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Wyndham City Council Animal Management
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Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029

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 commends Council for:

- Council’s shift towards clearer accountability and data-led reporting.
- ‘Register to Reunite’ program.
- Initiatives to assist cat owners to transition to 24-hour containment measures.
- Education before enforcement actions undertaken by authorised officers.
- Conducting information seminars on various animal ownership matters.
- Committing to increased ranger patrols to educate pet owners on their responsibilities when out and about with their pets.
- Low cost (and/or free) desexing initiatives and vouchers for low-income residents.
- Relatively high impounded pet reclaim rates
- Continued focus on professional development and risk management of staff.
- Evidence-based safety improvements relating to dog attacks and prevention.

Key Commendations and Great Initiatives

- Expansion of educational outreach, including targeted youth engagement and multi-platform messaging.
- Commitment to improved microchip auditing and biannual data validation, ensuring higher registration accuracy.
- Strengthened professional training and upskilling of authorised officers, ensuring high compliance standards.

- Continued delivery of the low-cost desexing program and strengthened partnerships with rehoming organisations.
- Integration of annual public reporting to ensure ongoing accountability and transparency.
- Balanced approach between education, enforcement, and community partnership in reducing nuisance behaviours.

Opportunities for Further Improvement

1. Introduce metrics to measure the success of educational programs and behavioural change in the community.
2. Expand education for new residents, particularly in high-growth estates, on pet ownership laws and responsibilities.
3. Continue exploring incentive programs for desexing and registration to improve compliance rates.
4. Strengthen communication with cultural communities through translated materials and bilingual rangers where possible.
5. Provide clearer public reporting on enforcement statistics, including dog attacks and nuisance resolution outcomes.

General feedback:

Training of authorised officers:

Animal Care Australia supports the information provided for the training of Council's authorised officers, however, we note many items on the training list are "as required" or "as offered" with no clear goals or timeframes for those skills to be gained or updated.

Most importantly, the training plan does not allow for any of the authorised officers to attain a Certificate IV in Government Investigations, which many other Victorian councils have provided for.

It is disappointing the DAMP has no information on exactly how many authorised officers are allocated to Animal Management duties, or whether all officers are multi-tasked to ALL local laws compliance activities. Equally there is no information as to how many total local laws or animal management officers are employed by Council.

Registration and Identification:

Animal Care Australia draws Council's attention to the mandatory desexing for all cats unless specific exemptions are met. While the DAMP indicates there are 8153 cats registered in the LGA, mandating the desexing may impact how many residents register their cats. Offering further initiatives for residents in having their cats desexed and registered would likely increase the registration numbers.

Animal Care Australia acknowledges the Domestic Animals Act requires Council to set number caps for cats and dogs unless an excess animals permit is granted, however this WILL be a deterrent to people registering their animals (and/or microchipping them for that matter) if they own more than the listed caps. In as cost of living crisis, Council could encourage more residents to apply for excess animal permits if they were free and/or had multi-year expirations instead of annual renewals.

Excess animal permits for other pets should not be necessary unless a resident has proven that they have difficulty following amenity/welfare legislative requirements and need to be forced to comply. The intention of Section 42 of the Domestic Animals Act was not intended to be a sneaky way for councils to raise revenue from pet owners indiscriminately. It is intended to give councils an easier pathway when faced with irresponsible pet owners. Financially penalising ALL pet owners with number limits does not make Wyndham City Council a pet-friendly Council – as claimed!

Dog registration fees could be brought down to the same levels as for cats to encourage more people to register (and renew) their dogs.

Nuisance:

Council has what appears to be 18 designated off leash areas for dogs, which looks great on paper, until you factor that there are 19,944 registered dogs in the LGA (and many more unregistered). If they were all to be exercised off-leash by their owners on a daily basis, that would equate to around 1108 dogs visiting EACH designated area EACH day. This is surely inefficient and would account for more grievances/nuisance reports relating to dogs being walked and or not exercised and bored in backyards.

Overpopulation and High Euthanasia:

Animal Care Australia highlights that the Council website is unfortunately hard to navigate to find what release fees are from Council's facilities, and whether there may be an infringement fine on top of those release fees. The Fees & Charges schedule has a lot of confusing figures relating to impounded animals, so maybe the Lost Animals webpage could detail the process involved to reclaim an impounded pet. This might go some way to helping residents understand and reclaim their lost pets.

The Lost Animals webpage is purported to show photos and details about lost pets taken to the pounds servicing the LGA, but when Animal Care Australia checked, there were only 2 cats listed as being at the Lost Dogs Home, and no animals at all listed at the Council run pound. Given the annual statistics for impounded pets in the draft DAMP, there should be more animals looking for their owners in both pounds but have not been updated with information on the web page. Excess reclaim/collection rates set by Council and also charged at the Lost Dogs Home does not encourage pet owners to reclaim their pets, especially in a cost of living crisis where the choice may come down to feeding your children or reclaiming the family pet. Council should be looking at programs that allow for the first reclaim and or transport home is free and only charging repeat offenders. Animal Care Australia also notes Wyndham Council is one of the most expensive Councils for reclaim/animal collection fees. This is absolutely unnecessary.

Council website:

The Council website is extremely hard to navigate to find the information and Animal Care Australia is experienced at searching Council websites. It was difficult to find information relating to pet ownership in the LGA, costs for registration, impound fees, infringement fines, any information relating to responsible pet ownership, etc.

All of these areas need to be thoroughly checked and updated to ensure that residents coming to the website can easily navigate and understand what their responsibilities are.

For a comparison of the current DAMP versus the Draft DAMP see appendix 1.

In closing:

It is necessary to call your attention to animal restrictions within the **Community Amenity Local Law 2023** - in the hope that while Council is reviewing the Domestic Animal Management Plan you will consider approving amendments to Local Laws taking into consideration our feedback and provide the opportunity for residents to keep their pets, in particular, birds (other than poultry) without the need for permits.

Birds:

(Budgie, canary, finch, or other small domestic bird)

Limit of 10 for residential premises is NOT SUPPORTED.

The prohibition of keeping large parrots is totally unfounded and also NOT SUPPORTED.

There are hundreds of avian species routinely kept in Victoria and every species has its own specialised management, husbandry, enclosure size and welfare requirements. Placing a limit of just fifteen domestic birds is simply ill-founded. Finches are far smaller and much quieter than budgerigars, as an example. Therefore, we recommend the removal of the restriction of fifteen and insert: 'To be kept as appropriate to species, size of cage/aviary or bird room' into the Table.

There are dozens of large parrot species that make far less noise than budgies and yet they are prohibited? This is ludicrous and a clear indication that Council are completely uneducated and ill-equipped to be setting these restrictions.

The bird numbers within this entire Part shows a clear lack of knowledge regarding bird keeping and its enormous breadth and management techniques. We **STRONGLY** recommend the removal of the permit requirement/restriction and insert: 'To be kept as appropriate to species, size of cage/aviary or bird room'.

It should be noted that the keepers of some poultry may be members of Agricultural Societies, and the keepers of avian birds could be members of Avicultural Societies. Council could include "Members of avicultural clubs, are exempt from the above limits provided their birds are kept such that they do not unreasonably affect the amenity of neighbours."

Small Mammals:

Rabbits, ferrets, guinea pigs, rats and mice are considered as house pets and have been for some time now. **The total restriction of only 4 animals in a residential premise is TOTALLY NOT SUPPORTED.**

Now that housing cost forces people into smaller unit dwellings, indoor pets such as rabbits, ferrets, rats, mice, and guinea pigs are becoming the norm.

Owners of these smaller pet's work to improve the quality of the animal in health and temperament and animal related clubs and societies have policies for registered breeders who are bound by their published Code Of Ethics and Code Of Practice along with provisions provided with the current Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

There are many Societies for rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, and mice.

Ferrets

Ferrets have become much loved companion pets and while they do require some care, maintenance and ensuring that they are kept very entertained and occupied when awake, they in fact do not require a lot of space which makes them perfect as 'indoor' pets.

Ferrets are far more secure indoors and escapes into the environment are far less likely to occur with an indoor kept pet than an animal out in a cage.

Ferrets are also social animals and should be kept at a minimum as pairs or in groups, therefore Council's restriction of only two ferrets or as part of only 4 small mammals, is impractical, uneducated, ill-advised, and most definitely **NOT SUPPORTED**.

Rats, Mice and Guinea Pigs

The limit of just four (4) animals on residential premises or just two (2) in a Unit/flat is **NOT SUPPORTED by Animal Care Australia**.

These animals are colony animals, and it is important for their health and well-being to be kept in larger numbers than what Council's policy imposes As companion animals allowing more appropriate colony sizes poses no threat to community, health, or animal welfare. ¹.

¹ [Short Communication: Rats Demand for Group Size - Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 7 \(4\) 267-272 – 2004](#)

Rats, mice, and guinea pigs are primarily indoor pets and invariably kept in small enclosures. These animals do not exhibit extreme noise, are not intrusive and are free of the diseases and pathogens that often plague their wild counterparts. In fact, they pose no health problem for their owners and are renowned for keeping themselves well groomed.

For the Club registered breeding community, the proposed limitations are also unrealistic, especially given the average litter size for some of these species is larger than the proposed limit suggesting that these proposals have not considered the biology and needs of these species. Additionally, due to their short lifespans it is vital that several adult pairs be kept at any given time to ensure that the quality of the gene pool is maintained – without allowing owners to keep ‘breeders’ the health of the species will invariably suffer.

Rabbits

Many people that keep rabbits in any residential situation keep them as pets and the majority of pet rabbits are kept as indoor pets for their health and safety. Vaccines do not provide protection against all of the government released rabbit haemorrhagic viruses that are designed to eradicate feral rabbits.

Responsible pet owners will have their rabbits desexed should THEY NOT wish to breed. Council imposing restrictions is an extreme overreach of power and highlights how out of touch with animal keeping this draft policy is.

Small mammals are extremely popular, particularly in circumstances of higher residential density areas, make no noise, and despite common misconception produce little to no odour. Small mammals are colony animals and a limit of just ten animals is simply poor animal welfare. This is especially applicable if different species are kept as, it further limits the ability of the pet owner to keep suitable colonies of each species if limited to a total number of four or just two!

Both the bird and small mammals restrictions scream of species bias and are clearly not based on the animal welfare needs of the animals or the respect deserved by pet owners. These excess animal permits should ONLY be applied to irresponsible pet owners and not all residents.

Animal Care Australia would like to request a meeting to discuss further collaboration to ensure a policy that aligns with the needs of your pet keeping residents.

Animal Care Australia’s primary objective is ‘education over regulation’ and always commend Councils wherever they seek to further the education of their residents. We recommend viewing our online document: [Council Animal Management Plans](#)

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,



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Appendix 1: Side-by-Side Comparison and Commentary

Section	2021–2025 DAMP	2025–2029 Draft DAMP (with Commentary)
Overall Structure & Vision	Four-year plan guided by the Domestic Animals Act 1994; focused heavily on operational compliance and process detail.	Refined strategic plan aligning with Section 68A(2) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994, emphasising measurable outcomes and modern governance. ACA commends this shift towards clearer accountability and data-led reporting.
Community Consultation	Community engagement summarised with general findings – requests for greater ranger visibility and education on cat confinement.	Enhanced two-phase consultation, broad inclusion of residents, online surveys, and direct stakeholder workshops. Demonstrates best-practice engagement with measurable feedback integration.
Training for Authorised Officers	Outlined comprehensive skills and safety matrix; annual reviews included.	Maintains professional training standards with additional emphasis on compliance auditing, conflict resolution, and handling high-risk cases. ACA applauds continued focus on professional development and risk management.
Registration & Identification	Introduced “Register to Reunite” and free first-year pet registration; relied on SMS and door-to-door campaigns.	Strengthened through database cross-referencing, microchip audits, and renewal reminders via multiple digital platforms. Excellent integration of technology and proactive data validation to increase compliance.
Responsible Pet Ownership & Education	Delivered awareness programs via social media, expos, and brochures on cat curfew, desexing, and leash use.	Expanded with targeted community education campaigns, youth engagement initiatives, and updated responsible pet ownership seminars. ACA strongly supports Wyndham’s proactive and inclusive education strategy.
Nuisance Management	Focused on cat curfew enforcement, barking complaints, and free trap hire for cat nuisance control.	Continues and enhances cat management with updated enforcement practices, stronger collaboration with conservation teams, and

		structured annual evaluation of cat curfew effectiveness. Commendable balance between education and enforcement.
Dog Attacks & Safety	Strict enforcement of dog attack laws; focus on increased ranger visibility.	Continued zero-tolerance approach, complemented by new education on recognising and reporting attacks, and patrols of at-risk areas. ACA supports these evidence-based safety improvements.
Dangerous, Menacing & Restricted Breed Dogs	Regular inspections and high compliance; maintained State database.	Maintains 100% compliance target, adds improved public communication and inspection protocols. Strong governance continuation.
Overpopulation & Euthanasia	Promoted desexing and rehoming partnerships; limited metrics on outcomes.	Expanded partnerships with rescue groups, clearer desexing program evaluation, and community support initiatives for vulnerable owners. ACA commends this humane and practical welfare model.
Local Laws & Orders	Local Law 2015 maintained; Orders reviewed periodically (cat curfew and dog off-leash). Community Local Law Amenity Local Law 2023	Reviews formalised with timeline accountability; integration of legislative alignment and review process under the Act. Reinforces regulatory clarity. OUTDATED and out of touch with animal welfare requirements and community expectation
Performance Evaluation & Review	Annual review process stated but lacked measurable indicators.	Introduces structured annual evaluation framework and community reporting mechanisms. Strengthens transparency and accountability.

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