team is responsible for a number of areas within the Council Plan which have been taken into consideration during the development of the Domestic Animal Management Plan.

### Council Orders, Local Laws, Policies and Procedures

Baw Baw Shire Council has in place policies, procedures and local laws that are designed to encourage responsible pet ownership and respond to animal management issues experienced in Baw Baw Shire.

Some of these address more than one section of this Plan. To avoid repetition, details of Council's orders, local laws, policies and procedures can be found in Appendix A.



## Legal Framework

Under Section 68A of the *Domestic Animals Act*, every council must prepare a Domestic Animal Management Plan, as follows:

### 68A Councils to prepare domestic animal management plans

- (1) Every Council must, in consultation with the Secretary (*of the Department of Primary Industries*), prepare at 4 year intervals a domestic animal management plan.
- (2) A domestic animal management plan prepared by a Council must—
  - (a) set out a method for evaluating whether the animal control services provided by the Council in its municipal district are adequate to give effect to the requirements of this Act and the regulations; and
  - (b) outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this Act in the Council's municipal district; and
  - (c) outline programs, services and strategies which the Council intends to pursue in its municipal district—
    - (i) to promote and encourage the responsible ownership of dogs and cats; and
    - (ii) to ensure that people comply with this Act, the regulations and any related legislation; and
    - (iii) to minimise the risk of attacks by dogs on people and animals; and
    - (iv) to address any over-population and high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats; and
    - (v) to encourage the registration and identification of dogs and cats; and
    - (vi) to minimise the potential for dogs and cats to create a nuisance; and
    - (vii) 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 and the regulations; and
  - (d) provide for the review of existing orders made under this Act and local laws that relate to the Council's municipal district with a view to determining whether further orders or local laws dealing with the management of dogs and cats in the municipal district are desirable; and
  - (e) provide for the review of any other matters related to the management of dogs and cats in the Council's municipal district that it thinks necessary; and
  - (f) provide for the periodic evaluation of any program, service, strategy or review outlined under the plan.
- (3) Every Council must—
  - (a) review its domestic animal management plan annually and, if appropriate, amend the plan; and
  - (b) provide the Secretary with a copy of the plan and any amendments to the plan; and
  - (c) publish an evaluation of its implementation of the plan in its annual report.

## **Training of Authorised Officers**

Section 68(A)(2)(b) of the *Domestic Animals Act* states that councils must outline programs for the training of authorised officers to ensure that they can properly administer and enforce the requirements of this *Act* in Baw Baw.

### **Objective**

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

### **Context**


Baw Baw Shire is made up of over 100 localities spread over 4,028 square kilometres, featuring both larger towns and rural areas.

As of 2016, Baw Baw Shire's estimated population was 48,479 (up 13.1 per cent from 2011) across 18,698 households (ABS, 2016). The population is made up of a number of demographics, including balancing an ageing population with young families moving into the area.

With Baw Baw's growing population, we would expect to see a growth in Baw Baw's pet population. However, as of August 2017, there were 2,149 cats and 7,777 dogs registered in Baw Baw Shire, which is a reduction in registrations from October 2014 at which time 2,452 cats and 8,938 dogs were registered in Baw Baw Shire.

Baw Baw Shire is also home to twelve registered domestic animal businesses which includes pet shops, boarding kennels, training establishments, and breeding and rearing establishments. Two of these establishments are Council owned, including Council's Municipal Pound, and Utopia Pet Lodge. Utopia Pet Lodge was purchased by Council in September 2016 as an existing boarding kennel and cattery, and, following registration being granted by the Minister, has continued its operations with minimal changes. It is set to close its boarding operations on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017, with the existing building being repurposed as Council's new Municipal Animal Pound.

Baw Baw Shire Council's Community Compliance Team comprises five equivalent full time (EFT) Community Compliance Officers, a Senior Compliance Officer, and a Compliance Coordinator. All of the Community Compliance Officers are multi-skilled, and responsible for animal management as part of their role. Currently, a casual animal attendant is engaged to perform basic pound responsibilities including cleaning, feeding and caring for the animals. A full time pound attendant will be employed to undertake pound operations following the opening of the new pound facility.



<b>Baw Baw Key Statistics</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2012</b>
Population	48,479	45,205	42,861
Households	18,698	16,489	16,489
Area	4,028 square kilometres	4,028 square kilometres	4,028 square kilometres
Number of authorised animal management officers (EFT)	5 (estimated 3 EFT dedicated to animal management)	4	4

### ***Current and Planned Training***

The Community Compliance Best Value Review asked the wider community for feedback on training requirements for Community Compliance staff, based on their experience with our team, and their expectations as pet owners and members of our community.

Through the community consultation, the most highly mentioned aspect of the service delivery and its quality related to customer service provided by the team. Recommendations for improvements were made with regards to:

- Timeliness and responsiveness of the team in relation to messages and complaints; and
- Communication and customer service skills of staff.

There is likely to be some overlap between respondents' understanding of customer service from the Community Compliance Team and Council in general.

A staff workshop identified a number of issues with various aspects of the service affecting the level of customer service:

- Managing conflict and aggressive customers;
- The challenges brought about by multi-skilling Officers; and
- Contingencies to cover staff absences, such as illness and leave.

The above findings highlight the need for further training to support staff in dealing with difficult customers and setting the community's expectations around providing timely customer service.

These responses have been taken into account for our planned activities over the next four years.

<b>Authorised Officer Training</b>	<b>Current 2017</b>	<b>Planned</b>
Industry training – animal handling, animal assessment, statement taking, prosecution	Officers are required to attend ongoing industry training	Annually

OH&S training - conflict resolution, dealing with difficult or aggressive customers	Mandatory training is conducted internally with all Council staff	Annually
Bureau of Animal Welfare – training and information days	All Officers attend these sessions on a rotational basis as they become available	Intermittently as available. Target - minimum of 2 Officers to attend each session
Training in Animal Control, Animal Welfare and Regulation	Hands on training is provided at the commencement of employment, and Officers are required to undertake external training with an accredited provider within their first 12 months if no previous qualification is held	Within 12 months of commencement, and ongoing skills update depending on availability
Restricted Breed Dog Identification	Four Officers have undertaken training offered by the Bureau of Animal Welfare, although this was several years ago	Further training opportunities are being investigated and will be undertaken by all Officers, particularly with the changes to legislation allowing for the registration of Restricted Breed dogs
Auditing of Domestic Animal Businesses	Two Officers have had formal training in undertaking audits	Further training opportunities are being investigated and will be delivered to all Officers
Diploma of Government	Two Officers have undertaken a Diploma of Government	Training and development goals will be identified through Individual Performance Development Plans and undertaken as required
Diploma in Policing	Two Officers have undertaken a Diploma in Policing	Training and development goals will be identified through Individual Performance Development Plans and undertaken as required

Internal Organisational Training –	An Organisational Training Package is currently being developed focussing on investigation and case management, brief preparation and prosecution	To be delivered to existing Authorised Officers, and upon appointment of new Officers
Microchip implantation training	Currently one Officer is accredited to implant microchips	Further training opportunities are being investigated and will be made available to Officers at their discretion
DNA sample taking	Currently two Officers have undertaken this training and further training opportunities are being investigated for additional Officers to be trained and authorised	Further training opportunities are being investigated and training will be rolled out across 2018/19
Municipal Fire Prevention Officer Training and Safety Course	Four Officers have completed this training to date	Training needs will be identified through Individual Performance Development Plans and undertaken as required
Detecting Family Violence (specifically related to animal management)	Three Officers have been involved in training and information sessions regarding Family Violence to date	Further training opportunities are being investigated and training will be rolled out across 2018/19
Induction program for new staff	All staff across Council complete a standard induction program including online e-learning; corporate induction; business unit induction and induction review workshops.	Within 3 months of commencement with Council
Diploma of Management	Two Officers hold their Diploma of Management	Training and development goals will be identified through Individual Performance Development Plans and undertaken as required

Certificate IV in Justice	Two Officers hold their Certificate IV in Justice	Training and development goals will be identified through Individual Performance Development Plans and undertaken as required
Diploma of Justice	One Officer holds their Diploma of Justice	Training and development goals will be identified through Individual Performance Development Plans and undertaken as required
Prosecutors Training Course	Two Officers have undertaken the Prosecutors Training Course	Training and development goals will be identified through Individual Performance Development Plans and undertaken as required
Cultural Awareness / Indigenous Relations Training	Baw Baw Shire has a large Indigenous population. No training has been undertaken in relation to cultural awareness, and would prove beneficial to Officers interacting with this area of the community	Training opportunities are being investigated and will be delivered to all Officers

### **Our Plans**

*Objective 1: Develop and implement a training policy that clearly identifies minimum training requirements and any additional training needs that should be undertaken by Authorised Officers by June 2018.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Identify minimum training requirements by consultation with management and staff.	By June 2018	Documentation to be finalised and incorporated into an internal training policy by June 2018.
Identify additional training opportunities by consultation with management and staff.	Ongoing	Ongoing - additional training opportunities identified and attended by Officers, recorded on the skills matrix.

*Objective 2: Develop training plans for each officer to be incorporated in to their annual Individual Performance Development Plan.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Identify additional training opportunities, and develop training plans for each officer to be incorporated in to their annual Individual Performance Development Plan, and entered in to the Skills / Training Matrix.	By December 2017	Annual review of register to ensure its accuracy and to ensure proposed training goals have been incorporated into Individual Performance Development Plan.

*Objective 3: Ensure all Authorised Officers have completed their minimum training requirements within 12 months of appointment.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Identify minimum training requirements for officers and record when officers have completed each course and the timelines for completing each course.	By June 2018	Monthly review of Skills / Training Matrix to ensure each officer has completed their minimum training requirements within 12 months of appointment.

*Objective 4: Formalise a specific Animal Management Officer induction program.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Document a formalised induction program for new Community Compliance Officers which includes relevant training, in accordance with the training policy.	By June 2018	Reviewed following the induction of any new Community Compliance Officers.
Ensure that any agency / contract staff are qualified to undertake animal management in accordance with Section 72A of the Act.	Ongoing - Prior to appointment of a person who is not an employee of the Council as an authorised officer	Prior to appointment of a person who is not an employee of the Council as an authorised officer, documentation must be provided to confirm that the person has the qualifications or experience prescribed by the Secretary, which will be stored on Council's database.

*Objective 5: Provide each Authorised Officer with further investigation, statement taking and prosecution training to ensure continuous improvement of Officer skills.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Develop internal training package focussing on investigation and case management, brief preparation and prosecution, to be delivered to existing Authorised Officers, and upon appointment of new Officers.	By June 2018	<p>Training package to be finalised and delivered to existing Authorised Officers by June 2018.</p> <p>Monthly review of Skills / Training Matrix to ensure each officer has completed their minimum training requirements within 12 months of appointment.</p>



## Registration and Identification

### **Objective**

To increase and maintain high levels of pet registration and microchipping within Baw Baw Shire.

### **Current Situation**

Registration and microchipping of dogs and cats is a priority in the success of Baw Baw Shire's animal management, and is key to responsible pet ownership.

When pet owners register and microchip their dogs and cats, it enables Council to reunite lost pets with their owners efficiently. Registration also assists Council to plan its animal management activities, services and infrastructure.

The Council provides detailed information to residents about registration and microchipping requirements. This is conveyed through media releases, advertising, Council's website, social media and brochures available at Council's service centres.

### Pet Registration Data

As of August 2017, there were 2,149 cats and 7,777 dogs registered in Baw Baw Shire. This is a decrease of 303 cats and 1,161 dogs since 2014.

Based on BIS Shrapnel's formula for estimating the number of dogs and cats per municipality (based on the number of households) it is estimated that 72 per cent of dogs and 30 per cent of cats are registered within Baw Baw Shire. This has decreased from 94 per cent and 39 per cent respectively since 2014, and can be attributed to a significant reduction of resources within the Compliance team between 2015 – 2017, resulting in an inability to undertake Council's doorknocking program (see 'Pet Registration Activities' below for more details), as well as data cleansing occurring in 2016 and 2017, resulting in more accurate records.

### **Pet Registration At A Glance**

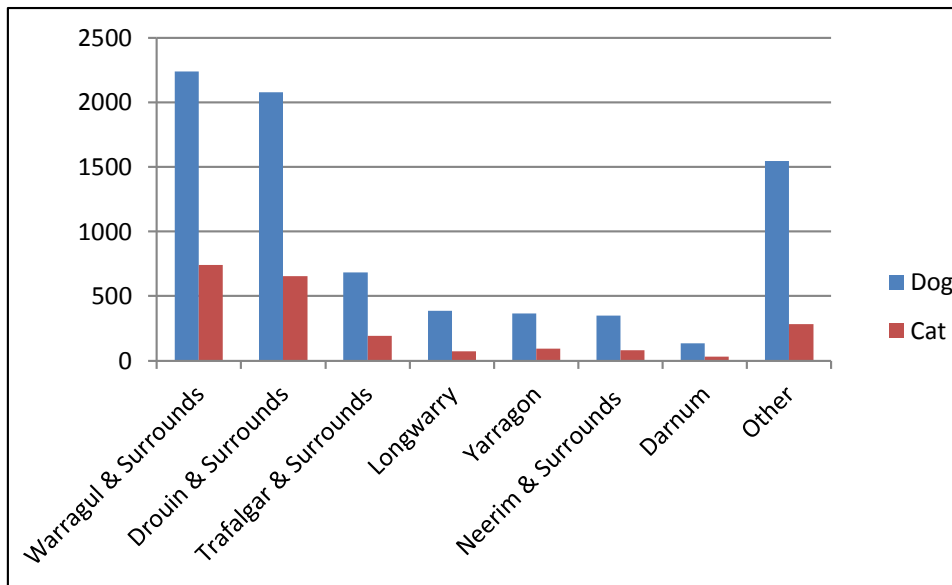
<b>Key Statistics</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2012</b>
Number of registered dogs	7,777	8,938	8,543
Estimated dog population*	10,770	9,497	9,497
Estimated dog registration rate	72%	94%	90%
Number of registered cats	2,149	2,452	2,253
Estimated cat population*	7,146	6,302	6,302
Estimated cat registration rate	30%	39%	36%

\* Based on BIS Shrapnel formula.

It is no surprise that Baw Baw's two most heavily populated towns, Warragul and Drouin, led the way with cat and dog registrations. As of August 2017, Warragul was home to 2,238 registered dogs and 739 registered cats, followed by Drouin with 2,079 registered dogs and 656 registered cats.

To assist in keeping Council registration data up-to-date, the RSPCA send a monthly report to Council regarding pets adopted from them into Baw Baw. This enables Council to capture new registrations.

### ***Pet Registrations by Town (October 2014)***



### **Pet Registration Activities**

Baw Baw Shire Council continues to undertake similar activities to those listed in the previous Domestic Animal Management Plan, however, escalated efforts will be made to achieve a higher rate of pet registrations in the 2017 – 21 period.

Baw Baw Shire Council sends pet registration renewal notices to pet owners each year, which is supported by a communications campaign to encourage pet owners to pay their registrations on time, and includes using the media, advertising, social media, Council's website and electronic signage.

The Community Compliance team will also reinvigorate its doorknocking program to detect unregistered pets. Historically, this targeted approach has resulted in a significant number of pets being registered or re-registered with Council. The doorknocking program will continue over the life of this plan.

Baw Baw Shire Council offers financial incentives to encourage pet owners to microchip and desex their pets. Pets that are desexed or obedience trained can be registered at 1/3 of the cost of a non-desexed animal. No discounts exist if a cat or dog is only microchipped, in line with legislative changes introduced in 2013.

Of the 7,777 dogs currently registered, 5,307 or 68% are desexed, and of the 2,149 cats registered 1,809 or 84% are desexed. It is pleasing to see that a large number of pet owners display responsible pet ownership through desexing their pets. We expect to see an increase in the number of desexed registered cats, following the introduction of mandatory desexing in 2016, and the ongoing promotion of desexing pets.

Eligible pensioners receive a 50 per cent discount on their pet registration fees. Of the 7,777 dogs registered in Baw Baw, 27 per cent belong to a pensioner. Similarly, of the 2,149 cats registered, 35 per cent belong to a pensioner.

The community identified a service delivery gap through the Best Value review consultation, which was lack of online payments and applications for animal registrations. Currently, only animal registration renewals are able to be paid online. New applications are only payable in person or via mail.

#### Microchipping Activities

Baw Baw Shire Council runs limited activities in relation to microchipping, however the introduction of legislation requiring animals to be microchipped prior to being registered has assisted to keep microchipping numbers elevated.

Council's Customer Service Team does not transact new animal registrations unless proof of microchipping has been sighted. It is also mandatory to microchip and register any animals from the Baw Baw Shire pound before release or adoption.

Council currently has one officer trained in microchip implantation, and is investigating further opportunities to train additional officers. In house microchipping will reduce costs associated with returning animals to their owners, and would expedite the return of animals as it would no longer be necessary to make an appointment and transport animals to a veterinary clinic for implantation. Benefits would also be realised in relation to adopted animals and those rehomed through our partners.

Discounted microchipping will also be offered at future Pet Expos.

#### ***Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures***

See Appendix A.

#### ***Our Current Education/Promotion Activities***

See Appendix B.

#### ***Our Current Compliance Activities***

See Appendix C.

#### ***Summary***

It is disappointing to note that registration figures have decreased since 2014, which is likely attributable to the reduced capacity of the Community Compliance Team to promote and pursue compliance. The lack of Doorknocking has proven to be detrimental to our pursuit for increased compliance, and as such, will be undertaken with vigour throughout the life of this plan.

Additionally, both estimated population figures and on-the-ground experience suggests that there is an increasing issue regarding cat registrations. It is expected that there are many more cats living within Baw Baw Shire that are not registered. Although exact figures are not available, there is a high proportion of seized cats that are not microchipped or registered, resulting in difficulty in reuniting owners with their pets.

There is an opportunity for the Council to partner more closely with local veterinary clinics to encourage responsible pet ownership. Council has an existing rapport with local veterinary clinics, and agreements in place relating to animal management. Ongoing consultation to determine how we can strengthen the partnership, particularly in relation to registration and microchipping, would be beneficial.

An issue was identified by Community Compliance staff in relation to the accuracy of the Council's data regarding pet owners. This could be rectified by cross-checking the Council's data with microchipping databases.

### **Our Plans**

*Objective 1: Increase the registration rates of dogs and cats which are over the age of three months and reside within the municipality, and ensure that they are implanted with a microchip and/or displaying identification.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Ensure all seized and impounded animals are registered prior to release.	Prior to every release.	Review annual increase in registration numbers.  Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded who are not registered to their owner.
Conduct an annual door knock to identify unregistered dogs and follow up outstanding registrations to gain compliance.	Rolling program of doorknocks throughout the year to pick up missed registrations.	Assists the public and provides them every opportunity to comply.  Increases number of animal registrations and ability to reunite missing animals.  Review annual increase in registration numbers.  Review number of dogs and cats being seized and impounded who are not registered to their owner.  Records of number of unregistered and un-

		microchipped animals identified during door knocks.
Increase section 84Y agreements and agents for registration, enabling the immediate registration and return of pets to their owners	Prior to Agreement renewals in April 2018	Increased number of section 84Y agreements implemented and agents for registration operational, resulting in a greater number of pets returned directly to their owner without Council intervention.
Mail out of registration renewal forms.	Annually in March	Provides residents every opportunity to register their pets prior to 10 April.
Compulsory micro-chipping of dogs and cats for first registration and transfer from another Council.	Ongoing	Promotes recovery rate.  Assists Officers with identification.
Promote "April Amnesty" for pet registration, where owners can register pets over the age of 3 months for the first time, that should have been registered previously, without fear of infringement or enforcement action resulting.	Annually in April	Promotion at Pet Expo and via media releases from late March and throughout April.

*Objective 2: Continue to educate the community about the importance of pet registration and microchipping.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<p>Conduct an annual communications campaign in the lead up to pet registration fees being due.</p> <p>Media releases through Council's Communications Department, providing information to residents on when registration is due, how and where to register, fee structure, registration form, what information they need to provide (e.g. microchipping, desexing certificates), letting Council know they are no longer the owner,</p>	Annually in Feb - March	<p>Annually review the number of animal registrations paid (generally and on time).</p> <p>Annually monitor the number of animals registered with Baw Baw Shire.</p> <p>Raises awareness relating to responsible ownership.</p> <p>Assists Officers to ensure strays can be returned as soon as collected.</p>

have changed address or the pet is deceased. Highlight renewal period on website in March and April		Promotes compliance.
Pet Expo	Bi-annually in March / April	Provide discounted micro chipping, and promote responsible animal ownership through information and advice available on the day including local services such dog training, nutrition, pet grooming, veterinary attention.

*Objective 4: Improve the accuracy of Council's registration database by cross-referencing with microchip registry data by June 2019.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Improve accuracy of Council's pet registration database by contacting microchip registries to obtain details of dogs and cats in the municipality that are microchipped. Check all animals are also listed on the Council's pet registration database and follow up those that are not registered.	June 2019	Demonstrate an increase in numbers of pets registered with Council following the microchip registry cross referencing exercise.

*Objective 5: Improve customer service and ease with which to pay animal registration fees.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Introduce additional methods of payment (including online payments) for new animal registrations and renewals.	June 2018	Alternative payment methods to be introduced by June 2018.

## **Nuisance**

### ***Objective***

To reduce the number of animal-related complaints.

### ***Current Situation***

Baw Baw Shire Council regularly handles nuisance animal complaints, ranging from wandering cats and dogs to barking complaints.

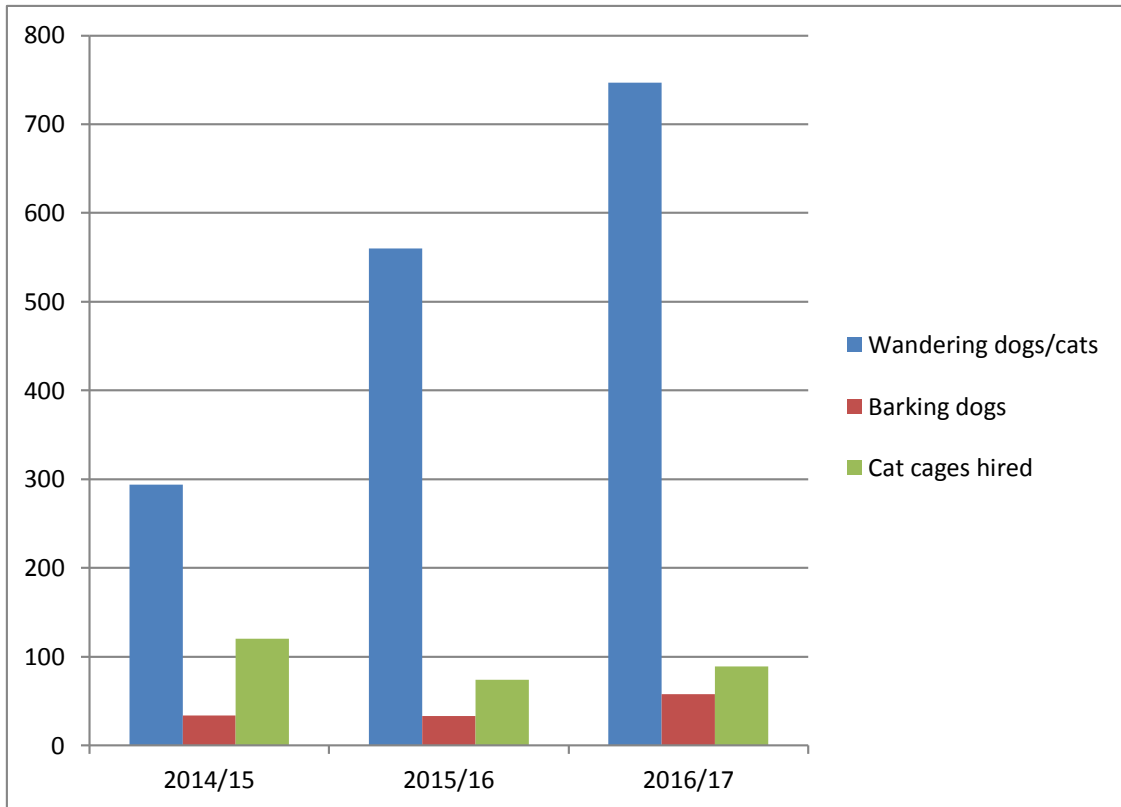
Baw Baw Shire's activities in relation to these areas include hiring cat cages, collecting and impounding wandering animals and associated enforcement, and investigating barking dog complaints.

### **Cat Cages**

The Council has noticed a decrease in the number of cat cages being hired by community members in the 2015/16 period, which is attributed to the reduced number of cages available due to damage or non-return. 10 new cat cages were purchased in early 2017, which has led to an increase in cat cages due to their availability. In 2014/15, cat cages were hired 120 times. 2015/16 saw a decrease with only 74 hires, and the frequency of hires increased again in 2016/17 to 89.

The cat cage system is delivered in partnership with the Customer Service Team. Cat cages are hired out with a bond from the hirer, and returned to Council when the nuisance cat has been captured, or within seven days.

When cats are able to be identified, they are returned to their owners with either a warning (first offence) or infringement (subsequent offences) and owners are provided with information about responsible pet ownership, including containing cats to their property.



### Barking Dogs

In an opposite trend to cat cage hire, barking dogs continue to be an issue for numerous residents. There were 34 barking dog complaints investigated in 2014/15, 33 in 2015/16, and the 2016/17 saw a significant increase in barking dog complaints with 58 reports being investigated.

Although Council currently has a barking dog complaint process in place, a review of the process is being undertaken in order to ensure a more positive outcome for all impacted parties, through education and voluntary compliance. Council's Local Law 2016 has provided Officers with additional tools to assist them in managing barking dog complaints, through the introduction of animal noise provisions, which require that an owner or occupier of any land must take reasonable steps to: prevent any animal making unreasonable noise on the land; or prevent any noise caused by an animal being emitted from the land which in the opinion an Authorised Officer is: (i) unreasonable or objectionable to a person on other land or premises; or (ii) adversely affects the amenity of any person on other land or premises.

In addition, the Local Law sets out the factors that will be taken in to consideration throughout an investigation, including steps that may be taken by the owner of an alleged barking dog/s to remedy the nuisance.

Baw Baw Shire does not offer barking dog collars for hire, but information is provided to dog owners and they are encouraged to investigate options to control nuisance barking. Owners are also made aware that the use of e-collars or shock collars is



controlled by the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* (POCTA), and that they must obtain written veterinary approval prior to the use of these collars.

### Wandering Animals

Despite a slight drop in wandering animals from 2012/13 where 327 reports being received, to 2014/15 where 294 reports were received, the following 2 years saw a substantial increase in wandering animal complaints. In 2015/16, 560 reports were received, and in 2016/17 the number of complaints were more than double that of 2014/15, with a staggering 747 wandering animals being responded to.

Wandering animals are detected both proactively through routine patrols, and reactively when the Council receives complaints.

When animals are found, they are scanned for a microchip and checked for a Council registration tag. If animals are able to be identified, contact is made with the owner to reunite them with their pet. Similarly to wandering cats that have been trapped, where the cat is microchipped, currently registered, and the owner can be contacted, a warning is issued for a first offence, followed by infringements for subsequent offences.

If wandering animals are unidentifiable, they are taken to Council's pound, where they are held for the statutory period of eight days before being available for adoption.

The Council also has agreements with numerous animal rescues and veterinary clinics, who often take animals to re-house them after the statutory period if they have not been immediately adopted, or where they have special care requirements, for example, pregnant bitches, puppies, kittens, elderly or infirm animals.

Feedback from the Community Compliance Best Value review suggested that wandering animals are an issue after Council's normal business hours, as well as during business hours. While the Community Compliance Team does offer an after-hours service, it is limited to emergencies such as dog attacks and livestock on roads. Any animals found wandering are not handled until the next working day. The overwhelming feedback from community consultation was to review the after hours service provided and expand it to collect wandering animals after hours.

### Dogs On Leash/Off Leash

Prior to July 2016, Baw Baw Shire Council did not have any on leash orders in place which would require that dogs be on a leash at all times except for in designated areas. This caused concern for our community, with dogs being able to be exercised and walked off leash anywhere, putting the safety of our community at risk of unwanted interactions with dogs. Following extensive consultation, Council introduced an Order pursuant to Section 26 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, requiring that *"the owner of any dog must keep the dog in effective control by means of a chain, cord or leash held by the owner and attached to the dog while the dog is in any public place, other than designated off-leash areas"*.

A list of Baw Baw Shire's parks was collated and an audit undertaken of which parks may be appropriate for off leash areas. A trial of these identified parks as off leash areas was undertaken, however, following feedback received by Council through the trial process, and follow up audits of these areas, further investigations are now being undertaken to: ensure that the areas are appropriate for use; establish what infrastructure will be required; and identify additional potential areas.

The off-leash parks review and final report will be completed by 31 December 2017. The report will then be considered by Council. Once a decision is made as to the parks to be designated a proposed schedule for the delivery of infrastructure will be developed.

### ***Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures***

See Appendix A.

### ***Our Current Education/Promotion Activities***

See Appendix B.

### ***Our Current Compliance Activities***

See Appendix C.

### ***Summary***

Since 2014/15, reports of wandering animals have increased significantly. Our information does not explain why the substantive increase has occurred. Council's objective is to decrease the number of wandering animals through education campaigns and Pet Expos, as well as educating owners of wandering animals directly.

Both veterinary clinics and the general community have requested a review of the Council's after hours services to include the collection of wandering animals. This item was also flagged as a priority in the best value review.

Barking dog complaints are increasing, which is not surprising as our population grows, particularly the development of residential areas where property sizes are smaller and dogs are more likely to bark at other animals that reside nearby, with neighbouring residents more likely to be affected by the barking due to close proximity to the property on which the dog lives.

The community is also calling for a Council decision regarding permanent dogs off leash areas and relevant infrastructure. The finalisation of these areas is being treated as a priority

## Our Plans

*Objective 1: Educate the community and provide readily available information relating to animal nuisance.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Pet Expo – ‘Compliance’ stall providing information to residents regarding animal nuisance.	Bi-annually in March / April	Promote responsible pet ownership through information and advice available on the day including a Compliance stall, and local services such as dog training, nutrition, pet grooming, and veterinary attention.
Finalise the locations of designated off-leash areas, and undertake educational campaign regarding their location and responsible use.	June 2018	Permanent off leash dog parks identified and appropriate signage and infrastructure installed.  Promotion through Council’s website and media releases.
Ongoing education of the community regarding recently introduced cat curfew through Council’s website, media releases, and with registration renewals.	Ongoing	Reduction in the number of cats impounded.  Reduction in the number of nuisance cat complaints.

*Objective 2: Reduce nuisance animal complaints by 2% per year.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Educate the community regarding responsibility to pick up and dispose of dog faeces through Council’s website, media releases, signage in off leash parks, provision of poo bags in Council parks and reserves.	Ongoing	Increased use of the dog poo bags provided.  Reduction in the number of complaints regarding dog faeces.
Assist residents dealing with cat trespass / nuisance problems by investigating additional locations for cat cage hire / return for rural based residents.	By June 2018	Additional locations confirmed and infrastructure / processes implemented as required.  Number of cats impounded via additional locations.

*Objective 3: Meet the community's expectations in relation to service regarding wandering animals.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Review the expansion of Council's after hours service in relation to wandering animals.	By December 2017	Number of animals collected after hours.  Community satisfaction survey results.
Review procedures related to nuisance animals to ensure that community needs are being met.	By June 2018	Community satisfaction survey results.  Customer satisfaction / dissatisfaction indicated to Officer on completion of request, and recorded in request notes.  Complaints/compliments received.

*Objective 4: Improve response and provide greater consistency in responding to barking dog complaints.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Develop a barking dog kit which includes relevant information to be provided to dog owner and impacted customer, to educate both parties and encourage resolution.	By June 2018	Number of barking dog complaints received.  Number of kits issued.  Outcome of complaints – number of complaints resolved through voluntary compliance vs number of infringements / further enforcement.

## **Dog Attacks**

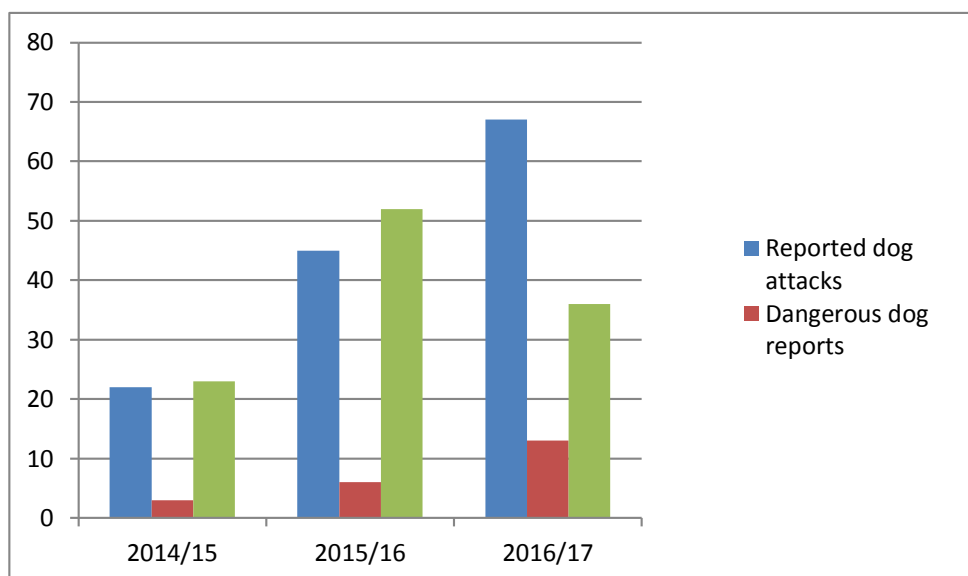
### **Objective**

To reduce the number of reported dog attacks across the municipality.

### **Current Situation**

Baw Baw Shire has experienced an increase in the number of reported dog attacks and rushes since 2014/15.

A spike in the number of dog attacks was noticed in 2016/17, which correlates with the significant increase in the number of wandering animals in the same year.



Dog attacks are given priority by Community Compliance Officers and are responded to within 15 minutes. It is preferable to be on site within 15 minutes of the report being received, however on occasions when substantial travel is required, phone contact is made on route to the scene.

Dog rushes increased substantially in 2015/16, followed by a decrease in the 2016/17 year. Dog rushes are treated similarly to a dog attack. A full investigation is undertaken and enforcement action, including infringements, are issued as necessary. When a dog rush occurs, dog owners are educated about confining their dog to their property.

Dog attacks are attended by Community Compliance Officers after hours and are treated as an emergency regardless of whether the attack occurs during business hours or after hours.

Dog attacks mostly occurred in and around the home, including the pavement in front of the home and on neighbouring properties. Public areas where people and dogs congregate, such as parks, also create risk.

Council continues to increase awareness of the impacts of dog attacks, and the benefits of confining a dog to their property as the key to preventing dog attacks. Increased education and raised awareness is an objective over the life of this plan, including raising awareness about the need to check fencing and gates for potential escape routes for dogs.

***Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures***

See Appendix A.

***Our Current Education/Promotion Activities***

See Appendix B.

## **Our Current Compliance Activities**

See Appendix C.

### **Summary**

Both dog rushes and dog attacks have increased in Baw Baw Shire since 2014. This is concerning and points to an opportunity for further educate the community about keeping their animals confined to their property.

### **Our Plans**

*Objective 1: Reduce the number of dog attacks and dog rushes and ensure that they are handled consistently.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Develop a formalised dog attack enforcement and investigation policy in accordance with the requirements of the <i>Domestic Animals Act</i> .	By June 2018	Policy finalised and implemented.  Review each dog attack investigation to ensure each Community Compliance Officer is managing investigations consistently.
Finalise a Dog Control Decision Policy to be utilised in relation to reports of dog rushes, chases and attacks.	By June 2018	Policy finalised and implemented.  Review all reports of dog rushes, chases and attacks, and ensure that relevant paperwork is completed and submitted in each case.

*Objective 2: Educate the community about the difference between a dog attack, dog rush, the importance of keeping animals confined to their property and the importance of reporting dog attacks.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Improve public awareness of what a dog attack is and how to report it using media articles, advertising, Council's website, social media and brochures available at customer service centres.	By June 2018	Compare the number of dog attacks reported to Council pre and post campaign.  Measure the number of dog rushes reported accurately (as opposed to being reported as a dog attack).  Measure the number of overall dog attacks and dog rushes.

## Dangerous, Menacing and Restricted Breeds

### Objective

To effectively manage dogs that are classified as dangerous, menacing or of a restricted breed.

### Current Situation

If a dog exhibits certain behaviours and/or there is an incident then Council has the power to declare that dog either a menacing dog or a dangerous dog, depending on the offence/s detected. Dogs must be declared by Council and are not declared menacing or dangerous as a preventative measure because they “may become aggressive”.

A dog can be declared as menacing if it has rushed at or chased a person or it bites any person or animal causing injury that is not in the nature of a serious injury.

A dog can be declared as dangerous if it has caused the death of or serious injury to a person or animal by biting or attacking that person or animal; or if the dog is a menacing dog and its owner has received at least two infringement notices in respect of the offence in Section 41E (restraint of menacing dog).

The number of registered declared dangerous dogs and registered menacing dogs living in Baw Baw Shire has increased since 2014. There are six declared dangerous dogs and eighteen menacing dogs.

Key Statistics	2017
Number of registered declared dangerous dogs	6
Number of registered menacing dogs	18
Number of registered restricted breed dogs	1

Community Compliance Officers maintain a register of dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs living in Baw Baw Shire on behalf of the state government.

Officers also inspect premises where dangerous, menacing or restricted breed dogs are housed a minimum of once per annum, and conduct inspections when a dog has been newly declared as dangerous to ensure housing requirements are being met.

Restricted breed dogs are different to dangerous or menacing dogs.

A restricted breed dog is any one of the following:

- American Pit Bull Terrier (or Pit Bull Terrier);
- Perro de Presa Canario ( or Presa Canario);
- Dogo Argentino;

- Japanese Tosa; or
- Fila Brasileiro.

Restricted breed dogs have controls placed on them due to the increased potential of an aggressive nature of the breed in general, and not necessarily as a result of an incident. There is one restricted breed dog living in Baw Baw Shire, being a Dogo Argentino. An American Pit Bull Terrier was residing in the municipality from 2016 – 2017, but passed away recently.

### ***Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures***

See Appendix A.

### ***Our Current Education/Promotion Activities***

See Appendix B.

### ***Our Current Compliance Activities***

See Appendix C.

### ***Summary***

The number of dangerous and menacing dogs in the shire has risen since 2014, as a result of increased dog attack and dog rush incidents being reported and investigated. The number of restricted breed dogs increased for approximately 12 months, but has reduced to the previous status of one. This figure may change with the newly introduced changes to the legislation regarding the ability to register restricted breed dogs. Annual inspections are conducted on premises where dangerous dogs are housed to ensure compliance with regulations.

### ***Our Plans***

*Objective 1: Identify and register all declared dogs in the municipality by June 2018.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Finalise a Dog Control Decision Policy to be utilised in relation to reports of dog rushes, chases and attacks.	By June 2018	Policy finalised and implemented.  Review all reports of dog rushes, chases and attacks, and ensure that relevant paperwork is completed and submitted in each case.
Cross-reference microchip database information with current Council registration database for potential restricted breed dogs by June 2017.	June 2018	Annual review of the number of restricted breed dogs in Baw Baw.
Undertake annual spot checks	Annual and ongoing	Confirmed compliance with all legislative requirements for the keeping of declared dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs.



## Over Population and High Euthanasia

### **Objective**

To minimise the number of animals surrendered, pets without homes and animals euthanised.

### **Current Situation**

#### Over Population

Community Compliance Officers have noted a significant increase in the number of cats being surrendered or seized, mostly from a large population of feral cats.

There remains a continuous problem with residents harbouring stray and feral cats by providing feed for them, yet not accepting the responsibility of ownership by way of registration and desexing. This subsequently leads to further breeding and a larger feral cat population.

Feral cats that are seized or surrendered often present with cat flu, other health issues or a temperament that is unsuitable for rehoming, which leads to higher euthanasia rates.

However, Council's statistics show that 84 per cent of registered cats are desexed, indicating a level of responsible pet ownership within the community, and confirming that there are still a number of cats in our community who are unregistered and/or feral.

	<b>Desexed</b>	<b>Non-desexed</b>	<b>Total registrations</b>	<b>% of animal population desexed</b>
Dogs	5,307	2,470	7,777	68%
Cats	1,809	340	2,149	84%

As mentioned under 'Nuisance Animals' the Council has noticed a decrease in the number of cat cages being hired by community members in the 2015/16 period, which is attributed to the reduced number of cages available due to damage or non-return. 10 new cat cages were purchased in early 2017, which has led to an increase in cat cages due to their availability. In 2014/15, cat cages were hired 120 times. 2015/16 saw a decrease with only 74 hires, and the frequency of hires increased again in 2016/17 to 89.

A large proportion of cats seized through the cat cage program are feral, unregistered or not microchipped.

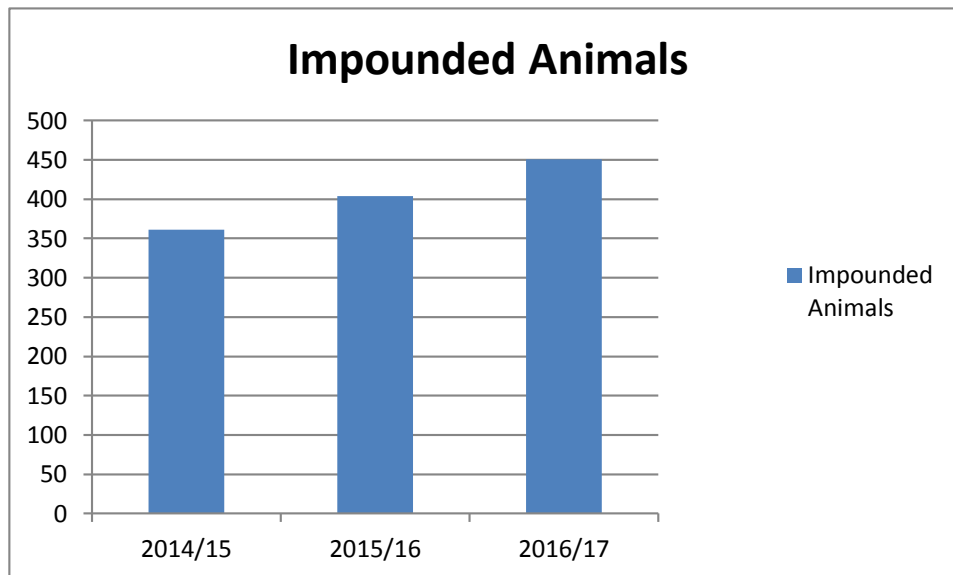
When adopting animals, it is mandatory for adopters to have the animals desexed and registered before leaving the pound to help address overpopulation.

In conjunction with the implementation of Council's Community Local Law 2016, Orders were introduced regarding mandatory desexing of cats and a cat curfew.

## Euthanasia

Since 2014/15, Baw Baw has experienced a steady increase in the number of impounded animals, from 361 in 2014/15 to 451 for 2016/17.

Of the 451 animals impounded in 2016/17, 94 of these animals were euthanised, including 15 dogs – 2 having been seized as a result of dog attacks, and 3 having been surrendered by their owners, and 79 cats.



The Council also has six Section 84Y agreements in place under the Domestic Animals Act with local veterinary clinics to perform medical duties or assist with re-housing if necessary. This also contributes to managing high euthanasia rates.

### ***Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures***

See Appendix A.

### ***Our Current Education/Promotion Activities***

See Appendix B.

### ***Our Current Compliance Activities***

See Appendix C.

### ***Summary***

Baw Baw's figures suggest that the dog population is not causing an issue with over population or excessively high euthanasia rates. Of the estimated dog population of 10,770, 7,777 are registered, equating to 72 per cent. Of those registered 5,307 or 68% are desexed, which helps to control an overpopulation of dogs.

There are also low euthanasia rates for dogs being experienced in Baw Baw. Reasons for dogs being euthanised vary from dogs being declared dangerous,

owners being unable to provide for declared dog requirements or illness. Compared to other councils, Baw Baw's dog euthanasia rate is low.

Council's statistics also reflect the feral cat problem being experienced in Baw Baw. Of the estimated 7,146 cats that live in the shire, only 2,149 are registered. However of those registered, 1,809 or 84% are desexed, which confirms that the overpopulation issue is being caused by feral cats.

Cat cage hire figures as well as figures for the number of cats impounded increasing also supports this.

Key Statistics	2017	2014	2012
Number of registered dogs	7,777	8,938	8,543
Estimated dog population*	10,770	9,497	9,497
Estimated dog registration rate	72%	94%	90%
Number of registered cats	2,149	2,452	2,253
Estimated cat population*	7,146	6,302	6,302
Estimated cat registration rate	30%	39%	36%

### **Our Plans**

*Objective 1: Increase the number of desexed registered cats by 2 per cent each year.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Continue to promote the mandatory desexing of cats in accordance with the Order introduced in 2016.	Ongoing	Increase in the number of desexed cats residing in the municipality.
Investigate partnership with vets to run a discount desexing day or ongoing subsidised desexing program for pets of low income earners.	By June 2018	Number of vets participating in the program

*Objective 2: Raise awareness about semi-owned cat population .*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Implement "Who's for cats?" education campaign in local area. Utilise the following resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Are you feeding a bigger</li> </ul>	By June 2018	Measure number and type of education materials distributed.  Record number of campaign

<p>problem?" (Who's for Cats? campaign fact sheet) - distribution throughout the municipality, placement on website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio ad - can be used for council 'on hold' phone messages, and also airing on local community radio stations</li> <li>• Template media release - for publication in local newspapers</li> <li>• Print ads - for publication in local newspapers</li> <li>• TV commercial file - can be used on website</li> <li>• Promotions to encourage people to take full ownership of cats eg discount desex/microchip/vaccinate offers, free products</li> </ul>		<p>queries received by Council.</p> <p>Record number of semi owned cats handed into local pound / shelter.</p> <p>Measure number of cats registered after the campaign has run.</p>
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*Objective 3: Institute a formal procedure for assessment for euthanasia or suitability for rehoming of dogs and cats by June 2015.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Document a formalised procedure for assessing animals in regards to suitability for rehoming.	By June 2018	Number of animals rehomed or released in comparison with euthanasia data.
Increase the number of 84Y partnerships and further develop relationships and consistent processes	By June 2018	Number of animals rehomed or released in comparison with euthanasia data.

*Objective 4: Increase the number of cat adoptions*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Undertake further promotion of animals available for adoption through social media, rolling advertisements on televisions in Council foyer, other media mediums	By June 2018	Increase in number of animals adopted
Provide a cat adoption viewing area at Council's new pound facility	By June 2018	Cat adoption area operational and an increase in cat adoptions

## **Domestic Animal Businesses**

### ***Objective***

To provide education to domestic animal businesses to assist them to comply with legislative requirements.

### ***Current Situation***

Baw Baw Shire Council is currently home to eight domestic animal businesses comprising of:

- Three boarding establishments;
- Four pet shops;
- Three breeding and rearing establishments;
- One dog training establishment; and
- One pound facility.

Overall, the Council has a low level of domestic animal businesses and few compliance issues.

All domestic animal businesses are audited annually to ensure compliance with relevant standards. Inspections are also undertaken prior to any new domestic animal businesses operating in the shire.

The Council also collects an annual levy on behalf of the state government for all domestic animal businesses.

### ***Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures***

See Appendix A.

### ***Our Current Education/Promotion Activities***

See Appendix B.

### ***Our Current Compliance Activities***

See Appendix C.

### ***Summary***

Overall, Baw Baw Shire does not have many domestic animal businesses and annual audits performed to date have not uncovered any significant issues.

The Council is considering increasing its presence in domestic animal businesses by conducting random inspections throughout the year to ensure compliance.

## Our Plans

*Objective 1: Identify and register all domestic animal businesses in the municipality by June 2018.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Identify all businesses that should be registered domestic animal businesses in the municipality. Identify businesses selling pets / pet products / services in the municipality and follow up to determine whether they should be registered with the Council.	June 2018	Compare number of registered domestic animal businesses before and after activity.
Respond to complaints regarding unregistered DAB's as a priority	Ongoing	Record any unregistered businesses. Ensure compliance.
Ensure that the Planning Department notify Compliance when enquiries or permit applications are received for Domestic Animals	Ongoing	To follow up and ensure compliance

*Objective 2: Annually inspect and audit all registered domestic animal businesses.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Continue to annually audit all domestic animal businesses within Baw Baw Shire.	Annually by 9 April.	Monitor compliance of domestic animal businesses annually.
Conduct random inspections of registered domestic animal businesses.	Minimum once per annum.	Number of visits per domestic animal businesses annually.  Compliance with relevant codes and standards.

*Objective 3: Ensure 100 per cent compliance with registration and mandatory codes of practice for all domestic animal businesses each year.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Formalise a policy to deal with audit outcomes within three months of inspection.	June 2018	Compliance rates of domestic animal businesses.  Time taken to rectify issues raised at domestic animal business audits.

## **Other Matters – Responsible Pet Ownership: Supporting people who are experiencing homelessness**

### ***Objective***

To provide support to people who are experiencing homelessness, in relation to any animals they may own, to enable them to keep their pets with them and become compliant with the *Domestic Animals Act* and Council's Community Local Law 2016.

### ***Current Situation***

In 2016/17, the Community Compliance Team responded to information in relation to homeless persons living within our municipality that had animals with them.

The bond between companion pets and their owners, is very important in the lives of many homeless. They find solace, protection and companionship through their pets. They care for their pets on limited resources so they themselves have less.

In response to our displaced community members, assistance was provided to ensure that the animals were microchipped and registered, and were securely confined or under effective control.

However, it has been identified that no formal process or policy is in place to ensure that support can be delivered quickly and consistently.

Informal discussions with Victoria Police members found that we often have contact with the same homeless people living in our community, and our local police are interested in forming a partnership and developing a policy to guide our response actions in our contact with the homeless.

Internal departments within Council have also expressed interest in being involved in this project, and further consultation will be undertaken in order to form a working committee to develop and implement an appropriate policy to ensure that homeless persons living within our municipality are supported.

### ***Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures***

See Appendix A.

### ***Our Current Education/Promotion Activities***

See Appendix B.

### ***Our Current Compliance Activities***

See Appendix C.

### ***Summary***

It has been identified that no formal policy or provisions are currently in place to support people who are experiencing homelessness, in relation to any animals they may own, to enable them to keep their pets with them whilst remaining compliant with relevant legislation.

Consultation will be undertaken with local police, other internal Council departments, and all relevant stakeholders to develop a policy to ensure immediate and consistent support is provided to any person in our community experiencing homelessness.

***Our Plans***

*Objective 1: To provide support to people who are experiencing homelessness, in relation to any animals they may own, to enable them to keep their pets with them without being in breach of any relevant legislation.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
In conjunction with local police, other internal Council departments and all relevant stakeholders to develop a policy to ensure immediate and consistent support is provided to any person in our community experiencing homelessness.	By June 2018	Policy developed and implemented



## Other Matters – Planning for the Future of the Pound Facility

### **Objective**

To provide a pound facility that meets the needs of our growing community and is compliant with the Code of Practice.

### **Current Situation**

The Baw Baw Shire Council pound currently has the capacity to hold up to eight dogs and nine cats.

With a growing human and animal population, the pound is often at full capacity and no longer meets the needs of the community.

The Community Compliance Team have in place a set of robust procedures for running the pound, however, a new pound facility is required to cater to the growing community's needs.

An established building has been purchased which has, until the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017, been operating as a boarding facility for cats and dogs. Works will be undertaken to repurpose the building as Council's new animal pound, in line with the Code of Practice for the Operation of Shelters and Pounds.

### **Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures**

See Appendix A.

### **Our Current Education/Promotion Activities**

See Appendix B.

### **Our Current Compliance Activities**

See Appendix C.

### **Summary**

The Council's pound facility is often at capacity and does not cater for a growing community.

An established building has been purchased which has, until the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017, been operating as a boarding facility for cats and dogs. Works will be undertaken to repurpose the building as Council's new animal pound, in line with the Code of Practice for the Operation of Shelters and Pounds.

### **Our Plans**

*Objective 1: Provide a replacement pound facility that is run in accordance with relevant standards and meets the needs of our growing community.*

Activity	When	Evaluation
Undertake works to repurpose the building located in Longwarry North as Council's new animal pound.	By January 2018	Building works complete and new animal pound operational.

Review of all pound procedures and processes to ensure they are current and applicable to new animal pound.	By January 2018	Adopted procedures and processes that are undertaken consistently.
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### **Annual Review of Plan and Annual Reporting**

As per Section 68A(3) of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, the Council will review its Domestic Animal Management Plan annually to assess whether any amendments are necessary in order to ensure the plan is relevant and can be completed within the required timeframe.

The Council will expand its evaluation reporting to include more detailed statistics to ensure clarity and transparency relating to Council's animal management services.

The Council will publish the evaluation of its Domestic Animal Management Plan as part of its Annual Report.

In the final year of the plan, Council will undertake a major review and prepare drafting the next Domestic Animal Management Plan.

## Appendix A Our Orders, Local Laws, Council Policies and Procedures

### PART 2 – ANIMALS

#### 2.1 Permitted Quantity of Animals

- (1) The limitations and restrictions in this Part do not prohibit the keeping of any animals or birds regulated by the Planning Scheme.
- (2) An owner or occupier of any land in a Residential Area must not, without a permit, keep or allow to be kept on that land any more than four different species of animals stated in the following table.
- (3) An owner or occupier of any land in a Residential Area must not, without a permit, keep or allow to be kept on that land in excess of the number of animals stated in the following table:

Animal Type	Land up to 999 square metres	Land which is 1,000 to 3,999 square metres	Land which is 4,000 square metres and greater
Dogs	2	3	4
Cats	2	2	2
Horses, Ponies	0	0	2
Sheep, Goats, Alpacas or similar	0	2	4
Pig	0	0	0
Rooster	0	0	0
Poultry	6	6	No limit
Cattle	0	0	1

#### 2.2 Keeping of Dogs and Cats on Rural Zoned Land

- (1) An owner or occupier of land in a Rural Zone must not, without a permit, keep or allow to be kept on that land more than:
  - (2) 5 dogs; and
  - (3) 5 cats.

#### 2.3 Animal Excrement

- (1) A person in charge of an animal must not allow any part of the animal's excrement to remain on any road or public land and must immediately collect and dispose of the excrement upon it being deposited there.
- (2) A person in charge of an animal on any road or public land must carry sufficient litter devices to collect and dispose of excrement from that animal and must produce them on the request of an Authorised Officer.

## 2.6 Keeping of Animals

- (1) An owner or occupier of land must ensure that any part of the land used for keeping an animal is:
  - (a) maintained in a clean, inoffensive and sanitary condition and does not cause a nuisance to any other person;
  - (b) kept to the satisfaction of Council or an Authorised Officer; and
  - (c) adequately fenced and keep the fence maintained in a satisfactory condition, so that any animal or bird kept on the land cannot escape from the land.
- (2) An owner or occupier of any land on which an animal is kept must ensure that:
  - (a) any structure on the land which houses an animal is sited so as not to cause a nuisance to any person;
  - (b) the part of the land surrounding the place where the animal is kept is free from rubbish or vegetation that could attract or harbour rats or vermin;
  - (c) all animal food for consumption kept or stored on the land is kept or stored in a vermin and fly proof receptacle; and
  - (d) all animal waste is removed from the land so as not to be offensive or a nuisance to any other person.

## 2.7 Animal Noise

- (1) An owner or occupier of any land must take all reasonable steps:
  - (a) to prevent any animal making unreasonable noise on the land; or
  - (b) to prevent any noise caused by an animal being emitted from the land which in the opinion an Authorised Officer is:
    - (i) unreasonable or objectionable to a person on other land or premises; or
    - (ii) adversely affects the amenity of any person on other land or premises.
- (2) For the purposes of sub-clause (1), in determining whether noise is unreasonable, objectionable or adversely affecting the amenity, regard must be had to:
  - (a) its volume, intensity and duration; and
  - (b) the time, place and other circumstances in which it is emitted.

- (3) For the purposes of sub-clause (1), reasonable steps to prevent the noise include (but are not limited to):
- (a) identifying and modifying stimuli or conspicuous causes of the animal's behaviour; and
  - (b) controlling or modifying the physical environment in which the animal is kept; and
  - (c) where the animal causing the noise is a dog, the owner and the dog participating in behavioural training; and
  - (d) where the animal causing the noise is a dog, using an anti-barking citronella collar; and
  - (e) where the animal causing the noise is a dog, and where veterinary approval has been obtained, using a shock collar; and
  - (f) obtaining advice from a veterinarian or animal behaviourist and implementing that advice; and
  - (g) securing the animal within a dwelling unless supervised by a person capable of preventing the animal from making unreasonable or objectionable noise, or noise adversely affecting the amenity of any person on other land or premises; and
  - (h) considering removal of the animal from the land or dwelling; and
  - (i) keeping records of any steps taken, including the dates and times that steps were taken and the effectiveness of such steps, and providing those records to the Council upon request by an Authorised Officer.

## **SCHEDULE 4 - Orders**

### **Dogs must be under effective control**

- (1) Pursuant to Section 26 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, the owner of any dog must keep the dog in effective control by means of a chain, cord or leash held by the owner and attached to the dog while the dog is in any public place, other than designated off-leash areas.

### **Designated off-leash areas**

- (1) A dog may be exercised off leash in designated off-leash areas, providing the owner:
  - carries a chain, cord or leash sufficient to bring the dog under effective control if the dog behaves in a manner which threatens any person or animal;
  - remains in effective voice or hand control of the dog so as to be able to promptly bring the dog under effective control by placing the dog on a chain, cord or leash if that becomes necessary; and
  - does not allow the dog to worry, attack, rush at or threaten any person or animal.

### **Mandatory Desexing of Cats**

- (1) As of 1 July 2016 all cats being registered for the first time (new registrations) must be desexed from the age of six months. Exemptions include any cat registered with Baw Baw Shire Council before 30 June 2016 and animals exempt under the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

### **Exemptions include the following:**

- A cat that is owned by a person or body that conducts a domestic animal business registered with Council where the cat is used for breeding purposes in connection with that business.
- A cat that is the subject of written veterinary advice that the health of the cat is liable to be significantly prejudiced if it is desexed.
- A cat that is owned by a person who is a current member of an \*applicable organisation and the animal is registered with that organisation (proof must be provided of both owners and cat membership at the time of registration).

### **\*Applicable Organisations**

- Australian National Cats Inc (previously known as Waratah National Cat Alliance);
- Cats Victoria Inc. (new organisation);
- Feline Control Council (Victoria) Inc; and

- The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy Australia and Victoria Inc

### **Cat Curfew**

- (1) From 1 July 2016 pursuant to Section 25 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 all owners of a cat are required to keep that cat securely confined to the owner's property and not allow that cat to wander at large outside the owner's premises. The Order covers all areas of the municipality.

### **Local Laws**

#### **Council Policies**

- Number of animals in a residential area.

#### **Procedures**

- Impounding domestic animals
- Handling 'aggressive dogs'
- Releasing impounded domestic animals
- Assisting police
- Domestic animal complaints
- Declaration dangerous/menacing dog
- Search warrants
- Restricted dog breeds
- After hours emergency service
- Excess animal permits
- Registration of a domestic animal business
- Equipment
- Vehicle use and maintenance
- Manual handling
- Community Local Law 2016

## **Appendix B**

### **Our Current Education/Promotion Activities**

Baw Baw Shire Council aims to promote responsible pet ownership through educational programs and promotion activities. These include:

- Media releases
- Paid print advertising
- Radio advertising
- Media interviews

- Brochures available at Baw Baw Shire Customer Service Centres
- Council website
- Social media, including Facebook and Twitter.
- Annual mail out of dog and cat registration renewal forms.
- Compulsory microchipping of dogs and cats for all registrations.
- Free dog and cat transfer of registration when relocating to Baw Baw Shire Council, if the animals are currently registered with another Council.
- Follow up of non-renewal of registrations and conduct door-knocking program to capture unregistered animals and animals where registration has not been renewed.

Following the success of previous Pet Expos, Baw Baw Shire will conduct a Pet Expo and Adoption day bi-annually to provide education to our community.

The Council will aim to run a minimum of two community education campaigns per annum to educate pet owners about various responsibilities.

## **Appendix C**

### ***Our Current Compliance Activities***

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires the Council to administer and enforce the provisions of the Act.

The approach used by the Council in the first, preferred instance is to educate the community and encourage pet owners to take responsibility for the pet voluntarily. The more successful this approach is, the less enforcement is required.

Emphasis is always placed on maintaining community safety.

The Council's compliance activities include:

- Regular street patrols to detect wandering animals.
- For non-serious or non-safety related offences, taking an 'ask, tell, enforce' approach, including verbal and written warnings where appropriate, provision of information, notices to comply and enforcement as a last resort.
- Prosecutions as required.
- Annual inspections of dangerous dog enclosures and domestic animal businesses.



- Respond to community complaints regarding non-compliance with provisions of the Act.
- Provision of an after hours emergency service in the instance of dog attacks.