

Community Engagement Report

Domestic Animal Management Plan

2025



Thank you to all the community members who have taken the time to provide feedback on the Domestic Animal Management Plan.

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If you need this information in another format, please call Nillumbik Shire Council on **9433 3111** or email nillumbik@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the Country on which Nillumbik is located, we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future, and extend that respect to all First Nations People. We respect the enduring strength of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.



Inclusion statement

Nillumbik Shire Council is committed to creating a fair, equitable and inclusive community where human rights are respected, participation is facilitated, barriers are addressed and diversity is celebrated. We support the rights of all people regardless of age, gender, sexuality, ability or cultural identity. We value the diverse and changing nature of our community and understand that some groups and individuals experience more barriers than others.

Project background

Nillumbik's Domestic Animal Management Plan

The current Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2021-2025 was developed in accordance with section 68A of the *Domestic Animal Act 1994* (the Act). Council has a legislated responsibility under the Act to ensure compliance and delivery of animal management services related to community expectations around responsible pet ownership.

Community consultation involves interaction with our community to better understand the needs and perspectives on the core areas of animal management, animal welfare, responsible pet ownership, Local Laws as well as the importance of educating the community of desexing and microchipping dogs and cats.

This process allows Council to use the insights gained from this consultation to understand community sentiment regarding animal management topics including dogs on ovals, confinement of cats and to identify current issues that are not currently included in the DAMP 2021-2025.

The insights gained during this phase of community engagement will inform and strengthen the development of the final DAMP.

Community consultation was conducted from 3 March – 4 April 2025

The purpose of this engagement was an opportunity for community to provide feedback on the Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Feedback on the draft plan was sought from community on a number of matters including:

- Animal management services
- Programs or strategies
- New Orders that could be made to address responsible pet ownership in the community including proposed on leash or off leash areas
- Concerns associated with current council policies on animal management.

How we engaged

The below table outlines the various methods used to engage with the community.

	Website	Total of 1,640 visits to the website participate.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/damp-2025
	Posters	A total of 50 posters were displayed throughout the Shire
	Postcards/flyers	A total of 250 postcards and 250 flyers were distributed throughout the Shire
	Corflute signage	6 signs displayed at dog parks
	Social media	Social media posts and paid targeted ads on Facebook
	Newsletter	Nillumbik News Autumn edition
	Pop-up information	Community Safety information sessions estimated 40 visits at pop-ups with community at Eltham North and Diamond Creek dog parks.

Website

- Consultation via participate.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/damp-2025

Posters displayed

- Council office
- Vet Clinics
- Pet shops
- Libraries
- Hubs
- Local retailers and registered Domestic Animal Businesses
- Community notice boards at Eltham, St Andrews, Hurstbridge, Panton Hill and Smiths Gully

Pop-ups with community

- Eltham North dog park
- Dog Park users
- Diamond Creek Regional Play Space
- Diamond Creek trail users
- Families visiting playground facilities
- Engagement with approximately 40 people

Sporting Clubs

- 59 Nillumbik clubs directly contacted and encourage to share survey with their members
- In-person engagement with approximately 80 participants at training events
- Additional Officer attendance at sporting grounds and proactively encouraging participants to complete the survey

Social media, Facebook ads, pet tales

- Pet Tales is posted every two weeks incorporated DAMP during consultation
- Facebook posts
- CSO's sharing the link to Participate during BAU
- TV screen ads - for Hurstbridge Hub, ECRC, leisure centres, Edendale

Postcards/flyers

- CSO's Handed out on patrols to residents
Also displayed at:
- Vet clinics
- Pet shops
- Libraries
- Hubs
- Local retailers and registered Domestic Animal Businesses

Corflute signage

- Eltham North Dog Park
- Adventure Oval Eltham North
- Diamond Hills Reserve Greensborough
- Diamond Creek Dog Park
- Hurstbridge Dog Park
- Susan Street Reserve
- Wattle Glen War Memorial Park (Wilson Reserve)

Nillumbik News

- Autumn Edition

Internal Consultation

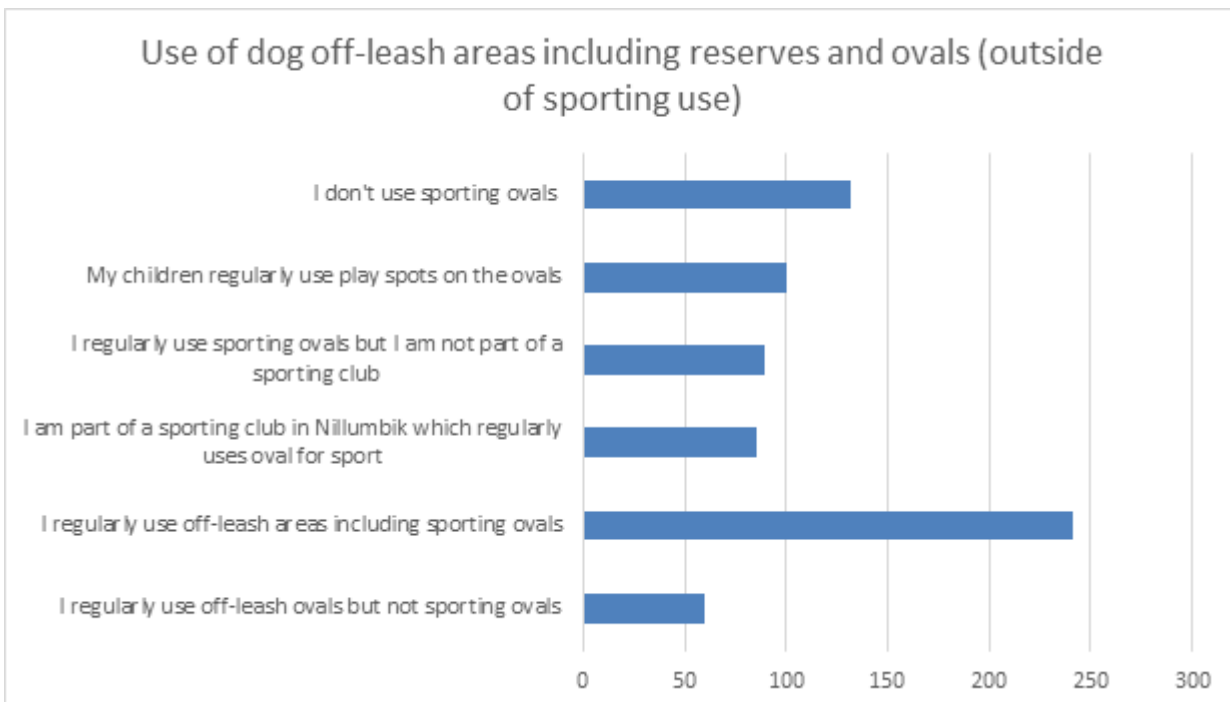
- Environment Team
- Recreation and Leisure Team
- Open Space Team

What we heard

Below outlines the summary of feedback received

Number of submissions	518 submissions received
Number of community sessions	2 Pop-up sessions
Number of separate submissions	6
Number of website visits	1,640 number of visits to the website

Dogs



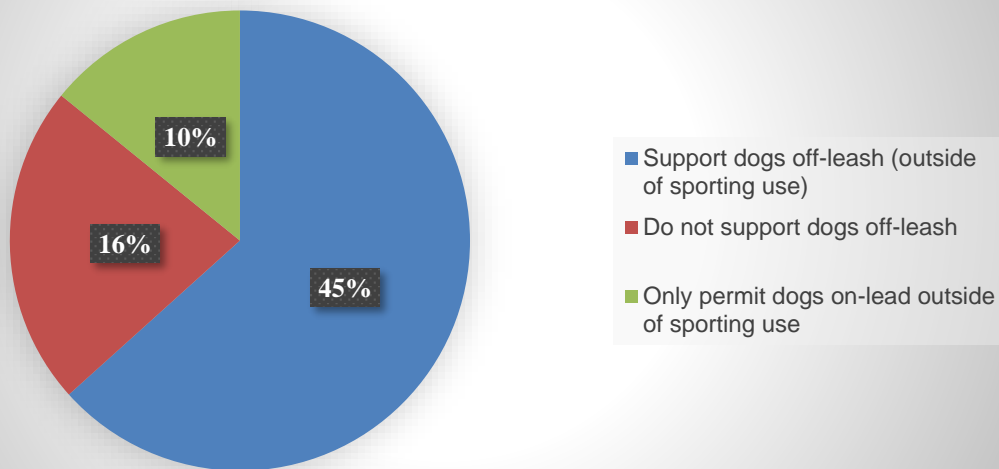
Feedback in support of off-leash areas, including sporting ovals when not in use.

- Sporting ovals are a shared community space for everyone to use.
- Dog parks are inadequate areas for many dogs. They can't get enough exercise there and there are regular fights.
- We should be allowed to have off leash dogs on sporting ovals whilst not in use . Has been very valuable for mental health.
- Often the parks are too small. Also, most people in our area have to drive to them and for some that is not an option. Usually, ovals are local and easy to walk to.
- Please keep this oval off leash, I know there are many dog owners who rely on this, plus without it the dog park will be completely unbearable
- Dog parks are a waste of money, they are too small, unsafe and encourage aggressive behaviour.
- All ovals in Nillumbik should be available to off leash dogs including the two ovals in the Eltham North sporting precinct.
- The cricket club and adventure playground ovals in Eltham North should remain off lead for dogs.
- The open spaces of ovals are ideal for large dogs to exercise, particularly if they are fully enclosed with fencing.
- The ovals in Eltham North on Wattle tree Road (Eltham North Reserve Top Oval near the soccer and cricket club) and the Adventure Playground oval need to be designated off lead areas when not in use by authorised groups.
- Off lead dogs should be allowed on the Eltham North ovals
- The Eltham Wanderers oval on Wattle tree road and the oval opposite Eltham North Primary should be off leash ovals for dogs when not in use by groups/ sporting clubs. The dog poo bags have been very effective, and I find majority of dog owners clean up after themselves.
- I just want an area of flat, fenced, maintained grass, sizeable enough to exercise meaningfully, paddock. The dog parks are small, cluttered and you can't do anything in them other than stand on the spot and watch your dog walk around bored.
- There are more dog owners (over 4,000) than sporting club members. If we were a club, we would have more rights. If more restrictions are placed a few of us will think about forming a club.
- We love exercising with our dog on the oval. It gives us both an opportunity to exercise freely.
- Sporting ovals allow me to walk around and get exercise as well as the dog. Dog parks only allow dogs to get exercise.
- ng the signage and continue using the ovals. They are public open space and should be open for use by all when not used for sport.
- Off lead areas are so important for our pets and also their owners
- Ovals need to be available for dog use out of sporting activity.
- Ovals are ideal for exercising large dogs. They are large open and flat, which means they are much safer than dog parks.
- All ovals in the shire should be shared use (see original survey!) so that dogs can be exercised off leash when not in use by authorised groups.
- Active dogs need large spaces and people wanting to jog/exercise with their dogs

should be able to use the available ovals that are already a public asset.

- The Redbacks Eltham North Ovals should be available for off lead dog use. Plenty of room to run and chase balls. And my children and I can exercise with our dogs. Plus, no snakes.
- The ovals mean we can jog with our dogs or play kick to kick with our kids. There is enough space on the ovals for everyone, and dog walkers pick up a lot of rubbish as well as their dogs' poo.
- The top and bottom ovals at Eltham North should be available for off lead dogs.
- Dog parks are too small for large and active dogs. There are also lots of obstacles that make them unsafe when very busy,
- Oval should be available at particular hours. It's a great socializing space for big dogs to stretch their legs and owners to get exercise at the same time.
- Dog parks are ok, but they do not provide the space for large dogs to burn off excess energy. They are not an adequate replacement for ovals which are large, flat open spaces safe for dogs and people.
- Please keep existing arrangements at sporting ovals in place. i.e. dogs allowed off leash when oval not being used by organized sporting groups.
- I love the option of the oval being off leash. We always walk onlead along the trail then spend time being off leash on the oval.
- Also remember dog owners pay rates as well!!
- Dog Parks are a disgusting waste of ratepayer funds. Stupid, unsafe and unhealthy.
- Dog parks are not an adequate replacement for ovals as off leash facilities. They are less accessible for people with mobility issues. Dogs can become aggressive in enclosed spaces.
- All sporting ovals should support dogs off-leash (outside of sporting use). These are community resources for the community.
- Walking dogs on and off leash provides essential exercise for owners and dogs. The social and community interaction opportunities should not be underestimated and are vital in a society where people are increasingly isolated.
- Please continue to make this oval available. It works well with sports clubs and is always very clean and free from dog poo.
- The dedicated dog parks can be overcrowded and cause issues with other dogs. We love to use the oval at Wilson's road when there isn't any sports on.
- There needs to be areas where dogs can be walked on leads where they are not approached by off lead dogs
- Dog parks and in particular ovals are important community meeting places for dog owners, sometimes it is thought that ovals can be replaced with smallish dog parks but in reality. A lot of dogs need large open spaces to run and their energy needs are not met at dog park
- These need to be monitored every now and then for compliance to general rules that few seem to comprehend
- The more ovals off lead (when not in use for sports) the better
- Given that most respondents prefer shared use sporting ovals, this should become policy moving forward. Shared use ovals allow dogs to be exercised and socialized off lead in a large, safe, pre-existing environment

Dogs off-leash



Of those who responded to the questions regarding dogs off-leash areas in the maps listed in the Draft DAMP 2025-2029, an average of 45 per cent (233 respondents) said they support dogs off-leash (including on ovals outside of sporting use) 16 per cent (85 respondents) do not support dogs off-leash and 10 per cent (52 respondents) prefer to only permit dogs on-leash.

Feedback against off-leash in all areas, including sporting ovals.

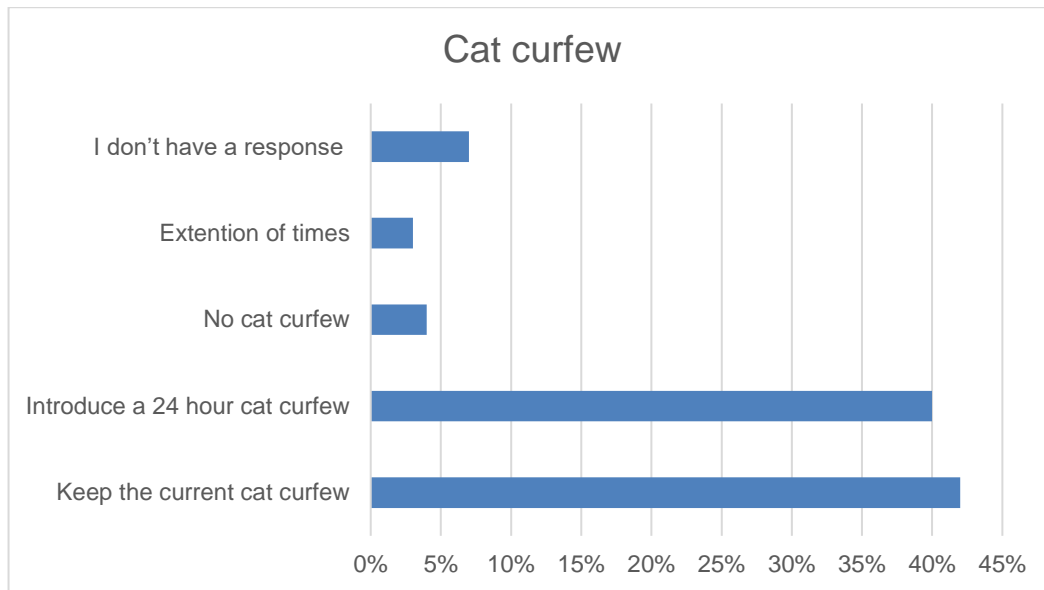
- Define under effective control.
- Dogs should not be permitted on sporting ovals.
- Where there is a purpose-built facility for dogs near an oval, there is no reason for dogs to be on an oval which has been purpose-built for sporting activities.
- I have experienced dogs off leash which are not under control on several occasions. jumping up on me, knocking me over & attacking my on-leash dog so I am in favor of restricting off leash areas where activities/people merge (ovals)
- Too many dogs are walked off lead when they should be on lead and then these dog owners don't pick up after their dog.
- It can be really dangerous for other dogs and children when dogs are off leash and not under control.
- It's an ongoing issue with owners allowing their off-lead dogs to approach other people and dogs.
- Dogs should not be allowed off lead on sporting grounds. Owners do not adequately pick up after their pets and make it really disgusting and unsanitary for those who play sport. There are plenty of other off lead areas where dogs can be exercised.
- It is important to recognize the particular importance of our area as part of a wildlife corridor. What is not often understood is the impact on native wildlife of dog scent trails left by every dog, everywhere they go, and the inhibiting impact these have on native wildlife.
- Rude dog owners unleash their dogs and do nothing when their dogs attack other dogs or people.
- Signage about the penalties might help, there are too many dogs being put at risk, as well as risk to walkers and bike riders on shared paths.
- No dogs outside of dog parks at all times.

- Please enforce the on-leash areas!
- I hope responsible dog ownership is monitored. There are too many dogs off leash with owners who don't have control.
- All areas on leash. No off-leash areas. No off-leash areas on waterways.
- Snappy dogs should not be off lead, overly boisterous big dogs should be monitored and restrained more, dog poo must be picked up, all dogs off lead must have excellent recall.
- Dogs off lease should be banned from all sporting fields in Nillumbik. There are now numerous dog parks for the purpose of letting a dog off lead. This should be a statewide strategy to avoid conflict and health and safety issues.
- I'm disappointed in the number of dogs that are off leash being walked in the streets. Having small kids that are terrified of dogs is not a great scenario. I have asked a dog owner before to put his dog on a leash and was confronted with aggression. I would love to see something happening about this issue.
- Having dogs on sports grounds is crazy. They poo and piss everywhere and it is rarely cleaned.
- Eltham Lower ovals should be totally dog free given the dedicated Eltham Lower dog park.
- No dogs allowed off leash on sporting fields at Lower Eltham
- Should not be allowed on sporting grounds.
- Eltham lower park ovals are full of dog poo which is frustrating to play sport on
- Get off the grounds. Pick up dog mess.
- We need to get dogs off the rear oval as the damage, especially in winter is not welcome, and the fields and already in poor condition.
- Get dogs off the oval at Eltham lower. Have lacrosse there for 30 years. Fallen in dog poo multiple times which is disgusting and hazardous.
- Dog owners won't use dog parks. They don't like how the dogs destroy the ground and are aggressive to each other so instead just use the sports fields and ruin these, leaving dog poo, digging holes.
- My son plays lacrosse. I absolutely shudder when he or other players fall and slide through the mud that has been peed and pooped on. Perhaps there should be testing on these grounds as to health hazards these and players on other grounds are facing.
- As an owner of a greyhound, a dog which must remain on lead, I think it is important that there remain on leash areas.
- Off lead dogs should only be allowed in fenced areas as owners rarely control their dogs
- The need to exercise and socialize dogs off-leash is well catered for with the existing dogs parks and open space
- Keep dogs off sporting areas completely.
- No dogs on Eltham lower oval and provide off lead area on front oval instead.
- Keep dogs on leash during sport training and games.

Cats

Cat Curfew

42 per cent (218 respondents) responded to keep the current cat curfew compared to 40 per cent (211 respondents) who support a 24-hour curfew.



Feedback in support of keeping existing cat curfew

- Promote cat curfew more.
- 24/7 cat curfew is unfair to cats that have been permitted outside.
- If council introduces a 24/7 cat curfew this would be a burden on cat owners.
- Cats are safer indoors and live longer.
- Keep existing cat curfew between hours of 7.30pm and 6am, most people take this seriously.
- Making cats stay indoors is distressing for the animal.
- Keep existing cat curfew, means households with lower income are not disproportionately impacted by changes.
- If council introduce a 24/7 cat curfew, many cats will be relinquished, causing stress for cat owners and their cats.
- Cats should be restricted to cat runs 24/7.
- If council introduce 24/7 cat curfew more cats will be dumped.
- Locking cats up during the day is unreasonable.
- It is cruel and unnecessary to introduce a 24/7 cat curfew.
- If Council introduce a 24/7 cat curfew, we would not be able to keep our cats because they must be separated during the day.
- 24/7 cat curfew is not sustainable or fair for cats with anxiety issues that have been indoor/outdoor their whole life.
- 24/7 cat curfew will result in a lot more surrenders.
- The current cat curfew is adequate and allows cats necessary time in their natural habitat.
- A 24/7 cat curfew cannot be applied retrospectively.

- A 24/7 cat curfew cannot be implemented unless council fund property alteration.
- Cats should not be locked up 24/7.

Feedback in support of 24-hour cat curfew

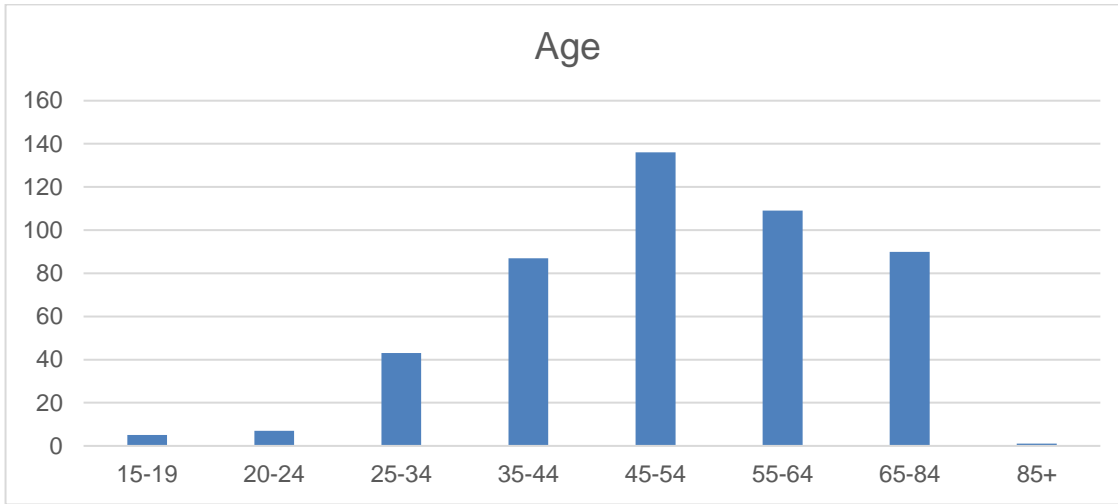
- Current cat curfew is inadequate because it is already dark by 7.30pm and wildlife may have already been impacted.
- Council should introduce a 24/7 cat curfew, as we find feathers and possum carcasses in our yard.
- If dogs have to be confined to their yard so should cats 24/7
- The impact on local wildlife needs to be considered.
- Fundamental importance of 24/7 cat curfew in Green Wedge Shire.
- Cat faces are full of toxins that affect wildlife, owners must deal with their waste appropriately.
- Consider grandfather option, Introduce new 24/7 cat curfew for new cat owner only.
- Council should consider partnering with a Catio maker offering a bulk discount.
- Roaming cats are a real problem.
- Owners need to have more education about confinement.
- Too many free roaming cats, especially in Wattle Glen.
- Cats need to be controlled to stop killing small wildlife.
- 24/7 Cat curfew is essential to preserve our Green Wedge animal and bird life.
- Residents are frustrated with cats excreting and urinating in their garden and on personal items.
- Cats are predators and destructive to wildlife.
- Council should consider exploring reduced desexing initiatives.
- Implement 24 hours curfew with new/ young kitten registrations.

Recommendations for consideration in DAMP 2025-2029 Implementation:

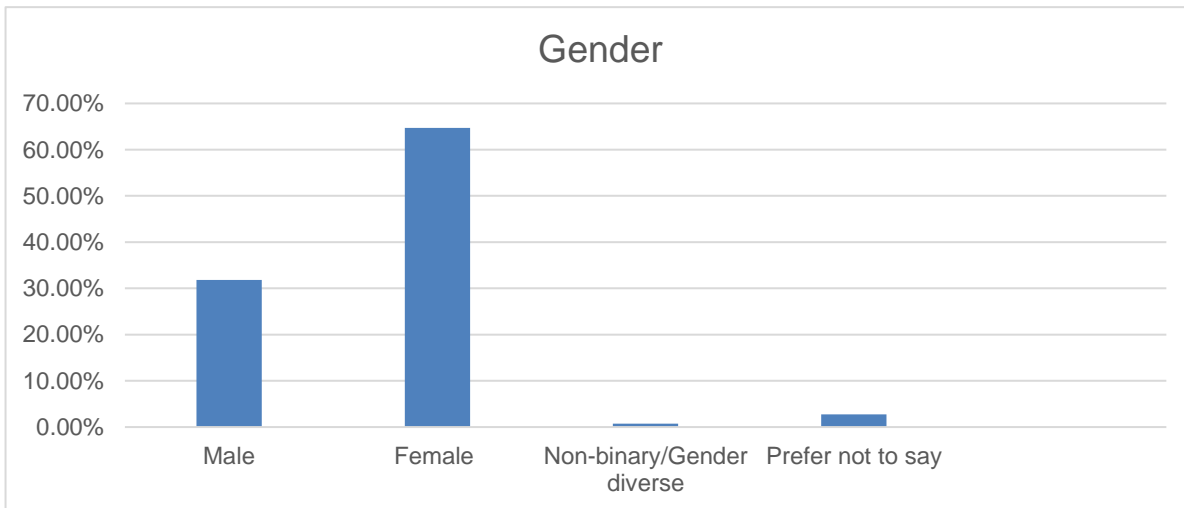
- Elaborate on definition of under effective control
- Establish information booklet on animal breeds and common temperament issues
- Install clearer signage, easier to understand on ovals and other areas
- Provide feedback around dog park construction and potential recommendation for better use (lighting, rubbish bins etc.)
- Conduct more pop ups, educating responsible pet ownership (consider bringing external providers along RSPCA)
- Increase park patrols
- Promote responsible pet ownership around dogs on leash
- Provide/Install more bins around the municipality for disposal of rubbish and dog poo bags
- Promote the benefits of desexing your cats (mandatory)
- Review barking dog process and educate community on strategies to mitigate barking
- Promote responsible pet ownership through videos series
- Stronger enforcement around non compliances relating to animal offences
- Explore initiatives for reduced cost desexing and promote
- Consider training sessions for new dog owners or nuisance animals
- Promote cat curfew more and include in animal registration brochure
- Consider 12 months animal registration refund policy
- Install more dog poo bag dispensers around the municipality, particularly along the trails
- Publish information on our website around dog attacks process
- Consider cat containment/enclosure building sessions (potentially joint with local businesses/Cat Protection Society) – if 24/7 cat curfew is introduced.
- Explore initiatives to offer discount for enclosures – if 24/7 cat curfew is introduced.

Who we engaged with

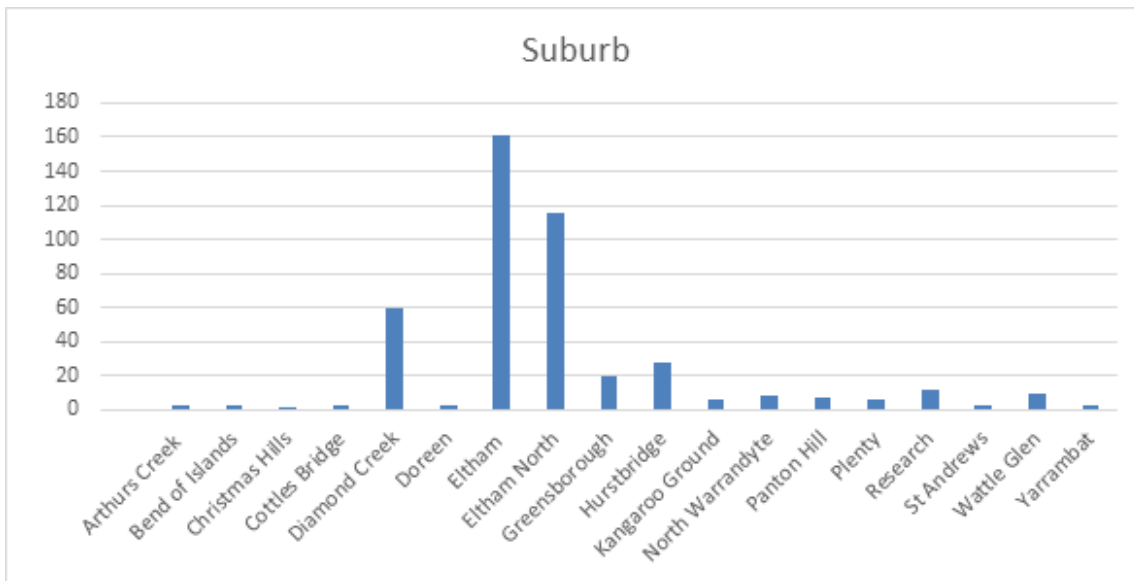
Age



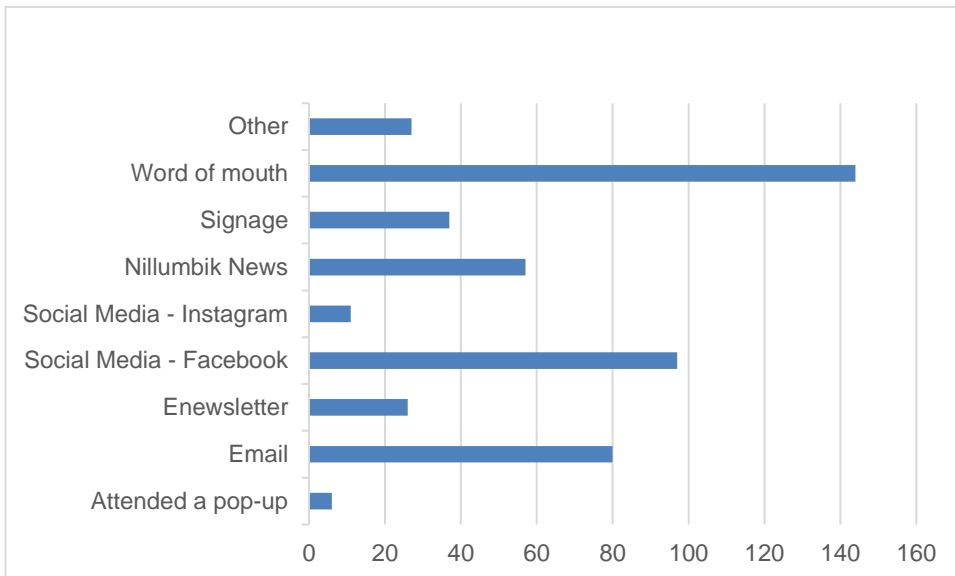
Gender



Suburb of respondents



How they heard about the consultation



Next steps

The new Domestic Animal Management Plan to be adopted at a future Council Meeting.

How can participants stay informed?

Register for updates or follow the project on Participate Nillumbik
participate.nillumbik.vic.gov.au

For more information contact email communitysafety@nillumbik.vic.gov.au

If you need an interpreter, please call



TIS National on 131 450 and ask them to
call Nillumbik Shire Council on 9433 3111.

Nillumbik Shire Council

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