

4 April 2025

Hello,

## **Submission – Nillumbik draft DAMP**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft DAMP. I have attached some comments which I trust are helpful.

### **About me**

I have worked with Australia's expert on cat and dog management, Emeritus Professor [REDACTED], the [REDACTED] of the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation.

I am abreast of research from around the world, and in Australia, on animal cat management methods and have knowledge of effective dog management methods.

### **Opportunities for improvement in the DAMP**

The draft focuses heavily on reactive compliance/enforcement/punishment, rather than assisting the community with pet-related issues. I believe there are opportunities to improve the proposed DAMP, as some aspects will not lead to the positive outcomes that some people may be anticipating.

In particular, the proposal (which is presented in the draft as already existing) to introduce a 24 hour cat curfew is not based on best practice in cat management.

I understand that many residents care about wildlife and our Green Wedge, as do I. I founded and ran a revegetation group in Diamond Creek. I know many wildlife rescuers.

However, research has shown that cats in urban and peri urban areas do not impact wildlife populations. In some cases, they provide a protective factor. People's increasingly negative attitudes towards cats, and their perception that cats impact wildlife populations, is largely based on the consistently-negative and misleading information that has been produced by the 'war on cats', which was schemed up in 2015.

I urge the council not to proceed with a 24 hour curfew and to most definitely not act as if it is already in place. It will increase costs, without achieving any positive outcomes.

At the very least, I urge the council to fully assess the likely costs and impacts on vulnerable people, including those living with disability, mental health issues, social isolation, financial disadvantage, as well as local vets and shelter workers, before proceeding further.

The Domestic Animals Act already has provisions in place for people who do not like cats visiting their property.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

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## General comments on draft DAMP

Responsible ownership of dogs and cats	<p>'Provision of additional educational programs on responsible pet ownership to kindergartens and/or schools'</p> <p>Animal Welfare Victoria already provides this. Additional programs by Nillumbik will not be a good use of resources.</p>
Over population of dogs and cats	<p><i>'Mandatory desexing of cats prior to registration'</i></p> <p>Research has found this provides no animal welfare benefits and does not reduce overpopulation of cats. Councils which have it in place are considering revoking it.</p> <p>A more effective initiative is to provide a free cat desexing program, targeted to areas of high impound rates, people on low income and rural areas where stray cats are less likely to be desexed.</p> <p><i>'Exploring desexing programs available through grants'</i></p> <p>I support this initiative. However, competition for AWW grants is considerable. Any desexing program needs to be targeted to areas of high impound rate and greater financial need</p>
Registration and identification of dogs and cats	<p>Again, this is solely a reactive compliance/enforcement approach.</p> <p>Although it is a legal requirement, actions such as 'Obtain new registrations as part of investigative case work' are solely a means by which to increase registration for registration's sake. They do not provide a community or animal welfare benefit and are widely perceived as revenue raising.</p> <p>Very few animals wear council registration tags, as they provide little benefit. They do not enable people who find an animal to reunite them directly, as access to the database is needed.</p> <p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allow payment plans for people who cannot pay for pound release fees upfront</li> </ol> <p>As per best practice in animal management, adopt an 'impound as option of last resort approach'. In areas where a cat or dog is found, scan them for a microchip in situ. If no microchip is present, doorknock the community to determine their address. Impound as last resort option, not to raise revenue from fines. Ie change 'Dogs with current Council registration and wearing Council issued identification tags with no previous history are successfully reunited directly with owners where possible to 'Dogs <del>and cats</del> with current Council registration <del>and wearing Council issued identification tags</del> with no previous history are successfully reunited directly with owners where possible to'.</p>
Dogs creating nuisance	<p><i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p>Encourage people who use ovals with their dogs to work together and develop a roster to conduct 'poo patrols', especially before ovals are used by organised sports</p>
Cats creating nuisance	See below
Pet expo	The pet expo is an expensive event. It is a 'dog expo', rather than a 'pet expo',

offers little to people with animals other than dogs.

Off and on-leash  
areas and signage

*Recommendation:*

Restore access to ovals for off-leash dogs. Dog parks are inadequate and often the location of fights, as people who haven't trained their dog use them and don't adequately supervise them.

Encourage regular oval users to develop a roster for poo patrols, especially before sports events.

4. Programs to  
address over  
population rates and  
any high  
euthanasia rates

'To address over population, Council works in partnership with the Cat Protection Society to promote desexing programs which aim to reduce the number of unwanted cats in the community and prevent further over-population.'

'Promotion' is not adequate. Research by the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF) via its Community Cat Program has found that free and targeted desexing programs are the cheapest and most effective way of reducing stray cat numbers.

'To address the overpopulation of cats and promote responsible pet ownership, the Council has implemented mandatory desexing of cats prior to registration'.

Mandatory desexing programs are not effective. Free and subsidised desexing programs are.

*Recommendation:*

Develop and market free and subsidised cat desexing program, targeted to areas of high intake and to people on low incomes. Consult with the APWF on implementing this.

'....cat traps will be provided to help reduce the number of stray and feral cats in the community.'

Reactive trapping does not reduce homeless cat numbers. If it did, Nillumbik would have no homeless cats. Free and subsidised desexing programs are needed.

Page 11 – 24 hour  
cat curfew

Nillumbik Shire Council has current orders in place that require cats to be confined to the owner's property under a 24 hour cat curfew'

I suspect this will be surprising news to every Nillumbik resident, especially in light of the online survey which sought people's feedback on this and made no reference to it being in place already. Has this been copied and pasted from another council's DAMP?

I do not support a 24 hour curfew.

Nillumbik cannot afford the economic impact of such a scheme, which provides no benefits and only increases costs.

## Additional suggestions

### Fireworks

Fireworks in Nillumbik still occur annually during two organised events – Diamond Creek Fair and Eltham Festival – and ad hoc when people let off illegal fireworks.

Whenever they occur, they cause distress to many animals, including wildlife, horses, farmed animals and dogs, as well as distress to people with PTSD, people with dementia and autistic people.

Dogs inevitably flee their property, as the notification area is far too small. Fireworks in Diamond Creek can be heard in Eltham and vice versa.

Confinement inside does not address the issue, as animals are still distressed and at risk of heart attacks and death. Dogs have been known to crash through plate glass windows, scratch through doors, rip out power points and risk causing house fires. Horses have been known to bolt at high speed into barbed wire fences and suffer serious and expensive injuries.

#### *Recommendation:*

Prohibit the release of fireworks in Nillumbik during organised events, including at the Diamond Creek Fair and Eltham Festival. This will facilitate people to comply with the requirement to have dogs on their premises.

## 24 hour cat curfew - Introduction

### Introduction

I do not support a 24 hour cat curfew because:

- People's views about cats have been negatively impacted by the 10-year-long 'war on cats', from which only negative media sound bites and computer-based modelling have been published
- Online surveys do not receive a representative sample of feedback from Nillumbik residents and are usually based on a very small % of residents
- People have likely based their opinions on the misleading information promulgated by the 'war on cats'
- It has not considered whether existing lifetime lockdowns in other councils have had any measurable benefit for ratepayers
- It has failed to consider the costs involved of enforcing a lifetime lockdown, which will likely be considerable for the council and, therefore, ratepayers
- It is not possible for Council to enforce as other councils with lifetime lockdowns have found. They don't bother. Council is not able to enforce the night curfew, either. It is solely 'enforced' by vigilante neighbours complaining about cats
- Provisions already exist for people to address neighbours' cats who visit their property when they don't want them to
- It will have no overall benefit for wildlife
- It will require a 'time sharing' roster of local streets, so that cats can be safely walked on leads without the risk of attack by off-lead dogs
- Where will the cat exercise parks be located? They need to be fully contained, with double-layer of wire fences and rooves, away from where dogs can walk
- It will unfairly impact:

- People who rent (predicted to increase from 2021 census of 9% of residents due to ongoing housing unaffordability)
- People who are financially disadvantaged
- People with disability and mental health issues who are unable to walk their cat on a lead
- children
- It will cause further stress and potentially family breakdown, at a time when residents need their companion animals more than ever, due to the many stressors of covid
- It may put women's safety at risk
- Dogs were originally confined as they can attack and kill people. Cats don't do this. The 'dogs are confined; why shouldn't cats' argument is based on a false premise
- Confining a cat is far more difficult and expensive than confining a dog
- Cats who cannot adjust will be surrendered and, likely, killed
- It will cause additional mental health damage and trauma to shelter workers and local vets and increase their risk of suicide

If lifetime lockdown is introduced, and I do hope it isn't, I urge the council to:

- Include grandfathering arrangements, where lifetime lockdown only applies to cats who are acquired after the lockdown is introduced
- Specify that cats can be walked off their property on a lead
- Implement a 'time-sharing' roster so that cats can be safely walked along local streets on a lead without fear of being attacked and killed by dogs, including off-lead dogs and dogs who are on-lead but who break away from their walker when they see a cat on a lead
- Provide cat- and dog-proof cat exercise parks in quiet and pleasant areas, away from dogs, traffic and people. They will need to be audited daily for gaps, or risk the council being sued
- Provide financial assistance or no-interest loans for people to install cat enclosures or cat-proof fencing, so that families can stay together.

Please find full details, including references, below.

### **Summary**

I urge the council to not impose 24 hour curfews on residents and their valued cat companions.

## Key issues included in draft DAMP

<b>Summary</b>	<p>'Cats creating nuisance' is the only item listed, with 'address issues of cats' the main 'issue' identified. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outside of property during daytime and at night time, in breach of existing curfew</li><li>• Preying on wildlife and native animals</li><li>• Causing a nuisance to residents</li><li>• Feral and stray cats</li><li>• Protection of the Green Wedge</li><li>• Educate cat owners on how to build cat enclosures and provide Enrichment</li></ul>
<b>Incorrect issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Outside of property during daytime</b> and at night time, in breach of existing curfew: Cats are allowed to not be confined during the day. Nillumbik currently has a night-time curfew</li><li>• <b>Preying on wildlife and native animals</b> – as shown below, all field-based research has found that cats in urban and peri urban areas, like Nillumbik do not have an impact on wildlife populations. Continuing to focus on this issue, without addressing the key threatening processes Nillumbik wildlife face, will not achieve positive outcomes</li><li>• Causing a nuisance [sic] to residents:</li><li>• <b>Feral and stray cats</b> The mention of 'feral' cats in this document<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protection of the Green Wedge: duplication of 'cats preying on wildlife' issue</li></ul></li><li>• <b>Educate cat owners on how to build cat enclosures and provide Enrichment</b> Education already widely exists</li></ul>

## Small sample size of survey

<b>Summary</b>	<p>I note that a very small number of residents of the total population were surveyed to develop the idea of imposing a lifetime lockdown for cats.</p> <p>This is not representative nor statistically valid.</p> <p>It is concerning that a proposal that will have a significant impact on many people would be made on the opinions of such a small number of residents.</p>
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## No to 24 hour cat curfew

### Increased costs to council

#### Introduction



If the council intends for this law to be upheld, there will be significant additional costs.

As this is not just an administrative issue, but involves sentient animals who need to be cared for in accordance with existing and future legislation and Codes, the costs are more significant than for something like fences.

#### Anticipated costs

A Victorian council has calculated the costs associated with each stage of an animal's journey through the council/pound system for cats who are:

- Collected, impounded, cared for for the mandatory eight day period then killed
- Collected, impounded, cared for then reclaimed by their family after the average length of stay
- Collected, impounded, cared for then adopted by new family.

They have determined the following costs.

Outcome	\$ per cat at 2021
Killed	\$625
Reclaimed by family after average length of stay	\$390
Adopted to new family*	
Male cat	\$1,015
Female cat	\$1,115

\*Includes desexing, vaccination, microchipping and common health care needs

**Fines won't recoup costs**

The council will be on a perpetual cycle of having to pay for trapping, transport, impoundment and killing.

Some of these costs may be recouped by fining a family who reclaims their cat. However, these will not recover all costs.

No costs will be recoverable from people whose cats are not microchipped, registered and who do not reclaim their cat.

Some people will obtain a 'free to good home' cat to 'replace' their impounded and killed cat. This cat will likely not be desexed. If the family doesn't desex, microchip or register them, when they are next impounded, there will be more costs for the council, as the cat won't be traceable.

These undesexed cats will likely add to the stray cat population.

In addition, the extra cats impounded and surrendered due to the lockdown will further worsen the council's euthanasia statistics, which will be publicised more widely and more regularly once new Victorian laws commence.

**Pound costs will increase due to reduced adoption opportunities**



Cats who have been impounded, or surrendered, because they cannot cope with lockdown will have reduced adoption opportunities.

They will have a longer length of stay at the council's pound, with subsequent increases in costs to the pound provider and then to the council.

**Existing councils who have lifetime lockdowns do not enforce them**

The few Victorian councils that already have lifetime lockdown do not appear to enforce the legislation.

This is likely due to the high costs.

Is there any point introducing legislation that cannot be enforced, due to complexity and inadequate resources within the council? Is there any point of initially appealing people who have loud voices when there are more important issues facing the community?

Lack of enforcement will likely cause more frustration in the community, as

we see happening with people who don't pick up their dog's faeces or who have them off a lead in on-lead areas when out walking.

- Impact on staff time** A lifetime lockdown will significantly increase the amount of time compliance officers spend:
- responding to calls regarding cats
  - arranging traps
  - delivering and collecting traps to complainants
  - transporting cats to the pound.

#### **Example – Maroondah**

After Maroondah introduced a night time cat curfew, the number of calls staff responded to about cats nearly doubled (183% increase). The number of cats impounded more than doubled (107%).

Financial year	Calls related to cats	Cats impounded
<b>2012/2013</b> (before night curfew)	92	75
<b>2016/2017</b> (after night curfew)	260	155
<b>% increase</b>	183	107

Naturally, this means staff are not available for other duties. More staff may need to be employed, further increasing council costs of the lockdown.

#### **Laws already exist to address visiting cats**

People may not be aware that residents can, already, request a humane trap from the council if they are upset by a neighbour's cat visiting their property more than twice (Domestic Animals Act 1994).

A lifetime lockdown will achieve little more than exists already, but at great cost.

#### **Difficult to enforce**

If you speak to residents in the few councils that have introduced lifetime lockdowns, you will hear that they are rarely enforced.

This is likely partly due to cost and difficulty.

The same will occur in Nillumbik. especially as we are more under-resourced than many councils.

This will likely frustrate residents more than if the existing night curfew remains.

Is there any point of having another law if council doesn't have the funds to enforce it? It will lead to unrealistic expectations amongst residents and, likely, more frustration than living with the existing laws.

## Why some people support ill-informed lifetime lockdowns

### Summary

The most commonly-cited reasons for people supporting lifetime lockdown are:

- The incorrect belief that cats in urban and peri urban areas are impacting native wildlife populations
- The 'dogs have to be confined, why shouldn't cats' attitude
- The lack of awareness that provisions already exist if a neighbour's cat is visiting someone else's property and it upsets that person.

Each of these is discussed below.

## Cats, dogs and wildlife – it's not what people think

### Urban and peri urban cats do not affect wildlife populations

Not a single peer-reviewed research project has found that the presence, or absence, of cats impacts wildlife populations in urban and peri urban parts of Australia.

Studies have, however, found that wildlife are heavily affected by us destroying their habitat.

Dogs are also known to be an issue.

### Cats and mammals

**Medium-sized mammals are not impacted by cats; Antechinus are more prevalent when cats are present**

A 10 year Perth study (Lilith et al 2010) investigated species diversity across three different bushland areas where cats were either:

- prohibited;
- required to be inside at night and wear a bell; or
- unregulated.

The study found that medium-sized mammals, such as Brush-tailed Possums and Southern Brown Bandicoots, were *not impacted by the presence or absence of cats*.

The smaller Mardo (*Antechinus flavipes*), which is highly susceptible to cat predation, was in *higher numbers in areas where cats were unregulated*.

### Cats and birds

**Increased housing density and distance from bushland causes declines in bird populations, not cats**

A Perth study found that cat density has no effect on passerine bird populations.

Decreasing bird populations were associated with *increasing urbanisation and housing density*, and increasing distance from bushland. The study concluded that *habitat destruction and degradation*, rather than cats, were the main factors impacting on birds (Grayson et al 2007).

### **Cats protect nests**

A Sydney study of nest predation in 24 forest patches in the Sydney metropolitan area found that *no nests were attacked by cats* (Matthews et al 1999). Black Rats, Ringtail Possums, Antechinus species and other birds were the main predators. Nest predation was *reduced when cats were present*.

### **Many birds killed by cats would not survive to breed**

Most of the bird species that cats kill have an average life span of 2-4 years in the wild. This means that 25-50% are dying of other causes every year and would not survive to the next breeding season (Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy, 2017).

### **Cats do not cause additional deaths, as most birds caught by cats are unhealthy**

Research also shows that birds caught by cats in urban areas are on average less healthy than birds killed by flying into windows and cars (Baker et al 2008, Møller and Errotzøe 2000). The researchers concluded that most cat-related bird deaths are not additive to the number dying each year. That is, *cats did not cause additional deaths of birds than would have occurred through other means*, in most cases.

### **Most birds caught by cats would have died from other means**

In the UK, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has similarly concluded that there is [no scientific evidence that cats are causing bird populations to decline](#). It, too, highlights that most birds who were killed by cats would have died from other causes before the next breeding season.

### **Habitat loss is affecting bird populations**

Just as in Australia, UK research has found that declines in bird populations are usually caused by habitat change or loss.

**Cats mainly predate introduced and common species**



A further study (Franklin et al 2018) found that the main prey items of cats are mice, followed by rats, small lizards, then common species of birds.

A Brisbane City Council analysis of the stomach contents of 25 cats found only one species – the Black Rat (Brisbane City Council 2015).

## Lifetime lockdown will increase secondary poisoning of wildlife



If cats are subjected to lifetime lockdown, predation of mice and rats in neighbourhoods will reduce. Whilst mice and rats are usually nocturnal, cats do catch and kill them during the day.

Most people are intolerant of mice and rats in their homes or, if they have chickens, on their properties at all.

Whilst there are recommended strategies that will prevent mice and rats coming inside or entering chicken coops, a review of social media posts in relation to mice and rats shows that very few people implement them. Instead, they resort to using rodenticide – either by themselves or by hiring an ‘exterminator.’

### Species affected by secondary poisoning

Rodenticides kill native wildlife through secondary poisoning. This includes [Barn Owls](#), Boobook Owls (Lohr 2018), Kites, Tawny Frogmouths, Kookaburras, Wedge-tailed Eagles (Pay et al, 2021), other meat-eating birds and likely reptiles (Lettoof, 2020).

In autumn and winter, when mice and rats may come inside warm homes, wildlife rescuers see a spike in the number of poisoned wildlife coming into care. Most die. Very slowly. Very painfully.

Research has indicated that anticoagulant rodenticides pose a serious threat to native predators in Australia, particularly in species using urban and peri-urban areas, such as those in Nillumbik, and species with large home ranges. (Lohr 2018).

Rodenticides also build-up in animals over generations, with one generation passing on the poison to their young.

**Other research  
doesn't measure  
actual impact**

Other than the research studies cited, existing research related to cat predation is based solely on modelling or hypothetical predation studies.

It does not measure the *actual* impact companion cats may have on native wildlife populations.

Funding is needed to conduct this research. Funding for research is difficult to obtain and is mostly from the government.

Given the 'war on cats', this is unlikely to be forthcoming. Most current research related to cats would seem to be solely to provide justification for the 'war on cats'. This is why research related to the 'war on cats' is more recent than many other research papers.

Cat – and wildlife - behaviour is unlikely to have changed since research that was not part of the 'war on cats' was conducted.

In the absence of any data that urban and peri urban cats impact on native wildlife populations, it would be inappropriate to introduce lifetime lockdown on the basis of the 'cats kill wildlife' argument.



## Dogs more of a threat than cats



Research has found that dogs are responsible for more reported attacks on wildlife than cats (Holderness-Roddam et al, 2014). They concluded that dogs are a significant, but poorly recognised, threat to native wildlife in natural urban areas, second only to vehicles.

Data provided by Healesville Sanctuary's Australian Wildlife Hospital found that, of wildlife injured by a dog or cat, 59.3% were injured by a dog and 40.7% by a cat.

As there is no current 'war on dogs', the impacts of dogs on wildlife are not regularly highlighted in the media. This is leaving people with the false impression that dogs have no impact on wildlife when, in fact, research suggests that they harm wildlife more than cats.

Other studies have also determined that dogs may play a significant role in impacting wildlife, through disturbance and killing (Doherty et al 2017, Hughes and MacDonald 2013, Twardeck et al 2017).

This impact of dogs on wildlife is occurring in spite of existing laws that require dogs to be confined to their properties and to be walked on a lead except in off-lead areas.

## Changes that actually would help wildlife

### Summary

If the council and its residents truly care about wildlife, we would:

- **protect remaining habitat** – protect all remaining wildlife habitat. This would mean prohibiting subdivisions and destroying native trees. Nillumbik would need to not approve any subdivision or tree destruction and applicants would need to take all refused planning applications to VCAT
- **mandate indigenous plants** - require all residents to only have indigenous plants on their properties. Mandate that residents replicate, as far as possible, the mix of canopy trees, shrubs, under storey and ground covers that would have existed before their homes, workplaces and schools were built. Whilst this doesn't compensate for the building footprint, it would provide some wildlife habitat that our buildings and roads have destroyed. Lack of habitat (and water) is a key determining factor of whether wildlife can live in an area or not
- **mandate wildlife-safe water** - require all properties to have wildlife-safe sources of water at all times
- **prohibit residents from feeding wildlife**, as it:
  - disrupts animals' natural fear of humans
  - affects foraging behaviour
  - leads to unnatural groupings of animals close together
  - leads to unnatural behaviours
  - can lead to dependence on human-provided food sources
  - usually entails feeding food that is dangerous or unhealthy
  - can lead to spread of contagious diseases like beak and feather disease in parrots
  - can lead to lumpy jaw in macropods
  - can spread zoonotic diseases to people
- **mandate bird-safe windows** - require that all windows in all buildings are made bird-strike proof, as [New York City has done](#). Australian data is lacking, but in the US, an estimated one billion birds die from hitting building windows
- **prohibit rodenticides** - prohibit the use of rodenticides, which cause secondary poisoning to wildlife
- **mandate litter collection** - mandate that all residents must pick up any littered items they see which could harm wildlife (eg looped items such as face masks, plastic rings, elastic hair ties, fishing line), cut them and bin them
- **minimise new roads** - not build roads through wildlife habitat
- **enforce rendering assistance** - enforce the state law that anyone who hits wildlife with their vehicle must render assistance
- **prohibit new trails** – not build walking/cycling trails through habitat, due to the disturbance it causes to wildlife
- **reduce night time speed limits on wildlife roads** – reduce the speed limit of all local roads that cut through wildlife habitat to at least 40 km/h, as is done when children arrive at and leave school
- **include wildlife crossings and fences** - on wildlife roads, install wildlife crossings that are suitable for each species, with the associated necessary habitat to encourage their use, with land modifications and

fences to direct wildlife towards the crossings

When reading this list, I expect councillors, and most people, would likely not support these provisions, even though they would do more to protect wildlife than a lifetime lockdown for cats will, as it would impact our own lives.

If so, perhaps any concerns about wildlife only apply when it doesn't impact us and that the argument seeking a lifetime lockdown for cats to 'protect wildlife' is based on flawed premises and double standards - one for us so that our lives aren't impacted, one for other animals whose lives will be impacted significantly.

## Companion cats are affected by the ‘war on (wild) cats’

### ‘War on (wild) cats’

Urban cats are being affected by the federal government’s so-called ‘war on (wild) cats’, which it devised in July 2015. I have been informed by a reliable source that this concept was devised by a group of politicians over lunch – not by scientists.

It aimed to kill 20 million wild cats, under the guise of protecting wildlife. Modelling later indicated that this is nearly 10 times the number of cats who may live Australia at any one time (Legge et al, 2017).

This highlights the lack of scientific rigour of this plan.

Since the ‘war on cats’ began, many attention-getting headlines of the estimated total number of animals (both introduced and native) that wild cats who live in the bush are believed to kill each year in Australia have been published.

These **estimates are based on modelling and hypothetical situations**, not actual numbers. The numbers aren't tailored to specific habitats, climates etc.

People’s companion cats have been affected by this ‘war’, as people now believe that cats in urban and peri urban areas are impacting wildlife populations.

This is not true.

Unfortunately, the research has also failed to indicate whether this total number is significant for each species.

For example, each day, we all likely kill ants and other small insects, in large quantities. Is this having an impact on the overall population of ants and other insects?

Possibly not.

In some cases, wild cats are listed as a threatening process for some species. But for most species, habitat loss and climate change are the key threatening processes.

The regular headlines have led to people confusing the possible impact of wild cats with companion cats. They have also led to people failing to reflect upon the impacts to wildlife of our constant destruction of their habitat.

### Key threatening processes are not being addressed

Governments of all stripes, both state and national, have taken no meaningful action on the threatening process that affects most native species: degradation and destruction of habitat and climate change.

In fact, Australia continues to have the worst worldwide rate of deforestation amongst developed nations (World Wildlife Fund, 2021). It is the only

developed nation on the World Wildlife Fund's global list of deforestation hotspots.

Rates of deforestation and habitat destruction are so high that Koalas are predicted to become extinct in NSW (New South Wales Legislative Council, 2020).

One could therefore wonder what prompted the government to put cats in its spotlight, when taking action on deforestation would achieve far more for wildlife. Could it be that cats are being scapegoated, to earn 'green points'?

Nillumbik, too, is suffering loss of habitat, due to increased development and population growth.

As the research previously cited shows, it is this loss of habitat that is having the greatest impact on wildlife populations in urban areas – not cats.

**Suppression of  
research is  
occurring**



Scientists have raised the alarm that research findings that are not in accordance with governments' environmental policies are being suppressed, on a large scale (Driscoll et al 2021). They have stated that this is particularly occurring in relation to habitat loss and climate change.

What the public hears in terms of threats to wildlife is therefore very much focused on whether it aligns with government priorities, not whether it is the most significant environmental impact.

Because of the 'war on cats', cat-related information is more often being heard by people than research about the impacts of habitat loss and climate change, which are the key threatening processes for most wildlife.

This is likely further skewing people's perceptions of companion cats and wildlife.

**Threatened Species  
Commissioner**

When the government launched its 'war on cats', it created a new role, the Threatened Species Commissioner (TSC). In line with government priorities, the TSC has focused heavily on cats, ignoring the more pressing issues of land

clearing.

One of the TSC's KPIs was to 'increase Australians' acceptance of killing cats.'

It is questionable whether the TSC has achieved much for threatened species. It has, however, achieved the KPI of scapegoating and vilifying cats.

## Effect of constant vilification and scapegoating



Any person, animal or minority group that has been targeted with vilification knows the outcomes: persecution, hatred, scapegoating and, ultimately, killing.

This is occurring right now with cats.

It is not cats who are causing the sixth wave of mass extinctions in the world. It is us, through our destruction of habitat and carbon emissions.

Although we know this, governments of all types continue to fail to take meaningful action. Instead, they scapegoat other animals.

## Provisions already exist if people don't want cats visiting

### Introduction

Provisions already exist for people who may be upset that a neighbour's cat is visiting their property, just as they exist if they are upset by a neighbour's barking dog.

A resident may legally trap a cat using a humane box trap and take them to the council's pound (Domestic Animals Act 1994, s23).

This case-by-case approach is similar to that which applies when someone is bothered by a neighbour's dog barking.

We wouldn't remove the voice boxes of all dogs, on the off chance that their barking may disturb a neighbour.

Similarly, I suggest that imposing a lifetime lockdown on all cats is needlessly extreme.

Not all residents are bothered by a neighbour's cat visiting them. In fact, it may be very welcomed, especially by elderly people who may spend long periods on their own, and children.

## Confining cats and dogs are completely different

### Why dogs were originally confined to their property

Some people say, 'Dogs have to be confined. Why not cats?'

Perhaps they are unaware that the reason dog confinement laws were introduced was because dogs were attacking, biting and killing people.

Cats rarely attack people and they don't kill. Most cats will flee, rather than attack, unless they are cornered. If cornered, the worst they can do is scratch or bite, both of which can be treated with prompt administration of antibiotics.

### Confining a cat is much harder than confining a dog

Confining a dog is much easier than confining a cat.

#### Dogs just need fences

Few dogs climb fences, climb trees or can jump onto sheds etc. Most dogs simply require fences to be confined. Dog-proof fences already exist on almost all urban properties.

This is not the case with cats.

#### Adult cats can get through 4cm gaps

Dog and cat anatomy is vastly different.

Cats have 'floating clavicles'. This means that their body width does not determine the gaps through which they can squeeze.

In fact, if a gap is large enough for a cat to get the widest part of their skull through, they can get their entire body through it, as shown in this [startling video](#).

The average adult cat can squeeze through a gap of just 4cm.

Confining a cat requires vastly more work – and expense – than confining a dog.



**Cats may not adjust** Some cats will not adjust to lifetime lockdown, especially those who have led a daytime inside/outside lifestyle.

Most people frown on dogs being kept permanently in a small backyard and not being taken for walks off the property.

Cats have similar highly-attuned senses as dogs. Keeping a cat permanently inside or confined to a property is no less harmful as doing that to a dog.

*Potential health and behavioural issues*

Cats may develop a range of health and behavioural issues from sudden confinement including:

- spraying
- toileting inappropriately
- depression
- scratching furniture and carpets
- constant meowing
- overgrooming
- urinary tract infections and blockages, which can be expensive to treat and may be fatal in males
- waking people up
- pacing around the house, similar to the stereotypical behaviour of animals confined in zoos who do not have adequate behavioural enrichment
- constantly trying to get out
- etc.

This may lead to them being surrendered, with resultant emotional harm to the cat's family (especially if children are involved or if the cat was a key source of support), staff at the council's pound and staff at local vet clinics.

**Gradual confinement is needed**

The RSPCA acknowledges that a cat who is used to having freedom and who is suddenly confined may suffer. It states that they may become distressed, display behavioural problems and that their health and welfare may be compromised.

If a cat is going to be subjected to confinement, it states that a gradual reduction in the amount of freedom they have will allow them to better adjust.

Imposing a sudden lockdown will not allow cats to adjust to confinement.

*Recommendation:*

Should a 24 hour curfew ever be implemented, and for Nillumbik's budget I do hope it isn't, exclude cats who are currently registered. Allow a 24 hour implementation period.

**Cost of confinement**

Most properties have fences which are sufficient to confine dogs. Living with a dog, therefore, poses no additional costs to residents, including tenants.

This is not the case with cats.

For a cat to have any outside stimulation and to reduce the risk of health and behavioural issues, properties will need to be modified by:

- enclosing the whole back and front yard with cat-proof 'fence toppers'
- installing an escape-proof enclosure.

All options will likely cost thousands or tens of thousands of dollars.

How will people be able to pay for this with short notice?

## **Impact of lifetime cat lockdown on people**

**Impact on landlords** Although landlords are currently enjoying low vacancy rates, they will likely be asked by tenants to build enclosures or cat-proof back yards, so that people with cats can continue living there.

Naturally, they can choose not to. If they choose to support their tenant, it will pose additional costs to them.

**Impact on renters** 2021 census data indicates that nearly 10% of Nillumbik residents live in rental accommodation.

The Victorian government has recently changed rental laws to make them more pet-friendly, for the wellbeing of people.

Landlords and real estate agents can no longer impose blanket 'no pet clauses'. Tenants can take the matter to VCAT if a landlord unreasonably prohibits companion animals on the property.

At a time when tenants can finally enjoy the many health benefits of companion animals, a lifetime lockdown will potentially deny them those benefits.

We are experiencing a rental housing crisis already, with considerable competition for rental properties.

If landlords refuse to enclose their properties with cat-proof netting or install cat enclosures, lifetime lockdown may, once again, lead to people having to choose between having a home or keeping a family member.

**Impact on women's  
safety**



If the council fails to implement a 'time sharing' roster for cats and dogs to be safely walked on leads off their property, people may feel the need to walk their cat at night, when fewer dogs are around.

This could jeopardise women's safety and increase sexual assaults and murders.

**Impact on financially disadvantaged people**

Confining a cat to a property while still providing adequate quality of life, with access to fresh air, sunshine and, ideally, dirt and grass, will require properties to be modified.

This may include:

- cat-proof netting installed at the top of fences on the property boundaries
- cat enclosures
- enclosing part of the property eg deck, patio.

This may cost thousands or tens of thousands of dollars.

This will likely be beyond the means of many Nillumbik residents.

If their cat doesn't cope with 24 hour confinement inside, they will have to choose between staying with their home or staying with their family member.

Victorian rental laws were changed to avoid people being put in this appalling situation.

COVID-19 has had a significant financial impact on many people. Now is not the time to add further financial stress to people – or potentially break up families.

**Impact on people with disability or mental health issues**



People with disability and mental health issues may not be able to walk a dog. For this reason, cats are fantastic companions. Cats can go outside during the day to exercise themselves, obtain stimulation and sunshine and come inside at night.

If lifetime lockdown is imposed, however, and the cat doesn't adjust to constant confinement, people with disability and mental health issues who are unable to walk their cat may suddenly be denied the many health benefits of animal companionship that they are, at present, enjoying.

This seems terribly cruel, given that these people may already have challenging lives.



## Impact on pound staff



If lifetime lockdown is introduced and someone's cat does not adapt to an indoor-only lifestyle, they will most likely:

- surrender them to the council's pound, or
- ask a local vet to kill them.

If they can only be rehomed to where they can live as an indoor-outdoor cat during the daytime, their adoption opportunities will be restricted considerably. They have a greater risk of being killed at the council's pound.

### **Mental health impacts**

Being required to kill healthy animals as part of employment has a profound impact on people who work with companion animals. Shelter and pound staff develop various mental health issues including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress, perpetration-induced traumatic stress and increased risk of suicide (Rohlf & Bennett 2005; Scotney et al. 2015; Whiting and Marion 2011).

In the USA, the work-place suicide rate for the animal shelter sector has reached number one ranking, comparable to other protective service professions, such as police and firefighting (Tiesman et al. 2015).

## Impact on local vets and nurses



Some people, when surrendering their animals, decide to end the animal's life as well, as they may perceive that the animal is 'better off dead' than without them or at a shelter.

Indeed, if lifetime lockdown is imposed, a cat who can't cope with lifetime lockdown has a higher risk of being killed.

People who care about their cat may take them to the local vet, rather than the council's pound, and ask that they kill them.

### **Vets and nurses suffer psychological damage from killing healthy animals**

Whilst vets and nurses regularly euthanase animals who are irredeemably suffering, killing a healthy animal has a severe psychological toll and can lead to perpetrator-induced traumatic stress (Whiting T and Marion C 2011).

In Australia, suicide rates for veterinarians are four times higher than for the general public (SBS News 2020, ABC News 2019).

Veterinarians are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety, and have higher rates of suicide, than other professions (Fritschi et al 2009; Platt et al 2010). Ending the lives of animals is implicated in increasing psychological damage and suicide risk in vets (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008, 2010). The more frequent the killing, the greater the risk of depression and suicide (Tran et al, 2014).

### *Example*

Recently, a person took their healthy animal to a vet clinic and asked them to kill him as the person was 'sick of him.' He refused to allow the animal to be rehomed. This left all the nurses all in tears, as they were forced to execute a healthy and young animal who wanted to live.

If the council imposes lifetime lockdown for cats, it will likely be perpetrating additional psychological injury on local vets and nurses.

### **Council will increase risk of suicide to vets and nurses**

With a likely increase in cat surrenders, the council will be increasing the risk of psychological injury, and suicide, to local employees. Is this an acceptable outcome, given that laws already exist to address unwanted cat visitors?

**Impact on residents  
due to higher rates  
or reduced services**



The curfew will increase council costs. This will lead to reduction in services in other areas, or rate increases.

The council will likely be asked to provide traps to more residents. This requires council staff time and resources to:

- purchase more traps
- increase the available storage for traps
- receive and process each query
- retrieve traps from storage areas and supply to the complainant
- collect and deliver cats to the pound whenever a complainant has trapped a cat and drive back
- return traps to storage
- sign off on the customer request.

Has the council considered the extra customer service requests that will be made if it introduces lifetime lockdown? And the impact this will have on people's rates? And how residents will feel about

- increased rates, or
- reduced services in other areas?



## Walking cats on leads

### Introduction

People with confident cats may be able to teach them to walk on a harness and lead. This won't be possible for timid cats, as they will likely fear walking in open areas like footpaths where people, and dogs, may approach them.

### Time-sharing of streets between cat and dogs



For cats to be safely walked on a lead, they will need to be protected from off-lead dogs.

Dogs can, do and will chase, attack, maul and kill cats.

Given that we frequently see complaints about people walking their dog off-lead, and that dogs regularly escape their property, how will the council protect cats' safety when walking on a lead?

When connected to their person by a lead, they won't be able to sprint up a tree or under a house, both of which they can do when 'free'.

Their lead could get entangled. A dog can kill them within seconds.

I believe there will need to be a time-sharing roster of streets, so that cats can safely be walked at a time when dogs aren't likely to be around.

How will this work? Cats can be walked until midday and dogs after midday on the first Monday Wednesday and Friday and Sunday of the month? Whilst cats can be walked after midday and dogs walked before midday on the first Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday of the month? Then switch for the second week of the month?

Something for the council to consider.

## Cat off-lead parks



I understand that 13 off-lead areas are available for dogs in Nillumbik.

If people with cats are going to continue paying rates, it is only fair that they are provided with safe areas where they can exercise their cats off-lead and ensure they can express natural behaviours, without the risk of attack by dogs.

These will need to:

- be located away from pedestrians, cars, dogs and people
- be made of dog-proof wire, including an inner wire frame as well as a separate outer wire frame so that dogs cannot injure cats in the park
- have no holes more than 2cm, to cater for both kittens and adult cats, given that cats can squeeze through very small spaces due to their floating clavicles, as previously stated
- have an escape-proof roof
- have double gates to ensure not cat can escape
- include trees for climbing and bushes for cats to hide in if feeling unsafe
- have dog-proof gates.

Has the council considered where they will be? And the cost of building and maintaining these?

## Conclusion

### Summary

I do hope Council will become more informed of effective dog and cat management methods. The sole focus on reactive, compliance-based approaches suggests there is room for improvement in this area.

In particular, I urge Council not to introduce a lifetime lockdown for cats.

Cats in urban and peri urban areas do not have an overall impact on native wildlife. They cause fewer wildlife attacks than dogs.

Provisions already exist for people to address a neighbour's cat who visits their property.

It will unreasonably affect people who rent, people with disability, people who are financially disadvantaged, council pound staff, local vets and nurses, and compliance officers.

It will pose a risk to women's safety.

It will add to council costs.

It will be difficult to enforce and may lead to resident frustration that it is not being enforced.

If, despite all this, the council does wish to explore a lifetime lockdown further, I urge the council to:

- determine whether this has had any measurable benefits (other than increased costs) in other councils that have imposed lifetime lockdown
- exempt existing cats from the new law, to reduce surrenders and the tearing apart of families. This is what the ACT has done when imposing lifetime lockdown in bushy suburbs
- include a 24 hour introductory period
- include cats being walked on a lead, the same as for dogs
- devise a time-sharing roster for cats and dogs being walked along local streets on a lead
- build secure cat exercise parks in suitable quiet areas.

Yours sincerely,



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Ending the lives of animals is implicated in increasing psychological damage and suicide risk in vets (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008, 2010). The more frequent the killing, the greater the risk of depression and suicide (Tran et al, 2014).

Won't be a sneaky way of trapping stray cats – numbers who need to be trapped and killed

Impact on workers – increasing risk of suicide, potentially life-long PTSD, and other mental health issues

<b>About me</b>	<p>Thank you VERY much for hearing me tonight. Great info presented by [REDACTED].</p> <p>I have worked with Australia's expert in dog and cat management, Professor [REDACTED]. From that work, I have SOME understanding of what works, and what doesn't, in cat management.</p>
<b>Costs to ratepayers have worked with</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Firstly, locking down cats for life will come at a considerable cost to the council. Based on what's happened in other councils, I'd expect your pound costs will more than double</li> <li>I believe you'll very likely have to employ additional AMOs, at an average salary of about \$74,000 per year</li> </ul>
<b>People who are upset by neighbour's cat on their property</b>	<p>And these extra costs will be imposed on the council, even though <b>provisions already exist</b> under the Domestic Animals Act to respond to disgruntled residents about cats coming onto their property.</p> <p>A lifetime lockdown will merely <b>duplicate</b> existing laws, at a <b>very significant cost</b>.</p> <p>Also, The few councils that have imposed 24 hour curfews don't seem to enforce it, according to residents.</p> <p>Is there really any point of intro a law that's largely unenforceable and so costly? Enforcement similar to people picking up dog poo</p>
<b>Stray cats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I expect some people, perhaps some of your staff, may think that a 24 hour curfew will reduce the number of stray cats</li> <li>But, it won't.</li> <li>Research shows that to reduce the stray cat population using trapping, Frankston would need to spend between \$17 <b>MILLION</b> and <b>\$30 MILLION</b> just in the first year, and keep the same rate of trapping for 10 years</li> <li>This is actually why we still have stray cats - because no council has enough money to reduce their numbers using trapping.</li> </ul>
<b>Wildlife</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With respect to wildlife, people say 'bloody cats', 'cats will wildlife' 'cats are decimating our native wildlife'.</li> <li>But research shows in urban and peri urban areas they have NO OVERALL IMPACT. None. None for medium-sized mammals like possums. None for birds. Research has shown They actually protect birds nests from being attacked by rats. An one small native mammal, about the size of a mouse, was in HIGHER numbers where cats were unregulated.</li> <li>Research shows that mice and rats are the animals who cat most commonly kill. Most people seem to use poison to kill mice and rats.</li> </ul>



	<p>These Poisoned rodents mice and rats then kill native wildlife through secondary poisoning. It's these wildlife who a 24 hour curfew will supposedly protect!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm VERY aware of the recent headlines that have been generated by the federal government's so-called 'war on feral cats'. This research is based on HYPOTHETICAL situations and MODELLING, and it's based on wild cats, not those in Frankston</li> <li>• What research has found to have a VERY significant impact on wildlife is habitat loss – due to development, more houses, killing trees and naïve vegetation.</li> <li>• So unless the council is going to prohibit ANY further development, (can't – developers will just go to VCAT), prohibit any further removal of trees and native vegetation, a 24 hour curfew will have ABSOLUTELY <b>NO</b> OVERALL BENEFIT for native wildlife</li> </ul>
<b>Dogs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As [REDACTED] mentioned, research has been found to cause more wildlife harm than cats. Stats from Healesville Sanctuary show that 59.3% were injured by a dog and 40.7% by a cat.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact on residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 24 hour curfew will also impact on people and their cats. Many cats won't cope with suddenly being trapped inside 24 hours a day. They'll develop health and behavioural issues. They'll likely be surrendered and killed</li> <li>• Some people won't be able to afford enclosures</li> <li>• People with disability or mental health issues, who have adopted a cat for companionship, rather than a dog who needs walks, may be completely deprived of the MANY health benefits of animal companionship, as may renters</li> </ul>
<b>Impact on workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finally, I'd ask that you please think about the human beings who work at your pound</li> <li>• There will, inevitably, be a significant increase in the number of healthy cats sent to the pound and not reclaimed, because residents can't afford the costs</li> <li>• Killing cats – and dogs – at pounds kills people.</li> <li>• People expected to do the job are deeply TRAUMATISED by it.</li> <li>• I've spoken to many people who have done this work.</li> <li>• They talk of every single animal they're expected to kill as taking a bit of their soul. Many have to leave their job or the profession</li> <li>• Research shows they have more mental health issues, more depression, more anxiety, more substance abuse, develop PTSD. Ultimately, tragically, they have a much higher rate of suicide than the general population</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In summary, I ask you to please not impose a 24 hour cat curfew</li> <li>• Firstly, it will <b>significantly</b> increase your costs. I'd actually urge council to actually calculate how much the costs will increase before deciding on this</li> <li>• Secondly, WRT wildlife, most people's impressions of cats and wildlife are based on incorrect information. If more people knew the truth, I expect there would be less interest in lifetime lockdown</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 24 hour curfew won't help wildlife and could increase the number killed, due to secondary poisoning from rat bait</li> <li>• Thirdly, Provisions already exist for people to address any cats coming onto their property. A 24 hour curfew isn't needed, legally</li> <li>• Fourthly, It will likely <b>INCREASE</b> the number of stray cats in Frankston, for reasons I don't have time to explain tonight</li> <li>• And, finally, it could well kill people</li> <li>• I ask you - is a 24 hour curfew, just to appease some people who are very vocal, but sadly very misinformed, about cats worth killing people for?</li> </ul> <p>I'd be very happy to talk to councillors after this meeting on programs that it could implement to improve at management and reduce the number of stray cats, esp free desexing</p> <p><b>WRT desexed cats:</b> their energy requirements are 25% lower than undesexed cats</p>
<b>Compromise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I do hope it doesn't, should it decide to impose lockdown or life, it needs to not apply to cats who already live in Frankston. This is what the ACT has done – included a grandfather clause</li> <li>• This is the only compassionate way of avoiding</li> <li>• veterinary experts and even the RSPCA state that it needs advice</li> </ul>
<b>Questions – Cr [REDACTED]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>[REDACTED]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asked for research papers</li> <li>• Hostile</li> <li>• Had some wildlife rescue people and carers who have</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>[REDACTED]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wants to make his decision according to evidence</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

<b>[REDACTED]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of good info opposing curfew</li> </ul>
<b>[REDACTED]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opposes curfew</li> <li>• Likely 'due to feral cats' and 'irresponsible cat owners' who already aren't following the rules</li> <li>• Feral cats and those owners aren't being addressed under a curfew</li> <li>• He works for Moreland – free desexing</li> <li>• Lack of consultation to community – could have consulted with registered cat owners by mail. Found out about it at the very last minute</li> <li>• Undue burden on cat owners esp people who rent, have a flat. Can't build a cat run</li> </ul>
<b>[REDACTED]</b> <b>[REDACTED]</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports 24 hour curfew (of course!)</li> <li>• Wildlife carer</li> <li>• RSPCA and Zoos Victoria support and 'the many councils' ie about four out of 76</li> <li>• Cat welfare improved under lockdown blah blah blah</li> <li>• Cats killing wildlife by the millions</li> <li>• Companion cats make up a large enough portion of the killing</li> <li>• Wants to protect diurnal species and send a clear message that Frankston cares</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>about its environment</li> <li>Houses adjoin reserves</li> <li>Cats roam kilometres from home (SA cat tracking data)</li> <li>Wildlife should be safe from harm as human population grows (or, better, let's stop the human population growing given that we know how harmful it is)</li> <li>Gardens for Wildlife - member</li> <li>Given gardens back to nature in effort to drive biodiversity</li> <li>Local cats visit her property</li> <li>Usual BS</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Claim that cats hunt at night and not during the day</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put Michele through the paces</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledged indig people</li> <li>Animal mmt should be about the animal</li> <li>Large pockets of disadvantage of that cats safe and abide by the bylaws</li> <li>Locked up will develop behavioural issues. Big dumping of cats. Enclosures v expensive</li> <li>How will council support residents if 'curfew comes through'</li> <li>Pet cats – change language. Seems to be interchangeable with feral cats</li> <li>AMOs have told her they're sick of telling people their cats have been run over</li> <li>Bayside and Port Phillip – people take for walks on the beach</li> <li>Doesn't want anti-cat council; didn't move to Morno because of that</li> <li>Cats and dogs are part of the family</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Feral cats kill wildlife but pet cats don't</li> <li>Is it acceptable that dom cats can kill wildlife when they're 'roaming'?</li> <li>Are you suggesting there are certain areas where there isn't a curfew eg near nature reserve?</li> <li> – people mightn't have the money, esp in pandemic, to confine</li> <li>Suburb of Waterways – can't have a cat. Would hope people there wouldn't be letting their cats out</li> <li>Don't want people leaving Frankston; people love it here</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You're a cat and dog owner</li> <li>Cat hater said 3B wildlife killed every year, incl 5% by pet cats</li> <li>3.4M pet cats in Aust</li> <li>Every dom cat killing 50 animals a year. Do you see your cat killing 50 animals a year</li> <li>She doesn't see her cat killing 50 animals a year</li> <li>Like to know who's provided those stats</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Didn't answer phone</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing three changes</li> <li>Dogs in Frankston – many people ignore the ban. Allowing dogs in will be positive</li> <li>Her dog died of bone cancer. She was in paper – political campaigning about something that will be determined in Sep. Became teary talking about her dog</li> <li><b>24/7 curfew – long overdue order</b></li> <li>Too many owners not following regulation</li> <li>Cats turning up on her property at all times of day and night</li> <li>Had cats in her kitchen, ex various neighbours. It's out of order.</li> <li>Very calm while talking about dog. Very emotional when talking about cats</li> <li>As a resident who cares for all animals, not fun cleaning up dead cats from side of</li> </ul>

	road and returning to owners
████ ████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moved to Seaford two years ago</li> <li>Only thing missing in the area is off-lead dog area</li> </ul>
Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No answer</li> </ul>
████ ████ ████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Supports 24 hour curfew; doesn't think dogs should ever be allowed to run on their own</b></li> <li>Don't have a cat</li> <li>Not anti cat (like 'I'm not racist but') but have experience with cats being out at night</li> <li>Large brush-tail mauled by one [OVERNIGHT! CURFEW ALREADY EXISTS!]. Baby possum in pouch</li> <li>Has hit a cat at night with her car and killed it</li> <li>Dogs on beach – doesn't agree with dog ever being off leash. Had experience with anxious dog that she couldn't take off leash. Took to park one time. Asked owner to call their dog back. Used to get abused – 'if he's aggressive, why have you even got him here' [iel have a dysfunctional dog, so everyone should work around me, rather than me choosing to modify when and where I walk my dog]</li> <li>Not many people can call their dog back</li> <li>Dogs in CBD – don't disagree with it but would feel more comfortable if there were poo bins. (Cos people couldn't supply their own bag?!) </li> </ul>
████ ████ ████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support 24 hour curfew</li> <li>Would like wording to be altered</li> <li>Premises – <b><i>cats shouldn't be allowed to be in their own front or back yards!!!</i></b></li> <li>Inside the house or cat run</li> <li>Yards provides important habitat for wildlife</li> <li>Wildlife is in danger every time they pass from one property to another</li> <li>Aust wildlife did not evolve with cats</li> <li>Tawnies – at risk of cats</li> <li>The 'introduce cat' have no protection from cats</li> <li>Unrealistic to not use a cat run</li> <li>The thing that makes cats deadly to wildlife is their ability to climb</li> <li>Our local wildlife need yards to be safe</li> <li>Wildlife acesmany pressures a thereare;Cats ar onething we can control. We can also████ control destroying their habitat and climate change████</li> </ul>
████	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healesville – 59% by dogs</li> <li>Would you suggest we do the same for dogs to protect wildlife?</li> <li>No, as dogs can't climb</li> <li>Regardless of what's done with dogs, need to 'control what we can'. Confining a cat is an easy one to protect wildlife. Fucking easier to stop fucking breeding and destroying wildlife</li> <li>Couldn't leave house on a lead – fair to treat dogs one way and cats another</li> <li>A lot of research about what they hunt</li> <li>Quoted████ - did a podcast recently on cat curfews</li> <li>Cats change what they hunt when confined</li> <li>They can get everywhere</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of biggest responses</li> <li>&gt;200 submissions</li> <li>&gt;1000 survey results</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public v interested</li> <li>• Sep 20 meeting – will announce results</li> </ul>
■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing to add</li> <li>• Thanks those who have given feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re person who said there was no consultation: Encouraging more people to email councillors directly</li> </ul>
■	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Want to declare that he has a cat and a dog and lived with them for many years</li> <li>• Not anti-cat, dog or animal</li> <li>• His decision will be according to evidence</li> <li>• He's heard info from people re research and stats and anything else people might have to say</li> <li>• This isn't the end of the discussion at all</li> </ul>

<https://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/south-east/dogfight-over-ban-on-canines-at-pat-rollo-reserve-oval-frankston-north/news-story/0138a51c6138a2449a4824d555d2749b>

**8 July 2019**

## **Dogfight over ban on canines at Pat Rollo Reserve oval, Frankston North**

Canines have happily played on a Frankston North oval for years — until reports some were terrorising children and destroying footballs. Now they’ve been banned, and owners aren’t happy.

Irreversibly off-leash dogs have been terrorising kids and bursting footballs at a Frankston North oval, sparking a ban on the animals.

Mothers of children who play at Pat Rollo Reserve say their children are terrified because the “dogs have taken over”.

Mum Chanttell, who didn’t want her surname used, said the ban was essential.

“It used to be an active oval with a lot of kids (but) since the dogs have taken over, they won’t go on — they’re terrified,” she said.

Chanttell said her son’s football had been ruined by a dog biting it, while other parents spoke of “gross” incidents including dogs urinating on sports equipment.

Another mother, Shalina, said: “Balls, dogs and kids — it’s an accident waiting to happen.”

However, furious pet owners from the Frankston North Dog Catch Up Group say they’ve used the oval for years and are tearful and confused by the ban.

Founding member Kathryn Cooper described the 200-strong group as “responsible dog owners”.

“They just want to enjoy part of the open space — they want a safe space they can be with their dog,” she said.

Council officers, dog walkers and representatives of Pines Junior Football Club, which uses the oval, met recently to discuss the matter.

“The objective was to identify how all parties and the broader community could work together to maximise the benefit of this valuable community asset,” mayor Michael O’Reilly said.

Cr O'Reilly said they were working on an agreement enabling dog lovers to walk their pets at Pat Rollo Reserve oval when it was not being used by sporting groups.

He refused to comment on what had led to the ban on dogs.

Pines Junior Football Club vice president Damien Pusch said the club had not made a formal complaint about dogs or called for a ban.

“We were surprised to see those signs (banning dogs) go up,” he said.

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24 March 2025

## Submission to Nillumbik Shire Council- Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029

The Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF) is a peak research body and advocate for pet welfare in Australia. As a not-for-profit organisation, APWF uses science-based research to enhance community well-being and improve the health and welfare of animals and people. APWF specialises in evidence-based solutions to prevent euthanasia of healthy and treatable companion animals in shelters and pounds and the associated mental health damage to staff and community residents. We share research knowledge with the community, shelters and pounds, state and local governments and veterinarians to create change and save animal and human lives. APWF is led by Chief Scientist Dr. Jacquie Rand, Emeritus Professor of Companion Animal Health at The University of Queensland (UQ) and a registered specialist veterinarian in small animal internal medicine. She has worked extensively in shelter research over the last 17 years, including collaborative studies with the RSPCA, Animal Welfare League and local governments. While at UQ Dr Rand taught Urban Animal Management and since 2013 has co-authored over 30 peer-reviewed articles on urban animal management including management of semi-owned and unowned cats. Dr Rand is an AVA member.

You can read more about us and our vision on our website: <https://petwelfare.org.au>.

### Executive summary

The **Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF)** is dedicated to improving pet welfare through evidence-based programs that reduce overpopulation, increase pet retention, and support effective animal management policies. Key focus areas include training Animal Management Officers in humane and effective handling, promoting responsible pet ownership through education and accessible vet care, and implementing targeted desexing programs to address overpopulation and reduce euthanasia rates. The APWF advocates for improved policies that remove financial and administrative barriers to microchipping and registration, making it more accessible for all pet owners. Additionally, the foundation supports community-based solutions for managing nuisance complaints and proactive strategies to prevent dog attacks. Australian Pet Welfare Foundation promotes behaviour-based assessments and responsible ownership measures as more effective approaches for managing dangerous or restricted breed dogs.



Additionally, APWF advocates for stronger regulations to prevent the unregulated giveaway of "free to good home" litters, which frequently contribute to overpopulation and higher shelter intake. We also urge councils to implement proactive desexing programs to support the community and reduce the need for these giveaways. Broader policy recommendations include pet-friendly rental laws, increased access to veterinary care for low-income families, and legislative changes to protect community cats. Our foundation emphasizes the need for greater transparency from councils in reporting all statistics, including shelter intake, euthanasia rates, compliance with desexing and registration laws, and the enforcement of cat containment laws, such as number of infringements and notices issued and for non-compliance. Transparent reporting and annual reviews of animal management programs are essential to measuring their effectiveness and ensuring continuous improvement. Australian Pet Welfare Foundation collaborates with local governments, animal welfare organizations, and policymakers to develop and implement effective strategies that prevent unnecessary euthanasia of healthy or treatable pets.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the Nillumbik Shire Council Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029.

## **Domestic Animal Management in Nillumbik Shire**

The Draft Nillumbik Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025–2029 focuses significantly on monitoring, compliance, and awareness initiatives—such as park patrols, signage audits, and online prompts. However, there is a notable gap in proactive community assistance programs aimed at directly supporting pet owners and addressing animal welfare challenges at a grassroots level. The plan places strong emphasis on reactive, compliance-based measures including routine inspections, dog attack investigations, and nuisance complaints. While some of these measures are important for maintaining public safety, they do not adequately address the root causes of issues such as pet overpopulation or owner non-compliance.

The plan also outlines various education initiatives, including responsible pet ownership visits to schools. However, these visits are already being conducted by the team at Animal Welfare Victoria, and therefore council resources could be redirected toward unmet needs within the community. Moreover, there is no clear method of evaluation set out on how the plan's objectives will be achieved—beyond a general commitment to "monitor and review"—leaving the success of these initiatives difficult to measure. There is also no way to submit a formal written response, only allowing for the completion of a survey.

Public education through online prompts and social media campaigns can be effective, but these strategies largely rely on self-motivation and do not offer hands-on support to pet owners who may be struggling. There is limited mention of subsidised veterinary care, low-cost desexing programs, or support for unowned cats through community cat programs. Without these practical supports, the plan remains heavily regulatory and misses the opportunity to proactively assist the community. Strengthening council-supported welfare initiatives—such as desexing grants in

partnership with animal welfare organisations or targeted support for pet owners in financial distress—would offer a more balanced and impactful approach.

### **Training of Authorised Officers**

Based on the training schedule of your officers that has been provided in the draft plan annual or biannual training for animal management officers is inadequate because key areas such as **dog attack response, barking dog management, and dog bite prevention** are only addressed every two to four years. Given the dynamic nature of animal behaviour, evolving best practices, and the high-stakes nature of incidents involving aggressive or injured animals, more frequent training is essential to ensure officers remain prepared for real-world scenarios. Unlike other public-facing roles where **customer service, conflict management, and occupational health and safety** are reinforced annually, critical skills for **safe animal handling, canine identification, and behavioural assessments** are reviewed too infrequently, potentially leading to outdated practices, increased risk to officers and the public, and inconsistent enforcement. Regular refresher courses, hands-on practical training, and ongoing education in animal behaviour and welfare would better equip officers to handle the complex and evolving challenges of their role.

### **Programs to promote and encourage responsible pet ownership and compliance with legislation**

The Nillumbik Shire Council outlines a comprehensive regulatory and educational framework for animal management, with a strong emphasis on **compliance-based measures**, including cat curfews, mandatory desexing for cat registration, and enforcement of dog control laws. While these measures align with traditional approaches to managing domestic animals, **they fall short of fully embracing contemporary, proactive, and community-engaged animal welfare strategies.**

Contemporary best-practice models in animal welfare management emphasize **preventative, supportive, and community-driven interventions** that address the underlying causes of animal management challenges, particularly in relation to free-roaming cats and dogs (Rand et al., 2019; Zito et al., 2015). These approaches aim to foster sustainable outcomes for both animals and communities, moving beyond enforcement to prioritize education, access to services, and engagement with vulnerable populations.

### **Overemphasis on Compliance Without Adequate Community Support**

While Nillumbik has implemented a 24-hour cat curfew and mandatory desexing as registration conditions, **there is limited evidence of practical support for residents to comply**, such as **subsidized desexing programs, support for cat containment, or targeted community education for semi-owners and vulnerable populations.** Research demonstrates that mandates without accompanying support often fail to achieve compliance and may increase the number of unowned, unmanaged cats in the community. **Low-income and marginalized pet owners** are

particularly affected when adequate access to services is absent, risking increased impoundment and euthanasia.

Modern animal management strategies emphasize **community-based programs such as community cat desexing** as effective tools to manage free-roaming cat populations humanely (Spehar & Wolf, 2017). These approaches are notably absent from Nillumbik's strategy, which relies instead on curfews and enforcement that may not address the unowned or semi-owned cat populations that contribute to population growth. Without targeted desexing initiatives, the council's approach may be limited in long-term effectiveness and risk adverse outcomes such as increased cat abandonment.

Although Nillumbik's educational programs — such as **Pet Tales**, school visits, and the Pet Expo — offer valuable outreach, they appear to follow **generalized approaches** that may **not effectively reach or engage residents who are most in need of support**, including those facing barriers to pet care (Zito et al., 2015). Contemporary welfare strategies advocate for **personalized, culturally sensitive, and proactive engagement** to address diverse community needs, particularly among groups more likely to have unmanaged pets or limited access to veterinary care (Rand et al., 2019).

Proactive models emphasize **the importance of supporting owners to keep their pets** through assistance such as low-cost veterinary care, behavioural support, and flexible enforcement that considers individual circumstances (Hughes & MacDonald, 2013). Nillumbik's strategy, as presented, focuses heavily on compliance and regulation without apparent programs aimed at **supporting owners to prevent relinquishment**, potentially undermining the human-animal bond and contributing to unnecessary impoundment.

## **Programs to address over-population rates and high euthanasia rates**

While Nillumbik's strategy includes some public education (e.g., promotion of reduced-cost desexing), **there is limited mention of targeted, community-level engagement aimed at preventing animal overpopulation before it arises**. Proactive animal management emphasises **early intervention through culturally sensitive outreach, personalized support to pet owners (especially in vulnerable communities), and ongoing education beyond general awareness campaigns** (Rand et al., 2019).

For example, **working directly with semi-owners—residents who feed but do not own cats—through targeted desexing and support programs has proven critical to reducing cat populations** (Zito et al., 2015). Additionally, proactive councils often partner with **housing services, social workers, and other community organizations to identify and assist at-risk pet owners**, ensuring animals remain with families and reducing abandonment. These strategies appear underutilized or absent in Nillumbik's current plan.

## Definitions of cats

The APWF recognizes and supports the definitions of cats as delineated in the findings and recommendations from the RSPCA Australia's 2018 report, "Identifying best practice domestic cat management in Australia." These definitions categorize cats as Feral and Domestic (owned, semi-owned, unowned).

### Domestic cats

Domestic cats live around where people live and frequent. Cat management strategies should recognise three subcategories of domestic cats, as recommended by RSPCA (2018 report) including:

➤ **Owned cats** – these cats are identified with and cared for by a specific person and are directly dependent on humans. They are usually sociable, although sociability varies. These cats are also called pet cats.

➤ **Semi-owned cats** – these cats are directly dependent on humans and are intentionally fed by people who do not consider they own them. These cats are of varying sociability and are sometimes called stray cats.

➤ **Unowned cats** – these cats are indirectly dependent on humans and receive food from people unintentionally, such as via food waste bins. These cats are of varying sociability and are sometimes called stray cats.

### Feral Cats

- **Feral cats-** Feral cats have no relationship with or dependence on humans (neither direct nor indirect), survive by hunting or scavenging for food, and live and reproduce in the wild (e.g., forests, woodlands, grasslands, deserts). Feral cats do not live in the vicinity of where people live and they do not receive food from humans intentionally (direct feeding) or unintentionally (e.g. via food waste bins). Feral cats are completely unsocialised to humans and have none of their needs fulfilled by humans. Feral cats are not found or trapped in the vicinity of where people live, are not the subject of nuisance complaints and do not enter Australian council pounds or animal shelters.

Failure to recognize and apply these definitions in cat management programs can have severe consequences, leading to ineffective strategies and unnecessary euthanasia. When semi-owned and unowned domestic cats are misclassified as feral, they are often subjected to lethal control measures rather than being included in community-based desexing and rehoming programs. This misclassification undermines the effectiveness of proactive, humane solutions such as targeted desexing, which have been shown to stabilize and reduce free-roaming cat populations over time. Additionally, conflating domestic cats with genuinely feral cats can result in misguided policies that penalize community members who provide informal care to semi-owned cats, discouraging public participation in effective management strategies. Without clear distinctions, councils may rely on reactive, punitive measures rather than investing in sustainable, evidence-based programs that reduce intake at

shelters, improve animal welfare, and ultimately decrease the number of free-roaming cats in the long term.

Recognizing these definitions is essential to ensuring that cat management policies are humane, effective, and aligned with best practices in animal welfare. Research demonstrates that pet cats can respond with more aggressive behaviours to humans when highly stressed than genuinely feral cats. It is critical that before a decision that a cat is euthanised on behaviour, it is given sufficient time to adapt to a stressful environment. Outcome decisions relating to euthanasia based on behavioural characteristics must be deferred to allow the cat sufficient time to habituate to the unfamiliar environment (e.g., shelter or pound), given the likelihood that these cats will experience high levels of fear in a trap cage or unfamiliar environment. By not allowing a stressed cat to settle into the environment, this may result in the cat exhibiting signs of being unsocial and ultimately lead to higher euthanasia.

Although Nillumbik reports a relatively low euthanasia rate compared to other councils, the acknowledgment that **cats with treatable infections, deformities, or temperament issues are euthanized highlights the absence of robust alternative pathways for these animals**. Proactive models emphasize **comprehensive foster care networks, behavioural rehabilitation, veterinary partnerships, and "working cat" programs (placing less socialized cats in barns or businesses)** to reduce euthanasia and offer second chances (Hughes & MacDonald, 2013; Spehar & Wolf, 2019). It is noted that part of the Nillumbik action plan is to provide residents and businesses with the use of cat traps to reduce stray and feral cat populations, therefore more cats will be impounded and euthanised.

The reliance on euthanasia for cats that could be supported through alternative means suggests **a gap in Nillumbik's capacity or willingness to pursue innovative life-saving options**, contrary to contemporary welfare models that prioritize "live outcomes."

## Community Cat Programs

The APWF supports the expansion of innovative desexing initiatives such as that implemented in the City of Banyule (Cotterell 2024). These programs must include clearly defined, measurable objectives over 3–5 years and be targeted to suburbs with high shelter intakes or cat-related complaints. Within these areas, microtargeting specific streets or neighbourhoods where cats are most at risk of impoundment or surrender ensures greater impact. Effective programs also require sufficient intensity—desexing 30 cats per 1,000 residents annually in targeted suburbs or 10 per 1,000 with microtargeting—otherwise objectives are unlikely to be achieved. Budget and Animal Management Officer (AMO) capacity must guide the scale of implementation.

Strong local partnerships are essential for success. Collaborating with veterinarians and welfare agencies can expand low-cost or free desexing, particularly for people who cannot access or afford private clinics. Programs should be adapted to local needs and barriers. A limiting factor is veterinary capacity, which constrains broader rollout. High-volume clinics offering early-age desexing should be supported, and animal welfare agencies encouraged—potentially funded—to develop such facilities for public access.



Effective cat management requires coordinated community-wide efforts and cannot rely on a single agency.

Cat impoundments are highest in low-income regional areas (Chua 2023, Albertson 2016), where veterinary services may be inaccessible. These regions need affordable desexing options. Mobile clinics could service towns without a vet, including farming communities. Alternatively, transporting cats up to two hours to a clinic is safe and commonly practised in remote areas of the USA. Desexing and transport services should be supported by partnerships with local veterinary practices.

To reduce unwanted cats, economic barriers to desexing must be addressed, particularly for low-income households or to assist residents with financial stress. This requires affordable programs and grants targeted to vulnerable Victorians. Success depends on microtargeting based on data from cat-related calls and impoundments. Positive, assistive AMO engagement with people who own undesexed cats—especially those experiencing disadvantage—is essential. The Banyule model (Cotterell 2024) demonstrates how such engagement in disadvantaged areas can reduce shelter intake and euthanasia.

Many cat carers struggle, especially during the current cost-of-living crisis, cannot afford desexing—especially when managing multiple cats. These individuals require fully subsidised or very low-cost services. Council grants to enable AMOs to facilitate desexing for such cases would be highly effective. Transport assistance may also be required, and using AMOs to support transport to surgery is a more constructive use of their time than impoundment.

While general desexing promotion is helpful, programs not targeted to those most in need may have limited impact (Frank 2007), often subsidising those who would have desexed their pets anyway. It is essential that programs are place-based, microtargeted to areas of need, and free from access barriers such as requiring pension or concession cards. Vouchers for local clinics may not be effective due to vet shortages and rising service costs. Based on RSPCA NSW experience (Ma 2023), only half of participants in microtargeted programs held benefits cards—highlighting that many who need help fall outside traditional criteria.

Addressing cat overpopulation effectively requires community partnerships and tailored, microtargeted responses. The APWF strongly supports place-based desexing programs that combine suburb-level targeting based on nuisance cat reports and impoundments, with local outreach by program staff. This dual approach—targeting where the problem is greatest and providing direct support to residents—offers the best chance for lasting, measurable impact on cat overpopulation and welfare.

### **Animal Welfare Funds Grant Schemes-**

The APWF strongly recommends Nillumbik Shire applying to the Victorian Animal Welfare Fund Grants Program, which recognises and supports the welfare of companion animals, along with both council, shelters, veterinary clinics providing low-cost desexing, Rescue Groups/ CFCNs and education on responsible pet ownership. These are targeted grants aimed at assisting vulnerable people and should be included as part of the responsible pet ownership promotion by Nillumbik Shire.

The 2023-24 Victorian State budget committed to \$5 million over 4 years, to support pet shelters and animal rescue and rehoming organisations, and since 2020-21 has dedicated \$12 million to animal welfare. This type of approach shows not only a commitment to animal welfare in the State, but a commitment and understanding of the causes of free-roaming cats in urban areas, and therefore effective solutions. The grant scheme is currently providing the funds for 14 Victorian councils to run targeted, free or subsidised cat desexing programs, as they can see the benefits in CCP assisting residents.

## Registration and identification

Although the Council emphasises increasing registration compliance through patrols and investigations, **there is little attention to understanding and addressing the barriers that prevent some community members from registering their animals.** Proactive domestic animal management strategies recognize that **financial constraints, lack of transport, language barriers, and fear of fines** can deter vulnerable populations from complying with registration and microchipping requirements (Rand et al., 2019; Zito et al., 2018).

Modern programs aim to **reduce these barriers through targeted support**, such as:

- **Subsidized or free registration events**, especially in low-income areas.
- **Mobile microchipping and registration clinics** in underserved neighbourhoods.
- **Partnerships with social services, community groups, and veterinary clinics** to reach marginalized pet owners.

By contrast, Nillumbik's reliance on enforcement (e.g., patrols and case investigations) risks **alienating residents who face legitimate challenges in complying**, without addressing the root causes of non-compliance.

The Council's registration data shows a steady decline in total registrations from 13,832 in 2021 to 13,328 in 2024, including a slight but consistent decline in cat registrations. This downward trend suggests a growing gap in compliance and potential under-registration of animals within the community.

Current best practices would prompt analysis of these trends to understand why registration rates are falling and development of targeted strategies to reverse this decline, such as:

- Surveying residents to identify barriers to registration.
- Incentive-based registration drives (e.g., offering free microchipping or desexing with registration).
- Positive reinforcement strategies, such as discounts for early or multi-year registration, rather than relying on punitive approaches.
- No evidence is presented that the Council is actively investigating or responding to this registration decline, which limits the effectiveness of their program.

The draft DAMP mentions educational programs and social media campaigns to promote registration, there is no indication of personalized, community-level engagement strategies to reach non-compliant owners. While registration checks during park patrols and case investigations are noted, **this enforcement-based strategy can risk damaging trust between council officers and the community**, particularly when compliance issues are linked to poverty, housing instability, or other vulnerabilities.

Modern, proactive animal management emphasizes **support before enforcement**, offering assistance and education before resorting to fines or penalties (Rand et al., 2019). There is **no mention of such a graduated approach** in the Council's current strategy—offering an opportunity for improvement. There is no integration of desexing support into the registration process, such as:

- Proactive strategies recommend linking registration, desexing, and microchipping as part of a unified effort to reduce overpopulation and improve welfare (Miller et al., 2014). This also addresses the challenge of unregistered and entire (undesexed) cats contributing to free-roaming populations.

Contemporary animal management strategies increasingly highlight the value of direct community outreach and partnership-based approaches to improve outcomes—particularly when it comes to engaging underrepresented or vulnerable populations. Best practices include culturally appropriate educational materials, door-to-door outreach in high-need areas, and collaborative workshops with veterinarians, shelters, and community leaders to promote registration and responsible pet ownership. In contrast, passive methods—such as generic social media campaigns—tend to be ineffective in reaching those least likely to comply.

While Nillumbik Shire Council's registration and identification strategy meets core legal obligations and incorporates some promotional and educational elements, it remains heavily compliance-driven. The use of follow-up checks for registration renewals may result in negative interactions with residents—particularly those already experiencing financial or social stress—and risk reinforcing disengagement rather than fostering collaboration. Without a greater focus on proactive, supportive, and community-engaged initiatives that help remove barriers to compliance, the current approach may miss opportunities to build trust and improve long-term outcomes in animal welfare and registration uptake.

To enhance its effectiveness and community alignment, **the Council should:**

- Implement **targeted, subsidised registration and microchipping initiatives**, particularly for vulnerable populations.
- Analyse declining registration trends to **identify causes and develop solutions**.
- **Engage directly with the community** through partnerships, outreach, and culturally appropriate education.
- Adopt **graduated compliance approaches**, focusing first on support and assistance.



- Integrate **desexing incentives** into registration processes.
- Explore **innovative identification methods** to improve return-to-owner rates.

By adopting these proactive strategies, Nillumbik could increase registration compliance, improve animal welfare outcomes, and build stronger relationships with the community.

## Nuisance

The **steady increase in nuisance complaints** from 290 in 2021 to 462 in 2024 highlights a growing concern regarding domestic animal management within Nillumbik Shire. This upward trend suggests rising issues related to pet ownership, such as excessive barking, roaming cats, dogs off-leash, or pet-related disturbances in public spaces. However, **without a detailed breakdown categorizing these complaints, it remains unclear which specific issues are driving the increase.** The lack of transparency in complaint data makes it difficult to assess whether the rise is due to a particular problem—such as an increase in dog-related incidents or a surge in stray cat complaints—or if it reflects broader concerns about responsible pet ownership and compliance with local laws.

A more **granular breakdown of nuisance complaints** would provide valuable insights into emerging trends and allow for targeted interventions. If barking dogs constitute the majority of reports, enhanced education on behaviour training and community mediation may be warranted. If roaming cats are a primary concern, improving access to desexing programs and enforcing containment measures could be prioritized. Without this data, the council risks implementing broad, compliance-heavy approaches that may not effectively address the root causes of nuisance complaints. A more **data-driven strategy**, including publishing annual complaint statistics by category, could help refine policy responses and ensure that resources are allocated where they are needed most.

While it is appreciated there are a wide range of duties as an Authorised Officer, what does “Officers will actively monitor, educate, and where appropriate, enforce breaches of our orders and Local Laws.” There is no information on how this will happen, nor what is deemed appropriate for enforcement action. Most importantly, no information on how you will educate, consult and inform your community.

While Nillumbik Shire Council has committed to introducing a new barking dog management process to assist both affected residents and dog owners, it is unclear why the training of Community Safety Officers (CSOs) to support this initiative is not scheduled until Year 3 of the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). Given that barking dog complaints are a persistent and often complex issue, requiring a balance of mediation, education, and enforcement, it would seem essential that CSOs receive appropriate training from the outset to ensure the process is implemented effectively. Delaying this training risks undermining the intended benefits of the new process in its critical early stages, potentially leaving both residents and dog owners without adequate support. **If the new barking dog process is expected to be effectively delivered and reviewed in Year 1, why is it not a priority to ensure officers are fully equipped to manage these cases until Year 3?**

Moreover, the plan's broader goals to minimize wandering dogs and dog waste are framed as ongoing actions but lack mention of complementary community education strategies that could reinforce compliance, suggesting an overreliance on reactive enforcement rather than proactive community engagement. Clarification on these timelines and the rationale for delaying essential officer training would strengthen the alignment of the DAMP with best-practice animal management principles, which emphasize early intervention, education, and consistent enforcement as key components of effective companion animal management.

## Cat Containment

The APWF strongly recommends keeping cats contained indoors at night, and during the day, if possible, on their owners' property in a comfortable environment that meets their physical and mental needs. However, the **APWF is against mandated cat containment** (night curfews and 24/7) because it results in increased cat-related complaints, impoundments, and euthanasia, as well as higher costs and enforcement difficulties for local governments. Additionally, mandated cat containment fails to reduce the overall number of wandering cats in the short and long term, both in Australia and internationally, and is a barrier to solving the free-roaming cat problem.

For cat containment to be successful, clear measurable goals need to be first identified such as reduced wandering and nuisance cats and/or reduced risk of wildlife predation. For successful implementation it is critical to recognize the source of the problem, geographic locations where the issues are greatest, and barriers in these areas for residents to successfully contain their cats. For example, free-roaming domestic cats and cat-related complaints are greatest in disadvantaged areas. In these areas, many free-roaming cats are semi-owned cats or unidentified owned cats with disadvantaged owners. Mandated containment will not achieve the hoped for goals, because firstly, most free-roaming cats in these areas are unidentified.

Secondly, many disadvantaged residents simply have no ability to comply, and therefore mandated containment becomes a social justice issue. In areas where free-roaming cats are most numerous and problematic, many residents live in low-cost rental properties that have inadequate fencing for cat containment, and may have no screens on windows and doors or air-conditioning. Containment fencing is often in the range of \$700 to \$2000 or more and is simply not affordable for community members to comply with cat containment mandates. Unfortunately, no subsidy is available to encourage their purchase, and cheaper options, such as PVC pipe installations, may require specific skills that some individuals do not possess. Additionally, many community members live in apartment blocks without access to a yard, leaving them with only communal spaces where they cannot put an enclosure. This is particularly common in social housing, where residents may not have flyscreens on windows and, therefore, cannot physically contain their cats, and fencing is inadequate to fit even inexpensive PVC tubing.

Promoting simple low or minimum cost solutions such as bed-time feeding is likely to get more compliance, especially effective night-time compliance. Night-time containment is effective at protecting vulnerable wildlife, because it is a time when cats



and threatened and endangered species most susceptible to cat predation (nocturnal mammals such as squirrel gliders and phascogales) are most likely to interact.

Bedtime feeding of cats is recommended as a highly effective way to assist cat owners at minimal to no additional cost to keep owned pet cats safely inside at night and prevent potential wildlife predation and nuisance behaviours such as fighting. This involves feeding cats inside at bedtime and ensuring all doors and windows are shut for the night, providing many owners with a way to safely confine their cat in the house/dwelling overnight. Bed-time feeding should be widely promoted to raise awareness among cat owners to increase cat containment at night, however, containment should not be made mandatory. This is because containment may not be achievable, for example for owners with no air-conditioning and inadequate screening on windows and doors, and no suitable secure area. In addition, mandating containment leads to increased costs and enforcement difficulties for local governments and other unintended negative consequences including severe mental health impacts on community residents and staff associated with euthanising healthy cats and kittens. Mandated cat containment also prevents the resolution of the problem of wandering cats by creating a significant obstacle for cat semi-owners to take full ownership of the stray cats they are feeding.

Mandating cat confinement creates a false hope within the community that the problems will be fixed once implemented and enforced. However, enforcement cannot occur when there is no owner for a cat, and effective enforcement requires an owner to be issued with the infringement or notice. In the relatively few cases where an owner or semi-owner is identified, they often have no ability to comply. Infringements issued by the council noncompliance can further financially burden cat owners without achieving containment.

Mandating cat containment is seen as a popular solution to the free-roaming cat and nuisance problem. However, this is because the community does not understand the cause of the problem (low socioeconomic, semi-owned and unidentified owned cats), nor do they understand the adverse impacts of such a program on staff mental health and job satisfaction, nuisance complaints and costs to councils and welfare agencies. They also do not understand that evidence from Victoria demonstrates they are not effective, while microtargeted desexing programs are successful at reducing the problem.

The expansion of local cat confinement laws will not solve the issue of semi-owned and stray domestic cats, as has been shown in previous instances such as Yarra Ranges Council and Casey Council (further details at [APWF 2023](#)). Furthermore, some councils have produced reports stating that curfews are unenforceable (Hobsons Bay Council, Hume City Council). In the City of Yarra Ranges (Victoria), in the 3rd year after mandating 24/7 cat containment, cat-related complaints increased by 143%. Yarra Ranges Council acknowledged that the significant increase in cat complaints was likely the result of the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew in 2014. In addition, impoundments increased by 68%, and euthanasia increased by 18% (human population only increased by 2%) (Yarra Ranges 2021).

In the City of Casey (Victoria), 20 years after introducing mandated 24/7 cat containment, the number of cats impounded was still 296% higher than baseline (from

264 cats in 1998 to 1,047 cats in 2019/20), more than double the rate of the human population increase. In 2000, Casey received 349 cat nuisance and related complaints which had increased to 376 complaints in 2020/2021 (Casey Council 2001 & 2021a, b)([APWF 2023](#)) Therefore, mandated containment is not effective over 3 years or 20 years in reducing complaints associated with free-roaming cats, cat impoundments and therefore costs to councils. This failure reflects the impracticality for owners of semi-owned or stray cats to contain cats, and the financial and logistical barriers faced by cat residents in disadvantaged urban environments including in social housing. Therefore, it is important to consider alternative solutions that are both effective and feasible for all community members. We recommend a more nuanced approach that includes supporting the construction of affordable and simple cat enclosures and exploring subsidies for those in need and promoting bedtime feeding where feasible.

## **Mandatory Desexing**

Uncontrolled cat breeding contributes significantly to overpopulation, leading to poor welfare for cats and increased community complaints, impoundments, and euthanasia. While Nillumbik reports a high desexing rate (97%) among its 4,000 registered cats, this only represents a small portion of the total cat population in the Shire. Most nuisance reports relate to semi-owned or unowned cats, which are typically not desexed. Without proactive intervention, these populations will continue to grow. Mandating desexing without offering support fails to address the issue, as many carers cannot comply due to financial or logistical barriers, and issuing infringements to these carers (if identified) will not achieve compliance. Research and practice consistently show that community cat overpopulation is best tackled through high-intensity, microtargeted desexing programs, like those formerly implemented in Banyule (Cotterell 2024), which focus on suburbs with high cat-related complaints and impoundments. These programs are more humane, cost-effective, and sustainable than enforcement-based approaches.

To be successful in Nillumbik, cat desexing initiatives must focus on place-based strategies that remove barriers for disadvantaged residents and engage semi-owners to take full ownership through free desexing, microchipping, and registration. Subsidised or free programs must go beyond broad eligibility requirements and be actively targeted to residents who are unlikely to desex without assistance. Funding from Animal Welfare Victoria should be leveraged to support desexing in areas of high need, including the potential use of mobile desexing units or transport assistance. Council officers, particularly AMOs, play a key role in identifying “hot spots” using local knowledge and should be resourced to support outreach efforts. This community-centred approach would be more effective at reducing impoundments and improving animal welfare outcomes across the Shire, while supporting the wellbeing of both animals and residents.

## **Dog attack**

While Nillumbik Shire Council reports a relatively low number of dog attacks compared to other regions, it is concerning that despite 34 dog attacks being reported

in the 2023–2024 period (as of January 2025), no prosecutions have been undertaken in the last several years, with no reporting on infringements issued or outcomes, such as animal management plans, for minor dog attacks in your draft. Although education and promotion of responsible pet ownership are essential components of a proactive animal management strategy, the absence of enforcement actions in response to serious incidents like dog attacks suggests an over-reliance on education alone, without appropriate accountability. Current best-practice animal management emphasizes a balanced approach that combines education, early intervention, and where necessary, enforcement to ensure public safety (Miller et al., 2014). When enforcement is absent in the face of repeated or serious incidents, it may undermine community confidence in council action and the effectiveness of regulations, particularly when public safety is at risk.

Moreover, while the Council outlines various educational initiatives, such as school programs (which are already available through the Responsible Pet Ownership Program at Animal Welfare Victoria) and the annual Pet Expo, these broad activities may not be sufficient to address the specific risks posed by dogs known to rush, attack, or wander at large. A proactive strategy would typically include targeted interventions for owners of dogs involved in attacks or rushes, such as behaviour management programs, enforced containment measures, and ongoing monitoring (Rand et al., 2019). There is little indication of such tailored responses in Nillumbik's approach. Additionally, while regular patrols are mentioned regularly as an ongoing activity, there is no discussion of using data on attack hotspots to direct patrols strategically, missing an opportunity for focused prevention. To align more closely with contemporary proactive approaches, a clearer strategy for balancing education with early interventions, such as property visits and solutions-based conversations with owners should be embedded within the Council's Domestic Animal Management Plan.

## **Dangerous, menacing and restricted breed dogs**

While Nillumbik Shire Council reports a relatively low number of declared dangerous and menacing dogs, the current approach appears largely reactive, relying on formal declarations once incidents have occurred, rather than focusing on early intervention and proactive management to prevent such incidents. Proactive complaints handling—where concerns about aggressive or nuisance dog behaviour are addressed early through education, behavioural interventions, and owner support—can reduce the likelihood of situations escalating to the point where formal declarations are necessary. This type of early action aligns with contemporary animal management strategies that emphasize prevention, owner engagement, and community safety (Rand et al., 2019). Moreover, while legal penalties for non-compliance are necessary, there is little evidence of programs aimed at supporting owners to comply with restrictions once dogs are declared, such as training assistance or containment support. Without proactive engagement and support, relying solely on declarations and penalties may not effectively mitigate future risks to public safety, and may place undue burden on owners without providing tools to manage their dogs' behaviour. Integrating proactive complaints handling, combined with targeted education and early behavioural



assessments, would strengthen the Council's approach to managing high-risk dogs and align with best-practice models in animal management.

## **Domestic animal business**

While Nillumbik Shire Council's approach to auditing and regulating domestic animal businesses aligns with legislative requirements, the strategy appears primarily focused on compliance and enforcement, with limited emphasis on proactive education and support for businesses to meet standards. Contemporary best practices in domestic animal management highlight the importance of partnering with businesses through education, resources, and ongoing dialogue to promote high welfare standards beyond minimum compliance. Additionally, while audits are conducted annually, this is just a minimum requirement with no mention of incorporating proactive support mechanisms, such as workshops or advisory visits, and how this could strengthen the approach and better align with modern animal welfare principles.

## **Other matters**

### **Nillumbik Dog Pound Facility**

Nillumbik Regional Pound provides important services for lost, surrendered, and seized animals, there is a notable absence of focus on identification and proactive complaints handling as key strategies to reduce impoundments. Contemporary best-practice animal management emphasizes early intervention, community education, and proactive support to prevent animals from entering pounds in the first place, including promoting microchipping, registration, and working with owners of problem animals before issues escalate. Given that the data shows a steady number of dog impoundments over recent years—with only 68 dogs reclaimed in 2024—there is clear scope to improve reunification rates through better identification and direct community engagement.

Additionally, proactive handling of complaints—such as addressing concerns about wandering or nuisance dogs before formal seizure, could reduce the number of animals entering the pound. It is also concerning that there is no mention of Banyule Council's contractual use of the facility, despite Nillumbik outsourcing pound services to Banyule, which could impact capacity and resource allocation. Acknowledging this shared arrangement is essential for transparent reporting and strategic planning. Overall, a stronger focus on preventative measures and proactive engagement with owners would align Nillumbik's approach with current progressive animal management strategies and reduce the burden on pound facilities.

## **Emergency Situations and Community Crisis Assistance**

Nillumbik Regional Pound offers valuable services, including emergency accommodation and support for animals impacted by family violence and welfare cases, its capacity of only 36 individual pens limits its ability to respond to large-scale emergencies or significant impoundment events. In the event of a natural disaster, large-scale seizure, this capacity would be quickly overwhelmed, leaving both animals



and the community vulnerable. It is recommended that Council establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a larger shelter or animal welfare organisation that can accommodate higher volumes of animals in emergencies, ensuring a coordinated and scalable response. Such an agreement would bolster support for domestic violence and welfare-related cases. Many **residents are unlikely to contact council until they are in crisis**, so any available assistance must be clearly advertised and communicated to the public to ensure people know **help is available before reaching breaking point**. Furthermore, clearer information on the criteria for accessing emergency and welfare accommodation would improve transparency and help ensure fair and consistent access to these vital services. Formalizing these arrangements would align the pound's operations with best-practice emergency and welfare planning in animal management.

We have provided references, for any further information you may require please contact [info@petwelfare.org.au](mailto:info@petwelfare.org.au)

Best wishes,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name], BVSc (Melb), DVSc (Guelph), MANZCVS  
Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine

[Redacted name]  
Australian Pet Welfare Foundation

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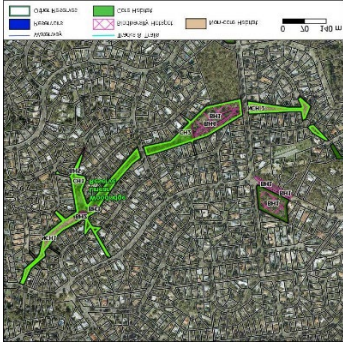
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**Feedback on draft DAMP maps and cat curfew options**, provided by Environment teams (Enviroworks & Land Management team and Environment & Sustainability team)  
20 March 2025

In order to support the objectives of Council's *Biodiversity Strategy 2024-2034*, the following recommendations are made:

- Regarding the cat curfew options, it is recommended that a 24 hour cat curfew be introduced.
- Regarding the dog areas:

1	Fergusons Paddock Hurstbridge	The current map is fine. No change recommended.
2	Nillumbik Park Diamond Creek – map 1 (Marngrook Oval map)	The current map is fine. No change recommended.
3	Nillumbik Park Diamond Creek – map 2 (Coventry Oval map)	<p>a. Make small section north of Coventry Oval (on north side of Diamond Creek) a dog on-lead area because this is a biodiversity hotspot. Pink area in below map taken from site Conservation Brief.</p> 
4	Diamond Creek Reserve	The current map is fine. No change recommended.
5	Eltham East Linear Reserve	<p>a. The unnamed reserve at bottom right, where dogs are shown as being prohibited is not a core biodiversity habitat so could be changed to become an off-leash area (from a biodiversity perspective).</p>
6	Woodridge Linear Park	<p>a. Make section at eastern end of Woodridge Linear Park a dog on-lead area because this is a biodiversity hotspot (BH4/BH1). Pink area in below map taken from site Conservation Brief.</p> 

7	Susan Street, Eltham	The current map is fine. No change recommended.
8	Falkiner Street Park, Eltham	The current map is fine. No change recommended.
9	Plenty River Drive Reserve, Greensborough	The current map is fine. No change recommended.
10	Griffith Park, Eltham	The current map is fine. No change recommended.
11	Eltham Lower Park (and Hohnes Hill Reserve)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Make the viewing platform at the confluence of the Diamond Creek and the Yarra River an on-leash location.</li> <li>b. Check location of Leinster Farm wetlands (dog prohibited area), they don't extend as far as depicted in red.</li> <li>c. Could make the Leinster Farm area north of the wetlands an off-leash area (it is currently shown as on-lead).</li> <li>d. Consider making Hohnes Hill Reserve a dog-prohibited reserve. The narrow trails in this reserve wind between sensitive native flora and fauna, so the potential for trail-adjacent dog-on-leash impacts is particularly high here.</li> </ul>
12	Gumtree Reserve, Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Make this an on-leash area so it is consistent with other council bushland conservation reserves. It contains sensitive flora and fauna which require protection.</li> </ul>
13	Wattle Glen Memorial Park (Wilson Reserve)	No comment. Not managed for biodiversity.

Submission following error in NSC Participate Nillumbik online system:

**Domestic Animal Management Plan, April 2025.**

Background: I am a registered pet owner (of a splendid dog) and love animals. I understand the immeasurable good that animals offer, and how human and non-human animals have coexisted in close relationships for a very long time. At the same time, I acknowledge the significant environmental impacts pets have across Australia – from resource use to the killing of native wildlife. Urgent action is needed to reduce impacts.

Cats are beautiful creatures with many attributes. They are formidable hunters – it is in their DNA. They are not part of the Australian ecosystem and their presence on this continent in the last 200 or so years has brought devastating impacts. It is estimated that domestic cats each kill more than 100 native animals each year.

**I am in support of the following actions, among others:**

- Ensure 24-hour cat confinement/curfew.
- Improve enforcement of dogs off lead, especially in reserves.
- Improve education and enforcement to ensure removal of dog poo by dog owners/carers.
- Improve pet registration processes.
- Improve programs to support responsible pet ownership – including ethical/environmentally responsible actions such as better poo disposal.
- Increase responsiveness of NSC officers/rangers to nuisance/barking dogs.

***Cat Curfew:***

This is a critical issue to bring Nillumbik up to speed with other Councils, the majority of which have 24-hour cat curfews. It is an important action for the basic care of biodiversity.

Cats cause the death of countless small animals – from butterflies, moths and other insects, to reptiles, mammals and birds. Day-time kills are often different to night-time kills which is part of the reason it is important to have a 24 hour curfew.

Cats also cause disruption to the lives of many animals – for example, small birds are reluctant to carry on with their usual activities when they know there is a cat around. It can disrupt their feeding, breeding, and resting. This adds pressure to native animal populations that are already suffering under the impacts of urbanisation.

Roaming cats in Nillumbik can also end up becoming part of the feral cat population. The Federal Government recognises how feral cats contribute to the decline of native fauna. We have a local and national responsibility to ensure all cats are confined.

Changes should be made as soon as possible. These should offer clear and considered communications to the community so there is sound understanding of the issues, leading to welcome change rather than push-back.

***Responsible dog ownership:***

Keeping dogs on leads better protects flora and fauna in Nillumbik. Many people do not understand why, and Council should take a pro-active educational role in clearly explaining the issues.

I convene a Friends Group and although the Reserve we look after is a dogs-on-lead Reserve, I frequently see people going through with dogs racing around off lead. While this might help keep the rabbit population down, or at least well exercised and a bit nervous, it does also lead to damage being done, and fear being felt by native animals who might then leave the area. When I see people going through with their dog off lead I have a calm and kind conversation with them. Not once have I had a bad reaction – in fact, people are often grateful that I have spoken to them and explained the details. Once people understand, they generally want to do the right and caring thing.

The same goes for dog poo – if people understand how problematic dog poo is for the environment/animals/waterways, they will generally take responsibility for it.

Council should increase communications about this issue via various methods (Nillumbik News, noticeboards, signs in parks, along footpaths etc).

Wrapping dog poo in plastic and throwing it in the bin is a major problem for a range of reasons. Council should encourage the use of plastic-free alternatives for the collection of dog poo (such as newspaper and paper bags that are approaching the end of their re-use).

Council should explore and create solutions for composting systems, especially in areas known for dog-gatherings eg dog parks etc.

Here are some quick and interesting articles regarding the impact of dog poo and how it can be disposed of a lot more responsibly (Nillumbik Council should be a leader!):

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jan/01/stools-to-fuels-street-lamp-runs-on-dog-poo-bio-energy-waste->

<https://phys.org/news/2018-01-street-dog.html>

<https://www.inventioncity.com/new-inventions/light-powered-by-dog-poop>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/jan/15/dog-poop-bags-plastic-alternatives>

***Animal welfare:***

According to the RSPCA and other animal care groups, cats are much safer when kept indoors rather than when they are allowed to roam. Cats and dogs that roam often suffer from being hit by a car, end up in fights with other animals (causing injury to themselves and/or the other animal), bitten by a snake trying to defend itself, lost or stolen.

These issues raise significant questions regarding animal ethics and must be appropriately addressed by Nillumbik Shire Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise my concerns and contribute to the DAMP policy development.

# Friends of Nillumbik Inc.

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## **Submission to Participate Nillumbik in response to draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029**

April, 2025

Friends of Nillumbik Inc. (FoN) provides this written submission in response to Nillumbik Shire Council's (NSC) invitation to provide feedback on the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2025-2029.

### **Summary Response**

FoN supports the draft DAMP 2025-2029, recognising the importance of pets to many residents. We commend:

- The proposed introduction of a 24-hour cat confinement to the owner's property policy.
- Improved pet registration processes.
- Improved proactive programs to increase responsible pet ownership.
- Orders specifying where dogs and cats are not permitted, regulating on and off-leash areas, and requirements for effective control of dogs.
- Improved enforcement of dogs off lead and dog litter.
- Increased responsiveness of NSC officers to nuisance/barking dogs.

In our review comments on the 2021-25 DAMP, we proposed that planning, consultation and operation of the DAMP and associated pet management be fully funded by pet owners. Review of the 2025-26 Council budget for the Animal Management service area appears to indicate revenue and expenditure are about the same, but there is no breakdown of this to show that it is fully funded by pet and domestic animal owners. This should be an explicit policy requirement in the DAMP.

### **Specific Further Comments on draft DAMP**

#### Promotion of Responsible Pet Ownership

In our review comments on the 2021-25 DAMP, we proposed that consideration be given to incentive-based registration costs, for example, for pet owners who do the right thing

and have no instances of complaints, enforcement actions, or impoundments. This could take the form of registration discounts.

Council could also encourage the use of plastic-free alternatives for dog poo bags - newspaper is a great option, or paper bags that are almost at the end of their re-used life. Appropriate home composting is also preferable – ‘pick it up and take it home’.

Council could also set up better systems near dog walking areas, such as a poo composting system rather than land fill bins filling with plastic wrapped poo.

### Cats.

We confirm our support for a ‘24-hour cat confinement to their home property’ policy as proposed in the draft DAMP, along with the phase-in period and support from Council providing advice on cat containment options and methods. We reinforce this proposal with the following:

In the 2021-25 DAMP, it was stated that 66.4% of survey responses had either strong or somewhat support, and 60% of quick poll responses indicated support, for a 24-hour cat curfew. Further, of the 10 most common community issues referenced in the DAMP, four of them (3, 6, 7 and 8) related to cats outside their property, preying on wildlife, creating a nuisance, or appearing unowned. Yet Council at the time did not support the proposal and instead opted for a partial daytime curfew.

Our research has indicated that, of the eight councils around metropolitan Melbourne with Green Wedge Management Plans, most of them (Yarra Ranges, Mornington Peninsula, Whittlesea, Cardinia and Casey) have 24-hour cat curfews, with only Nillumbik and Kingston having night-time restrictions and Melton having no curfew but regulations to report cats trespassing on a property. Manningham City Council introduced a 24-hour cat confinement policy on 1 April 2024.

The Albanese government recently announced (7 September 2023 - [Government declares war on feral cats | Ministers \(dcceew.gov.au\)](#)) a new action plan to ‘stop feral cats from decimating wildlife and driving vulnerable native species to extinction’, and to reduce feral cat numbers across Australia. Cats kill two billion reptiles, birds and mammals every year, have played a role in two-thirds of mammal extinction over the last 200 years, and currently threaten over 200 nationally listed threatened species.

Domestic cats also contribute to the decimation of native animals when outside their homes. A study published by the Guardian ([Keep pet cats indoors, say researchers who found they kill 230m native Australian animals each year | Wildlife | The Guardian](#)) found that *pet cats each* kill an average of 110 native animals per year. The report indicated that daytime roaming cats tended to kill more birds and reptiles, while night-roaming cats tended to kill more mammals. Consequently, nighttime-only curfews, when observed, only partially address the problem.

Cats are also safer inside their homes, according to the RSPCA ([Safe and happy cats | RSPCA Australia](#)), where they are not at risk from traffic, snakes, insects and fights with other animals. The Cat Protection Society says, each year in Victoria, over 1600 stray and surrendered cats must be cared for in adoption shelters each year, and the average life expectancy of a roaming cat is only three years.

Thank you



Friends of Nillumbik Inc.

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From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Tuesday, 22 April 2025 3:01 PM  
To: Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP Survey Results

Thanks Elishia.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
Sent: Sunday, 13 April 2025 11:48 PM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP Survey Results

Hi [REDACTED],

Apologies for the delay in responding to your question.

Following the completion of Phase Two of the community consultation, we are currently reviewing the survey responses and compiling all submissions received to date. Phase Two generated over 500 submissions.

Our aim is to identify key themes and develop a Consultation Findings Report. This report will be published on our Participate Nillumbik webpage after the upcoming Planning and Consultation Committee meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, 13 May 2025.

This timing allows for any additional submissions from those who may wish to attend the meeting to be taken into consideration.

While I understand that some members of your group may have already registered, we encourage you to register your interest in addressing the Committee as a submitter. Submitters are given the opportunity to present for up to three minutes during the meeting.

Please note: to speak at the Committee meeting, you must register by **5pm on Monday, 12 May 2025**.

Registrations can be made via Council's [website](#), by email [Governance@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Governance@nillumbik.vic.gov.au) or by phoning the Governance team 9433 3718 during office hours.

I'll continue to keep you updated as we approach the date of the meeting.

Regards  
Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**  
**Manager Community Safety | Municipal Recovery Manager**  
**Community Safety**

[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)

03 9433 3352 | 0417 058 369

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 7 April 2025 10:19 AM  
**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Subject: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP Survey Results

Hi Elishia,

Now that the survey period has concluded, when do you anticipate the survey results to have been extrapolated and circulated in a form suitable for our group to review?

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

Sent: Tuesday, 18 March 2025 1:04 PM

To:

[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP

Good afternoon all,

I would like to take a moment to thank you for attending the recent meeting held last week on 13 March 2025 to discuss concerns relating to the Nillumbik Domestic Animal Management Plan consultation (DAMP).

Your valuable input and engagement are greatly appreciated, and we are grateful for the time and effort you dedicated to the discussion. We are committed to ensuring that all feedback is heard and will be carefully considered in the next steps of the process.

As requested, I have attached the relevant document extract from Victorian Government Gazette (Section 26 Order, page 15) for your reference. Should you have any further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

We also invite you to register your intention to address the upcoming Planning and Consultation Committee (the Committee) on Tuesday 13 May 2025, commencing at 7pm, as a submitter, you have the opportunity to make a verbal presentation of up to 3 minutes to the meeting of the Committee. Please note submitters must register their intention to address the Committee by 5pm on Monday 12 May 2025.

You can register via Council's [website](#), by email [Governance@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Governance@nillumbik.vic.gov.au) or by phoning the Governance team 9433 3718 during office hours.

The meeting will be held at the Civic Centre in Civic Drive, Greensborough. Members of the public are welcome to attend the Planning and Consultation Committee meeting. Should you be unable to attend the meeting will also be live-streamed and can be watched online [here](#).

Thank you once again for your participation.

Kind regards  
Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**  
**Manager Community Safety | Municipal Recovery Manager**  
**Community Safety**

[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)

03 9433 3352 | 0417 058 369

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, 12 March 2025 9:22 AM

**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Re: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP

Thanks Elishia. I will let you know who else will be coming asap.

See you then.

Regards

[REDACTED]

**From:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Date:** Wednesday, 12 March 2025 at 9:07 am

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP

Good morning [REDACTED],

Thank you for reaching out and proposing a day/time to meet and discuss the matter further. I will send through a meeting invite for 5.30pm Thursday 13 March 2025.

Kind regards  
Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**

**Manager Community Safety | Municipal Recovery Manager  
Community Safety**

[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)

03 9433 3352 | 0417 058 369

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Tuesday, 11 March 2025 4:36 PM

**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Re: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP

Hi Elishia

As discussed this morning I have spoken to a few members from the Dogs for Eltham group and the best time seems to be late Thursday afternoon. Is 5.30pm possible? [REDACTED] is not available until then. Otherwise as late as possible please. I expect the meeting to go for about half an hour.

I would also like to reiterate that this group has always been keen work with Council and any other groups to ensure the best outcomes for all the community.

Looking forward to meeting with you.

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Date:** Friday, 7 March 2025 at 2:30 pm

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP

Hi [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email. I understand your frustration and appreciate your feedback. I wanted to acknowledge your message and refer to the recent correspondence with other group members earlier today.

As mentioned, I am committed to formally recognising this communication as a written submission on behalf of the Dogs of Eltham user group.

I would also appreciate the chance to schedule a meeting with you, gather any additional feedback, and address any questions you may have.

Kind regards  
Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**  
**Manager Community Safety | Municipal Recovery Manager**  
**Community Safety**  
[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)  
03 9433 3352 | 0417 058 369

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from your system. If you are not the intended recipient of this email, you must not use, print, distribute, copy or disclose its contents to anyone.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 7 March 2025 10:14 AM  
**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Re: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP

Dear Elishia

Further to my email sent to you at 10.39am yesterday morning (not yet responded to) I have now had the chance to complete the survey and noticed that Diamond Hills Oval (Plenty River Drive Reserve) is indeed now listed as an off leash area. I apologise for my mistake, I was looking for the Diamond Hills Reserve and wasn't aware of the correct name.

I am still concerned however that there may be other ovals within the municipality that prohibit dogs off leash including the Eltham North ovals and the oval in Plenty. Not listing all sporting ovals in the consultation process limits the opportunity for the community to comment fully. The second survey is very flawed and seems to be trying to restrict responses so that the politically-preferred outcome can be achieved. I have little confidence that the poorly designed survey will achieve a fully informed response from the community. The design is clunky and very restrictive. It seems to be guiding the community rather than trying to understand the community viewpoint.

I have also read your responses to [REDACTED] with much interest and certainly some confusion. When the new signage and dog poo dispensers were installed at the Eltham North ovals there was certainly a clear understanding that dogs would be allowed off-leash when organised sport activities were not in progress. There was even discussion with staff that "under effective control" meant well behaved dogs with good recall. After two years of the oval being used without any intervention from Council as an off-leash facility we are now advised that "under effective control" means *by means of a chain cord or leash no longer than three metres*. It is extremely disappointing that staff would advise of this restriction at this late stage of the community consultation. You are also now introducing new information that issues relating to proximity to dog parks and playgrounds have been factored into Council's decision making considerations. Why wasn't this made clear in the initial stages of community engagement? I am sure you can understand why community members in the Edendale ward feel duped and deliberately misled.

As you are aware there are many dog owners who consider the Wattle tree dog park as being too small, consisting of many obstacles and is unsuited to large active dogs. Certainly I have heard many people say that they don't like using that park because the confined space increases the aggression of dogs and that older people feel unsafe. The community was informed that the originally-planned size of this dog park was reduced to accommodate car parking for the Men's Shed. Furthermore we

were told that the size was the absolute minimum to qualify for Government grant funding. It is extremely disappointing that Council would spend more than \$800,000 of ratepayer/taxpayer funds to reach an absolute minimum standard. Surely Council should be striving for best practice in the interests of its constituents.

We have a similar issue at Lower Park where the planned dog park currently under construction was reduced in size when Council buckled under the pressure to accommodate the non-existent activities of the Horse and Pony Club. These are two examples of where Council has buckled under the pressure of other groups at the expense of dogs and their owners. This also raises the questions as to whether Council plans to exclude (by stealth) off-leash dogs on the Lower Park ovals once the construction of the new dog park is completed.

I for one do not think the consultation has been adequate and look forward to a review that enables the community to express its viewpoints in a more comprehensive way.

Looking forward to your response

[REDACTED]

**From:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Date:** Thursday, 6 March 2025 at 2:33 pm

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP

Good afternoon [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email, I fully understand your frustration around the shared spaces and appreciate your desire for clarity.

The purpose of the phase one consultation was to gather feedback from the community on what matters most in terms of responsible pet ownership. This feedback has been used to formulate the draft DAMP of which we are currently consulting with community.

While both ovals in Eltham, do have signage indicating: *No dogs on oval when in use by authorised user groups*, the Eltham North Adventure Oval does state *Dogs must be on a leash at all times. No dogs on oval when in use by authorised user groups*.

The existing Section 26 order under Domestic Animal Act 1994 , outlines that *dogs must be under effective control of a person by means of a chain cord or leash no longer than three metres, in all public parks and reserves except where designated by signs in areas listed on the order.*

The areas currently listed in the order are as follows:

*Dogs are permitted off-leash but must be under effective control whether restrained or otherwise in the following parks and reserves (as designated by signs):*

- a) Eltham Lower Park, Eltham*
- b) Griffith Park, Eltham*
- c) Plenty River Drive Reserve, Greensborough*
- d) Eltham East Linear Reserve north of Diosma Road, Eltham*
- e) Falkiner Street Park, Eltham (Barrack Bushland)*
- f) Susan Street, Eltham*
- g) Gumtree Reserve, Research*
- h) Woodridge Linear Park, Eltham*
- i) Fergusons Paddock, Hurstbridge. South side of path only. Dogs are prohibited from entering the wetlands areas as signposted*
- j) Nillumbik Park, Diamond Creek. Dogs are prohibited from entering sporting oval and wetlands*
- k) Diamond Creek Reserve, Diamond Creek. Dogs are prohibited from entering wetlands areas where signposted and sporting oval (except at Council approved events)*

We are gathering feedback through phase 2 consultation on the draft DAMP including existing maps of the above areas. This input will help us create the Final DAMP, which may include additional areas to be addressed in an updated Section 26 order with updated mapping.

To ensure the ovals remain designated shared space and consider off-leash areas, we encourage respondents to clearly state that these specific ovals should be off-leash, even though they were not directly included in the survey. While there isn't a specific number of responses required, the more clear and consistent the feedback is on this matter, the better we can address it in the final DAMP and any subsequent Section 26 order updates.

Your feedback is valuable, and we are committed to ensuring it is heard. If you have any further questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Kind regards  
Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**  
**Manager Community Safety | Municipal Recovery Manager**



[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 5 March 2025 7:07 PM  
**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>;  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

Hi Elishia,

Thank you for your response. However, contrary to your email, the Eltham North Ovals (Eltham North Reserve Adventure Playground Oval and Eltham North Reserve Top Oval) are both currently designated dog off lead ovals. Our group has had numerous consultations with council regarding the ovals, and as your council sign at the ovals state, these ovals are shared use spaces where dogs must be under effective control. As clarified by our group last year, effective control includes voice control enabling dogs to be exercised off lead. Furthermore, council members have also admitted that the Eltham North dog park is an inadequate space to exercise active dogs, and is better suited to small/quiet/inactive dogs. It was also admitted that the space is too small for a dog park and likely to lead to incidents of aggression - which has been proven multiple times. While the dog park may suit some users, it does not suit a large number of dog owners, who utilise the ovals instead. To suggest that you only received 6 responses that specified these ovals is perhaps indicative of the survey questions themselves rather than support for these to remain off lead. From memory, the initial survey did not ask about these ovals. Similarly, the current survey also does not ask about these ovals. What the survey did ask, was if sporting ovals in the shire should be shared use, to which a majority of residents agreed they should. I would suggest that many participants would have assumed that this was an adequate response, and included ALL sporting ovals in the shire - including those at Eltham North Reserve - with no need to specify particular ovals. This feels like a deliberate attempt by council to subvert the wishes of the residents.

I would also like to take point with your comment that the Eltham North ovals are not included because of the proximity to existing dog parks - the ovals at Diamond Creek are part of the survey despite having a dog park in close proximity, as are the ovals at Eltham Lower park and Fergusons Paddock, so this feels like an inadequate reason to discount these two ovals. They also have playgrounds near by. I understand that the very close proximity of the playground to the EN Adventure Playground Oval may be an issue - which is yet another reason to keep the oval at Eltham North Reserve Top Oval a designated shared space and off lead oval. While keeping both ovals as shared use would reduce wear and tear on any one oval, we are more than happy as a dog walking community to use just one of these ovals. This would provide two spaces for the sporting clubs to use without dogs, and the dog park for small/quiet/inactive dogs while enabling the rest of the community to exercise and socialise their dogs at the ENR Top Oval (when not in use by sporting groups).

I would also like to reiterate here that dog parks are not safe alternatives to off lead ovals. Dog parks can not be used by families with children, nor by people who wish to exercise with their dog. It is common knowledge now that best practice is to have dog parks only as an additional space, and not as the only space for dogs to be exercised. This was discussed with council last year at one of our consultations and the expert evidence provided. We also discussed the use during the day of the ovals by dog owners. If these ovals are restricted use rather than shared, we are wasting a valuable community resource. When we left that meeting, we were assured in no uncertain terms that the council was not wishing to change the status of ovals that are currently working. Since that time, our group has been in regular contact with council and have been told that there have been no adverse responses or complaints regarding the ENR Top Oval.

Can you please let us know in exact terms, what council requires in order to keep the ovals designated shared space /off lead areas? Do you need respondents to specify that these ovals in particular should remain off lead - despite not being included in the survey? How many such responses are required? I have lost all faith in the feedback process so am seeking some clarity around what we can expect.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

-----  
[REDACTED]

*I respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which I live and work. Always was, always will be.*

- Distance of existing dog park within close proximity
- Proximity of children playground/school
- Environmentally sensitive areas

However, we are still open to feedback on whether other spaces should be considered.

This feedback is encouraged and can be captured in any additional feedback on the draft DAMP. [Draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025 -2029 survey | Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 | Participate Nillumbik](#)

Kind regards

Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**  
**Manager Community Safety | Municipal Recovery Manager**  
**Community Safety**  
[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)  
03 9433 3352 | 0417 058 369

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 4 March 2025 5:04 PM  
**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals - Draft DAMP

Hi Elishia,

I hope you're well. We have reviewed the draft DAMP and note that the off lead areas listed (refer extract from the report below) does not include the current off leash ovals in Eltham North? Please advise whether they are proposed to remain off leash. This ought to be specifically clarified in the DAMP document. I look forward to your further response.

**DRAFT - Nillumbik Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025 - 2029**

## Appendix 1: Maps of off-leash areas in Nillumbik

- Fergusons Paddock - Hurstbridge
- Nillumbik Park - Diamond Creek
- Diamond Creek Reserve - Diamond Creek
- Eltham East Linear Reserve - Eltham East
- Woodridge Linear Reserve - Eltham
- Susan Street Reserve - Eltham
- Falkiner Street Park - Eltham (Barak Bushland)
- Plenty River Drive Reserve - Greensborough
- Griffith Park - Eltham
- Eltham Lower Park - Eltham
- Gumtree Reserve – Research
- Wattle Glen War Memorial Park (Wilson Reserve) – Wattle Glen

\*Updated maps of off-leash areas and designated dog parks currently in design and will be included in final DAMP 2025-2029.

Regards,



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 13 February 2025 3:37 PM  
**To:** 'Elishia Jansz' <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Thanks Elishia, appreciate the update. Looking forward to the next phase.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Thursday, 13 February 2025 3:26 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi [REDACTED],

Thanks for reaching out, time has certainly flown by!

Following the initial community consultation and engagement last year in June 2024, community members were invited to share their thoughts and priorities regarding dogs and cats in their local area.

The feedback received enabled us to better understand what matters most to residents about domestic animals and their management. The insights gathered will help shape and support the new draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029.

This plan will address key issues such as responsible pet ownership, animal welfare, public safety, and the environmental impact of domestic animals.

Take a look at our website to view the insights gathered from Phase 1 in the Domestic Animal Management Plan Consultation funding report. [Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025 | Participate Nillumbik](#).

We are planning to commence Phase 2 of consultation and engagement on the draft Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 in early March 2025, it is anticipated this will run for 5 weeks.

I encourage you to register to Participate Nillumbik to stay informed of categories and topics that interest you that Council may seek feedback on, register here [Create an account | Participate Nillumbik](#), alternatively we welcome you to provide feedback in person at one of our scheduled pop ups:

- Eltham North Dog Park - 12 March 2025 4.30pm – 5.30pm
- Diamond Creek Trail, Diamond Creek– 22 March 2025 11am – 1pm



Kind regards

Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**

**Manager Community Safety | Municipal Recovery Manager  
Community Safety**

[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 11 February 2025 4:36 PM  
**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi Elishia,

I hope you have been well. Please provide an update in relation to the formulation of the revised DAMP.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** Ben Tzirkas

**Sent:** Wednesday, 5 June 2024 10:29 AM

**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Thanks Elishia.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 4, 2024 2:37 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi [REDACTED]

Great to hear that you received the notification regarding the review of our Domestic Animal Management Plan 2025-2029 (DAMP).

The purpose of the first phase of community consultation, involves interaction with the community to better understand the needs and perspectives of the community 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.

This process will allow Council to utilise the insights gained from this research to understand community sentiment regarding animal management, including dog on ovals and validate data to ensure the relevance of content in the Draft DAMP, through external engagement with Community and key stakeholders we will likely identify current issues that are not yet dealt with by the current DAMP 2021-2025.

The information gathered through this initial stage of community engagement will support the development of the Draft DAMP and enable Council to tailor the DAMP effectively, this will occur in the second half of this year.

A revised Draft DAMP and additional engagement initiatives are proposed to be carried out and will require further extensive community consultation and engagement with key stakeholders early next year. In 2025, it is at this stage updated mapping of proposed area prescribed as on leash/off leash will be included.

I encourage you to complete the short survey via [Home | Participate Nillumbik](#) page and provide valuable feedback for consideration. The Domestic Animal Management Plan review is open for community consultation from 3 June 2024 – 14 July 2024, alternatively we welcome you to provide feedback in person at one of our scheduled pop ups:

- Eltham North Dog Park - 13 June 2024 4.30pm – 5.30pm
- Diamond Creek Regional Play space – 22 June 2024 11am – 1pm

Kind regards

Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**  
**Manager Community Safety | Municipal Recovery Manager**  
**Community Safety**  
[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)  
 03 9433 3352 | 0417 058 369

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 4 June 2024 11:07 AM  
**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi Elishia,

I hope you have been well. We received the new draft DAMP today. I note that the Eltham North sporting precinct is not mentioned in the DAMP. What does that mean for the Eltham North ovals in terms of the current off lead dog access? Your clarification would be appreciated.

Perhaps a quick face to face meeting to discuss what is proposed in the new DAMP could be accommodated by council? We are very keen to understand the impact of the proposed document and to ensure council is aware and takes into account our concerns.

I look forward to your further reply.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 4, 2023 10:22 AM  
**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi Elishia,

Just wanted to say a big thankyou for meeting with us last week. It was lovely to meet both you and Renee. The meeting was very helpful and your time very much appreciated. I/we look forward to hearing from you later next year at the appropriate time so that we can engage in relation to the upcoming DAMP renewal.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 15, 2023 9:01 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Good evening [REDACTED]

Thank you for reaching out with regard to the DAMP review process.



As outlined below, we have every intention to begin the process to review the DAMP in early 2024, however I am happy to accommodate an opportunity to informally discuss the process.

You have mentioned a Friday may be suitable for most to attend, please advise which of the below dates works best for you and the broader group and a time that you prefer.

- Friday 25 August 2023
- Friday 1 September 2023

Following confirmation, I will forward an invite to you all to facilitate a discussion at Council office.

Kind regards

Elishia

**Elishia Jansz**  
**Acting Manager Community Safety and Amenity**  
**Community Safety and Amenity**  
[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)  
03 9433 3352 | 0417 058 369

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 14 August 2023 10:31 AM  
**To:** Elishia Jansz <[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi Elishia,

Please advise status.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 9, 2023 10:42 AM

**To:** Blaga Naumoski <[Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>; Elishia Jansz  
<[Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Elishia.Jansz@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Thanks Blaga,

Hi Elishia,

We were hoping that we might be able to have a quick informal discussion with you about the DAMP reviewal process. There are roughly six of us from the broader group that were hopeful that you might be in a position to facilitate an informal meeting at your offices. Our preference would be for an out of hours meeting if possible. If that is not able to be accommodated, a Friday during business hours would allow most of us to attend. I look forward to your further advice.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** Blaga Naumoski <[Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Sunday, August 6, 2023 10:26 AM

**To:** [REDACTED] Vince Lombardi  
<[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi [REDACTED],

Council is required to review the DAMP, including new initiatives by 2025. We are scheduled to start the review in early 2024.

In order for officers to formally commence the review, Council is required to formally resolve to do so and also endorse the commencement of community consultation. Feedback on the plan will be 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
- concerns associated with current council policies on animal management.

I encourage you to register your details on the [Home | Participate Nillumbik](#) page and indicate that you would like to be notified of future engagement opportunities.

Officers will also have an endorsed communications plan that will support the promotion of the review.

If you have any questions about the process, please reach out to Elishia Jansz, Acting Manager Community Safety and Amenity and she will be able to assist you with your enquiries.

Elishia has been copied into this email.

Kind Regards

Blaga

**Blaga Naumoski**  
**Director of Governance, Communications and Community Safety**

**My pronouns are:** she/her  
[Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)  
03 9433 3110 | 0432 403 944

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 4 August 2023 11:43 AM  
**To:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>; Blaga Naumoski <[Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi Vince and Blaga,

Further to the below correspondence, I was just hoping for an update on how we might be involved in contributing to the upcoming review of the DAMP document. Your further advice would be appreciated.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 20, 2023 4:51 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Blaga Naumoski <[Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Blaga.Naumoski@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

Hi [REDACTED],

I Have copied in Blaga Naumoski who is the Director of Governance, Communications and Community Safety.

Blaga's area will oversee the upcoming DAMP review and can provide guidance regarding the process and timing of submissions.

Kind Regards

Vince

**Vincenzo Lombardi**

**Chief Operating Officer**

**Operations**

**My pronouns are:** he/him

[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)

03 9433 3280 | 0408 702 932

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Thursday, 20 July 2023 10:09 AM

**To:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals - DAMP

No issue, all good Vince,

We are very grateful for the use of the ovals. Even as late as yesterday I ran into somebody on the oval that said they had only just realised the ovals were open for use again by dog owners again and they were so happy with council's decision.

Last time we met we were discussing the Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) and that it would be updated and become renewed in 2025. Per our discussion at the meeting, we are keen to provide written submission to council at the appropriate time to help shape what the revised document might look like with a view to ensuring that the Eltham North ovals remain open to off lead dogs that are under affective control, except when organised



sporting activities are in progress. How might we commence this process, when is the appropriate time, and to whom should we address any such correspondence? Your guidance would be really appreciated.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 19, 2023 5:28 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Eltham North Ovals - Signage

Hi [REDACTED],

Great to hear from you, hope all is well.

I'm glad the bin dispensers are functional, as [REDACTED] mentioned the signs will be installed by late next week (apologies for the delay).

Happy to discuss further.

Kind Regards

Vince

**Vincenzo Lombardi**  
Chief Operating Officer  
Operations  
My pronouns are: he/him  
[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)  
03 9433 3280 | 0408 702 932

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 19 July 2023 3:58 PM  
**To:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals - Signage

Hi Vince,

I hope you have been well. The bins and bag dispensers at the Eltham North ovals have been really well received by the local community and all of us dog owners are very much appreciative. I just wanted to follow up on the permanent signs for the ovals. Are you able to confirm when they will likely be installed? Also, in case you were not aware, the temporary signs remain on the upper oval but the adventure playground oval had it's signs removed several weeks ago? I look forward to your further advice.



Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Wednesday, May 3, 2023 8:24 AM

**To:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Cc:**

[REDACTED]

**Subject:** Re: Eltham North Ovals

Hi All,

Following on from yesterday's email, and having now seen the signs in person, they don't look as concerning as we first thought! (The angle of the photo we saw made them feel quite different). Ideally, we would still love for a more inclusive community focused tone, but we also understand that as they are, the signs do the job of letting people know when and how dogs are allowed on the ovals which is of course the main thing. We are, of course, still willing and keen to be part of the process going forward to engender a genuine culture of community collaboration and would relish the opportunity to work with you to achieve this.

Once again, thank you for your support.

All the best,

 (on behalf of the Dogs of Eltham North Community Group)

-----











*I respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which I live and work. Always was, always will be.*



---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 2 May 2023 12:58 PM  
**To:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)> [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Subject:** Eltham North Ovals

Dear Vince, [REDACTED]

It is with great joy and thanks that we have seen the signs come up at the Eltham North ovals. Those of us who have been using the ovals have been monitoring the dog poo, and so far, there have been no issues that we are aware of. We greatly appreciate how quickly changes have been administered.

However, we are a little concerned with the tone of the signs. As a group, we have been very keen to promote a sense of inclusion, compromise and community responsibility. The signs as they are now, come across as fairly combative, and do not represent the shared nature of the ovals that we are trying to engender. The way in which council presents itself in the signs will affect the way in which the community perceives the rules, and thus, the dog walking community. We do not want to be in conflict with the sporting groups (or council) , we want to work with them in order to attain the best possible outcomes for all involved. However, the signs do not reflect this, or council's support for such an outcome. There are a number of examples of positive shared use signage across both Nillumbik and other council shires, as well as examples of positive reminders to pick up dog poo. We are aware that the signs on the ovals are temporary, and are keen to be part of the longer term solution. Is there a capacity for us to be involved in the wording and design of the permanent signs so that a genuine culture of community can be supported and engendered within these spaces?

I would also like to reiterate here my earlier suggestion of communicating to the sports clubs a proposal to increase registration for dog owners so that the extra funds raised can be distributed among the affected sports clubs in order to both show our willingness to address the issue in a hands on manner, and to acknowledge and thank them for their role in making the space useable for all members of the community.

Thanks again for your continued engagement and commitment to positive change. We look forward to your response, and to working with you further.

Sincerely,

██████████ (on behalf of the Dogs of Eltham North Community Group)

.....

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████████████████████

██████████

██████████

████████████████████

*I respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which I live and work. Always was, always will be.*

**From:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Thursday, 20 April 2023 5:59 PM

To: [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Filed: Follow up

Dear [REDACTED],

It was great to be able to discuss and hear your concerns and issues, thanks again for making the time at such short notice.

We will continue to work with all community groups as best we can to explore workable solutions.

I believe [REDACTED] will be providing an update with regard to signage, social posts and bag dispenser installations.

Kind Regards

Vince

**Vincenzo Lombardi**  
**Chief Operating Officer**  
**Operations**  
**My pronouns are:** he/him  
[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)  
03 9433 3280 | 0408 702 932

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**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** Thursday, 20 April 2023 10:30 AM  
**To:** Vince Lombardi <[Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:Vince.Lombardi@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)>  
[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Filed: Follow up

Dear Vince, [REDACTED]

On behalf of the dogs of Eltham community group can I again reiterate our utmost appreciation for the solution-finding consultative process you graciously offered last night.

It was a really affirming experience, and demonstrates how well we can work together with a supportive mindset.

I'm attaching the pdf presentation from last night.

I also thought it might be helpful to show our willingness to work with the sporting clubs, if we asked for the set training/match times so we could pass this information on to dog owners. This would help regulate boot/foot/paw traffic at the ovals.

[REDACTED] offered a really good messaging for signs which also demonstrates our responsible dog ownership philosophy:

'Nillimbik is committed to providing shared use community ovals. Dogs may be exercised on ovals but must be in **effective control** at all times. Dogs are not permitted on the oval when in use by authorised sporting and school groups.'

We also had a great chat with [REDACTED] afterwards about some incentives to get the whole community involved in poo management. Perhaps a competition for school kids to create sticker designs we could then put on rubbish bins reminding people about picking up poo, or design input into signage that takes the regulatory edge off and adds a bit of fun.

Again, we thank you so much for your genuine concern and commitment to working with us.

Good luck with the sporting groups Vince and keep us posted!

Kindest,

