



The Barossa Council



DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022 - 2027

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Barossa Council acknowledges the traditional lands of the Peramangk, Ngadjuri and Kurna people and that we respect their spiritual relations with Country

Introduction

The *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (The Act)* provides the framework for Dog and Cat Management in South Australia. The Act requires all councils to develop a plan for the management of dogs and cats within its area.

Mission

To create an environment that encourages responsible pet ownership, where people and pets integrate safely and harmoniously within The Barossa Council community.

What is a Dog and Cat Management Plan?

In fulfilling Council's obligations under section 26A of the Act, this Plan will guide Council's approach to dog and cat management over the next 5 years.

The plan provides the framework for Council's priorities and services delivered to its community. It identifies objectives and strategies to implement the mission, which relates directly to the objects of the Act.

How was this plan developed?

The plan was developed by The Barossa Council (Council) officers, having many years of experience in animal management within Local Government. Consideration was given to Council's existing dog and cat management services, by-laws, strategic and corporate plans and the Dog and Cat Management Board's Template.

Community Engagement

A key component of the plan is input from the community. Through the development of the plan the community was invited to provide feedback and input into this plan.

Exclusions

Costs and resourcing are not detailed in this plan and will be covered in separate Council processes or documents.

Any legislative changes, or changes to service levels that occur during the life of this plan may not be accurately reflected.

Strategic Links

Council's Corporate Planning framework guides Council to achieve its 20-year vision for the community. There are direct links between this plan and Council's Corporate Plan*.



Community and Culture

- Contribute to a safer community.
- Provide opportunities for the community to participate in local decision-making.
- Encourage a learning community.



Health and Wellbeing

- Address nuisance and environmental risk such as animals, vermin, pest control, illegal dumping on public land and fire prevention.



Good Governance

- Ensure that Council's policy and process frameworks are based on principles of sound governance and meet legislative requirements.
- Ensure that decisions regarding expenditure of Council's budget are based on an assessment of whole of life costs, risks associated with the activity and advice contained within supporting plans.
- Define and deliver on agreed Customer Service Standards for Council.



*Currently under review at the time of preparing this plan.

Legislation

The *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (The Act)* provides the framework for Animal Management in South Australia. The Act's objectives are focused on promoting responsible ownership of dogs and cats. Councils are conferred legislative responsibilities for the management of dogs and cats within their communities.

Objectives of the Act:

- To encourage responsible dog and cat ownership;
- To reduce public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats;
- To promote the effective management of dogs and cats.

Council's responsibilities (Section 26 of the Act):

Administer and enforce the provisions of the Act relating to dogs and cats within its area, and for that purpose must—

- Maintain a register of dogs containing the information required by the Dog and Cat Management Board; and
- Appoint a suitable person to be Registrar; and
- Make satisfactory arrangements for issuing and replacing certificates of registration and registration discs; and
- Appoint at least 1 full-time authorised person or make other satisfactory arrangements for the exercise of the functions and powers of authorised persons; and
- Make satisfactory arrangements for the detention of dogs seized (and may, but need not, make such arrangements for cats seized); and
- Make satisfactory arrangements for fulfilling other obligations under the Act.

Income received

Council keeps separate accounts of money received under the Act and of money expended in the administration and enforcement of the provisions of the Act relating to dogs and cats.

Annual financial reporting to the Dog and Cat Management Board (DCMB), combined with stringent financial policies and practices ensure that income and expenditure is monitored and managed effectively, with income generated by dog and cat registrations being invested into the administration and enforcement of the Act.

Dog registration fees

The Act allows each Council to set dog registration fees, and in doing so, must provide for a percentage rebate for a dog that is both desexed and microchipped.

Council will endeavour to ensure that registration fees remain affordable and will seek to balance affordability with the resources required to meet the needs and expectations of the community. Annual reviews will be undertaken as part of Council's budgeting processes.

Dog Management Fund

Every council must pay into the State Government's Dog Management Fund, a percentage of each dog registration received. Currently the percentage has been set at 12% for regional councils, which includes The Barossa Council; and 24% for metropolitan councils.

Breeders and sellers of dogs and cats

The DCMB manages the statewide breeder registration scheme and retains associated registration fees. The scheme was introduced to regulate the breeding and selling of dogs and cats to reduce the number ending up in shelters, to reduce unwanted litters and reduce the instances of puppy farms. Council will ensure that it is taking steps to fulfil its obligations under the Act in relation to Breeders.

By-laws

Legislation allows councils to make by-laws for the management of dogs and cats at a local level. Council has both dog and cat by-laws which enables Council to limit the number of dogs and cats kept at premises, as well as defining on and off-leash activity areas for dogs. Council's by-laws were renewed during the preparation of this plan.



Pet Ownership

Companion animals (dogs and cats) provide a range of benefits and enrich our lives. In 2014, it was reported that 41% of households in South Australia owned a dog, 27% owned a cat and 16% had both a dog and a cat*. Pets facilitate social interactions within the community and provide a range of physical and emotional benefits for owners, but come with a range of responsibilities.

Owner responsibilities

In 2018, the Act was amended which introduced compulsory microchipping and compulsory desexing of dogs and cats, unless the animal is eligible for an exemption. A high percentage of dogs within the Council area are microchipped which provide valuable identification and opportunities to reunite lost dogs and owners.

Pets are a big commitment!

Pets are a significant commitment for the life of the animal, taking into account the important matters of desexing, microchipping, Council registration and the ongoing financial commitment associated with the provision of food, veterinary care and adequate fencing.

Dogs and Cats Online

The state-wide online database for dogs and cats provides a valuable centralised system for dog registration and the registration of cat microchips. Council will continue to promote the use of Dogs and Cats Online with dog and cat owners and encourage greater online use.

Community education

Legislative controls need to be supplemented by a range of non-regulatory approaches such as education, communication and increased awareness of dog and cat matters to achieve lasting, voluntary changes in behaviour.

Minimising nuisance

Minimising public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats is a key component of The Barossa Council's approach for the life of this plan. Encouraging responsible ownership and providing the community with an understanding of their responsibilities, will contribute to a community which benefits from reduced public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs and cats.

Children and pets

Anecdotally, there are benefits for children growing up with pets. Ranging from health and exercise, to care, compassion and responsibility. It is critical that children are supervised around dogs. The instances of dog bites are often a result of the family pet.

**2014 Roy Morgan Research - Pet ownership in Australia*

Dogs in Public Places

Owning a dog encourages physical exercise as well as social connection and interaction, which generates a range of benefits for both dog and owner. However, ensuring the dog remains under effective control when being exercised off-lead in approved areas, or on-leash on streets and roads is crucial. Council encourages off-leash activities in appropriate locations and situations; and will focus on educating owners to keep their dogs on a lead if the dog cannot be kept under effective control when off-lead.

Dog parks

The introduction of two off leash dog parks provides a valuable asset to dogs and their owners. Adding value and promoting the appropriate use, including ensuring effective control will be an important focus.

Minimising dog incidents

One of the main causes of dog incidents or unwanted approaches is a result of inadequate fencing to secure the dog to a property; or not having the dog under effective control in public places. Dogs that wander can be a threat to livestock, other animals and the community, particularly children and the elderly. Council places a high priority on ensuring adequate control over dogs and encourages matters to be reported to Council.

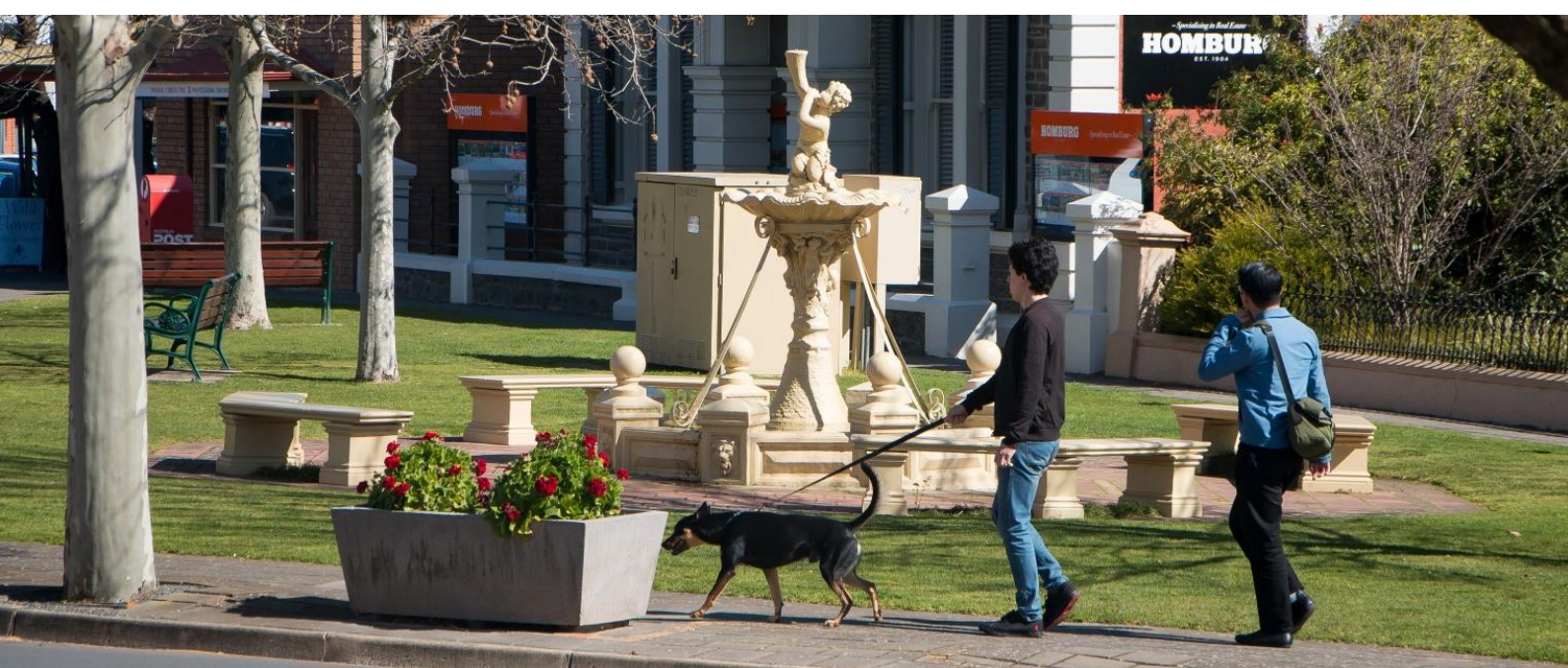
Accidental escapes account for a majority of instances of wandering large. Council will work with owners to ensure adequate confinement. However, in situations of regular or persistent wandering due to a lack of action from the owner, a sterner approach may be applied in accordance with Council's Enforcement Policy.

Dogs and Livestock

The diversity of land uses within the Council area sees a mix of residential, rural living, hobby farms and large primary production areas. Confining dogs to a property is critical to reducing instances of dogs impacting on livestock. It is important that dog owners are aware of their legal obligations and potential consequences when dogs are involved in chasing, harassing or attacking livestock. A dog chasing livestock or being in a livestock enclosure can cause distress and injury to the other animals.

Yes, your dog can bite too!

Dogs often bite out of fear or anxiety, protection of food, protection of belongings or property, during a chase or simply in reaction to a set of circumstances. An incident can occur either in public or private environments. Council will promote the Dog and Cat Management Board's publications and look at education initiatives to promote this message as well as opportunities to engage with local dog behaviourists to promote early socialisation, training and an awareness of dog body language.



A Local Perspective

The Barossa Council area covers a total of 912 square kilometers and is bordered by the municipalities of the Town of Gawler, Light Regional Council, Mid-Murray Council, Adelaide Hills Council and the Playford Council. It consists of a number of larger townships as well as various smaller settlements, with an estimated population of 25,245 in 2020. The Barossa is a unique area and attracts a large number of visitors and tourists.

Dogs Registered by Location

Registered dogs by Location (Top 10)	2020/2021
Nuriootpa	1263
Williamstown	803
Tanunda	796
Angaston	488
Lyndoch	478
Mount Pleasant	301
Springton	223
Cockatoo Valley	217
Kalbeeba	129
Penrice	101

Overview of Statistics

	18/19	19/20	20/21
Dogs			
Dogs Registered	5552	5690	5766
Microchipping Rate	85%	93%	96%
Desexing rate	69%	70%	71%
Dogs Wandering Reports	278	253	200
Dogs Collected & Returned	251	239	144
Dogs Impounded	27	15	12
Impounded & returned to owner	19	9	9
Dog Harassments	13	30	21
Dog Attacks	30	30	32

Top 5 Dog Breeds

Top 5 Dog Breeds	2020/21
Australian Kelpie	599
Maltese Terrier	465
Border Collie	456
Labrador Retriever	387
Staffordshire Bull Terrier	305



Dog Management Services

Team and allocated resources

Council's Regulatory Services Team is tasked with the management of dogs and cats in the community. The team consists of two full-time General Inspectors, an Administrative and Technical Support Officer and a Manager, Regulatory Services. The team reports to the Director, Development and Environmental Services, who is appointed the Registrar of Dogs. Overall, Council has three Authorised Officers in animal management. In addition, the team is supported by various teams and directorates throughout Council.

Service levels and after hours

Council places a high priority on dog matters which may pose a risk to the community including dogs wandering at large and dog incidents.

Council provides an after-hours service for emergency dog situations, including a 24/7 service via its after-hours call centre to reunite lost dogs with their owners, if the dog is identified with a current registration tag.

Reuniting dogs and owners

Council strives to ensure that dogs found wandering are returned to their owners as soon as possible. This reduces stress on both dog and owner. A very high percentage of dogs found wandering are reunited with their owners the same day. Council has averaged a 97% return-to-owner rate over the last three years.

Excessive barking

Whilst barking is a natural behavior in dogs, excessive barking is a commonly reported problem and can be a source of frustration for neighbours. Owners are often unaware of their dog's behaviour and the nuisance it is causing. Council will seek to expand on printed and online material, including a new barking information pack to be available to both dog owners and neighbours to promote improved communication between neighbours which may assist in the early resolution of some cases.

Excessive barking is an unwanted behaviour which can be caused by a range of factors. Identifying the cause is important. Council officers will assist residents and work to resolve nuisance barking as soon as possible, by providing education and advice to dog owners based on data collected by affected neighbours. For more prolonged or severe cases, legislation allows for a more formal approach which can include issuing Control Orders or Expiations notices if supported by evidence.

Dog holding facility

Council operates a purpose-built facility to accommodate dogs on a short-term basis locally, until owners are found. This assist in reuniting dogs and owners as soon as possible.

Animal Welfare League (AWL)

Council seeks to ensure that found dogs are reunited with their owner as soon as possible. Council has partnered with the AWL who will accept dogs that are unclaimed by their owners after being held for the mandatory period. At the AWL, dogs will undergo veterinary and behavioral assessments to determine their suitability for rehoming, if not reunited with their owner

Dog Exercise Areas

The majority of Council reserves are areas where dogs can be exercised off lead, providing the dog is under effective control at all times. Importantly, dog owners must understand the importance of effective control to minimise unwanted approaches by a dog or in more severe cases harassment or attack incidents.

Effective control of a dog means by a physical restraint such as leash. Or in the case of off-leash areas, by command and the dog will immediately respond to voice command, the dog being in close proximity to the person and the person being able to see the dog at all times.

Unfenced Dog Exercise Areas Effective Control - Off leash	All Council Reserves. Unless sign-posted otherwise.
Fenced Dog Exercise Areas Effective Control - Off leash	Nuriootpa Linear Park - Penrice Road, Nuriootpa
	Williamstown Williamstown Oval Precinct - Springton Road, Williamstown.
	Tanunda Heinemann Park – Murray Street, Tanunda (Partly fenced)
Council Reserves On Leash Only	Nuriootpa Centennial Park, Caravan Park and adjacent Coulthard Reserve Penrice Road, Nuriootpa.
	Mount Pleasant Talunga Oval and Caravan Park - Melrose Street Mount Pleasant
Dog Exercise Areas On leash only	All public streets, public roads and footpaths.
	Shared use paths used by pedestrians and cyclists
	All Forestry SA Reserves, Campgrounds & National Parks Contact State Government for more detail
Dog Free Areas Dogs not permitted	All schools and school ovals (Unless Accredited Assistance dogs or with Principal's consent) Where signs indicate dogs not permitted.



Cat Management

With the legislative reforms in 2018 came a stronger focus on cat management. The changes to the Act provided for mandatory microchipping and desexing; and in association with the introduction of Dogs and Cats Online provided a cat registration scheme.

Education: responsible cat ownership

Council provides a range of education information to the community in various forms including electronic and printed material as well as advice in person. Educating the community on responsible cat ownership will be a key focus. Particularly in relation to desexing, microchipping, identification and registration on Dogs and Cats Online..

A cat is happiest at home

Cats that are allowed to wander are a source of nuisance and can impact both the community and the environment. Cats prefer the safety, warmth and comfort of home. Council will continue to encourage responsible cat ownership to reduce negative impacts associated with wandering cats.

Animal Welfare League

Council has partnered with the Animal Welfare League (AWL) as Council's nominated facility who will accept stray and unidentified cats from the community on Council's behalf. The AWL will make arrangements to reunite identified cats with their owners. In the case of unidentified and unowned cats, will provide veterinary and behavioural assessments to determine their suitability for rehoming.

Stray and semi-owned cats

Well-intentioned people may contribute to increases in the homeless cat populations by feeding unidentified or unowned cats. This can attract other cats to the area and encourages breeding which increases the problem.

Council will discourage residents feeding cats that they do not own. Instead, residents will be encouraged to take the cat to a vet or rescue organisation for scanning, or in the case of an unidentified cat, take full responsibility for the cat by desexing, microchipping and confining the cat.

Cat nuisance

Council officers respond to nuisances caused by various animals, including owned cats. Compared to dogs, Council receives low numbers of complaints annually.

Property owners are permitted to humanely trap cats found trespassing on their property. Council will continue to offer humane traps for hire for this purpose and encourage all trapped cats to be taken to the AWL.

Cat By-Laws

Council has a cat by-law which limits the number of cats at properties, in certain situations. The by-law was renewed during the preparation of this plan.

The Act provides some limitations in relation to cat management. There are also challenges in resourcing and implementing laws to require registration and confinement of cats at a local level. Due to the low number of complaints and Council's existing by-laws, localised cat registration and confinement has not been included within this plan.

Cat desexing, microchipping and registration

The Act provides that cats must be desexed and microchipped. Owners must also register their cat's microchip on Dogs and Cats Online. This provides a valuable record of cat ownership and assists Councils, veterinary practices and welfare organisations reunite cats with owners.

A focus will be to increase the number of cats microchipped and registered through the life of this plan. The importance of identification via microchipping, as well as collars and tags will be promoted. Cat microchipping allows for the cat to be reunited with its owner if found, and protect it from laws relating to unidentified cats.

A local perspective

Council has been educating the community for many years on responsible cat ownership and has offered a cage hire program to residents to assist with unowned or stray cats.

This is believed to have contributed to a low number of requests received annually relating to nuisance cat issues. Issues of nuisance caused by owned cats be managed under Local Nuisance Legislation.

Cats registered on Dogs and Cats Online

18/19	19/20	20/21
430	838	712

Cat nuisance requests

18/19	19/20	20/21
25	30	41

Legislative review

The *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* is scheduled for review during the early part of this plan, which may introduce a greater requirement on Local Government in relation to cat management.



Theme 1: Provide for the effective management of dogs and cats

Objective	Strategies	Activity Measure
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements of the <i>Dog and Cat Management Act 1995</i>. - Ensure that all income generated by registrations is expended in the administration and enforcement of the Act. - Maximise the use of contemporary ICT systems and processes. - Provide services that meet the needs of the community based on available data. - Ensure that staff are trained and have the appropriate skills and knowledge.	- Undertake annual reporting in accordance with DCMB requirements. - Undertake annual reviews to ensure that registration fees remain as affordable as possible, whilst balancing the resources required to meet the needs of the community. - Undertake regular reviews of income and expenditure as part of Council's budgeting processes. - Maintain a separate account of income and expenditure associated with Dog and Cat Management. - Ensure all staff follow legislative requirements and set procedures that reflect legislation, best practices and industry standards. - Investigate matters in line with Council's Enforcement Policy. - Provide for training opportunities and upskilling of staff, to ensure best practice approaches are used. - Undertake regular reviews of resourcing required to meet the needs of the community. - Undertake a review of after-hours service levels based on data, community needs and WHS requirements. - Review data annually to determine trends. - Encourage the use of Dogs and Cats Online by Dog and Cat Owners and Veterinarians. - Investigate and implement initiatives to increase convenience and communication with dog owners including SMS Messaging, Online Reporting and expanding use of social media. - Ensure that Council's capital assets remain fit for purpose and meet legislative requirements. - Encourage matters to be reported to Council for investigation	- Annual reports provided to DCMB by required timeframe. - Legislative compliance - Number of training opportunities attended by officers - Number of after-hours requests requiring attendance. - Increase usage of Dogs and Cats Online - Number of Dog and Cat related requests received.

Theme 2: Promote and encourage responsible dog ownership

Objective	Strategies	Activity Measure
- Foster and encourage voluntary compliance in the community - Maximise desexing and microchipping of dogs and cats. - Maximise Dog Registration - Encourage obedience training and early socialisation of dogs. - Minimise the number of dogs transferred to rescue organisations	- Provide for an education-first approach to promote voluntary compliance within the community. - Be visible in the community and promote Council's role in Animal Management, including success stories, to educate the community on important issues. - Be a reference for information & advice for the community. - Promote important messaging and information through social and printed media. - Investigate opportunities to educate the community. - Partner with local vets and dog trainers to promote key messages. - Increase number of online registrations to maximise identification of dogs and cats and revenue. - Encourage and promote physical identification of dogs and cats, in addition to Microchipping to reunite pets and owners promptly. - Undertake annual audits of dog registrations and microchipping to maximise compliance rate. - Provide information on the benefits of desexing, microchipping and registration. - Enforce legislative requirements for unregistered dogs. - Utilise roadside signage to promote key messaging, including dog registration. - Provide and distribute printed brochures and education material to local vets - Provide registration rebates for obedience training to encourage attendance. - Regularly review online content such as websites and the use of social media to engage with the community.	- Reduced instances of use of expiation notices being issued. - Number of website visits and online engagements - Minimal number of animals being transferred to shelters and rescue organisations - Maximise return to owner rate of dogs and cats - and minimise time spent missing. - Maximise compliance rate of dog registrations - Display signage annually across Council region at key times. - Number of social media and online engagements.

Theme 3: Minimise public and environmental nuisance caused by dogs

Objective	Strategies	Activity Measure
- Address and minimise nuisance issues including wandering at large, excessive barking and dog incidents - Provide suitable areas for off-leash and on-leash exercise and ensure such areas are being used appropriately by dog owners	- Encourage the community to report dog wandering to Council for investigation - Develop and roll out a barking information pack for dog owners and neighbours suitable for downloading. - Encourage the community to report all dog harassment or attack incidents to Council for investigation. - Limit numbers of dogs that can be kept in applicable properties via by-laws - Investigate and manage dog incidents in line with best practice, legal advice and DCMB Guidelines - Review data annually for trends or opportunities - Provide a regulatory focus for ongoing, repeat or serious matters. - Regularly review the use of public reserves for suitability for on-leash or off-leash exercise ensure they meet the needs of the whole community, including non-dog owners. - Review and update signage at relevant Council reserves and shared use trails - Undertake proactive and reactive patrols of public areas including dog parks, off leash areas and shared used trails to educate the community on responsibilities and requirements. - Ensure dog bag dispensers are appropriately placed to maximise use by owners. - Educate and increase the awareness of requirements for on-leash areas, including roads and footpaths. - Encourage and promote the requirement for dogs to be kept on leash if they can not be kept under effective control. - Ensure incident data is recorded on Dogs and Cats Online. - Ensure signage is current, visible and easily understood. - Promote the Dog and Cat Management Board's education material in printed, online and social media formats.	- Number of requests relating to nuisance dog issues. - Number of barking inquiries that proceed to investigation - Reduction in serious or repeat incidents - Signage is relevant, current and meets the needs of the community. - Number of patrols undertaken and issues identified. - Increase roll out of dog bag dispensers in parks, reserves and open spaces. - Reduction in reports of owners not picking up after their dogs. - Minimal instances of dogs being exercised off leash on roads and footpaths. - Increased public awareness of effective control and reduction in associated issues.

Theme 4: Encourage responsible cat ownership to minimise public and environmental nuisances

Objective	Strategies	Activity Measure
- Promote and encourage responsible cat ownership - Minimise nuisances associated with wandering cats - Review data annually to determine trends	- Encourage use and uptake of Dogs and Cats Online by cat owners. - Educate owners on microchipping and desexing requirements. - Provide and regularly review online content encouraging responsible cat ownership. - Promote discounted microchipping opportunities or organisations - Distribute DCMB printed educational material in Council offices and local vets. - Enforce mandatory desexing and microchipping requirements - Encourage confinement of cats - Partner with AWL to facilitate housing, reuniting and/or rehoming of found cats by residents. - Provide traps available for hire. - Utilise Nuisance legislation where required. - Develop a 'Dear Neighbour' information pack for residents impacted by cat nuisances - Review Customer Request data and data provided by AWL - Discourage the feeding of stray, unowned or semi-owned cats - Use and promote education material on Council's website and social media platforms.	- Increased number of cats registered on Dogs and Cats Online annually - Increase uptake of online registrations - Number of requests relating to nuisance cat issues. - Number of online page views, visits and engagements - Increased number of cats returned to owner via microchip - Increased number of cats on Dogs and Cats Online desexed and microchipped. - Number of found cats presented to AWL by residents.

References

Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 and Regulations

Dog and Cat Management Board Website

Dog and Cat Management Board – Templates and Policy

The Barossa Council Enforcement Policy

Barossa Council Companion Animal Management Plan (Expired)

The Barossa Council By-Laws