

31<sup>st</sup> August 2025  
Macedon Ranges City Council  
Email: [mrsc@mrsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:mrsc@mrsc.vic.gov.au)

**Dog off-leash and prohibited areas for dogs and cats**

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.

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

Animal Care Australia 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.

Animal Care Australia 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, Animal Care Australia 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.

**Animal Care Australia DOES NOT SUPPORT the sole use of surveys as a means of consultation.** It is inappropriate for Council to claim you have consulted when organisations are not actually able to lodge a written submission. Surveys are misleading and provide for irresponsible statistical analysis.

It is vital that Councils support the keeping of all pets within their shires/municipalities and that Councils consult with the appropriate stakeholders when looking to address the many myths or phobias that are expressed by uneducated members of the public, in relation to the keeping of some animals.

In reviewing Council's proposed Dog off-leash and prohibited areas for dogs and cats, Animal Care Australia would like to raise the following comments:

- **Animal Care Australia notes a number of the changes relate to not allowing dogs to enter waterways or more crucially to be within 3 metres of any embankment.** This is questionable and while certain areas may hold some form of environmental need, the potential impact of dogs swimming in or walking near a waterway are minimal at best.  
  
Importantly, reviewing the Community Feedback document does not highlight an expressed need for this restriction. In fact, the opposite was called for: "To investigate in future (as part of possible dog off leash area policy development) any dams etc that may be suited for dogs to swim (non-river/waterway options). This need clearly has been raised because of the current restrictions affecting access to waterways.
- **A good number of off leash areas have reduced in size or have been removed entirely.** Notably these appear to be dual use type – ie. sports fields which have been adjusted to use when not being used for sport, which is supported. However, others restricted appear to be likely due to poor owner poo pickup habits. This matter should be dealt with by the addition of poo-bag vending machines and bins supported by stronger education and signage, rather than restrictions.
- **Not creating more fenced areas unless State government funded.** Animal Care Australia finds this position to be deplorable. It is Councils responsibility to provide services and areas for recreation by its residents.

Animal Care Australia notes the only one area planned is funded by State.

According to the Councils own information, local residents overwhelmingly indicated that they wanted more fenced off-leash areas during the previous consultation survey.

- **Council reports that they currently have 11,698 registered dogs in the shire, and 52 designated off-leash areas.** Some areas have multiple areas in their jurisdiction, and others have only one, or none. Animal Care Australia assumes this is related to population and dog ownership of those populations, as it is not clear why certain areas benefit, and others do not.

These changes result in an alarming outcome and impact on dog owners. If all registered dog owners in the shire wanted to exercise their dogs off leash daily, that would equate to around 225 dogs for each designated area each day. Surely this is something that would not be acceptable or manageable for Council.

Should you require further details please do not hesitate to reach out as we would be happy to meet with you and further discuss this matter.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Donnelly', with a stylized, cursive script.

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## **About Animal Care Australia**

As a nationally recognised animal welfare organisation, Animal Care Australia 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, animals used for educational or entertainment purposes or kept for conservation, and in particular native birds, reptiles, and mammals.

Animal Care Australia was founded in early 2018 to establish an organisation run solely by volunteers to lobby for real animal welfare. With extreme animal rights and animal liberationist ideologies influencing government legislation, regulation, and policy at our expense and to the detriment of our animals and pets, it has become necessary to provide government with a balancing voice.

By uniting the broad spectrum of animal groups, collectively we offer an experienced, sensible approach to animal welfare.

By educating our members and the public about the importance of treating animals with kindness and respect for their needs and promoting the humane treatment of animals to improve animal welfare outcomes, Animal Care Australia is in the unique position of lobbying and advocating for all animals within our care.

Animal Care Australia provides priority to the following:

- advocating for stronger welfare outcomes
- advocating to increase education of the public in animal welfare and best care techniques
- educate the public on handling their animals with kindness & respect and the importance of their needs
- educate the public in the differences between animal welfare and animal rights