

16<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Hume City Council  
City Laws Team  
E: [citylaws@hume.vic.gov.au](mailto:citylaws@hume.vic.gov.au)

To whom it may concern,

**RE: Review of Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP) 2017-2021**

Animal Care Australia (ACA) is a national incorporated association established to lobby for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

ACA is currently recognised by **Animal Welfare Victoria** as a key stakeholder in the review of Victoria’s Animal Welfare Act and its associated regulations. ACA is directly consulting and advising during that review, including the future revision of Codes of Practice for the keeping of all pets.

ACA encourages continued development of animal welfare standards and Codes of Practice for animal husbandry, breeding, training, sale and sporting exhibitions for a wide range of animal species, including pets, companion animals, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation.

ACA is engaged with state governments to develop more appropriate model Local Laws and model Subordinate Local Laws governing the keeping of animals in each state. Nationally, ACA is finding Local Councils placing restrictions and permit requirements on their residents which do nothing to improve animal welfare and tend to lead to greater non-compliance.

To this end, ACA would like to make a recommendation that the following statement be included in the opening section of your Domestic Animal Management Plan:

**“Hume City Council acknowledges the importance animals play in the wellbeing of our residents. Council’s default position is to encourage and promote the keeping of animals within the shire.”**

In reviewing the current consultation survey, ACA recognises the questions are directly aimed at local residents and their understanding of their local neighbourhood, essentially providing Council with feedback on areas in which it is failing the community; whether the community is aware and educated about the responsibilities of pet ownership. This ACA applauds.

However, we note a lack of questions directly relating to the existing DAMP, which we believe is what residents and key stakeholders should have been consulted about in greater detail. It is with that in mind that ACA makes the following comments:

1. ACA applauds Council on its plans to educate residents on a range of domestic animal issues and we trust this will continue in the next DAMP.
2. ACA notes Council has reported issues relating to dog attacks. It is our strong recommendation that Council employ the services of professional dog trainers in order to appropriately determine whether the behaviour having been displayed was that of a dangerous or that of an irresponsible owner. Many dogs ‘deemed’ as having been at fault are in fact due to poor ownership, handling and lack of training.
3. ACA notes an option being proposed to residents, is for training of owners where dogs have been found wandering. ACA applauds this initiative and to that end recommends Council consider subsidising professional dog training for cases where bad behaviour has been recorded. This will assist in reducing the numbers of dogs needing to be surrendered or declared as dangerous dogs. ACA has found people running dog rescues and within Pounds/shelters are not adequately

trained or experienced in recognising true behavioural issues and tend to mis-diagnose issues that can be quickly remedied with the right training.

4. In relation to cat containment, ACA recommends cat curfews/containment that require cats to remain on their owners property 24/7. Night time curfews have a limited impact on the issues relating to roaming cats. 24/7 containment within the property would solve the majority of issues with domestic pet cats being a nuisance, injured/killed, and unwanted pregnancies adding to the cat population. As we know majority unwanted kittens that fill the shelters come from accidental litters from un-spayed pets. These also benefit native wildlife.
5. ACA supports containment laws that have exceptions for cats that are 'walked' on harness and lead in the same manner as applies to dog owners.
6. Again, some form of assistance for cat owners to construct appropriate containment enclosures is necessary for the containment laws to be effective. Many Councils interstate now recognise the need to consult and assist residents to contain their cats in a similar manner to assisting owners with declared dangerous dogs. That is, providing assistance with approval processes for the construction of enclosures etc.

**General comment:**

ACA strongly encourages all councils to promote and encourage the keeping of animals as pets as they provide extraordinary mental health benefits for all of us. Any restrictions only serve as a detriment to pets and those wishing to keep them.

ACA recognises Council must abide by provisions within the Domestic Animal Act restricting the number of fertile females that can be held with requiring to apply to be a Domestic Animal Business, however we find many Councils DO NOT apply these provisions fairly or accurately when considering applications for Excess Animal Permits. We implore Hume City Council not to fall into this behaviour and to give merit to those doing the right thing by applying for Permits and acting in a responsible manner – both as owners and breeders.

**Animal welfare is NOT about numbers – it is about the conditions, behavior, cleanliness, housing and husbandry that each animal is kept under by the owners – your residents.**

Policies that restrict the keeping of animals on the basis of preventing noise, odour or other issues for neighbours are strongly discouraged. Restrictions including permit requirements inflict an unnecessary compliance burden on residents and staff which only discourages animal keeping needlessly. Laws are already in place to deal with neighbourhood nuisance issues including matters due to poor animal keeping practices.

ACA's primary objective is 'education over regulation' and always commend Council's wherever they seek to further the education of their residents.

ACA has references to support this submission and will be happy to supply them on request.

Please do not hesitate to make contact if we can assist further.

Kind regards,



Michael Donnelly  
President  
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